CHAPTER 5

ACTORS’ TRAINING IN KUTIYATTAM

‘FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION THROUGH CHARACTERS’

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Historical evidence proves that Kutiyattam as a performing art grew into a full-fledged theatre art at least from the time of King Kulasekhara. Formerly, it was exclusively preserved by a small community of performers from Chakyar and Nambiar cast. Until Kerala Kalamandalam started offering courses on Kutiyattam in 1965, the performance and practice of this art form was a hereditary occupation reserved for that particular community alone. Owing to this a child’s profession was determined by birth, undeniably not by choice. One had to follow an established long-standing custom in the training and practice of Kutiyattam acting. There is evidence that the old generation of master actors and scholars visualized this art form with extreme seriousness about its purpose and procedure and rendered it with surplus aesthetic enjoyment of a rare kind. The numerous legends about the great actors of the past are an indication of the high regard with which the art of Kutiyattam was held (Paniker, 1995). In order to provide exquisite moments of aesthetic pleasure families of all performers kept the training and skills as their own professional secrets. However, ever since Kutiyattam came out of the temple premises Kerala Kalamandalam published an encyclopaedia of Kutiyattam named Natyakalpadrumam. This book is a collection of writings by the great scholar and performer Late Guru Mani Madhava Chakyar. Thus for the first time the practice and training system came
out from the secrecy of the family precincts. The implication of this work is that through accumulating his experience and the traditional resources Mani Madhava Chakyar made it accessible to both actors and spectators who are from outside the community. There are slight differences in training and performance from each family because each master teacher (guru) has his own way of imparting knowledge especially in hand gestures, chanting, and significantly in acting manuals. (Attaprakaram and Kramadeepika) Thus they have some different stance from other families and teachers with regard to this treatise. Even though there are slight arguments depending on the families, it is incredible that this performance community prevented their tradition of enacting in the time of colonialism owing to the indifference to the community. This is because even at that critical situation the performers considered their roles in the performance as a duty of their life thus practicing the training and performance with full of dedication.

5.2 PERFORMERS AND THEIR ROLES

Since this classical theatre art form has been the traditional hereditary profession of many of the Chakyar and Nambiar families of Kerala, there were special family oriented theatre groups among both Chakyar and Nambiyar who had the rights to perform Kutiyattam and kuthu in different temple premises. Historical evidence proves that these families lived in the land donated by the temple in order to perform the Kutiyattam and Kuthu without any drawback and obstruction. If by chance the performance was faulty, the temples reserved the right to take back the property from the families. This obligation to perform the annual ritual of Kuthu and Kutiyattam made it compulsory for the family to reserve the male members of the family to devote themselves to the study of these arts (A. M. Chakyar, 1995). Even though there
were eighteen theatre groups and eighteen Chakyar-Nambiyar families in this profession, presently it is only seven Chakyar families and seven Nambiyar families who exist still as traditional performers. In these temple oriented theatre groups Chakyars do the acting, Nambiyarss focus on Mizhavu playing, make up and stage arrangements and rituals and the Nangyar (female from Nambiyar family) portrait the women characters, sing and play Kuzhi thalam (bell-mettle cymbals).

5.2.1 Chakyar

Traditionally, the male actors have been members of the Chakyar community which is a part of the Ampalavasi or temple dweller caste; this is one of the smallest communities among the temple servants from Kerala. As per evidence from Chilappadikaram the name Chakyar was used to indicate the group of people that were professional actors hailing from the village called Parvur near the banks of Periyar River. The term ‘Chakyar’ is derived variously from ‘Sakti’ (Cakki in bhasa), Saksi or Sakyan. The word is also formed from ‘Slaghyar’ or an abbreviated form of ‘Slaghya Kulakkar’ (men of respectability) or ‘Slaghya-vakkukar’ or ‘Slaghya-gir’ (Rajagopalan & Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute., 2000).

As K.P.S.Menon (1995) points out the Namboothiri who goes astray due to force of circumstances also becomes a Chakyar. Though such occasions were rare, a Namboothiri who gets excommunicated is received into a Chakyar family which quite willingly accepts him. Even though still there are debates about the origin of this community one thing is sure that the dedicated artist from this community are the ones who preserve and transmit kutiyattam performance tradition and it’s practices from generation to generation without a break for centuries. Since the acting is considered as the Kuladharma (family duty) Chakyars necessarily received their
training from e child hood both in Kutiyattam and Kuthu. Ever since the beginning of Kerala Kalamandalam which was the first institution for traditional art forms, there are few artists from the other castes also practicing as the actors in Kutiyattam and Kuttu. But the right to perform Kutiyattam and Kuthu inside the temple premises is still reserved only for the Chakyars and Nambiars. As P. R. Chakyar (1995a) point out, the following are the names and details of eighteen Chakyar families in Kutiyattam profession in the olden times.

Table 5.1 Chakyar Families in Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kuttancherry</td>
<td>Settled near Nelluvay, did not have any relationship with other Chakyar families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ammannur</td>
<td>Originated from Pattambi then shifted to Muzikulam and finally settled in Irinjalakkuda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paravur</td>
<td>Originated from Paravur but subsequently merged with Ammannu family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Koyapa</td>
<td>Originated from Vanneri region and settled in Pinkulam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pantallur</td>
<td>Now this family has merged with Koyapa which however originated from Eranad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mekkad</td>
<td>This family belongs to Annamanada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Valia Parisha</td>
<td>Started in Kidangur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ambalappuza</td>
<td>Originated and settled in Ambalappuza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Name</td>
<td>Origin and Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kazhakkuttam</td>
<td>From Kazhakkuttam itself (the mekkad, Valiya Parisha, Ambalappuza and Kazhakkutam merged together and descendents stayed in Kazhakkutam.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Karttikamattam</td>
<td>Original family hails from the south east of Perumbavur now merged with Cheriya Parisha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cheriya Parisha</td>
<td>Originally from Kidangur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Potiyil</td>
<td>Originally from the south banks of Aluva river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tottm</td>
<td>Originally from the north east side of Tippunitura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Manganam</td>
<td>Started from the east of Kottayam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Evur</td>
<td>Near to Evur Temple (the families of Potiyil, Tottam Manganam and Evur become one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Manalikkara</td>
<td>Now the family is extinct. They used to process the rights for temples like Tiruvattar. Now the properties and rights belong to Eramallur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Perunchallur</td>
<td>Near Talipparambu, Now not in the profession thus their properties and rights are belong to Mani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Taliyil</td>
<td>Not extinct now thus the rights are handed over to Mani through Koyapa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presently the Chakyar families named Pothiyil, Cheriya prisha, Valiya prisha, Ammanur, Koyppa, Kuttancheri and Mani are involved in the Kutiyattam profession.
There are also parallel institutions like Nadanakairali, Margi, Chathakkudam Mizhavukalari which work intensively in the Gurukulam mode and also provide training in Kutiyattam acting beyond the borders of caste, religion and Nationality.

5.2.3 Nambiyar

Nambiyar is from a sub-cast of Ambalavasi who have been associated with Kutiyattam and kuthu as the percussionists and were experts in makeup. According to history the Nambiyars were those who introduced the local languages into Kutiyattam which prove that they used to perform in the olden days. The earlier evidence shows that Nambiyars used to narrate storylines as the introduction and thus were known as Suthradhara till the role of Vidushaka came and took this role. It was then that the local language began to be used. Still this local language introduced by Nambiyar is known as Nambiyar Tamil or Mardangika Tamil. At the same time Nambiyar keeps the right to perform the salutation before the performance while doing the job of Mizhavu player. As a result of Kerala Kalamandalam, presently there are many drummers who belong to another community who play the percussion and are specially trained in makeup and costume. Kaviyoor, Thrikariyoor, Vlíivattam, Eadanadu, Chathekudam, Kalakathu and Kochapilli are the families that still practice this profession with other artists.

