

CHAPTER: 3
THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
KUTTIYATTAM AND NATYASHASTRA
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
STAGE CONVENTIONS AND ARTIFICES:
AN EVALUATIVE STUDY



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- Kutiyattam is a unique “Dramatic Form”, founded on Bharatamuni’s Natyashastra and developed in a free style based on Natyashastra’s Dramaturgy. In the performance of this art, its proponents emphasized the “Natya Dharmi” aspect rather than the “Loka Dharmi” aspect and also adopted new ways, new codes, new devices / techniques, new conventions and principles.
- “Stage Conventions and Artifices” for Kutiyattam is highly conventionalized and to a great extent follows the percepts of Natyashastra. It can be in following ways:
 - **PURVARANGA:**
 - **“KUTTAMBALAM” – TEMPLE THEATRE ARCHITECTURE:**
 - **NATYOKTI / DRAMATIC UTTERANCE:**
 - **SPECIAL STAGE TECHNIQUES / EFFECTS:**
 - **NIRVAHANAM:**
 - **KAKSHYA VIBHAG / ZONAL DIVISION:**
 - **MULTI FOCAL SCENE SETTING / SIMULTANEOUS DRAMATIC ACTION IN DIFFERENT LOCALS:**
 - **TRANSFORMATION OF ROLES:**
 - **MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIP / COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ACTOR, CHARACTER AND SPECTATOR:**
 - **ROLE OF WOMEN / FEMALE CHARACTER:**
 - **LOKADHARMI AND NATYADHARMI:**

➤ **PURVARANGA:**

*** BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF “PURVARANGA” – THE PRELIMINARIES
DONE IN KUTTIYATTAM:**

- In Chapter No. – 5 Bharata described – “Purvaranga” of Play Productions.

☆ **THE BELOW ITEMS ARE ALL NIRGITA AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN:**

- Refer in Thesis: Chapter No. – 2 for Purvaranga - “Items Behind the curtain”.

☆ **THE BELOW ITEMS ARE ALL AFTER REMOVE THE CURTAIN:**

- (*Illustration: 1 and 2*) The curtain is now removed and “Sutradhara – Chakyar” enters with a smiling face, his eye brows and cheeks vibrating with happiness, his hands symbolically full of flowers. He offers flowers to the stage and prostrates. (*Illustration: 3*)
- He then performs “Puja” of the deity without any flowers or flames or utensils, but purely symbolic gestures. It is as follows: “I see before me all things required for the Puja. Let me now start the Puja”. (*Illustration: 4*)
- He takes his seat on the floor, takes the spouted vessel called “Kindi”, worships it, takes the “Shankh / Conch” and its stand, worships them, takes sandal paste and flowers and then fills the Kindi with water and worships it again. He lights the lamp, in their proper place; he smears cow-dung paste on the ground and washes his hands. Then he pours water into the Shankh, washes it, then invokes “Devi Ganga” into the water in the Shankh and worships it. This “Tirtha” or holy water is sprinkled on every object. He then propitiates the self and offers “Naivedyam” to Ganapati, invokes Goddess Sarasvati from the face of Brahma to the ‘Lotus Flower’ and worships with “Pancopahara” and food. (*Illustration: 5*)

- **(Illustration: 6)** Then he sees his consort returning after her bath, he gives flowers and sandal paste to her. Then he offers “Pushpanjali” to the gods of heaven and prostrates. His face beaming with happiness, the Sutradhara then expresses his thoughts: “Ha! Ha! I feel so happy. Getting up early in the morning, I have finished my purification by bathing and cleansing, my Puja and food. Let me now go the ‘Rangashala’.”
- He proceeds to the ‘Ranga’ or stage and sees several “Brahmins”. He depicts several Brahmins by their gait. How are these Brahmins? Possessing a pure, austere, prestigious culture and heritage, and engaged in “Shad – Karmas” and well versed in “Vedas and Shastras”, these venerable Brahmins have a brightness of their own. He plucks flowers and offers them with great respect and says: “O great Brahmins! Let the Lord of the three worlds “Shri Narayana”, bless you. How is this Shri Narayana?” He enacts “Kottuvilakkuka” - for the stopping of the Mizhav playing and enacts the following “Shloka” by “Mudrabhinaya” but, without rendering it. Then he renders it with “Mudrabhinaya”.
- Here Sutradhara recites a Shloka like the following from “Balacharita” of Bhasa. In the case of other plays, he recites the Sutradhara Shloka of the concerned play.

(Illustration: 7 TO 11)

शङ्खक्षीरवपुः पुरा कृतयुगे नाम्ना तु नारायण -
 स्त्रेतायां त्रिपदार्पितत्रिभुवनो विष्णुः सुवर्णप्रभः।
 दूर्वाश्यामनिभः स रावणवधे रामो युगे द्वापरे
 नित्यं योडञ्जनसन्निभः कलियुगे वः पातु दामोदरः ॥

- **(Illustration: 12)** Then he indicates the close of the piece of acting by performing, “Kaliyam Vecchu Tiriyuka”. He then starts the “Nitya Kriya”. In this connection he does several “Charis” with appropriate gestures where necessary, keeping proper rhythm to the “Mizhavu” accompaniment. Various “Akkitta” songs are sung by the “Nangiar” for these items, which are called “Dhruvam”. The dances in the “Nitya Kriyas” are performed to specific mnemonics and songs. Some of these songs have lines of meaningless syllables.

- The various sections of the “Nitya Kriya” are:

⇒ **CERIYOKKU (CERIA COKKAM):**

- Dance steps done to a set pattern; hands also have to be moved in a specific manner; there is also a turning movement.
- Fast “Triputa Tala”.

⇒ **VALIYOKKU (VALIYA COKKAM):**

- Dance steps are done to a set pattern in fast “Triputa Tala”.

⇒ **KUNKUNAM:**

- Dancing and jumping to the four sides, four times, each in a set pattern.

⇒ **BHRAMARI:**

- Turning around in dance steps to a particular mnemonics.

⇒ **KSIRASAGARAM:**

- Ksirasagaram after the Shloka “Ksirasagara Phenacandana.....” which is sung during its performance. At the end of the four lines the meaningless syllables mentioned before “Tetenna Tenna.....” are recited.
- Dance steps done when the Shloka is being sung.

⇒ **KESADIPADAM (HEAD TO FOOT DESCRIPTION OF SHIVA AND PARVATI):**

- The actor will take five steps forwards and five steps backwards showing gestures for the head to foot description, various parts of the body of Shiva and Parvati. (*Illustration: 13*)

⇒ **MARA SARIRAM:**

- This is so called, since it is done, when the Shloka “Mara Sariram.....” is sung.

⇒ **DIKPALA VANDANAM:**

→ The actor will enact plucking flowers and offering them to the particular guardian deity. The Chakryar do the salutations to all the eight “Dikpalas”; Indra in east, Agni in south-east, Yama in south, Nirrti in south-west, Varuna in west, Vayu in north-west, Kubera in north, Isana in north-east and also to Brahma down below and Vishnu up in the sky. For this “Nangiar” will recite Shloka “Visvajanadhipa.....” (*Illustration: 14*)

⇒ **NRTTAM:**

→ A fine piece of dancing: lifting one leg and jumping on the other, turning in circle; the tempo increases slowly to fast movement. At the end, the actor will enact that he is plucking flowers and offering “Pranams” them to all beings in the universe including Devas, Rishis, Siddhas, Charanas, Kinnaras, Vidyadharas of Heaven, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Sudras, Birds, Animals of the Earth, Asuras, Nagas, Grass, down to the ants of the Netherworld. Then he will prostrate on the stage. (*Illustration: 15 To 18*)

- (*Illustration: 19 To 21*) Then he goes to the temple with the costume on, ascends the steps (Sopana), rings the bell and prays to the deity, offers “Dakshina” to the priest and accepts “Prasadam” from him.
- Then he comes back to the stage and salutes it by touching the ground with his head and goes to the green room and takes off his costumes.

* **VARIOUS ITEMS OF “PURVARANGA”**
IN KUTIYATTAM AND NATYASHASTRA: A COMPARISON

NO. / ITEM	NATYASHASTRA	KUTIYATTAM
<u>THE BELOW ITEMS ARE ALL NIRGITA AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN:</u>		
1	<u>PRATYAHARA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping the ‘Musical Instruments’ in the proper place – “Kutapasya Vinyasa”. ⇒ <u>Mrdanga player – Mardangika:</u> → In the centre, facing ‘East’. ⇒ <u>Cymbals / Gong player – Panika:</u> → On the left side of ‘Mardangika’, sits two ‘Panikas’, who follow the musical rhythm. ⇒ <u>Gayanah:</u> → To the south of the back-stage and facing ‘North’, ‘Gayanah’ has his place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instrumentalists in Kutiyattam are – ⇒ <u>Mizhavu player-Nambiar:</u> → ‘Mizhavu’ is fixed in a particular position in “Kutapa Sthana” in the ‘Kuttambalam’. ⇒ <u>Kuzhitalam player-Nangiar:</u> → The ‘Nangiar’ who marks rhythm with the ‘Kuzhitalam’ sits on a ‘White Cloth’ on the right side of ‘Mizhavu’. • ‘Idakka’ is not placed on the ground but is to be kept hanging near the ‘Kutupa Sthana’. • ‘Kurum Kuzhal’ will be with the piper.

