CHAPTER II

Bharata’s Theatre and Kutiyattam
Bharata’s Theatre

Literature comes under two main categories - Drsya and Sravya. In Sanskrit dramas are called by the general term ‘Rupaka’ because of their visual representation. Bharata classifies this in ten major types and one minor type called Natika. They are vary in length, nature of plot, the hero and heroine and the sentiment etc. Nataka and Prakarana may have five to ten acts. While Vidhi Bana and Anga are one act plays. Dima, Vyayoga, Samavakara, lhamiga and Prahasana may have one to four acts. Among the uparupakas (minor types) Natika with four acts are very popular.

Nataka comes first and foremost among the Rupakas. In olden days writing of drama became one of the chief accomplishments of poets, and it is intended for acting than reading. Under the patronage of Kings many poet wrote plays to be staged in the court auditorium. Most of the Sanskrit dramas draw their plot from the Ramayana, Mahabharata the Puranas and Legends. Bharata’s classification and definitions
of Rupakas clearly show that a good number of plays belonging
to different type were before him. The plays of Bhasa are the
earliest dramas that are available now.

**Sanskrit Dramatists**

i. **Bhasa**

Bhasa is the earliest Sanskrit dramatist whose works have been preserved to us. He is known as the father of Indian drama. He is placed in the fourth or some where in Third century B.C. Among the available dramas the 13 plays of Bhasa are the earliest and are popularly known as Thirteen Trivandrum plays. Bhasa has described a good variety of incidents and characters in these dramas.

Kalidasa refers to Bhasa as a great and popular dramatist in the prelude of his play Malavikagnimitram. Bana also refers to him in very high terms. Many poets, critics and commentators have quoted verses from Bhasa’s dramas. They have mentioned the two plays Sāvpanavasavadattam and Pratinjyaugandharayanam by name. There is a tradition which says that critics
tested the merits of Bhasa by throwing his works into the fire but the fire did not burn Svapnavasavadattam. For a long time nothing was known about Bhasa other than these references.

Of these Thirteen plays first two are based on the Ramayana, the next six plays are based on the Mahabharatam, the next four are based on popular legends and the last one is based on Vishnu puranam.

**Pratimanatakam**

It represents the story of Rama from the preparations for his coronation by Dasaratha up to his coronation after the fourteen years of exile. Bhasa has introduced many innovations in the plot. The statue (Pratima) scene by which the play is thus named is highly original and dramatic. This Nataka is known as the Pratima Nataka on account of the importance given to the Pratima or Statue in the Pratimagrha. Bharata was able to infer the fate which befell Dasaratha, on Sri Rama’s going away to the forest. This Nataka takes its material from the Ayodhya and Aranyakandas. In seven acts, it develops the Dharmavira mingled with Karuna Rasa.
**Abhisekanatakam**

This drama owns its subject matter from *Kiskindha, Sundara* and *Yuddhakandas* of Ramayana. It begins with the fight with Vali and ends with Rama’s coronation. The death of Valin and the subsequent coronation of Sugriva as the king of monkeys is the subject of Act-I. Act-II to V relates Hanuman’s visit to Sita, his capture by Ravana and subsequent escape, Vibhishana’s banishment and the battle in Lanka leading to the killing of Ravana and the coronation of Vibhishana. Act-VI treats Sita’s ordeal by fire and the coronation of Rama with Sita as his queen. Thus Abhisekanatakam takes as its organizing theme three coronations from the Ramayana. In six Acts it develops the sentiment of Vira.

**Kamabharam**

It is a one act play in the type of Vyayoga. It describes the episode of Indra begging in the disguise of a Brahmin and receiving the armor and the earrings of Kama. The burden of Kama is the central theme of this play. The sentiment of vira is predominantly developed and Karuna is kept as a subodinate
sentiment in this play. Kama, Salyaraja, and Sakra are the main characters of this play.

**Dutavakyam**

It is a one-act play belonging to the Vyayoga type. It deals with the story of Lord Krsna going to the Kauravas as the messenger of the Pandavas seeking peace. In this play the hero is Srikrśna and the sentiment is vira. The main characters of this play are Duryodhana, Srikrśna, and Sudarsana - the armour of the Kṛṣṇa.

**Dutakhatotkacam**

In this one act play Khatotkaca appears in the battlefield after the death of Abhimanyu and predicts the death of Kauravas.

**Madyamavyayogam**

It is a vyayoga type of one act play. It deals with an imaginary episode in which Hidumba employs a clever device with the help of her son Khatotkaca to meet her husband Bhima during the exile of the Pandavas.
**Pancaratram**

It is a play in three acts. It deals with the incident of the Kauravas stealing the cows of the king of Virata in order to discover the presence of Pandavas in his palace. In the plot Bhasa has made far reaching changes. Here he represented Duryodhana in a favourable light. This is a *samavakra* type of drama.

**Urubhangam**

This is a one act play in the type of *Utsrtikanka*. This play is the only real tragedy in Sanskrit dramatic literature. This play deals with the fall of Duryodhana with his thighs broken by the mace of Bhima, the last few hours of his life and final death. Here also Bhasa has represented Duryodhana as a great hero possessing superior valour and virtue.

**Svapnavasavadattam**

*Svapnavasavadattam* is the best of the thirteen plays. The title *Svapnavasavadatta*, comes from the dream scene in the play which is the poet's own highly dramatic innovation.
This is a drama in six acts and really a continuation of the Pratijnaugandharayana. The central sentiment in this drama is vipralambha Sngara and the main characters are Udayana, Vasavadatta – as Avantika, Padmavati, Yaugandharayana and vidusaka.

Pratijnaugandharayananam

This is a Nataka in four acts. It describes the earlier life of Udayana who was imprisoned by the King of Ujjain and father of Vasavadatta. Yaugandharayana vows to free his master and succeeds in making Udayana escape along with Vasavadatta. Udayana, Vasavadatta, Yaugandharayana are the main characters of this play.

Carudattam

It deals with the love story of a poor Brahmin Carudatta to a rich courtesan Vasantasena. This is a prakarana type of play in four acts. The main character of this play is Carudatta, Vasantasena, Samsthanaka and Sajalaka.
Avimaraka is a drama in six acts. It deals with the secret love of Avimaraka and Kurangi. He is a prince who had lost his statues and dignity due to a curse and possessed that name after killing an Asura named Avi. Kurangi is the daughter of Kuntibhoja who refused to give her in marriage to Avimaraka. In the end the identity of Avimaraka is revealed by Narada and he marries Kurangi.

Balacaritam

The theme of this drama is based on the Balakandha of Ramayana. In five acts it describes the birth and exploits of Lord Krsna till the killing of Kamsa. Bhasa deviates very much from the accounts of Krsna given in the Sreemad Bhagavatam Vishnupuranam and Harivamsam.

ii. Kalidasa

Kalidasa is the greatest of Indian poets. As a dramatist he has attained universal admiration. He is the great representative
of India’s spirit, grace and genius. He is the author of three dramas, two Mahakavyas and one Khandakavya. Malavikagnimitram, Vikramorvasiyam and Abhijnana sakuntalam are his dramas. In these we find pathos, power, beauty and great skill in the construction of plots and delineation of characters. We find in his works at their best a simple dignity of language, a precision of phrase, a classical taste, a cultivated judgment, an intense poetic sensibility and a fusion of thought and feeling. About the personal life and date of Kalidasa we do not possess any definite information. According to the references and evidences, it is held that Kalidasa lived in the first century B.C.