5.2.4 Nangyar

Nangyar are the women from Nambiyar community who keep performing the female roles in Kutiyattam and Nagyar Kuthu. It is this presence of women both as actresses and singers which distinguish Kutiyattam theatre from the traditional
theatres in many other parts of the world. It is historically evident that women have been appearing in different roles in Kutiyattam at least from the time of King Kulasekharavarma. The responsibilities of Nangyar in Kutiyattam performance can be divided into three. One is to place themselves on the stage right in full view of the audience throughout the performance, playing the bell-metal cymbals to render time for the performers and singing verses-either for invocation of Gods and Goddesses or for vocal support to the performer who enact Nirvahana or solo flashback. Second is to portray the women characters in the play and the third, to perform the special role of Subhardra’s maid Kalapaltika in Nirvahana mode in Nangyar kuthu, dramatically narrating the entire story of God Krisna. In this it is about Lord Krishna impersonating the various characters in about fifty or sixty episodes without change of costume or make-up. The performance depends on the whole gamut of histrionic skills and also in presenting varied emotions through gestures and body language. The Nangyars also have to go through the same intensive training as the Chakyars. Thus the acting ability of the Nangyars is proverbial.

Although training practices differ from one teacher to another, the student is instilled with a sense of selflessness and absolute devotion to the teacher and his art. Even if the teacher does not happen to be student’s parent, he pays his teacher the same respect he would his own father. Venu (2005b) describing the motto of their Kutiyattam gurukula tradition which says that one master with two students in the beginning period of training and one master with one student in the final stage. This maxim shows the importance that a performance community gives to the proper training in Kutiyattam acting. Further it reveals that the higher stages of training will happen only when the master teacher considers the student on an individual basis. Such that the most distinguishing aspect in the training of students for art forms like
Kutiyattam is - the very personal attention of the master, which is essential to the student for his growth as a full-fledged artist.

5.3 THE STAGES OF KUTIYATTAM ACTOR TRAINING

The training period of Kutiyattam actors are life-long which is absolutely against the idea of becoming an actor overnight as in the modern TV serials. The fundamental training for Kutiyattam actors begin at childhood and continues till he or she starts performing independently and also becomes able to create his own performance manual (Attaprakaram).

5.3.1 The Preliminary Stage

According to A. M. Chakyar, (1995) at the age of seven the student would be initiated into the elementary lessons of Kutiyattam. Beginning to train at an early age provides an effortless and systematic development of an actor in his career such as creating a deep understanding of himself and the form. In fact, to begin the training before the expansion of an actor’s bone and limb is helpful to culture his body and mind for this particular art form. According to Usha Ngiyar (2011) a student at the age of seven to ten is more capable of imitating the teacher and reproducing it with enthusiasm. As they at that time will not be grown up enough to understand the depths of emotions and basic sentiments. Consequently this is the apt time to concentrate on making them understand the physical form and style of Kutiyattam. In this age, the student actor will receive the basic training in order to culture his voice and body. Formal training is conducted in a family compound known as Kalari,
literally means institution. Kalari is a small training room with basic facilities like protection from heavy Monsoon rains, good ventilation and smooth earthen floor.

The basic training is to recite the *slokas* loudly in their appropriate ragas. While singing the *slokas*, the trainee should remain in the basic posture of Kutiyattam dancer-*samapada* posture, holding the hands in *musti* or first with flossed fingers, moving them appropriately to the tune of singing. The *slokas* would be selected from different plays; this singing would be continued for two hours as a *sabda-sadhana* (voice – training). During the day time the student has to learn the *Nityakriyas* (dance portions) which consider the *Purappad* part of the plays. After lunch at noon, they have to learn by heart the ‘Siddharupa’ and *Amarakosa* as important parts of the study of grammar. Later in the evening, he has to begin practising the movements of the eyes. Then in the night again he has to recite the *slokas* from memory thus the training in childhood is stretched over the whole day. According to A. M. Chakyar(1995) he persevered in this difficult training system chiefly because of his fear of the uncles who were his master teachers. If the things taught one day were not repeated correctly the next day, his uncle would beat him mercilessly. If there was some slight slackness or lack of attention he would not get his food that night and there was no other choice at that time. This helps him to continue his study of Kutiyattam in the *Gurukula* mode. The above mentioned discussion shows the intensity of rigorousness in the basic training of Kutiyattam under the family system of teaching and learning. The family oriented teaching system is not time bound but once it became a specific subject in Kerala Kalamandalam, the teachers developed a teaching pedagogy for a five year period. It was more intensive than the family oriented training system. Childhood training in Kutiyattam is mostly to construct or create a foundation for the student actor as the first step of converting him in to a Kutiyattam actor both mentally
and physically. For example it is very much important to culture the actor while training him or her beginning with the way of standing, moving in particular situations, in chanting particular svaras, the harmony of the hand gestures and the movements of the eye and eyebrows etc... In this context the training that the master teacher introduces is to make a positive effect on the actor and continue the training module to mould him naturally appropriate to Kutiyattam. Once the student successfully completes his first stage of training in the basic skills and Nityakriyas then he gets an opportunity to do his debut (Arangettam). This opportunity will completely depend on the assessment of the master teacher.

5.3.2 Second Stage

After successfully completing the debut the student would be considered fit for playing minor roles in Kutiyattam. Thus, he is appointed for playing minor roles in plays in which the master teachers were played the major roles. The student actor in this stage has to closely involve himself in the procedures of the performance. By assisting his teachers and seniors in the dressing room and even on stage the actor gets more familiar with the performance. In fact Kutiyattam masters believe that this is one of the very natural ways of teaching. The actor absorbs the complicated plays, characters, and in a gradual way realises the application of skills on stage by participatory observation in performance. In this second stage, the student actor has to develop his acting skills by practicing special dramatic conventions like Vanavarmanam (description of a forest), parvathavarnana (description of a mountain), patappurappdu (preparation for battle), kesadipadavarnana (description of the beauty of a woman from head to toe) and Nepathyam kettatuka (action in response to an imaginary voice from behind the scene) (Nair, 1995). Generally, the actor student on
stage is a senior student in the institution who thus takes charge of leading the basic classes for junior students and conducts every day sadhanas (repeated practices) in the morning. Even though there are no written rules and regulations the actor needs to practice in this mode of training at least for five years. Consequently, the student actor has to carry out at least ten to twelve years of rigorous practice to learn the fundamental information by heart. Further study is more important for an actor in his artistic life. Thus he has to be with the master teacher with passion and commitment.

5.3.3 Youth Stage

The actor has to work almost all the time in order to gain knowledge of the Attaprakaram of all the important plays thoroughly. The actor has to be very particular in creating clear and accurate expression of each word and line, the proper use of the mudras and abhinaya. At this stage the master teacher gives more classes on the coordination of the actor’s mudras and eyes and also for the eyes and creative mind that help an actor to produce expression of emotions accurately. As A. M. Chakyar (1995) remembers his teacher Chachu Chakyar asks him to repeat everything several times until the teacher is fully satisfied. A demand is placed on acquiring flawless accuracy and artistic effect of keeping the body in the right posture, in showing the mudras and in the coordination between eyes and hands. At the same time the teacher also provides the actor sufficient opportunities to obtain stage experience (rangaprarichaya). At this time the actor also has to take responsibilities in teaching the new students and in taking care of all the performances Kuthu and Kutiyattam. This is the stage an actor has to concentrate on establishing himself as a favourite Kutiyattam actor among all kinds of audience. Creating such appeal to the
audience is always important for an actor to carry out his later artistic career with the leadership quality in performance and practices. An actor in this stage has to go through all possible higher studies in Sanskrit language, on Natyasastra, on eye exercise, and on rasabhinaya and so on, which help him to elaborate the acting sequences and also contribute his own to the existing form. This contribution of an individual actor in Kutiyattam is known as manodharma and through this quality an actor will be able to reform the form which he gained through his entire training.

