

Theatre Criticism in Malayalam

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1. Theatre Tradition in Kerala

Theatre criticism in Kerala probably dates back to the comments on Meypādu in *Tolkāppiyam* in the pan-Dravidian days, long before Malayalam evolved as a language (12th century). To what extent these were influenced by similar treatises like Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* is not clear. The continuity of the Kūṭiyāttam presentations of Sanskrit plays is some evidence of the early preoccupations of Keralites with dramaturgy. It is even argued that Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabhāratī* is conceived in the form of answers to questions raised by theatre workers from Kerala who went to Kashmir to seek clarifications from the great savant. The *āṭṭaparakārams* (stage manuals) and *kramadīpikas* (production manuals) of Kūṭiyāttam are an indication of self-awareness on the part of actors and trainers of actors. Theatre criticism is internalized in these manuals and the oral tradition of criticism must have contributed to the growth of this self-awareness. Perhaps the earliest of available texts on Kerala stage and theatre is *Bālarāmabharatam*, an 18th-century treatise in Sanskrit written by Kartika Tirunal Balarama Varma Maharaja of Travancore. It is an attempt to describe the techniques of stage presentation in the *toury-atrika* style used in Kerala. Though basically inspired by Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, it contains many concepts deviating from the original. One of the important ideas in *Bālarāmabharatam* concerns the definition of *bharatatvam*.

2. The Definition of Bharatatvam

Rāgasambaddha tālakriyā parichhedyā bhāvanānubhāvātvaṃ Bharatatvam.

(Bharata means the experience of the imagination regulated by tālakriyā to the accompaniment of rāga).

Whatever *tālakriyā* is there accompanied by *rāga*, whatever imagination is there regulated by *tālakriyā*, the experience of that is *Bharata*. If *Bharata* is defined as the experience of the imagination, it is broad enough to include children's *nāṭya* too. To avoid this kind of inclusiveness, *Bharata* is modified by *kriyāparichhedyā*. Children may have imaginative experience, but not knowledge of *tāla*. If *Bharata* is defined as the experience of the imagination regulated by *tālakriyā*, it is broad enough to include the insane. The insane may have mastery of some kind of dance, hence it has to be modified as *śāstroktā tālakriyā*: scientific *tālakriyā*. But it does not mention *rāga*, the definition will be too narrow. Hence *rāgasambaddha* should be added.

If *Bharata* is defined as *rāgasambaddha bhāvanānubhāvātvaṃ*, it may have the experience of auditory imagination, but, since body movements alone have *tāla* as a quality, *tālakriyā parichhedyā* should be added, otherwise it will not materialize. This will help to

avoid the inclusion of *avatālanāṭya*, the violation of *tāla*. To avoid the over-inclusiveness of *tālakriya*, it has to be modified by *kriya*. If the word *tāla* is omitted, the definition will include the use of wrong *tāla*. If the word *rāga* is omitted, the definition will include the use of wrong *rāga* or false notes. If the word *bhāvana* is omitted, the definition will lead to *rasahinata*, the absence of *rasa*. If the word *anubhava* is left out, the definition will cover untrained performances as well as mere memory of performances. If only the word *bhāvana* is used, it may include *parakīya bhāvana* such as in *śālabhanjika nāṭya* and *nāṭya vidambana*. Hence the qualification *svakīya* should be added. But if *svakīya bhāvana* is mentioned, is it *bāhya bhāvana* or *antara bhāvana* (external imagination or internal imagination)? *Bhāvana* has to be *ubhayātmaka*, both external and internal. Thus the final definition of *Bharata tatvam* is

Rāgasambaddha tālakriyā parichhedya parakīya bhāvanā rahita svakīyāntarabāhyabhāvananubhāvataṭvam.

3. Classical and Folk Theatres

While traditional theatre in Kerala consists of classical theatre forms like *Kūṭiyāttam*, *Krishnāttam*, *Kathakali*, etc. and non-classical theatre forms such as the ritual theatre of *Mudiyeṭtu*, *Padēni* and *Theyyam* or folk theatre forms like *Kākkārissi*, only the classical tradition had developed a critical consciousness which led to the creation of treatises on theatre. Ritual and folk theatre by and large depended on oral sources. Hence critical writings on non-classical theatre forms are almost absent.

