

CHAPTER NO.VIOTHER DANCE FORMS OF THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH

It is with St. Francis Xavier that the historical accounts of Christianity in Tamilnadu begins in October 1542 during the rule of Portuguese. Besides Goa he worked mainly on the Pearl Fishery Coast, Kanyakumari districts, Coastal regions of Tanjore, South Arcot districts and in Madras. The vigorous westernisation of Christianity which was started by the Portuguese in Kerala was easily carried on to these new regions. However, inspite of the above developments, a few individual Jesuit scholars tried to make these Christians an integral part of thenative culture and society. Henry Henrique, Robert De Nobili, Emmanuel Martis, C.J. Beschi are a few mentioned here, whose contribution have been remarkable in the field of language, literature and culture. Beschi and Robert De Nobili composed many poems in Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit. Tempavani⁽¹⁾, a lyrical poem by Beschi divided into three books each comprising twelve chapters became part of the village folk-songs. Christian feasts were celebrated with great solemnity. To these, art performances were normally linked. From the end of 18th century quite a few art-forms of the Christians took a definite form. Pāska or passion plays were introduced in

different regions. A short account of the Paska of Edaikattoor, Pallipatti both Tamilnadu and Pashavom (passion play) and Gumta Nach in Mangalore is commented on in this chapter.

'Bethlehem Kuravanji' by Thiru Vedanayagam Shastriyar is found to be an useful and important source-material for Kuravanji Nātakams. Among the Tamil speaking people of Palghat district of Kerala, Nātakams like Kunkunammāl, Allēsu etc. and Kummiāttam and Mūnrurājakūthu are still performed.

a) PASKA IN TAMILNADU:

During the time of Lent and Easter, many parishes in Tamilnadu have the Paska performance (passion play). Each Paska of the parish has a history of its own. In Edaikattoor, Edaipadi, Kovilur, B.Pallipatti and many other places, the performance is being enacted every year regularly and religiously for many decades. During the field-work, the Paska at Edaikattoor and Pallipatti was witnessed by the present writer and necessary information was gathered and the artists were interviewed.

EDAIKATTOOR PASKA:

Edaikattoor is situated 40 Kms. away from Madurai on the way to Rameswaram. It is on the northern bank of river Vaigai. Dr.R.P.Sedhupillai, in his historical research book, "Oorum, Perum" mentions that a great poet Idaikadar lived in this

village, and this place is named after him "Idaikattoor". Cultivation is the chief occupation of this people. Christians, Hindus and Muslims live in harmony and brotherhood.

There were Christians already in the 17th century and Jesuits preached Christ and established the Church in this part of the country. The parish of Rajagambeeram was established in 1839 and Idaikattor was its sub-station. But in 1865 Idaikattoor became an independent parish and Fr.Hurlin S.J. became the parish priest. After him, in 1878, Fr.Ferdinand Cell S.J. became the parish priest and he was the main man behind Paska and its birth and growth in Idaikattoor . He was also the one who built the famous Sacred Heart Church at Idaikattoor (98). He played a vital role not only in building the Church but also replaced the statues used for Paska with men (actors). Later this Paska was slightly modified by Fr.Pfeiffle S.J., Fr.Jeganathan, and Fr.Viswasam.

THE PASKA AND THE BIBLE:

For the past 107 years (1877-1984) the people of Idaikattoor enact Paska in two days." By this they bear witness to the people, how God created in his mercy and how He redeemed the world through the passion, death and resurrection of His only Son Jesus Christ. All the scenes in the Paska are ,

therefore, from the Bible. The dialogue spoken by the actors are also based on the Biblical language. Therefore, those who act and those who witness can easily memorize the Bible. This was used as a medium to catechise people in large numbers at the same time.

THE CENTENARY JOURNEY OF PASKA

As soon as we hear the work Paska the village of Idaikattoor comes to our mind. In Europe, between 1100 to 1500 Paska had its origin. Later it was developed and modified and has reached its present shape. The foreign missionaries who came to India tried to attract people through this media and succeeded in it to a great extent.

HISTORY OF IDAIKATTOOR PASKA AND DEVELOPMENT:

In 1865, Paska was established in Idaikattoor and they used statues and dolls for the characters. The dialogue was read out. But in 1878, the then parish priest, Fr.Cell replaced these statues and dolls with men. For these characters he selected men who would fit into the character and who had good voice. He trained them himself demonstrating the various actions. Those who witnessed that first Paska were delighted and enthused. Thus, the initiative taken by Fr.Cell has reached

the present stage with slight modification and alterations.

In 1920, the then parish priest, Fr.Pfeiffle chose 4 priests, Irudayam Pillai, Asirvatham Pillai, Sinia Pillai, to reform the existing dialogues, songs, scenes of the Paska without drifting away from the Bible but basing them close to the Biblical texts. Costumes and screens which were fitting and appropriate to the characters and scenes were prepared. Above all Fr.Pfeiffle built a stage for Paska.

In 1936, Fr.J.Jeganathan made slight modification in the Paska. He pulled down the old stage and rebuilt it extending the stage. The present day Paska is still performed on this stage. In 1962, Fr.Viswasam, introduced some more scenes and raised the standard of Paska . In 1976, Fr.V.M.Amalan and Fr. M.Divyanadam composed music (light) and staged the Paska with three stages at the same time with the modern techniques of sound and light.

All the people who once belonged to this place return to the village to witness the Paska. The Paska of Idaikattoor is performed on the first Friday and Saturday after the feast of Easter. The performance of each role comes down almost as the family heritage. In case there is nobody with the ability to

act in the family, the elder of the village together select someone else to perform a particular role. All the performers are men. The costume and make-up are in keeping up with the Jewish mannerism, although Tilak (Nāman) Kirīṭams etc. are used by some characters like Pilate, soldiers etc.

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

On the evening of the 1st Friday after the feast of Easter, the whole premises of the parish is cleaned up and decorated for the annual Paska. The performers get busy behind the stage with the make-up (99). People in thousands flock here from all directions to witness the Paska. When the performers are ready, at about 10.30 p.m. the parish priest comes and blesses (100) all the performers and prays for the success of the performance.

The curtain opens to the traditional music and songs praising Lord Jesus where the Tableau of Jesus is shown on the stage. After this, the scene of Genesis (Adam and Eve), St. John the Baptist, Sermon on the mount (101), Last Supper-Washing of the feet (102) Awarding of death sentence to Jesus by Pilate (103), Carrying of the Cross and meeting Mother Mary on the way (104), Lamenting of Mother Mary after the death of Jesus on the cross (105), They carry a statue of Him

in a specially constructed chariot in a funeral procession to the church (106) and back to the main stage for burial(107) Resurrection of Jesus (108) and many other incidents of the Bible are beautifully sung and enacted to the accompaniment of the background musicians. The whole performance is enacted with a solemn High Mass in the parish church on the Saturday night. The whole dialogue is in singing. Performers, while singing employ suitable gestures in accordance with the meaning of the lyrics. Quite a few hastas like Pataka, ardhacandra, musti, Sikara, Anjali etc. are used very frequently. The music is based on Carnatic style, but the folk-tunes and a touch of Gregorian music (church music) among the Latin rite Christians) is clearly seen in the composition of the melody. The lyrics are in Tamil. There is very little of Nrtta throughout the presentation, but one could find Nrtta and abhinaya elaborately used by them, like: Mother Mary, Annas, the high priest, Pilate, St. Peter, Mary Magdalene, Judas etc.

For the people of Idaikattoor the celebration of Paska is not just a stage-performance, it is also a re-living of their religious experience from the beginning to the end. The stage is right in front of the church, erected in 1936 it remains as the permanent place for the enactment of this

historic story of Christ. This is another example where the art-form, stage performing art has become a part and parcel of the religious life of these Christians in Madurai after the pioneering work of De Nobili in attempting to understand Christ in the Indian ways and forms.

MASATTA RAKTHAM (INNOCENT BLOOD AT PALLIPPATTY)

Pallipatty is 50 K.m. away from Salem, a remote village where the passion play under the title of Masatta Raktham is being enacted for many years. The performance is held on the second Friday after Easter. The speciality of this performance is that it is enacted on a hill, literally making it the natural setting and stage for the performance.

Originally Pallipatty fell under the parish of Kovilur which was established in 1702. In 1750 there was a division in the parish and Pallipatty came under Lalikalam. From Lalikalam Pallipatty became an independent parish in 1930.

PASKA AT PALLIPATTY:

In the 1960 when Rev. Mathew Pulickal was the Parish Priest, Sri.S.A.Cruz, a teacher by profession directed and staged the glory of Jesus into a passion play and he himself

acted as Jesus. This was in the style of Kovilur Paska. But the present Paska Masatta Raktham was written by S.Ithayanathan of B.Pallipatty and was first staged in 1969 at Kovilur. Since 1970 it is being staged every year in B.Pallipatty.

UNIQUENESS OF THE PASKA:

The unique feature of this play is that it is performed on a hill. The hill Mazhabiel is a good back-ground with a natural stage setting with rocks, plants, trees, caves, canal, lane etc. For details refer the sketch (i) and the photo of the hill Mazhabiel (109).

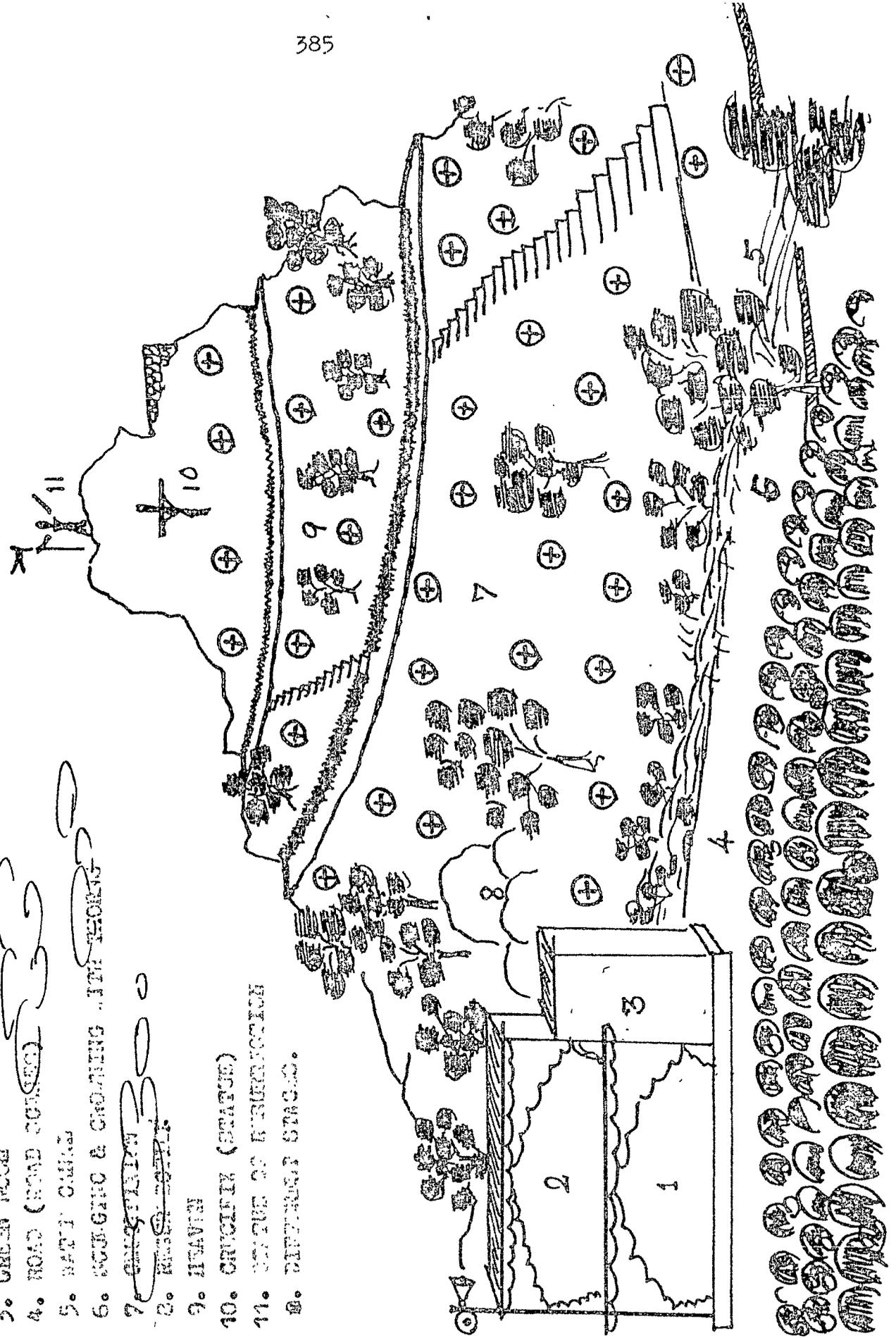
First Masatta Raktham was performed only on one stage. In 1975 it was performed on 20 stages with 200 artistes by making use of the sound and light technique. This was the result of the hard work of Rev.R.Xavier. In the year 1977 it was performed on 30 stages with 300 artistes with the help of Rev.S.Irudaya Selvam. And today, it gets the praise of the whole world because it is staged on 33 stages (symbolical number denoting the age of Jesus Christ) with 333 artistes with the help of Rev.John Joseph and Fr.Peter the present Parish Priest.

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

The rehearsals begin with the start of the Lenten season

**A. GEOGRAPHY OF THE STAGE
ON THE HILL - PALLIPATTI**

- 1. ERECTED STAGE.
- 2. 1ST FLOOR OF THE STAGE.
- 3. GREEN POOL.
- 4. ROAD (ROAD COURSE).
- 5. NATT' CANALS.
- 6. SCULPTING & CARVING WITH THONG.
- 7. ~~GRASSY PLAIN~~
- 8. ~~REAR WALLS~~
- 9. HUMAN.
- 10. ORIGINAL (STAGE).
- 11. SCULPTURE OF RESURRECTION.
- 12. DIFFERENT STAGES.



though the performance takes place only on 2nd Friday after the feast of Easter. On the day of performance the whole hill is lit and pilgrims from far and near climb the Holy hill. 333 artistes gather for the make-up and dressing(110, 110a). The drum-beating begins by 6.00 p.m. At about 10.00 p.m. the local musicians go to the parish house to bring the priest ceremoniously(111). Thousands of people come with food and settle themselves on the vast open ground in front of the Mazhabiel Hill. The parish priest goes to the green room and blesses the artistes. Everyone eagerly awaits the performance.

The performance begins with the scene in heaven where a fight between angels starts. The setting is right on the top of the hill. The rebellious and proud angels are pushed down to hell and then the devils dance right at the foot of the hill. Then the usual story on the life of Jesus goes on. By dawn the scenes of the resurrection of Christ are enacted. After this all the Christians complete the celebration with a solemn High Mass on the Mazhabiel Hill.

About 7 to 8 thousand people watch this historical play every year. According to Fr.Peter, the parish priest the audience includes not only Christians but also Hindus and Muslims. Every year the number in the audience increases.