5.3.4 Senior Stage

This is the stage an actor in Kutiyattam is considered as the master performer of the particular form. Thus he can even start practicing as an individual performer and teacher. The mental and physical capacity he obtains through practice helps him absorb all other knowledge. By keeping the body in health the actor at this stage acquires the quality of concentrating his mind on anything he wants. Proper concentration results in a mature performance as a result the actor becomes a role model in the field of Kutiyattam performance. The actor in this stage mostly spends his time on spreading the knowledge through performance and classes. Making new students to keep the tradition alive is one of the most important activities that an actor is supposed to do in this stage. As A. M. Chakyar (1995) points out all great gurus loved their sincere and devoted pupils as their own children. They never taught for any payment or remuneration. They wanted to transmit whatever knowledge and skills they had to the younger generations. In fact they also thought of earning a name through their students. Thus the actor-teacher in this stage concentrates on developing new Attaprakaram with his students in order to contribute his wisdom to the form and make it more rooted. The knowledge of an actor-teacher is considered to be reflected
through the performance practice of his students so that the final stages of an actor is mostly devoted to teach his students and thereby learn more things through such teaching. Therefore the actor in Kutiyattam continues his learning till the end of his life as a creative artist.

5.4 THE FUNDAMENTAL MODES OF ACTOR TRAINING IN KUTIYATTAM

Entering into the depth of Kutiyattam and mastering its form of acting is the only way for an actor to reach the stage of transforming into the characters that he portrays on stage. Therefore the fundamental training in Kutiyattam is fully designed in a mode that helps an actor to understand both the existing forms of his body and art. Considering the form of an actor's body in Kutiyattam the preliminary importance is to culture the body and voice appropriate for to performance. Training for chanting the scripts and the basic structure of movement provide proper means for an actor to achieve the style while he starts to do the characters in Kutiyattam. It is said that if an actor does not properly learn the basic skills in the beginning stages of his training it is very difficult for him to become a flourishing actor in his life time. As the first step of training, the student actor is insisted upon to imitate his master teacher in all kinds of movements and vocal exercises and also repeatedly do it till he gains fluency in that. The primary focus of the initial training is to understand and develop the command on balance, alignment, and control of his entire body and its limbs. Training in basic posture helps him to reach an exact body language that Kutiyattam demands from an actor. Furthermore, he will be able to train his vocal chanting through this basic body language.
Second part of the training mostly depends on the running repertoire of the particular school. The actor usually starts with learning the characterisation of *Sutradhara* for his debut performance otherwise allotted minor roles in the plays. As he becomes senior he learns more complicated roles and naturally becomes an expert in elaborating special scenes and characters.

The final part of the training develops an actor’s capability of role transformation in one play. Here the actor achieves the ability to travel from his basic character to various impersonations of the characters without changing his external elements such as makeup and costumes. As Paniker (1995) describes when the actor does the role of Ravana and enacts Parvativiraham or separation of Parvati and Siva, he narrates the whole episode in great detail either by assuming the roles of Siva and Parvati alternately or the actor who is in the makeup of hanuman sees the projected characters like Sita, Rama or Lekhsmana by means of his gestures and facial expression. This is considered as the ultimate artistic achievement of an actor in his life. The superior actor is the one who has the ability to show different characters in detail and to be judged by experienced spectators (*sahrudhaya*) who can see the expressions and characters beyond the external elements. In other words, the lifelong practice enables an actor to internalise the external elements of his own art form which allows him to exist as a medium through which all characters can appear.

### 5.4.1 The Basic Poster

Learning the basic posture is the first and foremost mode of training in Kutiyattam because this posture is the foundation for all other developments for an actor in his career. According to M. M. Chakyar (1995a) in the basic posture the actor
has to keep the front portion of his feet open, the heels should be pushed in further he has to take care that his hips are not thrust backwards so that the body will be balanced well. Now, while remaining standing, the body is lowered to a sitting posture (*thanu nilkkuka*). Usually a stick is placed in between the two knees, so that they do not come closer to each other. Starting with duration of five minutes this stance should be practised every day; and the training should make it easy for the student to stand in this position for about an hour. This fundamental posture commonly known as *arakku vayu koduthu thanu nilkuka* that is essential for the suitable presentation of the voice and emotions and also the initial step for a student to transform into a Kutiyattam actor. Through the rigorous practice of the basic posture the actor student reaches into the most balanced attitude of his physical body with his feet equidistant, bending at the knees, *vayu* (energy or breath) held in the bottom of the spine and the elbows at the same level as the shoulders. Venu (2005a) believes that this posture reflects the element of the divine within the human, ‘the basic stance is to get the energy point at the bottom of the spine—that is *Kundalini* of the *Yoga*. Only if an actor has proper energy concentration at the back, is his face lit. His eyes are bright; he becomes a different person, because of the energy he develops. Then he can do wonderful things, because he is not ordinary anymore. In that case this position of the body has been developed through centuries of study and observation of the human anatomy and the geography. As a result, this position provides a good follow of energy to the entire body of the performer. Almost all movements in Kutiyattam start and end with this posture thus mastering it is very much fundamental and significant in the accomplishment of the Kutiyattam actor. This is the reason why the traditional curriculum compels an actor to go through this posture by practicing
initially for five minutes and slowly extend to sustain the posture with the proper application of the (vayu) breath on the spine for an hour.

The shape and form of Thannu Nilkuka very much depends upon the height of the students. With the practice of the squatting posture, the student actor acquires a balance of his body with a sturdy posture. Once trained and comfortable to sustain this position for some time the actor practices the movements of the hands rotating their wrists in various patterns like rotating towards the front and then in the reverse, in front of the chest with the palm in open and closed positions. This exercise with maradakkum literally means ‘with in the chest’ eventually leads to reciting of sloka and hand gestures. A student is expected to dedicate eight to nine hours during his every day for this. Indeed the Guru has all the right to decide the number of hours and the basic practices that a particular student should work on.

5.4.2 The Chanting Practice

It is important to note that the chanting training in Kutiyattam happens only in the basic posture while rotating the wrists. Practicing the singing/chanting svara/raga sections in the significant squatting posture of Kutiyattam is a hard task for the beginner at the same time very effective to shape the performing body of the Kutiyattam actor. As Nangiar,(2003) mentions, morning training done by an actor should give more focus on developing control over his body, voice and mind (imagination). The chanting practise for an actor both in Mangala sloka and Nirvahana sloka afford a consequence only when it happens every day in this traditionally prescribed body posture. As a result the entire body of an actor gets warmed up by an internal energy and the vocal cords start to open consequently. This practice naturally leads the actor to achieve the accurate raga or svaras in
Kutiyattam. Since this training is a cluster of exercises designed for evoking both body and voice, it regulates the flow of energy, brings the breath to the centre and calls forth the proper vibration of the voice. Further, it enables an actor to train his voice with good control and release and at the same time gain an expressive or emotive voice to suit different kinds of dramatic time and space.

As Venu (2005a) remarks rendering of *slokas* is considered to be the *Vachikabhinaya* in Kutiyattam. This is a style of rendering which is schematised after taking into consideration the tone which is most suited to the *sthayi* and *sanchari bhavas* of the characters. It is also indebted to the style of Vedic chants, made possible with the employment of an appropriate accent. According to P. R. Chakyar, (1995b) the fundamental realisation of being an actor has to be gained through training in the *Vachika* in Kutiyattam, be it prose or verse, which is presented in a particular cadence. The sound pattern of an actor has no correspondence to realistic sounds; nor is it meant to have any resemblance. The characters in Kutiyattam do not express their emotions by imitating the mode of speech in real life. On the other hand, the musical style in Kutiyattam enhances the *Rasabhinaya* of the actor through the medium of *Vachika* with the powerful exploitation of the technique of suggestion.

