CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The detailed discussion in the foregoing chapters shows a picture of how both Noh and Kutiyattam have managed to preserve their traditional performance practices throughout history by incorporating different methods of performance practice. The historical development of both Noh and Kutiyattam started as a total sum and combination of folk music and dance along with rituals made for the ordinary people. As part of its survival strategy both Noh and Kutiyattam lost their connection with the ordinary people for quite a long time and they were performed exclusively for the feudal and religious communities at a certain point of time. Later both these art forms were released out of the feudal system and thus received greater attention globally by overcoming the boundaries of cultures and languages.

Instead of depicting everyday life as it is, Noh and Kutiyattam give more importance to guide the spectators into the deeper and more important aspects of man’s nature. These forms of dance and music are delicate art forms of the greatest beauty which add the myth of their own respective regions and the related expressions of feelings. It is to create such aesthetic fulfilment upon the spectators that both Noh and Kutiyattam practitioners developed and structured their entire area of performance practice while keeping the traditional values alive. This consideration help them to transform a popular folk form to the most sophisticated and classical performing arts in the world.
The study of its particular performance spaces—Noh Butai and Koothambalam—shows that the performance of these art forms were not intended for a mass but considered for select number of audience. The main stages for both art forms are square in shape and the structures are roofed with an intimate seating for spectators thus demanding minimal yet detailed acting. Both genres demand precise procedures with specific meaning for entrance and exit on the bare stage which is considered as a sacred place. The set and properties that are used for both Noh and Kutiyattam are very much selective and minimal which provide the quiescent effect during performance. The musicians are on the rear stage and they are also considered as co-performers in both the art forms. Through costumes and make-up both art forms categorize the identity, type, rank and importance of the character.

Since the spectator is expected to be familiar with the narrative outline of the play, his interest in watching the play is not so much in the progression of the events as in the depiction of the emotional states and the total experience which captures the ‘essence’ of things, creating an idealized world of non-illusory and make-believe world, rich in poetic and symbolic beauty (Sudha Gopalkrishnan, 1991). Indeed, while keeping to the strict rules and regulations of executions of performance, both Noh and Kutiyattam actors have to master the art of harmonizing the symbolic gestures, movement patterns, and also the chanting with the instrumental music, make-up and costume, stage decor and properties. As a result, both art forms are performed with an aim of provoking the imagination of the spectators and invigorating the space between the actor and spectator. Finally, the moment of a beautiful and aesthetic experience in both Noh and Kutiyattam is jointly evolved by the ensemble and committed presence of both the actor and spectator. Compared to Noh the number of plays represented in Kutiyattam repertoire is very less. At the
same time, five separate types of Noh plays can be presented in a single day programme as per the principle of Jo, Ha, Kyu. The plays used for Kutiyattam performance therefore come under the classes prescribed by Natyasastra and the presentation of a single act in Kutiyattam traditionally requires more than six days.

Even though there are many numbers of female characters in Noh, the tradition allows only the male performers to portray all the characters during a professional performance. This is however in contrast to that of Kutiyattam which is practiced by both men and woman with an exemption of the role of an aggravated Surpanaka which alone is played by a male actor.

Both Noh and Kutiyattam give respect and also consider the actors training as the most important part of their performance practice. According to the aesthetic vision of each art the actor’s body is an instrument for expressing his creative ideas on stage, therefore the training for an actor is meant to help him accomplish complete harmony of his body and mind. Training in both art forms require long period of time and an actor has to dedicate his whole life towards practicing his art and for its development. Only a cultured body and mind can provide an actor self-confidence, harmony and freedom for his creative activities. Therefore, the master actor in each art wished to banish the element of mistake from his profession and create a solid ground for the next generation.

The comparative study thus clearly points out points of parity and disparity between Noh and Kutiyattam actor training which may simply be put down as follows:
6.2 RESEMBLANCES OF NOH AND KUTIYATTAM ACTOR TRAINING

6.2.1 Analogy to Gurukul system of Training

Both in Noh and Kutiyattam the idea of training is structured in the manner of Gurukul system. In Noh performance practice once the child is accepted as the student he quite naturally becomes the member of the school or family. He has to practice regularly by following the all discipline and style of the school or teacher. At the same time the particular teacher or school also is responsible for taking up such kinds of students to the highest expression of a Noh actor.