In every religious performance it is not only the quality and standard of the performance that attracts the people, it is also the inner disposition of the people that draws them to a particular artistic form. So, it is not enough to prepare just the performers, the audience also have to be prepared. By watching the Paska of Pallipatty , one is reminded of Ramleela in Banaras which of course is far far ahead in its attendance and history. Well, the Paska of Pallipatty could be Kristalīla , but it will take many years not just to prepare the performers but the audience.

b) PASHAVOM:

The district of Dakshina Kannada (previously called South Kanara) in the Karnataka State is inhabited by a sizable Christian population. Though a few must have got converted to Christianity from this region, many must have migrated ⁽¹⁾ from Goa during the suppression of Konkani started in 1684 which included their customs, habits, dress, fine-arts and other indigenous elements in their social and religious life. This was vehemently enforced by the Portuguese govt. and hierarchy. The Pashavom which the Christians enacted in the premises of the Churches in South Kanara region in the past must have been brought by them from Goa.

SOMIACHO PASHAVOM:

Somiacho Pashavom literally means in Mangalorean Konkani (the Konkani language is spoken by the Christians of South Kanara) , The Lord's Passion. This is similar to the PASSO in Goa, PASKA in Tamilnadu and the PASSION PLAY in the West. Though the content of all the art-forms remain the same, yet the form and presentation differs from place to place. The present day Somiacho Pashavom of this region has little similarity to the Sanskrit Theatre of India where singing and dancing is part and parcel of the performance where every actor does singing, dancing and acting (dialogue). Here, there is practically not much dance to be found in the presentation of their religious drama. The little singing which is done is also from the back-stage. However, the lyrics are traditional and moving. Many places the dialogue is very close to poetry.

Till 1950 the performance was enacted in many Churches of this region like; Shirva, Kalyanpur, Milagres, Rujai etc. on the Good Friday. At that time singing was part of the re-enactment of this Historico-religious play. The present writer on making a survey found out that at present no church in this region enacts Somiacho Pashavom on Good Friday.

However, the presentation which I witnessed during the

field-work was staged first by the Konkani Nataka Sabha established in 1951. The passion play was written by late Shri M.P.D'sa in 1954 with the help of the following eminent personalities: P.T.Rodrigues, Simon Rusquinha, J.B.Rusquinha, C.B.Fernandes, Fr.Philip Neri, Fr.George Albuquerque and others. On the inaugural occasion they had 8 shows. Later, after a big gap in 1964 it was staged again 7 times. The same presentation was repeated again in 1984 for 13 times. During the field-work one of these performances was witnessed by the author on the 29th March 1984 at Don Bosco Hall in Mangalore. In 1954 probably for the first time Somiacho Pashavom was brought to the stage as a performance which earlier was a part of the Good Friday services.

The Somiacho Pashavom or the Passion play in Mangalore has been always performed in the time of Lent.⁽²⁾ The theme and the content was and is in the line of Gospel narrations where the birth, life, mission ,passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ was acted out. The costumes and make-up were corresponding to the Jewish-customs and habits (112 + 113). The traditional religious devotional music used had touches of Indian melodies, but the instruments used were violin and guitar. Though the duration was four hours, originally it must

have been longer. There were 56 actors taking part in the performance. Lady characters were given very little importance. Mary and Mary Magdalene had a small roles to play unlike performances in other parts of the country.

It was more of a historical drama than the faith-experience of the people in a given and concrete situation where the indigenous cultural straits and influences play a major role. The most striking element of the native land was the language they used- Konkani. However, it was an attempt by the people to experience and understand religion through the stage which is very much in the line of the Indian mind and culture.

c) GUMTA NACH

This is a peculiar folk art prevalent among the Christians of South Kanara. Ghumot means a peculiar type of drum made of clay. Across the mouth of this drum the skin of the jungle lizard is tied and on the other side there is a small hole over which the left hand moves to produce different sound effects (114). The main artist is the one who plays ghumot in the lead. Whilst giving the rhythm on the ghumot, he sings as well. Other ghumot players just accompany him with rhythms. The theme of the songs is taken from the Bible and

moral stories which is tuned to the peculiar local music in Konkani. The singer normally asks a question and in the second line answers it . A song based on the creation goes as follows:

" Devaon Kitem Rochilam"? (What has God created?)

" Devaon Sorgu Rochila " (God created heaven)

Today this art-form has almost died out. During the field-work I did not come across an actual performance anywhere. However, I could gather the information from the elders of different villages who described the mode of its performance in the past. According to their description, while the singing began, one by one the dancers entered the Matov (pandal). They danced in a group with simple steps and variations. The dance is normally performed during the time of marriage and also during Christmas and Easter with appropriate songs. The place of the performance was the courtyard of the bride-groom or the bride. The participants were only men, the women folk served as an attentive audience. The performance was done informally. It lasted till late at night.

I could also record the Gumtanchim Poddam (songs of the Gumta) from these masters. They start the Gumta Nāch or Poddam which are still sung with a prayer with the sign of the cross (In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit = the

Christian Trinity) and end by asking for the blessings of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The main songs are on creation (Genesis), King David and Goliath, 7 Sacraments, Passion of Christ, Mother Mary etc. Shri Lazarus Moronha, Marne Moodubelle, D.K., Shri Basil Joseph Pinto, Shri John Pinto both from Birav ,D.K., Shri Paul Leo Fernandes Moodubidri, Shri Lawrence D'Souza, Loretto and Shri Simon Barboza, Palli,D.K. are a few exponents of this art-form whom I met during the field work.

In the recent years Canara Communications, a Mangalore Diocese-owned institution has taken some interest in promoting and encouraging this art-form by way of arranging small programmes and documenting the songs of Gumta Nāch. The dance portion of the art-form is almost forgotten but the songs are in a dying stage. Unless some positive and immediate steps are taken to revive this art-forms it will soon become a story of the past.

d) BETHLEHEM KURAVANJI:

In Tamilnadu, the practice of Kuravanji Natakams is an ancient one linked to the temples. There are many Kuravanjis i.e. Kutrala Kuravanji, Kumbesar Kuravanji, Azhagar Kuravanji etc. Bethlehem Kuravanji was composed by Thiru Vedanayagam Shastriyar, the son of Devasaganpillai of Tirunelveli and the

disciple of Rev.Swasch , in 1880 at Tanjore. He modified it in 1920 and dedicated it to the universal church. The mode of presentation and the development of the theme of Bethlehem Kuravanji is same as that of other Kuravanjis. Jesus was born in Bethlehem and hence it is called "Bethlehem Kuravanji"

CONTENT (3)

The daughter of Sion, Dēvamōhini, sees Jesus as He comes along the streets of Bethlehem. She is overwhelmed by His divine beauty. Touched to the core, she wishes only to marry Him. All night she pines for Him. The pleasant moonlight does not calm her either. Day break still finds her restless.

A gypsy girl, Visuvasa Kuravanji, who happens to pass by Dēvamōhini as she goes to the palace, stops to chat with her. Dēvamōhini , is taken up by the gypsy and asks her to predict her future. The inspired gypsy tells her of the love she bears for the King Jesus and also that she rightly deserves to be His queen. Dēvamōhini is filled with joy on hearing this and rewards the gypsy abundantly. Thrilled with all the prizes received, the gypsy girl returns home.

Gnana Singam on returning with his catch of birds, sees that his wife has not returned and goes in search of her.

Both meet and Gnana Singam is told of the recent events. Their joy is mutual and the happy couple glorify God in song and dances.

Bethlehem Kuravanji must have been performed in different parts of Tamilnadu in the 19th century. During the field work I witnessed the performance of Bethlehem Kuravanji at Pondichery in April 1984 by Miss Sughandi , Miss Julien and troupe from Cuddalore (115, 116, 117). The performance was similar to any other Kuravanjis I witnessed. The development of the theme was very much the same as that of the traditional Kuravanjis . However the names and situations were different. The analogy of the story is as follows: Dēvamōhini is the church, Jesus , the Divine Bride-groom, The gypsy, Visuvasa Kuravanji is Faith and Gnana Singam, her husband is knowledge. Faith and knowledge is required to be united to God. Bethlehem Kuravanji stands as one of the master pieces of Vedanayagam Shastriyar and a remarkable contribution to Tamil literature and dance.

e) Kunkunammāl Nātakam:

Kunkunammāl Nātakam is performed in Pāmbupārai and Nēlipara villages near Kōzhipāra in the Palghat Dist. of Kerala state. It is a religious dance-drama in Tamil based on the life of St.Kunkunda of Germany. The dance-drama performed at the above mentioned places is adapted to the local names and expressions which will be clarified as we discuss different aspects of this art-form. It is performed only by men.

It was Arulānanda Iyer who lived in Eruthēnāpāthy which is five miles away from Kuzhinjampara in Palghat district who wrote Kunkunammāl about 250 years ago in a story form. Later in 1806 A.D. Nalloor Anthony Muthu of Malloor village, Chittur Taluk in the old Cochin state, 6 miles from Kozhipara converted the story of Kunkunammāl into lyrics fit for a dance-drama. He also set the lyrics to different rāgas (melodies) and Tāla (rhythms) patterns. Besides this dance-drama Nalloor Anthony Muthu also wrote Gnāna Sundari, Aleciar (St.Alice) Natakam in 1806, Crisantapar Nātakam, Isthakiar Natakam, a story wherein a Hindu becomes Christian, about the same time. Originally Kunkunammāl was performed on two consecutive nights. At present they perform it in one night.

For the Pāmbupārai village troupe Vādyār Arōkiyaswamy

is the dance teacher. Most of the performers in the troupe have learnt from him. The performance of Kunkunammāl Nātakam down through the years has carved a tradition of its own for the training, learning and performance.

TRAINING AND TECHNIQUES:

A minimum of 6 months of training is necessary for a student to have his Arangetram (First public performance). A boy who wants to learn this art-form is brought by his parents to the Āsān (Vadyar) or dance teacher. First the parents of the boy ceremoniously make the sign of the Cross on the forehead of the boy. Then the Āsān does the same and receives the boy. The boy, now the disciple of the Āsān gives Daksina to his Guru which normally includes some money and Vettale (beetle leaf, araconut etc). With this initiation ceremony the training, which is mostly held at the house of the Āsān, begins.

ARANGETRAM:

This is the first public performance of the student. It normally takes place at the church festivals. The disciples now give Guru-Daksina to the Guru which consists of a Dhoti (Veshty- unstitched white cloth worn by men, length 8 metres to 10 metres and 2 metres wide), shirt, Tundu (a big towel)

together with some money. After this public performance (Arangetram) the student can freely join any troupe which gives regular performances.

SOME TECHNICAL TERMS:

There are many technical terms and expressions used in this art-form. Some are common to other art-forms and some stand unique.

Kāl:

Literally Kāl means leg in Tamil, here it means step. There are 4 kāls (steps) which have a particular oral recitation of the rhythm called Vāitāri. They are 4 in number, corresponding to the Kāl, i.e. the first (onnam) Kāl's Vāitāri is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ta	-	Tai	-	Ta	-	Ta	Dhim Taka
(1)				(o)		(o)	

Kalāsam :

Kalāsam is called Teermanam or Nritta Pāttu. It is the ending rhythmic syllable of a particular cycle of rhythm (Talam). There are 3 Kalāsams in number i.e. Ta Taiya Jham. Each song is set to a particular rāgam and talam.

Virutham:

This style of singing is done without a fixed rhythm.

Commonly slokas are recited in this manner.

Pin Pāttu:

When the main singer sings a line, the other singers follow it up with the Ālap. They sing in the same rāg without the words, touching mainly the upper octave (Tār saptak) . This is a typical example of Carnatic music style of singing.

Chuvadi:

It is also called Ēdu , means the book in which the dance-drama script is written. It is kept with the Āsān(Vādyār) and handled with great respect by all. Formerly palm-leaves were used for writing. The Pāmbupārai troupe has preserved the palm-leaf script even to this day (118). Before the performance begins they pay respect to the Ēdu or Chuvadi .

ĀSĀN:

The dance teacher is addressed as Āsān in Malayalam, Vādyār in Tamil. The word Vādyār comes from Sanskrit root word Upādhyaya. The dance teacher is also called Kūthu Vādyar and Kaliyachan.

Ēdu Pākkana Vādyār:

He is the person who looks into the script(Manuscript). He does the work of a prompter, He gives a whistle signal

after every scene is over and helps the proceedings of the play enactment.

Tēppukāran:

The make-up man is called Tēppukāran.

Japam:

Before the beginning of the play, the performers pray to God, saying the Lord's prayer "Our Father", to Mother Mary and to St. Kunkunammal. No instruments are used at this stage.

Siluvai Virutham (Sloka):

A sloka type of song sung on Lord Jesus Christ who died on the Cross and rose again. The Siluvai Virutham is started by the Āsān or Vādyār and continued by the other singers and musicians.

Kūthumēdai:

Kūthumēdai literally means dancing place. The stage where they perform is called by the above name. It is normally close to the church, in the church premises or erected in the open paddy field.

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

Kunkunammal Nātakam is performed at night. It starts at about 9.00 p.m. and ends by early dawn. The occasion of the performance is usually during the church festivals. Performances also can take place anytime of the year by the invitation of a person who wants to fulfill a vow which he has made to conduct the performance of Kunkunammal Nātakam. The place of performance is in the Church premises or a suitable open-air venue with an erected stage. The venue has to be close to the church.

On the day of the performance all the performers assemble together. They eat only one meal and fast as a preparation for the performance. To revive themselves spiritually all of them go for Confession, Holy Mass and receive Holy Communion and get the blessings of the priest.

In the evening all the performers assemble at the 'Gurus' house or at a convenient place and give Dakṣina to the Guru which includes 25 n.p. folded in a beetle leaf. They touch the feet of the Guru and get his blessings. After this they kneel down, the Guru with some white powder makes a sign of the Cross (+) on the forehead, lips and chest of the disciple with his right thumb. Again touching the feet of the Guru the performers go to their elders to get their blessings. After this at a

prescribed time they go to the Teppukaran, the make-up man for the make-up (119). At about 9.00 p.m. the performance begins with Japam. Japam (prayer) is prayed behind the curtain. The Maniyakāran (the village head), Āsān, musicians and all the performers and helpers come to the stage, fold their hands in Anjali hasta and remain still for a while, before a wooden cross which is placed in the centre of the stage around which a few candles are being burnt and the instruments are kept close to the cross(120). At this, the Maniyakaran starts the prayer (Japam) with the sign of the Cross which is followed by everyone. Different prayers are recited. They pray the Lord's prayer " Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread, forgive us our sins as we forgive those trespass against us. Do not bring us to test and deliver us from evil", followed by a prayer to Mother Mary- Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with you, Blessed art thou among women and Blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, Now and at the hour of death- Amen.

After this they praise the Holy Trinity- "Glory be to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit" (3 times) . Then they pray "Kunkunammal pray for Us". All these prayers are in Tamil and

above a translation of the same is given. Finally with the sign of the Cross they end the Japam.

