

## CHAPTER - III

# INFORMAL EDUCATION OF SANSKRIT IN KERALA:

## THE TRADITIONAL STREAMS

### Introduction

Sanskrit education in Kerala had a strong foundation in the grand pan-Indian model of the gurukula system. However, Kerala had its own traditional rules and customs with regional variations, which led to the establishment of certain institutions. This system, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, had developed into a number of teaching and learning procedures dealing with different topics from religion and language to science and technology. These traditional institutions represented the formal system of education in Kerala for hundreds of years from the early the medieval ages up to the modern times.

As we have seen, the Gurukula system of education of the previous ages underwent several changes later due to the historical reasons such as the intervention of the foreign powers and the consequent social and cultural reformations. Finally, the new education policy implemented by the British colonialists rejected the Indian system and as a result the institutions that followed the traditions, which were already facing degeneration, began to collapse. Gradually, as the feudal and caste based

ideology represented by these institutions had no significance in the changing social and political scenario, they began to lose their grip over the people and education. Sanskrit and its knowledge system were considered by the modernists as a dead event. The traditional institutions were left out from the main stream. This system of education, which remained prominent for centuries, became neglected, marginal and feeble. When compared to the modern and formal system of education which is current in India, the old system has now become informal and representative of the traditional.

Based on the above perspective, the remaining fragments of old system of formal Sanskrit education which are present in various parts of India including Kerala could be regarded as informal system of education in contrast to the modern mainstream formal education. At the same time the formal main stream of Sanskrit education is strongly there in the modern system of general education and higher education in colleges and universities and other centers of formal education.

Thus the informal education of Sanskrit in Kerala today includes the scattered streams of education related to the different modes of the traditional system that existed here in the past. They include religious or Vedic education, secular education like *Āyurveda* and *Vāstu*, and the traditional Sanskrit education popularized by some individuals and groups.

In recent times there is a renaissance in the traditional Kerala art forms like Kūṭiyāṭṭam, Kūttu etc where Sanskrit language, theatre and literature are some of the main topics for learning. The institutions and groups present these traditional theatrical forms in a slightly reformed and innovative manner. These are also separated from the main stream of art or theatre education. The Sanskrit education given in these art forms are informal when compared to the Sanskrit Education given in the main stream.

### **Vedic Education in Kerala: Multiple Streams**

We have already noted the history that, after the settlement of Brāhmaṇas in the Kerala villages, the Vedic literature began to spread in this part of the country also. For the teaching of Vedas and the related śāstras like Vyākaraṇa, Jyotiṣa and Mīmāṃṣa, as mentioned earlier, many famous institutions were started in about the 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. These institutions were attached to the temples managed by the Brāhmaṇas. In the temples of Thrissur, Tiruvalla and Kottayam full facilities were given to Brāhmaṇas for the teaching and learning of Vedas. This is already discussed in the previous chapter. The Brāhmaṇas enjoyed free food, accommodation and training at these places. In the same manner for the teaching of Veda there were facilities in the wealthy Namputiri families.<sup>1</sup>

Teaching of Vedas was started in the mathas attached to some temples of Kerala like Vadakumnatha temple at Thrissur. Their purpose of teaching Vedas were purely religious. The chanting of 'Muṛa' which included the texts of Pada, Krama and other patterns of chanting were encouraged for the study of Vedas. According to the tradition Eighteen Sabha Mathas were instituted in Kerala.<sup>2</sup> These mathas were started for the education of Sruta and Smarta karmins. Thirunavaya, Thrissur Thekkematham, Edayil Matham, Naduvilmatham, Triikkanamathilakam Chengannur etc were centers of Vedic education in the medieval period. The method of education followed was the gurukula method. Later some of these Sabha Mathas became non-existent.

Now in Kerala a few institutions are teaching Vedas in the traditional way in a limited level. Thrissur Brahmasvam Matham (*Ṛgveda*), Thirunanaya Bhrahmasvam Matham continue their tradition, Kanchi Kamakodi Yajurveda Vidyapitham at Irinjalakuda (*Yajurveda*), Mattattur Kaimukkumana at Mattattur (*Yajurveda*) and Sāmaveda Gurukula at Panjal (*Sāmaveda*) also claim a long tradition. Arshavidya Gurukulam at Kodunthirapilly in Palakkad, teaches vedas in Tamil style.

***Ṛgveda*** - Among the four Vedas the *Ṛgveda* is the most ancient one. It is related to the priest- 'Hota'. For the teaching of *Ṛgveda* in Kerala the most famous institution is Thrissur Brahmasvam Matham.

It is believed that, for the development and propagation of Vedanta the disciples of Adi Śankara established four Mathas at Thrissur. They are the Thekke Matham, Etayil Matham, Naduvil Matham and Vadakke Matham.<sup>3</sup>

In the course of time (about 400 yrs ago) the head of the Vadakke Matham endowed some property belonging to that Matham to a Vedavidyalayam and made the 'Vādhyān' (teacher of Vedas) and the 'Thrissur Yogam' (committee of Brāhmaṇas of Thrissur) the trustee of the institution. With this Vadakke Matham ceased to be a secluded monastery and took a new birth as a Veda Mahavidyalaya ensuring continuity of the Vedic studies.<sup>4</sup>

It was the custom for the Namputiri youngsters to observe after their 'Samāvartanam' observed 'Bhajanam' (vow of worship) in Vadakkumnathan temple for a year or more after their 'Samāvartanam'. These youngsters were provided education in advanced courses like Pada, Krama, Jaṭa and other modes of skilled Vedic chanting during the day time. It was this tradition of Vedic education which in course of time grew into a great institution. The advanced teaching of the Vedas was done by scholars from Changaliyotu Namputiri family of Thrissur. After the birth of the Mahavidyalaya this teaching of Veda was shifted to Vadakke Matham which later came to be known as Brahmasvam Matham.

### **Brahmasvam Matham**

Till about 1930 the custom was that the Samhita portion of *R̥gveda* was taught either at the student's own home by his own father or elders. The students joined the Brahmasvam Matham only for higher studies particularly for the study of Pada, Krama, Jaṭa and Ratha etc.. with correct 'svara' and 'sampradaya'. From 1932 the study of Samhita was also introduced in Brahmasvam Matham. The young students who had to spend their time fully for traditional Vedic education remained separated from the main stream education at that time. As a remedial measure, from 1951 onwards these students are given private tuition in language, science, social studies etc. So after completing the study of *R̥gveda Samhita* the students are enabled to appear privately for school examinations and join the main stream of formal education in schools and complete their general education. The teachers and students of the Matham are given free boarding and lodging.<sup>5</sup>

At the primary stage, while chanting the Mantras the teacher holds the head of the student and moves it up and down, according to the rise and fall of the svara of each akṣara in the Mantra. Head is in upward position during the uttering of udātta and downward position when anudātta is intended. So a teacher can teach only four or five students at one time. The Instruction is not with the help of books, but oral and based

on practice and memory, and also, with the help of Mudras (gestures). The use of Hasta Mudras (hand gestures) in Vedic chanting is seen only in the Kerala Vedic tradition. So to start a particular section the teacher need not say a word, but he shows the relevant Mudra. The student understands the word denoted by the Mudra and follow it properly without any mistake. Each Vedic student has to understand the whole *R̥gveda* by heart.

The following schedule is observed in the Math for vedic studies. In the early morning ( at 5 a.m) the students rise up and recite Gayatri. Then they conduct 'Suryanamaskaram' with the chanting of Veda for on hour. After suryanamaskāram they observe for about 10 to 20 minutes Sree Kṛṣṇa upāsana since Kṛṣṇa is the temple god of Brahmasvam. Again from 7.30 am the students join the Vedic classes. At present there are 25 students studying *R̥gveda*. Two of them are natives of Maharashtra who came here to study *R̥gveda* in the traditional style of Kerala. In the afternoon students learn other subjects like Sanskrit language, Mathematics, Science and Social science etc, to enable themselves to appear privately for school examination. Again from 7 p.m to 8 p.m they take the Vedic lessons. Upto the year 2005 Sanskrit education was imparted by scholars specially appointed for that purpose. They followed traditional methods in the teaching of Sanskrit also. But in the new scheme of studies, Sanskrit is taught as per the school syllabus.<sup>6</sup>

Admission is strictly restricted to the Brāhmaṇa boys and they stay in the Matham along with their Brāhmaṇa gurus. This system of education in the Matham continues the two aspects of gurukula system, students lives with his guru and follows the oral tradition. But he is not living in the guru's house and following the strict codes of conduct. As mentioned earlier teachers and students are given free boarding and lodging. After the 'Upanayana' around the age of seven pupils are admitted to the Brahmasvam Matham. They study the samhita portion of *Ṛgveda* during the first five years. Those who want to continue education in the higher level start to learn Pada, Krama, Jaṭa and Ratha and they are also given opportunity to have their school education in the manner explained earlier. As noted earlier, presently there are 25 students in *Ṛgveda*, four students in Yajurveda and five students in Sāmaveda. The teaching of Yajurveda and Sāmaveda was started recently.

At present there are four teachers for the *Ṛgveda*. They are Vadakumpad Pasupathi, Oravankara Damodaran Namputiri, Madhuthazham Neelakandan Namputiripad, and Thamaranellur Purushothaman Bhattatiripad. In the past famous scholars like Kaliyath Parameswaran Bharathikal, Panthavoor Subramanyan Namputiri, Irinjalapilli Madhavan Namputiri, Meledam Sankaran Numpūtiri, Ezhikoden



Parameswaran Namputiri, and Parappuram Raman Numputiri were teachers in the matham.<sup>7</sup>

When the students begin Vedic education they start the learning of Sanskrit also. First of all they give importance to oral method because the right pronunciation is very important in Sanskrit, especially in the chanting; Śravaṇa, Manana, and Nidhidhyasana are very important in the learning of Vedas. Memorising and concentration are essential in the oral method. At the beginning they teach the students *Siddharūpa*, *Srīrāmodanta*, some cantos from *Śrikr̥ṣṇavilāsakāvyaṃ*, *Raghuvamśam*, *Kumārasambhavam*, *Nārāyaṇīyam* and some parts of *Amarakośa* and *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. All these are through the oral method. Preference is given to anvaya, anvayārtha, and sārārtha of the verses studied. The famous previous Sanskrit teachers of this institution were Puradam Haridathan Namputiri, K.N.M Divakaran Namputiri and Killimangalath Krishnan Namputiripad. Now Edamana Vasudevan Namputiri is the teacher of Sanskrit. He studied Sanskrit informally and privately from Prof. Ramakrishnan who was retired professor from Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur.<sup>8</sup>

About 40 years back Brahmasvam Matham started a correspondence course for *Ṛgveda* namely 'International Correspondence Course in *Ṛgveda*'. Unfortunately after 2 or 3 years this course was stopped. Only sixty lessons were distributed to students. In 1995 these lessons were

collected and published in the form of a text in Malayalam titled *Vedakiranangal* by Dr. C.M Neelakandan and Paleri Narayanan Numputiri. The purpose of these lessons were to introduce Vedas to the ordinary people, who are without the knowledge of Sanskrit, through Malayalam medium. Steps are also being taken to make the study of the Vedas more comprehensive by including the study of *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Śrauta* and *Gṛhya sūtras* relating to *Ṛgveda* in the scheme of studies.<sup>9</sup> The Matham has published some books in Malayalam like *Vedadhvani* and also published audio and video cassettes and CD. of 'Vedamantras', 'Sandhyāvandanam' etc.

During the summer vacation they give a systematic short term course in Tantra and other Kriyas meant mainly for the students outside the Matham.

Recently the Bhrahmasvam Matham has begun to conduct seminars, discussions and 'Satsangam' frequently for the inmates and the public. It is very useful for the proper interaction of students and teachers with the public and experts and also helps for the infiltration of the knowledge in traditional Vedic culture into the public sphere with less religiosity and more academic and critical interest.