**Malavikagnimitram**

The first dramatic work of Kalidasa is Malavikagnimitra. This is a Nataka in five acts depicting the love story of Agnimitra and of Malavika, one of the attendants of the queen. This drama refers to certain historical events. The main characters of this drama are Malavika, Agnimitra, Dharini - the queen, Gautama - the Vidusaka, Iravati etc.
Vikramorvasiyam

The plot of the Vikramorvasiyam is taken from Mahabharata. The origin of this plot can even be traced to certain hymns of Rgveda. In five acts it deals with the love of Pururavas, and Urvasi-an Apsaras. So this drama represents events partly terrestrial and partly celestial.

Abhijnanasakuntalam

This is a drama which has received the highest praise from all over the world. This is perhaps the last play written by Kalidasa. In this drama, maturity, poetical genius and dramatic skill of Kalidasa have attained their perfection. In seven acts it depicts the love story of king Dusyanta and a hermit girl Sakuntala. Though the plot is taken from the Mahabharata, Kalidasa has made major innovation in the signet ring, which Dusyanta presented to Sakuntala. The main sentiment of this drama is *srngara*. But from the Fourth act onwards the undercurrent of the sentiment *karuna* is beautifully portrayed.
iii. Sudraka

Sudraka is the author of this drama who is placed in the first century A.D. It is a drama of the *prakarana* type in ten acts. It describes the love of Carudatta and Vasantasena and seems that Sudraka took the four act play of Bhasa’s *Carudattam* and developed it into a full-fledged play by weaving a political theme into it. Here the clay cart incident plays an important part and the title of the play comes from this incident. The style of *Mrccakatika* is sweet and simple and the scenes are very realistic and highly dramatic. It is noted for the variety of characters and incidents and also for quick movements. This drama throws much light on the social and political state of the country during that period.

iv. Visakhadatta

Visakhadatta is the author of a unique drama called *Mudrarakṣasam*. He is quite familiar with the city of *Pataliputram*, and his probable date seems to be somewhere in the early Seventh century A.D. *Mudrarakṣasam* is a drama of
political intrigue and depicts a battle of wits between two able ministers of state. The efforts of Canakya to establish Chandragupta on the throne of the Nandas and to force Raksasa, the faithful minister of the Nandas to accept ministership of Chandragupta are beautifully described in this work. The style of the author is vigorous and very appropriate to the theme. He is unrivalled in the effective handling of a political theme.

v. Harsavardhana

Harsa was the son of the Prabhakaravardhana and Yasomati. He was king of Kanauj of the Seventh century A.D. He is the author of three dramas Priyadarsika Ratnavali and Nagananda. His style is sweet and simple. He himself was a great poet and his court was the resort of learned men.

Priyadarsika

This is a natika in four acts. It is written on the model of Kalidas's Malavikagnimitram. The plot is taken from Udayana episode and the predominant sentiment is sugara.
**Ratnavali**

A Natika in four acts, Ratnavali describes the secret love of king Udayana to Sagarika, an attendant on his queen Vasavadatta. At the end of the play the heroine Sagarika turns out to be Ratnavali, a Ceylon Princess, whom a shipwreck has brought to Udayana’s court and Udayana marries her. The predominant sentiment of this play is *srngara*.

**Naganandam**

This is the masterpiece of Harsha. It is based on a Buddhist legend. It is a full-fledged drama in five acts. It is the gripping story of the vidyadhara princess Jimutavahana. The hero offers his life to Garuda in exchange for the life of a serpent and thus the author beautifully represents the spirit of self-sacrifice. Apart from being a love story, it contains a passionate appeal for non-violence. The predominant sentiment of this drama is *santa* and the main characters are Jimutavahana, Mitravasu, Sankucuda, Garuda, Jimutaketu, Atreyar-the Vidusaka, Malayavati and goddess Gauri. It is considered as one of the greatest plays in Kutiyattam.
vi. Bhavabhuti

Bhavabhuti belongs to the early Eighth century A.D. and he was patronised by king Yasovarman of Kanauj. His real name was Srikantha, the son of Nilakantha. It is said that he got the title ‘Bhavabhuti’ on account of that word occurring in beautiful verse composed by him. He was a great scholar in Vedas and Sastras. He is the author of three plays Mahaviracaritam, Malatimadhavam and Uttararamacaritam. Bhavabhuti hates fun and has not introduced Vidusaka even in the love story of Malatimadhavam.

Mahaviracaritam

It was the first drama written by Bhavabhuti. It is based on Ramayana with slight variations meant to show Rama’s heroism. In seven acts it describes the life of Rama as a warrior. The last act describes the country traversed by Rama and Sita on their way to Ayodhya in the aerial car.
Malatimadhavam

This is a *prakarana* in ten acts. The whole plot of Malatimadhavam is Bhavabuti's own creation and he is indebted to the Brhatkadha. The theme is a love story of Malati, daughter of the minister of the country and Madhava—a young scholar of the city and the son of the minister of another state. Bhavabuti has skillfully interwoven another love story with this main story.

Uttararamacaritam

It describes in seven acts the story of Uttarakanda of Ramayana that is the abandonment of Sita, her residence at the hermitage of Valmiki, the birth of Kusa and Lava and then the union of Sita and Rama. Bhavabuti has made many interesting innovations in the plot. The most interesting and touching innovation is the scene in which Rama and Sita are brought to the same place and Sita is made to see Rama without being seen by him and personally experience the feeling of Rama in her separation. It is here the dramatist has developed Karunarasa to a climax. Bhavabuti excels in developing the sentiment of
Karuna. He also introduces a dramatic performance within the play. His innovations from Ramayana are very much popular that many think it as the version of Valmiki himself. This play holds a high place in the theatrical literature of the world. In the expression of genuine pathos, and the description of wild scenery Bhavabhuti is found at his best.

vii. Bhattanarayana

Bhattanarayana is the author of Venisamharam and he lived in the middle of the seventh century A.D. It is a famous drama in seven acts. It describes the great events of the Mahabharata war ending with the binding of Draupati's braid of hairs, by Bhimasena. The central sentiment of this drama is vira and is best among those which develop the sentiment of heroism. The style is quite suited for Vira Rasa.

viii. Murari

Murari is the author of a drama named Anargharaghavam. He is placed to the early part of the ninth century A.D. He was a great scholar in sastras having undergone regular training
under eminent gurus. It is a drama in seven acts describing the popular Ramayana story. He possessed the name Balavalmiki. His style is highly artificial and is delightful to the learned.

ix. **Saktibhadra**

Saktibhadra was perhaps the first author of Kerala who wrote a Sanskrit drama. He is placed in seventh century A.D. and is the author of *Ascaryacudamani*, which is perhaps the first Sanskrit drama in south India. Unmadavasavadatta, which is now lost, was another drama written by him.

**Ascaryacudamani**

It is a drama in seven acts dealing with the story of Ramayana. It starts from Rama’s entry into the heritage at *Pancavadi* and ends with the return journey to Ayodhya in aerial chariot after the killing of Ravana. This work has many common features with the plays of Bhasa. In the construction of the plot Saktibhadra deviates from Valmiki. Here Sita’s abduction is made least objectionable by Ravana approaching her under Rama’s disguise, and misleading her by a false announcement.
of Bharata’s kingdom being in danger. The drama takes its name from the miraculous crest jewel and ring given to Rama and Sita by the hermits. The dominating Adbhuta Rasa is the characteristic feature of the play. The main characters of the play are Rama, Laksmana, Sita, Ravana, Surpanakha, Marica, Jatayu, Hanuman and Mandodari.

x. Kulasekhara

He is a king of Kerala of the eighth century A.D. He had written two dramas named Subhdradhananjayam and Tapatisamvaranam. His dramas deserve a place among the classical dramas in Sanskrit literature. His period was the golden age of Sanskrit theatre. The reformation of the staging of Sanskrit drama has done during his period.