In Kutiyattam also training in acting is developed and conserved by the master teacher and handed down to the respective student in the mode of Gurukul education by a particular performance community or the family. This systematic training offers plenty of chance for the student to accumulate lots of information about an ideal actor by observing his Guru (teacher) both in performance and everyday life. The success of a student in this particular mode of training in both traditions is connected with his intimate relationship with his teacher. At the same time, the accomplishment of a teacher depends on the achievements of his student. Thus, he devotes his life to educate him by observing his approach, qualities, and capacities to become a performer to continue the performance tradition (parampara). This system of teaching includes discipline, devotion, hard work and concentration in order to create a well-learned, responsible actor who can face any of the challenges during his performance practice.
6.2.2 Training at early stages of life

With regard to the beginning stage of the actors’ training both Noh and Kutiyattam teachers still believe that the training should start at the early stages of an actor’s life.

In terms of Noh an actor should be able to start his training between the age of seven and nine. A student at this age naturally shows eagerness towards the art of acting and also has natural traits of expressions. Kutiyattam teachers too are of the opinion that training between the age of seven to ten is the best in order mould the body for Kutiyattam performance. It is also trouble-free for the teacher to culture the body of his student before his bones and limbs develop well. Consequently, it is also considered to be the best time to teach the form and style of acting and is also thought of as the best time for a systematic and effortless development of a student’s career as an actor. The student at this stage is enthusiastic in imitating his teacher and also effortlessly learns the basic body postures, movement patterns and the chanting of both Noh and Kutiyattam.

2.3 Importance of Imitation

Both Noh and Kutiyattam give specific importance for imitation as the fundamental rule of an actor training. In order to learn the fundamental skills in Noh and Kutiyattam the student has to copy whatever the teacher does or shows in the class. Noh tradition believes that to become a successful actor one has to imitate his teacher well and then judge for himself to see if he can understand the art as well as absorb the art into his body and mind as the absolute. Thus while training the entire
fundamental postures; movements and chanting are copied by the student from his teacher with brilliant precision.

To become a Kutiyattam actor the student has to start his lessons only by imitating the postures, movements or chanting demonstrated by his teacher in the classes. In the initial stages the student has to learn all the skills of Kutiyattam by copying his teacher in order to become a specialist in the art of acting. Such teaching and learning is considered as the natural way of learning the language, culture and even others minds. In modern sciences, imitation has been thought as an extraordinary quality of intelligence that helps one to understand himself both individually and socially.

6.2.4 Significance of Repetition

Both in Kutiyattam and Noh immense importance is given for repetition as part of an actor’s training process. In both traditions the skill is considered as a kind of language to communicate between the teacher and the student and also for understanding their art more deeply. It is only through repeating the skills that an actor can reach the level of perfection and mastery of the skills that are taught to him by his master teacher.

In both forms constant practice helps an actor to realise what he learned from his teacher and further it helps him achieve the internalisation of his performance skill through putting him into the object of his role to feel freedom and the maturity in his acting. In other words the repetition process helps an individual to achieve an almost second nature as a well-trained actor. The repetitions are the ones that alter the internal energy of an actor. Further, these repeated exercises fulfil the function of
nourishing the inner sensitivity and awareness of an actor. In fact repetition helps the actor to build his skills and enables him to perform his roles with greater spontaneity.

In Noh, repetition is extremely helpful especially in the process of learning the movement patterns (*kata*) and other information. Furthermore, it also helps an actor to recall the information. The information of Kutiyattam practice also can be recalled by an actor effortlessly in his life time because ultimately the actor becomes what he repeatedly does.

### 6.2.5 Activating Spine and Centre of Gravity of the Human Body

Both Kutiyattam and Noh traditions believe that while training, an actor should be aware of activating his spine and also be conscious about the centre of gravity of the human body.

In Kutiyattam training the actor has to be fully aware of his body while holding his breath at the hip (at the base of his spinal column) in order to make an active presence of himself on the stage. As Kutiyattam actors believe evoking this navel part through practice helps an actor to strengthen his breath, energy, integrity, and sense of connection to the audience or outer world and concentration on the spine helps to activate the entire nervous system.