**Sāmaveda-** As noted before in the Brahmasvam Matham, the study of *Sāmaveda* was introduced 4 years back and *Yajurveda* has just been

started recently. *Sāmaveda* has three students and one teacher namely Mamanna Sreejith Namputiri from Panjal. According to the teachers, compared to the students of *Ṛgveda*, the number of students in *Sāma* and *Yajus* is usually low; some pupil could not continue the study as desired.<sup>10</sup>

Samaveda is the source of ancient Indian music, it is totally rhythmic in nature and related to Udgata priest.<sup>11</sup>

Jaiminiya, Raṇāyanīya, and Kaudhuma are the three branches of *Sāmaveda*. Kerala Namputiri's follow the Jaiminiya branch. At present the condition of *Sāmaveda* tradition in Kerala is in a pitiable stage. There exist only one institution for *Sāmaveda* training apart from the Bhrahmasvam Matha in Kerala, namely Panjal *Sāmaveda* Gurukulam. Twenty five years back this Gurukulam was a common institution for teaching vedas. Now it is restricted for the study of *Sāmaveda* only. Situated in the Panjal Lakshmi Narayana Temple in Thrissur district, it is the only *Sāmaveda* gurukulam in Kerala. Very few number of students are studying in this institution. Nellikkal Vasudevan Namputiri from Panjal is conducting the Veda classes.<sup>12</sup>

The teaching of *Sāmaveda* is confined to the families of Vedic scholars in two villages, Panjal in Trissur district and Kidangur in Kottayam. These Vedic centers are in a critical stage. There are only four

or five persons who know *Jaminīya Sāmaveda* completely and all of them are in their late seventies in age. Mamanna Sreejith the teacher of Brahmasvam Matham is the only one *Sāmaveda* student of new generation at Panjal.

**Yajurveda-** *Yajurveda* is related to 'Adharyu' Priest and the subject of this veda is the karmas or rituals for the Yajus. *Yajurveda* is divided into two branches, *Kṛṣṇa* and *Śukla Yajurveda*. Now the traditional teaching of *Śukla Yajurveda* is very rare. Śrauta subjects like *Agnyādhāna* are the main topics of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*.

In Kerala there are only two places where *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* is being taught. Kanchi Kamakodi *Yajurveda Vidya Pitham* at Irinjalakkuda and Kaimukkumana at Mattattur. The former is running as a *Veda pāthaśāla* on the model of Brahmasvam Matham. At Kaimukkumana, students stay in the house of the teacher and the Gurukula mode is followed with the financial help of the Kanchi Kamakoti Vidyapitha, Irinjalakuda.

### **Kanchikamakoti Yajurveda Vidyapitham**

Kanchikamakoti *Yajurveda Vidyapitham* is situated near Kutalmanikyam temple at Irinjalakuda. Kanchikamakoti Jayendra Saraswathy svamikal inaugurated this institution in 1972. At that time there were seven students and two teachers.

Now this institution is functioning very well. There are twelve Bhrāhmaṇa students including two natives of Maharashtra learning Yajurveda and Sanskrit. After the Upanayana ceremony (between 8 to 12 yrs age) students come to study here and they begin Vedic education on an auspicious day. Only those who are fully qualified for the vedic education as per the orthodox norms are admitted here.

They start their classes early in the morning by chanting the Gāyatrī. Up to 6 A.M they practice Mantras in the Kutalmanikyam temple. The method of Vedic education is purely oral. Minimum five years are needed for the completion of preliminary education in *Yajurveda*. Sanskrit is also learnt as part of this education.<sup>13</sup>

In Sanskrit education they follow the traditional way by learning the *Sidharūpa*, *Amarakośa*, *Srīrāmodanta*, *Bālaprabodhanam* and parts of some Kāvya. Importance is given for the correct pronunciation. Separating the combined words, arriving at the right meaning of the words and sentence by using the interpretive tools of Vighraha, Anvaya, Artha etc are the methods followed in the teaching and learning of Sanskrit. Savithri Antharjanam from Puthenchira, Thrissur, is the teacher of Sanskrit. Now the Vedic teachers are K.N.Vasudevan Namputiri from Kattoor and Narayanan Namputiri from Irinjālakuda who is the previous student of the institution.

After the basic education in Vedas and Sanskrit in the traditional way students are sent to school to acquire the formal education. Before the completion of the primary stage of Vedic education, tuition facilities are provided for the study of school subjects. The students are allowed to write the annual examination of the 6<sup>th</sup> standard at the primary level and if passed are admitted to the 7<sup>th</sup> standard. The students thus admitted are given opportunity to continue their Vedic education also as usual with slight adjustments in their time table.

A period of minimum 7 to 14 yrs are needed for the completion of vedic education. According to Vyloor Naryanan Namputiri the former teacher, *Yajurveda* is the most important Veda for rituals. So pronunciation and concentration is very important. So they give first preference to pronunciation.<sup>14</sup>

Presently this institution at Irinjalakuda has been managed by a registered committee constituted of Namputiri Brahmins. Central Government of India (IHRD) had provided a grant. Coimbatore Aryavaidya Pharmacy and Veda Raksha Nidhi trust also provide financial support in a limited level. Giving proper accommodation to the students is the main problem faced by the institution. Another problem is the lack of provision for proper school education for these children without which they will be excluded from the main stream of public education.<sup>15</sup>

### **Kaimukkumana-Mattathur**

Kaimumuku Sreedharan Namputiri of Mattathur at Kodakara, Thrissur is teaching both Veda and Sanskrit in the traditional way. Veda classes are conducted at his own house (Kaimukkumana). This institution is a branch of Kanchi Kamakoti Vidya Pitham. One teacher is appointed for the teaching of Sanskrit. There are 10 students learning *Yajurveda* and Sanskrit. Kaimukkumana is well known for Jyotiṣa śāstra also. Raman Namputiri, elder brother of Sreedharan, is teaching Jyotiṣa in this house. There are many disciples studying there.<sup>16</sup>

### **Recent Trends**

Recently there is a tendency among various religious groups and agencies to take up vedic studies in the name of popularizing traditional wisdom for example, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi conducts Vedic classes for devotees at some of their branches in Kerala situated at Tirur, Kottakal, Nilambur, Aluva etc. Those who want to learn Veda are admitted to the classes without any caste, sex, and age discrimination. These centres do not teach any particular Veda as a whole but they teach selected portions of Vedas and Upanisads like Puruṣasūkta, Śrīsūkta, Durgāsūkta, Medhāsūkta, Gāyatrī Mantra etc. They do not follow traditional methods but some elements of tradition are incorporated.

The method of teaching is oral. After the loud recital of the Mantra with proper accents its meaning is also explained by the Vedic scholar who conduct the classes. Students also recite the Mantras with the clarity of pronunciation. These sūktas are used in daily Bhajans and prayers.

Ramachandran master conducts Vedic classes at Shornur and Irinjalakuda for Satya Sai Seva Samithi. In Thrissur, Vedic class were started on 2003 March. About 45 students attended this class in the first batch, classes are conducted on every Sunday morning from 10 am to 12pm. At first Mantras are recited loudly, then the meaning of each mantra is explained. After the class printed notes are given in Malayalam script. But now after 6 years, only ten students are regularly attending this class. Some elderly people who came to attend the class had to discontinue as they felt difficulty in pronouncing and memorizing the texts.<sup>17</sup> Later this organisation began to publish books for the purpose of these Vedic classes. Now these are available in six volumes as compilations of various sūktas. Puruṣasūktam, Srīśūktam, Narayana- sūktam, Narayaṇa Upanisad, Ekādaśa rudram; CD's of these hymns are also available now.<sup>18</sup>

Kāśyapa Vedic Research Foundation, Ballussery also teaches Vedas without any discrimination of Caste, sex and age under the leadership of M.R. Rajesh. Selected Vedic portions are taught to the students once or twice weekly. In the kozhikode branch they conduct



classes only on Sunday morning.<sup>19</sup> These religious organizations use the Mantras of Veda simply as prayers in bhajans as a clear means to inculcate popular faith in their particular cults and beliefs by relating them to the Vedas. The Vedas, Itihāsas and Purāṇas are used in the name of the eternal Hindu Dharma to attract more and more devotees and attain acceptability to the new cults and faiths sponsored by the powerful Godmen and Godwomen in the community. Actual teaching and learning does not take place in their bhajans mode of preaching, but an acquaintance with the scriptures are made with a strong religious motivation. In depth study of Sanskrit or Vedas are not possible in such contexts. But a person having some knowledge in Sanskrit can get something more from these classes. Discriminations on the basis of caste and creed are also absent in these groups which are not orthodox or Brāhmanic in character and follow the 'Bhakthi' pattern of religion modified to suit the modern times.

### **The Reading of Itihāsas and Purāṇas**

The recital of Bhāgavata and Bhagavadgīta in temples also have some educative value. So far as informal Sanskrit education is concerned, such sessions of reading and recitals are becoming more and more popular in recent times. The devotees who are interested in spiritual discourses and mythical narratives have enough opportunity to hear and

understand Sanskrit verses and Sanskrit terms from the Vedas, Itihāsa and Purāṇas. This not only enhances their religious and cultural acumen but inspires their interest in Sanskrit literature in general.

The ceremonial reading of *Mahābhārata* and purāṇas was a custom in important temples in Kerala during the medieval period. For this, Brahmin scholars were appointed in the temples and they were called *Mahābhārata* Bhaṭṭas. At that time people were benefited by the recital of epics and purāṇas.

In some of the Kerala temples there is a custom of reciting Bhāgavata as a worship to the deity by experts in that field. This recital will take seven days, and so it is called 'saptāha'. For example 'Bhāgavata Saptāha' conducted in a temple will have continuous recital of selected portions of Bhāgavata purāṇa with Malayalam interpretations, from 6 AM to 6PM daily for seven days. This saptāha or weekly type of Bhāgavata reading course is not only done in temples but also in the family gatherings also. Recently community organizations show interest to conduct 'saptāha' in public places also. This placement of Bhagavata recital from the temple premises to the midst of society indicates the growing interest of the public in Sanskrit and its culture which give importance to knowledge, spirituality and morality. Many young scholars

are involved in the conduct of the saptāha. Since it is a source of good income also.

The ceremonial recital of Bhāgavata can be classified into two: daily recital and Saptāha recital. Among these the most popular reciting of Bhagāvata is 'Saptāha' which is done in seven days. This is a ritual based on some rules. While reciting Saptāha the portions to be recited on each day is fixed. Dr. Krishnamani Tripathi in his *Srimadbhāgavata tattvasamīkṣa* gives the detail of this schedule quoting *Kauśikasamhitā*. According to this the portion to be recited on each day is as follows:<sup>20</sup>

1 <sup>st</sup> day	From the first skandha upto 22 <sup>nd</sup> chapter of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> skandha.	51 chapters
2 <sup>nd</sup> day	From 23 <sup>rd</sup> chapter of 3 <sup>rd</sup> skandha upto 6 <sup>th</sup> chapter of 6 <sup>th</sup> skandha.	74 chapters
3 <sup>rd</sup> day	From 7 <sup>th</sup> chapter of 6 <sup>th</sup> skandha upto 15 <sup>th</sup> chapter of 7 <sup>th</sup> skandha.	28 chapters
4 <sup>th</sup> day	From 1 <sup>st</sup> chapter of 10 <sup>th</sup> skandha upto 3 <sup>rd</sup> chapter of the 10 <sup>th</sup> skandha.	51 chapters
5 <sup>th</sup> day	From 4 <sup>th</sup> chapter of 6 <sup>th</sup> skandha upto 54 <sup>th</sup> chapter of 10 <sup>th</sup> skanda.	51 chapters
6 <sup>th</sup> day	From 55 <sup>th</sup> chapter of 10 <sup>th</sup> skandha upto 13 <sup>th</sup> chapter of 11 <sup>th</sup> skandha.	49 chapters

7<sup>th</sup> day From 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of 11<sup>th</sup> skandha 31 chapters  
upto end of the 12<sup>th</sup> skandha.<sup>20</sup>

In this way one can recite the 335 chapters of 12 skandha of Bhāgavata in 7 days. There is also another tradition of dividing chapters prevalent while performing 'saptāha' in the Vallabhacarya tradition.

According to this scheme, there is slight difference in the division of chapters on each day which is assumed, followed in this tradition.<sup>21</sup>

1<sup>st</sup> day The Dialogue between Manu and Kardama

From 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the 1<sup>st</sup> skandha upto the  
19<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> skandha 48 chapters.

