

Attaprakaram and Kramadipika

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The Chakyars and the Nambiars possessed different texts on Kūṭiyāṭṭam which were handed down from generation to generation. Some of these texts are with them even now. This literature of Kūṭiyāṭṭam consists of Kramadīpika, Attaprakaram (both concerning choreographic directives), Nirvahana *śloka* (quatrains describing the anecdote concerned), Vidūshaka *śloka* (quatrains followed by Vidūshaka), Tamil colloquial expressions, Arangutali *śloka*, *Tāla prastāram* (rhythm pattern) and songs like Akkitta?

Kramadīpika and Attaprakāram are books which help Chakyars in the stage performance of the drama. What is the difference between Kramadīpika and Attaprakaram? Attaprakaram describes in Malayalam how the actors shall move, what they shall do, in order to perform on the stage the verse and prose of the drama. Kramadīpika, on the other hand, narrates the background information not explicit in the text of the drama but which is essential to be borne in mind by the actors. This includes practical details like make-up, mode of entering the stage and so on. Kramadīpikas are notes for stage application written by experts on histrionics, the Gurūs of Chakyārs, in ancient times. Attaprakarams, interspersed with portions of Kramadīpika, and Kramadīpikas containing portions of Attaprakarams are common. I have come across only a single Kramadīpika pure and entire, which has no mixing with Attaprakaram—the Kramadīpika of *Chūdāmani*, *Pratimā* and *Abhisheka* all of which relate to the Ramayana story.

The point may be made clear by one example. The following is a verse spoken by Lakshmana in the first Act of *Chudamani*:

Jyaghoṣena nirākaromi bhayadān
paryantabhājo mṛgān
Parnai sadma samāpayāmi, śayanam
badhnāmi puṣpacchadai:

Here Lakshmana says: "I shall drive out wild animals with the noise of my bow-string, make a green cottage here and make a bed therein with petals of flowers." The Attaprakaram describes how it can be enacted:

Lakshmana humbly bows [to Sri Rama:] "What were you saying? To make a green cottage here? Yes, let it be." Walks out a bit and returns. Turns and takes his bow and arrow in hand, jumps towards the lamp, looks left and right. "I shall do like this." He takes a warrior's posture, tightens his bow and produces a noise on the string.

At that time in the forest on the bank of Godavari, wild animals run amuck frightened by the noise of the bow-string. How is it? The elephants stand there fanning their ears, there echoes the noise and they hear it.

Enacts the frightened elephants running and shows that they have gone. Then enacts the frightened leopards, lions, deer running and shows that they have gone. Then cutting branches of trees and using climbers prepares for making a hut. With his sword cuts big branches, bring them to be used as pillars. From these branches he makes beams, radial layer, doors, etc. and binds firmly with barks. By collecting flowers a bed and a pillow are also made.

The above description is for the acting of two lines of a quatrain. The Attaprakarm thus narrates in Malayalam how the entire text is to be presented on the stage.

Next, an example for Kramadipika. In the third Act of *Ascharyachudamani* (p. 25) an old monk is to appear. The text provides only this much: "Tata: praviṣṭi yātrāsambhāravapyarṭo vṛddhatāpasa." The Kramadipika describes the attire, make-up and mode of entrance of the old hermit in this fashion:

After having performed up to the entry of old hermit, let the old hermit with his make-up go to the hindpart of the stage. His attire is a simple white cloth folded and worn like loin cloth. The waist ornament, *Katisutram*, shall be bound at one side slanting. Below the knee on the leg and all over the body rice powder shall be smeared with wrinkles marked. The lines are bent at middle and elongated both sides. On the forehead he wears turmeric marks and collyrium on his eyes. On the face green paint (*manayola*) shall be applied. Hair made of white threads are to be tied on the head and beard too with the same thread. Red cloth and feather disc are to be on the ear and holy thread *poonul* shall be tied. A stick in the right hand. On the left shoulder is another stick with bundles of *sruva*, *juhu*, wooden board to sit on, *pāduka*, wooden cup named *kinti*, the holy text, deer's skin, grass twig named *camata* tied up at both ends. Walk with the help of the right hand stick. This is the make-up for the old hermit. The young hermit, after Naipathyam, shall pronounce and act "na sūnyamira" shall walk around to conclude. Then there is the formal entry of the old hermit. He holds the curtain and reads, sings twice and then recites the *alamasloka*:

Niścāranāthāgamanad
janita bhayaścalitagātray stirasau
Yātrā sambharabhara—
śśanakairāyāti tāpaso vṛddhaḥ:

Let him tie down the *uttariya* on his hand. After the *sloka*, he shall reads and coughs like an old man, and in the same tune as in the *sloka* announces his words of retreat. "ita ita svāgatamatithaye". Coughs again, places his bundles on the shoulder and walks on the support of his stick, bent and faltering. Turns around and at the finale there are continuous drum beats. He leans firmly on the stick, turns. Concludes with the items *nirgita*, *cāri*, and *parikrama*. These are the rituals for the old hermit behind curtain. Then he sprays water on the face turns towards stage. His entry on a bent forward posture. He coughs, shows an old man's behaviour and speaks out: "Durghatam durghatam ho ho!" Afraid of Ravana he nervously looks around and walks in haste. After performing entry like this he hears "Aahamatithi, kotra bha" and speaks out twice "ita ita svāgatamatidhaye," shows movement of entering and concludes.

This is the nature of Kramadipika. All important instructions for actors are given here. Attaprakaram has textual meanings and explanations to help the acting. All other topics are discussed in Kramadipika, especially make-up details and different modes of entry.

In our Kūttampalam several Sanskrit plays are being performed. Centuries back nine plays right from the entry of Sutrādhāra upto Bharatavakya were in vogue in their full form. The plays are *Swapnavasavadatta*, *Pratijnagaugandharayana*, *Pratimānātaka*, *Abhishekanātaka*, *Ascharyachudamani*, *Subhadrādhānanjaya*, *Tapati-Samvarana*, *Nagananda*, and *Balacarita*. Two one-act plays, *Dutavākya* and *Dutaghatotkacha*, a *vyayoga*, *Kalyanasaugandhika*, two comedies, *Bhagavadajjukiya* and *Mattavilāsa* and

certain other *rupakas* were also enacted. Presumably the Chakyars did perform *Urubhanga*, *Madhyamavyayoga* and *Pancharatra* too. Each had its Attaprakaram and Kramadipika, and unfortunately, except a few, they are lost. About those which are now available, we have no information regarding their time and authorship. From the treatment of subjects and from the style it appears that a few are very old and others recent. But those which are written within the last four and five centuries are very rare indeed.

Centuries back, the practice of acting a drama as a whole, had come to an end in our country. The present practice is to stage a portion of a play, upto a maximum of one Act, often certain portions of one Act. The portions which are in vogue are the first Act of *Subhadradhananjaya*, Surpanakhāṅka of *Chudamani*, Asōkavanikāṅkam, Anguliyankam, the first and third Acts of *Abhishekanataka* (Balivadham and Torana-yuddha), the First Act of *Nagananda*, and third act of *Pratijnayougandharayana* (Mantrāṅkam). As a ritual, certain portions of the comedy *Mattavilasa* are also enacted. Till recently, it seems, certain portion of *Kalyanasaugandhika* vyayoga and of the one-act plays *Dutavakya* and *Dutaghatotakacha* were enacted at Velloor and Vennimala. It may not be difficult to trace out their Attaprakāra and Kramadipika, if we try now. To collect them, to edit and publish, would indeed be a great boon to our theatrical art.

The nature and style of the Attaprakarams and Kramadipikas, which I have read, are as follows.