In Noh also the actor has to activate his spine while focusing on his body language by controlling the breath known as *ki-hai* which provides strength to his hip. The part called *hara* (the area of the body that lies a few centimetres below the navel) in Noh is considered as the centre of an actor’s entire self. Thus by activating both spine and the centre of gravity of the human body the actor in both forms develop an internal energy which is essential for an actor.
6.2.6 Voice and Movement as the Fundamental Art

Training in both Noh and Kutiyattam give prime importance for culturing the voice and movement of a student actor. In Noh tradition an actor student begins by training his voice and physical movements, which is considered as the very foundation for an actor to understand the basic language of his art for reaching the pinnacle of mastery and success. Training in chanting and physical movements helps the Noh actor to create the form of metaphorical and poetic language of acting in Noh. The basic posture called *Kamae* and the fundamental movements like *Shuriashi*, *Hakobi* and *Sashikomi* are the foundations for a Noh actor to build his performance and transform himself into the very character that he creates.

In Kutiyattam also the fundamental training for an actor starts with reciting the *slokas* (verses) in the suitable *ragas* (tune). Appropriate to the tune the trainee keeps rotating his wrist with flossed fingers while standing in the basic posture of Kutiyattam. It is this posture called *thanu nilkuka* that facilitates an actor to produce his voice and emotions in Kutiyattam language. Even though this practice of chanting in the significant squatting posture is a hardcore practice for a student, it is the only way to shape the body for good performance for the Kutiyattam actor. The movement with the hand gestures in Kutiyattam permits an actor to travel through his imaginative spaces in order to create the aesthetic pleasure in the spectator.

Both in Noh and Kutiyattam the vocal delivery, be it prose or verse, is presented in a particular cadence instead of expressing their emotion by imitating the mode of speech in real life. Here both the sound and movement patterns of an actor are not a true copy of the realistic sounds and real life movements; nor does it mean to hold any similarity. The training in movement and chanting helps an actor to understand the real nature of his own physical and vocal mechanisms; consequently
he will be able to find out the proper path to produce his voice and movement with perfect freedom.

6.2.7 Learning the Pre-determined Choreographies

There are fixed choreographies both in Noh and Kutiyattam and learning these pre-determined choreographies is the important part of an actor training in both traditions.

In Noh these choreographies are known as ‘Kata’ that is intended to formalize the movement patterns of an actor. It is essential for an actor to master this Kata in order to create a separate identity while he performs.

Kutiyattam actor also learns the art of acting through training in the pre-determined choreographies like Nityakriya, Chari, Attam and dramatic sequence. It is through the practice of these movement patterns that an actor in Kutiyattam realises the vitality of his form more physically and mentally.

The training in pre-determined choreographies guides the actor both in Noh and Kutiyattam to attain the ultimate level of his skill through step by step practice. Through repetitive training the actor will be able to acquire control over his entire limbs and body that allow him to move on the stage with a kind of continuous flow. Further such practice in both traditions helps an actor to develop an awareness of his entire body and the surroundings.

6.2.8 Learning the Character Types

Understanding the character types through imitating the grandmaster is the second stage of an actor training in both Noh and Kutiyattam.
Noh tradition believes that, it is important for an actor to gain the ability of portraying the three basic characters that are the old man, woman and warrior. Once the actor masters these basic characters he can easily apply these techniques to any type of acting that involves any character and also create an acting style of the highest fruition.

Likewise, in Kutiyattam also the actor has to learn to portray the character types than imitating the daily life characters. The important character types an actor has to learn in Kutiyattam are called *dhirodatta, dhiroddhata*, demons, animals, and *vidushaka*. Any characters in Kutiyattam will fall under these classifications. Thus learning these characters types is the most important base for creating any other character on stage.

Furthermore, majority of the characters portrayed in Noh and Kutiyattam are not the real life characters but something supernatural.

### 6.2.9 The Role of Acting Manual in Training

Learning the acting manual is considered as one of the most important part of training in both Noh and Kutiyattam. These highly complex and codified descriptions are handed over from generation to generation in order to give the actor more clarity on his creative works.

In Noh the actor’s manual known as *Utaibon*, contains a complete detailed description of the delivery of speech, rhythm, physical movement etc. Mastering the *Utaibon* through years of practice is considered as a milestone in the career of a Noh actor.

In Kutiyattam the *Attaprakaram* and *Kramadeepika* are the ones which guide an actor for presenting a play on stage. Thus the essential aim for actor training in
Kutiyattam is to understand the practical application of *Attaprakaram* and *Kramadeepika*.