2<sup>nd</sup> day The story of Bharata

From 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> skandha up to the  
7<sup>th</sup> chapter of 5<sup>th</sup> skandha - 52 chapters.

3<sup>rd</sup> day

From 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 5<sup>th</sup> skandha upto the end  
of the 7<sup>th</sup> skandha 53 chapters.

4<sup>th</sup> day The birth of Śrīkṛṣṇa

From 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the 8<sup>th</sup> skandha upto the  
3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of 10<sup>th</sup> skandha, 51 chapters.

5<sup>th</sup> day      Marriage of Rukmiṇī

From the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 10<sup>th</sup> skandha upto the

54<sup>th</sup> of the same skandha      51 chapters

6<sup>th</sup> day      The legend of Hamsa

From 55<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 10<sup>th</sup> skandha up to the

7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 11<sup>th</sup> skandha      43 chapters.

7<sup>th</sup> day

From 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 11<sup>th</sup> skandha upto the end

of the 12<sup>th</sup> skandha      37 chapters.

Still two more division for reciting Bhāgavata pāṛāyaṇa in saptāha are referred. In all these schemes there are slight changes in the number of chapters to be recited on each day.

Among these four divisions the second one is commonly followed and the fourth scarcely followed.<sup>22</sup> The other two are not seen now-a-days in Kerala.

Each day each story of Bhāgavata is selected for close reading and interpretation. Rukmiṇīsvayamvaram. Avatāra, Santānagopāla etc are the main stories for narration. The devotees believe that by hearing Santānagopala the childless couples may get children and by hearing Rukmiṇīsvayamvaram unmarried youth may get suitable pair.

Practitioners of saptāha go through some traditional training in this field. Most of them listen to their senior family members and accompany the veteran performers and thus acquires skill in the field.

They had already some Sanskrit education from their family or from school. For example Vasudevan Namputiri who live near Paramakkavu temple at Thrissur, is a reciter of Bhāgavata in temples and family gatherings. In an interview he informed that he learned the method of Bhāgavata reciting from his mothers elder sister Devaki Antharjanam. She used to read Bhāgavata in his ancestral house every year.<sup>23</sup> As noted earlier the reading of epics and purāṇas in the past was conducted in temples, and also on rare occasions in the houses of high castes. There is no provision for lower castes to read the Sanskrit Bhāgavata. They chant only the Malayalam Bhāgavatam Kilippāṭṭu written by Tuncat Ezhuttachan. But today the Sanskrit recital and explanation is conducted more and more in temples and common places. In the Saptāha performed at houses all relatives and family members attend the function and get knowledge of the purāṇa. In the course of hearing the verses they also enhance there familiarity and knowledge of Sanskrit also.

### **Recent trends**

Vazhakkunnam Vasudevan Namputiri conducted Bhāgavata discourses at Madras in 1936 and again in the month of September 1937

at Mumbai. These accomplishments of Vazhakunnam Vasudevan Namputiri outside Kerala was an impetus for his followers to perform Saptāha all over the country.<sup>24</sup> Now there is a trend to conduct *Bhāgavata purāṇa* recitals in the auditoriums and halls outside the temple. Organizations like Chinmaya Mission and Nair Service Society are conducting Saptāha at Ernakulam, Thrissur and similar other cities. This has created opportunity for the common man to understand ancient Sanskrit literature. Now women also are performing Saptāha discourses on Bhāgavata at temple and houses. The change is also affected in the case of listeners too, women and children attend these sessions in large numbers.

The audience, after hearing the recited and interpretation are educated informally in the purāṇas and various śāstras dealt within the texts. They also learn important ślokas and their meaning by heart which are often repeated by the reciters. The listeners are also motivated to know more about Sanskrit and related literature.

In Kerala Bhāgavata saptāha tradition has a long history of atleast one hundred and fifty years. Kutallur Kunjikkavu Namputirippad and Vazhakunnam Vasudevan Namputiri both were very famous in the field.

The earliest known preaching of Bhāgavata purāṇa in seven days in Kerala was started by Kutallur Kunjikkavu Namputirippad. He began the

preaching of Bhāgavata pāṛāyaṇa from 1839-1903 at Guruvayur temple premises. He began to recite Bhāgavata. Saptāha in Guruvayur temple in a modified manner. His scholarship and deep devotion to the lord at Guruvayur temple made his Bhāgavata purāṇa preaching, touching and appealing to the devotees.<sup>25</sup>

Vazhakunnam Vasudevan Namputiri (1891-1947) was a disciple of the Kutallur Kunjikkavu Namputirippad. His preaching of Bhāgavata purāṇa was very interesting. He quoted verses from the works of great poets and philosophers like Valmīki, Vyāsa, Nārāyan bhattatiri of Melpathūr, Pūntānam Namputiri, Rabindranatha Tagore and so on. He attracted the audiences with the simplicity of language, lucidity of the recital and appropriateness of expressions and body gestures.<sup>26</sup>

Some of the senior recites of Bhāgavata who have been conducting Saptāha are Prof. Vaidyalinga Sarma, Venmani Krishnan Namputiri of Sreemulanagaram, Kalady, Palezhi Narayanan Numputiri Rtd. Professor of U.C. College, Aluva, Anjam Madhavan Namputirii and Krishnan Namputiri at Guruvayur.

Younger scholars who performe in the saptāha now-a-days are Vasudevan Namputiri, Madhu Kizahakkedath Mana from Palakkal, Thrissur, Dr. K.R Harinarayana from Tazhekkad Thrissur, Brāhmaśri



Perukumana Sreedharan Namputiri, Kozhikode, Brahmasri Kesavan Namputiri from Guruvayur and so on.

### **Sanskrit theatre**

न तज्ज्ञानं न तच्छिल्पं न सा विद्या नसा कला।

नासौ योगो न तत्कर्म नाट्येऽस्मिन् यन्न दृश्यते ।<sup>27</sup>

Sanskrit drama has got a great educative value as Bharata says ["Śilpa, Śastra, Kala, Vidya and all knowledge and action are present in Natya]"

Language is integral in the plays and its use in conversation etc. is seen in the Vacikābhinaya. Bharata, the author of *Nāṭyaśāstra* also says that the body of Nāṭya is the original text or written script by the poet and the use of language by the actors are based on it.<sup>28</sup>

Sanskrit drama represents different life situations before the spectators who understand and appreciate them by watching and hearing. The dialogues are given in Sanskrit or Prakṛt according to the types of characters. A reader or hearer can easily understand and follow the different modes of Sanskrit conversation employed in the various contexts in the dramas. Hence Sanskrit drama has an important role in the education of Sanskrit language in both formal and informal ways. Along with Kāvya, Nāṭakas were also included in the traditional Sanskrit

education. They were given a textual reading and interpretation. However, the acting of the drama on stage was rare. Traditional Sanskrit theatre, as *Nāṭyaśāstra* reveals, was highly sophisticated, conventional and also multidimensional. There existed a complex code of gestures, movement patterns and vocal expressions. There were some traditional communities of actors well versed in Sanskrit play performance. Numerous rituals accompanied the play conducted usually in temple premises or royal courts. The major Kṣatriya or Brāhmana male characters used Sanskrit while female characters, servants and vidūṣaka used prakṛt or local languages. There was a custom of giving Sanskrit versions of the prakṛt passages in the text of the play.

### **Kūṭiyāṭṭam**

The traditional Sanskrit theatre of Kerala namely Kūṭiyāṭṭam is one of the oldest and continuously performed classical theatre form in India. It is the only surviving Sanskrit theatre of the ancient world. Kūṭiyāṭṭam is probably a regional fragment of the last grand Sanskrit classical tradition, a keralite bridge between the past and present.<sup>29</sup> Kūṭiyāṭṭam is believed to date back to about two thousand years.<sup>30</sup>

Kūṭiyāṭṭam is complex in structure and execution. It is traditionally performed by actors and musicians in 'Kūttambalam' stage constructed in the compounds of a Hindu temple. As a result of its close association with

temple rituals, Kūṭiyāṭṭam serves the religious function as a visual sacrifice to the temple deity. Its acting style is conventional, composed of an elaborate blend of symbolic gesture, stylized costumes and physical movements and loudly chanted dialogue and verses. In the olden days the chief spectators were the members of upper class. Today men and women of other castes and communities also watch Kūṭiyāṭṭam and it is also performed outside the confines of orthodox temples.

According to tradition, families of actors and musicians belonging to particular castes of temple servants namely Cākyārs and Nambyārs hold the exclusive right to perform plays in the Kerala temples. The temple records of the tenth century AD attributed to King Kulaśekhara Varman indicate that Kūṭiyāṭṭam was already at an advanced stage of its development by this date. Kūṭiyāṭṭam as it exists today was remodeled during the time of Kulaśekharavarma.<sup>31</sup>

Kūṭiyāṭṭam has some significant features which make it different from other Sanskrit theatrical forms. They are the elaborate and the prolonged acting of the ślokas, the overriding importance of Vidūṣaka who speak in Malayalam and the fact that the role of females are acted by women of the Nambyār families called Nañnyārs. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam the vidusaka has a prominent place. He not only entertains the spectators, but

through the medium of laughter, conveys information and knowledge on several matters of ethical and social importance.

The Vidūṣaka characters represented by Cākyārs have ample verbal facility and are fluent in Sanskrit and Malayalam. They can elaborate any situation and improvise on any topic. They narrate several interesting purāṇic and epic stories, and give lectures on morality and devotion. For example 'Mantrāṅkam' the third act of Bhāsa's *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa* is performed in sixteen days Kuzhalūttunni, the Vidūṣaka character dominates the stage for almost all the entire course of the play explaining various Śāstras, Puruṣārthas and other age old traditions.

There are slight differences between the Cākyār families in their systems of acting and training. Though all Cākyārs follow the same Attaprakaram (manual of acting) of the plays, each Cākyār family has also developed its own training method even though it adheres to the same traditional system of theatre education. There are notable difference in the methods of recitation, the conduct of 'kriyās', rituals and conventions, in the rendering of the musical ślokas as well as in the rendering costumes and makeup. But these differences do not affect the general rules of performance which are univerasally practiced.

Among these Cākyār families presently only five families are practising Kūṭiyāṭṭam traditionally. Name of these families are Perinchallur

Mānicākyar family of Kozhikodu, Koypa family of Trissur, Ammannur family of Irinjalakuda, Kuttanchery Valiyaparisha family of Kunnamkulam, Potiyil family of Kottayam and Ambalapuzha.<sup>32</sup> According to tradition about twenty Numbiars families were performing temple arts in Kerala. But now only thirteen families are found practicing. They are Chengannur, Arattukadavu, Kaviyur, Kidangur, Eramallur, Kottayam, Muzhikulam, Trikkariyur, Tonikkal-Ernakulam, Kuzhupullimatham-Thrissur, Meledam Kochampilly and Kalakkath-Palakkad etc.<sup>33</sup>

### **Recent trends**

The teaching and learning of Kūṭiyāṭṭam and Kūttu were conducted in houses of Nambyārs or Cākyārs. These centers of learning was also called Kalaries. But now these traditional Kalaries are absent. They are converted into modern institutions and named as 'Gurukulas'. Students belonging to different communities are admitted to these gurukulas run by the families of Nambyārs and Cākyārs. At the same time these Gurukulas are not completely open to all. In fact they are following two types of education. The first type is meant exclusively for the students of Nambyār and Cākyār families in the name of the 'protection of family tradition'. Another type is for the students of general category because these 'Gurukulas' are they are getting financial grant for the teaching of such

students. So attendance of these general category students is compulsory in the 'Gurukulas'.<sup>34</sup>

At present only a few families are teaching Kūṭiyāṭṭam, Kūttu, and Pāthakam traditionally under the banner of Gurukulams. For eg. Chachucakyar Smaraka Gurukulam, Irinjalakuda, Perincallur Manicakyar Gurukulam, Kozhikode, Manimadhavacakyar Smaraka Gurukulam Palakkad, Pothiyil Gurukulam Kottayam, Koypa Gurukulam, Kidangur Gurukulam, Muzhikulam Gurukulam and Margi institutions at Thiruvananthapuram.<sup>35</sup>

Today only a few actors have the traditional knowledge and skill to perform Kūṭiyāṭṭam. About a dozen Cākyār actors regularly act Sanskrit plays in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam form. The plays of Bhāsa, kālidāsa, Kulaśekhara, Śakti bhadra are commonly staged. The eldest male member of the family (Cākyār and Nambyār) of actors is regarded as the head of a family. He is responsible for keeping the traditions alive by teaching the secrets of the arts to the younger generation of his family. Kūṭiyāṭṭam has survived centuries precisely because men such as these have transmitted their knowledge to the members of their families with at utmost devotion. Today people in general are interested in this art form.