Japam is followed by Siluvai Virutham (i) which is also sung behind the curtain. It is a praise offering to Jesus who died on the Cross and rose from the dead. Now, the instrumentalists accompany on their instruments. The Āsān or the main singer starts the song folding his hands in Anjali hasta. After the main singer completes one line, other instrumentalists sing the pin-pāttu (ālāpana extemporisation of the melody) , one by one after every line. The same order is continued for sometime in different variations in the pin-pāttu (alap)(121).

After the Pallavi, the main singer starts clapping his hands on the first three beats $\overset{o}{1} \overset{0}{2} \overset{o}{3}$ - leaving the fourth beat without a clap. Now, the other singers one by one lead the singing and others repeat the same in chorus. Finally everyone folds his hands in Anjali Hasta which is followed by a Keerthanam or ganam having a very lively rhythm and melody. With this the Ēdu-Pākkana Vādyār (Prompter) gives a whistle and the curtain opens for the first scene.

Bālarpārttukār (Young Performers)

This is also called Pālarvaravu or Pālarvasanam. In this

scene 6-8 boys come on to the stage dressed almost like sailors. They have fine feathers on their caps. In the right hand everyone of them has a coloured handkerchief. There is a Tilak on their forehead in the form of a Cross. They perform a few simple steps, sing and make appropriate gestures. The Vadyar stands behind them and recites the Jatis (rhythmic syllables). Palarvaravu is short and quick.

Sūtradhar:

The next scene will open with the entry of the Sūtradhar. Sūtradhar, the word comes from Sanskrit whose job is to introduce the play to the audience. He introduces himself first and then greets the respected people in the audience. This is followed by a dialogue between him and the main singer. In the course of the dialogue he introduces the play, Kunkunammal to the people.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

In the third scene, the buffoon enters. He is called Kōmali. However, in the Edu the Kōmali does not occur, the buffoon is called as Sēvakan. He makes the people laugh with his funny gestures and singing.

Up to the third scene the procedure is almost same in all the other Nātakams of this area. From the IVth scene the drama proper is unfolded. A short summary of the story content of

Kunkunammal Natakam is given here below: It may be noted as to how the Indian names of persons and places have been adopted to the local situation and the audience.

The King Madhurendra Mannavan enters the stage with a band of attendants. At once he summons his minister Madhiyōgi to enquire about socio-political and economic situation of his subjects. As the dialogue continues, the queen Kunikunda enters the Darbar scene and the minister retires. King and Kunikunda have a long dialogue, at the end they kneel down and make an oath that they both will remain chaste in their life (122). Just then a few people come in and present a memorandum that wild animals are damaging their crops and they want protection from the king. The King sets out on a hunt to kill the wild animals. Before he goes out he hands over power of the Kingdom to Mannavi (Queen Kunikunda) in the presence of his younger brother Chandravaliban. Once the King was out of sight Chandravaliban tries to rape Kunikunda (123) but she succeeds in arresting him and throws him into the prison. She then enquires about revenue matters from Kanakapillai, the revenue minister. The minister tells her that Esthar Raja has not been paying the tax. The queen summons him and imprisons him till he pays the taxes.

A few days later, Chandravaliban and Esthar Raja were released. These two plot against Kunikunda and cook up a story that it was Kunikunda who came to make love with Chandravaliban, and Esthar Raja is the witness. When the King returns, Chandravaliban complains, Esthar Raja gives witness. Though Kunikunda pleads innocent (124) the King believes his brother and orders Kunikunda to be taken to a forest and be executed over there (125).

The executioners take Kunikunda to the forest and as they were all set to execute her, Kunikunda prays to Jesus(126), just then they hear a thundering noise in the forest, the executioners leave Kunikunda alone and run away. The noise was due to the hunting of another king called Santiago of Antioch. The king finds the helpless woman all alone and on enquiry comes to know her story. He takes her to his court and asks Kunikunda to look after his son. Ratikanakasalai, wife of King Santiago, hands over their son to Kunikunda to be looked after (127).

After sometime Santiago's brother Theraikon tries to make love with Kunikunda to which she declines. Infuriated Theraikon kills the child and puts the blame on Kunikunda. The king sends her to the forest from where he brought her. In the jungle Kunikunda prays to Jesus. In a vision an angel of God gives

her the gift of Sanjēvi (medicine) and advises her to go to the countryside and cure people from all their diseases (128). Kunikunda heals thousands of people by her Sanjēvi, received from the angel.

In the meantime , Theraikon and Chandravaliban are affected by leprosy. Kunikunda's fame spreads all around the country. She is brought to the court of Santiago to heal Theraikon. Kunikunda recognises him, but he does not recognise her. Kunikunda tells Theraikon to confess his crime to the priest and the King, only after that she would heal him. Helpless Theraikon does as he is instructed. Kunikunda heals him. King Santiago recognises her and is sorry for his mistakes, kneeling down he asks pardon from her (129) and requests her to stay in his Kingdom.

In Rome, Chandravaliban too is affected by leprosy. Messengers come to request Kunikunda to go over to Rome and heal Chandravaliban. She goes and recognises Chandravaliban, but he does not recognise her. She asks him to make confession about his crime to the priest and the king. Kunikunda cures him and tells her full story to the King Madhurendra. He feels sorry for her and chastises his brother. However, the king demands a proof from her to prove her chastity- to walk on the fire. Kunikunda proves her purity by walking on the burning

candles (130). Again they are united as husband and wife (131). With the special blessings and permission of the Pope, Kunikunda goes to the convent and Madhuvendra enters a monastery. The Pope himself admits them ceremoniously to the religious life (132).

(iii)
Mangalam:

This is a concluding song sung by all the performers, musicians, Āsān and Maniyakkaran (133). After this many people garland Kunikunammal, they present her with salt, candles and money. But Kunikunda does not take anything for herself. The salt which is kept at her feet is taken by the people to be used in during the times of difficulties. Candles and money is given to the church. After this ceremony all the performers are led by the Āsān followed by the King Madhurendra, Kunikunda and other in a procession to the church. They sing the joyful songs all their way to the church.

Concluding Ceremony in the Church:

All the performers and audience go to the church. The performers remove their crowns, musicians bring their instruments especially Jāra and place them at the foot of the Altar. Ārati is made to God as a thanksgiving gesture by the representatives of the people. It is also done to the performers

to remove the evil eye on them. At this time, the priest comes and blesses them all by sprinkling the Holy water on them. As in the final phase of the religious ceremony they have Holy Mass after which the people go home talking about the miracles that happened in the past by the name of Kunkunammal.

MUSIC AND COSTUME:

The music of Kunkunammal Nātakam is based on Carnatic Music. The virutham is sung in rag Nāttai with a touch of Nilambari. The folk-tunes of Tamilnadu occur very frequently. The group singing of the Balarpart and many other tunes are typically folk. Style of singing at times resembles the western music, especially it is clear when we hear the Sutradhar who sings in a band tune in which there are no oscillation (ghamakas) in the melody.

By and large the music resembles the Tamil folk-drama music which took on a definite style in the first half of the 20th century. The well-known artists who championed this type of music are Shri S.G.Kittappa and Mrs.K.B.Sundarambal. In their compositions they had a lot of folk-tunes with a little touch of Western music.

The general trend of the music is that of the Terukuthu of Tamilnadu. Practically throughout the night they sing in the

higher octave. Melodies are limited to one octave or even less. Since in olden days there were no mikes, they had to sing in the higher octaves. Here, one should note that these Tamil-speaking people in the Palghat area migrated from Palani, Kumbakonam, Ramnadu, Madurai and other places in Tamilnadu year ago. Therefore, it is natural that people who came from above places brought along with them the art-forms that existed there and these found an expression in their artistic ventures like Kunkunammal Nātakam.

There are quite a few musical instruments used in the back-ground music. The musicians usually sit on the right side of the stage . The instruments used are:

Jālra:

This is a miniature of the Elathalam of Kerala which is like a small cymbal. Jālra also resembles the Talam used in Bharata Natyam dance form. It is played by the main singer, mainly to keep rhythm and conduct the orchestra and singing.

Ganjana:

It is just like the Ganjira used in the classical Carnatic music recitals. Ganjana has small bells (gungurus) fixed on its frame. This may be a substitute for the ankle-bells of the performers.

Other instruments are Mridangam, Ghatam and Harmonium. Besides giving sruti the harmonium player also accompanies the singing and the Pin pāttu . At times interludes are also supplied by him.

The Costumes are worn according to the role of the performers. A few years ago the Kings and others used to wear Dhoti and over that they used to have the kingly garment. Nowadays they wear pants in the place of Dhoti. Otherwise the costume remains the same. Kunkunammal and other female characters wear South Indian Saree. It is interesting to note that each character has a handkerchief held in the right hand. It must be a custom of the Tamilnadu folk-theatre.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

In the Kunkunammal Nāṭakam one finds the faith-experience of the Christians expressed in an art-form that is truly Indian in its presentation and thought-pattern. The format of the musical dance-drama is like any other dance-drama of India.

Presentation:

Like in other dance-dramas we find Pūrvaranga vidhi , the Japam and Siluvai virutham, which are done behind the curtain. In Yakshagana and such art-forms there is also this ceremony behind the curtain. In Kunkunammal prayers are said to the

Christian Trinity, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, Jesus, Mary and the Saint Kunkunammal. Of course, similarly in other dance-drama forms they pray to different Gods and Goddesses.

BĀLARPĀTTU:

The dance by the boys who are normally the beginners, is a common feature found in many art-forms especially in Yakshagāna. The existence, appearance and role of Sūtradhar and buffoon (here they call him Sēvakan) are also an inherent part of the Indian folk-theatre. Each character introducing himself to the audience and greeting the respected persons in the audience, is also part and parcel of the Indian folk-theatre. Besides these, the unfolding of the drama itself is very much in line with the other forms of Indian theatre.

AGNI PARĪKSĀ (FIRE TEST)

The purity of Kunkunammal is tested by her walking on the fire. Though the king trusts Kunkunammal, the test is done to prove to the people. We find this similar incidents in Ramayana where Sita undergoes a similar Agni Parīksā.

The whole dance-drama is a religious ceremony. It starts in the church where all the participants go for confession, Holy Mass and Communion to purify and prepare themselves both

spiritually and physically for the performance. Finally, it ends in the Church with the solemn Holy Mass after the stage performance.

During the interview, it was made clear that the church authorities and other responsible people do not take much interest in promoting and encouraging these art-forms. It has survived to this day mainly because these particular Nātakams are considered to be the heritage of certain families or villages which forces them to hand it over to the next generation. Secondly, these people are very religious-minded in their treatment of these Nātakams. They consider it to be a spiritual enlightenment and blessing to act in them. If more encouragement and acceptance are given to these art-forms, they can truly help Indian culture and Christianity enormously.

SILUVAI VIRUPHAM SONG:

(i) " Adchaya Siluvai Vaithen Athanudaiya Adaiyālathāl
Kadchaya Sathuruvil Nintu Kanivadai Radchiyum ente
Udchitha Sarva Eghan ukanthidum pitha, suthan pal
Nadpum Ispirithu Santhu Namathāl Amen sesu "

(I made the sign of the Cross, in the name of the Father,
Son and the Holy Spirit, asking Him to protect me from evil,
who is the giver of all - Amen Jesus)

INTRODUCTORY SONG OF THE PLAY

(ii) " Vandanam, vandanam, vandanam tanden
Sindai magizha vandanam tanden
Enthaiyana pithavukkum Iniya Deva sudanukkum
Andhamudaya Sandhu panniru Aposthalan Sabai orkum
Paappu Mechina Sanathukkum
Maapugazhperum Kavinjar periyore valla
Ichabaiyorkume Nadakam nadathuvorkkum
Navalargal Anaivarukkum Paduginta Palarukkum
Pattudai Thalaivarukkum vandanam vandanam tanden
Sindhai magizha vandanam tanden"

(Welcome, welcome, welcome, with a joyful heart I extend my
greetings to Our Father, beloved Son of God, Holy Spirit , the
twelve Apostles, the Bishop, priests , the well-known poets,
elders, all who are assembled here, the conductors of the
drama, the writers and the singers.)

MANGALAM

(iii) " Povom thavamadame, Ashiporulai thuthithidave
Puthiyullave Sutha Kanniye

Muthar thudi perugum bhakti virundhinarum
 Pannum thavaththor, kanni madathore
 Unni Jebam puriya Nannaya kovilidam
 Povom thava Madame
 Athi pala Radhangal Aniser murasadhira
 Angam thonigal, thunga marigal
 Pongiyalingidave sangeetha Raagamudan
 Povom thava madame."

(Let us go holy people to adore the First born together with
 the devotees, holy Virgins and those who do penance. Let us
 go to the church to pray, with the gifts of fruits and chariot
 procession, with the beating of drums, with joyful songs of
 praise, let us go to the church oh, holy people.)

f) KUMMIĀTTAM :

Kummiāttam, the folk-dance of Tamil-speaking Christians of Palghat district, Kerala , is very similar to the technique and presentation of Kummiāttam of Tamilnadu and Kaikottikali, a folk-dance which is prevalent in the other parts of Kerala. In Kummiāttam , the songs are considered to be very important and the same are very lucid and lyrical in style. Recitation of good deeds and teachings of moral truths is very wide-spread in Kummiāttam songs .

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF KUMMIĀTTAM WITH CHRISTIAN THEMES:

Down the centuries, Tamil literature had reached its heights in many different forms in its expressions. During the Sangam period, the songs of Agathuppa in the time of Kāppiyangal , the great epics and later on the devotional songs were composed. In the subsequent period, the folk-songs Nāttuppurappādal had their peak days of great growth and popularity. Bharathi , a Tamil poet was very effective through the folk-song styled Nāttuppurappādal.

Kummi songs on Hindu themes and moral teachings must have been in existence for many centuries. However, the origin of Kummi songs on Christian themes must have taken place in the

later part of the 19th century. Ēsu Nathar Pēril Pōrtti Kummi (Kummi on the Nativity of Jesus Christ) is considered to be one of the first Kummis to be composed. The author of this Kummi is not known. It could be the composition of many scholars. However, there is ample evidence to pin-point with certainty about the time of its composition and exposition.

The date of the exposition of the above Kummi is 1st Jan. 1888. This is clear from the lines of Kāppup-padal (song of protection) of this above Kummi.

Āyirathen-nūrtriyenpathiyettu

Āndukkula Kāranamāna

Pāyiramaga nan vaithukkukkonda kummi

Pādukirein pāthang kāppane

(I sing Kummi to the Protector (axis) of this year 1888, protect me)

The date 1st January can be derived from the following verses

Māsilāk Kaṇṇimari vayirthril suthan

Manidanāgavē uruveduthu

Yesuvennunth thirunāmarth tharitha

Yettanththirualittru gnanappenne.

(The son incarnated through the Immaculate virgin Mary was given the name Jesus on the 8th day after his birth. This

clearly suggests the 1st of January, 8th day after Christmas).

