

TERUKKUTTU

A Street Play from Tamil Nadu

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I

Street plays are found in many regions all over India. In Andhra Pradesh they were known as *Vidī Nātakas* but the form described here is found in Madras State and is known as *Terukkūttu*,¹ literally meaning street play. Besides these plays there were several other types of street entertainment such as dance, discourse and recitation. *Terukkūttu* developed as a particular form of dance drama with a *Bhagavatar* leading the vocalists and musicians, distinctive types of costume and style of dialogue. In the towns street plays are performed to mark religious festivals mainly amongst the poorer communities; these plays do not always adhere to the traditional style of *Terukkuttu* presentation, but rather imitate the Tamil cinema. The rural performances tend to be more orthodox and take place near the village in an open space opposite the temple. They are mostly performed by agriculturalists who in the off-season assemble together and enact the plays traditionally handed down to them by their forefathers. The lyrics have often been composed by the village poet or *Pulavar*, and the themes taken from the *purānās*. *Terukkūttu* is most strongly associated with the temple festivals of *Māriyamman* (Rain Goddess) and *Draupadiyamman* (Festival of the Goddess *Draupadi*); though individual performances are given on other occasions purely for entertainment.²

In the rural districts there are groups of *Terukkūttu* actors who are professionals known as *Kūttādis*. They live in one village i.e. *Tiruppambura* and perform for the surrounding villages. Land is donated to the *Kuttadis* by rich patrons for their performances. Temples also donate land. The land cannot be sold, but they can live on money they make from produce.³ Since *Terukkūttu* is most famed for its participation in the *Mariyamman* Festival, described below is an account of a traditional festival as remembered by Mr. Kothamangalam Subbu in Tamil villages about fifty years ago.

Rain is important in the hot, dry districts of Madras State which

depend on agriculture for their living. Besides obtaining rain for their crops, the villagers believe that if they celebrate this Festival they will not be beset by smallpox, cholera and other serious diseases. *Māri* is the name for rain in Tamil and *Amman* is the female goddess of rain, usually the village deity. Another name for the rain goddess is *Gaṅgai Amman*. When the dry season comes between March and August, the troupe of *Terukkūttu* actors assembles together and offers itself for engagements. Some of the better include professional actors who perform the year round, but these are few. The actors in one troupe are mostly from one village and do not move out of their immediate district unless called. In the old days if wealthy village patrons were sufficiently impressed they would give them a grant of land. Sometimes the village committee, and sometimes the temple authorities would fix engagements for the troupes. The committees would decide on the dates of the festival and engage a troupe accordingly.²

The committee when drawing up plans for the festival had many events to consider. A sacred thread or *kāppu* (talisman) was tied onto the wrist of the goddess as a beginning ceremony; clay models of horses and elephants had to be made by the potters for the deity to ride on; the village folk would make merry, and home-brewed liquor assisted in the spirit of the celebrations! The festival lasted seven days—sometimes nine—and performances of *Terukkūttu* were given every night lasting until dawn. The committee also had to decide the cost, and which of the wealthier families would bear it; these may differ every year. (It was supposed to be auspicious to sponsor *Terukkūttu* because if the rain goddess's feelings were sufficiently evoked she would send rain). Grain or any agricultural product such as vegetables were the recognised means of payment for the villagers, including the *Terukkūttu* troupe. When all this had been settled the festival took place.

The festival would commence, then, with the *kāppu* being tied on to the wrists of the goddess. Although the female *Amman* is the principal deity, another typical village god, *Aiyaṇār* or *Aiyappa*, the male god, is also honoured, and for him clay horses and elephants are made by craftsmen. *Aiyaṇār* is also known as *Aḍakkalan Kūttar* or the protector of the people. Other village gods are *Kālī*, the female protector of the village, believed to be responsible for the high crop yield, and *Velan*, who protects the insane.* There is another image of *Amman* as a bust to symbolise *Paraśurāma*'s mother who was beheaded by her son to please his father. This bust is carried in procession at the village festival.