Tapatisamvarana

It is a drama which describes in six acts the story of the love between Tapati, daughter of the Sun-god, and Samvarana, the king of Hastinapura. The plot is taken from the Mahabharata. The first three acts describe the development of love between
the hero and the heroine. In next acts he describes their union, birth of a child and their separation etc. And the story ends happily with the reunion of the hero, the heroine and their son Kuru.

**Subhadradhananjaya**

It is a drama in five acts dealing with the story of Mahabharata. It describes the well-known story of Arjuna’s abduction of Subhadra from Dvaraka. An interesting episode of this drama is the hero and the heroine loves each other not knowing their original name. Arjuna, Subhadra, Alambusa, Krsna, Draupadi, Goddess Kartyayani are the main characters of this drama.

These are the popular major dramas in Sanskrit. Most of these dramas are written to perform in special occasions as noted in their prologues.
Kutiyattam - An Introduction

The dramatic poetry, drsyā kavya, was written with the intention of acting. In olden days drama was not divorced from music and dancing. A play was said to have been 'danced' rather than acted unlike the modern social and historical plays. According to the traditional view a drama was an entertainment coupled with educative value for all classes of people. Dance and music were not separated from drama and so it became a source of entertainment for people of all classes. Various dances and dance dramas were prevalent in different parts of India. But staging of Sanskrit plays, in the traditional 'dancing' way is now vogue only in Kerala. A community known as 'Ca kyars' preserved this tradition of acting. It has been their belief, that performing kuttu was their exclusive clannish right and privilege. Though the smallest community in Kerala they did not altogether give up their profession. According to them it was not only a means of livelihood, but also a mode of worship. This was partly because of their unwillingness to give up their profession and partly because of their fear of incurring displeasure of the deities.
Staging of Sanskrit plays in the form of a dance drama deserves a thorough and detailed study because of its peculiar features and its survival in Kerala under peculiar circumstances. An attempt has been made to give a general description of Kutiyattam as it is now performed.

Kutiyattam is a general term which refers to performances by the Cakyars, Nambiars and Nangiars in the Kerala temple theatre. The word Kutiyattam itself means ‘combined acting’ and is applied properly to the performance of the Sanskrit drama where more than one character is on stage at one time. The Cakyar also frequently performs alone in the temple theatre Kuttambalam, with only the musical support of the Nambiar and Nangiar. Prabandhakuttu and the Nangiarkuttu are the other two solo performances of this kind. Prabandhakuttu gives emphasis to the Vacikabhinaya - verbal mode of presentation. These solo performances are not taken from Sanskrit plays but are improvisations based on the Sanskrit prabhandas (Narrative poems) of poets like Melpattur Bhattathirippad. In this after a brief introductory dance the Cakyar in the make up and costume of the Vidusaka recites a verse, acts it and expounds it, adding
analogies from historical and current social, religious and political events. Here, the Cakyarnarates the story, while the Nambiar playson the Mizhavu. Nangiar kuttu lays stress upon histrionic acting (Angikabhinaya). Adapted from the introductory scene of Subhadradhananjayam, this art form presents the story of Krsna in the form of Nirvahanam enacted by the Nangiarasa female attendant of Subhadra. Now a day’s more stories are added by eminent scholars to perform Nangiarkuttu. There is no place for humour; the Nangiar acts and the Nambiar playson the Mizhavu.

Kutiyattam as an art form gives scope for combined acting by several characters in the play. It adapts scenes from Sanskrit plays. All the four types of abhinayas are present in Kutiyattam. While the hero and the heroine primarily employ angika and svattika abhinaya, the vidusaka resortsto vacika, which is conveyed through prose, verse, music, Vidusaka’s Tamil, Prakrit and Malayalam. The male and female actors together present a great variety of characters. The different
forms of drama - like vyayoga, Nataka, Prahasana - have been adapted to kutiyyattam. Thus it is an integration of several modes of acting, forms of drama and types of actors. The text of the plays provides a foundation upon which the performance is built, but the time required for speaking the lines of the text is only a small part of the total performance time. The extensions and elaborations of the text are the most characteristic features of Kutiyattam. These extrapolations have several different functions among them.

a. To allow the play to be understood by those not knowing Sanskrit and so familiarize people with the language,

b. To have the motivations of the characters, the meaning of every verse, and indeed the meaning and significance of almost every word of the text understood and experienced fully,

c. To provide comic relief.

d. To censure vice and excess with social satire.
e. To allow the actor to reach his highest potential as a performer and

f. To make the entire performance an act of devotion.

Thus one act of a play, which would take at most twenty minutes of performance time in a straightforward production, will last for a very long time. The least number of days required for staging a single act is five. Other plays without Vidusaka follow similar patterns. If Vidusaka happen to be one of the characters of the play, six consecutive nights will have to be spent for his speech on different topics. And only the ninth day the Kutiyattam in the actual sense of the term would begin.

The Source

The Attaprakara and Kramadipikas are the instructional manuals for the actors. The Attaprakara explains in detail how to interpret and enact the verses and prose sentences in the play, give the gesture texts for the extrapolations, and outline the verbal interpolations of the Vidusaka. The Kramadipikas give instructions on make-up, costuming, and the various
melodies that are to be used for the verses of the plays. In short, the Kramadipika gives details from the directorial point of view and the Attaprakaras work like actor’s notes. Thus the stage-manuals give full details for the direction and production of performances. Kramadipika of Ramayana, Attaprakara of Anguliyan Kam, Asokavanikankam, Mantrakam and Bhagavadajjukam, are the most important of the existing texts. These texts, along with the texts of the plays themselves, are lovingly preserved and guarded by the Cakyars.

The Performance

The source of a Kutiyattam performance includes:

1) Purvaranga i.e. the preliminaries

2) Purappatu i.e. ‘entrance’ of the main character

3) Niravahana ‘accomplishment’ or ‘background’ of each of the characters whom has done purappadu

4) Kutiyattam, or ‘combined acting’ proper i.e. the text itself
5) Mutiyakkitta ‘final invocation’.

Purvarange or the preliminaries can be divided into three subparts—

a. Activities behind the scene i.e. (talavilkettuka)

b. Decoration of the stage, (Aranguvitanam) and

c. The entry announcement i.e. Purappad.

After these preliminaries are completed, one or more major characters will perform purappadu and Nirvahanam. In a performance the past is described in flashback in three stages.

a. Anukrama - Describing the incidents backwards one by one,

b. Samkṣepa - While doing anukrama actor stops at a certain event in the past and narrates the story from the very distant past which is related to the main theme. This relatively short narration is called samkṣepa.
c. Nirvahana - Here the story is described from the beginning in a forward direction.

The first two stages are presented through gesture only. The third is enacted along with verses sung by the female singer after their representation in gesture by the actor. Nirvahana will continue for a few days. After this, begins the text of the play.

Firstly, a short introduction to it is enacted without speech through gestures. Then the text is received with gestures and then again enacted only through gesture, which is often in the form of an elaboration of the text. Next, the last one or two lines of the same text are repeated with speech and gesture to give continuity to the text. Since the elaboration continues for a long period, the other character, including those to whom the text is addressed, exits, and return to take up their positions towards the end of the elaboration. The actual Kutiyattam takes place only on the last three nights. All the rest are seem like solo-acting.
The final day’s performance ends with Mudiyakkitta, the final invocation which is sung by the Nangiar while the Cakyar who has played the hero dances. Then he washes his feet, lights a wick, extinguishes the lamp, and then lights one of its wicks again. This is the completion of the Kutiyattam performance.