	<p>⇒ <u>Vainika and Vamsadharaka:</u></p> <p>→ By the side of 'Gayanah', possibly a little back, sit 'Vainika' – Flute player and the two 'Vamsadharaka', those who accompany with flutes.</p> <p>⇒ <u>Gavikyah:</u></p> <p>→ Facing the chief singer, to the 'North'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The seating of the instrumentalists. 	
2	<u>AVATARANA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The musicians, especially the females, enter and take their seats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singer is the same Nangiar who plays 'Kuzhitalam'. • 'Idakka' and 'Kurum Kuzhal' are played by male artists and they do so in the standing posture near the 'Mizhavu'.
3	<u>ARAMBHA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The commencement of singing, vocal exercises, trying out 'Svara'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no Arambha in Kutiyattam as in Natya Shastra, since the song is not elaborated.
4	<u>ASHRAVANA:</u>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mizhavu is not tuned and hence Ashravana of Natya Shastra is also absent in Kutiyattam.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The adjustment of tuning of the 'Musical Instruments' to the same drone (Shruti). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There used to be a 'Sushira Vadya' called 'Kurumkuzhal' to play rhythmic tunes rather than melodious tunes. No. 3 and 4 items are performed not at this point of time but only later.
5	<u>VAKTRAPANI:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying out different styles of playing, particularly the 'Drums'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "Mizhavu Occappettutuka" (The Sounding of the Mizhavu.) of Kutiyattam. At first the 'Nambiar' rubs the face (Vaktra) of the 'Mizhavu' with his right palm (Pani) and touches his head with his hands as a salutation and plays a set pattern of rhythms. During this he is not accompanied by the 'Kuzhitalam' or other instruments.
6	<u>PARIGHATTANA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The adjusting and tuning of the 'Tanti Vadya – Stringed'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no 'Tanti Vadya' in Kutiyattam and hence no Parighattana.
7	<u>SAMGHOTANA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The different ways of playing on the 'Drum'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 'Nambiar' plays different rhythmic patterns. This would synchronize with the playing of "Gosthi-Kottuka" in Kutiyattam.
8	<u>MARGASARITA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first combined playing of the 'Tanti Vadya - Stringed' with 'Avanaddha Vadya - Drums'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no 'Tanti Vadya – Stringed' in Kutiyattam and hence Margasarita is absent in Kutiyattam.

9	<u>ASARITA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying different rhythmic patterns in consonance with the songs in praise of gods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is what is done in the playing of the ‘Gosthi-Kottuka’, in which several ‘Shlokas’ are sung in praise of Ganapati, Lord Shiva and Sarasvati, which are called “Akkittas Hymns”. • The drumming and singing stop and the ‘Nambiar’ now comes forward to the lamp on the stage and recite a ‘Nandi Shloka’ referring to the play. • This is not from the text of the play and is called “Arangu Talikkuk – Rang Prasadnam”. • After ‘Arangu Tali’ the curtain is held and the Nambiar plays ‘Mizhavu’ along with the orchestra, which is called “Vayikku”.
<u>THE BELOW ITEMS ARE ALL AFTER REMOVE THE CURTAIN:</u>		
10	<u>VARDHAMANAKA (GITA-VIDHI):</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presentation of songs with ‘Svara’ and “Tala – Vadyas”. • Singing for the glory of Gods. Such songs are called ‘Nirgitas’ and are to be performed along with dance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vardhamanaka of Natya Shastra can be seen later when the ‘Sutradhara’ does salutations to the guardian deities, which are called “Nitya Kriyas” like “Ceria Cokkam”, “Valiya Cokkam” etc.

11	<u>UTTHAPANA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The technical preliminaries being over, it is from this point that the presentation is raised to a performance level. • This is the starting point of singing the Nandi. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Behind The Curtain:</u> → The ‘Sutradhara’ enters behind the curtain and performs “Marayil Kriya”. • This portion partly tallies with Utthapana. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utthapana may have its counterpart in the “Vandana Shloka: Sankhashiravapu” in Kutiyattam.
12	<u>PARIVARTTANA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ‘Sutradhara’ and his two assistants enter and the worship of ‘Dikpalas’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Sutradhara – Chakyars” enters - → Enacts the performance of the “Puja”. → Gesticulates to the stage. → Looks at the audience. → Sees the Brahmins there. → Bows to them. • And recites a ‘Shloka’ invoking the blessings of the Lord. • So, up to the point of his taking a look at the audience, his action would synchronize with the Parivarttana. • But this recitation better synchronizes with the ‘Sthapana’ or ‘Prastavana’.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Parivarttana of Natya Shastra corresponds to the dance “Dikpala Vandanam” with the “Shloka: Visvajanadhipa.....”
13	<u>NANDI:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invoking the blessings of Gods. It is the recitation of benedictory ‘Shloka’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is not found in Kutiyattam.
14	<u>SHUSHKAVAKRISHTA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singing out with the Pitrus will be happy. An ‘Avakrsta Dhruva’ is sung with meaningless syllables. It indicates Shlokas for “Jarjara” also. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After reciting the ‘Shloka’, ‘Sutradhara’ does the “Nitya Kriyas”; in this context “Akkitta” many songs are sung by the ‘Nambiar’. Some of the songs have meaningless syllables. This portion partly tallies with ‘Shushkavakrishta – Dhruvas’.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Jarjara Puja” is replaced by “Ganapati Puja”. The Shushkavakrishta is absent in Kutiyattam.

15	<u>RANGADWARA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First presentation of Vachika and Angika on the stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘Abhinaya’ is introduced after the recitation of ‘Shloka’. ‘Sutradhara’ recites it with mime and action. This would synchronize with the Rangadwara.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rangdwara occurs as a part of the drama in the “Vidushaka’s Purappad” for Vachika and “Nayaka’s Purappadu”.
16	<u>CHARI:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lasya to represent Sringara. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please refer below description.
17	<u>MAHACHARI:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tandava to represent Raudra. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Nitya Kriyas” start with some items of dance, would be the equivalent of Chari and Mahachari.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chari and Mahachari though they cannot be seen as such in the “Shiva-Parvati: Kesadipadam” description, may change in gestures. However, there is no Tandava - Lasya or Raudra – Sringara differentiation.

18	<u>TRIGATA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conversation / dialogue among Vidushak, Sutradhara and Pariparsvika. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regarding Trigata in Kutiyattam, no conversation is conducted among 'Sutradhara', 'Vidushaka' and 'Pariparsvika'. In some of the plays 'Sutradhara' holds talks with a 'Nati' and is some other with 'Vidushaka'. So it can be called only a 'Dvigatam'.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Trigata is absent in Kutiyattam.
19	<u>PRARACHANA:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Praising the 'Kavya Prayog – Siddhi' by reason and logic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an item known as "Nambiar Tamil" means 'Malayalam prose rendering of the play', which is presented at this point and can be taken as part of Prarochana.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prarochana is absent in Kutiyattam.

➤ **“KUTTAMBALAM” – TEMPLE THEATRE ARCHITECTURE:**

- In Chapter No. – 2 “The Natyagraha”, Bharata described –

- ✧ **The Natyavesman: Shloka 1 – 6**
- ✧ **The Three Types: Shloka 7 – 11**
- ✧ **The Table of Measure Units: Shloka 12 – 16**
- ✧ **The Middle one for the Mortal Characters: Shloka 17 – 23**
- ✧ **Choice of Site and Foundation: Shloka 24 – 28**
- ✧ **Different Parts of Stage: Shloka 33 – 35**
- ✧ **Walls and Pillars: Shloka 43 – 62**
- ✧ **The Mattavarini/s: Shloka 63 – 67**
- ✧ **The Rangasirsa and the Rangapitha: Shloka 68 – 85**
- ✧ **The Caturasra Stage: Shloka 89 – 100**
- ✧ **The Tryasra Stage: Shloka 101 – 105**

- Kutiyattam is the only form which has the distinction of having a permanent theatre building based on shastric canons set apart for it in the temple complex, which is called “Kuttambalam”. Kutiyattam is performed only in “Kuttambalam (The Temple ‘Ambalam’ of Drama ‘Kuttu’.)” - Temple Theatre till recently. Kuttampalam is the Malayalam name used for the theatre structure in the precincts of temples in Kerala. The Kuttampalam of Kerala is different from the Bharat’s ‘Natya Mandap’ and it is built as per the following Sanskrit texts of Kerala –

⇒ **THE SILPARATNA OF SRIKUMARA (16TH CENTURY).**

⇒ **THE TANTRASAMUCCAYA OF NARAYANA (15TH CENTURY).**

- More than a dozen such theatres are still preserved in various temples; the present structures of the Kuttambalam are not much older than 300 years. The theatre at the Vadakkunnatha temple at Trichur is the largest.

- **LOCATION OF THE “KUTTAMABALAM”:**

“Devasyagre dakshinato rucire natyamandape

Sarvam samacaret natyamandapesu yathocitam”

⇒ The above Shloka mentions the position of the Kuttamabalam: “The theatre-house is situated in front of the sanctum, on the right-hand side. It should have all the appropriate decorations.” (*Illustration: 22 To 25*)

- **TYPES OF STRUCTURE:**

⇒ Most of the Kuttamabalams are of a rectangular shape; the interior stage structure within the auditorium is square in shape but the one at ‘Chengannur’ was oval-shaped. It has 3 main parts –

(1) **The Roof**

(2) **The Superstructure**

(3) **The Stone Socle – ‘Adhisthana’.**

- **THE AUDITORIUM:**

⇒ The inside of a Kuttambalam is divided into two equal portions:

(1) **“Preksagrham”** - For the audience.

(2) **“Rangmandapam”** – For the performer.

⇒ The Rangmandapam has been further divided into three portions:

(1) **“Abhinayasthanam”** - The area of performance.

(2) **“Mridangapadam”** - The space for placing the Mizhavu.

(3) **“Nepathyam”** - The green room.

- The position of the Chakyar's feet was to be at the same level at which the idol's feet were placed in the Srikovil thus equating him to the deity. Kuttambalam are to be found in the temples of Guruvayoor, Koodalmanikkam, Tirumandhankunnu, Tirunakkara, Peruvanam, Punnattur, Moozhikkulam, Kidangoor, Tiruvegappura, Haripad, Arpukkara, Tiruvarpu and Tiruvalattur.