*Another village belief associated with *Kālī* and *Velan* is that they have the power to bring disasters such as cholera and smallpox to the village. The villagers fear them and refer to them as *Drshidevata* or "wild gods". (*Drshideva* means evil eye). They are in small temples on the outskirts of the village and people will not pass in front of them at night. They make animal sacrifices to them and leave tobacco, homebrewed liquor etc. to appease them. They are Dravidian as opposed to Aryan *Siva* and *Viṣṇu* temples.

At an appointed and auspicious time the potters commence moulding the three-foot high clay horses. These horses break and have to be renewed at each festival. The potters officially announce the start of their work and dig the clay mixing it with water to mould tall proud in horses and elephants. When finished these models are painted in bright colours, red and white and black; a saddle is painted on. These bright alert horses are a distinguishing feature of the Tamilnad countryside wherever there is an Aiyānār temple. The villagers believe that the god rides them at night.

Another interesting feature of the rain festival was that the villagers collected earth, mixed it with other ingredients and put it in a clay pot. On top of this they placed a cocoanut flower—(pālai). Then in a similar manner, nine other clay pots were filled with nine different types of seeds, Navadhānyam, for the various crops grown. These germinated during the festival and if all the seeds grew, they believed there would be a successful harvest.

In the old days the festival would probably begin and end on a Tuesday. Every night after processions and other celebrations, the Terukkūttu troupe would give a performance. The stage was set opposite the temple entrance; a somewhat temporary structure with wooden poles joined together by ropes marked the outline, and sometimes a thatched roof was put on top. The floor-space of the stage was roughly 20' x 30', and the surface was covered with clay and cow dung. This setting can still be seen today in the villages.

The village vaṇṇān or washerman also featured in the preparations. He spread a white cloth over an area 50' x 50' for the dignitaries to sit on, these would be set closest to the stage. He also provided a clean, white dhoti for the curtain; nowadays a coloured one is used. The village vaṇṇān was very poor and only received kañji (rice water) as payment for washing clothes; his wife was often forced to go out begging for food; sometimes he was given the job of holding the light during a performance, which consisted of clay oil lamps stuck on the end of a wooden pole. These were held either side of the stage and periodically held up to the actor's face to give the audience a clearer view.

Before the performances commenced they would be announced by a particular community to the houses in the village and the surrounding area. The announcers accompanied themselves on drums. One manner of announcing was to stand outside the house calling out, and when the master of the house demanded who they were they replied that they had come from such and such a village, and had been sent to invite the master to a Terukkūttu performance. This call was half-chanted, sounding attractively stylised, as they went on from house to house, from village to village. These elaborate events leading up to the performance have been considerably

cut down today, and a nine night series of plays are only presented once in three years.

Excitement mounted in the village where the Terukkūttu performance was about to take place; preparations went ahead in a gay mood. People came from near and far, walking through the fields, making their way slowly on bullock carts or whatever mode of transport they could find. The villagers prepared their houses to receive their guests, asking them in and giving them typical Indian fare—betel nuts, tobacco and lime paste to chew. Stalls were set up selling mangoes, sugarcane, peanuts etc. People started to take their places early, quarrelling as they vied with each other for the best view of the stage. They all sat on the ground, and some of the older folk brought bed mats; for they would go to sleep in the middle of the all-night vigil. Below is a description of the performance. The plays today are conducted in a similar manner with the village folk seated on the ground opposite the temple.

At 9.30 or 10.00 p.m. the play commenced. In the old days a set manner of preliminaries was carried out, many of which have now died out. First to appear on the stage was the clown—*Komāḷi*. He wore a ridiculous cap to make people laugh and daubed himself with all sorts of religious markings—both Saiva and Vaisnava signs. He would then poke fun at the Brahmins, teasing them for their vegetarian habits. Then just to pass the time and put the audience in a good humour, he would recite nonsense rhymns such as “I dug three wells with a thorn, there was no water in two and the third well collapsed; I married three wives, two were sterile and the third had children! . . .” etc. Sometimes he would chew a pan* made of cigarette ends and stones expressing surprise at this loathsome fare. The village people would laugh in delight at the expressions on his face.

