

Expressions Of Difference And Rebellling

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Abstract: In this article I address the question how a performing artist attempted to differ from what he knew and what had been prevalent. It is all about how a eighteenth century poetical and performative attempt conjoined different percussion instruments other than which he had been trained in, costumes and presentation styles on stage. What Kunjan Nambiar has invented had differed from what he learned from child hood. I focus on Kunjan Nambiar's poetry and spontaneous language use to illustrate ways of differing in number of manners. For instance, he does not use the language that was in existence in temple theatre at that time, the costumes used, the place where performances took place etc. This expression of difference and rebellion has taken place in eighteenth century in Thiruvithamkur which is a part of the present day Keralam.

Keywords: Ottan tullal-Kerala Bhasha-audibility-visibility.

Introduction

If you psychoanalyse poetry of premodern Kerala, then you find that there are trends of differing from the existing ways of expressions. What I am attempting to describe in this article is one of the exemplars of performative acts which challenged the existed temple arts and addressees. For this matter I invoke *OttanThullal* which combined both singing (*pattu*/poetry/stories) and dancing—among many other facets. It is pertinent to situate it within the historical context of singing, dancing and differing. The first part of this paper confines to the antecedents of the language that enabled *Thullalpattu*/poetry/story (hereafter, poetry). The antecedents are traced back up to the fourteenth century for reasons which are well known (Leelavathy, M.1985:113-16). We refrain from tracing any continuous past and present of *Thullal* poetry; rather we underscore certain important land marks in the history of *Thullal* poetry; a poetry which are composed in *Thullal* language. We will explicate this argument as we proceed further. That is, we highlight few continuities and discontinuities. In this sense there is no attempt to trace any linear relationship between the origin and the present of Nambiar's poetic compositions. The first section is devoted to the verbal articulations in the poetic language of *Thullal*. In the second section, we deal with the foreground and background of *Thullal* performance on the stage. If the first part touches upon verbal language, the second section briefly recalls the visual similitude of *Thullal* with other performing arts of the temple. In other words, the second section consists of the historical precincts of this particular performance form. They were in existence before the formulation of *Thullal* as well as co-existed with it. Here, what is highlighted is more about the difference between *Thullal* and other performances, especially, *Kūttu*, from which Nambiar had distanced himself and articulated verbally and visually. It was his wilfulness to distance from

Brahminical/the Sanscritized which made his performance distinct from other's—the existent.

Thullal resonated, with a difference, many existing poetry recitals and at the same time resembled many performing arts that used to take place within the Brahminical temple ambiances. In short, *Thullal* resembles many existed performances which were artistically 'artificial' in the strict sense of the word. *OttanThullal* is an admixture of such artefacts which are thought to be belonging to different castes; castes which can be placed within the pyramidal diagram of Homo Hierarchicus. For instance, it resembles Sanskrit drama performed in *Koothampalams*(temple theatre) as well as certain performances of *Kakkalas* and *Kuravas*. *Kakkalas* and *Kuravas* were placed at the bottom of the pyramid and were either attached labourers or vagabonds/gypsies (Chaitanya, K.1995:90). With such transgressions and crisscrossing through the languages and social strata, Nambiar could concoct a performance form which could retain resemblances as well as unique particulars that are differentiable from its associative field. Let us now move on to the fecundity of *Thullal* language and its associative relations with its language premises.

Bands of Audibility

Thullal poetry was written exclusively in the language particular to Kerala; or still better in 'Kerala Bhasha'. This exclusivity has to be underscored for the composer of it had made explicit statement about his language use and he was insistent to avoid high-end Sanskrit language from his compositions. This is so, although poetry recited in temples of those days had predominance of Sanskrit language and such poetry was posited at a higher pedestal in terms of social hierarchy. He explicitly stated about his departure from Sanskrit language use and his inclination to use exclusively Kerala Bhasha. One of such statements is worthy of quoting here.

Orchestrate in thunder with polysyllabic Sanskrit

And you will see the public Stampeding at the exit.(Chaitanya, K.1971:113.Trans)

Here it is important to mention few historical facts that made the composer to be persistent with such preference in Malayalam. Those days, as mentioned above, there was an excess of Sanskrit language in the poetries. Those poetries were written by Sanskrit scholars for the elite to read and enjoy. Nambiar declared his independence from such language practice with a definite purpose. This was mainly because the ideal recipients of his poetry belonged to a section of Malayalam speaking community which consisted of mainly Nair soldiers and Temple-going communities (Gopakumar, A.2009:92).

If Nambiar is determined that the problem of the relation between writer and critics shall be settled thus to his satisfaction rather than to theirs, when he moves on to the more basic relation between the author and his public, he is only too happy to be their most accommodating servitor.....so he opted for

the simplest possible diction. He had a gift for neologism and picturesque slang.... (Chaithanya, K. 1971: 112-113)

The recipients and possible critics of Nambiar included members from diverse social strata; but unlike his predecessors and majority of his contemporaries, his anticipated recipients included more and above the conventional ones, soldiers, common people, women and children. But all of them used to visit Brahminical temples. Most of them were placed below the Sanskrit knowing Brahmin caste. This implies that his departure from poetry with high prevalence of Sanskrit to Malayalam poetry was not only a preference born out aesthetic choice, but it was at the same time a departure from the hierarchically structured caste system and caste based audience composition.

According to a persistent legend, this was a miraculous birth. Nambiar, the story goes, was engaged in the traditional occupation of accompanying the Cakyar on the percussion in the latter's recitals (kūttu). On one occasion he dozed a little and missed his beat and was mercilessly ragged by the Cakyar. This made Nambiar leave in a huff and create overnight the Thullal play, so that when the Cakyar turned up for his recital the next day he found that he had no audience (Chaitanya, K.1995:113).

The event that affected the departure is self-evident from the above quote. This story could be seen as a departure from the *Kūthambalam*. A movement from the Sanskrit theatre to outside of it. However, *Thullal* used to take place within the four walls of the temples. This departure was at the same time a distancing from the prevalent language use as well as a departure from the stage of Brahminical/Sanskritic theatre site.

This composer was well versed in Sanskrit language and its theatre forms, yet he composed poetry only in Malayalam and addressed those who were disenchanted with *Kūttu*. Moreover, he emphatically stated that 'I have expertise to compose poetry in Sanskrit, and also I know that compositions in Malayalam have aesthetic drawbacks, yet I prefer to compose poetry in Malayalam'¹ (Gopakumar, A.2009:23:34). He had explicitly detailed reasons for his preference in Kerala Bhasha/Malayalam; they are several. Although his poetry was predominantly in Malayalam language, he has invoked several words from several languages and concocted his own phraseology. It should be noted at the outset itself that, to him verses were to be in conformity with alliteration; it was alliteration which made his verses meaningful. To him, rhyme was his reason and irony conveyed his meanings. Humour overwhelmed him while composing poetical improvisations while performing *Thullal*. What was he composing? He was composing poetry, songs and stories. To some his verses tantamount to poetry (Chaithanya, K.1995:111-125); to some others they are songs (Leelavathy, M.1985:113-128) and to others they are stories (Sivasankarapillay, K.1970:16-52; Ayyappanikkar, A. 1977:8-32). Such multiple viewing shows the complexity of his verses; especially, in terms of signification and decipherment of what he wrote. If we think in terms of his symbolic expressions and the gestural languages which he deployed in his language regime of stage performances, then, it becomes all the more elusive to the

comprehend in contemporary cognitive field. The hermeneuticalⁱⁱ issues can be left aside for the time being for they fall outside the purview of this article. Let me proceed to describe laterally about the components of his language complex.