4. The Rise of Modern Theatre

Drama and theatre in the modern sense started in Kerala, it is usually believed, when Kerala Varma's translation of Kalidasa's *Śākuntalam* in 1882 inaugurated a series of translations from Sanskrit and English into Malayalam. This eventually led to the writing of original plays, but the commercial stage was mostly controlled by the performance of Tamil musicals and their imitations in Malayalam. For instance, the Tamil play *Sadāram* was staged in Trivandrum around 1901 or 1902 and K.C. Kēsava Pillai, the Malayalam poet and composer, wrote his *Sadārāma* in 1903 under its influence. A few theatre troupes were also formed in Kerala—like the Manomohanam Company led by Thiruvattar Narayana Pillai, Vinodachintamani under C.P. Achuta Menon, Rasikaranjini under Chathukkutti Mannadiyar and the Paramasiva Vilasam Company under P.S. Warriar. However it is difficult to say that this led to any large-scale writing on theatre and performance. But the spate of Malayalam plays—adaptations, translations as well as originals—did produce critical reaction in the form of a parody—*Chakki Chankaram*—in 1894. It is a vigorous exposure to ridicule all the literary and stage conventions indiscriminately employed. The author Sri Rama Kurup explained his motive in 1895 in a paper read at the meeting of Bhāshapōshini Sabha:

How many plays came into being, like the birth of *Raktabijas*, in the wake of Kerala Varma's *Bhāsha Śākuntalam* and [Chathukkutti] Mannadiyar's *Jānakīparinayam*? Do you think these plays were written without intelligence? When I say in all seriousness that plays are written by intelligent people, do I sound playful? . . . What

change of situation has resulted from the burning of the two above mentioned plays in the fierce fire of the creativity of the modern writers! Like dry grass in a flaming fireplace, emitting smoke all around! The tusker and the haystack had been made almost equal. The crow and the crane are of the same blue . . . Although many intelligent dramatic poets continue to produce their works, since there is no other way to redress their defects, I myself decided to take the trouble to suppress them for the time being. In short this is the main objective of my humble *Chakki Chankaram*.

[Vidya Vinodini]

Nevertheless, the divergence between dramatic literature and theatrical performance continued for several decades. The serious writer did not pay any attention to the musicals just as the stage artist did not care for serious plays. For instance it may be mentioned here that there was an attempt to dramatize *Indulekha*, the first great novel in Malayalam (1889). The novelist Chandu Menon himself had apprehensions about its fate. The poet K.C. Narayanan Nambiar makes a mention of this in the preface to his comic version of *Indulekha* written with the express intention of preempting the dramatization of the novel.

I wrote this play for mere fun. The late Chandu Menon, the author of *Indulekha*, in a conversation some time ago had told me, "I hear someone is going to dramatize *Indulekha*. I am afraid it will turn my novel into something out of shape. That play will not come out if Nambiar makes a comic version ending with the prologue". It was accordingly made just then.

[Quoted in G. Sankara Pillai's *Malayāla Nāṭaka Charitram*]

The prologue and the epilogue seem to be the same. It goes like this:

Good stories are twisted out of shape and spoilt
Plays are printed in the form of books and sold
Let the ladies laugh at those who do such things
Let those be put to shame in the years to come

[Quoted in G. Sankara Pillai]

5. Beginnings of Drama Criticism

The nine farces of C.V. Raman Pillai and their imitations provided material for theatre performances, especially for amateur performances in Trivandrum. Sri Chitra Tirunal Vayanasala (library) began to put on board new plays every year but they were mostly intended to provide entertainment. It is doubtful whether they could have led to serious critical evaluation of the plays performed. Some information about those performances may be gathered from the autobiographies of playwrights and actors written decades later. It was perhaps in northern Kerala that drama became an instrument of social reform, serious plays first came to be written and provoked serious responses. Kelappan, more a social worker than a critic, wrote about the play *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku* (From the Kitchen to the Platform, 1930):

Young people as a result opposed the defective Vedic training, introduced *Paridevanam* [marriage of younger sons in Nambudiri families within the caste], women broke up the traditional umbrellas [symbols of purdah] and came out. Women also came forward to receive modern education, widow marriages were introduced. The Nambudiri community got ready to move forward on a par with other communities. It was V.T. who gave leadership to such changes. *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku* was the sharpest weapon he used.