The *Bhāgavatar*, or chief vocalist, as is more his role in Terukkūttu sat on a bench at the back of the stage with his assistant vocalists and musicians beside him. There was usually a *mukha vīṇā* (double reed instrument) and *mrdangam* (drum), while the vocalists kept time with a small pair of metal cymbals. Sometimes there was a harmonium at the side of the bench. After the exit of the clown, the singers announced a couple known as *Rāja* and *Mōhiṇi* who symbolised the head of the troupe. They sang ballads with poetical analogies, but without any particular reference to the dance drama about to be enacted. Most of their narration would consist of nonsense rhymns and alliterations i.e. “I saw the day star and thoughts of love came into my head. I saw the fortune teller coming . . .” etc. continuing with a string of meaningless phrases. They engaged each other in trivialities and thoughts of love. This was all to pass the time and allow the artists to complete their make-up.

*Pan-Betel nut wrapped in leaves commonly chewed by Indian people.

Next to appear on the stage was the *Sutradhāra* or *Kaṭṭiakkāraṇ* as he is known in *Terukkūttu*. He would talk to the actors and generally link the play together, complementing the actors' dialogue. On his wrist a *kāppu* thread was tied. The *Kaṭṭiakkāraṇ* was a comparatively well-educated man. He was usually literate or, if not, could speak Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil. He could recite in all three languages and gleaned his knowledge from listening to the wandering holy men propounding the *purāṇas* and relating stories from the epics. Various other learned men traditionally wandered from village delivering lectures on cultural and historical knowledge; from these men also he had learned many things. When the *Kaṭṭiakkāraṇ* came onto the stage he recited Sanskrit slokas, often full of poetical analogies, his idea was to welcome the audience and encourage them to stay and listen to the performance. He compared the theatre to a lake, the *Vedas* to a tree and the assembly of people to a flower; the sound created by the actors and vocalists to the humming of bees as they settled gently on the flower.

The singers would then start invocatory prayers to *Gaṇēsa* or *Viṇā-yakar* the elephant-headed God, represented here by a small boy wearing a mask over his head, and a false belly. He performed a jaunty dance moving his stomach and elephant's trunk singing "I am the elephant-headed God, please note, who will remove all obstacles; I am the God with the pot belly ..." etc. The *Kaṭṭiakkāraṇ* requested *Gaṇēsa* to bless the play and make it successful.

Then *Sarasvati*, the Goddess of Learning, entered with her daughter, or sometimes on her own. The *Kaṭṭiakkāraṇ* asked for *Sarasvati*'s blessings. She asked who composed the drama about to be enacted and the names of the players. The *Kaṭṭiakkāraṇ* addressed his answers both to the Goddess and the audience. He not only announced the name of each actor, but also praised their merits. Meanwhile the musicians continued to sing, connecting the play by announcing each character and giving a description of them all. The musicians also supported the highlights of the drama, especially in moods of love or anger. They added to the excitement by repeating in chorus the lines of the actor, and in some *Terukkūttus* it has become the fashion for the singer to complement almost any action with a song. As the singers announced each character, the actor would stand behind the curtain provided by the village washerman, and dance; then the curtain was taken away.²

Nowadays first to appear is the *Kaṭṭiakkāraṇ* and the clown; in their dialogue they tell the audience what sort of play is to be presented. The *Kaṭṭiakkāraṇ* still appears throughout the show, keeping up a running commentary on the different parts of the story wherever necessary.

The play used to be enlivened by such characters as *Bhīma*, the quick-tempered warrior brother in the epic about the *Pandavas*, coming in proces-

sion through the village street. He would make roaring noises and eat chillies and paddy if left lying in his way; he would also smash cocoanuts with a huge club to symbolise how he would deal with his opponents.