* **COMPARISION OF KUTTAMBALAM WITH BHARAT'S VIKRSHTA**
MADHYA NATYAMANDAP:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>NATYASHASTRA</u> <u>VIKRSHTA MADHYA</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>KUTIYATTAM</u> <u>KUTTAMBALAM</u></p>
<u>THE AUDITORIUM:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The entire length was divided into two equal sections and the stage began from the centre line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stage area begins from the plumb line of the middle “Tazhikakkudam – Kalasam” which falls in the centre line of the breadth wise division of the Kuttambalam.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would be further divided into two equal parts: ⇒ “Rangmandapam” – The Stage Area, for the ‘Performer’. ⇒ “Preksagrham” – For the ‘Spectator’. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stage of the Vikrshta Madhya theatre was large and stretched from wall to wall with several divisions formed naturally due to the pillars on it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classical stage had to be modified to suit regional requirements, the emphasis now shifting to the main central playing space to which the action was being confined.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to its limited requirements of space, “Rangmandapam” in the Kuttambalam, did not occupy the same square-feet area as in the case of Bharata’s stage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Rangmandapam” is divided into following portions: <p>⇒ Rangapitha.</p> <p>⇒ Mattavaranis.</p> <p>⇒ Rangashirsha.</p> <p>⇒ Vedika.</p> <p>⇒ Nepathya.</p> <p><i>(Illustration: 26)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Rangmandapam” divided into portions mentioned below: <p>⇒ “Abhinayasthanam” - The area of performance.</p> <p>⇒ “Mridangapadam” - The space for placing the Mizhavu.</p> <p>⇒ “Nepathyam” - The green room.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Rangmandapam” is a raised square platform. In each corner there is a lathe turned, red lacquered pillar with dividing black lines in variously shaped “Kumbha” – pot designs. The pillars support the stage roof which is either in the shape of an inverted square tray or a square double roof ending in a “Stupi” – finial. • Mattavaranis, Rangashirsha, Vedika were no longer in several Kuttambalams.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But in several others and older ones one can still discover these even if in a truncated form. <p><i>(Illustration: 27 To 29)</i></p> <p><i>(Illustration: 30 To 34)</i></p>
<u>RANGAMANDAPAM:</u>	
<u>RANGAPITHA AND RANGASHIRSHA:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rangapitha: Main Acting Area. • Rangashirsha: The area behind “Rangapitha” was nothing more than extensions of the main acting area. • Both together measuring 24 square feet was used for dramatic purposes. 	<p><i>(Illustration: 35)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kuttambalam stage proper has been greatly reduced in size as it comprises only of the central areas of the classical stage - “Rangapitha” and “Rangashirsha”, thus almost eliminating the areas of both the “Mattavaranis” and the areas of the “Rangashirsha” right behind them. • The largest stage is that of the Kuttambalam at “Vadakkunnathan”, which is 22 square feet, though there are many of much smaller dimensions. • This is almost half the size of Bharata’s entire stage. • The central area of Bharata’s stage was almost retained with its earlier dimensions in the larger Kuttambalams, which is called – ⇒ “Abhinayasthanam” - The area of performance.

MATTAVARANIS:

- Bharata's square "Mattavarani" on either side of the "Rangapitha" were simply the extensions of the main acting area measuring 12 feet by 12 feet and was used for dramatic purposes and not for seating the audience.

(Illustration: 36 and 37)

- "Mattavarani" were more or less eliminated, though a suggestion of their existence seems to have been retained in some Kuttambalams, particularly at "Vadakkunnathan", Trichur.
- In the regional version, "Mattavarani" were reduced to narrow strips, which were remnants of the former "Mattavarani" gains strength from the arrangement in the "Vadakkunnathan". In this Kuttambalam there are three pillars in each corner of the stage and could not be used for dramatic purposes.
- The area is used for –
 - ⇒ "Nangiar" reciting 'Shloka', also sit in this area while the action is confined to the main stage.
 - ⇒ Also used for seating a few members of the audience, particularly "Brahmins".

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the latter the stage extends by a foot or so on the sides beyond the pillar bases. This extension of the stage is backed by a plank fixed on the surface of the plinth at an angle of 30° and ending in abstract ‘Makara’ designs.
<u>VEDIKA:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Placing and Arrangement of the Musicians:</u> <p>⇒ Musicians sat on the stage floor itself between the two doors at the back on the “Vedika” (Platform).</p> <p>⇒ The drummer led the orchestra and controlled the performance in the latter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>The position of the Vocalists:</u> <p>⇒ The vocalists were to the right side of the drummers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In several Kuttambalams, there is a strip of space between the stage enclosed by four pillars and the backwall separating it from the “Nepathyam”. It is in this space that the musicians sit and stand, which is called – <p>⇒ “Mridangapadam” - The space for placing the Mizhavu.</p> <p>⇒ “Nambiar” – “Mizhavu” players, as discussed earlier, sit on the huge “Pinjaras” holding the “Mizhavu”.</p> <p>⇒ “Nangiar” – “Kuzhitalam” player, sit on a white cloth placed to the right of the right Mizhavu.</p> <p>⇒ The other three musicians stand and the nature of their instruments are such that they encounter no difficulty in playing them in standing position.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here we find the same functions of the “Vedika” on the Kuttambalam stage. But, differences in social levels came into being in the centuries which followed, and so the other musicians have now to stand in the Kuttambalam. • This seems to be the remnant of the “Rangashirsha” now reduced to a mere strip with the “Vedika” removed for the sake having more space for movement. Here the “Rangapitha” area has merged with the “Rangashirsha” area to form a square stage but left a part of it to suggest the original area at the back of the main stage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the classical stage, the main musicians – drummers sat facing the east, means that they sat facing the main entrance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presiding deity in many a shrine in Kerala faces the west. And as the actor is playing before / in front of the god, the stages in these Kuttambalams face the east and consequently the musicians and the actors have also to face the east and thus perform in front of the deity.

<u>BRAHMA MANDALA:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is said that the first play staged by Bharata, before the Brahma, the gods and the demons; was an open-air performance. • The play was offensive to the demons, hence they created turmoil and a close theatre was built after this. • Various gods were symbolically placed on the stage of this theatre in order to protect it and the actors. • A “Mandala” with nine squares each of these with Brahma in the central square. • This central square on Bharata’s stage was called the “Brahma Mandala” and it was here that the “Nartaki” scattered flowers during the “Purvaranga” to pay homage to Brahma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Kuttambalam, the central portion of the coffered stage ceiling has nine recessed squares in eight of which are carved the images of the eight guardian deities. • Brahma presides in the central square which is exactly in the plumb line of the centre of the stage. • It corresponds to the “Brahma Mandala” of Bharata. The several guardian deities are the same as also the directions in which they are placed.
<u>ENTRY AND EXIT:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bharata had said that in the “Dakshinatya Pravritti”, the door on the stage left (Actor’s Left) should always be used for the entry and the one on the stage right for the exit. 	<p><i>(Illustration: 38)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One finds the same convention being followed by the Chakyars, during the staging of an act all entries are made from the stage left door and all exits through the stage right door.

<u>CURTAINS:</u>	
<u>PATI / APATI:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The door curtains called “Pati / Apati” by Bharata. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Pati / Apati” were perhaps not felt and these are eliminated.
<u>YAVANIKA:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Yavanika” which used to be between the “Rangapitha” and “Rangashirsha” of Bharata’s stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was no any need for “Yavanika” as there are no such clear-cut divisions on the Kuttambalam stage.
<u>CHITRA YAVANIKA – MULTI COLOURED CURTAIN:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of this curtain is not mentioned by Bharata as it was not a part of the permanent stage equipment of his stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instead of “Yavanika” there is third flexible curtain, which is called “Chitra Yavanika – Multi Coloured Curtain” and used in various ways. But it combined the use of both the curtains – “Yavanika” and “Chitra Yavanika”. <p>⇒ Some “Purvaranga” items were performed behind the “Yavanika”, in Kutiyattam, “Chitra Yavanika” takes over this function and it is used for concealing “Marayil Kriya”, which are performed behind it.</p>

	<p>⇒ <u>Then it is also used for the –</u></p> <p>→ Sudden revelation of characters.</p> <p>→ Entries from behind it. (<i>Illustration: 39</i>)</p> <p>→ Seated entries – “Pravishati Asanastha”. (<i>Illustration: 40</i>)</p> <p>→ Concealing death scenes. (<i>Illustration: 41 To 43</i>)</p> <p>→ Change of Locale:</p> <p>✪ Through the appropriation of a curtain, the change of locale can also be effectively conveyed. In “Balivadhankam”, the locale changes from the jungle to the main gate to the ‘Kishkindha’ city. To indicate this change, the ‘Stage-Hands’ bring it onto the stage and hold it in front.</p>
<u>NEPATHYA:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nepathya” is a small rectangular room placed at the back of the stage and a wall separates the two areas. (<i>Illustration: 44 To 46</i>) 	

PREKSAGRHAM:

- The stage plinth was one and a half “Hastas” (27 Inches) high. In between the first “Sopana” – tier of the seating arrangement which was one “Hastas” (18 Inches) high there was a passage perhaps of 12 Feet.
- This arrangement could have been suitable for a large theatre of 96’ by 48’ with an imposing stage of 48’ by 24’ and an equal sized “Nepathya” behind it.
- Its proportions were imposing; it was formal and aloof; the audience was highly sophisticated and well-versed in the artistic norms of the theatre.

(Illustration: 47 and 48)

- Even the largest “Kuttambalam”, that is 74’ by 55’ 5”. For a theatre of this size, the passage between the stage and the sitting level was eliminated.
- The audience was brought nearer because there was perhaps a greater emphasis on the “Angikabhinaya”, and on subtle shades of “Bhavas”.
- It could also be because of the informal atmosphere and simplicity sought to be introduced in the theatre, its stage and in the form itself.
- Kulshekhara Varman brought the Sanskrit drama closer to the people by introducing the local language in his plays and giving more prominence to the role of “Vidushaka”.
- But the difference in the levels of the stage plinth and the auditorium was maintained for practical reasons to ensure a fairly good view of the stage.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS AND ORNAMENTAL EMBELLISHMENTS:**SHAPE AND ROOF:**

- Bharata describes the shape of the theatre as “Shailaguhakara”.
- The ∩ shaped wooden ribs supporting the barrel shaped roof, the beams and the other ornamentals wood work, apart from being aesthetically pleasing, were also essential for the breaking up of the even flat surfaces which otherwise might have reflected back or created echoes of the spoken or sung word.
- The breaking up of the surfaces of walls and ceilings with wooden beams and ornamentations seems to have admirably served this purpose since they absorbed the sound. Thus the acoustic are perfect.