Antecedents of *Thullal* language

Thullal as a stage performance and performing art form combines bands of visibility and audibility. It is a combine of verbal, symbolic and gestural languages. Besides Malayalam, Nambiar's phrase regime havewords and usages from different languages such as Prakrit, Pali, Sanskrit, Tamil, Manipravalam and Malayanma. This phrase regime was named by Nambiar as Kerala Bhasha. Such a phrase regime includethe words and phrases coined by him as well. In general, the languages that can be discerned from his poetry are many, including language unique to him. He also displaces meanings of well-circulated words through contextualising them in his own unique manner. It is incredulous to designate such a phrase regime as some or other languages in existence. Therefore, I term the verbal language of *Thullal* as *Thullal Bhasha* or *Thullal language*.

ThullalBhasha

In Drama, different characters spoke different languages within a play; the early known plays of Asvaghosa (c. A.D. 100) bear evidence to the antiquity of such a language practice. Prakrit, means 'natural' or 'common' and primarily indicates the uncultivated popular dialect which existed side by side with Sanskrit—the accurately made, 'polished', and 'refined' speech (Upadhaye.A.N, 1978: VOL- V, 164-183). Usually Pali was the dialect of the unlettered masses, which they used for their day-to-day communication including performances of drama; while Sanskrit was the language of intellectual aristocrat, and it was used for religious and leaned purposes. The former was natural acquisition; while the latter, the principal literary form of speech, required training in grammatical and phonetic particulars.

There can hardly be any doubt that these dialects were employed in drama as they were contemporary local vernaculars; but later on they became stereotyped and fixed. In dramatic performances, kings and courtiers spoke Sanskrit; ladies of rank spoke Sauraseni; and the lower characters spoke Magadhi. The Prakrit lyrical songs were quite popular with Sudraka, Kalidasa, Visakadatta and others. To Sudraka and others, Prakrit served as the medium of homely conversation in their dramas. Sudraka's Sakara was a unique character quite unsurpassed; his songs and speeches in Magadhi were well known for their fun and humour. In the opinion of some scholars, Indian drama comprised popular dance with conversations and songs and in the beginning they were voiced in Prakrit. It was only later Sanskrit came to be introduced as the main medium of speech, thus those plays admitted Sanskrit and Prakrit simultaneously. *Karpuramanjari* by Rajasekhara (about A.D. 900) is a paly which has been a constant source of inspiration down the centuries, and a model *forsattakas*—a special sort of drama. It was composed entirely in Prakrit, though accepted as

one of the best comedies in Indian literature. It was remarkable for its stylistic language than for its plot and character displays.

In the opinion of some scholars, Indian drama comprising popular dance with conversations and songs, was originally in Prakrit, and it was only later that Sanskrit came to be introduced. However, there is one type of drama, the *sattaka*, which is composed entirely in Prakrit, and which in many respects resembles the *natika*. The term *sattika*, or *sadika*, is quite old. (Upadhye A.N, VOL.V:167-68)

In Tullal, we can read many instances in which words in Prakrit languages come in combination with other languages, including Sanskrit, without any boundaries among them.

Tamil

Tamil was one of the Dravidian languages appeared in some of the old texts of Kerala (Malayalam Lexicon, Vol. VI, 1988:132-33). The term Dravida is considered by some as of Sanskrit origin; whereas Sanskrit scholars think it as the Sanskritised form of *tamizh*. C.W. Damodaran Pillai derives *tamizh* from the root *tami* (lonely). According to him, *tamizh* amounts to sweetness and mercy. Hence, 'Tamizh' is a language which is sweet. The word *tamizh* was used in early Tamil literature to denote the language, the people, and their country (Venkatachari P.N.1991:601)

Tamil, which is rich in synonyms, had even as early as A.D. 200 a large and copious indigenous stock of vocabulary. And so, it has always been resisting unrestricted borrowing of words from other languages including Sanskrit. The literature of the early period is virtually free words of foreign origin in spite of Tamizhaham's commercial relations with the roman world. Sanskrit is almost absent in its texture. The language of poetry is not ornate but simple.....The Tamil of the middle period is marked by an abundance of Sanskrit words, mostly related to religion, ethics and philosophy (Venkatachari P.N.1991:602).

In ancient times the association or academy of the most learned men of the Tamil land was called Saṅgam or (Caṅkam), whose chief function was promotion of literature. Later, Tamil writers mention the existence of three literary academies (*Saṅgams*) existent at different periods of time. Tolkāppiyam is one of the earliest Tamil works on Grammar and poetic techniques.

Tolkāppiyam, the name signifying the 'ancient book' or 'the preserver of ancient institutions' was written by Tolkāppiār, and is the oldest extant Tamil grammar dating back to 500 B.C. It lays down rules for different kinds of poetical compositions drawn from the examples furnished by the best works then extant.....The third sangam have come down to us in the shape of

anthologies of poems.....*Ettuṭṭogai* (eight anthologies) and *Pāttuppāṭṭu* (ten idylls).....There were about 473 poets during this period; the writers of 102 poems are, however, unidentified. (Ibid, 603)

The anthologies of third Saṅgam consist of poems divided into two broad categories- *aham* or interior and *puṛam* or exterior. The former refers to different facets of love between men and women. The *puṛam* covers varieties of distinctive poems, mostly relating to man's social behaviour. Other major works such as *Śilappadikāram*, *Manimekalai*, and *Jivakacintamāni* are outstanding contributions of the post-Saṅgam period. It is quite probable that Nambiar was familiar with such works of literature.

... *Śilappadikāram* contain references to plays being enacted. Theoretical techniques are also found mentioned in them. Tamil dramas, *kūṭṭu*, as they were called, must have been a popular resort of the public during the period of imperial Colas (Ibid, 619).

Sanskrit became affective in Kerala only before 8th Centuries. Before that Tamil was the language of governance and literature. Those who ruled Kerala before 15th century were Tamils, there aftera theme poet presided over the release of a Tamil grammar text named as *Tolkappiyam*. Between 3rd century B.C to 1st century A.D. the kingly language was Tamil. Many of them are known as poets of Akananooru and puranannoru.compendiums named as *patitṭupaṭṭu* is filled with eulogies of Cera kings (Varadarajan.2000:3-4, Trans.)

Besides Tamil of those days which had commonality with the Kerala Bhasha, he was versatile with Sanskrit as well.