[Foreword to the play]

In Trivandrum too, a new awareness was in the air. Kesari Balakrishna Pillai was quite familiar with the changes taking place in Europe. He translated the plays of Ibsen and became the centre of an ideological ferment. P.K. Vikraman Nair, one of the most gifted actors in Trivandrum, joined hands with N. Krishna Pillai, the budding playwright. This collaboration resulted in the production of new plays, which were exemplary of the new kind of social criticism as well as theatre criticism. Vikraman Nair later wrote a seminal essay on the psychology of the actor. He demonstrated it in the role of the main character in Krishna Pillai's *Bhagnabhavanam* (Broken House, 1942):

This is how N. Krishna Pillai defines his own ideal of drama as well as his practice in the writing of plays:

My ideal was to write a play closely analysing any serious and fundamental problem of life with a sense of realism, using only the plot structure, time and space, characters, situations, dialogues and diction which, I was convinced, were absolutely essential for its unveiling, and focussing all those elements exclusively on the total revelation of the selected problem. What impelled me to take up such an objective were the works of the playwrights of those days who were indifferent or ignorant about such matters and the plays of Ibsen who had successfully pursued those functions in every word from beginning to end. Using a single-line plot since the traditional double-line plot often interfered with the concentration of effect, cutting down the number of scenes to avoid unnecessary obesity—I took these steps with the desire and determination to achieve the above-mentioned objective.

[*Kairaliyude Katha*]

6. *The First Malayalam Book on Theatre*

The forties of the present century saw the birth of innumerable societies which even in remote villages could arrange the performance of plays. C.J. Thomas, who was to become one of the foremost playwrights in the language, developed close associations with these societies and he felt that a study of the nature and function of drama on stage was a prerequisite to the growth of theatre criticism. In 1950 he published his *Uyarunna Yavanika* (The Rising Curtain) which was the first book in Malayalam to focus attention on living theatre.

7. *The Curtain Rises*

C.J. Thomas was among the first of Kerala's theatre critics to sensitize the reading public about the conditions of the stage and about contemporary plays. He was however of the view that the roots of Malayalam theatre could not be found in Kerala's traditions. Judging by the then available trends and accounts he was trying to argue that drama was introduced from the West with the arrival of the Portuguese. The Chavittunatakam popularized by the Christians under Portuguese inspiration was thought of as a source. He discounted the influence of Kūtiyāttam and Kathakali. He was also not adequately familiar with folk-theatre traditions. However he could appreciate the contribution of N. Krishna Pillai and could assess the political plays of Kesava Dev and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. He highlighted the role of the director in the production of a play at a time when this was almost unheard of. In *Uyarunna Yavanika* he writes about the director:

The director becomes the dictator when after the rehearsals are over the performance begins. For those two hours he may not care for the opinions of any other person. There is no job that causes so much headache. The strength of his authority comes from the magnitude of his responsibility. He is at that moment responsible for the performance, for the discipline of the actors, stage-setting, and in fact everything on the stage. On the one hand he may clear the doubt of an actor. On the other he has to see to the snacks for the actors. He has to offer the explanation if anything goes wrong on the stage. If the individual, who has to get so much done within so short a span of time, does not have the right to issue orders, it will affect his efficiency.

[Uyarunna Yavanika]

In his own plays, especially in his later plays such as *Crime 27 of 1128* and *Ā Manushyan Nee Tanne* (Thou Art That Man), C.J. Thomas chalked out his own style, but they remained closet plays until the stage directors came forward many years later to produce them. The plays that captured the attention of large masses in those days were those of Thoppil Bhasi and N.N. Pillai. N. Krishna Pillai, C.J. Thomas, C.N. Sreekantan Nair and G. Sankara Pillai attracted only the intelligentsia. They did not cater to the interests of commercial theatre troupes or of mass audiences. All these playwrights have written theatre criticism also. Reviews of performances were rare; they were mostly first responses to first performances. There is no tradition in Malayalam of regular reviews of productions. No critic has specialized in commenting on theatre productions. Occasionally in week-end editions of dailies, there may be brief comments sponsored by the playwrights or the performing troupes. The absence of an enlightened critical commentator has affected the growth of theatre in Kerala. Kalanilayam Theatres took the initiative to publish a book on theatre production called *Nātakavedi* (1961) by Madavur Bhasi. It was claimed to be the first book in Malayalam on the production of plays. It contains brief notes on several aspects of modern stage productions. Bhasi writes more as a practical stage-hand than as a mere theoretician. The book is like an introductory textbook for theatre practitioners containing counsels for rehearsal, make-up, lighting, stage-effects, etc.