1. *Kramadipika of Rāmāyana dramas*

The Chakyārs used to perform in ancient times, continuously for months together, a Ramayana Natakam by joining together three plays; *Ascharyachūdāmani*, *Pratimanātaka* and *Abhishekanātaka*. Altogether there are twenty-one acts. A separate Kramadipika has been prepared for each act. It is found that in the lone case of the seventh act of *Chudamani* (Anguliyankam), the separate Kramadipika is missing. The reason for this is presumably that before preparing this Ramayanam Kramadipika, a very detailed Attaprakaram including Kramadipika might have been popular for acting Anguliyankam. The Ramayanam Kramadipika only gives the advice to act Anguliyankam as per existing practice. The practice was there and was well known.

In the above Kramadipika, all matters that a veteran guru is supposed to deal with are described following the dictates of Bharata Muni's *Natya Sastra*. These include tools for make up and costume, special feature of each *vesham*, gait, posture of sitting, style of looking at, expression of mood and sentiment, tonal effects while uttering each word, speech patterns including stammering, frolicking, elongating, structure and form of dance, etc. It also includes remuneration and other rights of artistes. In brief, this is a document of the basic science of Kerala's theatrical art.

2. *The Attaprakaram for Anguliyankam*

This can be called the Veda of the Chakyar. Anguliyankam is the six act of *Chudamani*. It is based on this drama that Chakyars learn their traditional art of histrionics. Its expressions are very elaborate. Hanuman is the sole character of the act. Sita is supposed to be there, but she is not present on the stage. The few words that Sita is to say are narrated by the Nangiar in the background. Hanuman, having crossed the

ocean and reached Lanka, searches everywhere and finally locates Sita sitting below a *simsapa* tree at Asokavanika. Hanuman intimates to Sita incidents such as the agreement between Sugriva and Rama and presents the ring of Rama to her. Only this portion of the story is dealt with in this Act. But the acting would take days together. Its Attaprakaram is prepared for such an elaborate performance. The plots and sub-plots suggested in each word are described at full length. The past story of Kishkindha Kanda, which is not there in the text of the drama, comes here in full. Surasa is overpowered in Hanuman's crossing of the ocean. Dialogue with Mainaka, the killing of Simhika and other encounters in the journey towards Lanka are enacted. How Ravana conquered the Heavens is shown. How Ganga was brought down to the world, how Hanuman was born, and such other anecdotes which can be related to the textual words, of the drama in some way or other are performed by the sole actor Hanuman in this scene. As conclusion, the verses of the first five acts of *Chudamani* too are usually enacted. Even now in many temples an item of festival is Atiyantira-Küttu (ritual performance) and Anguliyankam is taken for his purpose. A minimum of 12 nights are required for this. Verses numbering about five hundred which provides related anecdotes which are interspersed in the acting have been collected and compiled from epics such as Ramayana. The Attaprakārams of all these verses too are written and thus the Anguliyankam Attaprakāram is very comprehensive and elaborate. To have a satisfactory performance of the Act, at least forty-one days would be required.

3. The Attaprakaram of Mantrānkam

Mantrankam is the third act of *Pratijnayaugandharayana*. The Vidushaka has the key role to play. In the acting of Sanskrit drama by Chakyars, the Vidushaka makes speeches in Malayalam. Mantrankam is speech-oriented.

Just as many related anecdotes are presented through *angika abhinaya* in Anguliyankam, in Mantrankam we see many an anecdote is narrated through spoken word by the Vidushaka. The Chakyars learn the art of narrating stories by practising Mantrankam. Epic stories such as Birth of Vyasa, Incarnation of Vamana, Burning of Tripura, Ramayanam, Swayamvara of Draupadi, Subhadraharanam, Burning of Khandava, Kiratam, pastoral stories and narratives of even the pornographic brand such as *Paramangalam* story, the story of *Ummikunnathu Bhatta*, the story of polished rice being sown instead of paddy, the story of ringing the bell by Kizhkkantala, the experimentation of cold bath for high-fever, the story of the dinner given to Bhava-Sarma, the parrot story, the story of the merchant Chettiyar, the stories of the danseuse Anangalekha and lovers Unyaranan and Ittaranam, etc. are to be narrated in Mantrankam. It is considered that Anguliyankam provides all the necessary training for a Chakyar for miming and Mantrankam all the skill of words. The Mantrankam Attaprakaram is very old. Moreover, my Guru Attoor Krishna Pisharoti once told me of two or three various Attaprakārams of Mantrankam that he had seen. I have seen certain portions of Mantrankam written in Sanskrit beginning: "Mantrankasya Prayogartham upadesa Kramagatam." This Attaprakaram gives much information on the political condition and social life of Kerala in those days.

