

Demystifying Kathakali

PHILLIP B. ZARRILLI

Prior to 1970 the most readily available literature in English about Kathakali dance-drama consisted of two sources: K. Bharata Iyer's *Kathakali*¹, and Eugenio Barba's article, 'The Kathakali Theatre', in *The Drama Review*². For the theatre practitioner, interested in exploring new sources for experimentation or stimulation (and not intent upon a career in the local South Asian Studies Library), such sources provided the only materials immediately at hand about this form of theatre. In addition to these sources, the publication of Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* in 1968 (with the reference to Kathakali), the United States and European tours of major Kathakali troupes in 1967, 1970, and 1973, and the accompanying journalistic onslaught produced by cumulative effect a mystique which has become associated with Kathakali.

The late sixties provided an area ripe for the development of these mysteries of Kathakali, as yoga, the 'wisdom of the east', 'spirituality', and 'altered states of consciousness' became passwords to a tolerable existence. Such general cultural phenomena, coupled with the writings of Barba, and Iyer, Grotowski's reference, the new attention given to Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', as well as interpretations of Genet's work as a 'theatre of Ritual' brought into Western theatre the dubious merit of searching for experimental stimulation through ritual and myth. It was a prime moment for the creation of a self-fulfilling prophecy, for a popular image to envelop a foreign dramatic form which could fulfil the yearning of a culture desperately in search of mystical-ritualistic roots.

Artaud's dictum from his First Manifesto of the 'Theatre of Cruelty':

The Theatre will never find itself again—i.e., constitute a means of true illusion—except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out on a level not counterfeit and illusory but interior.³

What better fulfilment of that vision could be found than Iyer's description of Kathakali savagery:

We see a loathsome *raksasi*, all black, streaming with blood, howling in pain and rage, emerging from the darkness of night... like the very spirit of evil let loose, and preceded by the lurid glow of torches... We are terror-struck to the marrow of our bones and disgust, utter disgust, for the weird spectacle seizes us...⁴

A persistent searcher might have turned up C.G. Jung's description of Kathakali, which adds more fuel to Artaud's fire:

Everything is bizarre, subhuman and superhuman at once. The dancers do not walk like human beings—they glide... The world we know offers nothing even remotely comparable to this grotesque splendour. Watching these spectacles one is transported to a world of dreams, for that is the only place where we might conceivably meet with anything similar.⁵

As Kathakali troupes began to ply the international theatre/dance circuit, newspapers around the world resounded with the rhetoric of the Kathakali mystique.

Clearly what holds the attention is the powerful spiritual substance of this kind of performance. The performers enter with reverence and go through some form of invocation before the show begins.

Sun, London, 17 Aug. 1967

When at last the gods triumph once more over evil, the tension breaks, the music stops, and slowly the drumbeats cease. Almost unwillingly one wakes up from the reverie, tired and exhausted, but triumphant as one who has danced with the gods.

Tehran Journal, 14 Aug. 1968.

Within five hours these small somewhat bandy and rather tired men were to transform themselves into awe-inspiring and terrible gods... The actors lay down upon the floor and soon seem to be asleep, breathing heavily and deeply... But this, it is said, is the time that the inner transformation into god or demon will get under way... The actors are awakened; gait and gesture have been changed; the look in the eyes has become intimidating..."

Bulletin, Australia, 12 Sept. 1970.

Even the *Washington Post's* writer did not escape the language of Kathakali's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*:

The object of this pantomime is a form of magical transformation... Kathakali is at once ritual as well as drama... It remains modern and at the same time ritualistic in its abstract characterization, in its concentration on the visuals, and in its belief in magical transformation.

The Exotic Dance-Drama of India, 1 Nov. 1970.

Only an occasional critic escaped the language of mystery and mystique, such as Clive Barnes, who noted in his lucidly written review of 28 November 1970: "There were times when I was most extraordinarily bored."

These fanciful descriptions, uncritical and unreflective, which coalesced in the creation of the Kathakali mystique, have grown out of "false assumptions regarding the cliché-ridden themes of 'Indian wisdom,' Hindu spirituality,' and 'Yoga' [which] abound, both in India and outside; the whole topic is coloured by emotional primitivism and the subjectivity of the personal quest"⁶. Such writings propagate romantic or idealized stereotypes of Kathakali, which preclude any serious attempt at cross-cultural dialogue, either between practising artists, or among scholars of dramatic form, structure, or cultural milieu. They provide whimsical, personally gratifying, and falsely romantic metaphors⁷.

A reassessment of Kathakali needs to occur, *after* it has been thoroughly demystified. But this analysis of Kathakali's mystique is as much about problems of cross-cultural contact in the arts and communication of cultural performance as it is about Kathakali itself.

