Chapter IV

EMOTIONAL PARADIGM AS PERFORMANCE

Any analysis of the performance text of *Naḷacaritam* will have to take into account the fact that it is associated with the original literary text only on the basis of such categories as *slokas, dandakas* and *padas*. The performance text is made up of six distinct units of acting: *slokas, dandakas, padas, kālasams, attam* and set pieces of choreography. These structural elements are meant to be elaborated by the performing artists. Kathakali connoisseurs and actors have taken their time to come to terms with the emotional plane of *Naḷacaritam* with its psychological depth and complexity.

The transformation of the linguistic text of Kathakali to its theatrical text is conceived through *attam* in which one can identify three distinct types. One type of *attam* is a form of set soliloquy [*tantetattam*] acted by certain character types like *katti* and *tati* after their entrance, for example, *tati* types like Kali and Woodsman in *Naḷacaritam*. These *attams* allow the character to elaborate on his basic nature. A second type of *attam* consists of sets of interpolations that expand on a particular portion of the story of the text. This descriptive *attam* has its own performance manual.
and is meant for actors in their interpolation. *Pakshiviraham* [love-in-separation of birds] and the descriptive acting of *sringara rasa* by the beautiful heroine in *Naḷacaritam* are instances. The third type of *attam* is improvisation inserted into a performance by the actor on the spur of the moment within the limits set by what is appropriate to the context of the action. The visuals of the forest depicted in Day Three of *Naḷacaritam* by Nala while on his way to the Saketa Palace is an instance.

The performance text includes structural sub-units like the *attams* mentioned above as well as the performance or acting of textual sub-units like *sloka, dandaka,* and *pada.* Among these, *attams* and *kalasams* are in a way dance-acting units.

In the performance of *Naḷacaritam* the acting of several components such as *Pakshiviraham,* the beauty of the heroine, the forest scene, and the depiction of *sloka* and *pada* are to be explained further as they are contributive to the emotional structure of the text.

The performance of *Pakshiviraham* [love-in-separation of birds] usually occurs on Day One of the play, where Nala wonders why everything in his own garden is frightening to him who is afflicted by pangs of love. In order to elaborate on the anguish, pain and fear in the acting, a denotative use of *pakshiviraham* contributes to the suggestive mode. Here it is derived from the poet’s suggestion that the swans in the
pond enjoy themselves in different ways. Anyway, this intertwined delineation adds effect to the emotional aspects of the theme.

It is on Day Two of the play that the beauty of the heroine is acted out. Nala says to Damayanti:

My beloved, with a lovely form,
now listen to my pitiable condition before our wedding. (NC 72)

The performance text gives details of this attam. In the pada beginning with “My beloved, listen...”, in the first tempo, Nala thinks of his pathetic plight before marriage. In the second tempo, he looks at Damayanti and acts “My beloved.” Though Nala’s sthayibhava is sringara, the thoughts of the difficulties he had undergone earlier makes his mind heavy. The “oro” [each one] in the line is elaborately depicted. In “your virtues” the basic feeling is that he has been continually hearing about her from many people. This is acted out separately and in great detail. The acting of “though brave” convinces the audience of Nala’s bravery and courage. While depicting “weary and drooping due to the pangs of love” Nala’s condition reaches “virahenaksinaruja vivash” [afflicted due to separation] as described in the first day of the story. In “my darling, I brooded” the address “darling” is acted in lalitya drstri with a light dance, with sringara. After this, all the trauma of the past which he had tried to conceal is convincingly portrayed by the actor.
Nala also tells Damayanti about how he roamed about in the same garden. He tells her all this in "I had to conceal my desire". This is a repetition of the experiences described in first day's pada beginning with "The only relief in the garden...." “I was very upset. When I was roaming about aimlessly I chanced to catch a golden Swan”. Here the feeling of gratitude and affection are predominant. In “went to you and came back to me”, the act of the Swan’s flying away and flying back is acted with a delicate dance. “Saying that ‘the gods are in favour of you. Your desire will be fulfilled’, the friend disappeared” is presented with a dance. “Now, my desire has been fulfilled.” After the pada Nala remembers his past and says:

“My darling, under the spell of love I suffered a lot, and was not even able to do my daily chores. Still, now that we are together, I feel relieved and happy.” (NC 73-74)

Here some slokas depicting sringara are generally enacted. Sometimes, the previous story of the First Day’s incident up to the time of the svayamvara is recounted in more detail; but since the previous story is almost completely covered in the enactment of the pada, enacting a sloka has often been considered a better option. The following verse is usually performed.
Saundaryam sukumarata madhaurata kantirmanoharia
Srimatta mahimeti sargavibhavan nissesanarigunan
Etasyamupujya durvidhataya dinah paramatmabhuh
Srstum vanchati cet karotu punara pyatreiva bhiksatanam.
(N C 74)

[Having utilized the perfect qualities like beauty, charm, sweetness, brilliance, attractiveness, elegance and greatness characterising a woman for her creation the Brahma has come to beg her mercy because for creating another woman he has no attribute left]

And the method of acting is as follows:

The hero looking at heroine from head to foot, with the feelings of sringara, wonder and elation:

How could Brahma have created her? [thinking] I understand. First Brahma created her form. Then he collected the attributes characterising a woman, like beauty [saundaryam], charm [sukumarata], sweetness [madhurata] brilliance [kanti], attractiveness [manoharita], elegance [srimatta] and greatness [mahima]. In the form, he infuses all these and checks if they are in their proper order. In some places, he re-arranges a few of them to suit the form. He is finally satisfied that in her all the qualities characterising a woman are blended in a unique manner. But alas, now he has to come to her, begging for her mercy, because for creating another woman, he has no attribute left!

When this sloka is rendered in abhinaya, all the qualities are
portrayed individually, and are supported by separate drstis. Usually, this sloka is acted by Cakyars in Kutiyattam. The good qualities are represented as being collected in a container, and each one of them is taken out separately and incorporated into the form with different drstis. (NC 74)

It is to be noted that sringara acquires dramatic beauty in Kathakali by a more leisurely treatment. Seized by the erotic mood, the mind does not get detached; there is no hurry and the demands of love are imperious; it has to be caressed and coaxed to yield its pleasures. No weariness overtakes the devotee; his hunger only grows with what it feeds on. When Nalacaritam is staged it accords full recognition to this essential nature of the love emotion. Here the love scene is therefore Patinjattam [literally, leisurely or slow moving dance] to develop sringara bhava [love emotion]. The text of this scene is highly poetic and romantic. The glances, postures, gait and facial expressions employed are so sweet, graceful and suggestive of the animating emotion that the actors look like embodiments of radiant love.

Incidentally, Kathakali has borrowed from Kutiyattam many stage practices including its very distinguished technique of abhinaya. As Philip Zarrilli has noted, Kutiyattam’s intricate performance techniques produce sections of productions during which a lone actor expresses solely through his face, hands and eyes the actions, emotions and narrative of the scene. In Kathakali such stylized and extended use of gestures is included, but
often shortened and integrated, yet it is as technically proficient as in
Kutiyattam. For the first time the actors are no longer expected to
speak/sing the dialogue, the entire script is handed over to the singers,
freeing actors for a such more vigorous, masculine form of dance which
may not be possible if speech / singing remains a part of their technique as
in Krishnanattam and Kutiyattam. Along with this there also occurs
changes in costuming and make-up (Zarrilli, Kathakali Complex 47-49).

Historically speaking, the classical Indian performance tradition is
found in Kerala’s Kutiyattam [combined acting], the only existing form of
Sanskrit dramatic enactment today with links to the practices encoded in
the Natyasastra. Dating from at least the ninth century AD, Kutiyattam is
most likely the oldest extant form of classical aesthetic theatre in the world.
Kutiyattam enacts specific acts of Sanskrit dramas, traditionally performed
in special theatres located in the compounds of some of Kerala’s major
temples. The most characteristic features of Kutiyattam include its highly
developed, codified system of hand gestures [Mudras] used to literally
“speak” the text of the plays enacted, attention to detail in facial gesture
and use of the eyes to convey to the audience the sentiment [rasa]
appropriate to the dramatic context. The classical influence on Kathakali is
found in its adaptation of Kutiyattam’s complex gestural code [mudras]
used to enact the Kathakali text as well as in the emphasis upon facial/eye
gestures to communicate appropriate sentiments [rasas] to the audience, both of which are used to elaborate on the text.

The stylized form and techniques employed in Kutiyattam can be reckoned as responsible for the highly developed language of gestures, specially of the face and the hands, so typical of Kathakali. It was in Kutiyattam for the first time, in contrast to Sanskrit theatre, that one of the characters, that is, the Vidusaka, began to play a very important role in the performance. He used the local language, namely Malayalam, in contrast to the other characters. While the Sanskrit words were received and chanted and communicated by the heroine and the hero, the Vidusaka rendered his lines in Malayalam. It was his task to bridge the gap between the classical Sanskrit spoken by the hero and the regional language or dialect understood by the audience. He was also the bridge between the past and the present.