Considering a beginner in Kutiyattam it is extremely difficult to identify the ragas that are used in his daily training. Therefore, the training is not done by teaching the names of the *svaras* or their operational modes. The practice is done by the recitation of each *sloka* in a particular manner by the teacher and the student has to learn through imitating his teacher. When it is tallied with the prescriptive rule for the *svara*, it is usually found to be correct.

This shows that in the beginning stages of training the student actor are not so aware of the categorisation of sentiments or classification of *svara’s* in vocal
chanting (*svarikuka*). To start with, the work on voice had little to do with learning the clear melody. It had much more to do with the kind of ascending and descending lines, with the pulsing out or letting flow voiced breath in connection with certain consonants and their vowels, with the modulation of lengths and the energy of accents. Since there is no permission to make individual variations and improvisations, it requires long years to master proper cadence of rendering *svaras*. Normally the verses are taught as they are sung during the performance and teachers do not follow a note by note pattern as found in conventional music training. By following the instructions of the master teacher, gradually the student realises the kind of svara he sings in a particular scene or and understands how he develops a particular *rasa* from the basic sentiment.

Table 5.2. Different Kinds of Svaras/Ragas Which are Used for Rasa’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Usages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Arthan</td>
<td>The verses and chants which describe the Srungara of the hero.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muddan</td>
<td>To show the Srungara of Rakshasa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sreekamaram</td>
<td>For the peak of the vipralamba Srungara of Rakshasa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Paurali</td>
<td>Vipralamba Srungara of Sree Rama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bhinapanchakam</td>
<td>The peak stage of the Sombhoka Srunkara of Rama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kaisiki</td>
<td>Use of either Hasya or Bibatsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Usages</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Dukhagandharam</td>
<td>Use of the verses make Compassion in Karuna rasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tarkan</td>
<td>Use of the Roudhra rasa to show anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Veera Tarkan</td>
<td>Using of the verses for Vira rasa for valiant characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Danam</td>
<td>To show Bhayanaka- terror- and the wonder in Bibhatsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tondu</td>
<td>Using of the verses which show the Santa rasa and devotion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 Other Svaras/Ragas and Their Usages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Usages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indalam</td>
<td>This is the common svara for the veera and uthama hero (exalted hero)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Korakkurinji</td>
<td>For the common situation of the vanara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Puranir</td>
<td>Use of describing morning sunrise and rain etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Srikandhi</td>
<td>To describe sunset, killing of the wicked, noon, devotion and the verses at the end of the all acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Veladhuli</td>
<td>Verses to show terror, shouting mocking and nervousness etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chedipanchamam</td>
<td>Use for Second cast, low (Neecham) cast, child character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bhinapanchamam</td>
<td>Vipralambha srungra of Rakshasa the extreme happiness of the vipralambha and Srirama’s wonder while srungara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gattantari</td>
<td>Devotion while killing the wicked and sometimes while praying to some deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Antari</td>
<td>While describing the story alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vimala</td>
<td>Akkita songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Virapanchamam</td>
<td>On extremely valorous occasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Muralindalam</td>
<td>Love in union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Varati</td>
<td>No information about this raga currently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Pfaff (1997) recalls his Kutiyattam guru Ammanur Madhava chakyar’s advice, once an actor learns the chanting of sloka he has to understand it well by himself. This is because later the relative mudras (gesture) are used in acting. Furthermore, he has to add his eye to that and finally the bhava (emotion) has to come out. When an actor learns the sloka perfectly, then the mudras will be easier, when the sloka and the mudras are perfect, then the eyes will be easier and when all three are
perfect only then \textit{bhava} could be performed well. When an actor learns, whatever he learns has to be within him, not beside him. Only when it is within him, his performance too then would naturally be his, and he would simply perform it.

\section*{5.4.3 The Leg and Hand Exercises}

There are series of preliminary exercises for the actor’s legs and hands that are meant to culture his body and also are designed in a way to develop his physical fitness. Further, these exercises are made to develop an actor’s body movements in different rhythmical patterns that generally start with a slow tempo developing into medium speed and thus reach a fast pace. These exercises are considered to be very significant for the beginners because it’s thought to be a practice that develops the physical skills of an actor in Kutiyattam.

Since the movements and positions of the feet play a great role to form the Kutiyattam body of an actor while he performs, it is essential that he should be able to move his feet as per the requirement of Kutiyattam performance. According to Madhavan (2010) swinging the legs (\textit{kaal veeshu}) sideways as highly as possible leaning against the wall with the outstretched arms supported on it is one of the important exercises in that. Student needs to look at the wall and is not expected to look at his legs while doing this exercise. As a result of continuous practice in swinging the legs an actor not only develops the flexibility of the thigh joints but also improves his body balance in an accurate way by applying an appropriate body weight. In this sort of practice the actor extends his leg while he bends the other one in a squatting position with particular, calculated shifting of weight of his body. Jumping exercise on parallel feet is considered as one of the important and essential
trainings for the exercise of legs. The student actor has to lift his leg as high as possible, forward while jumping. Jumping exercise also helps an actor to develop both his internal and external energy with the deepest concentration. The actor also has to be aware of keeping his spine stretched while moving which is one of the most important matters to make the exercise effective. At the same time the actor has to retain the attention of his internal powers which is known as *vayu* concentrating it to the bottom part of his spine and keep the navel part as the gravity centre of the body. The moment the actor loses the focus on his spine he loses his balance.

Learning the form of Kutiyattam gives significance to the circular-movements of an actor’s wrists. It primarily helps an actor to mobilise his hand to tell a story by using some of the particular *mudras*. Since the most non-verbal communication in Kutiyattam depends on the hand gestures beginning from the basic training time the actor has to develop the quality of moving his hands in various tempos. Through practise of the wrist and finger exercise, the actor reaches a point when he can manipulate his hands to create the prescribed hand gestures in Kutiyattam. Venu (2005a) observes that the most salutary contribution of Kutiyattam is the narration of story through a system of hand gestures. *Hasthabhinya* as a branch itself evolved from the potential of the hands that are used to express emotions. While expressing, the eyes and the mind are focussed on the figures that create the required emotions in the emptiness with the hands. The connections established between the hands and the mind is what produces and sustains the natural emotions. Generally hand gestures in Kutiyattam can be divided in to four varied types based on execution during the performance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Samyukta</td>
<td>Combines -(the same gestures using both hands)</td>
<td>Sun, deer etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Asamyukta</td>
<td>non-combined (a gesture each shown by using a single hand)</td>
<td>Animal, flower and woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Misra</td>
<td>mixed (using different gestures on either hands)</td>
<td>Widowhood, father, teacher and play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Samanam</td>
<td>Similar (using same gesture for two different things)</td>
<td>Equal ,near</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.3.1 Twenty four Hasta Mudras

Signifying with one hand

Signifying with both the hands
Day, Like, Body, Doing, Tongue, Forehead, And, Messenger, Bank, Tender leaf.

Signifying with one hand
Growth, Movement, Forgetfulness, All, Information, Heaven, Ocean, Close, Matter, Death, Meditation, Sacred thread, Straight.

Signifying with both the hands
Thought, Desire, Self, Remembrance, Mind, Knowledge, Creation, Vital air, Humiliation, Negation, The dative cause, and Future tense.

Signifying with one hand
Vishnu, Krishna, Balabhadra, Arrow, Gold, Silver, Demoness, Sleep, Main Women, Lakhmi, Lute, Star, Garland, Blue-lotus, Rakshasa, Crown, Bar used for shutting a door, A particular thing, Chariot, With.

Signifying with both the hands
Flower, Mirror, Female, Offering Oblations, Perspiration, Little, Sound, Quiver, Fragrance.
Signifying with one hand
Charioteer, Boon, Beauty, Holy, Spirit, Binding,
Deserving, Staying, Ankles, Pulling, Chowrie, Yama,
Mud, Medicine, Curse, Swing, Gift,
Circumambulation, Digging, Spear, Renunciation,
Velour, Burning, Scattered, Delivery.