8. Towards a New Concept

The first attempts to educate theatre workers—directors, actors, greenroom assistants, stage-hands, etc.—were started only in the 1960s. C.J. Thomas was quite interested in organizing an enlightened group of artists, but he could not do much in this direction. His famous essay on 'Natakam' (1957) published in *Gopuram* is an expression of total dissatisfaction with the existing stage practices. In the sixties, theatre enthusiasts like M. Govindan, C.N. Sreekanthan Nair, G. Sankara Pillai and P.K. Venukuttan Nair started a series of *natakakalaris* (theatre workshops). C.N. Sreekantan Nair had experimented with a playreading group at Kottayam earlier and the souvenir published by the group known as Navarangam had created the atmosphere for a new attitude towards the theatre. How to maintain a serious theatre with true professionalism as different from amateurishness on the one hand and from crass commercialism on the other was the main concern of the group. The first *natakakalari* was held at Sasthamcottah and this was followed by the publication of *Arang* 1968—the first of a projected series (but there was no sequel to it). In that volume C.N. Sreekantan Nair wrote about the birth of a theatre:

Has the Malayalam theatre come of age? Or, do we see only the eagerness to take to wings? Is it time to say it has got a place outside the labour room? Do we have a modern theatre that is part of our life? This is only an enquiry concerning the theatre that has been imported from the West and is still aloof from Kerala's (and India's) tradition. I do remember here with the respect they deserve the plays that are immensely popular and the people who crowd around to see them. But aren't they doing their make-up outside the greenroom and performing outside the auditorium? Those who are knowledgeable about the theatre can think only like that. All that we now have, to promote the growth of a theatre history, are the footsteps of those actors who once in a while play for a brief time on our empty stage before a thin audience. The aim of this article is to look for those footsteps. I don't take into account those who play outside the auditorium, however great they might be. It is not the objective of this writer to make a survey of the past eighty-odd years of Malayalam theatre either. When an attempt is made to evaluate the gains and losses of the efforts calculated to turn Malayalam stage from mere entertainment to something serious, it should help us to see Malayalam theatre in its proper form.

This marks a trend which led to a search for roots. The theatre of roots—*tanatu nataka vedi*, as it came to be called—was at that time the concern of theatre people all over India. In the symposium on 'The Crisis in Indian Theatre' published in *Theatre India* (1977) this search for a national theatre became the focus of attention. T.R. Sukumaran Nair, a veteran Malayalam stage actor, comments on this question as follows:

In my view it will be just a waste of time and energy to blindly transplant the so-called indigenous theatre practices of the past on the modern stage. Imitating the past is as bad as, if not worse than, imitating the West. Instead, what is desirable or necessary is to absorb the best in our tradition along with the best elsewhere and achieve a proper fusion. How can genuine progress in any field be possible without inter-cultural interaction?

9. *Natakakalari and After*

In *Arang* 1968, G. Sankara Pillai had laid down the basic requirements of this new theatre based on the concept of *natakakalari*:

Drama has a vast universe to itself that includes within its range the gifted playwright, the expert director, the well-set stage, talented actors and an audience capable of appreciating every subtle nuance of the performance. We can assert that drama is fully grown only when all these elements are equally strong and well-developed. How can we bring such a situation into being? The basic requirements for this is that those who are engaged in the field should have clear idea of what drama is. The inspirational source of a play may be the irresistible usage of the power of genius. But when it has to be channelled through the medium of drama, he has to yield to certain controls and regulations. The question "What is drama?" comes up before him, and this begins to control his writing even without his conscious awareness: the play is the thing for the director—the base. His medium is the stage. The medium includes the moving actors and actresses, their costume and make-up, their movements, the light on the stage, and the sounds from the greenroom. What a complex medium! Body movements, controlled actions and trained voice are all instruments for the actors. What the audience of a play really appreciates is the happy harmony and cooperation of the trinity, playwright, director and actor. A reader can enjoy a play only if he knows the possibilities and limitations, strengths and weakness of the threefold unity in the work.

The basic truth that emerges from all that has been said above is just one thing: that not only to write and stage and enact a play, but even to appreciate it, we need training. This is no new truth. Practical knowledge is a primary requirement that any art demands. It may then be asked, why it has to be stated here like a principle. One can only point one's finger at our theatre world in answer to that. To our theatre of today which has to bear the burden of so-called theatre specialists who wear the overcoat of ignorance, squat on the throne of stupidity, make hoarse throats sing to its glory, and spell out the magic formula of sheer lack of knowledge. From the time drama came into being, we have never refused to recognize the importance of training in principle. Are literary discussions about the technicians of drama unknown to India? Haven't dramatic presentation and other related

topics been subjected to discussion? But those discussions and investigations, judgements and arguments, lie asleep on the pages of *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Attaprakāra* while our drama trespasses anywhere and grazes like a cow that has gone astray. That is our story today'; the tragic story that we ought to take into account. [Arang 1968]