As in other theatrical forms, the actor spoke the lines sometimes, proceeding the movement of the body, sometimes coinciding and sometimes following. The enunciation and the intonation of words was slow, stylized reminiscent of the chanting of the Vedas. The actor performed angikabhinaya to the word or the line or the phrase. Sometimes, the actor elaborated on the verbal, the Vacika, he interpreted and improvised. Plays lasted for many days because the actor was given the fullest freedom to
weave any number of interpretations as the basic poetic line. There was provision in the dramatic structure for the actor to switch back to one of his earlier incarnations to move, freely in the time past and present and even to meditate the future. In kinetic terms, this meant the evolution of a highly intricate and developed language of gestures. (Vatsyayan 36)

Incidentally, it was in 1949 that Kutiyyattam was staged outside the temple premises for the first time, “and it was undertaken by Painkulam Rama Chakyar who also happens to be the first teacher [Guru] in Kerala Kalamandalam where the teaching of Kutiyyattam was started in 1969” (Paulose VI). Prior to it the tradition was confined within particular family traditions like those of Mani Madhava Cakyar and Ammanur Madhava Cakyar.

For improvisation in the acting in Kathakali, the various sights that Nala [Bahuka] sees in the forest on Day Three can be cited. Here Nala taking leave from Karkotaka turns back and faces the stage, and with great awe and gloom reflects on the difference in his position between then and now.

Once I ruled over the entire world with the might of my hands, and now here am I, in this terrible and uninhabited forest, all alone! I have nothing today of my own. I had to part with everything that I had once acquired. In those days, I used to sit beneath the royal umbrella. When vassal kings used to humbly kneel down before me, I used to accept their salute, enquire after their well-being and bid them farewell. I
was given respect and honour even by the Gods themselves. What about now? After having lost everything in the game of dice, I fled from the country, with a single cloth on my body. My devoted wife, left even the children behind and followed me into the forest, clad in a single garment. We reached the forest at night, unaided and miserable. She had to bear severe pain in her feet, tender like lotus-petals, due to walking in the forest, but still she clung to me. When we suffered from hunger, I placed my own garment as a net to catch the bird, but they snatched the cloth and flew away. Then I had to cover myself with a piece of her cloth. After wandering aimlessly for several hours, overcome with fatigue, and trusting me completely, she rested her head on my knees and fell asleep, but I discard her in the terrible forest full of wild animals like lion, leopard, tiger, jackal and wild elephant. [Suddenly remembering, with intense grief] I tore off half her cloth and covered myself. This cruel sinner left her there and ran away. Is she still alive? Or is she crushed to death by the wild elephants? What could have happened to her? [Thinking deeply] No, she is pure and virtuous. No animal can touch her. If anyone tries to touch her, he’ll be burnt to ashes; this is certain. [He finds temporary relief]. (NC 150)

Then Nala goes to the palace of Ṛtparna, according to the direction of Karkotaka, and sees several things. Among the sights the thick fumes from the forest fire are depicted actively, as it looks like the sky of clouds in the rainy season. The birds trying to fly away from the fire are burnt. Animals which run helter-skelter afraid of fire are taking
shelter in the caves. A doe with its hair burnt runs about in search of water. More animals and birds are perished in the forest fire. There is even the pathetic scene of a female deer about to give birth to a child running with intense labour pain. The deer is in great fear. In the improvisation the actor in the role of Bahuka further elaborates this scene as:

Ah, there is a hunter in the distance, trying to hunt animals. He is in search of birds and animals. [Here the actor takes in the role of the hunter. Seeing the deer] Good! If I can kill her with my arrow, the young ones inside her belly will taste so good! [He sharpens his arrow on a rock and prepares to shoot the arrow. Now back to the original role.] Here, there is a tiger in search of a prey. It has seen the deer; now it opens its mouth and tries to spring on the deer. On the one side, there is burning fire, on the other side there is a fresh stream running through rocks and boulders. The hunter is also aiming his arrow. In the midst of the burning fire, stream and the hunter, the deer is standing helpless, trembling and panic-stricken. The tiger is also open-mouthed, about to spring on the deer. [This scene is enacted twice or thrice with its own appropriate bhava, with care to make it convincing and well expressed] Who is there to save this poor deer? Only God can save those who have no refuge. Let me see what God can do here now. [With wonder] Suddenly it starts raining. The hunter is struck by a lightning and is killed on the spot. The arrow that he had aimed at the deer slips and kills the tiger. The forest fire is
put out by the heavy downpour. The female deer gives birth to a child. The mother licks the child clean and suckles the infant lovingly. [With, happiness] God is great, indeed. He is a Saviour of those in despair. Similarly he will protect my beloved, whom I had cruelly renounced on that terrible nights. (NC 151)

In these improvisations along with Natyadharmi [stylised acting] Lokadharma [Imitative acting] is also used. Both these types are mentioned in the Natyasatrasa. Apart from the Natyasatra, Kathakali depends upon Hasthalakshana Deepika, the anonymous source text for hand gestures which has been interpreted by scholars, across time, in a variety of ways. The Natyasatra considers the art of drama or natya [which includes dancing] as an all-embracing category where all the departments of knowledge, different arts and various actions meet and commingle. The principles governing the technique of Indian dance are the same as those that govern the technique of classical drama in India.

Three broad principles govern the structure of Indian drama and stage presentations. The first is the principle of the modes of presentation [dharmis], stage way or stylized way [natya], and natural or the way of the world [loka]. The second consists of the different types of styles [vrittis], namely the graceful [kaiseki], the grand [Sattavati], the energetic [arbhati] and the verbal [bharati]. The third is the full play of the four types of acting [abhinaya], namely the gestures [angika], vocal [vacika], costumes, make-up, stage props [aharya], etc. (Vatsyayan 10-11)
Tellingly, for understanding the main aspects of dance/drama, it can be classified under three distinct categories, namely natya, nritya and nritta, or under the categories of tandava, lasya and sukumara. Among these, natya corresponds to drama, nritya to gestures [abhinaya] and nritta to pure dancing. The miming aspect of natya termed as angikabhinaya in the Natyasastra, an aspect of drama proper, is also an integral part of dancing. The principles which govern the angikabhinaya technique of drama [natya] also apply to the dance [nritya] where it is known as abhinaya. Kathakali which is a confluence of nritya, nritta, geetha [song] and vadya [instrument] is therefore considered as a dance-drama. While various styles [vrittis] with corresponding sentiments [rasas] have effective applications in Kathakali, units of nritta portions known as kalasams are extended passages of dance but always used in a dramatic structure. In Kathakali, kalasams are pure dances when they form part of todayam and purappad dance sequences, which are not integral parts of the text of Kathakali. However, when kalasams form part of the enactment of the text, they are danced in order to sustain the emotion of the character in that situation. These are, accordingly, danced slowly and softly in tender scenes of love and compassion, and violently and fast in rough and aggressive situations involving emotions such as anger. In effect, kalasams reflect the various bhavas in dignified forms.
Kalasams are not interpretative, but they support emotional expression. According to Kalamandalam Gopi the kalasams usually used in Kathakali are nine:

1. Vattom vechu kalasam: This is performed by master artistes in slow tempo in chempada tala in the normal course, but occasionally in adatala and fast champa tala.

2. Iratti: This is usually in chempada tala in slow tempo at the end of a quatrain. It is also danced in adanta and champa. It starts in a slow tempo and ends in fast tempo. The meaningful hand gestures of a refrain will be shown during this kalasam.

3. Idakalasam: It is included in the quatrain, at the beginning of the last quatrain.

4. Atakkam: This kalasam is employed for heroic situations.

5. Thoonkaram: This is an offshoot of iratti.

6. Eduttukalasam: A kalasam used mainly for aggressive red beard characters and when mean, vulgar kari characters enter.

7. Murikalasam: It is taken at the end of a quatrain portraying valorous emotion.

8. Valiakalasam: This is taken at the commencement of a fight and is more or less a vattom vechu kalasam in fast tempo. Valiakalasam is suited to expressions of wonder.
9. **Ashtakalasam**: This is a beautiful though controversial kulasam. In the north of Kerala, the ashtakalasam is considered the long valiakalasam. In the south, there are eight kaiasams in ascending order before a long kulasam. (Gopi 124)

Antonin Artaud's insistence on an absolute theoretical language of signs and gestures may be recalled here. Of the expressive gesture on stage, in Kathakali each gesture carries a meaning specifically. For instance, hand gestures [*mudras*] are like the letters of the alphabet. With twenty-four hand gestures mentioned in *Hastalakshana Dipika* more than five hundred objects are indicated; and for each gesture there is a specific stance, or movement, and both these unitedly substantiate the kinesics of the theatre.

Kalamandalam Gopi gives the details of *mudras* as follows:

Before an object is depicted, the performer portrays it with the movement of his eyes. Then he has to take a few steps and arrive at a particular stance to depict that *mudra*. There are nine such stances, preceded by jumps. A *mudra* is thus developed in several stages: first delineating the object with the eyes, then the jump specified for the *mudra*, followed by the stance specified for it, and ultimately the *mudra* itself. The movement of the eyes as a precedent to the *mudra* describes the form of the object depicted and the reactions on seeing it, such as pleasure, wonder, anger, jealousy, or disgust. (Gopi 121)
And he elaborates on the various jumps and stances as below:

1. Jumping backwards: This indicates valour and is employed for gods, powerful heroes, elephant, king, tree, lion, the heavens, and so on [fourty mudras].