The Stage

The stage for Kutiyattam is an elevated platform in the auditorium. In olden days it enacts only in Kuttambalam. A three leged stool is placed on the stage for the actor to sit on, whenever he feels inclined to do so. Two big drums called Mizhavu are placed side by side between the Rangapida and Nepathy (green room). Two drummers sit behind the actor on two separate stools placed behind the drum. The Nangiar keeps rhythm with her cymbals. A red curtain would be held before an important character appears on the scene for the first time.
First of all Nambiar comes to the stage behind the curtain, sprinkles the stage with holy water by reciting the Nandi Sloka. So that nothing inauspicious may happen during the performance. After ten or fifteen minutes of playing the Mizhavu the hero of the play comes to the stage and when he stands in his pose the curtain will be removed. The hero after standing in the same pose for two or three minutes will utter the first sentence that he has to act, in a very clear and audible tone.

At that time he utters the words with gestures when no instruments should be played. Thereafter the whole meaning is brought home by dancing with gestures when instruments are played. When action comes to a close the actor himself steps the playing of the orchestra with a sign of the fingers. Then he takes up the next sloga or cumika as the case may be and describes the idea elaborately in the same way as he did before. In the case of Vidusaka, the abhinaya being chiefly Vacika, orchestra is not required.
Natyasastra and Kutiyattam

According to Natyasastra, the drama has a rigid frame, sophisticated structure with a beginning, development and denouement, the five junctures with their innumerable limbs for the plot and the actor imitating the historical character. All these go to develop the principal sentiment, either heroic or erotic. The abhinaya is predominantly vakyartha oriented. The multiplicity of characters on the stage gives room for interaction among the characters which helps a lot in the evolution of a action.

A close look at Kutiyattam would reveal that none of these requirements of Bharata is fulfilled here. Kutiyattam has a loose structure, the development of plot does not accepted track, Abhinaya is almost of the nature of a monologue with little scope for interaction, the actor fixes the eyes on the flames of the lamp kept before him and the elaboration centers around the padartha.

Several technical devices used in the drama are important for its general effect. So the general perception is that Kutiyattam, as it is a performance of Sanskrit plays, follows
Natyasastra. It is true only partly. Some of these technics have been adopted or adapted by Kutiyattam and so they will be briefly examined here. Monologues and asides taken directly to the audience are frequent. In Kutiyattam performance the scene begins with extensive preliminaries. Each party involved expresses its view of the situation directly to the audience. Finally there is a confirmation in which the rival forces came briefly in contact with one another. Instrumental music which is described in great detail in the Natyasastra was supposed to accompany certain verses and types of action, but it was not to be used throughout. Kutiyattam, however, incorporates a particular accompanied vocal style for both the prose and verses of the text. Many gaits specified in Natyasastra are used in Kutiyattam in different occasions. The Akkitta songs of Kutiyattam are similar to the entrance Dhruva song of the Sanskrit dramas prescribed in the Natyasastra. Natyasastra indicates Sanskrit for the major characters like heroes, Brahmanas etc and Prakrit's for women, children, persons of low birth etc. Kutiyattam also follows this pattern. All the four types of abhinaya as required for a Natya according to Bharata’s Natyasastra are present in Kutiyattam.
Though Kutiyyattam follows Natyaśāstra on many aspects, it has generated its own Desi style. Natyaśāstra prefers one day for one act. But in Kutiyyattam one act will be completed within too many days. Long hours will be required even for a word in a sloka. The performance should be based on the interpretation of literal meaning to nanaloka, laymen, and the suggestive meaning to preksaka, the elite audience. As a whole this art form created a long narrative style. In Natyaśāstra onstage violence is restricted, but in Kutiyyattam, a description of the battle and the death of Bali etc are depicted elaborately.

The purpose of the sanskrit drama as codified by the Natyaśāstra is to allow the audience to experience fully a complete feeling that accompanies a particular primary emotional state. This experience is called rasa; and each moment of the drama is to be designed to illuminate the spectator a different aspect of the rasa. Kutiyyattam is concerned not with the action and the plot or the characters but with setting up, by means of character and plot, situations which will provide a multitude of feelings associated with the main one chosen. The focus is on emotion rather than on action. Natyaśāstra, offers a detailed
analysis of various emotional states and the ways in which the actor can show these states in his acting. Kutiyattam focuses on the eyes to express rasa and bhava. Elaborate presentation of the text through the explanation of prose order, literal meaning and interpretations illuminate the elementary function, Padarthabhinaya. A drama as a whole can be staged only by many days. Descriptive method is inseparable in its style of presentation. Hence it gives more emphasis to Bhava than Rasa. The performer and the audience need a high level scholarship of language, literature, techniques etc to enjoy and criticize the entire action. Actor imitates the state of the character and converts his imagination through his narrative techniques.

In Kutiyattam, the actor has a break not only from the structure of the play but even from the very stage itself. The actor gets himself transformed into a stage and characters, emotions and incidents pass through the face as though it were another stage erected for acting. He is liberated from everything around except for the lamp kept before him. Only the epic tradition\textsuperscript{13} permits an actor to be so liberated that he can fly through the space in imagination, assuming as many roles as possible.
So, Kutiyattam follows this epic tradition in its content and mode. Something that comes closest to this in Bharata’s tradition is the natyayitam. The kimbravishi and akasabhashita also do not come near the transformation of roles.

Bharata’s actor is an imitator, whereas a Kutiyattam actor is also a narrator and interpreter. These roles are inherited from the epic tradition. He is more akin to the suta in Naimisaranya than to the hundred sons of Bharata in the ancient lore. These narrative techniques have been studied fixing them at different planes. One thing is common to all the interest of the audience is sustained. It is the sole aim of all narratives. The story teller in the cakyar in Prabandhakuttu is the direct inheritor of this tradition. The verbal technique translated to physical action provides the basis for pakarnnattam. Kutiyattam therefore is the fusion of the narrator and the imitator.
Major plays adopted for Kutiyattam - A General Study

Among the Sanskrit dramas very few are included in the Kutiyattam stage. They are not staged as such in Kutiyattam. Individual acts from well-known dramas are chosen for the performance and each of these acts are known by different names while a drama is enacted in Kutiyattam. The importance is given to characters rather than the theme. That is why all the characters in the drama are not entering on the stage. Only main characters enter and importance is given to these characters. During the performance, not only the text of the drama but also a lot of relevant matters is brought in for elucidation and didactic appeal. The presentation of the play in Kutiyattam takes an inordinately long time. For example, the whole Ramayana Story based on the plays of Asaryacudamani, Abhiseka and Pratima took one whole year for its performance. In this manner the performance of the first act of Subhadradhananjaya of Kulasekhara takes eleven days. It contains only fourteen verses and some dialogues. The acting
of each verse takes two or three hours and even a single act may take many day’s for completion. Many scenes are presented as solo performances, with the same actor impersonating several characters without change of costume or make-up. The recapitulation of previous history is a long narrative. This elaborate portrayal of past history is called Nirvahanam. This is not a part of the original text of the play; it is added by the actors. So every play in Kutiyattam has also acting-manuals prepared by senior artists. Without the assistance of such manuals no act of a drama could be staged. Hence Cakyars have prepared such manuals in advance for the plays or acts which they usually put on the temple theatre. According to the tradition of the cakyars the number of the acts in which they are usually trained is seventy-two, selected from twenty-four classical dramas.