10. New Ramifications

G. Sankara Pillai's assumption of office as Director, Calicut University School of Drama, provided an academic status and recognition to his past organizational efforts in theatre training and workshops. The introduction of university-level courses gave theatre training a respectability. The starting of the Journal *Ruchi* (alternate issues in English and Malayalam) gave a further backing to serious and informed theatre criticism. Sankara Pillai's posthumous collection of essays on the theatre called *Nātakadarsanam* is evidence of this untiring efforts to establish not only a viable theatre but also an articulate response to the problems of Indian theatre today. He has written eloquently about the open-air Theatre as well as other new forms. His book on *Samvidhāyaka Sankalpam* (The Concept of a Director) shows him as a conscientious interpreter of plays by other authors. His comments on 'Theatre Under the Sky (1988)' (the street theatre) shows how broad his perspective on theatre criticism was:

The street play becomes something special not merely because the stage here becomes the sky. It is not merely presenting on the open-air stage of the street corner the play meant for the closed proscenium inside a hall. The changes in the sky that seem to support and envelop the play affect the meaning, structure, and style of representation. No street play presented without keeping this in mind will really suit that concept. If only the elementary meaning of something presented in the open-air theatre of the street is taken into account, then Mudi yettu and Therukoothu will all be street plays. But it should not be forgotten that we are using that term today to get established a certain specific concept. At the same time we should take into account changes in the structure and form of the stage trinity (play, actor, spectator) and their interrelationship since at the same time the street becomes the stage, its sky-line and the entire performing area. [Natakadarsanam]

Kavalam Narayana Panikkar too has espoused the cause of the new theatre—theatre of roots—knowing very well that roots are not everything. His knowledge of music and dance informs his theatre criticism. His experience of performing Sanskrit plays in his own style—specially those of Bhasa and Kalidasa—acts as a spur to his speculations on theatre. He has not so far collected his essays and speeches on theatre—but the scattered articles indicate the direction of his thinking in favour of the convergence of the traditional with the contemporary, of the classical with the non-classical, of the ritualistic with the rural folk elements. It is an indication of how far we have come away from what theatre and theatre criticism had been a hundred years ago. But we do know we have miles to go.

11. Conclusion

The publication of two bibliographies of plays on the occasion of the centenary of modern Malayalam drama and theatre marks an important stage in the history of theatre criticism. The Encyclopaedia of Malayalam Theatre published by Madavur Bhasi (*Malayālanātakasārvasvam*, 1990) contains not only information about drama as literature but also detained accounts of actors, directors, theatre troupes, publications, periodicals, etc. Its publication indicates an advanced stage in the theatrical consciousness of the

Malayalis. It includes a series of appendices in the form of articles on Sanskrit theatre in Kerala, the growth of Malayalam drama, foreign influence on Malayalam theatre, radio drama, etc. The publication of biographies and autobiographies (P.J. Cherian, Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, etc.) is another important landmark. Books like K.S. Narayana Pillai's *Drisyavedi* (1985) raise questions such as the search for a national theatre. Theatre criticism in Malayalam may thus be seen to have come a long way from the days in the 1930s and 1940s when people like E.V. Krishna Pillai and C.J. Thomas lamented that the popularity of Kathakali was a hindrance to the growth of drama and theatre in Malayalam. □

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Nambudiri, A.P.P. *Natakathilekkoru Natappatha*. (A Guide to Drama), 1967. In addition to plot, characterization, language and humour in drama, the book contains brief accounts of epic theatre, absurd theatre, translation of drama and Malayalam drama today.