2. Jumping to corners: This is usually used for mudras indicating concepts such as he, long back, command, chariot, coast, and so on [eight mudras].

3. Jumping forwards: To precede mudras standing for enemy, hard, obstruction, destruction, and so on [five mudras].

4. Jumping up: For mudras denoting a demon, demoness, win, battle, cut, anger, and so on [ten mudras].

5. Jumping and stamping: For mudras to indicates a brother, sister, evil person, horse, and so on [fifteen mudras].

6. Stepping sideways: For mudras symbolizing news, always, start, world, and so on [thirty-four mudras].

7. Special steps: These connote the concepts he, rob, prostrate, flag, wave, pillar, dance, deer, snake, sound, curse, and so on [thirty-six mudras].

8. Legs held together: Blessing, lips, fire, weapon, jealousy, sleep, eyes, weep, stone, wonder, time, crown, friend, tower, wings, eyes, and listen are some concepts expressed this way [two hundred and six mudras].
9. Lowered body: Mother, arrow, wonder, sun, embrace, Cupid, hair, lotus, cheeks, cow, and so on are described thus [one hundred and twenty-eight mudras].

**The hasta mudras**

Many texts on dance and drama deal with the hasta mudras. The Natyasastra of Bharata Muni, Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikeswara, Hasta Muktavali of Subhakaran, Sangita Ratnakara of Sarngadevan, Balaramabharatam of Kartika Tirunal Maharaja, and Hasta Lakshana Dipika, among the more important texts, deal with hasta mudras. Of these, Hasta Lakshana Dipika is used as the basic text for Kathakali mudras. Over a period of time, though, several new mudras have been added and many altered.

Mudras are further classified as samyuta mudras [double-handed] and asamyuta mudras [single-handed]. These are again categorized as samana mudras, where a single mudra depicts several things and misra mudras where the two hands show different mudras.

*Hasta Lakshana Dipika* mentions twenty-four basic mudras:

1. *Pataka:* Double-handed gestures indicate thirty-six objects with different positions ands movements such as sun, king, elephant, lion, bull, crocodile, arch, creeper, flag, waves, chariot, netherworld, earth, buttocks, vessel, house, evening, noon, clouds, anthill, thigh, servant, wheel, seat, weapon, tower, cold, cart, gentle, crooked, gate, pillow, moat, feet, and latch. Single-handed gestures are used for expressing day, travel, tongue, forehead, body, thus, song, messenger, shore, and tender leaves.
2. **Mudrakhyu**: Double-handed gestures here indicate increase, movement, heavens, sea, dense, forgetfulness, all, announcement, property, death, meditation, and straightness. Single-handed gestures symbolize mind, thought, desire, self, remembrance, knowledge, creation, breadth, annoyance, future, denials, and fourth.

3. **Kataka**: Double-handed gestures are used for Vishnu, Krishna, Balabhadra, arrow, gold, silver, demons, sleep, heroine, Lakshmi, veena, stars, necklace, lotus, demon, crown, weapon, special, chariot and together. Single-handed gestures indicate flower, mirror, woman, Vedic fire, sweet, little, smell, and whichever.

4. **Mushti**: Double-handed gestures are employed to describe a charioteer, boon, beauty, sacred, past, tying deserving, status, heel, attraction, Yama, clay, medicine, curse, swing, give, circumambulate, quarry, sacrifice, spear, adventure, heat, sprinkle, and delivery [of a child]. Single-handed gestures indicate purposelessness, great impatience, minister, violate, tolerance, gift, permission, success, bow, we, wrinkles, pull, and food.

5. **Kartari mukha**: Double-handed gestures are employed for sin, effort, brahmin, fame, elephant's head, house, penance, clean, shore, dynasty, hunger, hearing, talking, pregnancy, end, and hunting. Single-handed gestures indicates you, word, time, plural, we, man, face, enmity, boy, and mongoose.

6. **Sukatund**: Double-handed gestures here stand for birds and certainty. Single-handed gestures indicate a hook.
7. **Kapithaka:** Double-handed gestures are indicative of net, feather, drinking, touching, returning, outside, back, descending, and footsteps. Single-handed gestures stand for doubt.

8. **Hamsapaksha:** Double-handed gestures are used for moon, air, Cupid, *devas* [gods], mountain, valley, daily, relatives, bed rock, happiness, chest, breast, cloth, vehicle, falsehood, lying flat, fall, people, beating, cover, spread, place in position, arrival, prostration, bath, sandalwood paste, embrace, follow, flee, go, sorrow, cheeks, shoulders, hair, submission, blessing, sage, thus, fish, worship, and tortoise. Single-handed gestures are used for you, sword, anger, now, I, infront, axe, flame, exert, to come near, and stop.

9. **Sikhara:** Double-handed gestures indicate travel, feet, eyes, seeing, path, enquiry, ears, and drinks.

10. **Hamsaayam:** Double-handed gestures symbolize the concepts soft, dust, white, blue, red, pity, and line of hair. Single-handed gestures stand for beginning of rain, hair, line of hair on the stomach, and three folds on women’s stomachs.

11. **Anjali:** Double-handed gestures are employed for heavy rain, vomiting, fire, horse, heavy, noise, splendour, hair, ear studs, sorrow, always, river, bath, flow, and blood. *Single*-handed gestures stands for branch and anger.

12. **Ardha chandra:** Double-handed are used for concepts such as but, why, tiredness, sky, lucky man, god, remembrance,
grass, and man's hair. Single-handed gestures symbolize starting, smile, why, and contempt.


15. *Suchi mukha*: Double-handed gestures are used for different, jumping up, world, Lakshmana, fall, other, month, eyebrow, and broken tail. Single-handed gestures indicate one, alas, stupor, other man, plural, crescent, long ago, this person, these persons, country, little, witness, reject, coming for battle, and drive away in battle.

16. *Pailava*: Double-handed gestures indicate Indra's weapon, mountain peak, cow's ear, length of eye, buffalo, iron mace, spear, animal horn, and wind around. Single-handed gestures are employed for distant, money, smoke, tail, cane, and grains.

17. *Tripataka*: Double-handed gestures are symbolic of sunset, hello, drink, body, and begging.

19. *Sarpa siras* (in practice, not in the *Hasta Lakshana Dipika*): Double-handed gestures indicate giving water, sprinkling water, movement of a snake, clapping hands, breaking open the head of an elephant, sandalwood paste, slowly, grow, divine man, swinging, elephant's ear, and invitation for wrestling.

20. *Vardhamanaka*: Double-handed gestures describe a woman's ear ornaments, diamond string, knee, saint, the demon Dundubhi, and mahout. Single-handed gestures indicate whirlpool, navel, and well.


22. *Urn nabha*: Double-handed gestures are used for horse, fruit, tiger, butter, snow, very, and lotus.


24. *Kataka mukha*: Double-handed gestures are employed for jacket, servant, heroic person, wrestler, releasing an arrow, tying, and up.

There are several things that are depicted by a single *mudra*. Thus, *pataka* may indicate both a pond and water, a saint and feet, darkness and night, the netherworld and a cave, worship and devotion; *mudrakhya* signifies both Varuna and the sea, mind and intellect, a sighing and choking voice; *kataka* connotes flagstaff and staff, wealth and gold; *mushti* stands for charm and decoration, success and strength, holiness and
goodness, washerman, and servant; *kartari mukha* symbolizes nearness and time, administration and action, spite and sorrow; *kapithaka* indicates touch and matter, spy and travel, earth and liberation; *hamasapaksha* epitomizes both cruel man and enemy, great width and bed; and *anjali* symbolizes court and country. Similarly, *ardha chandra* indicates great man and heroic man; *bhramara* stands for sound and music; *suchimukha* for month and fortnight, ancient and that; *vardhamanaka* for honey and nectar, ego and youth; *arala* for peg and needle, and so on. Sometimes, even three to four objects can be shown by the same mudra--as with *kutaka* and *lataka*--game, dance, and festivals; with *pataka*--saint, symbol, and result. Several things are shown with *misra mudra*, where one hand shows one mudra and the other hand, widowhood, battle, and so on, where the right hand shows *kataka* and the left hand *mushti*. There are more than sixty objects depicted by *misra mudras*. In some cases, as for little, water drop, and demon, the gesture starts with *mudrakhya* and ends with *suchi mukha*.

The above instances only show mechanical movements of the hands and fingers. For effectiveness, it is necessary to infuse *prana* [life-breath] into the gestures. For more powerful gestures the life-breath with great pleasure should be carried to the fingers. When weak gestures are needed, as by King Dasaratha at the time of his death, the life-breath should be withdrawn from the finger, which will render the finger movements weak. (Gopi 112-123)
In the understanding of Kathakali acting, though the elaboration mentioned hitherto has to do with the structural elements, the actor’s creativity also comes in the form of embellishments made in his interpretation of the role. In that sense, Kathakali acting is both an external and internal process. For the actor/dancer there is the doing of the form in the moment without the entanglement of personal feelings, emotions or self-conscious constructions in the acting itself. Since the emotional states are extremely important in Kathakali, these emotional states are objectified and not personalized expressions. Even though the feeling comes forward to fill out the expression of the imaging process, this is an objective process, which does not necessitate the subjective involvement of the personality of the actor, even though a feeling state is present.