### 6.2.9 Learning through Exposure and Experience on the Stage

Both the traditions consider stage practice as an important part of training. Even though the student actor learns the art form through several years of training under the master, his study does not stop with mere graduation. It is only through the exposure and experience on stage that an actor can harmonise his inborn talents and creative imagination and become a fruitful professional actor.

In Noh the student actor has to learn and master all of the back stage preparations and preliminaries by assisting the teachers and seniors at the time of the show. While performing on stage the actor gets chance to understand and analyse the proper applications of his knowledge. It is undeniable that constant and careful practice in this method is the only way to create a professional actor in Noh.

Same as in Noh tradition Kutiyattam also believes that a student after completion of his debut has to start performing minor roles with his teachers and seniors. At the same time he also has to involve in the production procedures by assisting his teachers and seniors in the dressing room and also for other preparations. Through this method of learning an actor in Kutiyattam gets more familiar with the performance practice of his art form.

In fact this is considered as the natural way of training in both Noh and Kutiyattam. For here the actor learns the plays, characters and applications of skills gradually and also gets a chance to understand the inclination of his respective audience. Consequently, by harmonising his body and mind the actor in both forms
develops himself into a professional artist who can meet the demands and challenges in his art at any point of time.

6.2.10 Form to Reform

The most important objective of the training in both Noh and Kutiyattam is to shape the actor to easily transform into the character that he plays. The actor has to learn how to transform his voice, shape, movements, behaviour and sentiment levels (ankikam, vachikam, ahariam and swathkam). The form that contains the appearance of patterns, poetry, songs (chants) and dance (kriya) is the only phenomenon which can help an actor to make his transformation effortless and the rhythm provide the spirit of acting. Therefore, the first part of the training mostly concentrates on learning the existing respective forms of Noh and Kutiyattam. The actor learns the forms through the process of information- information on culturally transferred behaviour patterns. Thus this process of learning can be considered as a mimetic way of learning instead of a genetic way of transmitting.

The actor in both Noh and Kutiyattam learn the forms thoroughly till he can inhabit inside this form and thus finally realise that the form is not static. Therefore, the real mastery in acting comes when the actor is able to reform his art form by contributing something new to the existing form. In fact, the forms are designed to help the actor experience how the body and the voice function. Thus through years of training and performance practice the forms enable an actor to find freedom. Forms therefore can be considered as the discipline or stylisation and freedom for reforming as improvisation which is known as manodharma in Kutiyattam. Thus in both
traditions improvisation is allowed to an actor only after he becomes a grandmaster in his own respective form.

6.2.11 Training for Inner Substance in order to Produce Rasa or Hana

At the ultimate level of actor training in both Noh and Kutiyattam the focus is more on developing the inner substance of an actor. Both traditions believe that it is only through harmonising the physical components that an actor can reach the level of manipulating his emotions in different levels. The performance practice in both theatres is meant for the spectator who is capable of internalizing the dramatic situations and emotions with concentration and whole-heartedness. Therefore, such performance can create an aesthetic fulfilment in the spectator or in the performance space in all totality.

In Noh, the fundamental principle of a fruitful actor’s function and also the aura he creates while acting is conceptualised as the flower (hana). Depending upon the quality of skill and will of an actor this Zen-like understanding can give nine different levels of ideal aesthetic experience. As a flower that withers only after blooming and spreading the scent, the Noh actor with the quality of Yugen should be able to control the breath of the spectators like the supercharged air and space created by his acting.

The whole training and performance practice of Kutiyattam too are designed to create the ultimate level of aesthetic enjoyment for the spectator (sahrudhaya) called Rasa. Since the nine defined Rasa’s emerge from the nine basic psychological states (Sthai) which is common to all creatures in the world, the Kutiyattam actor with
his mastery and control over body and mind can transmit the feelings to the spectators (*sahrudhaya*) using depth and unity of his performance.

Instead of imitating or showing the daily life the actors in both Noh and Kutiyattam create symbolic images of daily life and extend it to deliver that feeling to the spectator. This effort of the actor is the very essence which generates the ultimate presence of beauty (*yugen/bangi*) in his performance. Further the effort from both sides- that is, from both the actor and the spectator-transform the time, space and action, thus attaining a collective consciousness. It is this united artistic or symbolic time, space and action which differentiates the performance from daily life and which also provides the ultimate aesthetic fulfilment or an experience of bliss.

Both art forms make space for the spectator to enter into the aura of performance, and the spectator too contributes by thinking independently.