Sanskrit

Sanskrit was a language used by aristocrats for intellectual, religious and literary purposes. Sanskrit grammar text written by Panini around the 4th century BC is the first grammar text in any languages in the world. The earliest writing that has come down to us in Sanskrit, the Rg-Vedic hymns, is in the form of poetry and the prose texts that were bequeathed to us are called *Brahmanas*. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are called *Kayas* (poems) and are described as the model and source of all later literary creations. The earliest elaborate treatise on drama is Bharata's *Natya Sastra*. It treats texts of drama as *kāvya*s. It is a work on poetics as much as on dramaturgy (Arundale, R.D.1971:37).

The texts mentioned above gained circulation in Kerala. Apart from that, Sanskrit texts written in Kerala mainly contained subjects such as astronomy, mathematics, *ayurveda*, law etc. The first Sanskrit text written in Kerala is Vararuchi's text on mathematicsⁱⁱⁱ.

In AD 682, a meeting was called at Thirunavaya, Northern Kerala, to discuss the shortcomings of the prevailing astronomical methods of Aryabhatta and his school and to reform the system. It is believed that at this meeting, some of the methods of the legendary Astronomer and Astrologer Vararuci (4th Century A.D) were adopted by those present. as the author of 248 *Candra vakya* (or “moon sentences”), he had popularized their use to describe, through a series of ‘nonsense’ mnemonic words or phrases, the position of the moon at regular intervals each day to help worshippers carry out their daily observances and rituals(Unpublished Workshop Paper, Madhukar Mallayya and George Gheverghese Joseph: Dec,2005:2-3).

Parameswara was a prolific writer and he had written about thirty books including original treatises and commentaries, both on Astronomy and astrology. Digganita was his magnum opus. A new system of astronomical computations was formulated by him after continuous investigations coupled with observations of celestial bodies for over 55 years. Parameswara had observed and recorded several solar and lunar eclipses from 1393 A.D onwards. Neelakanda was a student of Parameswara and his son Damodara (Ramakrishnan, P.2005:3).

In Kerala Sanskrit was in vogue in many artistic performances, such as *kūdiyattam* and *kūttu*(*Chākyarkuthu*). The first Sanskrit drama written in Kerala is *Ascharyachudamani* (*wondrous Crest Jewel*) by Sakthibhadra in 8th century (K.G. Poullose, 2001:61.). The other performance, *Kūttu*, existed as a separate *genre* and required excellent command over Sanskrit language. Linguists consider Kulasekhara Alwar’s *Mukunthamala* (9th century) as a linguistic text. By the 12th century a strong foundation had been laid in Astronomy and mathematics; individuals such as Sanghama Grama Madhavan, Vattasseri Prameswaran and Achutha Prisharati and Neelkandha Somayaji wrote their remarkable works in Sanskrit. Astronomy was meant to be for the benefit of the Sanskrit community.

The 14th century saw the emergence of the founder of the school, Sangama Grama Madhava (c.1340-1425).....Madhava’s only surviving works are in astronomy and mainly concerned with refining the *vākya* system of Vararuci, who was mentioned earlier.....Madhava’s remarkable contribution to the development of Kerala mathematics and astronomy. ...

According to Nilakantha, Parameswara learnt his mathematics from Madhava. He wrote a number of commentaries, including ones on *Aryabhatiya*, on Bhaskara I’s *Mahabhaskaria*, and *Laghubhaskariya*, *Suryasiddhanta*, on Govindasvamin’s commentary on *Mahabhaskariya*, on Manjula’s *Laghumanasa* and Bhaskaracharya’s *Lilavati*. Parameswara’s role in scrutinising and then disseminating the contents of these major texts of Indian astronomy and mathematics cannot be overestimated ((Madhukar Mallayya

and George Gheverghese Joseph, Unpublished Workshop Paper, Dec, 2005:6-7).

The story of Parasurama in *Brahmananda Purana* prose in Sanskrit was already composed in Kerala before the 15th century. *Keralamahathmyam* consisting of 2217 *slokas*, was a 16th century Sanskrit work. These texts give us evidence that Sanskritic verses and prose were in existence since the fifth century onwards and they had prevalence among the elite groups of Kerala.

Royal patronages were extended to Sanskrit scholars. For instance, the royal court of the Samutiris of Kozhikode had two major recipients, the eighteen and a half (*patinettara*) poets and the court of *pattattanam*.

By the 12th century the development of Indian Astronomy and mathematics had slowed down, they continued to develop in Kerala for a few more centuries..... The contemporary literary competitions like Revathipattathanam at Kozhikode and Kadavallur Anyonyam at Kadavallur near Kunnankulam are marks of literary and intellectual ferment of the period (Vijayalekshmy, M. Workshop paper, 2005:7-9)

They were proficient in the Vedic tradition including *Mimamsa*, *Tantra*, *Vyakarana* and *Vedanta*. “Another Sanskrit work, *Tantrasamuccayam*, formed the basis of temple *sanketams*, *Manushyalayacandrika* and several works of rituals and observances played an important role in the construction and growth of *Taravads*.” Vyavaharamala codified the laws given by various *smirti* writers from Manu onwards, like Prasaramadhaviyam/Parasarasmiti, ParasaraAswalayana Kriyakramam, Kriyalesasmriti, *Sankarasmriti* etc. (Ulloor.1925:1-10)) Sree Sankars’s contribution, Advita Vedanta, to devotional poetry cannot be overlooked in this context. In general, Sanskrit had an over prevalence in codifying Kerala Bhasha and literature in Malayalam. Nambiar might have been quite sensitive to such an overwhelming prevalence of Sanskrit which was alien to his anticipated audience.

Manipravalam

The languages known as Kerala Bhasha and Malayanma were considered as languages that pre-existed Manipravalam. In the beginning it had close affinity to Tamil language and therefore it was known as Malanattu Tamil. But later, it was found inappropriate to call it so and therefore it was renamed as Keralabhasha. (Paniker, A.1977:10-11) Manipravalam is a poetic language; it is a curious mixture of Sanskrit and Malayanma. The word *mani* means ruby (Malayanma) and *pravalam* means coral (Sanskrit). *Lilatilakam* is a late fourteenth century Sanskrit treatise; it is an analytical study of this newly emerging poetical language (Manipravalam) and it is a treatise on poetics as well. It has sections dealing with literary flaws (*Dōsha*) and excellences (*guṇa*); the verbal figures (*sabdalanakara*) and ideal figures (*arthalamkara*); and feeling import (*rasa*). The author of this text had familiarity with the

major authorities in the field – Bhamaha, Dandin, Bhoja, and Abhinava gupta etc. The language of *Kramadeepikas* and *Attaprakarams* which lay down the rules and regulations for dramatic performances is considerably influenced by the composite literary dialect of Manipravalam. Historians of Malayalam Language ascertain that Manipravalam is the archetype of Malayalam language by retaining the belief that it was the text *Lilathilakam* which made, for the first time, a compendium of the grammar of Manipravalam language. They portray *Manipravalam* as a hybrid outcome of two languages, namely the one that has been in existence, Malayanma and Sanskrit. The social condition that enabled such conjoining of two different languages is worth noting here. For this purpose we invoke an excerpt.