Since 1888 many Kummis have been written on Christian themes. They also have retained some of the earlier Kummis like Valli Kummi etc. This will be dealt with at a later stage of this chapter. In some places important lyrics have been taken or adopted from other Natakams like Mūnrurājākūthu , Aleciar Nātakam etc. and incorporated into this art-form. Kummi among the Tamil speaking Christians of Palghat district has become part and parcel of their social and religious life. In the early 20th century this art-form was commonly practiced by these people. However, after the first half of this century it is slowly disappearing from the life of the people. At present Vādyar Innasi Muthu of Maniharan Chella of Palghat district is one of the veterans who still has a troupe of girls and boys and teaches Kummiāṭṭam .

TRAINING AND TECHNIQUE:

The training of Kummiāṭṭam lasts about three months. The disciples are admitted just as it is done in the Nātakams of this area. After the initial training, arangetram or the maiden performance of the student takes place in the village. This may coincide with the church feast, marriage feast or any other social function. Giving Daksina to the Guru or Vādyar

on the Arangetram day is kept up in a Kummiāṭṭam too.

Steps and singing are taught simultaneously . The Vādyar (dance teacher) sings the tune of a particular Kummi in meaningless syllables like Tannanai Tannanai Tannanim Tannanai Tannanim Tannanim Tanaina Tanai num. The students repeat the same with the appropriate steps. After a while the teacher begins the Kummi song proper and the students repeat the same together with the dance steps. The song is concluded with a short Tirmānam i.e. Ta Dhit Tagir tat tai.

Pataka, Ardhaçandra, Hamsasya, Candrakala, Dōla etc. appear quite frequently. The position of feet is mostly seen in Tattu (touching the full sole to the floor). However, the use of the Nattu (heel) and Mettu (toe) are also evident. The position of the body is mostly erect or bent forward. Clapping and gnoti (chutki) are used to suit the music and the corresponding dance step. The movements in Kummiāṭṭam are very graceful, soft and simple. Even the boys dance in a similar style.

KĀL:

Kāl literally means leg. Here it denotes a dance step. Traditionally there are 6 Kāls or steps corresponding to 6 traditional Kummis. Vādyar Innasi Muthu⁽⁴⁾ teaches 16 kāls .

For them Kāl usually corresponds to choreographic patterns which shall be dealt with later. Some of the steps are very similar to Kaikottikali .

KĀLAM:

Kālam means rhythm pattern (speed). Normally three rhythm patterns are used. However, at times , if the performers have a very good mastery over the rhythm, then they perform in the fourth speed. The dance begins with slow speed which is called Onnām Kālam (1st speed), when they double the first speed, they have the Rantām Kālam (2nd speed), likewise the third and fourth speed.

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

Traditionally Kummiāṭṭam is performed during the church feast. After the religious celebrations in the church, on the eve of the feast, people gather in the courtyard of the church. They light a traditional lamp in the centre. The Parish priest is welcomed and ceremoniously garlanded. He blesses the dancers and takes his seat. Now, the Vādyar with Jāltra (small cymbal) stands by the side of the lighted lamp. The dancers stand in a circle and all the people squat on the floor, and some who are behind stand and watch the Kummiāṭṭam . Some times the

performance is also given after the solemn Holy Mass on the morning of the feast day. Kummiāttam is also performed in the marriage pandal at the invitation of the marriage party.

Performance Proper consists of 4 parts:

Kāppup-padal

Viruttam

Kummi Pāttu proper

Valtukūri Mudipēn

Kāppup-padal is like stuti or a prayer song requesting God for protection and to dedicate the Kummi for the prosperity of the world. This is sung by Vādyar while the accompanying singers give ālāp or pin-pāttu. The performers fold their hands, keeping their eyes closed, stand in the direction of the lighted lamp in the centre.

VIRUTTAM:

After the Kāppup-padal the Vādyar sings further stanzas of the Kummi stretching each syllable to the maximum in a given melody. Here, there is no fixed rhythm to be followed. It is like reciting the Vedic chants. After every line, the Vādyar sings, the dancers say in a loud voice Sabhās which means well-done. While Viruttam goes on, the dancers walk to their right in a circle with their hands held in Dōla Hasta.

The Vādyar also moves around the lighted lamp (134).

KUMMI SONG PROPER:

After the Viruttam, the Vādyar sings the melody of the particular Kummi in meaningless syllables, i.e. in a particular rhythm- Tannanai Tantanai Nanaina Tannanum etc. The performers sing the same and simultaneously dance with appropriate steps. Here they usually perform each stanzas in different speed. When the people have grasped lyrics and their meaning, then they dance in 2nd , 3rd and at times in 4th speed too. By this the monotony of the dance is broken and the people watch Kummiāttam for hours together, though the choreography and steps are quite simple.

VALTUKŪRI MUDIPĒN:

This is the concluding piece of Kummiāttam . All the dancers fold their hands and stand facing the lighted lamp in the centre of the circle formation. Folding his hands in Anjali hasta, the Vādyar sings the Valtukūri Mudipēn which is similar to Mangalam . After the Valtukūri Mudipēn the Vadyar pays his respect to the lighted lamp in the centre. The dancers first pay their respect to the lighted lamp in the centre, then touch the feet of the Vādyar according to the traditions of this art-form.

DRESS AND COSTUME:

There is no special dress for Kummiāṭṭam. The dancers use Cellangai (ankle-bells). In the left hand they hold a Visiri (fan made of palmira leaf), in the right a handkerchief. Girls wear Davani (south Indian half saree style) . Kāsu Mālai , garland of stones and bangles are some of the ordinary jewellery, that is usually worn. On the waist they wear Oddianam (a long chain of bells).

The boys usually have a shawl which is worn on the left shoulder stretched towards the right side of the waist. For the head they have a Urumakatte (turban). Practically no jewellery is worn. However, at times a silver or golden chain is worn with a cross on it. For the lower portion of the body they have the dhoti as a normal dress.

MUSIC:

The music used in Kummiāṭṭam is like any folk-tune of Tamilnadu. Often the melodies have some similarity to the raga system of Classical South Indian Carnatic Music. However, they don't sing in a particular raga. Usually the particular melody of a Kummi song is sung with meaningless syllables, i.e. Tannanai, Tanai, tannanai etc. , and then the song proper is introduced. This must be the technique they followed to teach

the melody. Once the people were thorough with the tune they introduced the lyrics. This enables the people to concentrate on the lyrics of the Kummi. The melody being simple and catchy, gets into them unconsciously. This style of singing is common in all the folk-traditions of Tamilnadu.

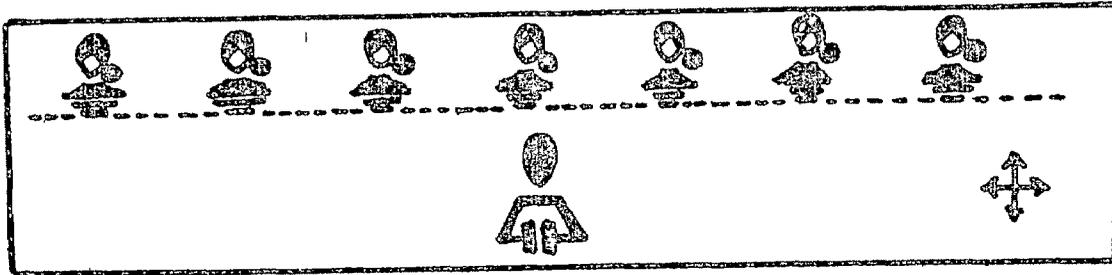
CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERN:

Kummiāṭṭam has developed a technique and style of its own in its choreographic patterns. Each teacher composes his own Kummi songs and does the choreography for it, however, as it is already said earlier that there are traditional Kummi songs and corresponding dances. During the field-work many interesting choreographic patterns were witnessed. However, a few of the striking choreographic patterns are given here together with the explanation below:

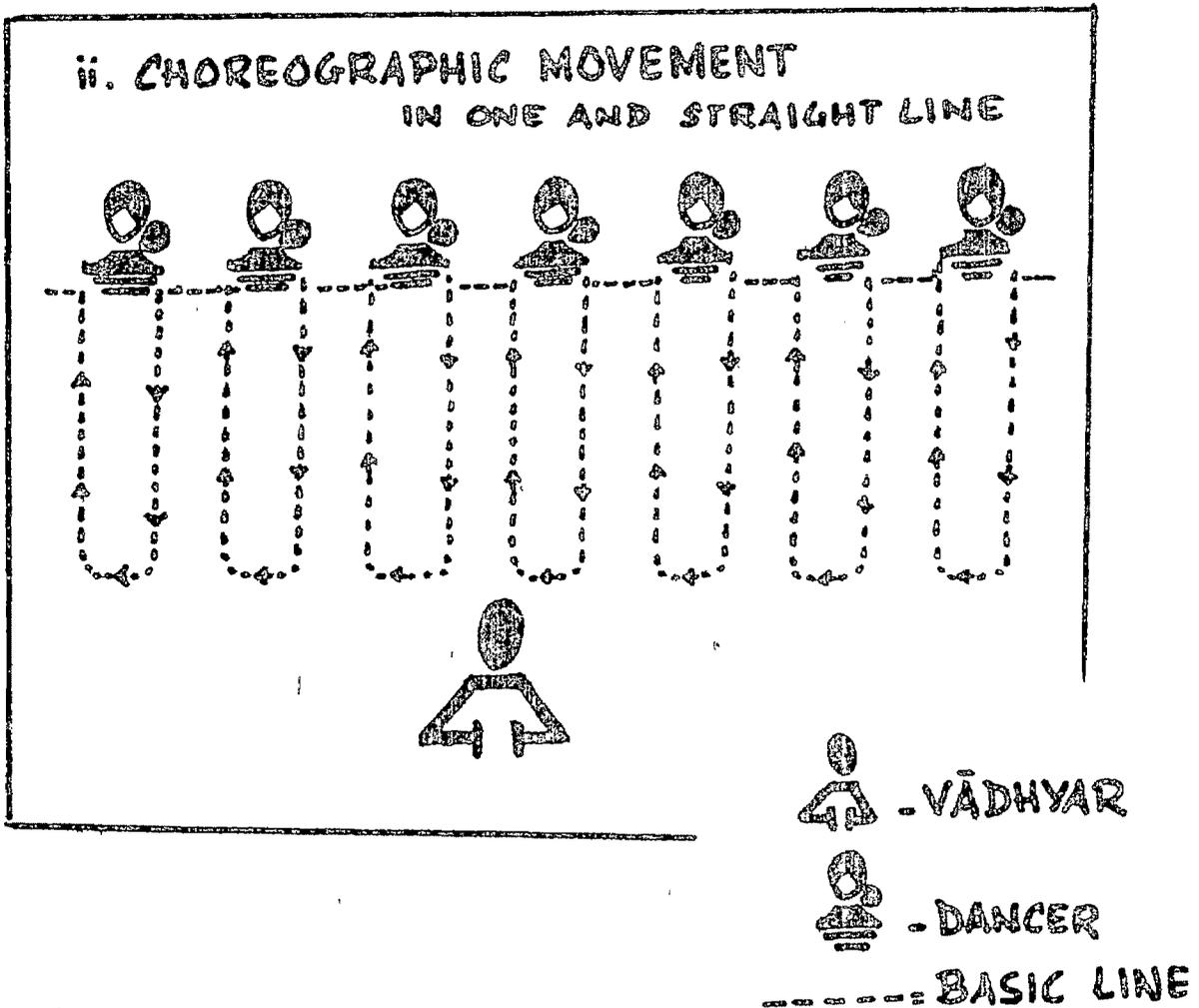
a) Choreographic pattern in one line:

All the dancers stand in one straight line and Vādyar stands in front of the line as shown in the diagram No.a(i) . Here , the dancers face all the directions but dance in the same place. Movement also is made into one direction by all the dancers. This may be towards or away from the Vādyar , to the left side or right or Vādyar . When the dancers move,

a.i. CHOREOGRAPHY IN ONE LINE



ii. CHOREOGRAPHIC MOVEMENT IN ONE AND STRAIGHT LINE



 = DANCE IN 4 DIRECTIONS AT THE SAME SPOT.

Vādyar also moves maintaining the original distance from the dancers.

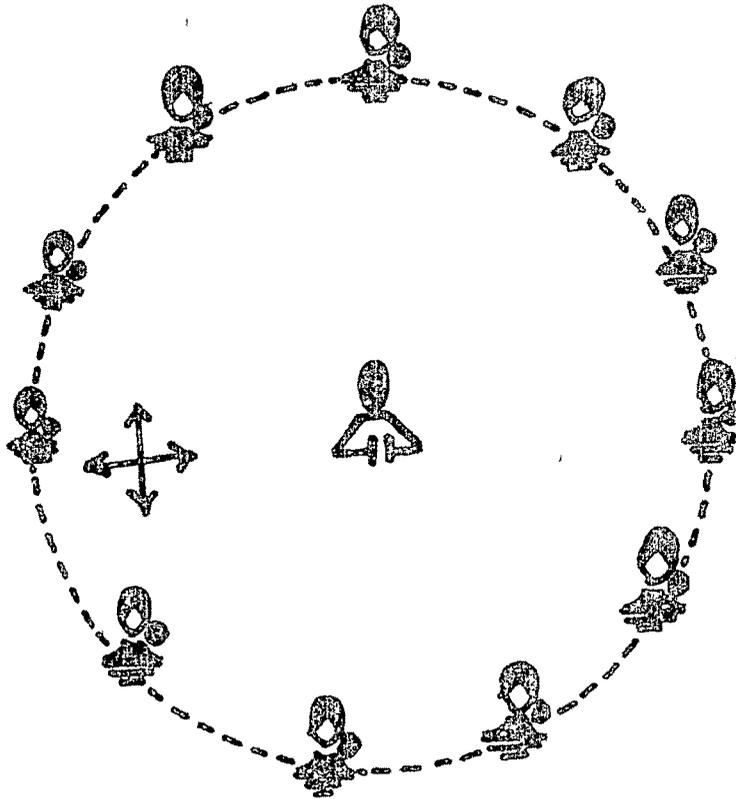
b) Choreography in the Circle Pattern:

The circle pattern in Indian folk-dancing is a common feature. In Kummiāttam too this pattern is found very frequently. The Vadyar stands in the centre of the circle and all the participants form a circle around him. First they dance in the same place facing different directions (135). Then they move in a circle just like a giant wheel with appropriate steps. At first clapping their hands they almost walk in a rhythmic pattern (136), then bending forward they clap on the first beat and walk in the same posture (137). They also go towards the centre of the circle (138) and go away from it stretching their left hand above their head level (139). In the same circle pattern kneeling on one leg they perform a few dance movements too (140).