## Education of Kūṭiyāṭṭam

Education of Kūṭiyāṭṭam is mainly divided into three parts. They are practical, theory and Sanskrit language and other literature.

Children had their 'traditional Vidyarambha' at the age of three, then they learn the alphabets and had their elementary education. At the age of seven they are initiated into the elementary lessons of Kūṭiyāṭṭam acting. Besides learning the lessons in the Sanskrit language, there is daily training in the basic lessons of Kūṭiyāṭṭam which begin at four O' clock in the morning. The basic training is to recite loudly the ślokas in the appropriate rāgas. While singing the ślokas the trainee should remain in the basic 'Samapāda' posture, holding the hands in muṣṭi state or fist with closed fingers, and moving them appropriately to the tune of the song. The ślokas are selected from different plays. This singing lasts for about two hours as a śabda Sādhaka (voice training). During the day time training is given in the Nitya Kriyas which consists of the dance of the characters in the purappad or prelude part of the plays. In the evening students practice the movements of the eyes. Then they have to recite the ślokas already learned from memory.<sup>36</sup>

All these knowledge or śāstras are documented in the texts of *Āṭṭaparakāram*, *Kramadīpikā*, *Hastalakṣaṇa dipīka*, and *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The detailed study of these texts is the main part of education. The most

significant corpus of performance theory are contained in the *Āṭṭaparakāram* and *Kramadīpika* of the particular plays prescribed which are uniform in Malayalam. The bodily acting in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam is based on the Kerala text of *Hastalakṣaṇa dīpika* which is based on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharatamuni.

Apart from this the study of Sanskrit language is commenced right from the beginning. In due course the student becomes a good Sanskrit scholar by learning Kāvya, Nāṭakas, Alaṅkāras etc as well as several śāstra branches like Tarka and Vyākaraṇa.<sup>37</sup> Sanskrit and its knowledge is very essential for the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors. Students learn by heart the basic Sanskrit texts on grammar like Sidharoopa. By the application of Mudra or hand gestures in acting, the students are taught how to denote the Vibakthi, Vacana, Liṅga etc. of each word, recited.

The study of *Amarakośam* is important in Kūttu and Kūṭiyāṭṭam because it gives the synonyms and different meanings of words. The actors elaborate the meaning of words and sentences in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam. For example if 'deva' is a word to be acted the actor should know the different meanings involved in the root like 'Krīda', 'Vicikitsa', 'Śobha'. etc. A skilled Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor could express all these meaning relating them properly to the context of acting. Hence a deep knowledge of 'Kośa' is very important to Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors.



During the explanation of a particular word or śloka in a play cākyār usually quote similar ślokas from other sources. For eg: in the description of the word 'Nārāyaṇa' they quote a number of ślokas from different Kāvya which may contain similar or charming ideas and references. Verses from Purāṇās and Campūs are also studied for this purpose.<sup>38</sup>

After the basic education in Sanskrit in their own family the Cākyārs approach other Sanskrit scholars to gain mastery in the Sastras. For e.g. Māṇi Mādhava Cākyār (1898-1990) learned Alaṅkāra Nyāya and Jyotiṣa from Pazhedath Sankaran Namputiri and again learned Nyāya from Parikshith Tampuran of Kochi.<sup>39</sup>

Today the Kerala Sanskrit theatre 'Kūṭiyāṭṭam' has been accepted as the world cultural heritage by UNESCO. This recognition has favoured its popularity. The new 'gurukulas' which functions in the different parts of Kerala under the patronage of traditional Cākyār families propagate this art by admitting students from all communities and performing outside the temples on public stages. About two hundred devoted artists are working in this field with sufficient knowledge in Sanskrit. They naturally face the problem of how to join together the traditional and modern ways of teaching and learning. Moulding tradition as per the requirements of modern tastes and world view is a general problem faced by all traditional

knowledge systems in India. The 'gurukulam' of Kūṭiyāṭṭam are the great informal centres of Sanskrit education and they contribute substantially for informal Sanskrit education. As mentioned earlier, some of the centres simultaneously follow the traditional method of teaching confined to their own community and introduce the innovative modes of teaching without rejecting the tradition for the benefit of all. As a result the art form which was once on the verge of extinction has been revived with new energy.

### **Kūttu**

Kūttu (show or act) is the family tradition of Cākyār. This Kūttu is mainly known as three: Prabandham Kūttu, Naṅgiar Kūttu, and Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Kūṭiyāṭṭam has been dealt with in the previous section. Usually Cākyār artists use Kūttu for the propagation of Bhakti, advice for the people in moral codes and for the criticism of social evils through humorous narration. In Prabandham Kūttu they use short Sanskrit campūs written on epic and purāṇic themes. Since a single Cākyār is acting in Prabandham Kūttu it is called Cākyār Kūttu also.

Sometimes, Naṅnyār the wife of Nambyār presents the Kūttu. It is called Naṅnyār Kūttu. The subject matter of Naṅnyār Kūttu is the tenth Skanda of Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Kūttu is also divided into three on the basis of presentation on the stage namely Atiyantarakūttu, Vazhivadukūttu and Kazhchakkūttu. These were patronized by the rulers of Tranvancore, Kochi

and Malabar regions and arrangements were made for the presentation of Kūttu in some prominent temples of these areas.<sup>40</sup> Particular Cākyār families were appointed for enacting Kūttu in places (temples) assigned to them. This is called Atiyantira Kūttu. Kottiyur Śiva temple (Kannur district), Tirumandhamkunnu Devī temple (Malappuram), and Vatakkumnatha temple (Thrissur) follow this system even today. For the blessing of the deity if a devotee presents or sponsors this art it is called Vazhivadukūttu. For eg: Mattavilāsam Kūttu and Angulīyāṅkam Kūttu in the Kottiyur temple comes in this category. If Kūttu is performed only for the appreciation of audience, it is called Kazhcha Kūttu. This type of Kūttu is very popular today.<sup>41</sup>

Tradition says that there were eighteen families who practiced Kūttu. But now only seven families of Cākyārs, namely Pothiyil, Cheriya-parisha, Valiya Parisha, Ammannur, Kuttanchery, Koypa, and Mani are active in this field. Kuttanchery Eravichakyar and the poet Melpathur Narayanabhattathiri modified this art form in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There has been great revival of in these art forms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kūttu and Kūṭiyāṭṭam are also taught in Keralakalamandalam, Cheruthuruthy. Today Kūttu and Kūṭiyāṭṭam are presented even outside the country. Paimkulam Valiya Ramacakyar (1905-1980) was the first artist who presented Kūṭiyāṭṭam outside the temple.<sup>42</sup> Nañnyār Kūttu is also

presented outside the temple today. Young artists present new themes in this field. Margi Sathi is the first lady who presented 'Sriramacarita' on the basis of Rāmāyaṇa in this manner. Then Usha Nannyar also wrote and presented 'Draupadi' in 2008.

Education of Kūttu and Kūṭiyāṭṭam have similarities. The knowledge and skill in Sanskrit and Malayalam is the life of the Kūttu performances. For a person who wants to learn Sanskrit and its narrative literature, attending the Prabhatham Kūttu is a valuable source of education. However little he knows about the Itihāsas and Purāṇas, he can develop his knowledge by the information about the ancient myths, customs, heroes and legends gathered from the eloquence of the performing Cākyār. The actor speaks Malayalam often in a dramatic style with full of dialogues and humorous comments. The listener's capacity to appreciate poetry and various styles of presentation are enhanced. The hearer of the Cākyār Kūttu gets extra vocabulary and extra images, beautifully compounded words and charming metaphorical expressions, which comes naturally to a skilled performer. This education through enjoyment is what happens during the Cākyār Kūttu.

### **Pāṭhakam**

Pāṭhakam is an oral presentation of a selected story from the purāṇas, slightly different from Kūttu. It is more logical and gives

importance to bhakti. Pāṭhakam is an ancient devotional art form performed by male member of Nambyār family. It gives the message of right living by narrating the stories of great persons following the dictum that 'by which path the great person went that path is the right path'. It also produces bhakti among the masses by entertaining them with devotional stories.

Traditionally, Cākyār Kūttu was presented only inside the temple, but Pāṭhakam was presented outside the temple also. One of the aims of this art is inculcation of Dharma among the common people. In the ancient period members of the Nambyār families were entitled to present this art form.<sup>43</sup> But now a days other castes like Nambisan, Varier, Pisharodi etc are also presenting Pāṭhakam.

Commonly Nṛgamokṣam, Rāmāyaṇam, Subhadrāharanam, Rājasūyam, Rukminīsvayamvaram etc are the main campū prabanthas used in Pāṭhakam. This requires deep knowledge of Sanskrit purāṇas. The narration should have qualities of sweetness, clarity of syllables, clear utterance of words, beauty of sound, boldness, and lightness and precision. A sound knowledge of Sanskrit and Alaṅkāra śāstra is also necessary. Because the explanation of double meanings (ślesa), figures of speech, and suggestive words (dhvani) in the campūs require good interpretive and analytical skill.<sup>44</sup>

The performer in Pāṭhaka costumes enters the stage and salutes gods and gurus in front of the light. Then he faces the audience and starts the Vandana śloka. For this purpose verses praising either Viṣṇu or Śiva are used. After the recitation he introduces the story and indicates its purpose.

Then he narrates the previous incidents connected to the characters of the story. Then he recites the prescribed śloka and he identifies the relation of subject, object and predicate of the sentence briefly. Using the heuristic method he brings together the different meanings related and gives interpretations suitable to the context.<sup>45</sup>

Kochampilly Damodaran Nambyar, Muzhikulam Raghavan Nambyar, Meledath Kunjuni Nambyar, Cherumanath Valiya Kunjan Nambyar, Peruvanam Krishnayyar, Thiruvegappuram Vasu Nambisan, Vallachira Sekharan Kutty Varrier etc were some of the major Pāṭhaka artists in Kerala. Pothiyil Narayanacakyar, Kidangur Ramacakyar Vallachira, Painkulam Damodaracakyar, Painkulam Cheriya Ramacakyar, Mani Damodhara Cakyar, Painkulam Narayana Cakyar, Mani Vasudeva Cakyar, Margi Madhu, Saji Narayanan, Margi Ramacakyar, Ammannur Kuttan Cakyar, Ammannur Rajaneesh Cakyar, P.K. Narayanan Nambyar P.K.G. Numbyar, P.K. Unnikrishnan Nambyar and Edanad Rajan Nambyar Kūttu, Pāṭhaka artists in Kerala.

The study of Sanskrit is very essential for this art. One who wants to be a Pāṭhaka artist should learn grammatical forms (Sidharūpa), *Amarakośa*, *Bālaprabodhanam Śrīramodantam*, *Bhagavadgīta*, Prabanda śloka, Purāṇas and Kāvya. The Prabandhas like *Rāmāyaṇm*, *Kauntheyaṣṭakam*, *Subhadrāharaṇam*, *Rājasūyaprabandham* etc are commonly practiced by the students who are interested in this traditional art form.<sup>46</sup>

Thiruvithamkur Devasvam Anusthana Kalabhyasana Kendram at Peruvanam temple, Cherpu, Trissur is also teaching Pāṭhaka and Kūṭiyāṭṭam with Sanskrit. Every Saturday and Sunday students practice here. There are ten students practicing now. In this Kendra, Harippad Chandran master is the teacher. He had learned Sanskrit and Pāṭhaka through gurukula method from Achutadas master and Karur Vasudevan Numputiri from Kottayam.