Signifying with both the hands
In vain, Superlative, To despise, Minister, To surpass,
Bow, To tolerate, Donation, Permission, Victory, I/me,
One, Old age, To take away, To eat.

Signifying with one hand
Sin, Exertion, Brahmana, Fame, Penance, House,
Sanctity, Hunting Hunger, The act of hearing,
Bank, Speaking, Pregnancy, Conclusion,

Signifying with both the hands
You, Order of time, Speech, Plural, We, Man, Face,
Enmity.

Signifying with one hand
Elephant, Goat, Bird.

Signifying with both the hands
Making sure.
**Signifying with both the hands**

Net, Doubt, Peacock, Feathers, To drink, To touch, Pacing,
Rolling back, Outside, Behind, To descent.

**Signifying with one hand**

Moon, Wind, Cupid, Gods, Peak, Mountain, Always, Relatives, Bed, Stone, Down, To beat, To conceal, To spread, To establish, To come, Bowing down, Sinking, Sandal paste, Embrace, To follow, Fish, To protect, To reach, Cheek, Puja, Shoulder, Hair, Obedient, To bless, Like that, Tortoise.

**Signifying with both the hands**

You, Sword, Anger, Now, I, In front of, Flame, Inviting, Axe, reaching the lap, to ward off.

**Signifying with both the hands**

To walk, Two legs, Two eyes, To see, Pathway, To search,
For, Two ears, To drink.
Signifying with one hand

The eyeballs, Smoothness, Power, Whiteness, Blue, Red, Sympathy, Line of hair growth.

Signifying with both the hands

Beginning of rains, Hair, Line, Three folds of skin.

Signifying with one hand


Signifying with both the hands

Branch of a tree, Anger.

Signifying with one hand

If, What, Helplessness, Sky, A man’s hair, Blessed, God, Grass, Memory.

Signifying with both the hands

To start, Smile, What, Abuse.
Signifying with one hand
Fangs, separation, ankle, waist, Vedas, brother, pillar, mother, the speedy one, demon, good growth.

Signifying with both the hands
One who disregards, beetle, rays, anger, good bangle, neck, shoulder ornament, negation.

Signifying with one hand
Wings of bird, song, water, umbrella, elephant’s ears.

Signifying with both the hands
Gandharva, birth, fear, cry.

Signifying with one hand
Broken, to jump three worlds, Lakshmana, to fall another, month eye brow, loose, tail

Signifying with both the hands
One, alas, dead body, another man, plural, hear, once upon a time, this man these men, country, a little, witness, to refuse, to command, to come, go for fighting.
Signifying with one hand
Thunder bolt, peacock a cow, length of the eyes, water buffalo, an iron weapon, a dart, horn of an animal, coiling.

Signifying with both the hands
Distance, stake, smoke, tail, a cane, grains.

Signifying with both the hands
Sunset, beginning with, form of address, drink, body, to beg.

Signifying with one hand
Animal, supreme soul.
**Signifying with one hand**

Serpant

**Signifying with both the hands**

Earrings, pearl necklace, knee, ascetic, mahout.

**Signifying with one hand**

Whirlpool, navel, well.

**Signifying with both the hands**

Fool, tree, nail. Bud, sprout.
Signifying with both the hands
Horse, fruit, tiger, butter, ice, many lotus

Signifying with one hand
Jockal, forgetfulness gloominess, monkey,

Signifying with both the hands
Armour, servant, a valorous man, a wrestler, discharging of arrows, bindings
5.4.4 The Eye and Facial Exercises

Exercise for the face muscles everyday with focus on different parts like cheeks, lips, eye, etc is one of the unique features of Kutiyattam practice. The above motioned body parts known as *Upangas* are very important in Kutiyattam acting in relation with the minute expressions of sentiments. Kutiyattam tradition believes that different expressions revive the heart of the character which is being transmitted through the actor’s eyes (change this sentence. Not clear). So the whole exercise for the face altogether means to develop the quality of the eyes and support the movements of the eyes. Since the eye is more sensitive than all other parts, it is insisted that the acting student has to sit in front of the teacher to practice his eye exercises.

Generally eye exercises are performed in front of the master teacher while sitting in a cross-legged posture. While sitting and acting the student has to be conscious of his spine as it is stretched to ensure the flow of breath. As part of the preparation the student has to massage his eyes too by applying ghee or purified butter. Then he lifts the eyebrows up to the maximum with wide opened eyes. The teacher always reminds the students to keep his eyes wide open and the student has to follow the guidance of his teacher and also the movement of his hands. The preliminary lesson an actor has to learn is to focus his widely opened eyes to one spot while giving breath (*vayu*) to both eyes in order to light it with energy. Once the actor is able to focus his eyes then he can start training up for moving through different focal points. In this practice the actor starts from a focal point keeping a certain medium distance in front of him. Gradually, the length of the focal point could be brought up very close without getting cross-eyed and then move further the focal point to the farther end far away and then again return to the same focal point which is
at the medium from where the actor actually started. The actor also gets his training on different kinds of focus as sharp focus, normal focus and soft focus. Furthermore, the actor starts his practices on basic movements of eye, eyebrows, eye-lids, lower muscles, outer edge of eyes, cheeks and other facial organs. As part of the training for eyebrows the actor starts learning how to lift the eyebrows up and down with wide opened and focused eyes.

- **Eyebrow Training:** As part of the training for eyebrows the actor starts learning how to lift the eyebrows up and down with wide opened and focused eyes. The actor has to start this training in a very slow mode and by constant training he may able to move it in a fast rhythm which results in a movement close to vibration.

- **Eye-lids Training:** The training of the lower eye-lids starts with moving it gently up and down without moving the upper eye-lids. In the final stage, the student should be able to do very fast movements shaking his lower eye-lids. And through training the actor reaches a natural trembling capacity of the eye-lids.

- **Cheeks Training:** The student has to start his cheek exercise by moving the air inside the mouth as if gargling. Through practice the actor makes the movement minimal and intensive which looks like shivering of the cheeks.

- **Lip Training:** The lip has been trained to move up and down, that is similar to expansion and contraction.

  All of these exercises start slowly and gently with ultimate care and they develop gradually into rapid movements. All of these exercises concentrate on giving the inner muscles in the face and eyes expansion and contraction of every group of.
Thus, it helps an actor to use these naturally when he does his performance on the stage.

As M. M. Chakyar (1995a) points out there are twenty-one types of exercises for the eye, based on movement of the pupils’ of an actor’s eyes.

1. Circular movement of the pupil, towards the left and the right.
2. Pupil at the centre, moving to the left and right
3. Pupil at the centre, moving upwards and downwards
4. Movement sideways, to the left and right
5. From the side of the left eye, moving downwards, reaching the right, in the shape of a half moon
6. Same movement as above but from the top
7. Movement of the eye imitating this figure
8. Eye movement flowing this pattern
9. Eye movement flowing this pattern
10. Opposite movement from all the above mentioned descriptions.
11. Movement imitating the figure V- starting from the left corner, coming down towards the centre, and doing up to the right corner
12. The opposite movement of the above
13. Taking three positions in the upper portion
14. Opposite of the above.
15. Sideways movement
16. Opposite movement
17. Taking three positions sideways
18. Opposite of the above
19. Like horizontal eight
20. A vertical eight

21. Like the figure three positions each, horizontally and vertically.

There are eight important movements in the above mentioned that is, in full circle, horizontal lines, vertical lines, diagonals, semicircles, squares and the endless figure eight. According to Pfaff (1997), acting student should practice each of these movements in both directions so that all the little muscles and vessels would develop evenly. Each movement had to flow smoothly and evenly, with short pauses at the end points where the movements receive its energy. Owing to the time to time reminders from the teacher the student naturally starts keeping his eyes wide open even while he looks down.