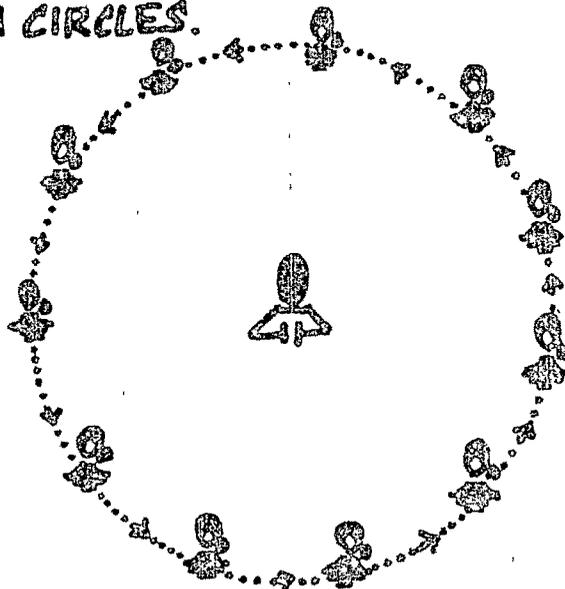
c) Choreographic Pattern in Two Lines:

Choreography in two lines is another feature of Kummiāttam. Here, the Vādyar stands in between the two rows of dancers (141, 141 A). Facing all the four directions they dance in the same place. They also move towards opposite directions and execute graceful dance steps(142).

b.i. CHOREOGRAPHY IN THE CIRCLE PATTERN.



ii. MOVING IN CIRCLES.



 -VADHYAR

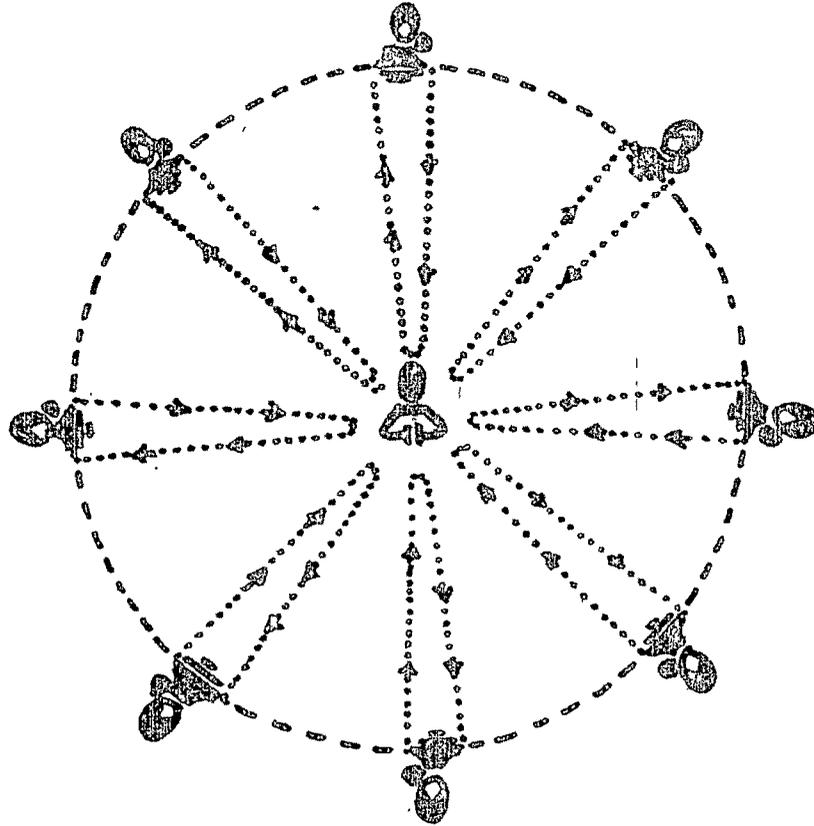
 -DANCER

.....: MOVEMENT OF THE DANCER.

----- : BASIC LINE .

 = DANCE IN 4 DIRECTIONS AT THE SAME SPOT.

iii. MOVING TO THE CENTRE OF THE CIRCLE AND BACK TO THE ORIGINAL POSITION.

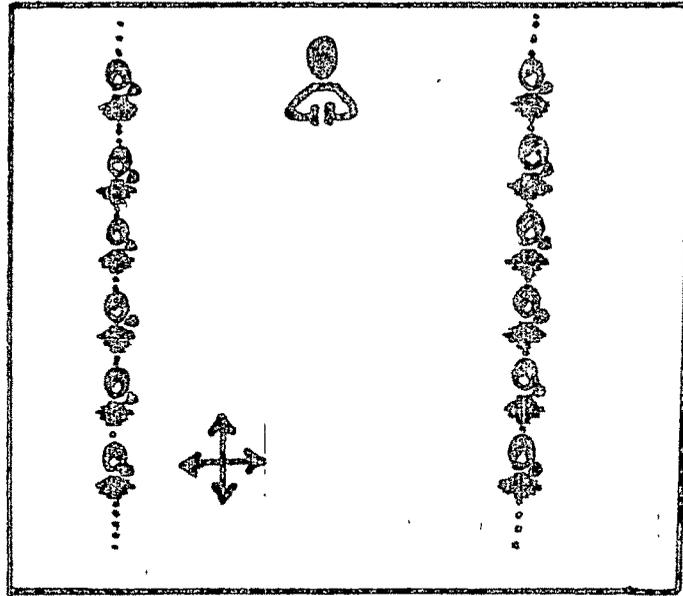


 - VĀDHYAR
 - DANCER

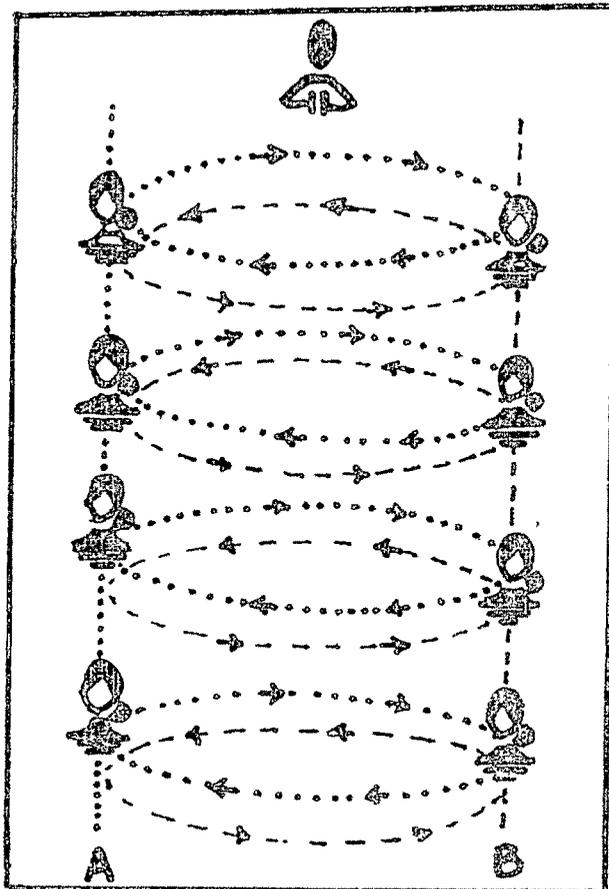
.....: MOVEMENT OF THE DANCER

--- ---: BASIC LINE

C.I. CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS IN TWO LINES.



ii. MOVING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS.



 - VĀDHYAR
 - DANCER

 - DANCING IN
 4 DIRECTIONS
 AT THE SAME
 SPOT.

..... = MOVEMENT
 OF THE A SIDE.
 ----- = MOVEMENT
 OF THE B SIDE.
 ----- = BASIC LINE.

d) Dancing in Pairs:

In this particular choreographic pattern, two dancers dance together. They clap each others palm, move and dance around each other. This is done in two rows (143) , in circles (144) or in any other dance pattern as per the choreographic imagination of the dance teacher (Vādyar). These movements and patterns are very much similar to Rās-garba.

e) Choreographic Pattern in Semi-circle:

Keeping the two parallel line as the basic format each dancer moves in a semi-circle pattern. This is performed on both sides of the basic line.

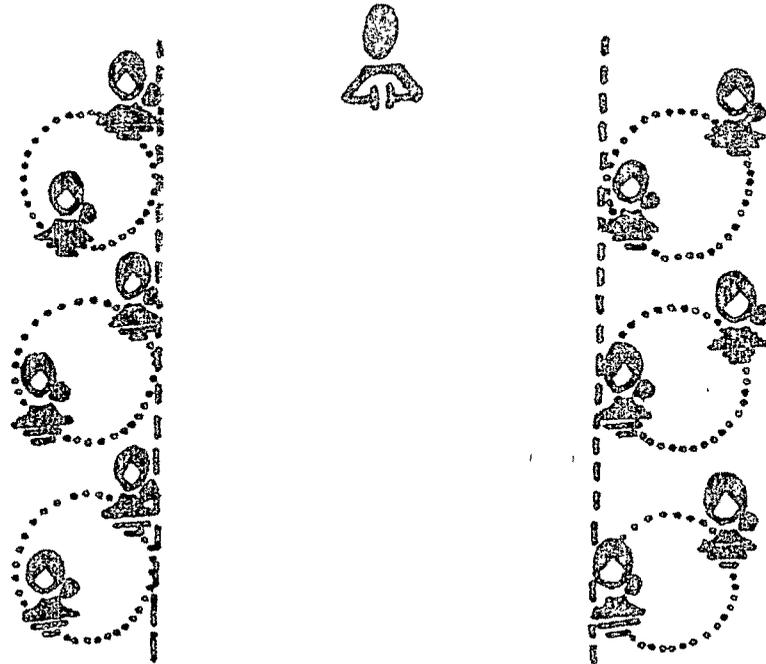
f) Choreography in the Creeper-Like Pattern:

Here the dancers move in two opposite directions in a creeper-like form (145). This type of choreography is quite complicated but it is very interesting to watch. In this category, there are three types of formations.

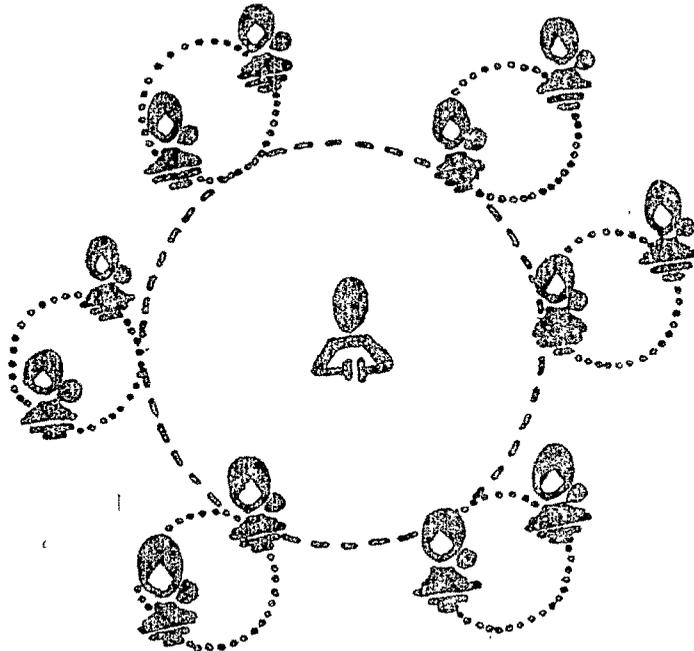
i) In One Straight Line: Here, dancers who are on the left side of Vādyar move towards the right in a creeper-like movement and those who are on the right side move to the left side. Vādyar stands facing the row of dancers a few feet away from the basic line.

D. DANCING IN PAIRS.

i. PAIRS OF DANCERS IN TWO ROWS.

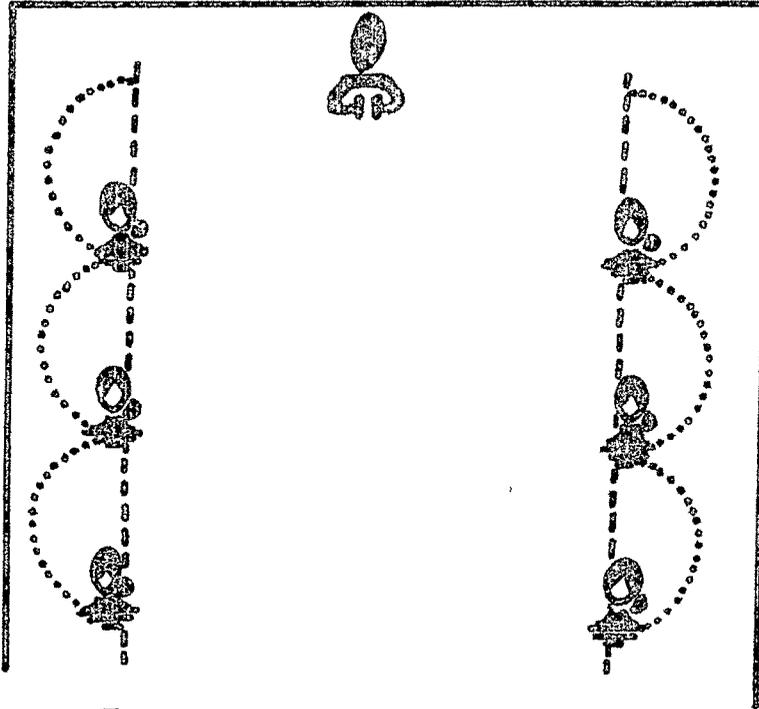


ii. PAIRS OF DANCERS IN THE CIRCLE FORMATION.



..... = MOVEMENT OF THE PAIR.
 ----- = BASIC LINE

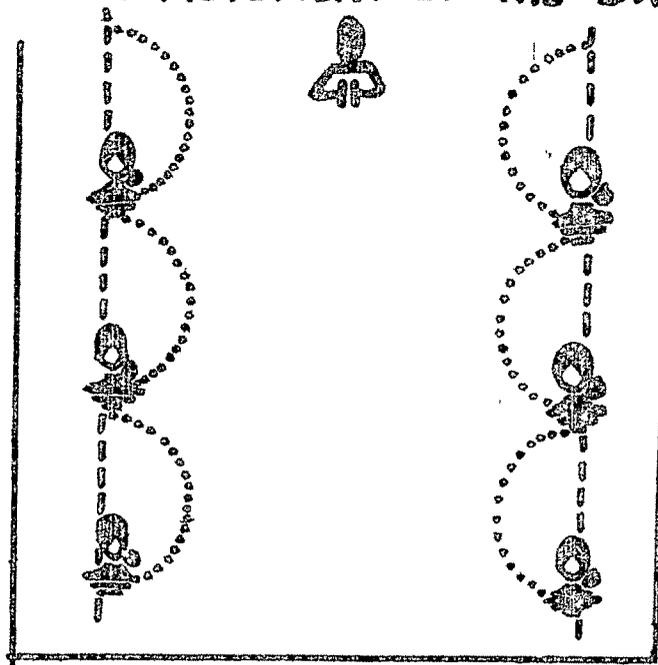
E. CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERN IN SEMICIRCLE.