The hearers of Pāṭhaka and Kūttu are ordinary people having some knowledge in the purāṇas. They get the opportunity to understand Sanskrit and its culture by attending the performances repeatedly. They are able to familiarize Sanskrit words, verses, different alaṅkāras, concepts of Dharma and so on. This learning is achieved unconsciously as the byproduct of listening to the stories with devotion and interest. Thus people keen in various traditional art forms, related to Sanskrit like

Kūttu Pāṭhakam and Kūṭiyāṭṭam have enough opportunity for informal Sanskrit education.

The knowledge of Sanskrit as we have observed is necessary for the performance of Kūttu, Pāṭhakam, and Kūṭiyāṭṭam. In fact the performers are informal educators of Sanskrit. The hearers and spectators of these arts acquire general knowledge in Sanskrit and Purāṇas. The knowledge of Sanskrit words, the different meanings of words etc. are imbibed by the regular hearer of these arts. An instance of such education is mentioned by the K.P.C Bhattathiripad who heard a Kūttu about *Subhadhra Dhanañjaya* by Mani Madhava Cakyar. He had formerly understood that the word Dhanañjaya means Arjuna. But Cākyār explained that in addition to Arjuna, Dhanañjaya means Agni or fire also. This new meaning was conveyed to him through the interpretation of the Cākyār.<sup>47</sup> Similar types of learning experiences are recorded by other persons also.<sup>48</sup>

During the kūttu Cākyār recites a number of verses denoting the same meaning which is suitable to the context of the narrative. For example in the context of a svayamvara he could recite many verses proper to that type of marriage relating it to several purāṇic stories of svayamvara. He has freedom to recite such verses according to his imagination. The verses he uses in one performance will be different from



the verses he uses at another place. Because of these improvisations each presentation of the story is felt by the hearer as modifiable and refreshing. Another speciality is the ability to discover allusions and hidden meanings.

The method of interpretation by the performers gives much scope for a good education in Sanskrit. They explain each verse by separating words with great care. When a noun or adjective is explained the legend behind the derivation of that word is narrated and the hearers are able to learn a great number of mythical stories unknown to him. For example the word *sāgara* means ocean or *samudra*. The word also contain the mythical story that ocean was created by the thousand sons of king *Sagara*. The *Cākyār* narrates the story of sons of king *Sagara*, their search for the sacrificial horse and digging of earth to reach the nether world and the legend of *Bhāgiratha* and bringing of the heavenly *Ganga* to the nether world. All these enhances the knowledge of ancient lore and gives the hearer much insight to the significance of particular words in Sanskrit poetry and the richnees of interpretations. It is believed that the stories like that of king *Bhagiratha* might inspire the hearers to lead a good and active life.

By comparing and contrasting the ancient values of life and the contemporary ways of life with jokes and humour, *Cākyār*, the informal

educator provides chances for the hearers for self criticism and correction. This type of cultural education is another aspect of informal education in this field.

### **Kathakali**

Kathakali is the original dance-drama form of Kerala 'Rāmanāṭṭam' is the proto form of Kathakali. Kottarakara Thampuran created the dance-form Rāmanāṭṭam on the basis of the story of Rāmāyana during the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Later a Raja of Vettathu natu of the same century modified the Rāmanāṭṭam and gave importance to Abhinaya especially to Āngi kābhinaya with the Mudras. It is known as 'Vettathu' system.<sup>49</sup>

Later in the same century (17<sup>th</sup>) Kottayam Thampuran from North Kerala choreographed this art and made it a complete dance-drama form known as Kathakali. After some years there developed in Kathakali different styles and systems that reflected local improvisations and special skills of masters. These diverging schools are known as Kalladikodam system, Kaplingadan system and Kalluvazhisystem.<sup>50</sup> The system of Kalluvazhi was spread in the middle part of Kerala under the great Kathakali masters like Pattikkamthodi Ramunnimenon. He acted and trained disciples at the Kerala Kalamandalam, Mancheri Kalari and Kottakal P. S.V. Natya sangam. The local Kalari practices and modes of presentations were gradually absorbed by these institutions.<sup>51</sup>

All these developmental stages of Kathakali give importance to Kalari practice. Boys under the age of twelve years were admitted to these Kalaries. Girls were not allowed to study. Training of eyes, body, cuvad (step) and mudra (gesture) are practised in the Kalari on the basis of various Āṭṭakkathās (tales for acting). The practice of Abhinaya is technically known as 'Colliyāṭṭam'. A Kathakali artist should study Kathakali at least eight years in order to attain some perfection in this art.<sup>52</sup>

The basic literary texts of Kathakali acting is known as *Āṭṭakkatha*. It is in the forms of songs and verses in the Manipravala style of language which is a mixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam. These are sung by singers in the background. Kathakali artist should know this literature very well for acting and singing percussion. It means that he should be a good scholar in Sanskrit and Malayalam. *Nalacaritam* of Unnaivarier, *Kalyāṇasaugandhikam* of Ramapanivadan, *Dekṣayāgam* of Veera Keralavarma Kochi, *Keecakavadham* of Irayimman Tampi, *Bakavadham* of Kottarakara Tampuran etc are well known. Kathakali song exists as a special variety of music. A great number of Kathakali lovers have the habit of listening to Kathakali music through audio instruments and many try to learn them by heart. This activity leads them not only to appreciate the

musical quality of Kathakali song but also the lyrics and emotions contained in them.

### **Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam**

Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam (dance of Kṛṣṇa) was started by King Mānaveda of Kozhikode in 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Theme of this āṭṭam is the story of Kṛṣṇa as narrated in *Kṛṣṇa Gīti* written by him in Sanskrit language. Eight nights are required for the completion of this āṭṭam. Some people believe that Aṣṭapadiyāṭṭam (*Gītāgovinda*) was the source of inspiration for Mānaveda in the making of Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam.<sup>53</sup> It remains as a single troupe drama which was originally attached to the samutiri kings of Kozhikode.

At Guruvayur temple the Samūthiri kings appointed a group of Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam artists giving free food and accommodation.<sup>54</sup> Later this play group came under the patronage of Guruvayur devasvam (temple administration). During the reign of the Samūtiris, this art form was performed only in temples, Kovilakams and house of Bhrāhmanas especially inside the Kingdom of Samūtiri. Only the Namputiri, Nambīśan, Sharodi, Mārār, Vellodi, and Nair castes were allowed to learn this āṭṭam. Ladies do not perform in this art. This group is usually busy throughout the year, touring and giving performances on invitation in temples, Once a year during the Vijayadasami festival, the eight plays are performed at Guruvayur as a complete cycle from Avatāra to Svargārohaṇam.<sup>55</sup> Unlike

Kathakali, Kṛṣṇanāṭam was taught at the only kalari at Guruvayur. Teacher of these Kalari is known as 'Āsān'. Boys under the age of twelve are given admission to this Kalari. Usually the Kalari practice begins on the first day of Malayalam month of Karkidakam (July-August). They practice the training of movements of eye, body, steps and Mudra. In addition they have to practice music, Kottu (drum), and ślokas and padas of *Kṛṣṇagīti* with the thorough knowledge of Rāga and Tala. Basic lessons in Sanskrit grammar and literature is a compulsory subject of study.<sup>56</sup>

Kṛṣṇanāṭam gives more importance to dance than abhinaya or acting. Mudras are used only for the explanation of meaning or bhava of a particular situation. The Vācika of Kṛṣṇanāṭam like that of Kathakali, remains the songs sung behind the curtain. Only the Kerala's special 'Sopāna' type of music is used in this art.<sup>57</sup> In the *Kṛṣṇagīti* there are eight parts: Avatāra, Kāliyamarddana, Rāsakrīdā, Kamsavadha, Rukmiṇī svayamvara, Bānayuddha, Vividavadha and Svargārohaṇa. So the text is also known as 'Kṛṣṇanāṭam'. It is clear that Sanskrit education is essential for the artists and other performers.

In the past the viewers of the Kṛṣṇanāṭam were the members of the high class families who had permission to enter the temple premises. But this situation has changed now. However, In order to enjoy the art

form the audience must have knowledge in Sanskrit, music, dance, and mudras.<sup>58</sup>

Recently this art form is being performed outside the Guruvayur temple also. So it is also in the way of becoming more popular in society. This creates more chances for people to hear Sanskrit songs and to understand the achievements of traditional theatre.

### **Mural Painting**

Generally the Mural paintings (cumarcitram) of Kerala are visual representations of the characters and incidents described in myths and legends. Birth of Rāma, Bhīma and Hanūman, Śiva as Kirāta, Jealousy of Umā and Gaṅgā are some common themes. The mural paintings in Kerala appears to be closely related and influenced by the traditional theatre.

A recent survey has listed nearly sixty mural painting sites in Kerala. The archiological, epigraphical and stylistic considerations have led the scholars to agree that most of these belong to the period between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>59</sup> One of the peculiarities of the mural paintings of Kerala is that they tend to give larger than life size to the characters.

The themes of paintings include are the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes, purāṇic episodes such as Śiva and Viṣṇu as Mohinī or Śiva and Gaṅgā with Umā watching, and the Narasimha and Hiraṇyakaśipu episode, Viṣṇu as

Venugopāla or Govardhanagiridhāri, or Śiva performing the Tāṇḍava dance. These themes are repeated in many sites which range from the Padmanabhapuram palace in southern Kerala, to the Vadakkumnatha temple at Thrissur.<sup>60</sup> There are many stylistic variations and some sub-schools can be identified here as in other regions of India. Nevertheless there is a distinct Kerala character which makes them unique among Indian mural paintings. In modern age Mural paintings is under the process of revival in Kerala. Related to temples and churches, many young artists practice in this field. Traditional mural painting is related to Sanskrit technical texts in this field; 'Dhyānaślokaś' or verses for meditation are used to paint the form of the deities. Most of the 'Dhyānaślokaś' are related to characters of Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Durgā etc.<sup>61</sup> These ślokaś give a detailed description of the form of the deities concerned. *Citra Sūtra of the Viṣṇu Dharmothara Purāṇa* and *Śilparatnam* are the basic texts of this art. The knowledge of Kāmasūtra, Rasa siddhānta, Itihāsa, Purāṇa and *Nāṭyaśāstra* are also essential for the students of mural painting. So Sanskrit knowledge is essential for the study of this traditional art.<sup>62</sup>

The recent development in the education and practice of Mural painting seen in Kerala is infact the result of the hardwork done by some traditional artists. Among them Karuvaparambath Achuthan Nair and his

disciple Krishnavarier of Pattambi drew Mural pictures on the walls of Guruvayur temple in the years 1943 to 1949.

After about forty years Krishnavarier reconstructed the faded mural pictures of Guruvayur temple in the years 1985-89. He was assisted by Mammiyur Krishnankutty Varier in this project. As a consequence a Muralpainting centre was started at Guruvayur temple in 1989. Krishnankutty Varier was the chief adviser and instructor. A common Sanskrit teacher was appointed to teach Sanskrit for students of mural painting and Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam.<sup>63</sup>

Krishnankutty varier died in 2008. His disciples Ganapathy Peringod was the senior instructor for sometime. Krishnakumar, the disciple of Ganapathy master teaches mural painting at Guruvayur now. All these teachers are interested to use the Sanskrit resources in Mural painting maintains, experimented and research outlook towards this ancient art.

The centres at Mahi Malayalalukendram and Aranmula follow the lead of Guruvayur 'Cumar Citra Kalakendram'. The teachers of these centres were students of mural painting at Guruvayur.<sup>64</sup>

The vāstu vidya Gurukulam at Aranmula offers regular courses in traditional architecture and mural painting and is approved by the government of Kerala. The centre has a mural painting gallery with a well-



supported library started in 1993. At the centre the public is also given a chance to watch daily training classes. The centres popularity has reached national and international level for its acknowledgement in the preservation and promotion of traditional architecture as well as the manual art of Kerala.

Recently as we have noted a university department for mural painting has started at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady. The syllabus includes portions of *Citra sūtra* from *Viṣṇudharmotharapurāṇa*. *Śilparatna* of Śrīkumāra and the *Dhyānaślokas* of various divinities basing the *Tantrasamucaya*. The mudras and Karaṇas of *Natyaśāstra* are taught along with the rasas and bhavas. The students of mural painting has to learn Sanskrit language and literature in addition to the above mentioned theory papers.