Once the student is able to do above the mentioned movements without trembling in the pupils of his eyes, the teacher allows him to continue his training with applying breath in the pupil of eyes. At the higher level the actor realises how the energy comes through his eyes and how he expresses the feelings through his eyes. M. M. Chakyar, (1995a) suggests that one should particularly take care to avoid the possibility of getting the ‘serpent-eye’ (Sarpadrishhti) while doing this complicated vayu training. When the actor successfully completes the prescribed vayu training he becomes the only one thought to be capable of expressing adequate rasa in his performance. Finally, the actor reaches the stage to express the complex situations and emotions by consciously adjusting the eyes focusing independently of any external stimulus. He becomes aware of the complex inner muscles. He also realises the possibility of consciously applying this control to produce the expressions by the micro movements of his eyes and the overall elasticity of the facial movements. Since the expression of the eyes gives the liveliness of Kutiyattam acting, the actor has to continue his eye exercises till the end of his life as a performing artist.
5.4.5 Nityakriya - Training and First Performance

Nityakriya includes choreographs of complex foot work literally mean daily activities is a very important component of actor training in Kutiyatam. According to M. M. Chakyar (1995a) until the actor learns to do Nityakriya himself, the other kriyas are not taught and it is necessary to practice it at least once day. This whole composition is referred to as Purappad which literally means preliminary. And so is Purvaranka in Kutiyattam and also the performance for the debut (arangattam) which is the first major step of an actor’s career. Nityakriya is the dance (nrutta) portions which consist of the dance of the characters in the purappad part of the play. According to tradition, the first role of an actor is the stage manager from Bhasa’s Sanskrit play, Balacharitham. Before he may proceed to study other roles, even before he is permitted to study Kutiyattam seriously, he must first master this part and perform (Brown, 2001). In Nityakriya there are various small segments of movement patterns. In that the preliminary one an actor has to go through is the training known as Maravil Kriya which includes seven series of movement patterns that are created to be performed behind the curtains. This highly stylised movement patterns are structured on the admiration and devotion between actors and the drummers. Thus a student actor has to practice and perform these intimate movement patterns while facing the musicians sitting on the stage. This is followed with an offering of flowers in Panchapadavinyasa while paying proper obeisance. Further the student learns Tevaram, (worship of God) to show his presence on stage. Even though these choreographies are not visible to the common audience the actor has to practice it with all perfection and precision because this is an important step for an actor to transform himself into the character in Kutiyattam.
In the second stage, the student has to learn sutradhara’s sloka sankhaksheeravapuh in Balacharitam, vailiyokkam and kunkunam will be followed by a description from head to toe of siva the Lord of the three worlds and Parvaty the daughter of the mountains. This is followed by the paying of obeisance to the Ashta dik palas, and then floral offerings and prostrations offered to the heavens, earth, underworld and all the living creatures there (Venu, 2005a). In the end part of the Nityakriya, the actor student has to learn how to respect and worship all living beings and pray for the world welfare. The final choreography is to enact the offering of respect to the nature for a never-ending career. The student actor has to practise all the above mentioned movements and chanting patterns while following the various rhythmic syllables (vaytari) by the master teacher (asan). The student repeatedly practices the Nityakriya in front of his teacher with the accompaniment of Mizhavu drums till he is able to perform it without any difficulties.

Nityakriya training provides the form of Kutiyattam to the beginner for which it exploits his extreme balance, physical and vocal control, and the structure and pattern of movements while he practices. The daily practice of Nityakriya enables the actor to synchronise all movements and gestures in tune with the richly varying rhythm of the drummers. Since this is the fundamental practice in Kutiyattam to understand the form of the acting the student actor has to follow each and every step prescribed by the teacher without any manipulations there for there is no space for improvisations. As per the rule of tradition, an actor has to learn this Poorva Ranga Kriya by heart and do it without any hitches. The master teacher can only then decide his debut on the stage. Generally for debut the boys do the role of Rama from play Ascharya chudamani and girls do the role of maid from the play Subhadradhananjayam. Once an actor does his Nityakriya performance in his debut
he can continue to study *Kriyas* from other plays like *Anguliyanakam, Mattavilasma* and also practice different dramatic sequence based on the repertoire of plays in the school.

### 5.5 TRAINING IN CHARIS

There are different types of movement patterns in Kutiyattam which is known as *Chari*. *Chari*—the combined movement of hip, feet, angle and thigh is a necessary part of both acting and training in Kutiyattam. The actor has to learn all the three kinds of *Charis* that is *Bhaumachari, Akasachari*, and *Yudhachari*. In this *Yudhachari* is also known as *Padappurapadu* (preparation for war) and is one of the important ones. Since it is the movement that shows preparation of war it is designed with various kinds of vigorous movements adapted from the martial arts of Kerala named Kalarippayattu. Based on the characters and their physical appearance *Yudhachari* again is divided into four kinds as follows:

- **Parikramana** is the one that is usually done towards the four directions to portray the common behaviour of the characters like Surpanakha and Hanuman etc...
- **Kalappurathu Natakku** is usually meant to indicate the characters like Rama, Lakshmana etc...
- **Vattathilchadi Natakku** is the choreography designed to indicate the walking style of demons
- **Cholliyunti Natakku** is movement patterns that show the mode of walking by ladies.
In order to show various types of *Yudhachari* an actor has to learn the movements such as war preparations, usages of different kinds of weapon, imitating the movements of animals, and different types of jumping and stamping. The practice of these movement patterns fundamentally are meant to shape the skills of the student actor and thus enable him to understand the form both physically and mentally better. Since one *Yudhachari* roughly takes forty to fifty minutes, it also helps an actor to increase his internal energy. And mould an actor to move freely inside the form of Kutiyattam while performing. Since these movement patterns commonly appear in almost all plays, an actor who masters this kind of movement patterns can use according to the needs in the plays. These movement patterns are highly stylized and designed aesthetically to practice and present with the accompaniment of Mizhavu music. By continuous practice of these kinds of movement patterns, the student actor gains an opportunity to use his *Manodharma abhinaya* inside the prescribed form for he is also expected to reform his existing form by using this opportunity.

### 5.6 METHODS OF VARIOUS ATTAM

The term *Attam* can be described as the manner of acting in Kutiyattam. The actor has to receive the training in different types of *Attam* such as *Patinjattam*, *Ilakiyattam*, *Irunnattam* and *Pakarnnattam*.

- *Patinjattam* training gives an understanding to the actor about the ways of acting in the basic standing posture of Kutiyattam. Generally this way of acting techniques is used to portray the characters in a higher position and also enacts the feelings like love, sorrow.
• **Ilakiyattam** is a way of acting with one leg in forward position and one leg backward position (Paulose, 2006). In terms of training, an actor who has successfully completed the training in Kriya is allowed to receive his training in *Ilakiyattam*. As M. M. Chakyar (1995b) describes the actor has to learn how to recite the *slokas* according to the ragas. Further he learns how to show the *mudras* in its appropriate nature with stamping and jumping (Chavittichati), raising the leg, stamping with spreading of the feet (parathicchavitti), stamping and jumping sideways, turning swinging and twisting the body. Through practice the actor should be able to intersperse the *Charis, Kriyas* and other *Attams* depending on the particular context in order to elaborate the meanings of the *sloka*.

• **Irunnattam** training is important for an actor to understand the way of acting while sitting on the floor. In performance this mode of acting is chosen according to the situation of the character. It usually use when the character has to portray deep sorrow like sorrow of Rama or Ravana, etc...