Bhasa and Saktibhadra are the two playwrights whom the cakyars depend the most. For centuries cakyars have been producing the plays of Bhasa in Kutiyattam style. Bhasa’s plays are distinguished by their histrionic potential. Every line of Bhasa is rich and provides scope for elaborate imaginative
interpretation. This is what endeared Bhasa to the cakyars. So the thirteen plays of Bhasa, Two Prahasanas ie Bhagavadajjuka and Mattavilasa, Kalyanasaugandhika, Naganada, Subhadradhananjaya, Tapatisamvarana, Ascaryacudamani, Sakuntala, Mahanataka, Krishnacarita and Unmadavasavadattam are once used in Kutiyattam stage. Among these last two are traditionally reported to be popular, but we have no evidence. Now a day’s some other plays are added and some are omitted in Kutiyattam performance.

The list of plays which are now staged on Kutiyattam is:

i. Four Kerala plays,

ii. Two prahasanas,

iii. Nagananda,

iv. Few among the thirteen plays of Bhasa,

v. Plays of Kalidasa.

Now we may examine these dramas in detail.
Kerala plays

Kulasekhara’s two dramas Tapatisamvarana and Subhadradhananjaya have been very popular in Kerala and are staged even to this day by the professional actors. He himself enacted the role of each character and with the help of learned friends and skilled actors formulated a scheme for the presentation of his dramas. A Brahmin friend recorded this; it came to be known under the common name Vyangyavyakhya which is perhaps the only text of this kind.

Subadradhananjayam (S.D.)

The stage-script written for S.D by one Brahmin scholar is known as Dhananjayadwani. It is only partially available now. It is not known whether the script was prepared for all acts of Dhananjaya, it ends abruptly with the description of the initial part of the second act, i.e. till the story of Srikrishna. Now a days Act I actively staged.
Act one of S.Dh.

This act is most popular in Kutiyattam stage. Details for the presentation of the first act have given full in the stage-script. The description of Purusartha is the important reason for the popularity. Dhananjaya - the hero and a maiden i.e. the heroine Subhadra are the two characters entering on the stage other than Vidusaka. Arjuna along with his friend Kaundinya cause the escape of Subhadra from a demon Alambusa who carried her across the sky is the theme of this act. The famous ‘Patanti’ scene is enacted here. The enactment of this act takes eleven days. The schedule of acting is on the following line:

1st to 3rd day - Arjuna’s Purappad and his Nirvahanam

IVth to VIIth day - Entry of Vidusaka and his Nirvahanam.

IXth to XIth day - Actual Kutiyattam performance. (enactment of Panjanga, Patanti Scene etc.)
Subhadra’s fall from the sky is one of the spectacular scenes enacted in Kutiyattam. This famous scene is known to have been traditionally represented on the stage using spectacular stage settings. But now a day’s a stool is used for this purpose. The another memorable and most interesting item of Kutiyattam repertoire is the performance of the famous verse ‘Calakuvvalayadhamnonh’ which also comes under this act. An able actor may take two hours or more to complete the abinaya. Here both the hero and the heroine enact the Pancanga when they are affected by love. This is another important scene of this act.

**Act II (S.D)**

The second Act of S.D was presented by Cachu Cakyar in the early part of this century. But this became extinct. Now a days Margi has presented this again. This was directed by Sri. Ammannur Madhava cakyar. The opening scene of this Act developed as an art-form known as ‘Nangiar-Kuttu’. The enactment of this IInd act in Kutiyattam takes twelve days.
**Act V (S.D)**

This act has not been performed since a long time, but now a days it is performed in Kutiyattam stage. Goddess Kartayani saves Subhadra from the Raksasa Alambusa and takes her to the garden in the outskirts of the city where Arjuna is waiting is the theme of this act. This act gave importance to Nangiars. There are four female characters appearing on the stage. They are Goddess Kartayani, Subhadra, a Ceti and Draupadi. Of these Subhadra’s role is given more importance.

**Tapatisamvarana**

Samvaranadhvani is the name given for the stage script of Tapatisamvarana. The manual of this drama is complete. In this the style of acting of the three acts has been described. The work ends with the statement that there is no dhvani thereafter except in the part where Menaka enters. Now a day’s only the first half of the first Act of Tapatisamvarana is staged in Kutiyattam. It takes eight days for its performance. The first five days perform the purappad of Vidusaka and his description.
of the four Purusarthas etc. is performed. The actual Kutiyattam takes place only on the last three days. In these days the text of the drama will be enacted and it ends up to the entry of the heroine Tapati. She is not presented. Only two characters, the hero Samvarana and his companion Parasarya i.e. vidusaka are entering on the Kutiyattam stage. The mention of the name of the first wife of the hero is done here and her name is not found anywhere in the actual dramatic text but this is found only in this stage manuals. There is a popular saying in Malayalam, the second part of which refers to the representation of Tapati jumping in the river Ganges and floating on the water until she is rescued by Samvarana. This shows that once the whole play is en acted on Kutiyattam. Even now this is performed as an Atiyantirakuttu in many temples.

Kalyanasaugandhikam

A Keralite called Nilakandha wrote a play of Vyayoga type named Kalyanasaugandhika, which is popularly performed in Kutiyattam. The play derives its name from Kalyanaka a Vidyadharas messenger of Indra and Saugandhika a flowersought
for Draupadi by Bhima. The hero of this Vyayoga is Bhima and the heroine is Draupati who does not actually appear on the stage. The other characters appearing on the Kutiyattam stage is Hanuman, Krodhavasa, Vidyadha and his consort Gunamanjari. The play is most theatrical with different planes of interpretation.

After a long interval this play was presented in Kutiyattam on the occasion of the inauguration of the Kuttampalama at Kerala Kalamandalam in 1976. This performance takes four days. But now a day’s performance is done in two consecutive nights. The first day begins with the entry of Bhima and the story is enacted up to the defeat of Krodhavasa - the demon who is the protector of the lake. His entry is very elaborately staged towards the end of the first day’s performance. The second day begins with the entrance of the Vidyadha named Kalyanaka along with his consort Gunamanjari. Both of them act as though coming down from the heaven by resorting the movement of ‘Ambarayana’ moving through the ariel space. To show this they should stand upon the stool when the curtain is removed. The ‘Ajagarakabalita’ and ‘Marutollolita’ are the fascinating
scenes of this play. In Marutollolita the vidyadhara couple shows the violent movement of air very effectively. The enactment of Ajagarakabalita\(^{17}\) in the proper way is an achievement on the Kerala stage. In order to show the scene the actor has to resort to the stobhas of lion, elephant and boa alternatively. To portray the elephant an actor has to show by gesture the tusks, trunk, head, ears and four legs. Now he shows the python coming out of the cave and devouring the leg by pulling at it. Again the actor imitates the elephant which tries to move away in anguish roaring all the while. Then the elephant notices a lion roaring and jumping on his head. Soon the actor assumes the role of the lion smashing the head of the elephant, plunging its nails on to the neck and drinking the blood, pulling the elephant to another direction. Thus an actor has to show this scene through Pakarnattam by the roles of an elephant, boa and lion and it is very much fascinating.

This is performed as an offering in some temples in a fixed schedule. For example in Vennimala temple, where twenty-eight days Kutiyattam is performed annually, this is to be performed on the day with the star of Puruttati without fail by the Potayil Cakyar family.
Ascaryacudamani

This is one of the plays in which the whole play is enacted and most popular in the Kutiyattam Stage. This is a seven act play and the cakyar has given different names to these acts. They are Parnasalankam, Surpanakhankam, Mayasitankam, Jatayuvadhankam, Asokavanikankam, Anguliyankam and Agnipravesankam. Being a Ramayana story it was very popular and was performed as ‘Atiyantirakuttu’ in many temples. Now a day’s Thiruvananthapuram Margi is performing the whole play. The abridged version of this play is very recently performed at Thiruvananthapuram in four days. Now we can examine this in detail.