Lilathilakam attended to the formation and improvement of Kerala language. There was a clear distinction between the scholarly language and the people's language, there was a clear distinction between the scholarly language and the people's language and the ongoing tussle between the two is noticeable, they denoted respectively the reference society and the lower class society. (Namboodiri, K.N.M.1999: 272-73)

The earliest work in Manipravalam is *Vasika Tantram* written in 13th century. Perhaps the most representative of these early Manipravalam works are the tales of courtesans (*Adi/achi Charitams*) and the message poems (*Sandesa Kavyas*).

Another sort of poem is known as '*Champus*' which had mixture of 'verse' and 'proses', verse were in Sanskrit meters and the *gadya* or prose portion was mostly in Dravidian meters. This prose was different from usual prose; it had rhythmic flow, harmonious sound combinations, alliteration, and in certain place rhymes too. Many of the Malayalam *champus* had their role in *Chakyarkuthu*. Such a textual strategy could be seen in *Ottan Tullal* (Menon, A. 1940:18). Most of them deals with *puranic* stories, the authors of *champus* often paid more attention to details of performance (*angya bhasha*) than to narration or storytelling. Figures of speech and bold conceits are very common in them and the passages from well-known Sanskrit works are freely quoted without any acknowledgement. Many of the old *Champus* are attributed to Punam Nambudiri; he is believed to have lived in the latter half of the sixth century and the early part of the seventeenth century M. E. Ramayanam Champu is the most famous of the works of Punam. Compositions in Malayanma or Malayalam or in Manipravalam were considered, in those days, to be beneath the dignity of a first-rate Sanskrit composition, therefore Punam who wrote in Manipravalam was humorously ridiculed by calling him an *Arakkavi* (half-poet).

While the *Manipravalam* poetry flourished as a diversion from the mainstream, three writers namely Madhava Panikkar, Shankara Panikkar and Rama Panikkar came into prominence and they were commonly referred to as Niranam poets and they belonged to the same family called Kannassa. Madhava Panikkar concisely translated Bhagavad *Gita* into Manipravalam-Champu-pattu, perhaps the first ever translation of that classic into any

modern Indian language. The most accomplished of the three is of course Rama Panikkar, the author of *Kannassa Ramayana*.

Although Sanskrit was the language of the courtly society and the language streams emanating from it ensued the 14th century literary works, explicit argument for a Kerala language is worth noting. The argument was to accept the Kerala language in its own right without carrying the backlogs while tracing the history of Malayalam language. (Namboodiri N.M.1999:272-273). The hierarchical relation between Sanskritic verses and those literary works in Malayalam or Kerala Bhasha began to get an unequivocal relation since the fifteenth century. Ezhuthachan was the seminal writer who could be considered as someone who altered the hierarchy among literary languages prevalent in Kerala. But at the same time, one of the harbingers of this alteration could be seen in the poetry of Cherushery's *Krishnagadha* composed in Malayalam during the fourteenth century itself (Leelavathy, M.1985:68-69). But the hierarchy persisted despite his works of literature or art. In this sense, it is important to remember that when we install a statue of Kunchan Nambiyar, behind his statue should be that of Ezhuthachan; behind him should be the aura of Cherushery.

Things turn out to be in Malayalam

The words Keralam and Malayalam (Malayalabhoomi) were used by historians as connotative terms to refer the far southern peninsular India lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. The country was known to ancient Greece, Rome, Arabia, Babylon etc; It is mentioned in the Asoka inscription, and was also referred to in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. It has mention in the famous Tamil works of the Sangam period like *Silappadikaram*, *Padirrupattu*, and *Manimekhalai*, and also in the works of Kalidasa. The language Malayalam is said to be of fifteenth century origin. The word 'Malayalam' was used at first to denote the land and is supposed to consist of two words *mala* (means 'hill'), and *āzham* (means 'deep' or 'sea'). Another opinion is that, the second word is not *āzham*, but *ālam* which means land (George, K.M.1991:535-47). There has been some controversy over the origin of Malayalam language. Some nineteenth century scholars considered Malayalam to have been derived from Sanskrit. An attempt has also been made by scholars like Caldwell to treat Tamil and Malayalam were closely connected with each other, and they also say that, Malayalam has taken its origin from the primitive Dravidian tongue and evolved through several centuries into its present form under certain special circumstances prevalent in Kerala.

For the people in Kerala they preferred the word Malayalam than Kerala, to them they had the languages called as Malayayma, Malayarma, Malayanma. May be that they were the hill men, they have chosen these words. At present, they use Malayanma to designate a language of the past. According to Caldwell, the Arabs have called the existent language as Malayanma. (Narayanapaniker, K. 1954:15)

It is surprising how the serious matters which could be articulated in an evolved language like Sanskrit could be rendered in an evolving language like Malayalam. The literary history takes a new turn with the works of Ezhuttacchan (16th century). The popular belief is that Malayalam literature starts with Ezhuttacchan; but the fact is that, the composition and construction of Malayalam had taken place a century before him. As mentioned above, this is clear from the work *Krishna-gatha* of Cerusseri Nambudiri, whose language is nearly as modern as that of Ezhuttacchan's. As the name indicates, the theme of the poem is the story of Krishna, delicate but effective humour appears in appropriate places forming a most interesting feature of his art. Though all *rasas* and sentiments are elaborately treated in his works, *Sringara* is his favourite emotion and the sweet *manjari* metre has contributed immensely to the grace and beauty of his style (Velu Pillai, T.K, VOL-1, 1996: 465-515).

The 16th century, literature was made by Tunchath Ezhuthaccan through his *kilippattu*. *Adhyatma Ramayanam*, the most widely and piously read of his poems, is a free rendering of a Sanskrit work of that name.

Thunjathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan belonged to a community which occupied an inferior position in the social scale ...in his hands the *Kilippattu* reached its perfection. This form of composition has obtained its name from the poetic fiction that the verses are primarily sung by *Kili* or parrot, the pet-bird of goddess Saraswathi (Velu Pillai, T.K. 1996: 480-481)

More than the one hundred Malayalam works were composed from the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 18th century (Namboodiri, K.N.M.1999:265-300). About one third of them were in prose. Royal eulogies and romantic poetry almost disappeared during this time. The bhakti tradition could be thought of only by taking into account the epic themes and the *Attikkatha* literature. Song forms like *pana*, *Kilippattu*, *Hamsapattu* and *Tullalpattu* also were in abundance. What is to be noted here is that there coexisted both Malayalam and Sanskrit poetry.

There are two other poets of this age, namely Poonthanam and Melpathur, whose contribution to the literature of Kerala is universally esteemed. Poonthanam represents *bhakti* (devotion) in its pure and perfect essence and Melpathur vibhakti (learning) of a very high order. While the former wrote in simple Malayalam the latter opted for Sanskrit. Poonthanam's poetry flows straight from his anguished soul....there are remarkable lines in his *Jnanappana* (the song of wisdom) which are incandescent with social criticism (Aravindakshan, v.1999:77).

There are yet other poetic works by different authors of late seventeenth century or first quarter of eighteenth century. About them we have some comments by literary critics and historians.