(Illustration: 49 To 53)

- The Kuttambalam in spite of its differently shaped ridged roof, gives the same feeling of a cave like structure, mainly on account of its enormous and steeply rising roof which allows a very small part of its superstructure to be seen from outside.
- The feeling is enhanced when one steps into it through the doors cut into the trellis frames on three or four of its sides. The underside of the roof of the auditorium is crisscrossed by a mass of wooden beams, struts, rafters, brackets, and pendants. These prevent the sound from being reflected back and creating echoes.
- In some Kuttambalams the roofs are partially gabled. Two large openings at the ridge ends, latticed and ornate, are made to let in light and breeze.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These take several shapes – → Triangular → Horse Shoe → Gavaksha → And a still more elaborate form which combines the “Horse-Shoe” and the “Cusped” design.
<u>WINDOWS – JALAVATAYANA:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bharata’s theatre had brick walls with small latticed windows – “Jalavatayana” so that only a gentle breeze would pass through them, without disturbing the sound. At the same time it could keep the auditorium cool. 	<p><i>(Illustration: 54)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the arrangement of the wall section comprises of the trellis frames, the openness is sought to be neutralized by a very low roof and this allows only a gentle breeze inside. Thus the acoustic in a Kuttambalam are perfect.
<u>PILLARS:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bharata’s theatre had two rows of pillars, the outer one perhaps smaller than the inner one and this left a passage which could also be used to seat the audience. 	<p><i>(Illustration: 55 To 57)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two or three rows of pillars in the Kuttambalams also serve the same purpose and are also used in the same manner.
<u>MATERIALS:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both used bricks and wood as main construction materials. • All the Kuttambalams are basically wood structure, of which a few have brick walls, a few feet in length, at the corners between which are set the wooden trellis frames. 	

→ **KASHTHASAN / PITHAM:**

- In order to create a dramatic impact on the spectator, a minimum amount of props is used on the stage in Kutiyattam. The ‘Pitham’ is a wooden seat that is used as a stage prop. Before the play starts, it is kept downstage. During the Kutiyattam, it is used on the stage in varied dramatic ways.
- After the “Marayil Kriya” behind the curtain ends, Chakyar pulls the ‘Pitham’ to center stage and sits on it and then assumes the specific posture / ‘Mudra’ of the character. Sitting on the ‘Pitham’ rather than the stage floor enables Chakyar to better manage his body movement / ‘Mudrabhinaya’, on account of the height of the ‘Pitham’ and the innovative posture of the character. The ‘Pitham’ affords a higher level than the audience to the Chakyar. The ‘Pitham’ brings a distinct plane onto the stage which lends a higher prestige to the character on account of his sublime nature. Sitting on the ‘Pitham’ enables the flame of the lamp at center stage to better illuminate the character’s facial expressions, which can then be viewed clearly by the spectator. The light does not shine all that brightly on the instrumentalists sitting on the stage, on the right the Nangiar and on the upstage ‘Mizhavu’ players Nambiar, thereby ensuring that the Chakyar on the ‘Pitham’ is viewed distinctly by the audience.

⇒ **THE USE OF THE ‘PITHAM’ FOR DRAMATIC EFFECT IN THE FOLLOWING SCENES:**

⇒ **NIRVAHANAM:** (*Illustration: 58*)

- When the ‘Nirvahanam’ is played out onstage, the flashback of the character is presented by the Chakyar sitting on the ‘Pitham’, during which it affords him the free space for managing his body movement / ‘Mudrabhinaya’.

⇒ **THRONE / ROCK / PEAK:** (*Illustration: 59*)

- Wrapping a red cloth over the ‘Pitham’ makes it suitable for use as the throne in a court scene. In the jungle / forest scene, the ‘Pitham’ is used as a rock for sitting on. It

sometimes is the peak of a mountain, from where the Chakyar acts to indicate he is looking down into the valley.

⇒ **JATAYUVADHANKAM:**

→ In the third act – ‘Jatayuvadhankam’, of the play ‘Ashcharyachudamani’, Ravana, Sita and Sarathi stand up on the ‘Pitham’ as if in the ‘Pushpak Vimana’ in the aerial / sky for dramatic effect. Even when more than a single character is at the same plane - when Ravana, Sita and Sarathi are at the same plane - more than a single ‘Pitham’ are used on the stage. To indicate various levels on the stage, a platform may also be used instead of the ‘Pitham’. For enacting the ‘Jatayuvadha’, a platform is used instead of the ‘Pitham’.

⇒ **SUBHADRADHANANJAYAM:**

→ In the play ‘Subhadradhananjayam’, Subhadra falls from the sky. In this scene, the character stands up on the ‘Pitham’ behind the curtain and jumps down to create the effect of falling.

⇒ **SURPANKHANKAM:**

→ In ‘Surpankhankam’ too, in the scene where Lakshmana is thrown from the sky by Surpankha, the ‘Pitham’ is used to create dramatic effect in this manner.

⇒ **BALIVADHANKAM:**

→ A great example of the use of the ‘Pitham’ for creating dramatic effect is found in ‘Balivadhankam’:

I. PITHAM AS TARA:

→ As in the original play, Bali enters with his wife, Tara. At the time, Tara is clinging to Bali’s garments. In Kutiyattam, Tara never comes onto the stage. To indicate her presence, the ‘Pitham’ is draped in a white cloth, with one end loose. Tara’s role is played by the Chakyar who plays Bali, or her “Granth / Text” are read by the Nangiar. During the conversation between Bali and Tara, the loose end is kept hanging and after her departure, it is rolled up.

II. PITHAM AS MOUNTAIN: (*Illustration: 60*)

- When a war erupts between Bali and Sugriva, Bali dashes Sugriva on the ground and places the ‘Pitham’ on him to indicate crushing him under a mountain. Lakshmana comes to the rescue of Sugriva and lifts the ‘Pitham’ as if it was a mountain. These actions look very dramatic.

III. PITHAM IS USED TO TAKE A HALF-SEATED POSTURE: (*Illustration: 61*)

- Bali, wounded by Rama’s arrow, is offered support by Sugriva, but Bali is neither able to sit nor stand. He cannot face away from the spectator as his speech would not be heard by the audience in that position. Therefore, the ‘Pitham’ is used to take a half-seated posture. After Bali’s death, a couple of assistants come onto the stage and cover Bali with a curtain and stand there. The chakyar playing Bali then exits. The assistants remove the curtain and go away.
- The ‘Decoration of the Stage and Stage Setting’ of Kutiyattam does not have much relation to those in the Natyashastra but has “Ritualistic and Symbolic” significance. The ‘Stage Setting’ of the Natyashastra is based on “Loka Dharmi”. The forms of animals, mountains, palaces, chariots and such aspects of the set are entirely based on “Loka Dharmi”. In Kutiyattam, Chakyar presents the scenes through his expertise in acting. According to the Natyashastra, the scenes are a matter of the outer vision of the audience; as per Kutiyattam, they are visible only to the imagination. Rare scenes such as the “Parakkum Kuttu” are the only exceptions to this rule, and similarly the scenes of Kutiyattam are of “Naty Dharmi” orientation.

➤ **NATYOKTI / DRAMATIC UTTERANCE:**

- The “Swagata – Monologues”, “Akash Bhashit - Divine Utterance”, “Nepathya Dhvani – Back Stage Speech / Sound” and so on highly stylized “Natyokti / Dramatic Utterance” that are very well established in ‘Classical Sanskrit Dramatic Literature’ as per ‘Natya-Shastra’ are literally employed in Kutiyattam.

⇒ **SWAGATA – MONOLOGUES / ATMAGAT SAMBHASHAN – SELF ADDRESSED SPEECH:**

→ At the time of enacting the original play, the Chakyar and Nangiar have their own “Swagata – Monologues” and “Atmagat Sambhashan – Self Addressed Speech”. In ‘Surpankhankam’, when Surpankha inquires for an opportunity to serve Rama, the latter experiences indecision on how to respond. There is a “Swagat” self addressed monologue, “What do I tell her?” and thereafter, he renders his own ‘Shloka’ in a very hushed tone so that Surpankha would not hear. After he decides on what to say, he speaks with normal volume. When Surpankha addresses the audience directly, there is again speech that seems as if she was addressing herself.

⇒ **AKASH BHASHIT – DIVINE / HEAVENLY UTTERANCE:**

→ In Kutiyattam, there is also use of “Akash Bhashit – Divine / Heavenly Utterance”. While addressing characters not present on the stage, this device is used. At the time of his own “Nirvahana”, Rama addresses Sita in-absentia owing to the tradition of not presenting Sita’s character on the stage. He say, ‘Do you say thus, Sita?’ using the device of “Akash Bhashit”.

⇒ **NEPATHYA DHWANI – BACK STAGE SPEECH / SOUND:**

→ Kutiyattam also employs “Nepathya Dhvani – Back Stage Speech / Sound”. In ‘Surpankhankam’, the locale is ‘Panchvati’ where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana stayed during their exile. The demoness Surpankha and Lakshmana battle each other and in this scene Surpankha carries off Lakshmana into the skies. Sometime later, Ram hears the sound of the blow and fears the worst. For this scene, the fearful sound is made in the backstage. During the fierce battle between Lakshmana and Surpankha, the cries heard by Rama are also created backstage.

➤ **SPECIAL STAGE TECHNIQUES / EFFECTS:**

- For appeasing our outer vision, Kutiyattam provides for certain astonishing scenes onstage and some of these astonishing possibilities in Kutiyattam.

➔ **NINAM ANICCAL:** (*Illustration: 62 and 63*)

- In the “Surpanakhankam” of the “Asaryacudamani” the scene where Lakshmana deforms Surpanakha is staged in a realistic manner.
- She appears with blood oozing from her nose, ears and breasts.
- The blood for this scene is prepared by mixing lime, rice paste and turmeric, and the tender leaves of coconut trees immersed in blood make the mangled organs.
- The slow approach of the red spattered ogress wailing loudly with faltering steps, through the midst of the audience, to the accompaniment of “Pantam and Telli” and loud drumming, create the impression of heavy bleeding and torturous pain, evoking both awe and revulsion in the mind of the spectator.
- Though the Sanskrit text refers only to the cutting of her nose and ears, Chakyars have added the cutting of her breasts also.