In the case of mural painting we can see that as a temple art form it was known only to a few traditional artists. Gradually overcoming the barriers of caste and religion and understanding the significance of mural painting in the world of modern painting this art form is universally recognized and studied as an indigenous art form. The mural paintings of contemporary painters are highly valued and they decorate walls of many houses and buildings all over India. The Sanskrit foundations of this art is gaining more and more attention. In order to give a classical touch for the

creation the modern painters are tempted to make frequent references to the epics, purāṇas and tantra. The study of Sanskrit and its literature in an informal nature helps the painter to gain more perfection in this art.

Guruvayur Devasom Cumar Citrakalākendram, Vāstuvidya gurukulam Aranmula and Mahi Malayalakala kendram are some of the examples for the traditional mural painting and practicing centres. As mentioned earlier Kalady Sanskrit University has recently started degree course in mural painting, thus giving it entry into the formal art education.

### **Vāstuśāstra**

The Vāstu principles are more or less common all over India. It developed through hundreds of years giving form to different styles varying from time to time and place to place. There are also Vāstu texts for Jainism and Buddhism. The Vāstu śilpa traditions is purely Indian in its fundamental concepts and currency.<sup>65</sup>

Among the various treatises on Vāstu the *Mayamata* has a very important place. It is a general treatise on Vāstuśāstra written in Sanskrit and originating from South India. Many vāstu experts and sthapatis feel that the *Mayamata* is the best known amongst Sanskrit treatises dealing with architecture and iconography.<sup>66</sup>

The term Vāstu derived from the Sanskrit root 'vas' meaning 'to dwell' stands for dwelling apartments in a strict sense; but the term Vāstuśāstra generally signifies architecture in Indian tradition. Here the term is used in the sense of India's traditional architecture especially as it developed in Kerala. Vāstu means a dwelling of human beings or Gods, its decoration, the furniture and articles, as well as the location of the dwelling place and its surrounding environment.<sup>67</sup>

The term vāstu also includes the material that are used in the vāstu karma as well as the measurements and calculations that are applied in the vāstu.

Although the basic norms of vāstu followed in different parts of India are the same, some variations are found in different texts due to different locations and traditions. The Vedic Buddhist and Jain literature give ample evidence of building activities. The ancient and medieval Sanskrit literature give descriptions of glorious palaces of royal life and the houses of the common people. The material evidence and structural remains of the habitats of those periods needs to be studied to understand the real style of vāstu of those times.

According to *Garuḍapurāṇa* vāstu comprises of

Prasādārama-durga-dēvālaya-

Maṭhādi-vāstumānalakṣhanā Nirūpaṇam

Āvasa-vāsa-vēśmadaupure grāma-vaṇik pathē

Prasādārāma-durges dēvālaya-maṭhesi ca

So the Vāstuvīdyā deals with the rules of construction of all kinds of architectural and sculptural objects, i.e it is the science of architecture engineering.

Every possible tool available in modern theoretical and experimental sources should be used to understand the scope and application of vāstuśāstra for the benefit of the common man. In a broader sense it can be said that not only cosmology and astronomy, but also astrology, physics, chemistry and various yogic disciplines are directly related to vāstu śāstra. Vāstu śāstra concepts deserve scientific analysis and they should not be allowed to lie hidden in a veil of mystery. Modern scientific research is necessary for gaining deeper insights in to this wonderful science.<sup>68</sup>

The archeological monuments of the past, Vāstu works written in Malayalam and Sanskrit and the hereditary skill of traditional craftman formed the three sub systems of the indogenous knowledge of the

traditional architecture of Kerala. Kerala is one such region where the indigenous knowledge base blossomed to the higher level of building science designated as vāstuvidyā.

Indegenious knowledge in vāstuvidya is linked to many areas such as geography, hydrology, biology, astronomy, material science engineering crafts and arts. The crafts men like carpenters and sculpturs play an important role in preserving the indigenous knowledge of vāstuvidyā with dynamism and purity. The knowledge base at this level is not well documented because it is transmitted orally from the master to the trainees. Since the oral tradition is vanishing this knowledge base which is the most significant part of vāstuvidyā is becoming obscure.

Vāstu is a universal science and its benefits are available to one and all without any considerations in caste, creed or religion. Every one can understand the popularity of vāstuśāstra in Kerala. Many non brāhmin families traditionally learn this śāstra and practice in this field. For example, most of the 'kanakkan' and Āśāri families concentrate in vāstuśāstra traditionally Thiruvalla, Vaikkam and Thrissur temples are the contribution of the traditional Kerala Vāstu śāstra. Kānippayyur family of Thrissur is famous not only in Jyotisa but also in Vāstusāstra also.<sup>69</sup>

Most of the vāstu texts are written in Sanskrit language. Therefore knowledge in Sanskrit is essential for the students of vāstu. Most of the

vāstu teachers are experts in both these subjects. In some cases students to learn Sanskrit with the help of the Sanskrit teachers.

Number of scientific texts related to Vāstu were available in Kerala like *Mayamatam*, *Manasāram*, *samarangana sūtradhāra*, *Viśvakarmīyam*, *Kāśyapīyam* etc. All these books are published but number of unpublished books are also available in manuscript form in various parts of India. Today most of the architectures so not know Sanskrit language. So they have a lot of limitations to know the correct meaning of these texts. This causes false beliefs in their field.<sup>70</sup>

Vāstuvidya is not recognized as a subject in the main stream of formal education. Ancient engineering techniques are banned for Indian students. In modern period most of the students get higher education in Architecture. But some also learn the traditional Vāstu sastra texts in Sanskrit out of their own interest. Such persons are rare but they have learned Sanskrit informally in this field at an early age. Usually the Vāstu scholars learn *Sidharūpa*, *Bālaprabodhana* etc in the primary stage, as it was the custom in the Karala Sanskrit education. Then they read Kāvya texts and after completion of one or two Kāvya text, students usually get enough competence in the use of Sanskrit language.<sup>71</sup>

Vāstuvidya gurukulam, Aranmula, Vāstu vidya Prathishtan, Kozhikode, Kerala Vāstuvidya Accademy, Thrissur etc are some of the

centers of Vāstuvīdyā in Kerala which follow the traditional mode of Vāstu Education. They also teach Sanskrit as an essential language to learn Vāstu texts.

### **Jyotiṣa**

Jyotiṣa śāstra (Astrology) reckoned, as one of the six limbs of Veda (vedāṅga) is a corner stone of Indian culture. It reveals the laws of celestial phenomena and terrestrial occurrences. The Ṛṣis of ancient India produced texts in both scientific astronomy and predictive astrology through their continuous observations and meditation on nature and life.

Great astronomers and Mathematicians like Āryabhaṭṭa, Bhāskarācārya, Varāhamihira and Vararuci lived in India and contributed their eminent works to the world of science. Kerala's contribution to Astronomy and mathematics is substantial. The astronomers in Kerala belonged to the Āryabhaṭṭa school. The 'Kaṭapayādi' system of notation which substitutes letters for numerals in calculations is popular along with 'candryavakyas' attributed to Vararuci which contains the methods to calculate the position of the moon. *Grahacāranibandhana* of Haridatta (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), Sankaranarayana's commentary on Laghubhāskarīya (9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) are important works. Vatasseri Paramesvara (15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) revised the old methods of calculations (parahita) and introduced a more correct method namely 'Digganita'. Nilakantha

Somayaji of Kutallūr family (15<sup>th</sup> A.D.) wrote commentary on *Āryabhaṭīya* and wrote *Tantrasamgraha* and *sidhanta Samgraha Karanottama* by Thrikkandiyur Acyuta Pissaroti is also well known.

In Astrology Talakkulath Govinda Bhatta (13<sup>th</sup> century) wrote *Daśadhyāyī* commentary on the first ten chapters of Varāhamihira's *Brhajātaka*. *Praśnāmārga* of Panakkāttu Namputiri (17<sup>th</sup> century) is very popular. Kerala has also produced several Jātaka paddhatis and books on Muhūrtas. Horaśāstra of Kaikulagara Ramavarier is also an authoritative work.<sup>72</sup>

The Gaṇita and astronomical calculations were developed in Kerala to high standards from the medieval times up to the colonial periods. There was a break in this traditions during the foreign occupation. The astrological part of Jyotiṣa is very much active in Kerala with many astrologers predicting the future and dealing with the common man's anxiety for future.

Jyotiṣa that predicts good and bad times is very popular in Kerala. Writing of personal Jātakas, Marriages, ceremonies related to temples and muhurtas for Kodiyetu and Kalaśam festivals etc. are decided by the traditional Jyotiṣa scholars in the field. Like Āyurveda this branch of knowledge has crossed the boundaries of caste system. Pazhoor padippura at Ernakulam has a long tradition in the field of Jyotiṣa. In the



north some of the 'Kaṇiyān' families has very deep knowledge in these sastras Pazhoor Kaṇiyāns are the best examples of Pandits of Jyotiṣa.<sup>73</sup>

The knowledge of Sanskrit is essential for the study of Jyotisa. Now a days as mentioned earlier, a number of Sanskrit Jyotisa texts translated into Malayalam are available. But to gain authority and mastery in this field Sanskrit knowledge is needed because all higher texts and their commentaries are written in Sanskrit. The Kerala Jyotiṣa Parishad organizes weekly classes in Jyotisa at Thrissur. About 20 students are studying there. Most of the teaching learning process are informal carried out with the help of traditional scholars or self study. Today young people are turning to Jyotisa education because it is an economically profitable job. In olden days students in this field traditionally learned Siddharūpa, Bālaprobodhana, Srīrāmodantam, *Kadapayadi system*, *Horaśāstram*, *Kṛṣṇīyam*, *Praśnamārgam* etc. But this type of education is become very rare nowadays. However, some of the practitioners were able to study this śāstra from their fathers in a very early age.

This senior Astrologers now practicing in this field with traditional knowledge are Sadanam Narayanan Payyannur, Soma Panikker Arikulangara, Kozhikode, Nellur Ramakrishnapanikker from Faroke, Ravunnipanikker from Kuttanad, Thrissur, Karunakara panikker, Vellarkad, Peringod Sankara Narayanan, Kunnamkulam, Thrissur, Raman Numpūtiri

Kaimukkumana from Mattatur, Thrissur. These scholars had received basic education in Sanskrit in a traditional way as cited above.

Sadanam Narayanan comes from a traditional family of astrologers. They used to teach Jyotiṣa in their family. Recently they started Jyothisadanam institute and it is under the banner of this institutiin the family is conducting Jyotisa classes now.

Another centre for Jyotisa study exists at Kaimukkumana, Mattatur, Thrissur. Raman Nampuriti is the teacher of Jyotiṣa. There are six students now studying Jyotiṣa. For the teaching of Sanskrit a special teacher is appointed. It is to be noted that the objective of Sanskrit learning in the field of Jyotisa is to acquire a working knowledge in Sanskrit which is helpful for the understanding and interpretation of the verses and term dealing with the śāstra. The instructors in Sanskrit need not give lessons in Sanskrit literary texts or criticism. A student wants to acquire that much knowledge in Sanskrit which is sufficient for the study of the prescribed śāstra portions and become professionally competent. On the contrary, the training of Kūṭiyāṭṭam or Kūttu require deep knowledge in Sanskrit language and literature. Therefor intense learning of Sanskrit takes place in those fields.