The celebrated writer of *Attakkatha* is Unnayi varier who belongs to the latter part of the seventeenth century. His *Nala-caritam* requiring four successive performances is a classic of enduring interest. It displays remarkable freedom and originality in treatment and exhibits the qualities of drama much more than any other *Attakatha*. There are several others worthy of mention and the interest has been well maintained till the twentieth century (George, K.M. 1991:540-541)

Ramapurathu Warriar, the author of *KuchelaVrittamVanchippattu*, was one of them. The *Vanchippattu* or Boatsong is a poetic of folk origin. *KuchelaVrittam* is the most famous boatsong in the language. Composed entirely in the Dravidian metre *natonnata*, it is a popular classic that retells the story of *Kuchela*, the indigent devotee and one time classmate of Sri Krishna, going to Dwaraka to pay homage to him (Paniker, A. 1977:27-28)

Malayalam has an abundant stock of orally transmitted poetry; there are regional variations in content and form among them. For example, the heroic ballads of north Malabar known as *Vadakkan pattukal* and those of south Tiruvithamkur known as *Tekkan pattukal* constitute a well-defined category with difference. The northern ballads relate the exploits of valiant men and women of two clans, viz., *Puthooram* and *Manikkothu*. *Iravikutti Pillai poru* is the most prominent among the southern ballads which might have been composed in the latter part of eighteenth century or first quarter of nineteenth century (Padmakumari, J. 2009:12). It tells the story of a warrior who wins eternal honour through self-sacrifice for his king and kingdom in the battlefield. There are other southern ballads in the form of *Villupattus* i.e., sung to the accompaniment of huge bow fitted with bells. They are sung in chorus, unlike the northern ballads (Aravindakshan, v. 1999:68).

Manifold number of songs could be seen as associated with various kinds of religious practices, beliefs and festive occasions, some of them have orally transmitted from generation to generation, and sometimes these are marked by simplicity of structure and uttering the earthly engagement of common people with marked by a sparkling sense of humour. Tullal is most popular in this manner, at the same time, in many instances it has been sharing common literary style, themes and concepts with contemporaries and early century writings. Prior to Nambiar, Kannassans, Ezuttaccan and successors had been using same and near diction and themes. The metre which the Kannassans used is called *Tarangini*, an appropriate name because it flows forward with a dancing, wave like progression. The rhythm of the verbal music unconsciously suggests many figures of dancing movement. Tullal writings when viewed exclusively in totality in terms of style of writings, the economic society it portrayed and an overall earthly existence which it encompassed can be tethered back to the previous centuries writer's such as Ezuttaccan and Puntanam. In terms of style, there is continuity between Kannassans and Kunjan Nambiar through Ezuttaccan and Punthanam. But at the same time Tullal language is unique in the sense that it was prescriptive in nature even when it refers to past. Besides, no previous composers gave so much primacy to humour

and sarcasm as much as Nambiyar. His purposiveness was filled with desire to change present in such a way that debilities of the present are overcome.

Unlike the authors we have already mentioned, who proved their metal in their writings, Kunchan Nambiar, although contemporary of primarily devotional poets, pursued another *genre* which is incomparable to the above authors. As already mentioned Kunchan Nambiyar stressed upon thoughtful laughter in his Tullal language. He combined *Narmmam* (wit, humour, Malayalam Lexicon.VOL.VIII:465), *Parihasam* (Making fun of, ridicule, and joke, ML, VOL.VIII:440), *Phalitham* (humour, witticism, Warriar, M.I. *et.al.*1999:859), *Kalīyākkuka* (to ridicule makes fun of, M.L VOL.III. 1976:514). Through such language practices he made his audience to laugh while being thoughtful about their past and present. The intention of the composer of Tullal poetry was to enable people to take care of themselves according the changing times. In other words, his aim was to refashion the self-hood of his audience such that they sail towards future without turmoil.

Kunchan Nambiyar took a detour; a detour which makes him unparalleled when compared with his contemporary laudatory literary geniuses such as Unnai Varier, Ramapurathu varier and also his predecessors such as Poonthanam and Ezhuthachan. The existent poetic practices as well as performativity, in the form of dance and drama, were reconstructed by Kunjan Nambiar. Nambiar demonstrated his strong protest against feudal power and intermediary cultures by caricaturing them as decadent therefore something to be abandoned. He selectively abandoned some while altering some other. He improvised some while he introduced something new. He had verbal, symbolic and gestural bistoury to effect and affects the forthcoming future. To achieve this purpose, he was sure that only parochial language will suffice.

Tullal language imbued with parables, maxims and proverbs that were commonly recounted even in confabulations.

bhatajanangalute natuvilinnoru patayanikkiha

cheruvan vativiyennoru charu kerala

bhasha thanne chitham varoo-(SPT-1208)

This stanza states that Tullal language is devoted to *bhatajanams* (Nair brigades) for the reason that the author takes cognizance of the associative relation between language of performance and people who hear and witness Tullal. The author himself states that his language in Tullal is that of *bhatajanam* (the fighting people, mainly Nairs).

Bhashayayi paravanum adiyanu samskritattinumonnupol

Doshaheena paduthuamalppamudippadundividunnathil

Sheshiyilla bhadajjangal darichida kadu samskritham

Bhashayai parayamathil chila dooshanam varumekilum (KeVT-1182)

He goes further to state that he is particular to use Kerala Bhasha even if abstaining from Sanskrit use tantamount to aesthetic erosion. This is mainly because he believed that only use of Bhasha can communicate with *Bhatajanam*. Although he plays with words and his phrase regime in his Tullal language, he does so for communicative purpose. It is his concern with communicative action which led him to invoke humour and sarcasm into his language bistory. “In Malayalam literature ... much importance had been given to the rhetorical aspect of poetry.... Nambiar was mainly concerned with the lucid and simple narration of the stories. Yet he did not entirely give up the use of figures of speech in his composition” (Sharma, V.S.2000:57).

He was never a court poet; rather, he was a heretic. This does not mean that he was against receiving patronage. By mid-18th century, most of the local powers of *swaroopams* and *nadus* were on a declining path. Thiruvitamkur had become one of the centralised Kingdoms. Artists and writers began to flock at the newly growing power centres along with ritual and spiritual spear heads. Kunchan Nambiar, although a critic of his present, followed the flow towards south of Kerala; first to Chempakachery and then to Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Thiruvithamkur kingdom. Still his critical Tullal language continued fathomless and it got bequeathed from generations to generations.

Bands of Visibility

From the description of verbal articulations, let us move on to describe the symbolic and gestural presentations. In this respect, it had affinities with the existent symbolic and gestural languages that went into the making of Tullal’s antecedents. As a performing art, Tullal is unique, despite so, it had similarities and dissimilarities with several other art forms. Such a condition of existence of Tullal makes it unique, in the sense that it is not reducible to any other art forms which were in its proximity—temporally and spatially. The forms that were in its proximity were Kūttu, Kūdiyattam, Patayani, Kakkarishi Natakam etc. These artistic performances (we call them artistic performances despite the understanding that any such performances of this kind are already and always implicated within religious orders) might have gained repeatable materiality within limited audiences.