• **Pakarnattam** is the most important mode of acting in Kutiyattam which comes at the higher level of an actor’s training. In pakarnattam training the actor has to learn how to deal with the enactment of the role of several characters. It is to learn how to change the role according to needs. Such that an actor who acts as Ravana suddenly changes as Siva, then Parvathi and so on. To learn this technique an actor has to be trained in different dramatic sequences such as Kesadipadam, Kailasodharanam etc...
5.7 TRAINING IN DRAMATIC SEQUENCES

As part of learning to perform in a more profound way the actor has to go through the training in select dramatic sequences. This also teaches an actor to do the solo performance on stage while enacting different characters at a time without changing the basic Aharya of the character. There are many such scenes that are already choreographed by older generation of artists to instruct an actor how to deal with the elaborate acting in Kutiyattam.

5.7.1 Kailasoddaranam

This is one of the most important dramatic sequences in Kutiyattam commonly known as Parvata Varnana meaning the describing mountain. Even though this scene can be acted in several situations by several characters, the popular scene in this is called Kailasoddaranam (lifting the mountain of Kailasa) by the character Ravana. As part of training the actor has to study how to see the height and width of the mountain only by using his eyes. The actor has to focus his eyes without blinking it and has to describe the mountain in detail. This is the part known as Parvatha Varnana were the actor sees and enacts the whole characterisation of the mount Kailasa such as the deep forest, the streams and rivers, the birds and animals, the life in the forest and so on. By practice an actor in Kutiyattam learns how to elaborate this sequence with suitable improvisations of new scenes and introduction of new characters into the basic story. In this situation the actor also gets the chance of travelling from one character to another (Pakarnattam) that depends on the ability of successfully adding new situations and stories. The second part of these sequences is lifting the mountain by using his whole body and throwing it in to the height with his strength. When the
actor throws the mountain it vanishes into the sky. Thus the actor has enough time to improvise the actions and situations before it comes back to his hand again. This is repeated in several ways and the actor who is a master in this now can create wonderful sequences and elaborate the scenes until the time he desires. Though this sequence is specially developed to be enacted on several occasions to describe Ravana’s valour, the basic of the Parvatha Varnana can be used in different situations and plays.

5.7.2 Ajagarakabalitam

This is another scene an actor has to practice which is selected from the play called Kalyanasaugandhikam Vyayoga. In the particular circumstances the character Bhima is in a forest in order to collect the flower for Gandhari. While walking in the forest Bhima happens to see an elephant that is attacked by a python and a lion. The actor who portrays Bhima transforms into the elephant and shows the gentle way of collecting food and eating. Furthermore, when the elephant falls asleep a huge python comes out and catches hold of the feet of elephant. Here the actor takes over the roles of Python and does all the actions of swallowing the foot of an elephant and also reacts as the elephant that cries deafeningly in pain. While the elephant gets up and tries to escape a lion from its cave in the forest on hearing the cries of the elephant reaches too quickly at the spot. Now in this scene the actor has to add the role of lion which jumps and smashes on the head of the elephant. On learning this scene the actor learn lots of pakarnattam skills like acting at the same time as elephant, python and lion watched by the basic character Bhima. This is one of the
scenes which provide the opportunity to an actor to learn and understand the human quality of sentiments in animal characters.

5.7.3 Kesadipadam

*Kesadipadam* is literary means from head to toe. It is a detailed description of the entire physic of a human being whether man or woman. By training an actor has to learn how to describe the whole body of a human being while following rhythmic patterns of Mzhavu. Most celebrated part in this is the description of the beauty of *Sita* by king *Ravana*. The actor who does *Ravana* has to move in the basic posture of Kutiyattam from the rear to the front stage while watching and describing the beauty of Sita who sits in the palace garden. The actor has to do this role with the ultimate control of his body movements and also the skills of *pakarnattam*. This particular scene should be done with elaborate acting while keeping the key emotions for almost an hour.

There are lots of other scenes like Kopaniyikkal (elaborated dressing) where a single actor has to enact the conversations between three different characters. In the scene named Udyana *Varnana* (describing a garden) the actor has to learn how to show actions resembling a peacock dance (*Maiyilattam*) which contains the cleaning of feathers, beak and legs in a rhythmic way; an elaborate description of a tree (*Vriksha Varnana*) by showing the leaves, fruit, flowers, buds etc and bees drinking honey from the flower; (*Vandukalude Madhupanam*) by using the movements of his eyes. The student has to continuously practice these dramatic sequences throughout his artistic life to master more of their details and acquire perfection. While doing his
roles in the performance he learns to harmonise all factors together that he has received from his master teacher.

5.8 LEARNING RAMAYANA SAMKSHEPAM, GRAMMAR AND ATTAPRAKARAM.

The actor in Kutiyattam also has to receive training in Sanskrit language, Grammar, poetry, Ramayana Samkshepam and Attaprakaram. Learning Sidharupa and Amarakosa is very important in Kutiyattam training as part of learning the Sanskrit grammar thus it is important for an actor to learn these every day afternoon during his training period. Practicing Ramayana Samkshepam is one of the very important parts in Kutiyattam because it is one that forms totality of all other individual skills. As Pfaff (1997) describes, an actor learns the complex and rigidly codified language of the hands and eyes by working through the story of the Ramayana word for word, sentence for sentence, using the fixed-text form of the Ramayana Samkshepam. Every aspiring Kutiyattam actor has to follow this path. The Samkhepam is constructed in such a way that all possible words and grammatical applications of the (mudra) gestural language in Kutiyattam appears in it. As a result, mastering Ramayana Samkshepam provides an opportunity for the student to understand the entire glossary and the possibilities contained in the (mudra) gestural language. Besides, it helps the actor to coordinate his eye movement with particular gestures while placing concentration on it. Finally, the actor has to find out a flowing rhythm for his narration thus the complex (mudra) gestural language slowly becomes natural. Therefore by practice the actor reaches the stage where that the gestural language appears as natural and expressive as the words themselves.
5.9 AESTHETIC CONCEPT OF RASA AND ITS TRAINING

A Kutiyattam actor learns all the various components in acting separately to create the ultimate aesthetic fulfilment in spectators. This ultimate aesthetic fulfilment of spectators in Kutiyattam is known as Rasa Nishpathi as described in Natyasastra. After learning the different components like physical movement patterns, chanting the dramatic lines, movement of eyes and story-telling by hand gestures the actor is expected to harmonise all these concepts through introducing the rasabhinaya into it. The following verse from Natyasastra describes each step of incorporation of an actor’s skill in order to produce the rasa in the spectator.

Yato hastastato dristi- Where the hand goes, the eyes follow
-ryato drististato manah where the eyes go, the mind follows
Yato manastato bhave- where the mind goes, the feeling follows
-ryato bhavastato rasa and where feeling is, rasa emerges