Terukkūttu keeps up its tradition of *pātra praveśam* or introductory song sung by the characters themselves after they have come from behind the curtain. They will relate to the audience who they are and their background, dancing as they do so, and then leave the stage. There are no stylised gestures, however, and the acting is entirely natural.

Mr. Subbu particularly recalls the entry of the heroine Candramadi, in Hariścandra. She had a special curtain appearance. Two men would hold the curtain, lowering it slightly as the singers broke into song "the lady Candramadi is here; she has a beautiful face like the moon and will dance for you." While this was going on, Candramadi's face was visible and she would roll her eyes and move her head from side to side to gain the admiration of the audience, while her feet moved; then as the curtain was removed she would dance forward singing. The audience would give her a great ovation as she came towards them. This play has a tragic end, where the poverty-stricken couple weep over the dead body of their son. The gods intervene bringing the son back to life and bless the couple. The audience would get so carried away at this point that they would shower the couple with rose petals and rice with tears in their eyes.²

Male roles are predominant, especially in the present day troupes, the most famous of which is Nātesaṅ Thambirān's. A characteristic of this actor is that he will whirl round quickly in circles if angry, and sometimes make a wife circle round the stage with quick, strutting steps to show his virility. He will jump up onto the musicians' bench and shout at his opponent (although he is a man of about 70 years). Sparks and flames are blown from his mouth when particularly provoked ! Special theatrical effects are obtained by blowing *kuṅḡiliyam** powder over a saucer of glowing embers; it explodes with a bang to augment the feeling of violence and anger.^{4a}

Most of the Terukkuttu performances consist of dialogue; there is probably forty percent singing and sixty percent spoken dialogue. Some of the dialogue is improvised, but it is mainly made to set pieces learned by heart. The clown or *kōmāli* will improvise on the spot to catch the audience in a good mood. *Kīcaka Vadam*** in Purisai village where Natēsan Thambiran comes from, is typical of present-day performances, and I was fortunate enough to witness this at the time of the *Draupadiyamman* festival when they were performing for nine nights.

*Kunḡiliyam—Inflammable powder, it explodes and bursts into flame when lit.

**Kīcaka Vadam—"The Slaying of Kīcaka" an episode from the epic Mahabharata.

The clown teased Bhīma about his cooking pots, poking fun at his plight as a cook (when the 5 Pandavas were incognito). There was an amusing scene as they tried to assemble the pots one on top of the other. Halfway through the night, as is the custom, some of the villagers stretched out and slept. The *kōmāli* (clown) decided that this was too much and sprinkled the sleepers with cold water; they all woke up to the laughter and jeers of their more wide awake friends in the audience. There is plenty of life and humour about a Terukkuttu performance. Many of the jokes may be coarse, but they are intended for a rural audience

At the time of the festival, Natesan Thambiran's troupe usually reserves Arjuna's Penance for the last night, and they highlight it with a special feature. A 45 foot pole is erected near the stage with rungs going up to the top. It is made of palmira wood and painted red and white. After an all-night performance, Arjuna climbs up the pole; when he reaches the top, he stands on a crossbar with his arms upraised in praise of Lord Siva. Raju Thambiran still plays this part at 67 years of age. The festival ends as actors and villagers alike walk in procession three times round the temple. If the goddess is pleased, rain will fall.^{4b}

In the cities Terukkūttus are performed in poor communities who live together as a social unit i.e. rickshaw drivers or railway porters etc. They have come from the villages to the cities to make their living, and look forward to the annual performances of Terukkūttu in which they themselves act. They rehearse for a considerable time before this, and sometimes, if they can afford it, will hire some of the professional *kuttadis* from the villages. Here again the community is very strongly pulled in to participate. Since these performances are so important to the poor communities, political parties have hired Terukkuttu actors to perform sociological themes extolling the merits of their party and political ideas. The audience they are trying to reach is largely illiterate, and the performances are an effective means of reaching them. Most of the communities in the slum districts of Madras perform Terukkūttus at the Pongal or harvest season in the streets of their area. The actors nowadays receive cash for their services and not land, rice, etc. as in the old days.³