- Nambudiri, A.P.P. *Natakadarsanam* (A View of Drama), 1988. Contains a description of different kinds of drama and evaluations of six Malayalam playwrights.
- Nambudiri, C.K. *Chattiraankam*. Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1980. This is a study of the performing art called Chattiraankam followed by the text. The nature of the performance is described along with its historical origins.
- Nandi* (Prologue). Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1974.
- Narayanan, Kattumadam. *Nataroopacharcha* (A Discussion on Dramatic Form), 1973. Contains a detailed account of the different elements of drama as a visual art.
- Narayanan, Kattumadam. *Malayala Natakathilude* (A Journey through Malayalam Drama). A critical introduction to the history of Malayalam drama.
- Natakakālarī* (Theatre Workshop). Ed. C.J. Smaraka Prasanga Samiti, Koothattukulam: 1972. Contains 10 articles on different aspects of drama and theatre, basically about leading contemporary Malayalam playwrights and their works. Of special importance is C.N. Sreekantan Nair's article on 'theatre of the roots'.
- Natakam Oru Patanam* (Drama: A Study). Ed. C.J. Smaraka Prasanga Samithi, Koothattukulam: 1962. Contributions include N. Krishna Pillai, M.K. Sanu, Sukumar Azhicode, A.P.P. Nambudiri, T.N. Gopinathan Nair. The articles deal with different aspects of drama in general and Malayalam drama in particular.
- Paniker, K. Ayyappa. 'C.J. Thomasinte Natakangal' (The Plays of C.J. Thomas) in *C.J. Smarakagrantham*, Koothattukulam, C.J. Smaraka Prasanga Samiti, 1961, pp. 153-162.
- Paniker, K. Ayyappa. 'Prekshakan' (The Spectator) in *Rangavataranam*. Trivandrum: State Institute of Languages, 1979, pp. 539-560.
- Paniker, K. Ayyappa. 'Kutiyattam, Keralattinte Vacikakhyna Parampariyam' (Kutiyattam, Kerala's Heritage of Oral Narration) in *Kalakeli* (S.K. Nair Smaranika). Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1985, pp. 32-40.
- Paniker, K. Ayyappa. 'Kavyanatakangal' (Poetic Drama) in *Vailloppilli Kavita Sameeksha*. Trivandrum: State Institute of Languages, 1986, pp. 100-120.
- Paniker, K. Ayyappa. 'Kathakaliyile Natakayata' (The Dramatic Elements in Kathakali) in *Drisyavedi* (1976), pp. 4-6.
- Paniker, K. Ayyappa. 'Anushthana Kalakulam Malayala Drisyavediyum' (Ritual Arts and Malayalam Stage) in *Bhashaposhini*, 2,4 (1978-79), pp. 24-27.
- Pillai, Chengannur Raman. *Thekkanchittayilulla Kathakali Abhyasakramangal* (Kathakali Training Programme in the Southern Style). Trichur: Kerala Kalamandalam, 1973. This is a comprehensive introduction to Kathakali training dealing with body exercises, dance sequences, the prologue, introduction, special acrobatic effects and methods of acting or *abhinaya*, followed by the stage manuals for 11 popular stories. The author was a great performer. The book carries a Foreword by M.K.K. Nayar.
- Pillai, G. Bhargavan. *Kakkari Natakam* (Minstrel Play). Kottayam: NBS, 1976. The text of a folk play known as Kakkari Natakam performed by wandering minstrels known as Kakkalas, with a knowledgeable historical account of the performance and its significance.
- Pillai, G. Sankara, ed. *The Theatre of the Earth is Never Dead*. Introduction by Kapila Vatsyayan. Trichur: University of Calicut: School of Drama (Traditional Arts Project), 1986. This is basically a collection of essays on the traditional arts and rituals of Kerala. It contains contributions by G. Sankara Pillai ('The Theatre of the Earth Never Dies'), K. Ayyappa Paniker ('The Mask Dance of the God of Death in Patayani'), C.V. Narayanan Nair ('Fencing in Ancient Kerala'), K.B. Iyer ('The Shadow Play in Malabar'), Prince Kerala Varma ('The Appurtenances of Kathakali'), G. Gangadharan Nair ('Kaliyuttu—A Ritual Form of Kerala'), A.K. Nambiar ('Structure of a Magical Ritual') and M.N. Krishnan Nambodiri (interviews with performers), and a Report of village festivals. The appendix is a source of information about tribes, forms of arts, and artists. There are many illustrative photographs.
- Pillai, G. Sankara. *Natakadarsanam* (A Perspective of Drama). Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1990.
- Pillai, G. Sankara. *Brechtinte Natakasankalpam* (Brecht's Concept of Drama).
- Pillai, G. G. Sankara. *Ibsente Natakasankalpam* (Ibsen's Concept of Drama). Contains observations on Ibsen's influence on Malayalam drama.

Pillai, G. Sankara., *Malayalanataka Sahitya Charithram*. (A History of Malayalam Dramatic Literature). Trichur: Kerala Sahitya Akaadmi, 1980. Published on the occasion of the centenary of Malayalam drama and the silver jubilee of Sahitya Akademi. It is the most comprehensive historical survey of Malayalam theatre and stage till date.

Pillai, G. Sankara, *Samvidhayaka Sankalpam* (The Concept of the Director). Kottayam; D.C. Books, 1990.

Pillai, Kainikkara Kumara. *Natakeeyam* (On Theatre), 1978. Foreword by N. Krishna Pillai. It is a collection of thirteen essays and has won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award.

Pillai, K. Raghavan, ed. *Ashtapadi Attaprakaram*. Trivandrum: Manuscripts Library, 1964. This is a composition by Rama Varman adapting Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* to dance sequence around 1801. It gives the Malayalam rendering of the Sanskrit original.

Pillai, K. Raghavan. ed. *Kalinatakam Adhava Darikasuravadham*, 1960.

Pillai, K.S. Narayana. *Drisyavedi* (The Stage). Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1985. Mainly critical articles on the current situation in Indian and Kerala theatre.