Parnasalankam

This is the first act of Ascaryacudamani. The performance of this act takes 21 days. This act was not performed in many years. This act was enacted at Margi in a traditional way, under the guidance of Sri Ammannur Madhava cakyar.
Surpanakhankam

This is the second act of Ascaryacudamani and the enactment of this takes five days. It is most important and is very popular in Kutiyattam. This play is still being enacted in temples at regular intervals. In this act Srirama, Lakshmana, Sita and Surpanakha are the main characters.

According to the acting-manual the performance starts with the entry of Lalita. But in the performances in the various temples in these days, Rama enters first and enacts the first part of Lalita in his Nirvahana. During the five days the first day enacts the entrance of Rama, then three days his Nirvahana, and the final day there the remaining portions of the entire act is performed. Actually, the actual Kutiyattam takes place on this day. This day along with Rama Lalita, Surpanakha and Laksmana are entering on the stage. Surpanakha’s make-up in black – karivesha - Ninam and her entrance in a noisy and terrible way are noticeable in this act.
Mayasitankam

This is the third act of Ascaryacudamani and the performance of this takes place in twelve days. The characters appearing on the stage are Sita, Lakshmana, and Ravana as MayaRama and Surpanakha as Mayasita. Here Sita has a major role to enact. Recently, Ammannur Madhavacakyar has composed this for Margi in the traditional way.

Jatayuvadhankam

This is the fourth act of Ascaryacudamani. The enactment of this takes seven days. After 1980, Ammannur Madhavacakyar has composed it in Ammannurgurukulam.

Asokavanikankam

This is the fifth act of Ascaryacudamani and is very important in the Kutiyattam stage. It takes 16 days for the performance. In this act Ravana takes the major role with Nirvahana. According to Attaprakara Ravana enacts the role of Sita by ‘hearing and acting’ method. The enactment of
Mandodari in this act was done recently with the newly composed Nirvahana verses.

**Anguliyanakam**

This is the sixth act of Ascarycudamani and is very much popular in Kutiyattam stage. It takes twelve days to perform and is still being enacted in many temples at regular intervals. Hanuman is the only character appearing on the stage and he enacts the roles of other characters. He has to describe by Angikabhinaya the whole story of Ramayana. It is because of this elaborate description of different incidents in the story of Ramayana that witnessing the staging of this act is supposed to be a great meritorious thing. It is believed even now that to offer Ankuliyanakamkuttu in a Vaisnava temple is good for a childless person to beget children.

**Agnipravesankam**

This is the seventh act of Ascarycudamani and also known as 'Ezamankam'. The enactment of this act takes thirteen days and is being enacted in temples as Atiyantirakuttu. Recently
it is composed for Margi by the combined effort of Ammannur madhava cakyar and Muzhikkulam kochukutten cakyar.

ii. Two Prahasanas

Mattavilasaprahasanam

Mattavilasaprahasanam of Mahendra Vikramavarma is a one act play, which is very much popular on the Kerala stage from early days. At present the duration of the performance is limited to three days or evening though we have evidence to suppose that it was not so in ancient times. An Attrapakara of Bhagavada Jjuka states that in Mattavilasa, the Sutradhara alone holds the stage for seven days, but actual days for performance of this play is not available. In ancient days all the five characters were presented on the stage. But later some characters - the Buddhist monk, the Pasupata and the lunatic as well as Devasoma - were omitted. Now a day’s only Kapalin – the principal character of the play named Satyasoma and the Sutradhara are the two characters entering on the stage. The other relevant characters are being represented by him through stobha.
The text was restructured retaining only the first two verses. The previous history of Kapalin as a pious Brahmin was added in the guise of Nirvahana. The verses from \textit{Kumarasambhavam} were borrowed to describe the penance before attaining his present form. The first two days of the performance Sutradyana enters on the stage and in the first day he recites the first verse of the drama up to the middle of the second line and explains the meaning of the whole verse followed by action. On the second day, his Nirvahana in which the connecting link of the story as to how the Nrtta was produced by Siva is being enacted. His aim is to create a background for the principal character Kapalin. For this the verses from second and third cantos of \textit{Kumarasambhava} of Kalidasa were borrowed. Then on the third day the main character Kapalin enters on the stage. It is supposed that his wife Devasoma is also along with him, but actually she is not presented on the stage. Here he describes his previous history, which is only available from Cakyas. Thus the performance is completed normally in three days. The presentation of this play is presented as an offering, in many temples. It is believed that this performance would cause to
beget progenies, so this is also presented in temples as Vazhvadukuthu – the religious performance. This Prahasana is also considered to be very ‘sacred’, especially forgetting the blessings of Lord Siva.

**Bhagavadajjukam**

Bhagavadajjukam of Bodhayana kavi is one of the earliest dramas adopted for Kutiyattam. It is rightly called as Prahasana ratna - the gem of a farce. This is still presented in full on the Kerala stage. From the available stage manuals, the Kramadipika of this play is the earliest. From this it is known that the staging of Bhagavadajjuka extended up to thirty-five days, which would normally have taken three hours for its presentation. In Thirty-five days presentation, Sutradhara takes first seven days, the next eight days for Bhagavan followed by sixteen days for Sandilya - the Vidusaka and the last four days for Kutiyattam.
Thus the scheme of presentation of this play is as follows: 
Ist to VII days are devoted to the introduction and function of 
the Sutradhara, VIIth to XV days for the entrance of Bhagavan, 
the monk who is the teacher of the Vidusaka, XVIth to XXXIst 
days for Sandilya-the Vidusaka who explains his background 
and introduces the theme. XXXIInd to XXXVth days are intended 
for actual Kutiyattam. It may be seen that the first fifteen days 
are set apart for preliminaries and introduction while the textual 
portion begins only from the sixteenth day onwards in which 
the actual Kutiyattam takes place only from thirty-second day 
onwards. The above mentioned stage manual gives provision to 
reduce the duration according to circumstances. In modern times 
Bhagavadajjuka is not presented as described above. The late 
Painkulam Rama Cakyar has edited the stage version into three 
scenes to last for about four and a half hours. The speech of 
Sandilya is cut short to the minimum which lasts for sixteen 
days. The discourse between Parivrajaka and Sandilya has been 
omitted and more importance has been given to female characters 
by introducing the description of garden. Thus this edited 
version of Bhagavadajjukam was presented in two nights. 
Recently the same is completed in a single night.
iii. Naganandam

Naganandam is considered as one of the greatest plays in Kutiyattam. But in any temple this play is not performed as an Atiyantira kuttu. This play of Harsa consists of five acts. References in the stage manuals prompt us to hold a view that all the five acts of the play were adapted for the performance. But during the last few decades only the first, second and the fourth acts are performed in Kutiyattam. And even there the first act forms only a background for the performance of the second act. The story of the first act is represented by gestures by the hero entering from the beginning of the second act. Thus in fact only two acts of the play i.e. the second and fourth, are popular on the Kerala stage.

Second Act of Nagananda

In ancient times this act was performed in sixteen days. In this the first six days consist of the Nirvahana of the hero Jimuthava hana and the next seven days for Atreya - the Vidusa ka. The entrance and his description of the four
purusarthas are described in these days. Then the last three days for actual Kutiyattam, where the story of the second act of Nagananda is enacted. The characters entering on this act other than the hero and vidusaka are the heroine Malayavati, her brother Mitravasu and a maid. The hanging scene of Malayavati is one of the best scenes in Kutiyattam and very much impressive.