II

Make-up consists of coloured powders known as *aṭṭidalam*. These are mixed with oil to give the correct consistency. Four basic colours are used: red—"ingilam," yellow—"haribalam," white—"sabadha" and lamp black. Other colours are obtained by mixing these together. Blue indicated a divine character such as Kṛṣṇa and Rama; green and orange slightly villainous personalities and red and black—bad. Heroes often wear a natural or amber-coloured make-up (such as Kaiṇa and Arjuna); Duryodhana wears red,

and Kīcaka orange. Bhīma wears a mixture of blue and black, and Dus-sāsana dark red. All male characters wear thick, black moustaches. On these basic coloured lines are painted on the forehead and cheeks. Female roles have natural make-up, a flesh-coloured face, and a thick red tilak or dot of kum kum powder on their foreheads, with reddened lips. (All female roles are played by men). Eyes for all parts are made up with black lines—the thicker they are the more villainous the character.^{4a & b}

The dressing room is a makeshift affair consisting of a small, thatched hut behind the stage. There is barely room to get everyone in. An earthenware pot is put in the centre with a lighted wick, and this is the only light. The actors hold a small, cracked mirror in their hand and apply the make-up with a thin stick.^{4a}

Costume is similar to traditional Tamil drama style and has been influenced a lot by the cinema recently. The richer the troupe the more elaborate the costumes. Some of the very poor troupes hardly wear anything to distinguish them from everyday wear. Elaborate crowns or kirīṭams decorate the heads of heroes and kings, fashioned in huge curved designs, glittering with false gems and silver metal pieces. The actors wear long-sleeved shirts with highly decorated front flaps which hang down below their waists. On their shoulders are huge, decorated epaulettes known as bhuja-kirīṭams; they wear bangles of gold on their wrists. The most distinctive part of their costume is the short skirt which juts out from the waist, and is made of white cotton, pleated for effect; it is supported by an underskirt of stiff straw. Underneath this they wear cotton pyjama trousers, usually black, and have ankle bells strapped round their legs. The crowns are made by the actors themselves out of light wood, decorated with gold paper and pieces of coloured glass. Female roles appear quite naturally dressed with a sari, blouse, gold belts and a crescent-shaped ornament in their hair. They also wear bells round their feet. The troupe is responsible for the maintenance of their costume. The above description applies to the more traditional troupes, some of the larger, town presentations may hire their costumes rather than make them.^{4a & b}

Music in general is essentially rustic with a folk quality, though classical ragas such as Harikāmbhoji, Khamās and Nādanāmakriyā are included in certain cases. The music is rhythmical, and the drum provides a continuous beat of four units, i.e. taka dimi taka dimi; this is known as “sarva lagu”. They sometimes use more complicated talas such as misracpāu, khaṇḍa, tisra and ādi. These are all played in a fast tempo to make the performance lively. The Terukkūttu accompanying instruments are mukha vīṇa (reed instrument), mṛdaṅgam (drum), cymbals and sometimes a harmonium. The pitch is maintained by a sruti (pitch) box this has a wooden frame with bellows which keeps a constant tonic and dominant when played. In the old days a pipe called a puṇji, was used to keep the pitch. The mṛdaṅgam is a

barrel-shaped drum with two leather heads at either end, one end having a black spot made of slag and rice paste which has a different pitch. The mukha vīṇa is a short, black double-reed instrument with a bell-shaped base, it is often decorated with brass bands, and its piercing, rasping notes predominate throughout Terukkūttu. It is the predecessor of the nāgasvaram, now mostly used in South India for religious celebrations.⁵