Pillai, Mekkolla Parameshwaran. *Naveena Natakadarsam* (The Concept of Modern Theatre). Foreword by A. Balakrishna Pillai. Among other things the book deals with Western influence on Malayalam drama. One of the first attempts to introduce Western dramatists like Ibsen, Checkov and Strindberg to Malayalam.

Pillai, N.N. *Natakadarpanam* (A Mirror to Drama), 1971. This book received the Kerala Akademi award in 1972. It is a comprehensive description of playwriting and play-production and covers both Western and Eastern techniques of acting, and is meant for students of drama.

Pillai, N.N. *Curtain*, 1983. This book by a major Malayalam dramatist and actor is a sprawling account of the multifarious aspects for world theatre. Contains comments on life and drama, ritualistic theatre, the psychology of the actor, voice culture and Brechtian theatre in relation to Kerala theatre.

Pillai, N. Krishna. *Anubhavgal Abhimatungal* (Experiences and Opinions). Kottayam: SPCS, 1988. A series of interviews in which N. Krishna Pillai, the playwright and critic, expresses his views on life, literature and theatre.

Pillai, Vayala Vasudevan. *Rangabhasha* (Theatre Language). A study of modern Western drama based on a tour of Europe.

Pisharoti, K.P. Narayana. *Kutiyattam*, published by the author, 1954. This is a descriptive account of the performance of Kulasekhara's Sanskrit play *Subhadra Dhananjayam*.

Pisharoti, K.P. Narayana, ed. *Ashcharyachandamani* by Shaktibhadra. Trichur: Kerala Sangeet Natak Akademi 1967. The Sanskrit text with its *kramadipika* and *attaprakaram*.

Raghavan, M.D. *Folk Plays and Dances of Kerala*, 1937.

Rangavataranam (Play Production). Kerala State Institute of Language, 1979. The most elaborate account of play production covering play analysis, direction, acting, rehearsal and appreciation. Contributions include G. Sankara Pillai, Kavalam Narayana Paniker, T.R. Sukumaran Nair, D. Appukuttan Nair and K. Ayyappa Paniker.

Raphy Sabeena, *Chavittu Natakam* (Dance Drama).

Sarma A.D. and R.C. Sarma. *Natakapraveshika* (Introduction to Drama), 1922. Mainly about ancient Sanskrit dramaturgy.

Sharma, V.S. ed. *Balarama Bharatam* by Kartika Thirunal Balarama Varma Maharaja, Kottayam: NBS, 1982. 18th-century Sanskrit text on dramaturgy based on Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* as applied (with special reference) to Kerala theatre. Contains translations into Malayalam and commentary by the editor.

Sukumaran, T.P. *Kanninte Kala* (The Art of the Eye), 1985. This book on theatre and drama deals with stage design, theatre of poverty, montage and abstraction, background music, audience, stylization, etc.

Thampuram, Kerala Varma Ammaman. *Koothum Kudiattavum* (Koothu and Kudiattam)

Thikkodiyar. *Arangum Aniyarayum* (The Stage and the Greenroom).

Thiruvarang '78. Ed. Rosscode Krishna Pillai. Trivandrum Thiruvarang, 1978. This contains a brief article by S.

Natarajan on the theatrical activities of the *Thiruvarang troupe* which was started in 1964; an article on production from script to stage by K. Ayyappa Paniker; an essay on folk songs and dance of Kerala by Rosscote Krishna Pillai; a note on contemporary Indian theatre by Suresh Awasthi; the English Translation of the play *Ottayan* (The Lone Tusker) by Kavalam Narayana Panikkar; an essay on *Sopanasangeetam* by Leela Omcheri; an essay on Kalarippayat, the martial art of Kerala, by C.V. Govindankutty Nair; a note on Krishnanattam by Kavalam Narayana Panikkar; Kavalam Narayana Panikkar's article on 'Indian Theatre—Search for Identity'; the English translation of G. Sankara Pillai's play *Three Pedants and a Deceased Lion*; G. Aravindan's article on film and other art forms and D. Appukkuttan Nair's note on 'Abhinaya in Kutiyattam'.

Thiruvarang 79: *Bhasa Smaranika*. Trivandrum: Thiruvarang, 1979. This was published on the occasion of the Bhasa festival in Trivandrum in 1979. Contains a note on koothambalams of Kerala and another on Bhasa and Kutiyattam, both by D. Appukkuttan Nair; production notes on *Madhyamavyayogam* by Kavalam Narayana Panikkar; a note on *aharya* (costume and make-up) in *Madhyamavyayogam* production by G. Aravindan; an essay on *Samagranatyam* by M. Leelavathy and 'From Revivalism to Recreation' by K.S. Narayana Pillai.