### 6.3 BASIC DIFFERENCES

Beyond the above mentioned basic similarities there is some dissimilarity also perceptible in matter of concepts and performance practice reflected in the training of both Noh and Kutiyattam.

#### 6.3.1 Training for the Elaboration of Dramatic Action

Kutiyattam actor mostly depends on his highly complex hand gestures (*hasthamudras*). These with its symbolic movements and dance depictions are used to elaborate the dramatic action in the performance. In order to reveal the multiple levels of meaning embedded within the text of the play the actor also trains himself in the fourfold method of performance. These elaborations require more time than the
narration of the story which is a unique feature of Kutiyattam acting. Besides, the Kutiyattam actor has to learn the mechanism of *Pakarnattam* which forms a significant part of the practice of explanation in acting.

In contrast to the above mentioned principles of Kutiyattam acting and its training, the Noh actor has to learn how to present the dramatic action in a more compact and minimalistic manner. As (Zeami, 1984) proclaims the training intends to mould the most full-fledged actor who is able to offer better and effective performance while he does less or nothing.

### 6.3.2 Training for Facial expression and Mask acting

The face of an actor in Kutiyattam is considered as one of the most fundamental parts assigned to express emotions with the central focus on the eyes. Thus the actor in Kutiyattam has to go through a rigorous training from childhood to gain control over these sensitive organs in his body. It is the mastery over the muscles of the face and eyes that help Kutiyattam actor to come out from the realistic kind of acting. The heavy and stylised facial make-up of Kutiyattam functions as a mask and facilitates an actor to highlight the basic psychological stage (*sthaibhava*) of the character by hiding his individuality.

In contrast to the above mentioned mode of performance practice and training, the face of an actor in Noh theatre is required to function as a neutral mask. The actor should not use any facial muscles to express the emotions; he is not even allowed to blink his eyelids during the training time. At the time of the actual performance the mask totally covers the facial expression of the main actor (*shite*), thus highlighting his individuality. If there is no mask the actor has to sustain the quality of tranquillity which is rather similar to the *Santa Rasa* in Kutiyattam.
6.4 FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study of the actors training system in both rich and organic traditional art forms of Asia, The Noh and Kutiyattam informs the significance of actor training systems to a contemporary actor. It shows the importance of lifelong practice as an important principle for creating-the most successful actor on stage. Through step by step practice the actor attains the ultimate level of his skill and is able to convey the difference between each form by intelligent and psychophysical negotiations.

Learning the skill or form is considered as the best language to begin communication between the teacher and student. This is necessary to reach the ultimate aim which is something beyond all such skills. The dedication and the relationship of both student and teacher are also very important to mould an actor to traverse beyond the skill. It is also showed that continuous and repeated mode of practice is the organic way of an actor to reach a healthy synchronisation of his physiology, psychology and consciousness.

By a constant training career, an actor should always be willing to accept new challenges which are harmonised to successive stages in his life. This would provide him a positive image for a long life in theatrical performance. As both Noh and Kutiyattam indicate, the foremost objective of actor training should be designed in order to meet the demands and challenges of the existing forms of theatre. By learning and understanding the existing forms and structures of theatre an actor should make he/she capable of experiencing life in the present or the here and now which, evoke the quality of internal energy to draws the spectators towards them. The training should help him remove dualistic distinction between the subject and object, body and mind and between the actor and the audience in the higher stages. When the body and mind begin to function as one the intellectual understanding will fuse with instinctive
knowledge. Instead of playing the externals of the character the actor has to play the essence of the character that he portrays. The target of training should be the overall psychophysical development of an actor to play the substance and never the effect. Therefore, training should specifically focus on the locale of an actor, his manner, potentialities and boundaries of his body and mind. A conscious attempt to explore the internal process of an actor with a unique vision and responsibility bring the successive energy in the contemporary performance practice.

This particular comparative study empowers the researcher to proclaim the necessity of a repertory system as continuity for actors training at every institution that offers training for contemporary actor. This repertoire with a basic focus on lifelong study of the performance text will help the actors to traverse beyond the formalistic concerns of physical skills and display. Despite of the still unanswered questions like; why do these two forms always maintains an elitist exclusivity? Or who tags this as elitist? Is it a survival strategy? The thesis hopes for deriving processes from the traditions to equip the budding actors for the contemporary theatre.

Reference