Before Terukkuttu begins praises to Ganesa are sung in the invocatory song *Ganapati Vandanam*. The part of the chorus is shown in Draupadi's humiliation at the court of the Kaurava brothers, the enemies of the Pandavas; Draupadi being the wife of the Pandavas. The Kauravas taunt their angry cousins the Pandavas, and both sides stand watching the evil Dussasana pulling off Draupadi's sari, Dussasana is encouraged by the king Duryodhana and with each taunt the chorus echoes the king's words getting louder and louder as well as an increase in the tempo, so that the audience is in a state of high tension. Indeed this is the role of the musicians to enhance each mood, by repetition of the phrases sung by the leading actor and they fill in missing links in the drama; they also introduce each character with a song. When Draupadi prays to Lord Kṛṣṇa for help, they break into a very moving song set in a typical folk tune *Ananda Kalippu*.⁶

Natesan Thambiran's troupe is recognised as retaining the most orthodox style of Terukkuttu, though it cannot be denied that throughout Tamilnad, this form of drama is popular with the village folk, who watch to enjoy themselves, and are not so concerned with traditional presentations. The troupe was founded about 100 years ago by Veeraswamy Thambiran in the village of Purisai in North Arcot district. He had four sons, Raghava, Vijaya, Krishna and Doraiswamy. Raghava Thambiran helped to establish the troupe firmly by training the actors well, and conducting performances year after year. Another measure of his enterprise was that he composed the folk plays enacted by his troupe in both dialogue and song. These included about ten stories from the Mahabharata, and he also took the themes of Valli's Wedding and Sirutondar for his presentations. His cousin, Kumaraswamy Thambiran, composed his own version of Prahlada. Raghava's father, Veeraswamy Thambiran, died in 1892, and the troupe came under Raghava's management. Raghava refined and improved the dialogue and song with the help of a Tamil scholar who expounded on the puranas in Purisai village. In fact even today the dialogue spoken by this troupe is in comparatively classical Tamil. The troupe was well trained and gained popularity; it maintained a standard pattern for its costumes and make-up. After Raghava Thambiran died in 1934, Raju Thambiran, son of Vijaya, and Natesan, son of Krishna Thambiran, led the troupe and kept the traditions alive. It is particularly Natesan's fame that has spread, with his lively, vigorous but sincere presentation. The repertoire of this troupe is as follows: *Jalakrida*, *Draupadi Swayamvara*, *Draupadi Vastrapaharana*, *Kicaka Vadha*, *Krishnan Tūdu*, *Kaṭṭa Moksa*, *Subhadra Parinayam*;

Arjuna Tapas, Nachu Poigai, Abhimanyu Vadha and Duryodhana Vadha, they also perform Prahlada, Valli's Wedding, Sirutondar, Hariścandra and Nalla Tangal.⁶

III

To show how rich the tradition of street entertainment is in Madras State, a brief description is given of some of them below. Sometimes they are incorporated in dance dramas and plays, and indeed some are "street plays" but do not adhere to the form of Terukkuttu as we know it today. Most of them are just traditional dances or recitations.

Kattaibomman Kuttu is a sociological play about Kattaibomman, a resistance leader during the British occupation. Similarly Raja Desingu is another form of drama extolling the merits of Raja Desingu and his resistance movement against the Muslim invasion. The setting for these plays is simple, sometimes just two wooden beds roped together and set up in a village street. They were often monologues, or only had one or two actors depending on the wealth of the troupe; Raja Desingu is noted for acrobatics and feats performed with a sword. Most of the plays have a moral theme propagating religion or stirring up national feeling.²