4. *Asokavanikankam Attaprakaram.*

Asokavanikankam is the fifth Act of *Chudamani*. Next to Anguliyankam, this is the most important in regard to *angika abhinaya*. The act was performed in 16 days and the attaprakaram was written accordingly. The *Manuscript Library* at Trivandrum has printed and published it. This too is not available now, it seems.

5. *The Attaprakaram of Bhagavadajjukīyam*

This fine comedy (Prahasana) was performed here in about 40 days. A detailed Attaprakaram, including Kramadipika, was found by me in the collection of my teacher, Attoor. It contains broad commentaries of all philosophic systems from Charvaka to Vedanta. Also described here are all ritualistic practices right from the birth of a child to the death of a man, and all religious rites like Yaga. More than half of it is Sanskrit and the rest is Malayalam. There can be no other Attaprakaram which has given so much importance to philosophic theories. The daily rites of Buddhists are also described. On the basis of linguistic study we may conclude that the oldest among the Attaprakarams are Mantrankam and *Bhagavadajjukīyam*.

There is a guidebook giving details of miming in respect of *Subhadra Dhananjaya* and *Tapati Samvarana*. It is called *Vyangya Vyakha*. It is written to help the actors, and is an actual description of the performance of poet Kulasekhara Varma who himself took the role and acted. As directed by the poet, an old scholar had written this book which is useful to artistes, like an Attaprakaram. The Attaprakaram now available in respect of *Subhadra Dhananjaya* and *Tapati Samvarana* have no relation with this *Vyangya Vyakha*. A Malayalam translation of this *Vyangya Vyakha* is very essential.

There is no practice of Vidushaka singing a 'counter-quatrain' (*pratislōka*) in dramas like *Dhananjaya*, *Samvarana*, *Nagananda*, etc. The Chakyars have many *slokas* for this purpose. There are also many *slokas* which are sung in the mock-*Purushartha* narrative. It is believed Tola Kavi is the author of all these *slokas*. A few years back, Kottakal P.V. Krishna Warriar collected and published many quatrains from *Purushartha*, and counter-quatrain from *Dhananjaya* and *Samvarana*. There are many more *slokas* to be collected in this field.

There is the practice of speaking Tamil in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. It means to narrate the story in Malayalam language. Tamil here means language. The section of the audience which does not know either Sanskrit or gesture language should also follow the story. For this purpose Nambiars used to make speeches along with *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. This is known as Tamil-speaking and is compulsory for all *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. Many prose works in Malayalam were made for this purpose. They are *Anguliyankam Tamil*, *Dutavakyam gadyam*, etc. Nowadays this practice of Tamil speech has more or less disappeared. "For all purposes, the text rendering should be followed by Tamil speech and only after the Tamil speech should there be further acting. This is the custom. a hundred panams for Tamil," it is mentioned in the Kramadipika of *Chudamani*. In other Kramadipikas too it is stipulated that Nambiars should be remunerated properly for their Tamil speech. Nowadays, only for *Anguliyankam* there is the practice of speaking Tamil. All other Tamil in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* has disappeared.

Briefly, it may be stated that Attaprakaram and Kramadipika are the source-texts for

the Chakyārs to perform Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Among the Kramadipikas available now, the most useful one is Ramayanam Kramadipika and among the Āttaparakārams, Anguliyankam, Mantrankam and Asokavanikankam are the outstanding ones. The Attaparakaram of *Bhagavadajjukiyam* is also an excellent one.

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