The external form of the emotional state is there, ready at the performer’s immediate vocabulary of movement. The performer allows the emotion to come forward. But the emotion will come forward only with the bounds of the stylistic limitations of the form. The objectified form of the emotional state as constituted physically and technically distances that state from the everyday and makes it larger than the everyday. (Zarilli, *Kathakali Complex* 208)

In this connection it is relevant to call in the approaches to the theatre as a network of signs, as “while in real life the utilisation function of an
object is usually more important than its signification, on the theatrical set the signification is all important” (Brusak 62).

Kathakali being a vital form of theatre, its repertoire is also lively and dynamic, as indicated by the singing of padam, abhinaya, and dance, etc. Usually, after a padam has been sung and the abhinaya has been done the singer stops while the actor goes on to interpret the literary content through gesture to the accompaniment of the percussion instruments. This interpretation is known as the manodharma which affords the actor full scope to improvise, and a well trained actor can hold an audience over one sequence for hours. This is followed by pure nritta passages where only the kalasams or the dance cadences are executed. In short, the performance structure of Kathakali contains not only the sub-units of dramatic composition to be performed but also other compositional units of performance such as interpolation and set pieces of choreography which are elaborative upon specific moments in the dramatic narrative. Ayyappa Panikar briefly presents it as follows:

Kathakali plays interweave two types of textual sub-units such as sloka and pada, in which the narrative section is sloka [quatrain] in third person [including dandaka, narrative link provided by a long stanza, a slightly different form of sloka], and the part for interpretation of padam by the actors [dialogue] in third person, including soliloquy. The descriptive, third-person narrative passages link together sets of poetic images that modify and elaborate the theme.
The verbal text *(attakkatha)* is recited by the two singers who stand behind the actors, and their textual narration is punctuated by pure dance sequences between couplets in the dialogue or monologue passages and by improvisational acting called *ilakiyattam* [interpolation]. The pure recitation with the performance on the stage is known as *cholliyattom*. The emphasis is mostly on *natyadharmi* [stylized acting] aspects rather than on *lokadharmi* [imitative acting] features. The rendering of the meaning of the recited passages both at the level of the word [*padartha abhinaya*] and at the level of the sentences [*vakyarthrr abhinuya*] is not confined to the use of *mudras* [hand gestures] for each word or concept but is extensively devoted to the exploration of the sub-text. (Paniker, *Kathakali: The Art of Non-Worldly* 20)

An analysis of the specific techniques of performance used when *slokas* are acted shows first the purpose for the actor to convey the total idea of the emotions/situation contained in the descriptive narration. Only selected gestures [*mudra*] are used by the actor to convey the state of mind [*bhava*] /impression or emotional content of the context for the particular character he is acting; the emotional state of being interpretation as well as the manifestation of that state through facial expression and movement of the eyes [*nayanabhinaya*] to convey the *bhava*. The structure of the performance of a *sloka* in *Nalacakritam* as given by Phillip Zarrilli is summarised as follows:
The first day’s play enacts the early budding love of Nala and Damayanti, the test of Damayanti’s love in selecting Nala from among the gods who have disguised themselves as Nala, and their union on marriage at the end of the play. Unnayi Varier provides the actors with some of the most refined roles in the Kathakali repertory. Acting the role of Nala gives the performer the opportunity to display his abilities in portraying the inner condition [bhava] of the character. (Zarrilli, *Kathakali Complex* 226-227)

Zarrilli goes on to discuss the third sloka that is important for understanding the performance:

The context in which the thirds *sloka* appears is important for understanding the performance of the *sloka*. The opening *sloka* and *padam* are preliminaries. They sing of Nala’s heroism and prowess, as well as his beauty, and set the context for Nala’s first appearance. The first actual scene of the play reveals Nala and Narada [the Sage, son of Brahma]. In the first *padam* actually performed, Nala welcomes Narada to his kingdom and deferentially pays his respects. Narada in the next *padam* suggests that Nala “waste not your birthright” [i.e., he implies that it is about time for Nala to consider marriage]. After this suggestive planting of the idea of marriage in Nala’s mind Narada goes on during his discourse to describe Damayanti:
In Kandinpur there lives a beauty,
A gem among women,
Damyanti by name.
Even the devas have fallen in love with her.
But mark me.
Jewels rightfully belong to kings.
The devas may claim only yajnas [sacrifices] offered in their honour
Perfect one, paragon among kings,
Strive to win this jewel for your wife. (Zarrilli, Kathakali Complex 228)

Zarrilli adds that “The purpose of the sloka is both (1) to provide a transition from the implanting of love in Nala for Damayanti to the soliloquy which follows in fourth pudam [during which Nala ruminates on his budding love for this perfect woman]; and (2) to allow the actor the opportunity to embody Nala’s state of mind emotional being at this moment”

In performance, the vocalists sing the sloka once, taking approximately one minute and fifteen seconds to one minute and forty-five seconds, depending upon the amount of free elaboration they introduce in singing the final syllables. The elaboration of end vowels allows for clarity of the word being sung. One example of this elaboration is the word ‘avum’ [like this]. This receives no elaboration since it has a short vowel ending. On the other hand the last syllable of ‘Srutila’ [having heard] ends with the long
sound “vaaaa” and therefore is easily and freely elaborated. [This type of elaboration is usually in the higher vocal ranges today, most likely a result of the influence of Carnatic vocal style on Kathakali signing].

While the vocalist sings through the sloka with his elaboration, the actor playing Nala conveys through his facial expression and hand gestures the inner state or condition of Nala at this point in the play. From the description of the context of the sloka, it may be seen that Nala’s pain at thinking of Damayanti is caused both by this desire for her [aroused in part by Narada’s description of her pureness and beauty], as well as by his being unsure that he will ever be able to have her as his wife.

The general form of the abhinaya [acting] of this sloka would be accepted by actors as experiencing and projecting cinta bhava. Cinta bhava is one of the thirty two transitory bhavas [sanchari bhavas] listed in the Natyasastra. Cinta bhava is often translated as “thinking” but it might better be thought of as “reflecting”. Obviously Nala is “reflecting” on Damayanti. His reflection on her is causing him pain because he is unsure whether he will actually realize union with her in marriage. He is reflecting on what Narada has just said in the previous action, that is, in both the preceding action of the interpolation and in the padam where Narada discusses Damayanti and suggests he considers her for marriage. This general state of “reflecting” is the mode/mood of performance of this sloka. However,
exactly what the actor playing Nala might reflect upon at this point is not specifically set, and it varies from actor to actor playing the role. It is precisely on these subtle variations that the connoisseurs of Kathakali judge the worth of a particular actor’s performance.

In order to further delineate the possible ways that an actor interprets/portrays the inner state of Nala during the singing of this sloka, a literal translation follows.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First half of the sloka</th>
<th>Avum like this purvam before</th>
<th>Srutva: Having heard tasyam in her</th>
<th>Bharatim words pandhalokal the words of travellers</th>
<th>Naradiyam of Narada srutayam having heard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saktam immersed jatam It happened [main verb]</td>
<td>Cittam [Nala’s] mind satankatirakatidoonam his mind was pained by sorrow</td>
<td>Tasya Her</td>
<td>Vaidarbhyaputryam [Damayanti]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The acting of this sloka will be judged by the appropriateness of the actor’s interpretation of the sloka and by his ability to capture in performance the correct bhava and to project and communicate this sloka to the audience. For the actor, the role of Nala as well as this sloka are examples of the demand for “interior” acting. The mature actor should
actually be reflecting on the things that Narada has just said while the singer sings the sloka. The actor's reflections on Narada's words, however, are not timed out precisely to the vocalists' singing of individual words of the text; the action and bhava will generally be the same, but the actor may not reflect on exactly the same thoughts inspired by the vocalists each time he performs this role. For example, while the vocalists may be elaborating on the "va" of srutva, the actor may be reflecting in his own mind on Narada's advice, "waste not your birth-right". This subtle reference to his age might send through the actor's [Nala's] mind something like the following:

Narada said, 'waste not your birth-right'.

It is time to think of marriage.

Another thought entering the actor's mind might come from Narada's mention of Damayanti and her beauty as a "jewel among women." The actor might reflect on this image of a pure and beautiful virgin by thinking, "Ah, she is a likely candidate for fulfilling my birth-right."

This process of reflection lasts through the singing of the first one-half of the sloka, i.e., through srutayam. When the vocalist sings and completes srutayam it is a cue for the completion of this portion of the acting of the sloka. Here the actor follows the vocalist. What does the external manifestation of this inner state of reflection look like? The actor is free to select a general "pose" or physical attitude which embodies a "reflective
attitude". The differing physical poses are to be completely appropriate to the context of reflection: sitting on the stool with the left foot externally manifesting this process of inner reflection by having the eyes or head begin to move up at avum, and by the singing of srutayam to move merely the eyes/head indicating the internal process of reflection. The “selection” of a particular type of pose and the execution of this subtle movement is a spontaneous outgrowth of the actor’s inner state embodying the bhava. It is not or at least should not be a calculated self-conscious process. It should just flow from the sheer immediacy of acting-in-the moment.