According to witnesses, Nagananda was last performed in 1957 at Irinjalakuda. After more than four decades it was performed at Thrissur recently. Beginning from the entry of the hero and vidusaka was prescribed here by the combined effort of a team of artists in one day. The performance text was prepared by Kalamandalam Rama Cakyar and Ammannoor Kuttan Cakyar. The verses for vidusaka were the same used before and also the legendary hanging scene of this act was performed. This scene which is presented by Usha Nangiar is very much exciting.

The Fourth Act of Nagananda

While enacting the fourth act of Nagananda the cakyar putting on the role of Garuda not only gesticulates the meaning
of the text of the play but also flies emulating a kite. Flying is an important part of the action and hence the performance is called Parakkumkuttu.

This is not a simple performance. It takes strenuous efforts on the part of the cakyar and his assistants\textsuperscript{19}. This is performed outside the theatre and preferably in a large place surrounding the campus. So the various places named Kootuparambu scattered all over Kerala are believed to owe their names to this performance. It is a wonderful sight to visualize Garuda lifting up the body of the hero of the play by his beak and fly away to a mountain. This spectacular scene, where the actor performed while hanging at the top of a huge wooden frame hoisted outdoors, was one of the specialities of the play. The performance is attractive as well as dangerous since the actor taking the role of Garuda has to remain suspended on the air for a long time. The first part of the famous Malayalam saying\textsuperscript{20} is refers to the representation of the actor who flown as Garuda in Nagananda. Parakkukuttu became a thing of past even more than centuries ago.
iv. Plays of Bhasa

Abhisekanatakam

This is one of the favourite plays of the cakyars from the earliest times. It depicts the story of Ramayana in six acts. Cakyars have divided it into seven acts for the purpose of their Kutiyattam performances. Balivadham, Hanumaddutam, Toranayuddam, Samudrataranam, Mayasiras, Prathamadvitiyankam and Pattabhisekam are the names of the acts given by the cakyars respectively. This is one of the plays performed under the name ‘Ramayanakuttu’. Now a day’s Balivadham and Toranayuddham i.e. the first and the third acts are presented in Kutiyattam most popularly. Hanumaddutam and Mayasiras are also presented in Kutiyattam recently.

Balivadham

This has got greatest popularity in these days. The presentation of this act takes five days. In ancient days all the six characters except Tara used to come on the stage. After 1970, Painkulam Rama cakyar insisted on bringing Tara also on
the stage. Now a day's outside the temple whenever Balivadham
performs all the seven characters, ie. Sri Rama, Lakshmana,
Hanuman, Sugriva, Bali, Angata and Tara come on the stage.
According to the kramadipika the whole act including the part
of the sutradhara can be finished in five or six days. But now-
a day's the part of the Sutradhara is omitted.

The action begins with Sri. Rama’s ‘Purappadu’. This
is enacted over five days in the following order:

First Day - Sri Rama’s Purappadu
Second Day - Nirvahanam of Sri Rama
Third Day - Sugriva’s Purappadu
Fourth Day - Nirvahanam of Sugriva
Fifth Day - The Kutiyattam Proper is enacted

Recently, Guru Ammannur Madhava Cakyar had made
an abridged version of Balivadham, which can be performed in
three hours. This shortened version was devised to facilitate
performance other than in the temple, on a single day. Ammannur
Cakya used to perform this play as a religious ritual in the Mulikulam, Vadakkumnadhan and Kudalmanikyam temples. But today this custom maintains alone at the Vatakumnadhan Temple at Trichur. Here this performance is made once in five years. The enactment of Bali’s death is one of the most important and interesting piece in Kutiyattam.

**Toranayuddham**

This is one of the most interesting and colourful performances presented by the Cakya in Kutiyattam. The presentation of this act takes six days. The play begins with the entry of Sankukarna who is frightened seeing the destruction of the garden by Hanuman. The characters entering are Sankukarna, Ravana, Vibhisana, Hanuman and a couple of minor characters i.e. two ‘Raksasas. One female character Vijaya - the door keeper - is also appearing. The scheme of presentation of the play is as follows:

- First Day: Sankukarna’s Purappad
- Second and Third day: Sankukarna’s Nirvaha
Fourth Day - Ravana’s Purappad and Nirvahana

Fifth and Sixth Day - The Actual Kutiyattam

This play shows how the Cakyars have brought in some comic relief by using a terrified servant Sankukarna. His enactment of the famous verse ‘Yusyam na Piyanandanapi Mahisi Devasya Mandodari’ is very important in the Kutiyattam.

In the first day Sankukarna enacts how Mandodari decorates herself in detail. This is famous as ‘Koppaniyikkal’ in Kutiyattam. Next day in Sankukarna’s Nirvahana he enacts the previous history of the Ravana. Here he enacts the lifting of the Kailasa Mountain, the quarrel between Siva and Parvathy, and the marching of Army. These are most important pieces of abhinaya in Kutiyattam.

At present this act is regularly performed as a religious ritual in Vengannur Siva Temple by the Koyappa cakyars of Painkulam and once in every five years at Vadakkumnadhan Temple, Trichur by the Ammannur cakyars of Irinjalakuda.
Edited version of Toranayuddham lasting for two hours and more would be performed on demand other than temples. Thus Toranayuddham would perhaps be the best piece on Kutiyattam stage.

Hanumatddutam, Samudrataranankam, Mayasiras of Abhisekanatakam are once performed in traditional way but it was not brought out on the stage in many decades. Recently, Guru Ammannur Madhavacakyar had made an abridged version of these acts which can be performed in one day by omitting the Nirvahana.

Pratijnayaugandharayanam

Among the plays of Bhasa which is enacted in Kutiyattam Pratijnayaugandharayanam had got an important place. Now a day’s only the third act is presented in Kutiyattam, but we have evidence to prove that the whole play was once performed. The third act of Pratijnayaugandharayanam is popular as Mantrakam, which is considered to be the most ancient in the repertoire of Kutiyattam. Mahasenankam and Arattankam are the other acts once used to be performed.
Mantrankam

This is most important for a Cakyar. It is said that a Cakyar who performs Mantrankam is competent to present all Vidushaka roles. That means all the matters in Vidushaka are included in this. It derives its name from the discussion conducted by the three ministers of Udayana about his release. The plots and intrigues in managing the escape of the king Udayana form the theme of this act. The main character in this is Vidushaka, the disguised Vasantaka. Yauganda Rayaana disguises himself as a lunatic, and Rumanvana as a monk are the other characters of this play. According to manuals this act is enacted in forty-one days. The first three days are meant for the rituals of Vidusaka’s Purappad and then next day onwards his nirvahana starts. Here he mentions many stories and after this Kutiyattam takes place. Vennirattam is the most important scene in this act. Kuttencery, Mani and Mekkad Cakyar families perform this as an offering in Peruvanam, Talipparabu Avittattur and Annamanada temples.
**Balacaritam**

It is even now strictly insisted that a cakyar must act the role of the Sutradhara in Bhasa’s Balacaritam for his Arangettam. This is an old rule. A Cakyar boy can have his Upanayanam (initiation) only after his Arangettam. Consequently even a boy who has no intention of pursuing the traditional profession has to get trained, at least, for this role and perform his Arangettam. If he does not have his Upanayanam before he attains the age of sixteen, a Cakyar boy ceases to be a member of his community.

**Svapnavasavadatam**

This play was once popular in Kutiyattam. In this the Svapnanka and Sephalikanka are staged very rarely in these days. Manimadhaba cakyar Gurukulam presents Svapnanka in Kutiyattam recently.