→ PARAKKUM KUTTU – FLYING DANCE:

- In “Parakkum Kuttu”, for operating the “Kuttu” near the temple a specific ground (Kuttuparampu) is consecrated and a canopy (Vantala) rose and suspended from a board approximately ‘42 Kol’. In the form of Garuda, Chakyar has a beak, a tail, and wings and so on worn at specific spots on his body. 1,001 ropes are conjoined by the Nambiar standing on the roof controls him, pulling and loosening the ropes. This creates the effect of Garuda flying or descending. He descends and opens his beak (also controlled by the Nambiar), lifts ‘Jimutvahan’ (a red cloth) and ascends flying into the sky. In this acting, the life of the Chakyar is actually in the hands of the Nambiar.
- This was the staging of the fourth act of the “Nagananda”, where Garuda actually comes down from the sky.
- It is said that with the help of thousands of strings tied to the different parts of artificial wings used by the actor, it was possible flutter the wings in the air and slide down to the ground from above. The strings were to be manipulated by the Nambiar. The tradition is that the actor assuming the role of Garuda had to come down flying, circling thrice, and takes the red “Tecci” flower garland put on the body of the prince and fly up.

→ OZHUKAL – FLOWERING:

- This is a scene from the “Tapatisamvarana” where the “Nayika” jumps into the river.
- It is said that the river was to be made up of thousands of strings kept highly in a horizontal way; the Nangiar who took the role of the “Nayika” had to move as if she were flowering in the river. Such things could be staged even without the help of strings.
- “Nayika” jumps into the river and is swept away by the current, which is also an astonishing sight. Long sheets of white cloth (Pava Itta) are used to create the effect of a river. When ‘Nangiar’ jumps on it and come under, it looks like she is being swept away.

→ **HANGING SCENE:**

- It is from the “Nagananda” where the “Nayika” Malayavati tries to commit suicide by hanging herself.
- A ring is made of cloth and is hung from above. “Nayika” stands on a “Pitham” and catching the ring with her hands jumps, keeping the neck near the ring. She comes down turning round and round. With the help of the proper facial expression, this scene is very effective on the stage.

→ **SOME SPECIAL CONVENTION IN DIFFERENT ACTS:**

⇒ **ASHOKAVANIKANKAM:** (*Illustration: 64*)

→ In “Ashokavanikankam”, in the place of Sita, just a lamp is lit and placed.

⇒ **SWAPNANKAM:**

→ In the “Swapnankam”, all the accessories for sleep in the “Samudragriha” including ‘Bhadra Deep - A lamp with gentle light’, ‘Camphor’, ‘Fragrant Smoke’, ‘A fountain device’, and ‘Cryotherapy equipment’ are used.

⇒ **JATAYUVADHANKAM / SPLIT STAGE:** (*Illustration: 65*)

→ In “Jatayuvadhankam”, a second stage similar to a split stage is built for the bird character of “Jatayu”.

⇒ **MAYA-SITANKAM / DOUBLE ROLE:**

→ In “Maya-Sitankam”, the heads of Maya Shri Ram and Maya Lakshmana are displayed.

➤ **NIRVAHANAM:**

- Nirvahanam is the recalling of the past story – “A narration by gestures of the earlier events connected with the story, referred to as ‘Flash Back’ and bringing it up to the present.” During the Nirvahanam proper, the actor will not speak.
- All the verses used for the Nirvahanam are recited by the Nangiar; the actor enacts the roles of various characters during the Nirvahanam. The actor renders by gestures what he recalls of the story concerned, he only expresses his thoughts and so he continues to be in the same costumes while playing the roles of various other characters. This aspect has been severely criticized in the Natankusha, but there is no merit in the criticism.
- The Cakyars have composed and / or compiled a number of verses on which the acting is based. According to the situation he may do the acting and gesturing sitting on a seat or standing and moving about.
- He will take the role of other characters and act their part. The taking over of other roles will be indicated by tying the two ends of the ‘Poyatakam’. If he is assuming the role of a female he will tuck one end of the ‘Poyatakam’ to his waist and stand in the posture of a lady and act. He will remove the tucked end of the ‘Poyatakam’ when the lady’s part is over.
- Some of the verses acted will be merely for the narration of the story; but some verses may have allusions to various events and people. In such cases a detailed abhinaya would be done to bring out the full import.
- When the acting of a Nirvahanam verse is completed, the actor will show a gesture to the Mizhavu drummer to stop. Then the Nangiar sitting on the right side of the stage keeping Kuzhitalam / Cymbals will recite the verse on which the acting just completed, was done. Then the actor will start on the next verse. There was a suggestion that the verses may be chanted first and then the acting done so that the people who know Sanskrit may follow the acting better. This has not found favor with the Cakyars. If the actor wants to cut some shlokas it will be difficult.
- In the case of the Vidushaka, Surpanakha and others, who are allowed to speak in Malayalam on the stage, their Nirvahanam would be in speech and not by gestures.

Depending on the drama and the character, the period of performance of the Nirvahanam will vary.

- Before starting the Nirvahanam proper, the actor has to do two items, known as ‘Anukramam and Samkseparam’.

⇒ **ANUKRAMAM:**

→ Anukramam denotes the narration of a story (by gestures) backwards in the form of a series of questions, from the time of the entry of the character.

- After finishing Anukramam he will start on Samkseparam.

⇒ **SAMKSEPARAM:**

→ Samkseparam is the narration of the story (by gestures) in a concise way from the point where Anukramam ended and taking the story forward up to a point and after that Nirvahanam is done, gesturing the story in a more detailed manner.

- While there are verses mostly in Sanskrit for doing Nirvahanam, there are only prose passages normally in Malayalam, for Anukramam and Samkseparam which are comparatively quite short. The Nirvahanam is a clever device for both ‘Ekaharya’ and character portraiture which sets the tenor of the actual dramatic performance.
- The ‘Indian Theatre’ for the best part does not lay great emphasis on character development and growth; ‘Kutiyattam Theatre / Tradition’ provides a full scope for character delineation through the convention of the Nirvahanam.
- It is significant to note that the actor on the stage does not use any speech in this phase; ‘Shlokas’ are rendered by Nangiar and follow the pantomime presented by the actor rather than preceding it. In this respect, Kutiyattam adheres to some techniques of ‘Abhinaya’ described in the ‘Natya Shastra’, particularly the conventions of ‘Sucha’ and ‘Ankura’ forms of ‘Angikabhinaya’.

➤ **KAKSHYA VIBHAG / ZONAL DIVISION:**

- A characteristic created by ‘Bharata Muni’, “Kakshya Vibhag – Zonal Division”, is used in Kutiyattam. In ‘Surpankhankam’, Rama and Sita go to see the ‘Parnakuti’ built by Lakshmana. This change of place is suggested by Rama’s “Parikramana – Circumambulation”. It is also suggested using another practice. When a character starts to leave, it is assumed that the action at that place has ended and when that or another character enters, it is assumed that a new locale is in effect. In ‘Classical Sanskrit Theatre’ based on Bharata’s ‘Natya Shastra’, this practice was in vogue. Sometimes aural and sometimes bodily acting is employed to suggest change of locale too. Climbing a top the ‘Kashthasan / Pitham’ and looking down also suggests a locale high above the ground level.

➤ **MULTI FOCAL SCENE SETTING / SIMULTANEOUS DRAMATIC ACTION IN DIFFERENT LOCALS:**

- ‘Simultaneous Dramatic Action in Different / 2 or 3 Locales’ is also a highly ‘Conventionalized / Stylized’ unique standard in ‘Classical Sanskrit Theatre’ based on Bharata’s ‘Natya Shastra’ and is also used in Kutiyattam.
- In ‘Surpanakhankam’, Surpanakha mimics Rama. Rama is present on the stage but in a different locale. It is assumed that he does not see Surpanakha. She mimics everything Rama does. In this manner, the action takes place in two different locales simultaneously on stage. On one hand is the sublime and illustrious character of Rama and on the other is the inferior and base nature of Surpanakha’s character. This difference in character is brought out using this device.

➤ **TRANSFORMATION OF ROLES:**

➔ **MUKHAVARNANA:**

- This is an acting that highlights a specific character at its entry. It is shown in all four directions. 'Chari' is a special style of walking – the right leg is put in the left corner, and in a way that facilitates turning in the direction of the corner the leg is pulled out and planted, then changed over to the back of the left leg and again the other leg is kept in the corner as before, going into all four directions and turn back. Then the feet are kept forward and back in all four directions and then kept back to jump in all four directions as well. The appropriate 'Tala' for this is "Tripata". The Chari differs from character to character.

➔ **KETTATUKA AND MUTI COLLUKA:**

- Very few characters are given an entry onto the stage in Kutiyattam, only those that are the most prominent and critically important are allowed to act onstage. Other less important characters are not introduced onstage; instead, the acting for their parts (Granth / Text) is presented through "KETTATUKA and MUTI COLLUKA" by the main characters.

⇒ **KETTATUKA:**

- When an actor hears something spoken by an unseen character from off stage, or if he hears a supernatural voice (Asariri) coming from above, he feigns to hear it by suitable movements of the head, hands or the 'Mudras'. This piece of acting is called 'Kettatuka'. The actor not only enacts hearing the words of the unseen speaker but also brings out fully the meaning of the speech that he has heard by imitating exactly the facial expressions of the unseen speaker and enacts with 'Mudras' the meaning of his words.

⇒ **MUTI COLLUKA:**

- A device to present a character (Usually a minor character) on the stage without make-up or costume. A stage-hand covering his head and body with a coloured cloth comes to the stage and renders the lines of the character. No 'Mudrabhinaya' are shown.
- The 'Guru / Masters' of this form have created another device for attracting the attention of the audience and making the acting all the more effective. Since the number of actors on stage is limited, the responsibility of the actors on stage increased greatly. These actors must introduce the audience to the other characters not on stage. When they do such an introduction, they leave their own character (Sthayi) and act out the parts of those other characters (Sthayi).
 - In this manner, various characters are portrayed by these actors, before which they provide adequate intimation to the audience about the change in character. For this, certain signals have been predetermined, which are used by a single actor to portray multiple characters, which actually amounts to mono acting. It is important to provide such signals (Performative Signs) to the audience as that ensures that they are able to follow the action.