During the second half of the singing of the sloka beginning with saktam again the actor is relatively free to select how he will show the general meaning usually given to the performance of this part of the sloka. During the second half of the sloka Nala may be shown expressing sorrow and wondering “what am I going to do?” While in the first half of the sloka the actor usually shows reflection on what Narada has said, in acting the second half of the sloka he reflects on the narrator’s description of Nala’s pain and sorrow. This manifestation of Nala’s pleasant and reserved character [pacca] is the condition of experiencing sorrow, pain and wonder. The pain and sorrow are of course, a result of his reflection on Narada’s words, and therefore a direct link between the two parts of the acting of the sloka. Externally, this pain and sorrow may be shown by the actor taking his eyes
back up, taking his hand to his chest giving a deep sigh, and having the face show sorrow [soka]. From this position the hands may go out in a gesture indicating "what can I do?"

This sloka in Nal\{\textit{acaritam}\} provides the Kathakali actor with a great deal of individual scope in the interpretation and realization of the bhava of the character at that moment in the play. The most important consideration for the actor is what is appropriate to the context. Some inexperienced actors might misinterpret what is appropriate by having Nala act very impatiently at this point, as if he were in a hurry to possess Damayanti. Such acting would be inappropriate because it would not show Nala as refined and reserved.

This sloka from Nal\{\textit{acaritam}\} reveals the importance of bhava in the acting process as well as illustrating the direct one-to-one relationship between the actor's portrayal of a character and the ongoing narrative content of the slokas. The actor embodies the bhava demanded by the context described in the narration. (Zarrilli, Kathakali Complex 228-33)

Further, to analyse the structure of performance of a pada we should keep in mind that the text \textit{per se} is only a base line for performative interpretations and elaborations. Like all the lines in a padam, there are two parts to its delivery: in the first delivery of the line, as the vocalists sing the line through, the actor enacts what might be called the subtext of the line; in the second delivery of the line, as the second actor presents each
word of the line in gesture language the vocalists sing the line over and over again through a set number of rhythmic cycles. Actually, the actor is discovering meanings to the text [and it may differ in each performance]. The actor exploiting the possibilities of gestural ramifications in effect is mediating between author and the spectator. Then a monologue, which looks like a mere statement in the text, “may evolve into an exciting dialogue when a creative interpretation, in term of gestural acting, is given to it” (Paniker, Nañacaritam: A Re-Reading x). For instance, the soliloquy of Bahuka in scene IX, Day Three which starts as:

Who knows about the designs of that doe eyed damsel

  convinced that I, who had once enjoyed
  the togetherness of love [with her],
  in my distress wronged her and betrayed her trust
  is she now about to put me to everlasting sorrow. (NC 181)

Here the actor integrates effectively feelings like dejection, fatigue, doubt, frenzy and intense passion in a credible and unified manner; as his lament longs further in the acting for having “wronged her” he has to present the mistakes he has committed, though inadvertently. It goes on to the details of the game of dice, the escape into the forest, persuading Damayanti to escape, allowing her to sleep in trust, tearing off her cloth, discarding her in the forest, etc.
In the case of a padam, an analysis can be given of the first padam in Scene I, Day Two of the play.

Lotus-eyed Bhaimi, fair and youthful
With lips [soft] like tender blossoms
and with pleasing wavers
Fresh youth has bloomed in full splendour
And is burgeoning day by day. (NC 67)

According to Bharatha Iyer the performance of this scene is as follows:

The hero and the heroine are in a very tender mood and in a lovely pose. The very pose conveys the feeling that they are melting into a state of 'incoherent unconsciousness of their isolated selves'. The left hand of the male is protectingly, caressingly placed over the crown of the female and the right one enfolds her in tender embrace; the female clings to him with creeper-like intimacy and grace. The position they have taken is deeply related to their mood; they are slightly turned towards each other so as fully to attract each other's glances. They are gazing at each other and unsatiated, they continue to gaze. Their glances are activated by the deepest of passions and desire; they are the outpourings of the soul in its most exalted moments. The repeated rising of their arched eyebrow, moving like rhythmic waves, betoken repeated glances which as it were, are garland glances—with which they adorn each other.

These rhythmic movements seem indeed to symbolise the rising waves of the mood that possesses them. And those
long, lingering, glances that tremble at the very suggestion of an interruption, the melting glances, the steady gaze of the hero, the timid, bashful, glances of the heroine that burn with suppressed passion, the ardour and even the subdued exuberance of the male contrasting vividly with the delicate restraint of the female, the many eloquent and lovely postures, the sweet and gentle movements that suggest the urge of youthful passion, all these embody a world of blissful intimacy and tenderness. One would love to float endlessly on the gently swelling and rocking waves of this ocean of happiness.

The situation may be one where king Nala and queen Damayanti, who had fallen deeply in love and had been pining for each other for long and in secret, meet in the royal garden for the first time, overcoming the many obstacles to their union. One can easily imagine the strength and sweep of the emotion surging within them. The king now finds that he has to overcome one more foe, the timid bashfulness of his beloved. He employs all the sweet and subtle strategy of love’s game to overcome her shyness. (Iyer 84-85)

Nala addresses Damayanti as “Kuvalaya vilochanae, balae, bhaimi kisalaya dharae charuseelae” [O lotus-eyed one, young girl, O daughter of king Bhima, the one with tender leaved lips and charming ways]. This is musically rendered in mantra stayi [low octave] and in two talavattoms [rhythmic cycles] of adanta tala—the first tempo with fifty-six matras [time unit]. During these two talavattoms, the preliminary part of the enactment
of this word alone is covered were Nala appreciates Damayanti’s dazzlingly beautiful form from head to foot.

A depiction of the acting of the padam in keeping with the basic rhythmic patterns given by Kalamandalam Gangadharan can be summarized as follows:

**The first talavattom of fifty six matras:**

For the first twenty matras: Nala looks at Damayanti’s face and enchanted by its beauty swings his head from left to right and left in sheer admiration.

At the twentieth matra: When the singer marks time by beating the gong, Nala’s eyes start from Damayanti’s face, to stop on reaching her bust at the twenty-eighth matra. At each instance, time is marked by the singer with a beat on the gong.

At the twenty-eighth matra: His eyes describe the rounded shape of her breasts, by making a figure \( \infty \) with the pupils of his eyes. This is continued up to the thirty-second matra.

At the thirty-second matra: His eyes reveal the size of her breasts, by opening wide. He does this up to the thirty-sixth matra.

At the thirty-six matra: His eyes describe the firmness of her
breasts, by alternately moving the eyelids of either eye, closing in and opening out as though in compression. This continues up to the fortieth matra.

**At the fortieth matra:** He starts expressing *rati* [erotic love], by smiling and glancing at Damayanti. This continues up to the forty-sixth matra.

**At the forty-sixth matra:** His face starts becoming pulled tight, with compressed facial muscles expressing his pent-up emotion. This is done up to the fifty-second matra.

**At the fifty-second matra:** His emotion is released and his facial muscles relax; he smiles lovingly at Damayanti up to the fifty-sixth matra. With this, the first talavattom of fifty-six matras in the first tempo of *adanta tala* is completed.

**The second talavattom of fifty-six matras**

In this rhythm cycle, Nala continues his appreciation of Damayanti’s form starting from the breasts, where he left off. He begins thus:

**For the first eight matras:** Nala’s eyes travel down from Damayanti’s breasts to reach her feet at the eighth matra. Here too the singer beats on the gong to mark time.
At the eighth *matra:* He looks at her right foot, and keeps doing so up to the twelfth *matra.*

At the twelfth *matra:* He looks at her left foot, keeping on doing so up to the sixteenth *matra.*

At the sixteenth *matra:* He looks once again at her left foot, and continues up to the twentieth *matra.*

At the twentieth *matra:* He looks once more at the left foot, and continues up to the twenty-fourth *matra.*

At the twenty-fourth *matra:* He expresses wonder at the beauty of both her feet, and swings his head to the right up to the twenty-sixth *matra.*

At the twenty-sixth *matra:* He continues to wonder, and swings his head to the left up to the twenty-eighth *matra.*

At the twenty-eighth *matra:* He still continues to wonder, swinging his head to the right, bringing it to the centre at the thirty-second *matra.*

At the thirty-second *matra:* His eyes travel upward, and his body rises from the stooping position until the eyes reach the level of Damayanti’s breasts at the thirty-sixth *matra.*
At the thirty-sixth matra: His eyes pause to once more enjoy the beauty of her breasts.

At the fortieth matra: His eyes move to Damayanti’s face, and enjoy its beauty up to the forty-eighth matra.

At the forty-eighth matra: His face expresses amour with a smile, which lasts up to the fifty-second matra.

At the fifty-second matra: He lovingly extends a sidelong glance at Damayanti, which lingers up to the fifty-sixth matra.

With this the second talavattom in adanta tala of the first tempo is over. The performer has not yet started showing the gestures for “kuvalaya vilochane”.

At this time, the musician is singing in todi raga, “kuvalaya vilochane” in the low octave. His singing does not matter because the actor is not performing according to the meaning of words of the song. The singer is mainly marking time for the movement of the artiste’s eyes which he, standing behind the artiste, cannot see. (Gangadharan 128-129)

Even when the artiste is acting out the meaning of the song through gestures, the singer closely watches the movements so as to synchronize the words of his song with the actors’s hand gestures. [Thus, the main role of the
singer in Kathakali is as a conductor [a kind of onstage - stage manager] rather than as a melodious singer. In effect, the entire performance of the play runs over the hand held gong [Cenkila] of the lead singer. A slow tempo of performance is the real test of the greatness of a performance. This applies to the actor, the singer, and appreciative connoisseur.