At this juncture let us pay some attention to the backdrops of Tullal performance. As we know well, Tullal had continuities and discontinuities with the existent stage plays or performing arts which used to take place within the temples. It is pertinent to situate Tullal within the gamut of other comparable but non-similar performances. For this, we take an indirect conduit, that is, by sketching some of the ‘origin myths’ about the beginnings of Tullal. Let us invoke a rather lengthy but precise statement made by an expert on these matters.

There are some legends or beliefs pertaining to the origin of Tullal. (i) Kunjan used to play *Mizhavu* for the Kuttu performance by a Cakyar at Ambalapuzha. Once while playing, he felt asleep and the Chakyar ridiculed Nambiar in public. Kunjan felt insulted and he decided not to participate Kuttu any further. The very next day he presented Tullal as a new kind of performance in the same temple premises and attracted the entire audience of Kuthu; thus he wreaked vengeance on the Cakyar. (ii) Nambiar played the mizhavu in a manner which was not agreeable to the Kuttu performance and it led the Cakyar to quarrel with Nambiar. Provoke by this incident Kenyan decided not to play and devised the novel song- dance form of Tullal to disgrace the Cakyar. (iii) Kunjan Nambiar was a member of the art group founded by Devanarayanan, ruler of Chempakasseri. Once the troupe ignored Kunjan and did not include him in a programme. He was irritated much and he invented his own Tullal art.

Though these stories can have some bearing on the origin of Tullal, they cannot be completely reliable. An art form like Tullal cannot be created from the void and the creation of an art form to ridicule or defeat another artist is also quite improbable. Moreover, it is assumable that Kunjan had motives in creating such a song–dance form like Tullal (Sharma, V.S.2000:18-19)

The overnight spontaneity attributed to the origin of Tullal need not be credulous. At least this is what that comes out of this excerpt. Therefore, it is only imperative that the constellation of which Tullal was a part need to be discerned. Traces of Kūdiyatam, Kūttu and Padayani could be deciphered in Tullal. We will now engage with those elements of Kudiyyattam and kūttu that have direct bearing on Tullal performance.

It is well known that Kudiyyattam used to be performed in *kuttambalam* which is a part of the Hindu Temple complex. “Kutiyyattam had to be performed only in the classical theatre (*kuthambalam*) by the Chakyar *jati*/caste. In Kuthu the male characters are performed by male members of Chakyar and female characters are performed by their female members(*Nangyār*)”(Ullor.VOL.I,1990:159). *Kuthambalam* is conventionally built on the right hand side of Sanctum Sanctorum and is situated in the outer circle. The word meaning of Kūttu is performance and that of *Ambalam* is the temple and hence *Kūthambalam* means the performance temple or the theatre structure within the temple complex where the performance is presented. Several musical instruments accompany the vocal music and interpretation in prose.^{iv}

The present theatre structures of Sanskrit drama in Kerala are called *Kūttambalam* in Malayalam and correspond to the *Naṭyamandapa* of Sanskrit texts. The method of construction pertinent to the *Kuttambalam* of Kerala is described in the *silparatna* of Srikumara, a text of the 16th century. This description is supplemented by details of construction found in the earlier text called *Tanṭrasamuccayam* of Cennas Nārayana, early 15th century. Both texts

contain materials attributed to earlier works of 10th and 11th centuries such as *Mayamata*, *Mānasara* and *Isanagivagurudevapaddhati*, pointing to a continuation of a still earlier tradition in *Śilpasāstra*. (Jones, C.R. 1973:286-296).

Primarily Kudiyaṭṭam is Sanskrit drama although Prakrith and Malayalam are also used. Vidūshaka uses only Malayalam language to interpret the Sanskrit verses. In Kudiyaṭṭam, the protagonist 'Vidūshukan' acts as a bridge between Malayalam and Sanskrit by interpreting the latter into the former through his antics and humour. One cannot restrict these interpretations to a particular language; the vidūshukan holds the power of explaining to his audience what the *ślōkas* mean in any language.

The form of Kudiyaṭṭam presentation is highly stylised in Aharya Abhinaya (make-up, costume and scenic spectacle), Angika Abhinaya (gesture) and Vachika Abhinaya (Oral rendering).....In Angika Abhinaya, in which Hsasta Mudras are liberally used in descriptions, conversations and dissertations the Lakshanas codified in Natya Sastra or the various other texts in Hindu dramaturgy are not faithfully followed. The Hasta Mudras are taken from Hsata Lashana Deepika which draws from the Tantric mudras prevalent in Kerala.....In Aharya Abhinaya the make-up is symbolic of the nature of the character presented on the stage. At the same time, there is no typifying character as in Kathakali. While Kathakali, Bali and Sugreeva wear the same costume, in Kudiyaṭṭam, their costume are different.....In Vachika abhinaya, the text of the Sanskrit drama is rendered by the actor with intonations reminding us of the Yajur-Vedic chanting of the Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala (Nair, A. D.1978:1-2).

.... Vidūshaka dominant where there is greater emphasis on Vāchika Abhinaya (oral rendering). The Vidooshaka talks in Malayalam. He interprets Sanskrit *ślokās* recited by characters in Malayalam and recites parodies of these *ślokās* and expounds the various laws of nature in a very humorous manner (Nair, A. D.1978:3)

The exact period of origin of *Kūdiyāṭṭam* is obscure though the earliest reference of the term *Chakkayyan*, a term that is now widely understood to be synonymous to *Chakyar* (the traditional maleactors of *Kudiyaṭṭam*), is found in the 2nd century BC epic of South India named as *Chilappathikaram*, written in Tamil.

Contrary to the tradition, "*Kudiyaṭṭam* was first performed outside the temple in 1949 by the renowned master teacher, the late Painkulam Rama Chakyar; in the sixties, Mani Madhava Chakyar also started performing at venues outside Kerala" (Madhavan, A.2010:23)

Kuttu or 'Prabnthakūthu' had been performed only in Kuthambalam. Unlike Koodiyattam, kuthu is performed by a single person. Percussion instrument called Mzhavu and kaimani form the background of acting and interpretation. That means there are three people to perform Kuthu. The origin of Kuthu is not known; however, there is mention in *Unnineeli sandesham* about people watching Kūttu in *Tali* Temple near Kozhikode in 14th century (Poulose, K.G.2006: 86).

Kuthu uses extemporary sarcasm while rendering puranic stories and epics.

The qualitative advantages that are rendered by Cākyar kūttu are innumerable (beyond limits). Cākyar Kūttu has given two hundred literally accomplished Cambukkals and little less than hundred proses.....it is only credulous to suspect that the origin of Malayalam prose originated from Cākyar Kūttu Ramayanam, Mahabharata, Bhagavatham they are written all in prose (Narayanapaniker, R.1954:38)

Kūttu was apparently the general term given for the dance dramas in ancient Tamilakam. Various types of Koothu were mentioned in the ancient Tamil poems including Kuravai kūttu, tunagai kūttu, olvalamala. Kūttu were normally performed on festive occasions like victory in war or good harvest, and both men and women participatedIn Kerala, kūttu took a somewhat different form. By seventh and eighth centuries ...Temples were developing as the new ideological centres of the agrarian settlements under the control of Brahmins...The ruling elite consisting of Brahmanas and the political power also began to develop new cultural forms. However, impact of the *bhakti* movement of Tamilakam was marginal, and hence the dance dramas took a different form (Krishna Kaimal, A. 1999:99-100)

There were three types of Kuthu: *Prabandhakoothu*, *nangiarkūttu* and *kudiyattam*. Kūttu was performed by Cākyar, where the story is enacted by *vāchikaabhinaya* i.e., verbal acting. *Nangyarkūttu* was performed by female members of Chakyar caste, who sang the songs and acted, with considerable emphasise on acting(Krishna Kaimal, A. 1999:100). As already mentioned Kunchan Nambiyar drifted away from Kuthu.