➤ **MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIP / COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ACTOR, CHARACTER AND SPECTATOR:**

⇒ **MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIP / COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ACTOR AND CHARACTER:** (*Illustration: 66 To 68*)

- The Chakyar often plays a double role of the actor and his character. Now he acts as the character and then as an actor. In ‘Surpankhankam’, Rama commands Lakshmana to build the ‘Parnakuti’. When the character of Rama is changed to that of Lakshmana, the change is indicated through an indicative change in the costume.
- Similarly, when changing over to Sita from Rama, the Chakyar makes such a change in costume right in front of the spectator. The makeover is affected by the Chakyar as an actor, not as a character. In addition, when he needs to render a ‘Shloka’, he signals to the instrumentalists to stop playing with a gesture of his hand. When making such a gesture, he emerges out of the character for some time.
- On the second day of the Kutiyattam, the Chakyar, although he is in the costume of Rama, enters without the accompanying curtain in order to establish his role as an actor. When he starts rendering his ‘Shloka’ and initiates the “Nirvahana”, he enters into the character. At the end of the play, when he performs the ceremonial dance, he again emerges from the character and becomes an actor.
- On the third and fourth days, he again enters with his back to the audience to remind the audience that he is not the character but an actor. On other days too, to suggest his entry as an actor, he covers his face with the ‘Uttariyam’. After occupying the ‘Pitham’, the Chakyar first reminds the audience of the previous day’s action for the sake of continuity, and only thereafter starts assuming various characters.

⇒ **MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIP / COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ACTOR AND SPECTATOR:**

- Surpankha's entry through the spectator, the rising of the spectator to make way for her, and Surpankha's conversation with other characters in the language of the spectator, her address to the spectator through "Swagatukti – Monologues / Self-addressed Speech" and the Vidushak's role as a spokesperson for the spectator - are all examples of the rapport between the actor and the spectator.
- As there are the spectators on three sides and the actors at the centre, the involvement of spectator is made possible. As there is no conflict on the stage (in the context of the Western concept of the word), the spectator is always informal and relaxed.
- Kulashekhara identifies 'Multiple Layers in the Spectator', the most prominent being –

⊗ **NANALOKA – ORDINARY FOLK / MACRO LEVEL:**

- Nanaloka are pleased by the normal mode of 'Four Fold Abhinaya'. They rejoice over what they see and express their responses without any inhibitions.

⊗ **PREKSHAKA – ELITE / MICRO LEVEL:**

- Kulshekhara combines the 'Divine Siddhi' and 'The Ability of Prasnikas' of Bharata to define his 'Prekshaka'.
- Prekshakas are serious and the target audience of Kulashekhara when he unfolds 'The Theory of Interpretation' of implied meaning through ocular movements..

⊗ **MULTI LEVEL ACTING REGARDING SPECTATOR:**

- 'Acting' to please 'Nanaloka' and 'Bhava' to please 'Prekshaka'.
- Communicate the suggested sense to 'Prekshaka' through eyes and give delight to the 'Nanaloka' by presenting the outer meaning.
- Synchronization of the 'Actor – Prekshaka' interaction through subtle ocular movements and 'Actor – Nanaloka' responses through external means is the basics of Kulashekhara's aesthetics of theatre.

➤ **ROLE OF WOMEN / FEMALE CHARACTER:** (*Illustration: 69 and 70*)

- In the most of the “Indian Traditional Theatre” like Yakshagana, Bhavai etc. men take on the role of women. Even there is no place for women in the art forms like Kathakali, Krishnanattam, Thullal in Kerala.
- But women held an honorable position in Kutiyattam. It is women who took the roles of female characters. In addition to taking female roles they used to sit on the stage, render Shlokas and keep rhythm with cymbals. In addition to ‘Abhinaya’ along with men in the play they also have the solo dance, which is called “Nannyarkuttu”. The “Hasta Mudras”, the “Charis”, the “Svaras”, abhinaya, talas and the format etc. are the same as that of Kutiyattam.

⇒ **SURPANKHANKAM:**

- During the ‘Nirvahanam’, the Chakyar who plays the main character (such as Rama in ‘Surpankhankam’) also plays all the other characters. But when the original play is staged, all the other characters apart from Rama, such as Lakshmana and Surpankha are also present on the stage. According to the drama tradition here, Sita’s part is played by the Chakyar who plays Rama. When Surpankha comes in the form of Lalita, the latter’s part is played by the Nangiar, but when Surpankha’s form is terrible and aggressive, the part requires depiction of her demonic ways, and is therefore played by the Chakyar. Following the prescription in the Natyashastra, female characters such as Lalita employ Malayalam and Prakrit Shlokas and prose dialogues in their oral acting. But for faithful representation of Surpankha, she uses the local dialect - Malayalam.

⇒ **ASHOKAVANIKANKAM:**

→ In “Ashokavanikankam”, in the place of Sita, just a lamp is lit and placed.

➤ **LOKADHARMI AND NATYADHARMI:**

- It is difficult to clearly define “Natya Dharmi” and “Loka Dharmi” styles. It may be said in general that stylized acting, codified stage conventions and artifices are “Natya Dharmi”; on the other hand, “Loka Dharmi” imitates things and events that are to be described as in the ordinary.
- The line of demarcation between the two styles is very thin. While some people argue that “Natya Dharmi” superior, some others argue that only with “Loka Dharmi” accomplishes its fullness.
- If the “Hasta Mudra and Chari” of monkey are shown it becomes “Natya Dharmi” but the movements of the monkey “Vanara Stobha” shown are “Loka Dharmi”. The presentation will be pleasant only when both are blend harmoniously.
- Since “Natya Dharmi” follows classical traditions, codified stage conventions and artifices and mode of acting subject to rules and techniques, all the actors tend to act in similar way; whereas “Loka Dharmi” acknowledges the actor’s individual differences in style, pattern and talent.
- One opinion is that as the “Hasta Mudra and Charis”, dance steps, abhinaya, codified stage conventions and artifices / theatric devices suitable for all the required occasions, are there, Kutiyattam follows the “Natya Dharmi” of set patterns but there is also the opinion that there are elements of “Loka Dharmi” also. Any how these distinctions are absent when both are blend harmoniously.
- At the time of “Nirvahanam” in Kutiyattam, special use of “Natya Dharmita” is made. The entry of a lion, the fleeing of the deer, the construction of the ‘Parnakuti’ etc. are only suggested through ‘Stylized and Symbolic / Suggestive’ ‘Musrabhinaya / Gestures’. The meanings of the words in the ‘Shlokas’ and their connotations are also communicated through prescribed ‘Stylized Netrabhinaya, Mukhaja Abhinaya and Mudrabhinaya’. These are examples of “Natya Dharmita” while the laughter-provoking mimicry (Comic Relief) of Rama by Surpankha, her “Ninam” bloodied make-up, realistic prose dialogues and her bodily gestures / movement after her nose and breasts are lopped off by Lakshmana, and so on are examples of “Loka Dharmita”. The entry of the bloodied Surpankha from the audience is an example of the macabre in “Loka Dharmita”.

- To sum up, it appears that the theatric conventions of Kutiyattam have their own distinctive characteristics and are not solely dependent on the postulates of the Natyashastra. Though the basic conceptual framework of Kutiyattam conforms to the aesthetic spirit of the Natyashastra as a production source, it is evident that the Natyashastra has not exerted too much influence on this art form. In matters of technique and presentation, Kutiyattam is more symbolic and inward-looking; while the Natyashastra seems to offer a consciously developed theatric vocabulary that is at the same time concrete and explicit.
- In this manner, Kutiyattam has adopted several customs found in 'Classical Sanskrit Theatre', which has brought to life its correlation with the 'Natyashastra of Bharata Muni'. Kutiyattam possesses its own, unique style, which is the only surviving form that presents 'Classical Sanskrit Theatre' today.
- How Sanskrit plays were enacted in ancient times can be guessed from Kutiyattam. In the interpretation of several technical terms in 'Bharat Muni's Natyashastra', Kutiyattam proves to be extremely conducive because it is the sole drama tradition that has preserved its correlation with the 'Abhinaya / Acting and Stage Conventions / Artifices' described by him.



1-2 The curtain is seen being held and then removed.



3 “Sutradhara” enters with a smiling face, his hands symbolically full of flowers.



4-5 “Sutradhara” performs “Puja” of the deity without any flowers but purely symbolic gestures.



6 “Sutradhara” sees his consort returning after her bath.



7



8



9



7 To 10 “Sutradhara” recites a Shloka and then he indicates the close of the piece of acting.



11 “Sutradhara” shows Shri Vishnu through “Mudrabhinaya”.



12 “Sutradhara” performs the “Nitya Kriya”.



14 “Sutradhara” performs “Dikpala Vandanam”.



13 “Sutradhara” performs “Kesadipadam”.



16



17

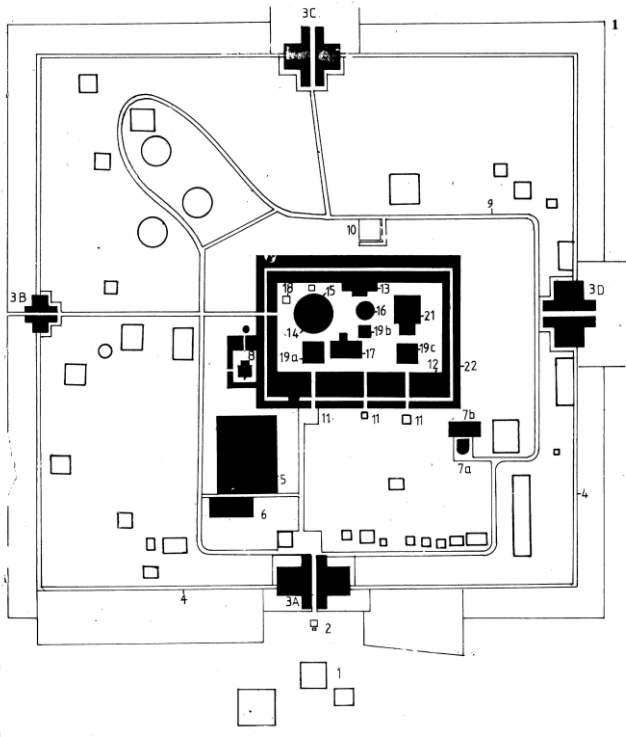


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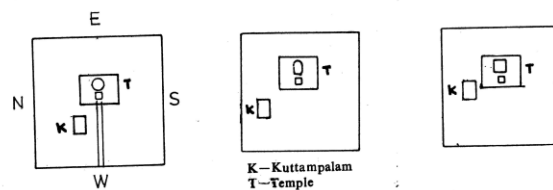
15 To 18“Sutradhara” performs “Nr̥ttam”.