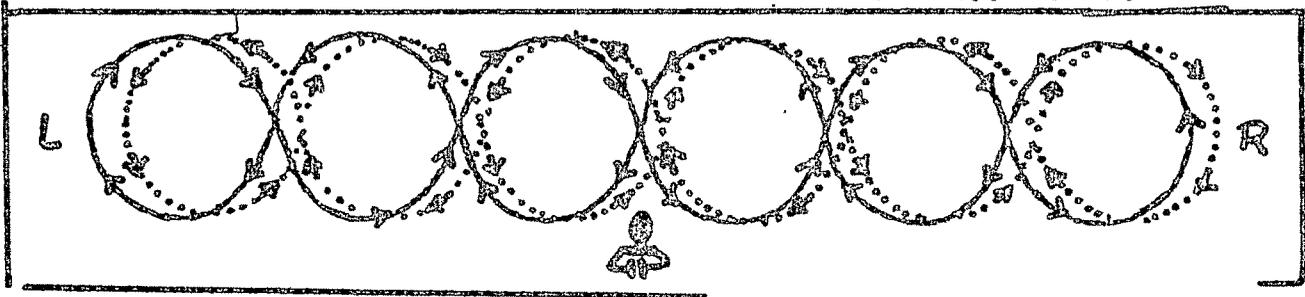
 - VADHYAR .
 - DANCER .

----- : BASIC LINE

..... : MOVEMENT OF THE DANCER .

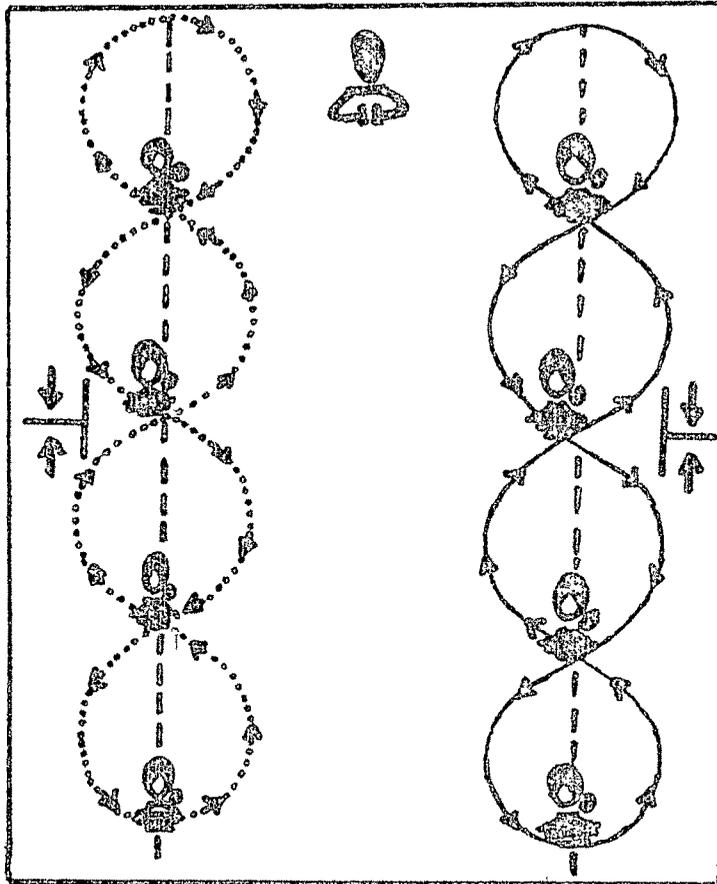


F. i. CREEPER LIKE MOVEMENT
IN ONE STRAIGHT LINE.



ii. CREEPER LIKE MOVEMENT
IN PARALLEL LINES.

——— = MOVEMENT OF DANCERS
FROM THE RIGHT SIDE
..... = MOVEMENT OF DANCERS
FROM THE LEFT SIDE.



 - DANCER
 - VĀDHYAR.
 - DIRECTION OF
MOVEMENTS
 = BASIC LINE

ii) In Two Parallel Lines: The same principle is followed in this choreographic pattern too. However, the position of the Vādyar is between the two rows of dancers and the choreography is in two parallel lines.

iii) Creeper-like Movement in the Circle Formation:

In this pattern they form two circle formations- Inner circle and outer circle. There will be equal number of dancers in both the circles. The dancers in the outer circle move clockwise and the dancers from the inner circle move anti-clockwise. This is a very interesting and difficult choreographic pattern.

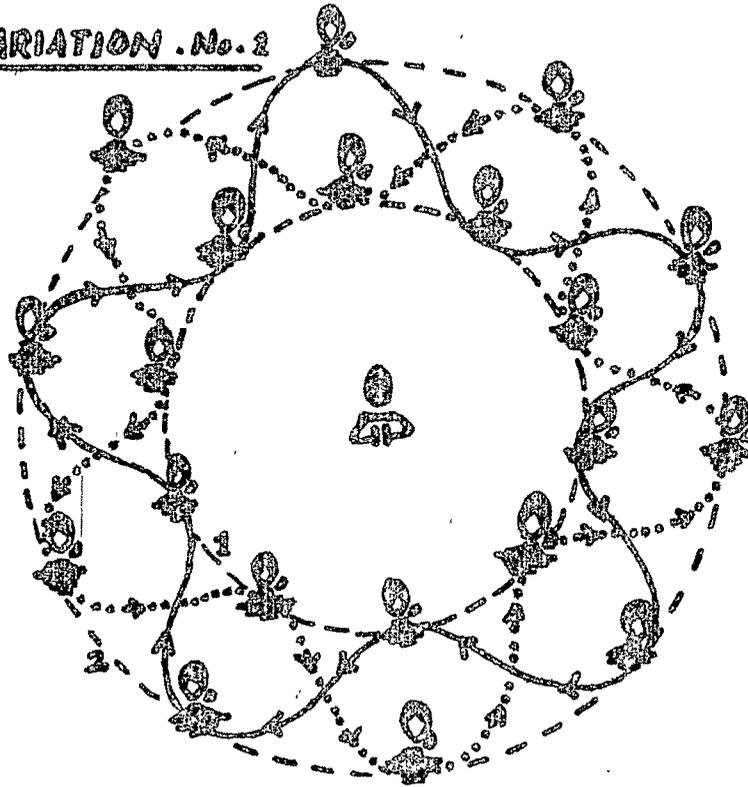
The choreographic patterns of Kummiāṭṭam do leave the similarity to the Kaikoṭṭikali of Kerala, Pinnal Kōlāṭṭam and other folk-dances of Tamilnadu and Kerala.

SONGS OF KUMMIĀṬṬAM:

In Kummiāṭṭam the songs are considered to be very important. Here, the various moral teachings and religious truths are indirectly taught to the people. The Kummi songs sung by the Tamil speaking Christians of Palghat have a distinct feature of their own. These songs bring out the simplicity and sweetness of the Tamil literature. The songs are on various themes like sayings and good deeds of the saints, based on the Christian scriptures, mainly the New Testament, on social life and even

F.iii .CREEPER LIKE MOVEMENT IN THE CIRCLE PATTERN.

VARIATION .No. 2



VARIATION .N.2.

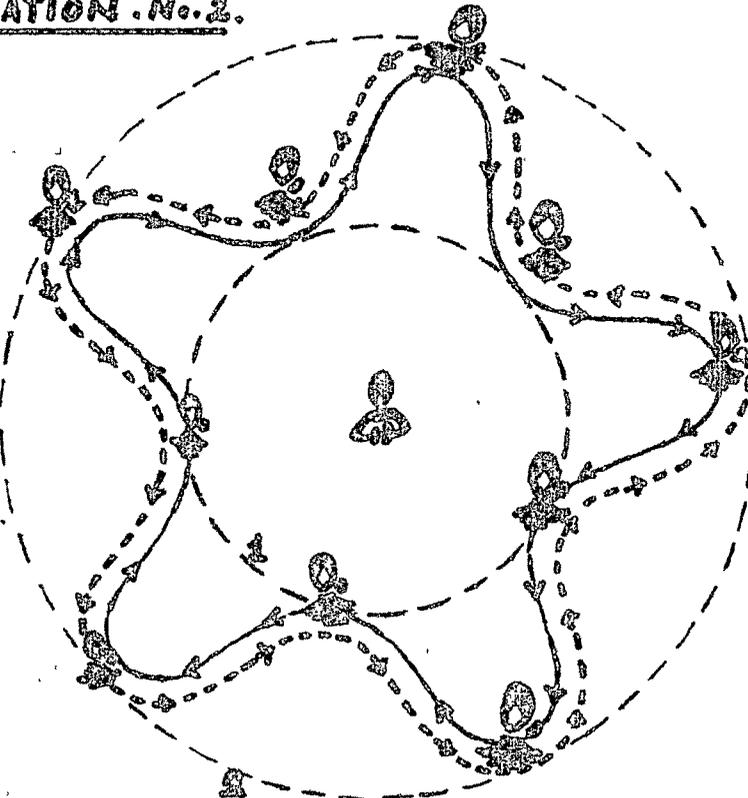
 - VĀDHVĀR

1 - INNER CIRCLE

2 - OUTER CIRCLE

..... = ANTICLOCKWISE
MOVEMENT OF
DANCERS FROM
THE INNER CIRCLE.

———— = CLOCKWISE
MOVEMENT OF
DANCERS FROM
THE OUTER CIRCLE.



there is a Kummi on Lord Murugan under the title Valli Kummi. In Valli Kummi, the song describes elaborately how Murugan, the God who married Kuramagal! (Kuravar= a hill tribe, Kuramagal= the daughter of Kurava). This Kummi is also sung by the Hindus in certain parts of Tamilnadu.

TRADITIONAL KUMMI SONGS ON CHRISTIAN THEMES:

Traditionally the Kummi songs on the Christian themes are under the following 6 categories. However, each title song has many varieties.

1. Kummi on the Nativity of Jesus Christ: Kummis under the above title heading are mainly based on the 2nd chapter of the Gospel according to Mathew and Luke. The contents of these chapters gets the literary form of Kummi on different aspects.

a) Ēsu Nāthar Pēril Kummi (5)

As the usual style of Kummi, Ēsu Nāthar Pēril Kummi (Kummi on Jesus Christ) also begins with a prayer of protection known as Kāppup-pādal. One of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, born through Mary, I sing a Kummi for the prosperity of the people of the world, protect me. To give this meaning he composes the Kāppup-pādal, which goes like this:

" Sīrvalr ekathiruthuvamē Ēsu Nāyagane Māripālagane
Pārvalar manuvor thazaikka Kummi padugirēn pāthankappame".

Jesus was born through the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. The claim of faith and the proclamation of the religion is that Mary gave birth to her child without losing her virginity, through the power of God. To bring out this truth, the writer makes use of a simile that as the flower gives its fragrance without any loss or destruction of self, so Mary gave Jesus to the world. It goes like this:

" Pūvathu vāsanai thanthathu pōloru
Puthiranur pavithittārē ".

Beautifully said in simple words yet significantly and deeply meaningful. The author of Thembavāni says " Pothirkol Pūmanipōl magvendrenal". These ways of explanation give great pleasure for the lovers of literature.

When people go to visit the newly-born child, they take along gifts. The shepherds who heard of the birth of Jesus, went to see the child. When they went they took along the fresh milk(cow). This aspect of the offering can't be seen in the life and culture of Jesus' time, for it is part of the culture of this land.

" Konarel tarumai Kudik kondu nalla ko pathai pal thair kondu
vanthu

Vanavar mangalam padiye karthavai vanthu paninthu namaskarithar"

(all the farmers together brought cow-milk, curds, while the angel sang gloria, they paid their homage and praised the Lord). The narration that the Shepherds gave cow-milk and curds reminds us of Kugan's offering of fish and honey.

God, the light is born as the light to the world. The creations which give light to the world came and paid homage to him and went back to their respective places, thus the writer of Kummi says beautifully. The literature while speaking of the birth of great men speak in general that the nature reveals the divinity but this also goes along with a doubt how it is revealed. On the contrary, the writer here clears that doubt with a technique of his own by stating it in a pictorial way.

" Sūrian candran vanthirangipparanj
 Jōthi pāthathaik kandu vananki
 Māiarasi natchatra mēga
 Mandalam poi sērnthu kondathuve "

Though the scripture says that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the writer's description of Bethlehem bears a Tamil rural back-ground when he says that the birds of the morning praised Jesus. It goes this way:

" Pālainilā vanap patchikalum vanam
 Paddi muthart chittuk kunchukalum
 Kālayil kathung karichang kōzhi
 Kāka muthalonru kunathe ".

Going still further the writer says that the doves, parrots peacocks and swans and all the other birds together praised the Lord. The nature gave a good yielding because of the birth of the Lord Jesus. The writer says it this way:

" Vazhai, kamuku kulai saikka nalla
Lagana thennai marangaikka "

And he says that the various flowers bloomed in abundance in this way:

" Mallikai mullai iruvā̄tchi nalla
marikozhunthu malayalari
alliyund thāmarai neitharung kottiyum
āngāngē pūthu malaranthathuvē ".

This reciting of different names of the flowers brings to one's memory the poetry of 'Kurinjipā̄ttu'.

It is the usual literary style to show that the people are living happily by bringing out the simile that the other living beings lived in harmony and unity forgetting their own innate enmity. We see the same style in Kambān's and Pukatenthiyar's works. The same style in Kummi is also very attractive and fills us with joy.

" Paspikka vanthidum pampum thavalayum
Pallavi sollikkondadinathā̄m "

(the snake and frog together sang and praised)

again,

"Padi davumayil kudidavum nalla

Pambu padameduth thadidavum"

(the snake and peacock joining together praised and danced)

Hearing the news of the birth of Jesus, the devil which deceived Eve in the garden of Eden, was frightened to the very core of his being. The frightened Satan was lamenting, for his kingdom would be destroyed. Because of this fear the gang of Satans fell deep in the sea of suffering, that is hell. This is described in the following lines in a very pictorial way.

" Vinnangal vanthu vilainthenru naraga
 vēthala pāthathil vezhinhathuvē
 vethālam vezhintha visaiyālē naraga
 vēthanai kadalkondalithu
 pāthala yakkini vai thivanthuirai
 pārtharenrē mikak kathinare
 kathina sathathai kēttantha lusipper
 karananth thannai yraivatharku
 pallai nerunerenre kadithup pala
 pāthagap peikalāi yēvivithu
 kallaium mannaiyum ponnayum mathi
 karthannuk koppidach sonnathiuvē ".

Hearing the loud sound and cry of the devils falling in the hell, the gang-leader Lucifer sent a few dangerous devils to King Herod and plotted to kill the child Jesus. King Herod who came to know of the birth of Jesus through the Magi, ordered to kill all the male children below the age of two.

"Vāringalennuda manthirimare yen vārthayai neengal marukkāmal
Kūrungal vendu vayathirtkutpatta kuzhanthaikalai kollavenrum-
endran

Ungal thorunthaniuk kadithu yenthen utharayendru neer sollikundu
Pērupeṛagap pirantha pillayellām pinangalagave kollumendran ".