Thullal

Lexically, the word 'Tullal' has several meanings; in its generic sense it means "moving or jumping up and down or to the sides with quick movements, prance, ... tremor, shivering, shaking" (Malayalam Lexicon,VOL.VI,1988: 494) In the modern parlance it means dance

and dancing. More precisely, it means a performing art reciting *puranic* stories humorously with rhythm accompanied by percussion instruments and *kaimani*. It is “a dance form performed by a single artist in which puranic episodes are depicted in a humorous manner” (M. Lexicon, VOL.VI, 1988: 495) It could also mean “violent movement of the body due to the possession of spirit” (Malayalam Lexicon, VOL.VI, 1988: 494-95) In fact, there are more than twenty entries in the Malayalam lexicon derived from the word Tullal. But in the present day usage it means the performing art which is considered as the contribution of Kunjan Nambiar to Malayalam literature and dance. It has rhyme and reason. Tullal compositions consist of a Puranic tale retold in simple, rhythmic verse, fit for loud recitation before an audience.

The Kūttu, or recital of Puranic legends by the Cakyar, was a tradition which either splintered off from full-fledged dramatic presentation of the Kudiattam or grew up as a parallel form. The texts were in Sanskrit here. The *Pathakam* brought the tradition down to a larger public by using Malayalam and the later Campu emerged in response to this need. In both these recitals, the *raconteur* enjoyed an enormous freedom to satirise contemporary society.....The raconteur could go further and pick out even individuals sitting right before him in the audience and flay them mercilessly. This freedom would be taken over as a great legacy by the Tullal and boisterously exploited (Chaitanya, K. 1995:95).

There are three kinds of Tullal distinguished on the basis of the performers’ costume and the style of rendering viz, *Ottan*, *Seethankan*, *Parayan*.

Ottan Tullal-The word Ottan also denotes a group tribal people who do the work of digging and removing soil. But it is doubtful whether ‘Ottan’ is a caste name and whether Ottan is a caste name whether Ottan Tullal has anything to do with that caste(Sharma V.S.2000:26).

Sitankan Tullal-some people say that it suggest ‘Sitankan’ meaning one who has got wealth and property, some others believe that the word has been derived from ‘Desinga’. According to another interpretation, it denotes ‘Sitankan’ which means one who is slow witted and passive (Sharma V.S.2000:26).

Parayan Tullal-The third variety of Tullal is Parayan and it denotes the caste Paraya. In Tullals like *Kichakavadha*, *Kumbhakarnavadha*, etc., Kunjan Nambiar himself has said that the Parayas belongs to the caste of Pakkanar.....It is impossible to derive etymologically the three words Ottan, Sitankan and Parayan, Which mean the different characters appearing in Patayani Tullal(Sharma V.S.2000:27).

Nambiar was an extrovert and observed the life around very closely, thus even when the main story is from the Puranas, he would introduce detour in plenty and use such occasions to comment on life in his own time. To perform a Tullal, no stage equipment is needed, the lines sung by the dancer and two accompaniers are called *ponnani* (leader) and *sinkiti* (supporter) who also play Maddalam and Kaimani respectively. The dancer and the singers thus jointly recite the whole text of the song, and thus a story is being sung and danced within a span of one or two hours. Tullal is in effect a visual –cum- literary art; Nambiar took his stories from the Itihasas and puranas and also utilised *Kathasaritsagaram* and *Panjathanthram* for sub-plots and also gave them the colour of contemporary life. Nambiar's poetry brims with humour and satire; his language is simple and he makes fun of almost every community in Kerala.

The Tullals of Nambiar were divided into three categories: the fast paced Ottan, the medium paced Sitankan and the slow paced Padayani^v. It has been plausibly argued that the first two names can be traced to the community which performed ritual exorcism and to the Pulaya caste (Chaitanya, K.1995:113)

Vachikabhinaya is the foremost aspect of Tullal; *Angikabhinaya* is performed according to the concept of *Natyasastra*. Angas, upangas and *Pratyangas* are employed; gestures and body-poses are also followed according to ancient tradition. In Tullal it is not possible to employ gesture language for each and every word that occurs in the *vachikabhinaya*, because of the time limit and because of its solo character. *Sattvikabhinaya* is conducted by exhibiting the *sattavas*. The *Aharya* aspect is very simple and it has very features similar to those of *kuthu* and of Tullal forms of found in Padayani, Kolam Tullal etc. (Sharma V.S.2000: 26)

The performance structure of Tullal is of a unique nature:

The preliminary steps are called Ganapathy', 'Pātivattom', 'Kalūāsam', and 'Munnarangu', all these have established ways of footsteps and stage movements.....After having rhythmical steps, the actor will embark on the narration of the story. The regular stepping will be either with the front part or by the back part of the foot and it can be single or double.....gestures are not used for each and every word of the line; the only some of the ideas are expressed through gestures. The Tullal Katha is conceived as a story told by the serpent Ananta to Vishnu; and accordingly the crown of the dancer has the shape of serpent-hood. Along as with the singing and dancing with accompaniments will be played by the 'Ponnani' (the main) and Sinkiti (the supporter). When the performance comes, to its close, the dancer will perform 'Mangalam' in song and dance and conclude with stepping Kalasam by both feet (Sharma V.S. 2000:27).

In composing the Tullal-music, Nambiar had these thoughts in his mind:

1. to minimise the technicality of music,
2. to give tones similar to ragas for the Tullal poetry,
3. to harmonise the nature of the content, its moods, metre and music,
4. to provide the scope for the ragas and *talas*^{vi} of Kerala and
5. to maintain the simplicity of music as in the folk songs so that it may appeal to the common man (Sharma, V. S. 2000:72).

Transgression and Advent

The eighteenth century witnessed the advent of Tullal. As we have already mentioned Kūttu, kūdiyāttam and padayani could be perceived as the predecessors. There are resemblances among them. These resemblances are not mere accidents; but conjectural. As a percussionist, Nambiar was well versed with these art forms. He was a percussionist of Kūdiyāttam and Kūttu which can claim both antiquity and 'heritage'. It got systematised and originated in Kerala while Sanskrit theatre was taking shape in India (Madhavan, A.2010:21) in the midst of folk forms such as Padayani and Teyyam were in action. Nambiar had amalgamated styles from both the Sanskritic and Dravidiyan performing arts. Kūdiyāttam and Kūttu were the exemplars of the former whereas Padayani and Kakkarithi Natakam bestowed to him benevolence.