The senior astrologers are keen to teach the profession to their sons and other family members. As the part of traditional education of

Jyotiṣa, Sanskrit is also taught in their families. Narayanan Numputiri cousin brother of Raman Namputiri of Kaimukcumana teaches both Sanskrit and Jyotisa. In an interview with the present researcher, he informed that there are four students studying under him and one of them is a girl student. His method of teaching gives importance to the practical or application side, always reciting the Sanskrit verses related to the astrological problem investigated and translating their meanings into Malayalam. His pupils listen to him while he is handling the problems of his customers. Gradually his pupils get a working knowledge in Sanskrit and ability for interpretation which is enough for the profession. But he is of the view that learning Sanskrit more is very much helpful to get excellence in this field.<sup>74</sup>

As mentioned earlier Kerala Jyotiṣa parishad conducts Jyotisa classes on every Sundays at Thrissur, where a Sanskrit teacher take classes covering the primary lessons and some Kāvya. This is sufficient to impart a working knowledge. P. Ajithan, Sanskrit of Govt. H.S. School, Nadavarambu, is taking Sanskrit classes. Nalanda Viswajyotiṣalaya from Koorkanchery, Vedanga Jyotiṣa Parishad from Pullur, Thrissur also are some of the other example in this field.

Young Jyotiṣa scholars who are interested in propagation of Sanskrit are also coming forward in Kerala.

The practitioners and students of Jyotisa get their Sanskrit education informally through various agencies. These agencies include traditional Jyotiṣa scholars who have learned Sanskrit as a part of their education, organizations which conduct classes for interested pupils. The majority of which are adults, and Sanskrit teachers who are ready to help the informal learners. It is also should be noted that a remarkable section of pupil interested in Jyotiṣa always tries to increase their knowledge by reading books and periodicals. In this course they become more familiar with Sanskrit language also.

### **Maruttukali**

Poorakkali is a temple related folk art form of North Malabar. It is played in the southern parts of Kannur district and northern parts of Kasargod district. This art form is related mainly to the Kāvu temples run by Thiyya and Maniyāni caste. The men of these castes participate in this art form. Poorakkali is related with the ancient Kanyāpūja festivals in the temples of Northern Kerala.

Maruttukali is a part of pūrakkali. In this the two contesting groups conduct debates on a number of topics in Sanskrit.<sup>75</sup> The leader of each group is called 'Panikkar'. Panikkar is a title given to the leader of the team at the time of his first contest. He wears a bangle on his right hand which shows his new status. In addition he is also given silk cloth by the temple

authorities as a gesture of honouring him. The contesting panikkars attend the temple ceremonies and lead debates on Sanskrit topics at a fixed time. The medium of debate is Malayalam. They do this after observing vrata in the temple. The duration of the vrata may differ as per the demands of the occasion. Some times it starts a day before and continues upto the next morning.<sup>76</sup> Usually pūrakkali starts by the evening and ends by eight or nine o'clock, in the night extending up to three to four hours. But 'Maruttukali' is performed on daytime only. The competition starts with 'Tāmbūla, carcā' which is the sacred ceremony of reception of the Panikkars with the traditional offering of tāmbūla. Then that will be serious and indepth discussions on subjects like Sanskrit grammar, Tarka, Vedānta, Sāmkhya, Yoga, Mīmāmsa, Vṛttasastra, Rasa, *Nātyaśāstra*, Sangītaśāstra, Itihāsas, Purāṇas, Upaniṣads and so on. This function includes the reciting of a number of verses in praise of the presiding goddess (devi) of the temple and also a number of quotations from authoritative śāstra texts.

One among the Panikkars recites a verse aloud. He again recites it by uttering the word separately and then explains the anvaya, (prose order) the meaning of words, the sentence meaning and purport of the verse respectively. Then the Panikkar leading the opponent team asks all possible doubts and questions regarding to that verse and the first

Panikkar answers them. He is given chance for the full exposition of his ideas and interpretations regarding the subject of debate. When this discussion is over the rival panikkar who asked questions begins with his presentation. Each and every point of discussion should be done with authoritative quotations of proof. A mediator approved by the two parties has the final say on serious disputes.<sup>77</sup>

This programme is performed before a gathering of a village audience who are equipped with the knowledge of Sanskrit śāstra subjects and with a love for Sanskrit studies. It needs a long-term training from the childhood to become a well-versed performer in Maruttakali. The panikkars are thorough with the textual passages which are used for debates. They learn byheart the whole matter in the prescribed order of recitation and interpretations. A serious deliberations are necessary for this the Panikkar learns all these under his Maruttukali preceptor or the senior Panikkar. Some times they approach other scholars for further studies. Gradually the Panikkar develops his own style in presenting the debate and begins to instruct his own disciples or team members. The disciples of Panikkars participating in this debates also will be present at the time of the performance. They learn the art by closely watching the performance of their Paṇikkārs.<sup>78</sup>

The 'Maruttukali' is an art form of debate performed publically. It needs much training in speech and sharpness of intelligence. The participants have to study Sanskrit texts in Sāhitya, Vedānta, Vyākaraṇa, Nyāya, Jyotiṣa, Mīmāṃsa and stotra. This programme develops an awareness about serious subjects of Sanskrit among the listening public. Thus Maruttukali gives an entirely different and note worthy method of informal sanskrit education.

Some of the important artists who performed in this field during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first part of 20<sup>th</sup> century are the following:

Madhava Gurukul, Chuzhali (1867-1939) was a famous scholar in various sastras like Vāstu, Jyotiṣa, Vyākaraṇa and Sāhitya. He was a good poet and good teacher who was taught Sanskrit in traditional method. He established a pāthaśāla at pariyaram at the age of eighteen. He had many disciples in Marattukali. He wrote profusely on various topic of poorakali and Marattukali and taught his students the Maruttukali literature and trained them for performances.<sup>79</sup>

Kumbrath Kannanezhutheccan, Karivelloor (1874 - 1951) was a famous Maruttukali artist. He taught Sanskrit and Maruttukali in the traditional way in his house. He had a great number of disciples like Kaneri Sreedharan

Panikkar, Kadiyur Kunjambu Panikkar, Krmī Kunjiraman Panikkar, Kaneri Kunjiraman Panikkar and Arathil P.P.Koran Panikkar.<sup>80</sup>

Kanjangad Kunjiveetil Kannanezhuthaccan (1889) was another Maruttukali Panikkar who was also a social and cultural activist. It is remarkable that a continuous tradition of Maruttukali scholars is available in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the well known figures are K.M. Krishnan Gurukkal of Kasargode (1956) Sahityatilakam P.K.Krishnanmoothanambyār of Payyannur, O.K.Murali (1926-1996), T.T.Ramampanikkar of Payyannur (1903-1979), Siromanikunjikoran, Kanjangad.<sup>81</sup>

As noted before Maruttukali is performed as a part of poorakali in North Malabar even today. Young scholars are coming forward to perform this traditional art of scholarly debate. They are devoted to continue this popular form of 'intellectual art'. Keeping the conventions and also making modifications in the art. One of the interesting turn is that like Kūttu and other temple art forms Maruttukali also has crossed the boundaries of temples. And is now being staged before invited audience. This has made the art more popular. The performers of the present generation are very much interested in propagating Maruttukali which has been welcomed by the lovers of Sanskrit and literature all over Kerala.



P.P.Madhavapanikkar of Peelikode is a leading artist in this field. Dhamodaran Panikkar of Kanjagad and Dhamodaran Panikkar of Karivelloor are actively engaged in Maruttukali.

At Cheruvathoor in Kasargode a poorakali Kala Accademy has been constituted. They are bringing forth some important publication about poorakali and Maruttukali. Poorakali published by Visnu Numbpūtiri is an authoritative work.

The accademi issued two C.Ds recently on Poorakali and Maruttukali. As noted before P.P.Madhavapanikkar, Peelikode, Kanjangad is a contemporary artist of Maruttukali. In an interview with a researcher Panikkar revealed some important informations about this art. His father Kunjiraman Panikkar was well known Maruttukali scholar. Madhava Panikkar got primary knowledge in Sanskrit which included the study of text *Amarakośa*, *Srīrāmodanta*, *Siddharūpa*. *Srīkṛṣṇavilāsa Kāvya* and *Māgham* from his father. He used accompany his father during the Maruttukali festival later during his training as a Maruttukali artist. He learned more in Sanskrit literature and Śāstras personally from Govindan Namputiri who was a Sanskrit professor at Pattambi. Further he continued education under Dr. E.V.Sreedharan and Surendran and studied Dhvanyaloka and other critical texts. According to his opinion at least five years of learning is necessary for a student to become an expert in

Maruttukali. He should update his knowledge in Śāstras through continuous education in Sanskrit.

Madhavapanikkar has more than forty years experience in Maruttukali. He is training some students in his house. Boys who have completed the tenth standard are admitted and at first they are taught lessons in Sanskrit which continuous for four or five years. After the student has got fairly good knowledge in Sanskrit, special training for Maruttukali begins. For this selected portions from Vyākaraṇa, Nyāya, Jyotiṣa and Kāvya are taught in detail in the traditional way. Then he gives instruction how to interpret the śāstras and ślokas and present the various meanings in correct Malayalam before the audience. Students are also given training to debate and to argue reasonably and be confident in handling the subject. For example a student is asked to explain a subject and the while another student is asked to raise questions and counter arguments against the former's explanations. The teacher observes the arguments of the students and interferes whenever necessary and gives correction and guidance.<sup>82</sup> He takes the students to watch the performance of the famous Panikkars. Those who want to acquires higher knowledge are allowed to approach scholars outside also. Thus by severe training and sincere desire for knowledge on students can reach the status of Panikkar after the about ten years of education. Some rare

ślokas from Manuscripts are taught the students to use on special occasions. Madhava Panikkar wants to continue the tradition of his forfathers. Four or five students who are from distant places are staying with him to study Maruttukali.

Recently there have been attempts to set up a A.K. Krishnan master Smaraka Marathukali centre at Kasargode. It functioned about two years and some students joined the institution to study Maruttukali.

### **Tantra**

Tantra is another field of traditional Sanskrit education. Most of the tantric texts are written in Sanskrit language. The *Tantrasamuccaya* was written by Chennas Narayanan Namputiri(1428) of ponnani, who was a poet attached to the court of Manavikrama, Zamorin of calicut. It is an authoritative work on Tantra in Kerala.

Some traditional Tantric families in Kerala still continue the tradition of teaching tantra to their family members and also to students outside their families, for example. Sreedharan Thantri from Triprayar, Sreedharan Namputiri Putumana.

Independent centres of training are also available. The SNDP organisation who manages a number of temples in Kerala is providing courses in Tantra in Kozhikode, Kannur, Paravoor Thrissur etc.. In

addition to *Tantrasamuccaya* they are also teaching Sanskrit. All these institutions following the traditional style.

### **Tantra Vidya Pitham, Aluva**

Tantra Vidya Pitham, Aluva was started at Tirunavaya Brahmasvam Maṭham Veda Paṭhaśśala in 1972 under the teacherhship of Kalpuzha Divakaran Namputiripad (1913-2000).<sup>83</sup> The purpose of this was to uplift and educate temple priests in Kerala. It had the blessing of Kāñchikāmakodi Pitham, Sankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi swami. After ten months it was shifted to the Chovannur Sabhamatha near Kunnamkulam. Later Vidyapitham was moved the Veliyathunadu, Aluva, where it continues today having procured its own land.<sup>84</sup>

Very early morning the students start their lessons in Tantra and related subjects. After the primary duties they reach the temple and conduct the mantras sādhana. Then they learn Tantra, Veda, Śilpa, Jyotiṣa, and Sanskrit, Indian Culture and English are aslo taught during these days. Sanskrit is the medium of instruction. In the evening students do yoga, sandhyavandana and Mantrajapa in Cheriya Narasimhaswamy temple. This education continues for seven years. During the period of Education students and teachers live together. The inmates do cleaning, Cooking and farming together. Students of the age of 16 or 17 are admitted.

Central Government, Devaswam board of Guruvayur, Kochi, and Tiruvitamkur provide grant for the maintenance of these Vidhya pithas. Facilities are available for research in Tantras and it has a very good library.<sup>85</sup>

Vijayan karumatra a tantric scholar established 'Gurupadham' in 1980 at kanikulangara, Thrissur district. They are giving a six year course in Tantra after the completion of the course the students are given the title 'Dharma sārādhi'. 25 students are admitted to every year. Sanskrit classes are conducted on Saturday and Sunday. The institution has three branches each at Nandipulam, Karumatra (Thrissur) and Mookambika (Paravur).<sup>86</sup> Paravur Sreedharan Thantri the famous Tantri and astrologer also teaching Tantra and Jyotiṣa to students in his family.