The presentation of the character of Satan gives an epic outlook and impression to Kummi. The verses on Satan here and there will undoubtedly remind us of Milton. Hence the presentation of Satan by the author is very impressive for the readers.

As directed by an angel, Joseph leaves the country with the child and mother and goes to Egypt while the soldiers roam around to kill the children:

" Thedia yōdivanda perum pāthagar
Thenpatta pergalu mengeyendrar ".

(came running searching, the devilish soldiers, asking where the others are)

Hearing this, the farmers,

" Nādiye nāngal vithakkayil kandathu
nandvai vilainthu pōchu thendrar"

(the seeds seen when sown are well grown)

The soldiers returned back. Further again the writer says about the Satans that:

" Pasithu patiniyāi kidakkum perum
pāthala manathil veezhinthathuve"

(the hungry devils fell deep inside the hell)

While concluding the Kummi, the final part of the Kummi ends with a happy note sounding the joy of the humanity and the angels, but at the same time the perturbed nature of the Satan is also brought out.

" Manamum retkamung kettalaintha kēdu
manduga peik kellānj chanjalāmam "

(ashamed of themselves, the dull headed devils were deeply perturbed)

b) Ēsu Nathar Pēril Portti Kummi:

This Kummi song is also based on the Gospel according to St. Luke and Mathew. The gist of the song is based on praising Jesus Christ and his birth along with Mary and Joseph.

The expressions, comparisons and descriptions are very much typical of Tamil literature.

" Kanagathil maridaiar thanumange
Thathinnam (mun) pullanaiyil (pin) sollaiyā
Karthanaiye thān paniya pātham paniya "

The shepherds in the forest worship the Lord.

"Poovanathilē coyarum pullinangalāl
Thathinnam (mun) pullinangal (pin) sollaiyā
Pōtri seyyum pālanai thalinaiye "

The flowers in the garden praise the infant Jesus.

" Panthi panthiyāy vilangum poonguilum
Thathinnam(mun) poonguilum (pin) sollaiyā
Sesu pālanai potridumām vazthidumām ".

The birds and animals praise and glorify the infant Jesus.

" Sāndhamulla sesumari soosaiyappar
Thathinnam(mun) soosaiyappar (pin) sollaiyā
thangal pātha muthi seyya potriseyya ".

Mary and Joseph worshipped and praised Jesus.

"Kātterumai karadi puli maan mariyum
Thathinnam (mun) kottamudan (pin) sollaiyā
Karthanidam koodidumam padidumam ".

Wild buffaloes, bear, tiger, deer gathered and sang to the Lord.

" Nāttamudan vandinamum Mā Malarin
Thathinnam (mun) Ma Madhuoom (pin) sollaiyā
Māri yenappeidhidumām- peidhidumam ".

Bees offered the honey to Jesus.

" Kānagathil yamarar thanirangi
Thathinnam (mun) thanirangi (pin) sollaiyā
Vandhu suthan thāl paniya- Panneeranaia ".

The angels descended from heaven and worshipped at the feet of Jesus.

" Māvanathi velarum Māninangal
Thathinnam(mun) maninangal(pin) sollaiyā
vandhu pandhiyai niraiya- thaniraiya "

The herd of deer gathered and praised.

" Poovanthile valarum pullinamum
Thathinnam(mun) pullinamum(pin) sollaiyā
Valla suthan thāl paniya- Nām paniya "

The animals in the garden came and worshipped Jesus.

" Poonkinaigal thān thalarthu malar viria
Thathinnam(mun) thendralikka (pin) sollaiyā
Poova killai padidumām koodidumām.

The flowers bloomed and sang the praise of the Lord.

" Conjalena vandinangal koodi Angē
Thathinnam(mun) pādidavum(pin) sollaiyā
Vuthamanai potridumām -Vazhthidumām".

All the insects gathered together and praised the Lord.

" Anjukili Anjumalar Anjumaram
Thathinnam(mun) Anjumalar(pin) sollaiyā
Anjaladhu Seidhidumām -Vuithidumām "

Five parrots, five flowers, five trees honour and praise Jesus.

" Senjsollisaithumpikalum kompathile
Thathinnam(mun) pumparampol (pin) sollaiyā
Sutriye thonithidumām Kanaithidumām "

Dragonfly drones with happiness and sings the praise of God.

" Kanni Mari than suthanaip potriange
Thathinnam(mun) thootri maler (pin) sollaiyā
Karananai vazhthidumam potridumām"

Mother Mary praised her son Jesus.

" Innilathilega suthan thannaiyum
Thathinnam (mun) than pandindhu(pin) sollaiyā
Engal niraiyenridumam nindridumam "

The whole universe praises Jesus.

2. Kappal Malai Kummi (Mount of Skull)

This Kummi is based on the Mount of Skull, the place where Jesus was crucified, which is commonly called Golgotha. Here the passion and death of Jesus is sung and danced.

3. Kappal Taru Kummi:

In this Kummi the redemptive work of Jesus, the Son of God is sung and danced. The incident where Mary meets Jesus on his way to Calvary, her pain, helplessness and the cruelty of the people etc. are pictured beautifully in the following verses of Kappal Taru Kummi.

"Athipitha suthanar pin thangunthethai

Anpuniyil Mandirkai sollaiya soll

(Tell us what the father of the divine Son did..)

Athipizhai theera yavai... Thanguntheththai

(in order to redeem us from the first fall)

Avaimari thannidamai sollaiya soll

Vanthu pirantha yen thanguntheththai sollaiya soll

Vallavarke nanadimai "

(the one born through the Virgin Mary, my Almighty, I am a slave to you)

Neethi seluthi nithianai

Nedung kurusaidi sumantha nalla

Sumanthu vilunthezhuntha

(the God of justice, carrying the cross fell down bearing the load, unto that holy one I am a slave)

Thuyavarke Nanadinai Appothu vaniyarum

(along with the people the Lord walked)

Āndavavume Nadanthār Nizhal nōkki Nindreiyān

Neethiyulla āndavanum

(He found no shade to stand by and rest, the Almighty God had no water to drink)

Thanniraith thānkudiyān Tharparanar mathavum

Nādith thadu Mārinalla Nalla mari thānazhuthu

Nāthane endrodi Nalla Nalla Māri than vizhuvāl

Pullanpiyē thānazhuthu pugazh

Pugazh periya Rājakanni vaniyarai parthauma

(The mother of the Lord shaken, broken, stumbled down crying and calling for her son, looking for him she stumbled down and cried. The mother of the Lord cried bitterly and cried and pleaded to the people saying:

Mathavume thuraipal Pinai yuthar Pattanamum

Veethi vali Yesthuram thunmargal veethivali

Thulai yithuvō vendraipāl Vanmai kulap pattanatt
 Manidaraik kollumenpāl Appōthu vani yaru yethu
 Athērum Manidarai Kēttu me yōdivan̄thu
 Kellumamā thaye yendru Baniyaru mappōthu Maru
 Maru mozhi kanē thuraipār

(In the streets of this Jewish town, see the work of these evil men. Can't you, oh people of nobility question? Seeing the people of that street, she pleaded with them to question this act of injustice but they had no reply to offer).

Kandavargal sonnārgal Kādu yutharap pōthu
 Solla vonnā māthuyarāl Yūthargalunth thanadithu
 Varumaiyai kulaikārar Varuyuthar seinnaiyei
 Pārthavargal sonnār Pārung guru sodun maganai
 Arainthu migu vizhunthu Āndavaraīth thanadithu
 Pōnarkal yendru solli Pōna mananjhallithu
 Nindrārē vaniyaru

(The passerby told her with great sorrow, of what they heard from the people who saw it, that the evil jews had whipped her son and made him carry a heavy cross. He fell down again and again under the weight of the cross but they beat the Lord and made him walk further- so they stood there with depressed hearts.

Nēsath thīru mathavum Kandāyo vāni yendru
 Kanni māriyap pothu Alariyē thānazhuthm
 Achina Mathavum Pathariye thanōdip
 Pārunj sūthar kumpalilē Yēgiyē mathavum
 Yesunar mumbaga ".

(The loving virgin mother cried and cried asking whether they had seen anything like this and ran stumbling towards that jewish crowd ahead and saw her son there in front).

4. Santha Oyil Kummi:

5. Oyil Kummi Vattai:

These above categories of Kummis deal on the general themes of hunting, sports, social life etc. However, the beginning or Kāppup-pādal is always there in praise of Jesus Christ.

6. Vetha Upathesa Kummi:

In this category the general Christian doctrines are sung and danced. The portrayal of ten commandments, the seven sacraments etc. are beautifully brought out in the literary form.

Besides these songs, there are songs on the saints like Aleciar (St.Alice) Chennappamal Story, Moorasa (the story of

three kings) Miracle at Cana etc. are sung and danced. Another special feature of Kummi is that many a times the Vādyar composes the Kummi songs on the spot on any relevant theme.

Kummiāṭṭam has become part and parcel of the social and religious life of the people of this area. The composition of the Kummi songs is very much in the style of Tamil literature. The poetic expressions are usually connected with nature, life and customs of the people. Though the themes of their Kummi songs are on Christianity, one can find the message being understood and comprehended by the Indian mind in both from its artistic and literary expressions. Unlike Cavittunātakam it is least affected by the European theatre.

g) MŪNRURĀJĀKŪTHU :

Mūnrurājakūthu or Mūvarasu nātakam is a dance-drama on the story of Epiphany .⁽⁶⁾ At present this religious stage performance is conducted every year on the 13th night after Christmas at the premises of St. Antony's Church, Attikkōdu in Kuzhinjanpāra town ,Palghat district, Kerala State.

The Magi plays were written and enacted in medieval Europe. In India (Tamilnadu) and Sri Lanka these plays were and are enacted in a slightly modified way. In Sri Lanka they are called Rāja Thunkattava⁽⁷⁾. and in Tamilnadu they are called Mūnrurājakūthu, the dance of the three kings. The story contents of the dance-drama consists of all the incidents that happen after the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem until the three kings from the East come and adore the babe-Jesus with gold, myrrh and frankincense.

The feast of Epiphany is celebrated in different ways in various parts of the world. " The day of light" is the name given for it in Greek. In Kerala this thirteenth day feast is called Pindikuthiperunnal. This is celebrated by erecting a plantain stem around which indigenous torches are lighted in small crucibles. This is a peculiar feature seen among the Catholic community in Trichur and its neighbouring

places.⁽⁸⁾ But among Christians of Palghat area the feast is celebrated by enacting the Mūnrurājakūthu .

HISTORICAL BACK-GROUND OF MŪNRURĀJAKŪTHU:

According to Chinnappa Vadyar the play has been staged for the last five centuries. However, as per the records available, since 1850 it has been staged regularly at the Attikodu church premises. Dr.Chummar Choondal says, that in St.Xavier's Church at Souriyar Palayam, seven miles east of Coimbatore Mūvarasunātakam was staged continuously for over hundred years without a break. The weaver community, Chaliyārs were the artists and actors. The play was staged under the leadership of Mariyadas Chettiyar. With the death of Mariyadas Chettiar the local troupe was disorganised and the staging of the play came to a standstill. Action, songs, dialogue, costume, presentation etc. had distinct variations when compared to the play presentation of Attikodu which still exists today though the manuscript is the same. These dance-dramas must have been staged at Thiruchirapally, Madurai and Palayamkottai in Tamilnadu.

STAGING OF MŪNRURĀJAKŪTHU:

The right to perform Mūnrurājakūthu is vested with the people of thirty three Dēsams namely Pappan Vali, Nadupalayam,

Venkarapalayam, Goruthenpathy, Pazhaniyarpalayam, Sayathurai,
Nallur, Swarapara, Valayar, Kollampilly, Kulukapara, Kozhipara,
Neelipara, Konganpara, Erumakarannoor, Attapalam, Chullimade,
Paralapara, Kanjikode, Koilpalayam, Pallasampathy, Theyaravan-
kotta, Elipara, Kottilpara, Palliyammanthurai, Konkkan Puthur,
Keranapallam, Bhavathypara, Menonpara, Vedhapalayam,
Gramboopara, Karaiyampalayam, Athikkodu etc. in the border
areas of Palghat district in Kerala. Formerly those villages
were under Tamilnadu. (9)

THE MANIYAKĀR:

The village head takes the responsibilities of organizing and staging the play. He, together with the Vadyar (dance teacher) plans out and selects the actors for different roles. The roles are handed down to the performers as the family heritage. Sometimes the same performer does it for a number of years. For example Paul Cruz aged 64 has been acting the role of Herod for the last 44 years. This system has its drawbacks which shall be dealt with at a later stage.

In the Athikkodu troupe, most of the artistes are from the families of Panditakāran, Muradan, Malayappan, Upadēsi and Mariyan. At present the Panditakaran family has the Ēdu (Script) and it is they who arrange the performance.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESENT MŪNRURĀJAKŪTHU:

According to Chinnappa Vādyar , a missionary priest Arulappa Swami from France who came as a parish priest to Athikkodu church in 1950 narrated the story of the Magi to the then poet and scholar Arokia Vādyar, son of Savarimuthu. The family of Arokia Vādyar migrated from Pandyanādu near Palani to Athikkodu. It is Arokia Vadyār who wrote the script for Mūnrurājakūthu in the year 1950 and enacted the Magi play the same year with the help of Innāsi Rāyan of Pappanpalayam who belonged to the Panditakāran house, Chilavai Muthu Maniyakkāran, of Nadupalam, Agppa Maniyakkaran of Bengarpalayam and many others under the supervision of Arulappa Swami at the premises of Athikkodu church. Arulappa Swami died in 1959 but the play continued to be enacted every year on the feast day of Epiphany till to this day except in the year 1921, it did not take place because of Thambi Maniyakkaran's objection.

In the present day the play is staged under the guidance of Vadyar Chinnappa, who is 76 years old. Chinnappa Vādyar learnt from his father Vādyar Sāsai who was a direct disciple of Arokia Vādyar . Since 1927 Chinnappa Vādyar conducts the show at the premises of Athikkodu church. There is a built-in stage to the right courtyard of St. Anthony's church, Athikkodu

where the historical Mūnrurājakūthu is enacted every year with all religious sentiments.

TRAINING AND TECHNIQUE:

Like any other art-form, Mūnrurājakūthu artists also have a rigorous training. The training goes on for at least two months. Once a person is interested in acting and if he is selected to play a particular role, only then is he admitted for the training by the Vādyar in a ceremonial way. The disciple gives Gurudaksina to the Vadyar, normally 5 rupees folded in a beetle-leaf together with a Vēshty. While presenting them to the Guru they kneel down before him for his blessings. The Guru places his hands on his head and makes the sign of the Cross on his forehead (146). After giving the Daksina to the Guru the disciple touches his feet. Then the Vādyar gives his final blessing with these words: " go and practise well with the blessing of St. Anthony". On the Christmas day too the disciples go to the Guru for the blessings. The older disciples start their practices beginning from the day of Christmas.