An interesting form is the oral contest between two people conducted almost as a village debate. Pagal Vesam, for instance, is a discussion between two people, and another more lively form is Lavani. To make it more attractive they accompany each phrase by rapping out rhythmic patterns on a tambourine called Tapatai with a metal ring on their index finger. They choose controversial topics such as the death of Manmada, the god of love. There are two theories as to how this god died, some say that Lord Siva burnt him to death with the power of his third eye, while others maintain that there is still creation which springs from love, therefore, Manmada must still be alive in the world today. The discourse may be heated that it leads to a village fight as people take sides with the performers, but in the morning they are all friends again. Not all the participants are professionals for sometimes two villagers who have a flair for this kind of thing will conduct the debates. There are also more scholarly recitals of the puranas given by men who go from village to village. These are known as Kalaksepams.²

There are numerous acrobatic dances such as Karagam, the pot dance. The dancer performs energetic steps with many pots balanced on his head. His special talent is to blindfold himself and smash a cocoanut placed on the head of his assistant, and, still blindfold with the pots on his head, he slices a banana fruit in two with a sharp sword placed on the stomach of his assistant. A Kāvadi is an arched piece of wood connected by a wooden pole, usually carried by devotees of Lord Murugan in procession. However, it makes an attractive dance as the performer deftly moves his supple body,

so that the Kavadi will roll in almost any position he wishes without touching it with his hands. There are special songs which accompany this dance known as Kavadi Cindu. In Puravi Attam usually a man and wife take part with a cardboard frame fixed around their waists in the shape of a decorated horse of many colours. They dance, making the horses buck and rear, which is all the more difficult because they have wooden "hooves" on their feet. There are all-male dances such as Oyil Attam and female dances such as Kummi. Most of these are included in the village festivals.²

Much research has been done in the field of Terukkuttu by the Madras Sangita Nataka Sangam under Mr. E. Krishna Iyer. It was found that many troupes exist especially in North Arcot, South Arcot and Pondicherry districts of Madras. The troupes get paid about Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300/- for a performance in Madras city, although in the villages they would get considerably less (Rs. 100/- to Rs. 150/-). Nowadays they are paid in cash and not with grain etc. However the tradition of presenting them with paddy as a token still remains, and there are customs such as presenting a dhoti to Arjuna and a sari to Draupadi during the nine nights of performance. Natesan Thambiran's troupe is given a stipend from the Sangita Nataka Sangam to maintain its costumes. For nine nights of performance the troupe may be paid by the temple or other committees as much as Rs. 300/- to Rs. 500/-.⁷

Though many of the troupes had died out during the repression of indigenous arts in the 1920s, Terukkuttu is now reviving, and the villages enthusiastically support their troupes. The exact number of troupes in existence today, however, is not known. Natesan Thambiran's troupe has proved to be the most traditional, and despite all difficulties has kept up the highest standard. One does feel that perhaps another estimate should be made of these troupes and more encouragement given to the lesser known, to improve their standards of performance. Although Terukkuttu performances are quite lively and popular, even in the villages, they sometimes copy cinema theatrics losing what traditions they have kept up to commercial and popular taste.

REFERENCES

1. Tamil and Sanskrit transliterations by T. Viswanathan, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.
2. Kothamangalam Subbu, a retired film director who has specialised in research into folk legends particularly Terukkuttu and related forms. Most of the information found in this article is based on a tape recording of a verbal account Mr. Subbu gave the author of the results of his research and experience.
3. K. Ramaiah, a native of the village of Tiruppamburan where the Kuttadis had settled. He remembers his experiences growing up in this village and has witnessed several Terukkuttu performances in Madras city.
4. (a) Eye-witness account by the author of a performance seen in Purisai village.
(b) Verbal information given to the author by Purisai villagers and the troupe-

5. Miss S. Seetha (Ph.D.), Lecturer at the Music Department, Madras University. These are her comments on a tape of a live recording of Draupadi Vastrapaharan performed by Natesan Thambiran's troupe, held by the Sangita Nataka Snagam, Madras.
6. E. Krishna Iyer. Therukoothu or Street Play: Bombay 'Marg' magazine Vol. XIX no. 2: 1966 p. 13.
7. Information received from the Madras Sangita Nataka Sangam.