Thomas, C.J. *Uyaruuna Yavanika* (The Rising Curtain), 1950. One of the first historical and critical surveys of the stage in Malayalam with studies of specific topics like the roots of the Malayalam dramatic movement, the stage before and after *Karuna*, drama and other arts, dramatic, perspective propaganda in drama, the dramatic technique of Kesava Dev, political plays in Malayalam, the Ibsenite movement and comments on plot, identification in acting, stage setting, director and audience.

Thomas, C.J. *C.J. Thomasinte Natakangal*. Trivandrum: Sreeni Printers and Publishers, 1970. A collection of eight plays by C.J. Thomas with an introduction to the dramatic writings of C.J. Thomas by P.K. Balakrishnan.

D. Theatre Periodicals

Arang 1968, C.N. Sreekantan Nair et al, eds. Natakakalari (M.S. Book Depot, Quilon), 1968. Compiled by an editorial committee consisting of C.N. Sreekantan Nair, P.K. Venukuttan Nair, K. Ayyappa Paniker, S. Savitrikutty, Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan, M. Govindan, M. Gangadharan, G. Sankara Pillai, published after the first *natakakalari* (theatre workshop) was held at Sasthamcottah. Intended as a series of annual. Publications containing texts of plays, write-ups on the theatre situation in different States, and reviews of plays. Only the issue for 1968 was published. This book contains three plays, 12 articles on the theatre in different parts of Kerala and other States, a bibliography of Malayalam plays, and two articles on a new concept of the theatre, by G. Sankara Pillai and C.N. Sreekantan Nair.

Keli (Play). Quarterly in Malayalam published by Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi. Started by Kavalam Narayana Panikkar as Secretary in 1964.

Keralakavita (Malayalam) started in 1968 as a quarterly; since 1989, an annual. Publishes plays almost in every issue. Discussions on poetic drama. Encourages performances of plays.

Margi. D. Appukkuttan Nair was the spirit behind this periodical. Only a few issues were published. Tried to promote traditional arts like Kathakali and Kutiyattam. Located in Trivandrum.

Nataka Seminar, ed. C.N. Sreekantan Nair: *Navarangam* (New Stage) *Nataka Seminar*. Published from Kottayam since 1960s. Contains articles on theatre, stage, performances.

Ruchi. Founder-editor G. Sankara Pillai. Present editor Vayala Vasudevan Pillai. Trichur: Calicut University School of Drama. Two issues a year, alternate numbers in English and Malayalam. Contains interviews, articles, playlets, theatre notes, etc. The English issue tries to present the Kerala stage to non-Malayalis and the Malayalam issue tries to interpret foreign theatre to Malayalis. Illustrations included.

Theatre India (English, 1977), Trichur: Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, 1977. Published on the occasion of the All India Theatre Festival at Cochin organised by G. Sankara Pillai as Chairman, Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, Trichur. Contents include the following: Habib Tanvir: 'The Indian Experiment'; C.J. Thomas: 'Crime 27/1128' (Part of the play) D. Appukkuttan Nair: 'Abhinaya in Kutiyattam'; V.K. Narayana Menon: 'The Place of Music in Indian Dance Drama'; Kavalam Narayana Panikkar: 'Thouryathakam on the Traditional Stage in Kerala'. Also a symposium on 'Crisis in Indian Theatre'; plenty of illustrations and synopses of plays.

PUBLISHING HOUSES

1. Sahitya Pravartaka Cooperative Society, Kottayam, Kerala (abbreviated as SPCS). The biggest publishers in Kerala today, SPCS have published the works of almost all the major playwrights during the past 40 years. Their distributing agency is the National Book Stall (abbreviated as NBS) with branches in all district centres as well as subagencies.
2. D.C. Books, Kottayam, Kerala. The biggest publisher in the private sector since 1975. Publications include plays, theatre criticism, autobiographies of performers, etc.
3. Poorna Publishers, Calicut, Kerala. A major publisher in northern Kerala. Original plays as well as translations of plays are among their publications.
4. Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, Trichur, and Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trichur have also published books on theatre. A translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* into Malayalam, the stage manual for *Nalacharitam*, etc. are among their publications.
5. In the 1940s, Mangalodayam, Trichur, was a major publisher. Their publications included plays as well.
6. In the 1960s, M.S. Book Depot, Quilon, published a few books as well as the special number of *Arang* 1968.
7. Current Books, Trichur, has also made its mark as a publisher.
8. Mathrubhumi, Calicut, Kerala, is an important publisher of many books, including books on Kathakali.