Bhasa’s other plays *Karnabharam*, *pratimanatakam*, *Dutavakyam* and *Pancaratam* are recently edited for one day’s performance.
v. **Plays of Kalidasa**

**Abhinjanasakuntalam**

This play is undoubtedly the master-piece of the master-poet Kalidasa who lived during Second century A.D. For the past two thousand years it has been performed all over the world and it was most popular. But this popularity has not reached the Kutiyyattam actors and the play is not included in their repertory. There is different opinions in this matter. There are evidences to prove that Sakuntala must have been staged earlier. The *Arangutali* verses and the *Alama* verses of the first and second act of this play is available. And also a legend which is heard about Sakuntala’s performance is an actor once injured his eyes during the *netrabhinaya* in the first scene as a charioteer. Thereafter the actors hesitated to perform this. But in modern times Painkulam Rama Cakyar prepared an attaprakara and performed the second act of Sakuntala. Mani Madhava Cakyar had prepared the third act. But these efforts were confined to selected acts and these veterans themselves did not repeat the performances later. But the whole play was
The seven acts of Abhinjanasakuntalam, from Nandi to Bharatavaky, was presented through five days in Kutiyattam and each day's duration will be around three hours. For the performance of the play only three actresses and four actors were on the stage. The schedule of this play is as follows:

First Day - Prologue
Second Day - First Act
Third Day - Second and Third Act
Fourth Day - Fourth and Fifth Act
Fifth day - Sixth and Seventh Act

Vikramorvasiyam

In Kutiyattam, this drama is newly performed. The composition of this is something different from other
compositions. Only three characters, Sutradhara, Pururavas and Urvasi come on the stage. It takes three days for its performance. Sutradhara enacts the story of Urvasi with other Apsaras perform in Kubera’s palace, and on their return, are kidnapped by Kesi, a demon. Pururavas rescues Urvasi and their return in his chariot, he narrates how she was born long ago from the thigh of Narayana Maharshi and how all other celestial women became bashful on seeing her beauty. Urvasi’s important scene is enactment of the Lakshmisvayamvara referred to in the play as being directed by none other than Sage Bharata. There is a lot of acting potential in this beginning from the gods and demons churning the ocean of milk until the Mahalakshmi emergence from it.

The first acts of Vikramorvasiyam play was produced using to the maximum the potential of Pakarnattam. Even without Nirvahanam, the story of the main character strung together is special about this rendering. Another feature is that all three characters have a lot of opportunities to express their creativity in abhinaya.
References:

1. Mentioned earlier in the first chapter.

2. Vide Kalidasa’s Abhijnanasakuntalam and Malavikagnimitram about Natyasala in the places of kings. A similar reference is made by Damodara Gupta regarding acting of the play Retnavali in Kuttanimata.

3. In 1906 the late T. Ganapati Sastri discovered 13 unpublished dramas and published them in the name of great Bhasa. Since then it was considered that Bhasa’s works were lost forever. There was a great controversy about the authorship and date of these plays, but it is now generally accepted that they are the abridged versions of the plays of the great Bhasa. His thirteen plays are:- 1) Pratimanatakam 2) Abhisekanatakam 3) Karnabharam 4) Dutavakyam 5) Dutakhadotkacam 6) Madhyamavyayogam 7) Pancaratram 8) Urubhangam 9) Svapnavasadatham 10) Pratinjayaugandharayanam 11) Carudattam 12) Avimarakam 13) Balacaritam.
4. Bana refers to him in high terms thus:

"सूत्रधार कृतार्थम: नाटकेष्बुजं भूमिकः
सप्ताकेष्बिशो लभे भासो देवकुलैरिव।।"


5. Kalidasa wrote three dramas Malavikagnimitram, Vikramorvasiyam and Abhijnanasakuntalam, two Mahakavyas Raghuvamsa and Kumaraambhava and one Khandakavya named Meghasamdesa.

6. It is said that Srikandha got the title Bhavabhuti on account of that word occurring in a beautiful verse composed by him:


"तपस्वी कां गतो वस्थामिति स्मेराननाविव।
भगवत्या: स्तनी वन्दे भवभूतिसिद्धावनी।।"

7. Cakyars are the children born to Nambutiri women who was under suspicion of bad conduct but before she was made outcaste. The male children born to such women would become
cakyars if they had performed their Upanayana and others whose Upanayana has not been performed would become Nambiar. The girls or female children may either join with a cakyar or a Nambiar. “Keraliya Samskrita Sahitya Caritram”. Sri Vadakkankur Raja Raja Varma Raja.

8. Abhinaya according to Bharata is in four ways 1. Angika/-by means of limbs especially hands, eyes, eyebrows, legs etc. 2. Vacika/-by words alone without gestures and facial expressions 3. Aharya/-by make-up and costumes and 4. Satvika/-by emotion or bhava on the face.

9. First day the entrance of the main character and then three days for his Nirvahana and the last day for Kutiyattam. The entire performance is complete in five days.

10. Five instruments are played simultaneously constituting what is known as Pancavadya. The instruments are 1) Mizhavu 2) Itayka 3) Karumkuzhal 4) Sankhu and 5) Kuzhittalam.
11. A sentence in Sanskrit.

12. Except heavenly nymphs, queens and educated courtesans.

13. In epic tradition, which has a different narrative technique, the narrator moves from one incident to another, jumps from the present to the past and hitherto the otherworld. It is a journey through the unlimited time and space. The structure is kept loose to facilitate this flexibility.

14. The presentation of a story in its complete form has never been its aim. The actors on their part concentrate more upon the delineation of a particular bhava or rasa than on rushing through the events of a play. On the part of the audience also they are more particular about the witnessing of the histrionic talents of the actors than enjoying the enacting of a story on the stage.

15. Prof. Pisharody (Kerala Theatre I & II, Annamalai University Journal, Madras 1932) has enlisted seventy-two acts which are presented on the Kutiyattam.
16. A famous saying is in Malayalam connection with the performance of the Kutiyattam is “One should salute a cakyar who has flown and a Nangiar who has swept away by flood”. The first part of this refers to the representation of the Cackier who flown as Garuda in the Fourth act of Nagananda and the second part refers the Nangiar who has floated on water in Tapatisamvarana.

17. The verse is this:

“अन्तर्गुद्गतमहाजगरास्यदंश्त्रा
व्याकृष्टपादमृगार्जितमेष सिंहः
दंश्त्राग्रकृष्टपृथुक्कम्भतास्थिवल्गद्
श्रीवानिखानखमक्षिपति द्विपेन्द्रम्”

A huge Ajagara (boa constrictor) partly hidden in a cave is swallowing the foot of an elephant which is roaring in pain. In the meanwhile a lion has rent asunder its head with sharp nails and gobbled up the flesh, blood and pieces of bones with the fang of the mouth. On the one hand the boa is trying to pull the elephant into the cave to swallow it,
while on the other a lion has jumped over it and smashed its head.

18. We do not have sufficient information in this respect. But some stage-manuals contain reference to the staging of the fifth and last act of the play. The entrance of the Goddesses Gauri is described, which come under in the fifth act. But this scene is not presented on the stage in modern times.

19. The chakyar who acts the part of Garuda with artificial wings attached to his body is mad to slide down from a great height with the help of one thousand and one strings connected to different parts of his body. The person who holds the strings will be Nambiar, the drummer. He manipulates the strings in such a way that the actor can slide down from a great height fluttering his ‘wings’ in the air and after reaching the ground, opens his beak, takes jimudavahana in it and flies up.

20. Mentioned above.