Here the address is “enacted through several bhavana dristis [imaginative eye-movements for dramatic communication], ratidristi [love], lajja dristi [shyness], visadadristi [elaboration], etc” (NC 68). The address starts with the elaboration of the lotus mudra [kuvalaya] and then the mudra for the eye is presented. The mudra for ‘balae’ [young girl, fair and youthful] is impressed in soft subdued dristi with a little bashfulness. In “the daughter of Bhima” [Bhaimi], “tender-leaved” [fresh blossoms], the freshness is depicted with a sense of wonder. In “youth” the dristi is more subdued. The eyes move upwards and are taken to their completion. The direction of acting goes like this: “Where ever the hand moves, there the glances flow; where the glances go, the mind follows; where the mind goes, the mood follows; and where the mood goes, there is the rasa” (Coomaraswamy 17). In Kathakali the aesthetic emotions are depicted in nine rasas, meaning aesthetic flavour or sentiment. They are Sringara [the erotic sentiment], Vira [the heroic], Karuna [the pathetic], Adbhuta [the sentiment of wonder], Raudra [the furious], Hasya [the comic], Bhayanaka [the fearful], Bhibatsa [the disgusting] and Santa
[peace or tranquillity]. On the Kathakali stage all these moods are delineated with great care and skill. Every mood or sentiment is handled like a jewel with cunning craftsmanship and care. Above all, the reverence, tenderness and dignity with which they are treated make the depiction of every mood a unique experience.

A content analysis of Nalacaritam can be undertaken only on the basis of its thematic content against a broad cultural background. The story of Nala and Damayanti is one of the greatest love stories in Hindu mythology and literature.

The thematic content of the other Kathakali dance-dramas are also derived from the myths and legends of the Hindu epics and the Puranas. Moreover, the character types can be traced back to the puranic stories or narratives rather than to those in Sanskrit drama. These great stories are adapted for Kathakali performance because the entire mythology of Indian literature is open to the interpretation of the actor, and this may be the secret behind the adaptation. Arundhati Roy describes this in her novel:

The secret of great stories is that they have no secrets. The great stories are ones you have heard and want to hear again. The ones you can enter anywhere and inhabit comfortably. They don’t deceive you with thrills and trick endings. They don’t surprise you with the unforeseen. They are as familiar as the house you live in or the smell of you lover’s skin. You
know how they end, yet you listen as though you don’t. In the way that although you know that one day you will die you live as though you won’t. In the great stories you know who lives, who dies who finds love who doesn’t. And yet you want to know again. That is the mystery and their magic.” (Roy 229)

This magic is actually in action on the sensibility which works along with the socio-political and cultural context. Then, unlike Krishnanattam, which restricted itself to a performance of Manadeva’s eight plays enacting the life and grace of Lord Krishna, when Kathakali was given birth it drew on a wide range of epic, myths and puranic sources, the “macrostructural narrative,” as Patrice Pavis puts it (Pavis 50). Here it is necessary to have a glance at the history and development of Kathakali since it was possibly inspired by some of the existing dance-drama forms like Krishnanattam the King of Kottarakara who composed and choreographed the new art form. Kathakali has been given its present name, which literally means “story-play,” referring to the performance of dance-drama written for the sake of theatre. Its origin is generally assigned to the late sixteenth century or early seventeenth century in Kerala. It is not at all surprising that the history and evolution of this complex dance-drama is difficult to trace with any accuracy, given the rich and indigenous performance tradition of Kerala which ranges from ritualistic folk art forms like Teyyam, Mutiettu, Patayani and Kalam Ezhuttu on the one hand and the highly devotional art
form like Krishnanattam on the other, to which Kathakali is indebted.

K. Bharatha Iyer provides a thumbnail sketch of Mutiettu:

Of these, the Mutiettu seems to be one of the oldest: it means wearing the crown, an act symbolic of victory. The most popular theme found enacted is Darika Vadha [slaying of the demon Darika], a story connected with the Bhagavati or Kali cult. The enactment is a votive offering, a religious rite that follows special ritual worship in the temple. The performance is completed in two acts: in the first one, Siva receives the sage Narada who voices the grievances of the world against the misdeeds of the demon Darika who possessed of invincible might. Siva promises to bring about his destruction by sending Kali. In the next scene, Darika appears and challenges Kali. The scene of challenge is an elaborate affair. Kali and Darika mount war chariots from where a long and spirited verbal exchange follows, which accentuates provocation, leading to intensity of passion. A great but leisurely fight ensues which lasts for hours during which the two combatants move about the whole temple compound, for the stage is everywhere in the depiction of this cosmic event. When a blood-red sky over-head announces the annihilation of darkness, Darika is slain by Kali. It is an impressive though ghastly scene. The abdomen of the fallen demon is ripped open, the avenging goddess drinks his blood and adorns herself with the garland-like entrails of the Asura. The play is simple in theme, structure and in the technique of staging. The opposing forces of light and darkness, the scene of provocation and challenge, the ghastly death scene, the
bloody meal and the conveniently expanding stage are all met with in the more developed Kathakali.” (Iyer 13-14)

Thus Kathakali has conceptually evolved as total theatre by the confluence of martial, classical folk and ritual performance. Among the factors of the confluence of performance genres, Kalaripayatt, or the martial art tradition of Kerala, has a substantial influence on the form, content, spirit and techniques of Kathakali. Kalaripayatt had developed its basic form by the twelfth century AD, often considered a watershed period in Kerala history.

Here we can add the arguments of Phillip Zarilli connected to the contribution of martial arts in Kathakali: “the martial practices and spirit preserved in the Kalaripayatt tradition form one of the most integral segments of technique and spirit out of which kathakali emerged in the course of its development as manifested in specific exercises, stances, choreographic patterns and the martial heroic spirit in kathakali” (Zarilli, When the Body Becomes All Eyes 17).

Krishnanattam from which Ramanattam is considered to have evolved might best be thought of as the immediate precursor of Kathakali. “Krishnanattam began and continues to be performed today as a devotional dance/drama which enacts the life of Lord Krishna in a sequence of eight plays.... To see the god more visually through costumes, make up is the most important thing. The art form is not so important. (Sankaran Nair as quoted in
Zarrilli, *Kathakali Complex* 47). Unlike Kathakali texts, the entire Krishnagiti \(^6\) [the literary composition] is more devotional in mood than dramatic. The text unfolds slowly yet steadily and the spirit of bhakti is its raison d'être. There is little actual 'dialogue' in the plays unlike the more dramatically structured ebb and flow of 'dialogue' and events in Kathakali texts.

Although, Krishnanattam draws upon many of the existing performance forms in the seventeenth century, especially the Sanskrit temple drama Kutiyattam, to create a new form of performance, ultimately the devotional nature of the dance drama bound the form within tight constraints. The canon of texts for performance was restricted to the cycle of eight days plays. The entire mood created in performance was dependent upon a dance style which could evoke devotion in the spectator through the fusion of music, costumes, mood and choreography. It would remain for Kathakali to build upon the dramatic possibilities of both Krishnanattam and Kutiyattam and fuse these possibilities with its own innovations creating a highly popular entertainment appealing to both the cultural elite and a broader mass audience of Kerala.

Though, originally called Ramanattam, the birth of Kathakali effectively dates from the writing of eight plays based upon the Ramayana by Vira Kerala Varma, the Rajah of Kottarakara, a small principality in eastern Travancore. The Ramanattam plays were probably written during the
close of the seventeenth century [between 1660 and 1680]. The very fact that
the Ramanattam plays were a cycle of eight indicates that at least initially
Krishnanattam served as the model for this new form of dance-drama. The
change in name to Kathakali came later as Ramanattam expanded to include
other plays than those based on the Ramayana, and the dance-drama itself
evolved artistically and aesthetically. The devotional, largely third-person
Sanskrit of Krishnanattam gave way in the Ramayana plays to a full body of
dramatic literature which contained little third-person narrative in proportion
to the dialogue accompanying the dramatic interplay of characters.
Significant changes occurred during the formative years of Kathakali’s
development. In Krishnanattam the emphasis had been upon dance, but
there had been a lack of a fuller realization of facial expression and hand
gesture. Of content, it can be seen that the implicit values and meanings
again work against the cultural plane. As Wendy O’Flaherty argues,
“Myths are not written by gods and demons, nor for them; they are by for
and about men. Gods and demons serve as metaphors for the human
situation. Myth is a two-way mirror in which ritual and philosophy may
regard one another” (O’Flaherty 8).

Then elements like myth, characters and actions of epic and purana
from the past work contributively to the interpretation of the text, and in the
expressive interpolations. Eventually, the past or tradition maintained through
an imagined specific form of continuity in the performance of Kathakali cannot be considered as something attributed or involved but as integral parts of the performance itself. In the words of A.K. Ramanujan, “In a culture like India, the past does not pass. It keeps on providing paradigms and ironies for the present, or at least that’s the way it seems” (Ramanujan 187).