19 To 21 "Sutradhara" performs Rituals after the performance.

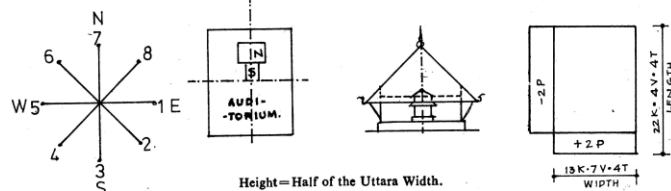


22 Vadakkunnathan Temple Complex Site Plan.



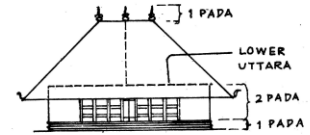
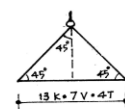
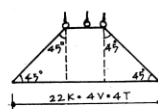
1 Positioning of the Kuttampalam in relation to the Shrine

23 Positioning of the Kuttambalam in relation to the shrine.



2 Yonis

3 Positioning of Stage and Nephthys



5

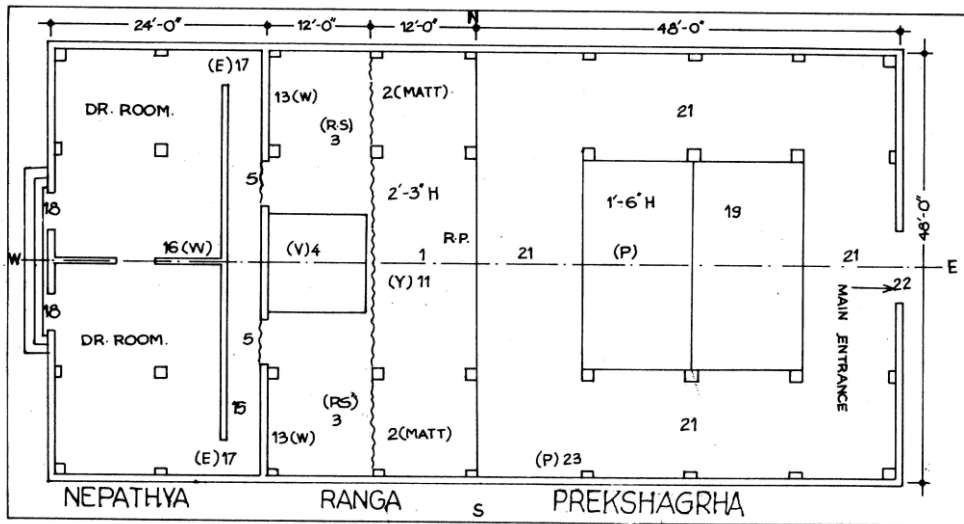
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24 Positioning of the Vadakkunnathan Temple Kuttambalam in relation to the shrine.

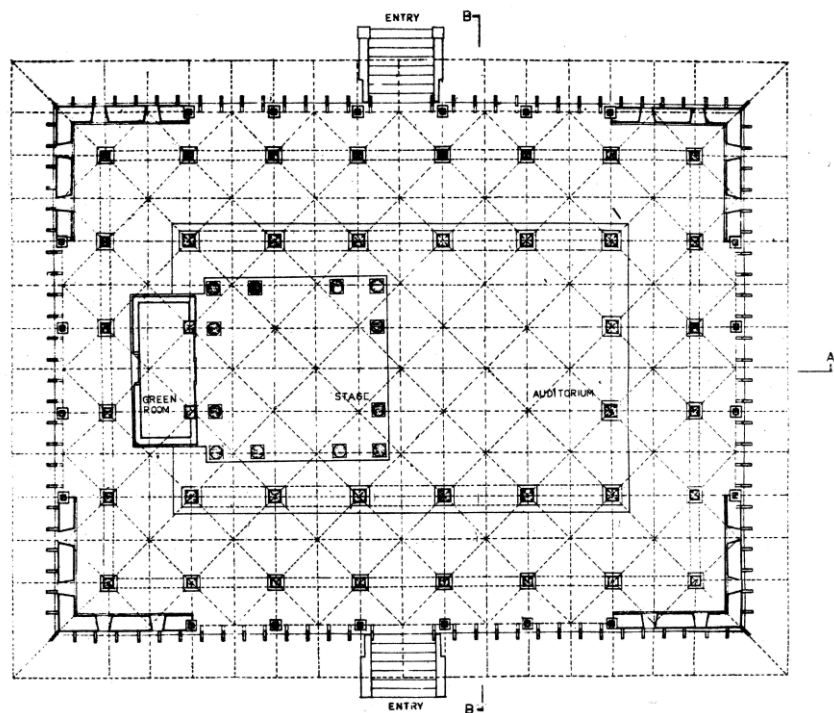


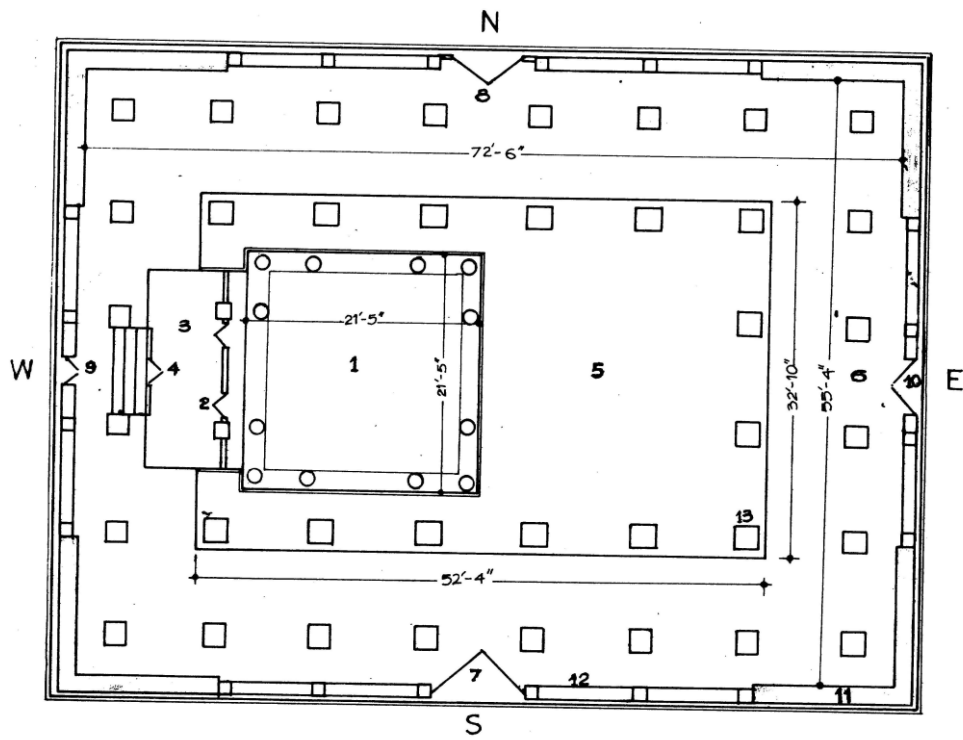
25 Positioning of the Koodalmanikkam Temple Kuttambalam in relation to the shrine.



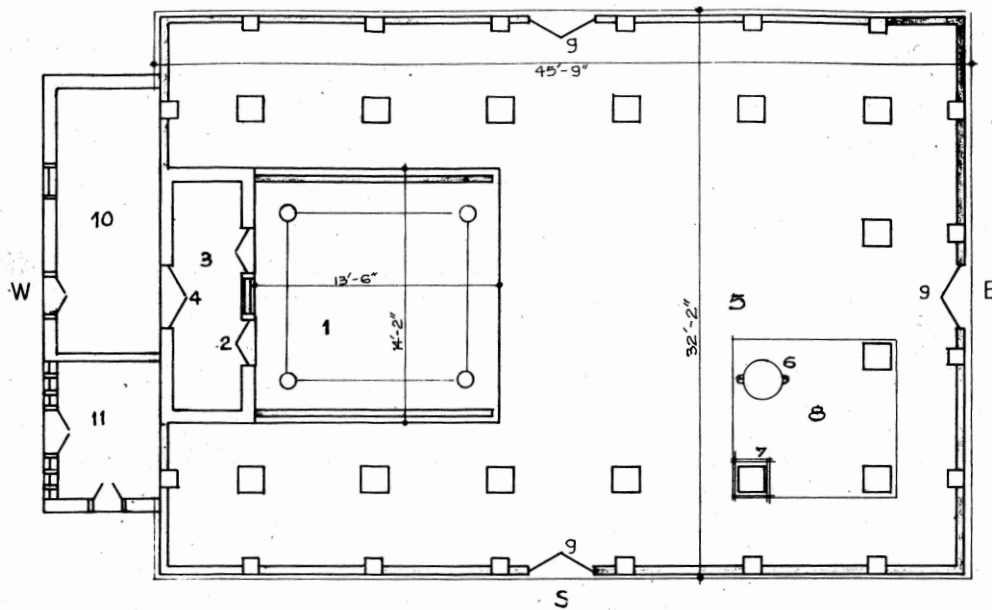
26 The “Vikrsta Madhya Natyamandapa” of Bharata Plan.