And finally it is this rasabhinaya that captures the mind of the spectator in Kutiyattam. Mind is a key element that works behind rasabhinaya thus the actor has to get control over his mind and his body. The exercises for netrabhinaya will help an actor to reach the awareness of his mind. Pfaff (1997) notes that his Kutiyattam master teacher Ammannur Madyava Chakyar believed, the mind-or the inner substance-is the same for all human beings. Therefore, behind the differences in shape and colour one can always find the same depth and unity. This is why a Kutiyattam actor is always able to transmit the fundamental feelings to the audience. Rasas which are the authentic outcome of the mind of an actor can only generate from a genuine inner feeling. Thus it is more related with the temperament and mood (chithavruthi)
of an individual and structures from one’s own experience. The appearance of temperament (chitavruthi) is known as (bhava) sentiments in Natyasastra tradition. There are forty-one types of temperaments. From among these Kutiyattam distinguishes nine selected bhavas as basic emotional states (Sthayibhava). Rati (pleasure or delight), hasa (laughter, humor) soka (sorrow or pain), krodha (anger), utsaha (heroism or courage), bhaya (fear), jagupsa (disgust) vismaya (wonder) and samam (Quietude) are considered as Sthayibhavas because it is naturally visible in all living things around the world. A highly talented actor develops and corresponds these bhavas to the spectators in order to make them experience the nine rasas. The actor has to train himself in order to develop the Sthayibhava into nine rasas by adding determinants (vibhavas), consequents (anubhavas) and complementary psychological states (sancharibhavas). The actor should be capable of manipulating his glance or (drusti) to create rasa from the Sthayibhava. According to Mani Madhava Chakyar there are nine kinds of Bhava dristis and also nine kinds of Rasa dristis. Only the actor who masters the eye and facial movements will be able to do these dristis. The actor has to learn how to express the comprehensive feelings through his eyes with the help of all his facial movements. Thus the actor always has to make sure that his eyes are visible to the audience and for that the movements of his head is particularly restricted while performing. Even though the mind is the key force behind all the glances, an actor needs to get a long time training to execute proper way of expressing the mind through eyes in Kutiyattam. While practicing these exercises it is significant for an actor to concentrate his mind on the interior aspects as well as direct his awareness towards the outside. Almost fifty years back students used to learn the rasas while he works on a selected Act or play other than practising the nine rasas separately. Further Kutiyattam teachers added and developed the rasa
training one by one in as part of the preparation of the Kutiyattam actor. The student actor has to learn the basic skills and principles of expressing the rasas from the teachers practically by following the four line verses which describe the characteristics of all the nine rasas separately. The student usually does this practice while sitting down in front of the master teacher with awareness of the whole body and mind. Once an acting student clearly grasps all the nine Sthayibhavas he can then, add particular ways of breathing system into it, learn how to create all the nine rasas on his face. Sruanga, Hasya, Karuna, Raudra, Veera, Bhayanaka, Beebhatsa, Atbhta and Santha are the nine rasas that are to be practiced in the following ways.

- **Srungara** (Erotic): The principal mood of Srungara is love (rathi) and happiness. The actor has to bring his lips near the teeth while giving a little strength to it. In order to get the cause the actor has to imagine the joy inside and naturally the breath will come inside that fills the cheeks, He has to extend the smile from his natural way of smiling and when the look seems to drink the object with eyes fully open and clear, the eyebrows being lifted and vibrant filled with significance and when accompanied a side long glance (kadaksha) the amorous look appears naturally on the face of actor.

- **Hasya** (Mockery): The principal mood of hasya is indifference or humour. Actor has to look into a certain direction and slightly contrast his lips in order to make a psychological state of laughter. His eye-ball has to slightly be drawn into the eyes accompanied by varied wondering movements of pupils along with the eye-lids that contrast in different degrees in order to suit the intensity of laughter; this glance is known as hasya dristi.

- **Karuna** (Pathetic): The principal mood of Karuna is grief (soka) with a pathetic look that arises from the psychological state of sorrow. The actor in this
emotion droops down his upper eye-lids in addition to the pupils nervous with grief and tends to come together at the bridge of the nose. His lip has to be slightly lower in its tips with a quivering or twitching movement while looking at the front. This sad look with full of tears is known as Karuna dristi.

- **Raudra** (Furious): The principal mood of raudra is anger (Krodha). The actor in this emotion has to make his eye-lids tremble with the sharp and motionless pupils. He has to lift his eyebrows up completely with open eyes that have a fixed focus. This fierce look with highly red and powerful eyes is known as Roudra dristi.

- **Veera** (Heroic): The principal mood of Veera is courage with sturdy and fully open eyes. The actor’s eyes in this emotion have to be fully opened and majestic. Further the ends of the eyes are contracted and even the eyes have to glow with brightness. This particular look called Veera dristi expresses variety of qualities named liberty, courage, majesty, sweetness and affability with halo that inspire lustre and grace.

- **Bhayanaka** (Terrible): The principal mood of Bhayanaka is created from a psychological state of fear. The actor’s eye-lids are raised and held motionless at the same time the pupils have to be pushed and are very restless. Further he has to look at the object that made him feel fear and move to both sides terrified. This look with terrible fear is called Bhayanaka dristi.

- **Bibhatsa** (Odious): The principal mood of Binbatsa is disgust with motionless limbs. The actor has to manipulate his eye-lids in a way that restlessly tend to come together and the pupils are unsteady. The nose of the actor has to be slightly up with lowered lips and contracted eyebrows. The eye-balls at the
corners of the eye should be driven by repulsion that occurs caused by the object seen.

- **Adbhuta (Marvellous):** The principal mood of *Adbhuta* is surprise with wide opened eyes. The pupils go into the white screen of the eyes and come out alternated. The white screen of the eye has to be moist and the eye-lashes are slightly contracted as well as the corners of the eyes are bright with surprise. The cheeks of the actor should contain a slight flicker and the eyeballs have to be pushed with the use of proper vayu then the look is called *Adbhuta dristi*.

- **Santa (Peace):** The principal mood of *Santa* is Quietude which is a tranquil face. This emotion is considered as the beginning and finishing point of the all other emotions. The actor has to control all his other emotions and goes in to a meditative situation as well as keeping passivity as the fundamental principal. This emotion is common to all species around the world that travels through the cycle of birth and death. In this emotion the actor tries to exercise the spirit of self-reliance through passivity other than trying to aggressively transmit meaning to the audience.

According to A. M. Chakyar (1995), it is Bhagavatar Kunjuny Tampuran who had developed a special style of acting the emotions through their lifelong research on Natyasastra and abhinaya in particular. This style of practising rasabhinaya is according to the method called *svara-vayu*. The method *svara-vayu* is based upon this close relationship between *rasas*, *svaras* and breath-control. Over long time of study and work experience an actor will be able to learn as to when he has to highlight and mitigate the *rasas* according to the context. The actor has to learn how to control all his facial muscles separately and thus make it cohere with all movements while practicing emotions. Even though the training technique is mechanical while
mastering the technique the actor also has to enquire about the genuine feeling and thus get an inner image from his own experience. The actor has to observe everyday life in order to understand how they behave, react and the changes that happen in their body in particular situations. It shows that Bhavas cannot be expressed merely with physical techniques. On observing the actor understands the natural ways of ‘action and reaction’ or the ‘cause and effect’ that happen at all levels in nature.

5.10 CONCLUSION

The descriptions elaborated in this chapter reveal how an actor in Kutiyattam goes through a lifelong training in order to fulfil the mind of the audience. From the beginning of his training the actor travels with an aim of being a full-fledged performer in Kutiyattam. Therefore the actor works hard on learning the skills in order to develop his willpower. During the training the actor learns all the skills for creating coherence of body and mind. The actor student in Kutiyattam starts his training by devotion and respect towards the form and the master thus learns it without any questions. The structure of repetition of daily practice helps an actor to by-heart the form through developing the skills of acting. By mastering the skills along with experience in performance practice on the stage, the Kutiyattam actor discovers his own way of acting which is not just the imitation of his teacher. Besides, he is eligible to create his own Attaprakaram with his own interpretations of any of the particular Act. When he is able to reform his art of acting he can continue his teaching along with performance in order to propagate his art form. Ultimately, the actor has to appear to move with ease and creative freedom which can be
achieved only through strict discipline and rigorous training. As Paniker (1995) mentions Kutiyattam acting is not just communicating the translation of meaning of individual words or sentences through gestures. In the process of aesthetic communication the experienced actor involves his entire body, mind in order to evoke the imagination of the spectator. The actor by his power of imagination creates scenes, visualises fantasies while the experienced spectator develops his imagined reality through following every movement of the actor’s eyes, hands, feet and costume for making the aesthetic experience jointly. This imagined reality is not the reality that exists outside the performance but it is the reality which is created by the actor and spectator while the performance is on. Thus the togetherness implied by the word Kutiyattam seems to extend from the training to performances, an actor’s body to characters body, literary text to performance text, the music to the movement and finally the actor and the spectator.

Reference


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1 Informed by Usha Nangyar in an Interview while researcher practicing Kutiyattam and Mizhavu at Chathakkudam Mizhavu Kalari