If we consider Kathakali as a mode of cultural praxis it can be ascertained that knowledge, discourse and meanings are repositioned through performance. “Then cultural performances are sites of cultural action which either implicitly assume or explicitly assert one or more discourses or meanings. Then like the concept of culture itself, a system of cultural performance such as Kathakali is a dynamic system of human action” (Singer 7).

The relationship between culture and performance is an area of great attraction to the critical theorists. As Susan Bennett puts it, “both an audience’s reaction to a text [or performance] and the text [performance] itself are bound within cultural limits. Yet, as diachronic analysis makes apparent, those limits are continually tested and invariably broken. Culture cannot be held as a fixed entry, a set of constant rules, but instead it must be seen as in a position of inevitable flux” (Bennett 101). We can see, thus, that theatre is culture-specific in the sense that theatre reflects almost all the components which are contributive to the culture also. This has been
stated more specifically by Bruce McConachie when he says that theatre is not “simply reflecting and expressing determinate realities and forces” (McConachie 229).

And in the case of Kathakali, which is a theatre of complex network of specific interactive practices of authorship or composition, acting or performing, patronage or connoisseurship, construction or maintenances of the appurtenances of performance, it is not reducible to the obvious set of performance techniques, repertory of play texts, traditional set of conventions and or aesthetics. But Kathakali carries on as a set of potentialities “inherent in the complex set of practices, texts, discourses, representations and constraints through which it is constantly negotiated and recreated by means of tactical improvisation both within the tradition and outside it” (Jenkins 51). As a whole, Kathakali as a complex and ever changing system of social and aesthetic practices which both shapes and is shaped by its contexts has attracted the attention of director-theorists like Antonin Artaud. He dreamed of a “pure theatrical language freed from the tyranny of verbal discourse, a language of signs, gestures and attitudes having an ideographic value as they exist in certain unperverted pantomimes” (Artaud 39).

Artaud, in his “search for a plastic stage language looked to Eastern theatrical tradition where explicit kinesic conventions allow a sustained and
autonomous gestural discourse of considerable synthetic and semantic richness:” (Elam 69) the Indian Kathakali dance theatre for example, “with its repertory of 800 mudras or syntactic units [64 limb movements, 9 head movements, 11 kinds of glance, etc] and a range of fixed meanings correlated to them, in terms of character, emotions etc” (Ikegami 370). These sub-codes which can be easily decoded are culture-specific in the performance of Kathakali and structurally they are signs, codes and paradigms, and sub-codes that contribute to the rasa bhava expressions also. Again, these expressions may be reflections, representations or depictions. Further, these on the stage can be defined as aesthetic objects and are paradigmatic.

According to semioticians like Jiri Veltrusky, “all that is on the stage is a sign” (Veltrusky 84), because on stage the objects signifying something in symbolic form produce meanings, but in daily life they may not have that much significance. Then a “real object may be substituted on the set by a symbol if the symbol is able to transfer the object’s own signs to itself” (Brusak 62). Meanings produced have cultural connotations or social denotations because objects undergo an aesthetic transformation and thus they become images or cultural metaphors.

Since the explicit kinesic conventions in Kathakali allow a sustained and autonomous gestural discourse of considerable synthetic and semantic
richness, the cultural paradigms produced thus are implicit in the aesthetic experience, and according to this paradigm a sensibility of emotional appraisal becomes operational. Hence paradigm substituted for emotion in Kathakali makes the expressions more manifest.

Since the emotions are manifested through paradigms in Kathakali the making of a paradigm is to be analysed more fully. Emotion, used as a general term, denotes an inner state plus a behavioural and psychological component. According to Axel Mattenklott “If one induces joy, for instance, one assumes that it will be felt [e.g. as a feeling of warmth] and that it has a behavioural counterpart [e.g. a smiling face] and a psychological response [e.g. a change of skin conductance level]” (Mattenklott 285). Axel Mattenklott in his theory of emotion further derives the following as subjective emotion: “Subjective emotion will be conceived as a subjective experience of the individual. It can be represented by different indicators [e.g. by a communication of what the individual feels]. Feeling will be used interchangeably with subjective emotion” [285]. Emotions have been traditionally measured by three various methods, called the “three-system approach to emotion: the registration of, respectively, the arousal of the autonomous or sympathetic nervous system, the recording of expressive behaviour [most frequently facial expression], and self-report. It cannot be concluded that subjective emotions can be measured analogously by these
three methods as respondents may feel something they express neither facially nor physiologically [e.g. change in the heart rate when coldness is experienced]. So as not to make things more complicated, however, it is assumed that subjective emotions in principle can be measured in the same way as emotions” (Lang 475).

Axel Mattenklott analyses the subjective emotion as follows: generally the measurement of subjective emotion raises three questions. The first asks whether an indicator is specific to a particular subjective emotion, whether skin conductance, for instance, is a specific indicator for joy. “An indicator for an emotion is defined as specific if it is present when the particular emotion is present and if it is absent when the particular emotion is absent” (Cacioppo & Tassinary 16). The second question asks whether an indicator is independent of persons and situations. For example, if finger temperature were an indicator of empathetic distress, it would have the property of generality if it covaried with changes in empathetic distress across situations and individuals. These two questions can be assigned to the context of validity.

Clearly, it is the task of emotion theorists to conceive the type of relationship between feelings and their behavioural and physiological counterparts. The different emotion theories that make inconsistent statements concerning the relationship between feelings and their
behavioural or physiological responses. When citing the two extremes with respect to this type of relationship, one sees on the one side the cognition-arousal theory (Schachter & Singer 379-399) and on the other the body reaction theory (James 17ff). According to the cognition-arousal theory, a subjective emotion is a product of an interaction between two components: physiological arousal [a heightened activation of the autonomous nervous system] and a cognition about the cause of that arousal. Arousal is conceived as emotionally nonspecific and it determines the intensity of the subjective emotion. Cognition determines its quality. If every physiological measure reflects only the intensity of the subjective emotion, the problem of specificity cannot be dealt with. The body reaction theory is based on the nativist assumption that a pattern of expressive creates or reflects a specific subjective emotion. Even if one assumes an association between a subjective emotion and behavioural or physiological response, this association can have various forms (Leventhal and Tomarken 565-610). First, both subjective emotions and their counterparts could be products of process of the central nervous system. Second, they could be directly and causally connected, with either or both acting as a cause. Third, both could influence one another, but the degree of influence is mediated by an underlying mechanism of the central nervous system.
The third question asks whether the method used for measurement is sufficiently sensitive to register changes in the indicator. For example, if we rely on facial expression as an indicator of subjective emotion we must ask whether judges who analyse the videotaped faces of subjects watching film scenes can reliably detect changes in their facial expression.

As already outlined, the main problem of this approach is that, at the moment, there is insufficient empirical evidence for emotion theorists to make valid statements about which physiological indicator is specific to which type of emotion. In literature, one finds a series of studies that follow the approach of identifying specific physiological indicators. Several primary emotions like anger, fear, or joy are induced through the use of differing techniques. In one, for instance, individuals are instructed to imagine situations in which they experience positive feelings like joy. The supposed feelings are measured by various physiological variables and the analysis is directed to identify indicators, the discriminating power of which is highest with respect to the induced emotions (Mattenklott 285-297).

In Kathakali, the emotional state of appreciation involves a complex network of spectator's cognitive and emotional activities that might have been stimulated by various textual characteristics and inputs in performance. The codes which are operative in the performance space like music, costumes, choreography and properties are contributive to the
structure and aesthetic of elaboration. The paradigms produced through these elaborations evoke emotions of varied kind akin to their contexts. Conceptually, these emotions are not internalised by the actor; instead, the body, with its different features in acting like facial, gestural, dance and movements, is considered “a mirror which gives the reflection not an imprint” (Nair Appukuttan 11).

Emotional responses to Kathakali [theatre] can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reception state</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Theatre → Kathakali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive model</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive/ Affective process</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

↓

Meaning ↔ Primary Affect blend like 
Sadness, anger, erotic etc.

Diagram 2

Here it is clear that the reflection of the emotions in the spectator is basically in keeping with his cultural state of mind which includes knowledge for appreciation [orientation] along with the emotional state of mind. Then emotion is conveyed though the elaboration of symbolic acting. For instance, a glance of love by the hero to the heroine, though she
is standing very near, is not done directly towards her but it meets in the spectator where the reception of the heroine is also taking place. The exaggerated address coping with the much exaggerated costumes is also justified artistically in this convergence. Thus images, metaphors or paradigms are produced. Consider the following:

The abhinaya in Kathakali is essentially symbolic. When there is a dialogue between two characters, the actors do not face each other. The ‘look’ of one actor appears in front of the other and not on his face because it is not the actors who are conversing, but the characters who are projected through actors. Similarly, when the hero and heroine embrace, there is no bodily contact; they do not even face each other. They simply stand side by side, facing the audience, symbolically extending their hands around each other. Every action of love, including kissing, involves not the lips, but the hands and eyes, which symbolically indicate the process. Sweating, likewise, is represented by fanning oneself profusely; horripilation, by shivering from head to toe; and shedding tears, by gesticulating with the fingers. (Nair Appukuttan 11)

Of properties, the Kathakali stage can become a palace or a forest at a moment’s notice. The actor’s physicalisation of dramatic action and of the text’s rich poetic images, supplemented by his dancing of set pieces of choreography, provoke the audience’s imaginative engagement in the creation of the ‘world’ of the play. A chariot is created through the mimetic action and dance of the performer as he simultaneously physicalises the
chariot, horse, and driver, rhythmically moving around the stage, an imaginary whip in hand driving the horse to battle.