Padayani Tullal which was so popular at one stage in the central Travancore area. Even now Padayani festivals are conducted in some Devi temples of that area..... Kunjan Nambiar has said that he writes in a simple Malayalam which suits the people of Padayani...Kunjan Nambiar had occasion to witness the Padayani in which many characters including Ottan, Parayan and Sitankan appeared (Sharma,V.S.2000:21)

Nambiar had a life experience that made him to be transgressive; his childhood was such. As a percussionist he had agility with rhyme and reason as exemplified through Kūttu.

It is believed that in his childhood days itself Kunjan was brought to Kitangūr by his father who either belonged to that place or had some job there. At Kitangūr Temple there is a very ancient Kuthamblam. Kuthu and Kudiyaattam were performed there from very early times (Sharma, V.S. 2000:7)

The transgressiveness of Nambiar is such that at the one side we find traces of many classical art forms and the other side there are the folk forms like Padayani. Tullal performance cannot be categorised either as classical or folk as it was at liminal space; it was at the same time classical and popular. Nambiar gave shape to Tullal based on various visual art forms and poetic styles. Stage manuals such as Āttaparakāṣam, Kṛamadēpika and Sanskrit text *Natānkuśa* had rendered service to him (Paulose, K.G. 2006:32). These manuals though exclusively used for kūdiyāttam had a great influence on Tullal, Kathakali, Kūttu, etc. They influenced Nambiyar's *āṅgika* (the actions), *vāchika* (the dialogue) and *āharika*(the attire). *Thaurathrikam* is the term that has been coined to address the amalgamation of these three

elements on stage. The word *kūdiyāttam* in Malayalam means dancing together, this art form along with *Kūttu* and *Tullal* has the same meaning reaching to its roots i.e. dance. But then, *Tullal* is a solitary performance; both the singing and dancing are performed by a single person. He disowned, as if it were, his percussion instrument in *Tullal*; it is perhaps due to his disenchantment with his own instrument and criticism of the present.

In *Kuttu* there is no *attam*; whereas in *Tullal* there is dance but no *āttam*. In *Kūtiyāttam* and *Kuttu*, *Mizhavu* is the primary percussion, the percussion instrument of *Nambiar*, but it is avoided in *Tullal* of *Nambiar*. It is possible to postulate that *Nambiar* was abandoning his own past. The transgression was such that he abandoned his past as a percussionist. He became a performer by his own right through such abandonment.

Nambiar incarnated *Vidūshaka*; he re-in-staged *Vidūshaka* in his own manner and style. From *Kūtiyāttam* he imbibed *Vidushaka* and from *Kūttu* he imbibed satirical speech. From *Kūtiyāttam* he imbibed not so much of *āttam* but *Thullal*. From *Kūttu* he inherited solitary performance. *Vidushakan* was the motif which might have at the back of the mind of *Ottam Tullal*. *Vidushakan*'s language is Malayalam or Kerala Bhasha; he interprets what is said and acted by the *Chakyar*. He is at the same time an interpreter and innovator. Epics and past are enacted by *Chakyar*, but *vidushakan* resonate with the present as well as past. He presents past in the present. To *Vidushaka*, present is all the more important as he prompts the audience to listen and laugh; he is not merely *narmasaciva* but a *karmasaciva* for different reasons.

The *Vidushaka* expounds the famous *Purusharthas* or the four ultimate attainments in human life. This is a satire on the follies and foibles of human life by which he recounts the exploits of a group of adventurous high caste Hindu to attain the four aims, namely *Rajaseva* (waiting up on the king with flattery, gossip etc.) *Asanam* (greedy enjoyment of an enormous feast), *Vinodam* (sexual enjoyment with prostitute) and *Vanchanam* (betrayal of the prostitute whom he has enjoyed), these four *purusharthas* are interpreted in place of *Darma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksham* (*Appukkuttan Nair D.1978:4*)

Parihasam is common to *Tullal* and *Kūttu*; the thrust is to ridicule the hypocrisies of the affluent and the carriers of profound knowledge /wealth. *Cākyars*' humour and power of satire are proverbial. He cleverly introduces contemporary events and personalities into his narration, royalty and aristocracy usually were the objects of his satire. The performers of *Thullal* interpret extemporally, but have a genuine literary background, as they are good scholars trained by able teachers.

ⁱWherever we use single inverted commas, it means the statements within such quotes are transliterations.

ⁱⁱFor detailed description of different hermeneutical traditions. See, Josef, Bleicher. (1980:9-11).

ⁱⁱⁱThe legendary Astronomer and Astrologer Vararuci (4th Century A.D) as the author of *Candra vakya* (or “moon sentences”), he had popularized their use to describe, through a series of ‘nonsense’ mnemonic words or phrases, the position of the moon at regular intervals each day to help worshippers carry out their daily observances and rituals. See, Vijayalekshmy, M. (2005:1-18)

^{iv}The major musical instrument used in *Kūḍiyāttam* is a big pot drum made of copper called Mizhavu. It has only one narrow mouth and it is covered either with the skin of a calf which is naturally dead before it reaches the age of six months or with the skin of a black monkey.

The other instruments used in *Kūḍiyāttam* are Itakka, which is a cylinder shaped drum, Sankhu or a conch, kurumkuzhal, which is a wind instrument, a pair of cymbals to keep the rhythm and Timila, which is again another cylindrical drum. Kurmkuzhal is very rarely used these days but the rest of the instruments are used in a *Kūḍiyāttam* performance.

^vOttan Tullal- The actor will wear the crown only after entering the stage. On the face green powder is applied and decorations are made on the eyes, eyebrows, etc., the dancer also wears koralarāma, kazhutharam, and marmala around the neck, tholputtu, katakam, and kankanam on the arms ankle bells on the legs, saramuntu, munthi and peculiar type of kacha on the waist.

Sitankan Tullal- On the actor's head there is no crown, but only a ‘konta’ covered with a white kerchief (*urumal*) and decorated with a lotus design made of tender palm leaves. The face has no powdering but the eyes and eyebrows are painted. On the body all the decorations are made of palm leaves. The waist will be covered by ‘Kacha’ ‘Saramuntu’ and ‘munthi’. In some places the Sitankan dancer dresses in the same way as Ottan.

Parayan Tullal- the crown of the parayan Tullal dancer bears at its top a single hood. He has ‘pacha’ on the face, and the eyes and eyebrow are painted black. White ash and sandal paste are applied on the body. Instead of Kacha, the dancer puts on a red silken cloth, and wears ankle-bells only the right leg.

^{vi}The dancer sings and dances, the Maddala player and the man who gives *Thala* on the Kaimani or cymbals also sing by repeating the portion sung by the dancer. . . . Rapidly is the special feature of Tullal and if it has to be maintained, the minute and detailed aspects of music or dance cannot be presented. Almost all the ragas and *tālas* of Kerala are employed in Tullal. But the most popular instrument Chenda of Kathakali and Mizhavu of Kūṭtu are eliminated and instead Maddala is used. . . . Tullal poetry is superb blend of the elements of metre, raga and *tāla*, among the *tālas* Lakshmi^{vi} is employed in Kūṭiyāttam also (Sharma, V.S.2000:71).