27 Plan of Vadakkunnathan Temple Kuttambalam.





28 Plan of Vadakkunnathan Temple Kuttambalam.



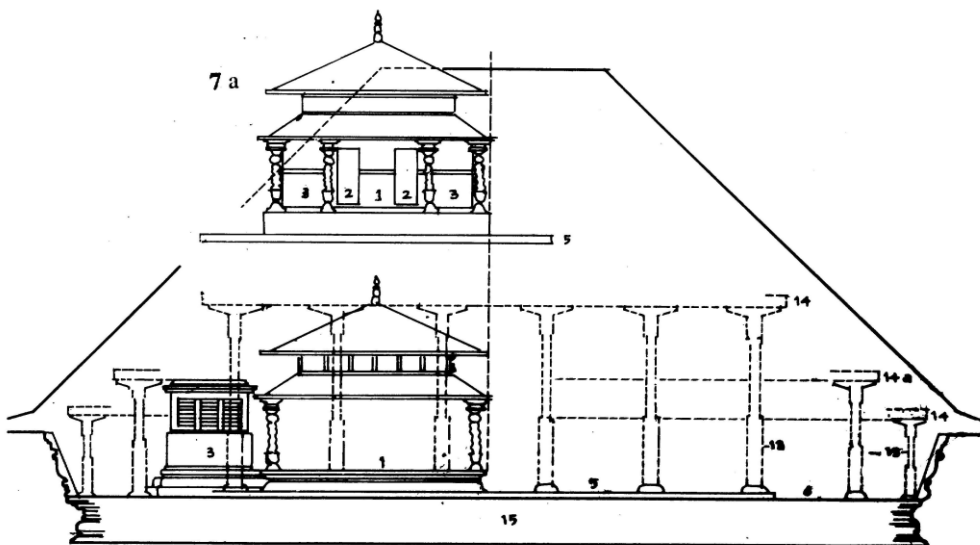
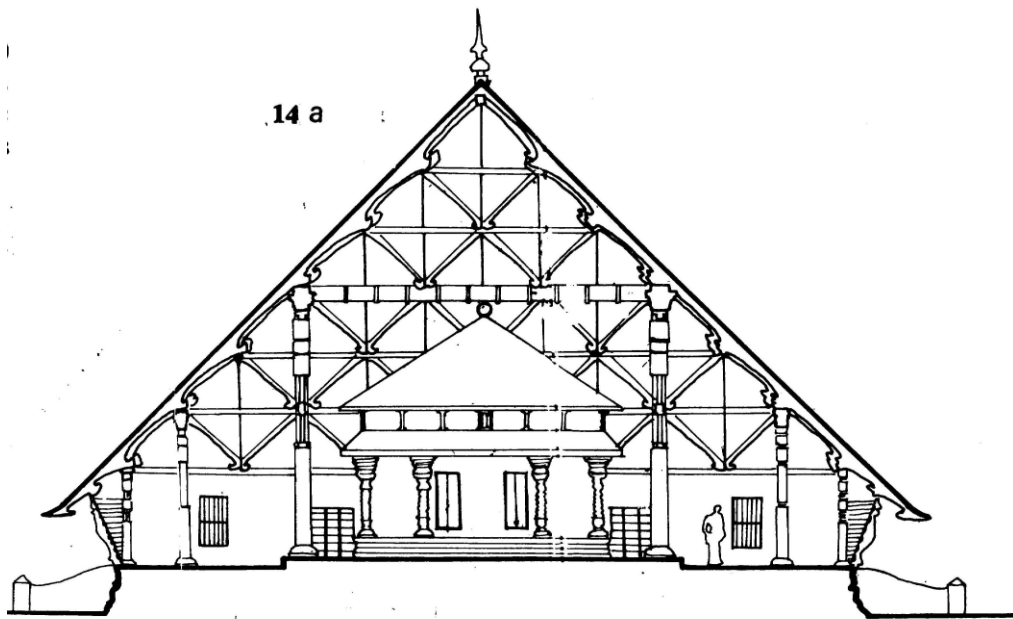
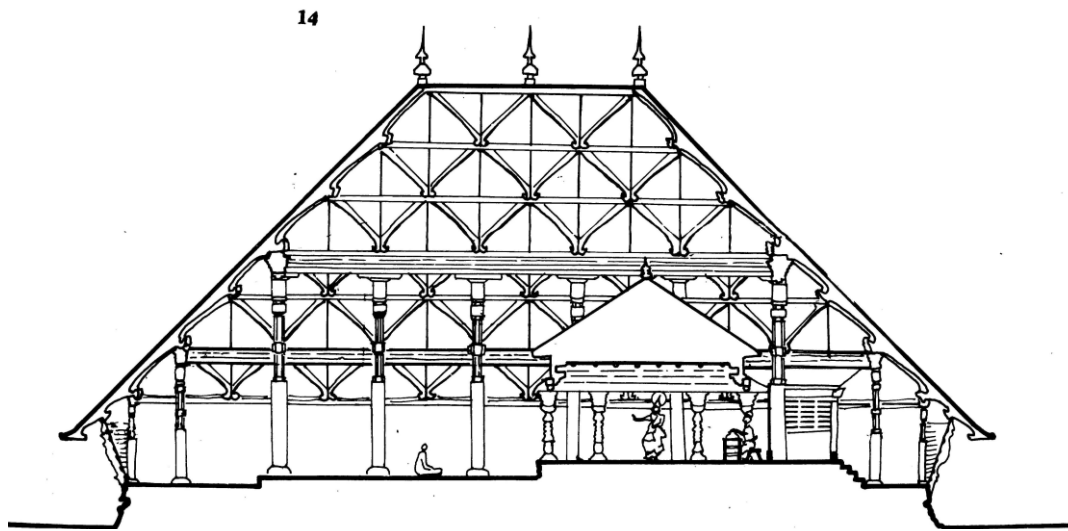
29 Plan of Kitangur Temple Kuttambalam.



30 Koodalmanikkam Temple Kuttambalam.



31 Vadakkunnathan Temple Kuttambalam.



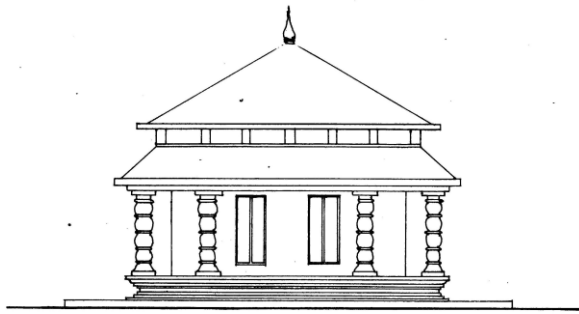
32 To 34 Cross section Vadakkunnathan Kuttambalam.
Concave-cut rafters of the Kuttambalam ceiling.



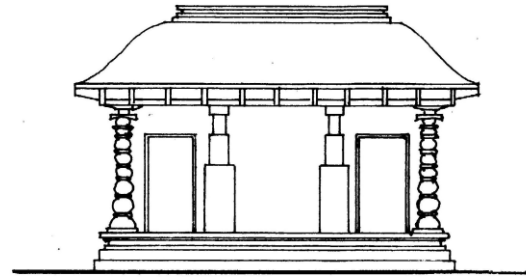
35 “Rangapitha” and “Rangashirsha”
of Vadakkunnathan Kuttambalam.



36



36-37 “Mattavaranis”
of Vadakkunnathan Kuttambalam.



38 “Entry and Exit”
of Vadakkunnathan Kuttambalam.



39 Entries from behind Chitra Yavanika.



40 Seated entries “Pravishati Asanastha”
from behind Chitra Yavanika.



41



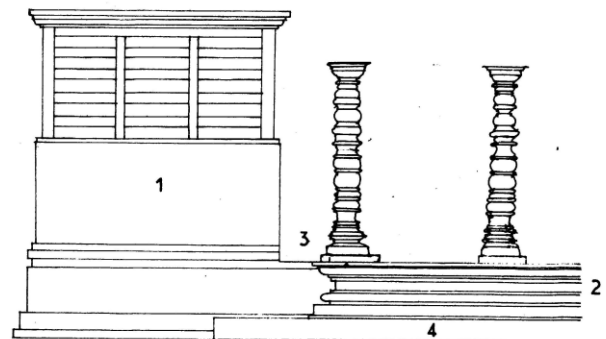
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41 To 43 Concealing death scenes
with the help of Chitra Yavanika.



44



44 To 46 “Nepathya” of Vadakkunnathan Kuttambalam.

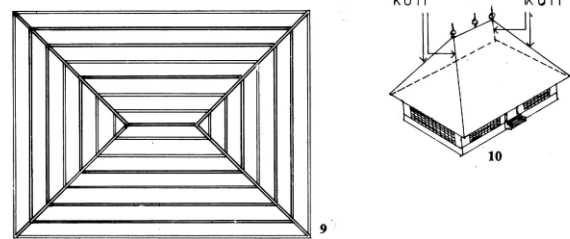
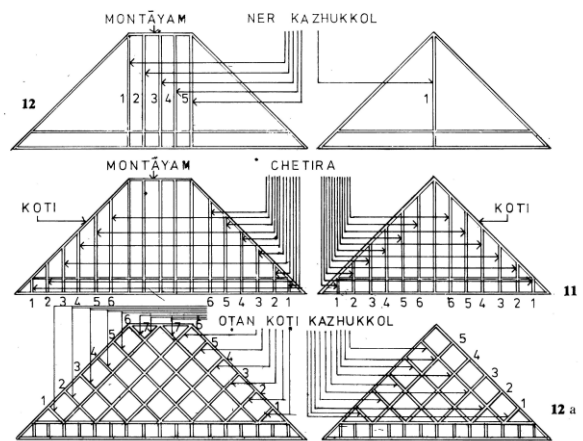


47-48 Preksagrham of Kuttambalam.



49

50



CEILING STRUCTURE

51

52



49 To 53 "Roof" of Vadakkunnathan Kuttambalam.



54 "Jalavatayana" of Kuttambalam.



55



56



55 To 57 Pillars
of Vadakkunnathan Kuttambalam.



58 During 'Nirvahanam' Chakyar sitting on the 'Pitham'.



59 Pitham as 'Throne in a Court'.



61 Pitham is used to take a 'Half-Seated Posture'.



60 Pitham as Mountain.



62-63 Ninam Aniccal.



64 In the place of Sita, just a 'Pot' is placed.



65 Second stage similar to a split stage is built for the bird character of "Jatayu".



66



67



66 To 68 Multiple Relationship
Communication between
Actor and Character.



69



69-70 Role of Women.