### **Classical Music and Dance forms**

The basic texts of Indian classical Music and Classical dance are written in Sanskrit. In music *Sangītaratnākara* of Sri. Sārngadeva and *Sangīthakalpadruma* of *Muttayyabhadra* and *Bṛhaddeśi* of Mādanga are well known. The authoritative texts in dance are *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Abhinayadarpana* and so on. Classical dance and music are teaching in the main stream, Institutions like Kerala kalamandalam, Cheruthuruthy. R.L.V College, Trippunithura. These institutions teach Sanskrit subjects. In Thiruvananthapuram and Chittur two music colleges are functioning:

Swathithirunal Music College and Chembai Smaraka Music college. Music is taught in several colleges and departments like Maharaja College, Ernakulam, University College, of Thiruvananthapuram. Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady has a department in Music and Dance. Sanskrit language and literature are taught in these institutions as a subsidiary in B.A, M.A classes.

Sanskrit is essential for the study of original texts in these arts and also understand literature selected to dance and music, Sanskrit keerthanas of Swathithirunal and Śyamaśatrikal are being sung in the concerts and skilled musicians could sing these songs with perfection if they know Sanskrit.

Many amateur artists are engaged in teaching classical music and dance forms in Kerala. For example Indira G Marar from Balussery, Syamala from Kodakara, Thrissur and Janardhanan from Thrissur. Let us take the case of Janardhanan S.<sup>87</sup> He is a dancer and musician. He is residing near Thiruvambadi temple, Thrissur. He started an institution namely Subramanya Kalakshetram about thirty years back. He conducts dance classes especially in Bharatanāṭyam, Mohiniyāṭṭam, and Kuchippudi. He received the first lesson of music from his father Subramanyam and later learned Sanskrit traditionally from his father and

later he learned from Sree Ramakrishan Asram and passed Śāstri exam. He studied Bharatanātyam, Mohiniyāttam and Kuchuppudi dance form.

He took his M.A degree in Music with specialisation in Choreography from the University of Madras. He has written one book on dance namely *Natyathinte advavu Sambradayam*

In addition to these he released a number of CD's related to various dance forms like Keralanatanam, Dakṣhayāgam, Gaṇapathivijayam, Śūrpanākham etc. He has done a 'Bharatanātyam' event in 'Srī Kṛṣṇa karṇāmṛtam' in Bharatanātya and Mohiniyāttam in Brahmācāṅpraveśam' and 'Narasimhāvatāram'. In these items he has given importance to bhakthibhāva.

For some time during the period of 2004-06 he taught Sanskrit language and grammar to school going students.

In Subramanya Kalakshetra presently about 25 students are studying various dance forms. Three types of students are attending classes. Majority of the students are regular dance students who want to acquire high standards. After three years of study they are given chance for their first staging (arangēttam). They continue this education in selected dance form for five or six years. Some of the students attend the classes for getting learning for performing in the school Youth festivals

students having some knowledge in dance also approaching for higher or special studies.

He explains Sanskrit terms and meanings to students. He has a good library, which contains books on Sanskrit music and dance when ever necessary. It is interesting that Mr. Janardhanan is still continuing his studies in dance and Sanskrit. He learns Kathakali from Kalamandalam Krishnakumar and Venkittaramanan privately. He enhances his knowledge in Sanskrit by self study.

Mr. Janardhanan during an interview with researcher talked about in the importance of Sanskrit in the teaching of classical art because Sanskrit knowledge helps the students for the understanding of the meaning of padās and mudrās and also helps to know correct Bhāvas. This is also relevant in the studies of classical music. He explains his teaching experience of Sanskrit that the reception of Sanskrit by the students is of different kind. He observes that for a person who wants to enrich his knowledge in Sanskrit has got several resources today. He can join correspondence courses, approach Sanskrit scholars and conduct self study using books and guides.

She is a very good dancer residing at Balussery. She established one institution namely Nataraja Kalakshetram about twenty years back. She is specialised in Mohiniyāttam. She learned classical dance both



formally and traditionally. She also says that Sanskrit knowledge is very essential in the field of classical dance especially at the time of choreography. Unfortunately she could not learn Sanskrit. But her sister and brother learned Sanskrit. So she understands the meaning of Sanskrit terms and its interpretations with their help when ever necessary. Some time she corrects her doubts with the help of dictionary. She encouraged her students to learn Sanskrit. She conducted dance classes in other places like Kunnankulam, Guruvayur, Kozhikode etc.. More than two hundred students had studied classical dance under her guidance.<sup>88</sup>

## **Yoga**

Patañjali was the first person to author a book on yoga in which he has systematised and co-ordinated the ancient science of yoga. The *Patañjalayogasutra* consists of 196 yoga aphorisms, which deal with all aspects of yoga. Ashtānga yoga consisting of eight parts or stages to achieve the final goal of emancipation has been described very systematically. In the recent years yoga was revived and rejuvenated by Swami Vivekananda, Sri. Arambindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Krishna Murthy and others.<sup>89</sup>

The practice of yoga helps to achieve mental balance and improve health and physical efficiency.

Yoga is a contribution of ancient India by observing which people all over the world can maintain health of body and mind. In the olden days yogis were connected with asceticism. Modern world finds in yoga the perfect way for making a sound body and mind in the middle of the stress and strain of contemporary life, therefore there has been wide demand for yoga in different sections of the society. Short-term yoga courses are now common in school and college campus. Yoga classes are being organised. In the community living camps and it has been included in the new syllabus in the eighth standard Sanskrit text in Kerala. Usually knowledge in Sanskrit is not essential for yoga. But a student who wants to learn a theoretical aspects could proceed only with a working knowledge of Sanskrit.

Patanjali Yogavidyapitham Chalakudy is conducting yoga classes through thirty three centres spread all over Kerala.

They started class in the year 1997. The duration of a course is 25 days one hour each day. The special features of the classes are that they take care to use Sanskrit terms during instructions.<sup>90</sup> Vyasa Yogavidyapitham, The Bharatiya Vicarakendra also conducts Yoga and Sanskrit classes.

## Sopāna Sangītam

It is the traditional and typical temple music style of Kerala. After undergoing various stages and transformations over a period of two thousand years, it continues to manifest itself as the music of the Kerala temple festivals.

Most of the songs presented in Sopāna Sangīta are taken from Jayadeva's *Gīta Govinda*, which is known as *Aṣṭapadi* in Kerala. Traditionally the members of poduval community who serve in temples learn the songs and sing at the fixed times of worship in the temples. The people who attend the worship have the opportunity to listen and learn the songs. Like the other temple art forms sopānasangītam is also spreading into the secular fields and the presentations are now made outside the temples also.

Anuṣṭhana kalābhyasana kendram at Peruvanam temple, Cherpu, Thrissur, is conducting classes for sopāna music. Now ten students are practicing Sopana music. They are studying Sanskrit and some kavyas. *Gītagovinda* is prescribed for detailed study. Sopāna musician Sankaranarayanan of Thrissur is the teacher.<sup>91</sup> Janardhanan Nedungadi and Hari Govindan from Guruvayur is the another Sopāna musicians. Hari Govindan had studied Sopāna Sangītam from his father Njaralath Ramapoduval in traditional way.

Paliyekkara Devi temple and Kshetrakalavadyavidyalayam, Guruvayur and some other places also teach the Sopāna music. Sopānasangītam is a popular event in the radio programmes and television.

### **Akṣaraśloka**

It is a play of poems for the enjoyment. It is an age old popular literary competition in Kerala. The recitation according to alphabetic order is known as Akṣaraśloka. So it is a play on increasing memory power of the individuals. In this context participants used only slokas in Sanskrit vṛttas. The participants recite verses one by one. The second participant will recite the poem starting from first letter of the third stanza of the first participants śloka. This is the rule of this competition. Some of the Scholars recite their own ślokas.

This programme is conducted not only in schools and cultural centres, but during the festival also. Akṣaraśloka parishad from Thrissur, Akṣaraśloka mandali at Thiruvananthapuram conduct number of competitions in Akṣaraśloka. Kuzhursmaraka Akṣaraśloka samiti, Pala Akṣaraśloka samiti etc are very famous in this field. K.P.C Narayanan Bhattathiri from Perinjalam is giving practice in Akṣaraśloka for students traditionally. He also teach *Narāyanīyam* with its meaning. He teaches ślokas to students and explain their meaning and Sandhi, Samasa,

Anvaya etc. More than twenty students learn under his leadership. Senior students also come to his family and practice ślokas on holidays.

Today it is very a important item in the school youth festival. Audience are also interested in Akṣraśloka. So students and listeners also watch this programme. So both of these are given chance to learn Sanskrit verses knowledge informally.<sup>92</sup>

### **Tolpāvakkūttu (Leather Puppet Show)**

Tolpāvakkūttu is a Kerala's traditional shadow theatre. It is performed in the annual pūram festivals of Bhagavati temples of Palakkad and its surroundings. The theme of this play is the Rāmāyaṇa of Kambar. This performance is conducted by the members of the Vellālacheṭṭy and Nair communities. The traditional puppeters are called Pulavars, which is a title meaning scholar. In Tolpāvakkūttu the story of Rāma from his birth upto coronation is divided into 21 parts. Each part covers each nights performance. Thus 21 nights are needed for a full enactment of the play. The script of the play is known as ātalpaṭṭu. It is composed of prose and verse in a special mixture of Tamil Malayalam and Sanskrit.<sup>93</sup>

The ātalpāṭṭu contains verses and prose passages and is recited loudly by the pulavars in Tolpāvakkūttu. Verses are sung in a variety of metre tune and rhythm, with the help of orchestra. During the

performance of the play the letter interprets and discusses the story with their own ability. According to G. Venu "In the explanation and interpretation of the āṭalpaṭṭu each performing artists show his originality and alters or elaborates the earlier explanations and interpretations depending on his own creativity."<sup>94</sup> Picture like puppets made by cutting on a flat leather surface is used in the Tolpāvakkūttu.

K.L Kṛishṇankutty pulavar and his family from Kūnathara has a long tradition in Tolpāvakkūttu and his family follows this tradition even today. G. Venu the Kūṭiyāṭṭam artist was a student of Krishnankutty pulavan. Uppath Narayanan nair and Annamala pulavar is also teaching Tolpāvakkūttu traditionally. Sanskrit is used in Tolpāvakkūttu is in a limited level. The artists collect some Sanskrit ślokas and other grammatical and literary parts needed for their particular performance and teach the students that portion only.<sup>95</sup>

The narration of Rama's story is based on the *Kamparāmāyaṇa*. Discussions of the subjects of the purāṇas are also incorporated during the narration. People attending the festivals gathers in front of the kūthampalam and listen to the scholarly discussions. The common folk thus get a chance to get some education in the ancient knowledge of India including Sanskrit. As an art form these puppet shadow theatre is

attracting the attention of contemporary artists and is now being played outside the temple premises and often presented on Television.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have discussed the traditional streams of Sanskrit education which are informal in status. Vedic education is a powerful source of traditional Sanskrit in Kerala. *R̥gveda*, *Samaveda*, and *Yajurveda* are taught in traditional families and in traditional institutions. Religious and secular institutions show interest in the propagation of vedic knowledge. The readings of Itihāsas and purāṇas theatre like Kūṭiyaṭṭam, Kūttu, Pāṭhakam, Kathakali, Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam and Maruttukali give informal education of Sanskrit to the common people. Vāstuśāstra Jyotiṣa, and Tantra are other traditional forms of knowledge existing in Kerala. Traditional families who know these śāstras are continuing its education. Other sources of informal education are classical music and dance forms, sopānasangītam, Akṣaraślokaṃ etc.. which are parts of Kerala tradition. The traditional agencies of education are trying to continue their work with necessary change in the style of education.

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92. Poovattur N. Ramakrishna Pillai, p. 3.
93. Vishnu Namputiri, *Folklore Nighandu*, p. 341.
94. G. Venu, *Tolpavakoothu: Shadow Puppet Plays of Kerala*, New Delhi: Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, 1970, p. 9.
95. Information gathered from Ramachandran Tolpavakuttu Artist, Kunathara, Palakkad: 31/07/08.