Phillip Zarrilli writes in his *Kathakali Dance Drama*:

As a dance-drama all Kathakali dance has been created to elaborate upon and to accentuate the drama and its ever-changing moods; however, some dances are intended to enhance directly the immediate mood or action of the dramatic narrative, and others are ‘pure’ dance, especially appreciated for their stylistic elaboration. Kathakali dances range from the very strong and vigorous [*tandava*] to the soft or languid [*lasya*]. The languid is most evident in the choreography of idealized ‘shining’ female characters. Dramatic dances such as choreographed battles illustrate the ‘strong’ vigorous style of Kathakali dance as they push forward the narrative action of the drama. Other set pieces of choreography such as [*kalasam*] which punctuate the performance of the dramatic text, help create, sustain, and/or elaborate on the dramatic mood of a scene. (61-62)

Acting [*abhinaya*] in Kathakali needs more description as this leads the play towards the audience. The Sanskrit term *abhinaya* interpreted literally means *educate*, as the actor educates the “spectator by stimulating
in him the latent possibility of aesthetic experience” (Coomaraswamy and Duggirala 48). Phillip Zarrilli sums it up succinctly:

To summarize, kathakali performances are collective and collaborative realization of the aesthetic potential of the performance score. As the vocalists sing the entire performance text, the music ensemble provides the basic rhythmic framework accompanying each element of the performance, and each actor-dancer realizes his role by embodying/enacting the character, ‘speaking’ his dialogue through use of the highly codified both pure and interpretive choreography as part of the role.

Kathakali’s complex performance score could be described as a series of elaborations and embellishments – on and within elaborations. The elaboration characteristic of the double performance of padam, the elaboration of sloka when performed, the vocalists’ modes of elaborating while singing, and the percussionists’ modes of rhythmic elaboration have all been designed and refined over the years as self-conscious challenges to the artists’ collective skills. It is precisely these modes of elaboration which are savored by connoisseurs. (Zarrilli, Kathakali Dance Drama 63)

And K. Bharata Iyer provides the following account on how Kathakali works toward a synthesis of its four principal dramatic elements:

Embodying so significant a conception, it covers every aspect of the process by which that object is achieved and is the synthesis resulting from
the combination of four separate and fully developed dramatic elements. They are Aharya, Vacika, Angika and Satvika. Aharyaabhinaya denotes the decorative elements of the play, like facial make-up, costumes and jewellery...The Kathakali stage presents the strange mythological personalities of the three worlds viz., the upper world of the gods, the middle world of the human beings and the nether world of the asuras, who are endowed with superhuman qualities, mental and physical. Further, they are not so many individuals as symbolic personalities. To present them convincingly is a problem that would test the ingenuity of any producer. They can only be 'realised' through suggestion or symbolic representation... The characters of the drama are not so many individuals but expressions of principles or qualities. Broadly, they fall into three principal categories: Satvik, Rajasik and Tamasik. Other intermediary types emerge in proportion to the preponderance of one or other of these qualities. All these types [basic and intermediary ones] are brought on the Kathakali stage under five principal classes. They are Pacca [green], Katti [knife], Tati [Beard], Kari [Black] and Minukku [Polished]. All these types are distinguished primarily by the facial make-up, the colour scheme and pattern of which differ in each case. The function of the make-up is to create a significant form, a form that possesses competency to express the character or qualities of the type it represents.
In *Naḷacaritam*, Nala is *Pacca*, Damayanti and Sudeva are *Minukku*, Kali and Woodsman are *Tati*, and Hamsa is a special type known as *Teppu* [type].

*Vachikabhinaya* refers to the speeches and songs by the actors. Instead of words, it is mimesis that informs the acting. The body is put to the fullest use to express ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions through mime and dance. Movement is more eloquent in expressing innate impulses and feelings than words, and the charged silence of the actor gives intensity to his expressive movements, which would not be the case when he is also expected to concentrate on his words or declamation. In silent acting or mime the experience is much more intense and effective. Instinctive and natural movements [*Lokadharmi*] are added to the conventional [*Natyadharmi*]. Thus *abhinaya* is the harmonious blending of these two modes. The studied movements that emerge out of this process are very many and relate to almost every part of the body and limbs. They are codified in the text with meticulous care. The suppressing of the *vacika* leads to a remarkable development of *angikabhinaya* with an extensive vocabulary of its own; it becomes an independent language that needs no words (Iyer 42ff). Critics like Terence Gray have realised this. He asks: “But are words the only or the essential medium of dramatic art?” (Gray 29). And he answers: “words become a strikingly inadequate medium for the expression of emotion.... For the great
moments of the drama words are inadequate, at such moments the character should express himself in mime and dance” (Gray 30)

Satvikabhinaya is the expression of psychic states and is intimately associated with emotional conditions and manifests itself in terms of joy, horripilation, change of colour, change of voice, trembling, fainting, motionless etc… In a woman in love, it shows itself in instinctive amorous gestures, bashfulness or in a sense of confusion [vibhrama]. A play in which satvikabhinaya finds full expression is considered by the Natyasastra as very superior. (Iyer 42)

Angikabhinaya means bodily movements, hand gestures, eye-movements, etc.

It denotes studied movements of the angas like the head, breast, hands, waist and feet, of pratyangas like the shoulders, shoulder blades, arms, thighs, knees and elbows, and upangas such as the eyes, eye-lids, pupils, cheek, nose, teeth, tongue, heels, toes, fingers, palms, face and lips. Of these, hastas [hand gestures] and eye movements are of particular importance. Hastas are the words of sign-language; the facial expressions, particularly the eye movements enforce their significance. Gesture has always played an important role in the transmission of thoughts and emotions of man. The natural inclination to gesticulate functions vigorously when we are gripped by emotion or when we desire to emphasise. (Iyer 50)
According to Kalamandalam Gopi, the famous actor of Kathakali, in angikabhinaya while the face is principally used for a reflective expression of emotions, the hand is the principal organ which uses gestures for interpretative expression of ideas and objects. While facial expressions in Kathakali are either exaggerated or reduced stylized simulations of natural human facial expression, the hand gestures are technically stylized and difficult to comprehend. Gopi elaborates:

The gestures of Kathakali, whether of the face or the hands and legs are spontaneously linked with rhythm, even the sub-organs of the face move in subtle micro-rhythms in Kathakali, giving a symbolic, indicative, visible manifestation of ideas and objects. These stylized, symbolic gestures lend greater power to expressions than the imitative. . . .

Mudras may be worldly, but when used in Kathakali they undergo an aesthetic transformation. They could be imitative of appearance of behavioural traits, yet employed in Kathakali, they become stylized. They could be Vedic [used during the chanting of the Hindu Vedas] or Tantric [ritualistic] with great divine potency, but when applied to Kathakali, the Vedic and Tantric mudras are refined to suit delicate aesthetics.

Hand gesture are only like the letters of the alphabet. The same gesture depicts several things in different movements, combined movements, different situations, and so on. It is interesting to note that
with twenty-four hasta mudras, or hand gestures, more than five hundred objects can be indicated. For each of these, in turn, there are several variations, depending on the situation, the potential power, the attitude of the character, "the non-character" [one who is extraneous to the text of the play], and so on. All the organs and sub-organs of the body should act in unison - in multiple ways - to give meaning to the hand gestures.

Compared with other performing arts, the hasta mudras in Kathakali are presented very elaborately. The depiction of a mudra [Lotus mudra] in all sorts of acting [abhinaya] in Kathakali for the manifestation of expression or to evoke emotion can be given as follows:

The Kathakali actor takes a very long time to indicate a lotus. He first lowers his entire body, indicative of the lower level of the lotus pond. Looking at it with his eyes alone, he describes the circular shape of the flower and its various petals; then with facial expressions he enjoys its fragrance. He opens his eyes, expressing wonder at its beauty. The entire face, the lips and the cheeks glow with a smile marvelling at its beauty. He then holds his hand in the centre in mushti mudras, revolving the wrists downwards, he opens out the palms of his hands. Bringing the opened out palms facing upwards, he holds them together in kapota hasta, indicating the lotus bud craving to rise to the water's surface. The hasta mudra slowly rises to simulate the lotus trying to reach the surface. All this time, the performer's eyes are diligently watching every movement of the lotus and with trembling
fingers he indicates the opening of each petal. This trembling opening of the lotus is depicted in his eyes by the movement of the pupil, eyelids and eyebrows; his lips spread in a beam of excitement while the drums play in a low key the reverberations attendant on this trepidatory opening of the lotus. Finally, the lotus is fully open. The performer’s face brightens as he takes in its beauty and fragrance. There is no limit to the time that he can take to exultantly describe the flower. (Gopi 112)

To conclude, it is clear that in this highly stylized mode of acting, every presentation becomes paradigmatic for the manifest expression of emotion. And, each paradigm, which can stand for or delineate the concept of any emotion, becomes the emotional paradigm. Nāḷacaritam which is an emotive structure as a whole can then be measured as emotional paradigm objectified.