KŪTHUCHALS:

Kūthuchal is a temporary palm leaf roofed shed put up in the premises of the church in Athikkodu. Here, the practices

go on at night after the evening meals. Since most of the participants are agriculturists it is the only time they can come together for the practices. Before every practice session they invoke Lord Jesus in a sloka or a hymn. Each performer learns his role by heart with the music , gestures and abhinaya.

BASIC FOOT-WORK:

Every beginner learns the 5 basic steps which they call Kāl. These five steps are skillfully employed in the choreography of the whole dance-drama. Each Kāl has a definite Vaitari (sollukattu) for the step. The Vadyar recites the Vaitari while the students perform the same.

Onnāmkāl:

Onnāmkāl is the first basic step of Mūnrurājakūthu which is similar to the first step of Tatta Mettu of Bharata Natyam dance style. The students begin their training with this step. In this the alternative feet are stamped against the floor. However, the position of the feet is like the normal position of the Kathak dancer. Aramandi of the Bharata Natyam is not observed. This step is done practically by all the participants. The students master rhythm by practising this step. While doing this step the hands are held in Hamsasya hasta in the opposite direction. The right palm is kept upwards when they strike the

right foot and the same is done on the left side. The hand position is same for all the 5 basic steps.

Rantāmkāl:

This is the second step a student learns in his training period. In this step for the first beat they strike the right foot across in front of the left leg; for the second beat strike the left leg and for the third and fourth beat the right leg is used. On the first and second beat body bends above the torso to the left and on the third and fourth beat the body is brought to the normal position.

Mūnnāmkāl:

The third step is usually performed by the female roles. The movement of the step is suggestive of Lasya (graceful) style. This step consists of five beats. On the first beat the right foot is kept across the left in the front, second beat is by the left foot at the same place, the third and fourth beat is taken in the normal position and the fifth beat is taken by the right foot placing it behind the left striking the front portion of the foot (Mettu). The same is repeated on the left side.

Nālamkāl:

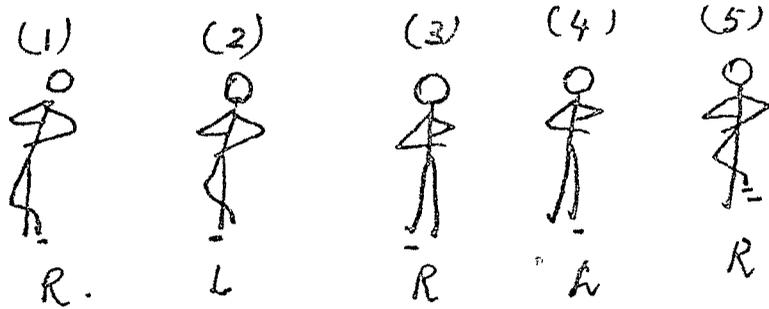
This is the fourth step and it is usually used by the King Herod to the count of 8 beats. The movement formation resembles the half circle. The right foot is stamped across the left. On the second beat the left foot is stamped in the same position. On the third and fourth beats the same movements are repeated. On the 5th beat the right foot will go behind the left foot and the rest of the steps are done as indicated above. By executing this step one sees the formation of a half circle.

Anchāmkāl;

The fifth step is also performed practically by all the performers. It is set to 4 beat rhythm. The performers use this with different variations. Sometimes keeping the 4th beat silent without the stamping of the feet. This step is useful for the free movement on the stage. Detailed sketches of the above steps with their corresponding Vaitari is given in the adhering pages.

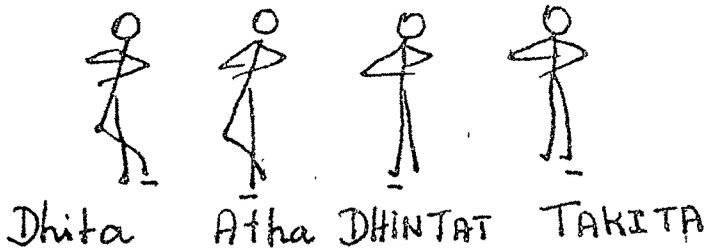
After the primary training in the foot-work the Vādyar teaches them the songs with appropriate choreographic movements together with it the hand-gestures(hastas) and abhinaya.

(iii)

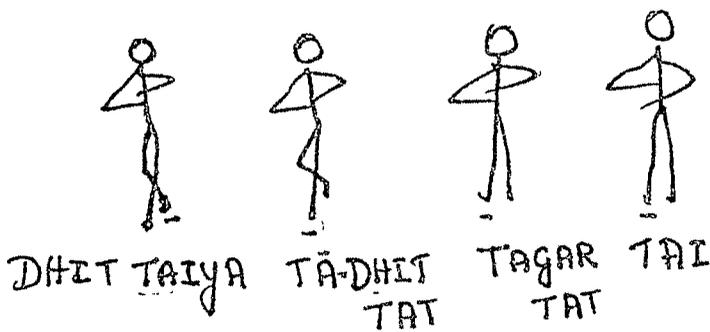


- Repeat Left side

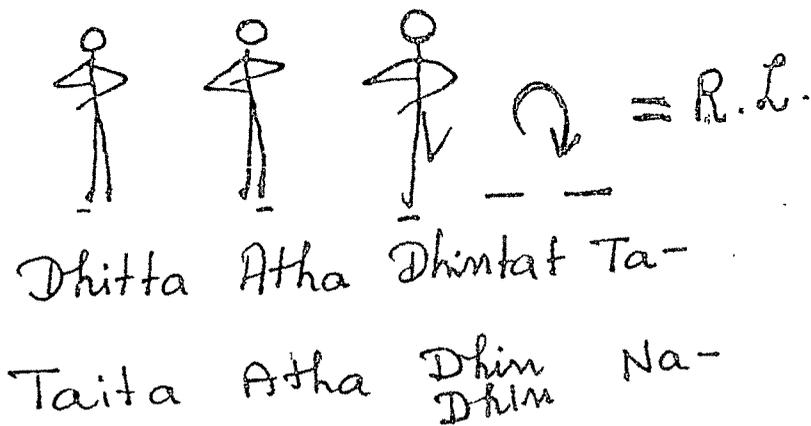
(iv)



= R. L.



(v)



Make-Up and Costume:

Mūnrurājakūthu has its own particular make-up and costume by tradition. All the characters faces are painted with white paste, red lipstick and thick black eye-brows and eye liners (147). For the three kings in the place of Nāmam they have a small cross drawn on the forehead in the black paint. King Baltazar does not wear moustache, King Melquor has a thin moustache and Gaspar has a thick moustache. They wear wooden Kiritams similar to that of Kathakali. They wear a belt (Aranjanam) necklace, ear-rings, bangles etc. On the upper body they wear shirt and each shawl in different colour worn on the neck which hangs on both the sides in the front. They also use long white Dhōti worn in a Pāvata (skirt) style.

King Herod has a similar make-up , but on his forehead he has a Vaishnavite Nāmam (sect forehead mark). His Kiritam is dome-shaped. The attendants of King Herod, usually acted by boys , wear turbans on their heads, paint their faces white and use shirts and shorts.

Pai (Devils):

Usually there are three characters acting as devils. Their make-up is very terrifying. The main devil's right half of the face is painted white and the left half of the face is

painted red. Other two have red colour on the right half and black colour on the left half of the face. They have a brown beard, odd-shaped kiritams and rustic looking necklaces. They wear shirts and use sarees as the pāvata (skirt).

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

Before the actors go for their make-up they go to the Guru for the blessing. The Guru with powder draws a cross on the forehead of the performer (148). This custom is also found in Cavittunātakam and other Nātakams. After the make-up all the main characters, three kings and Herod come with their Kiritams to the Guru. The Guru ties the Kiritams on their head, (149) assisted by the make-up man. After this the three kings go to their villages to start their journey to the church courtyard for the performance.

THE CEREMONIAL PROCESSION:

All the people, mainly from the 33 Deshkars arrive in the courtyard of the church. The stage is well-decorated for the performance. Pop-guns are fired thrice to signal the starting of the journey of three kings from the East. From Pappanpadi, Baltazar, the first king, from Nedupalayam King Melguor and from Venkar Palayam King Gaspar start their journey. They come on bullock-carts which are decorated and with burning

torches accompanied by drum-beating. The pop-guns are fired again thrice to announce the arrival of the kings. The minister of the first king leads the procession. The three kings meet each other saluting each other with the traditional Namaskāram (150). They sing Virutham song together (151). After this each one sings the Virutham and makes the sign of the cross on their own forehead, lips and chest (152, 153).

Herod hears all these drum-beating, watches the kings, their attendants and army from the stage. He sends an attendant to find out the cause of all this commotion. The kings answer him from the entrance of the main gate that they have come not to invade Jerusalem but are led by the strange star which is the sign that will lead them to the new-born King. But to their bad luck the star has disappeared. With these words, they proceed to the stage and all people stand to show respect for the Kings. Now, Herod becomes curious, comes down from the stage and accompanies them to the stage (154, 155). Then the three kings have their long conversation with King Herod (156, 157, 158, 159).

Now, many Paiveshangal (Satan) - devil characters rush to the scene from all the directions with shouts and screams and reach the stage (160, 161). They tell Herod not to believe

these kings (162). After their return all the male children below the age of 2 should be killed and together with Jesus Christ will be annihilated and only then our country will be saved. In this manner , shouting and jumping wildly, they leave the stage.

All the subsequent scenes are in the palace of Herod,. Herod calls the Vēda-Shastri - the astrologer of the royal court to find out the birth of Christ. Vēdashastri , after analysing the 4 Vedas, 6 Shastras, 18 Puranas, 64 arts and 94 dogmas says that there is no trace of the birth of Christ. He also points out that Vishnu will come in the form of Kalki and not as man.

Finally, a christian priest is brought who says that Jesus Christ is born in Bethlehem as per the conventional faith recorded in the Bible. Then, Herod sends all the three kings in search of the baby Jesus and tells them to inform him about it so that he also can go and worship the king. The kings depart. When they do not return, Herod does the vigorous dance combining all the 5 steps and leaves the stage. Now, three kings appear on stage, they walk to the church, kneel down, pray and place their crowns at the feet of Child-Jesus. At this, the priest of the church comes and blesses the kings and all the people

assembled. The Kings take Jesus in their arms and dance in a circle, so that all the devotees have a darsan of Child-Jesus. After this, Mangala Virutham is sung. By this time it will be dawn and the people move towards their homes. Now, elderly women do ārati to the actors with a view to ward off any evil eye that might have affected them due to their good performance (163, 164).

MUSIC AND CHOREOGRAPHY:

The music of Mūnrurājakūthu is very much like the drama music which developed in the 19th and early 20th century. In the Ēdu (the script book) different Tālas (rhythmic pattern) and ragas are clearly written which shows that the composer Arokia Vadyar must have been well-versed in classical music. However, what they sing today does not abide by the directives given in the original script. When the kings enter the scene Centa is played. They also use Jāra, the miniature of Īlathālam, harmonium and mridangam. There are nearly six play-back singers. The main singer plays the Jāra. Traditionally the musicians sit deep down in the back portion of the stage.

The choreography is entirely based on the 5 basic steps. The choreographic patterns are in circle, half-circle, and in straight lines. Every Virutham is culminated by a Kalāsam

(like Tirmānam). The three kings and Herod have a fixed choreographic pattern to which they should abide. If they make mistakes, the Vādyar is there to guide them to their proper place. The three kings mostly move in one line and hardly show their back to the spectators. King Herod mostly performs the Nālāmkāl . The Paiveshangal (devils) have no fixed choreographic pattern. They have the freedom to improvise to whatever extent their imagination permits.

EXPONENTS:

The people of Athikkodu area regard the eminent artists of this art-form with high esteem. The names of Arulappan, Anthony Swami, V.Arulappan, Chinna Swami, Alphonse, Mariappan, Apparu and others are still remembered by the people for their contribution to this art. The most prominent people who played the role of the first king are: Apparu Anthony Muthu, Sāsāl , Cuberian, Mariyamman and Innasu Muthu of Panditakaran house of Athikkodu. Chouri Muthu, Chouriar Chendanam, Arokia and others from Nedupalayam acted as the second king. Kalanchouri Muthu, Anthony Muthu, Silvai Muthu, Santappan, Albbuda Swami and others acted as the King Herod.

At present Paul Cruz aged 64 has been acting as Herod for the last 44 years. The first king Baltazar is acted by Madalai Muthu. King Melquor is acted by Anthony Swamy, King Gaspar by

Rajamanikam , Mantri (minister) by Muthuswamy , Paiveshangal (devils) by K. Albbuda Swamy, S. Joseph and Arulappan. The Vādyar is Chinnappan from Tennaiyaratam Kolam near Kozhipara

The right to act a particular role in Mūnrurājakūthu comes down in the family as its heritage. Mainly because of these sentimental attachment by a few families to this art-form, more specifically to a particular role, Mūnrurājakūthu is still very much alive in the life of these simple peasants. However, one should not overlook the dancer from this system. The descendants of the family may not be talented in music and dance. During the recent field-work, it has come to light that there are few of these performers who could sing well. Because of this the standard of the performance has suffered by yard-stick of the artistic eye. However, dedication and religiosity of these people is tremendous and is to be admired. Mūnrurājakūthu is an example where the faith of the people (Christianity), their folk-art and their native customs and habits have been beautifully combined and expressed artistically.

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5. Most of the Kummi songs are collected through the scholarly help and co-operation of Shri Anthony Swamy, Sorappara, Kozhippara P.O., Chittur, Palghat Dt., Kerala .
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<u>Name</u>	<u>Place</u>
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3. Shri Basil Pinto	Birav, Karkala Tq. D.K.
4. Shri John Pinto	Birav, Karkala Tq, D.K.
5. Shri Paul Leo Fernandes	Moodubidri, D.K.

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1. Arokiaswamy Vadyar	Koilpalayathar	Director of Pambuppara Nataka Mandram	Palghat Dt.
2. Maichalsamy P.	Erumaikarar	Actor	"
3. Anthony Swamy S.	Kannivadyar	"	"
4. Arputhaswamy C.	Valiar	"	"
5. Soosai Muthu	Kannivadyar	"	"

KUMMIĀTTAM:

1. Innasi Muthu A.	Vellai Veedu	Actor/Āsān	Palghat Dt.
2. Packiam	" "	Actor	"
3. Soosaimanikam	" "	"	"

4. Chinnappan	Parisakkel	Actor	Falghat Dt.
5. Savariyar	"	Singer	"
6. Anthony Swamy	Sorappara	Research Scholar	"

MŪNRURĀJAKŪTHU

<u>Name</u>	<u>Family Name</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>Place</u>
1. Chinnappan Vadyar	Panditakarar	Āsan	Athikkodu, Palghat.
2. Paul Cruz	Upadeshiyar	Actor	Valeyar, "
3. Madalai Muthu	Panditakarar	"	Athikodu "
4. Anthonysamy	Upadeshiyar	"	" "
5. Albhutaswamy	Upadeshiyar	"	" "
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