Five facets of this mystique are outlined below. Each facet feeds off the others symbiotically, all fitting together in one imaginatively idealized scheme. Kathakali as 'ritual' theatre implies an actor who is 'transformed', an audience which is 'transported', a world which is 'dreamlike', a 'tradition' which is ancient (reaching primitive roots). Each element of the mystique bears a fragment of truth concerning Kathakali. Each segment embodies enough of the history, practice, or cultural reality of Kathakali to be a partial truth.

1. *Kathakali is a ritualistic, religious form of theatre.* Iyer states: "Kathakali is conducted like a ritual and everything connected with it is invested with religious significance."⁸ M.K.K. Nayar reveals that "suddenly you are transported to a world totally different from yours; the world of the superhuman, colourful, dramatic and expressive"⁹

2. *The dream-like world of Kathakali is a part of the vibrant fairyland of Kerala.* Beautifully woven metaphorical images create for the reader a picture-postcard view of Kerala, home of *Kathakali*. (Of the following, one is from a tourist publication, the other from a study of Kathakali).

The State of Kerala lies like a great green staircase on the Southwest Coast of India. It descends to the sea from the granite heights of the cool Western Ghats, beribboned with rivers winding through forests of teak and gardens of spices, through flooded fields of brilliant green rice paddy...¹⁰

The natural beauty of Kerala is breathtaking. It is called 'The Venice of the East'. It is a fairyland, with its blue backwaters, green coconut groves, evergreen mountains, dense forests, swift-flowing rivers....¹¹

3. *Kathakali, as a ritual theatre, is enacted by actors who are transformed.* For Iyer, "As each costume and ornament is put on, the new personality possesses him more and more. At last, he takes up the sacred head-gear. With eyes fixed on the *living flame* of the lamp, which is symbolic of *divine presence*, he prays devotedly, salutes the head-gear and places it on his head; he gains a new grandeur and stature and his *transformation* into a mythological hero is complete."¹² For Barba this is an "actor-priest [who]... offers his body to the gods like the Juggler of Notre-Dame..."¹³ The actor-priest by performance time "transforms into a god or a demon"¹⁴ Barba describes the magical process as follows:

Three or four hours before show time, the actors begin to concentrate and meditate in absolute silence. They gather in pools of light around oil lamps, while the sons and some *chelas* (disciples) powder yellow, red, and green stones to prepare the colors and make the *chutti*... Then a make-up specialist takes over. Every muscle completely relaxed, the actor lies on the ground and starts breathing deeply and rhythmically. In this position he concentrates on the part he is going to play. According to reports, during this second phase of make-up ritual, the actor settles into a torpor, invited may be by the heat of the afternoon. During this 'sleep', the actor transforms into a god or a demon. At the end of this phase, the make-up specialist wakes the actor, whose gait and gestures are completely changed, due to the inner transformation accomplished during his sleep.¹⁵

4. *For actors who are priests, who become transformed into gods for enactment of ritual dramas, the "disciple" aspiring to become an actor-priest must be initiated, passing through the spartan rites of a rigorous training based upon ascetic self-denial.* Iyer notes:

The actor is an initiate; he has been disciplined from childhood under the rigorous tutorship of his *guru* and patron to conduct himself as a wholesome and adequate vehicle to portray the *lila* or sport of the gods. He is seldom allowed to forget that his calling is a sacred one... the paint, costumes... are all deified... From the moment he enters the green room... he conducts himself as a devotee in a shrine... The actor is compared to a *yogi*, meaning thereby that he is one who treads the path of *yoga* (union) or mental concentration, whereby the subject and the object, the worshipper and the worshipped, the actor and the acted become one.¹⁶

For Barba, the training is both religious and psychic. It is a "vocation" in which "religious faith is the very basis of this theatre". The Spartan conditions are described in glowingly harsh terms: the students have "no beds, no chest of drawers—no furniture of any kind. They sleep on pallets..."¹⁷ The implication is of self-renunciation for each disciple, the initiate of a religious order.

5. *Kathakali, with ritualistic, religious roots, is a 'traditional', 'classical'*



The final touches to Kathakali make-up: an actor puts on his finger-nails.

form of enactment which retains the ancient facets of this heritage unchanged today. This unifying assumption undergirds the 'mystique', but is seldom directly stated. It is implied in all these writings by the lack of qualification. Conspicuous by absence in writings on Kathakali is any mention of change, or of the interaction of Kathakali with its changing environment.

Once the main tenets of the mystique had been outlined in Iyer's book, it remained for subsequent writers to follow his lead. Barba, the journalists, etc. all followed with interpretations similar to Iyer's. No one *directly* questioned his use of language, his descriptions, or the assumptions which lay behind those descriptions. Whether later writers were plagiarizing Iyer, or, having absorbed his interpretation, read this mystifying element into their own experience of Kathakali does not finally matter. The *result* was the cumulative propagation of the mystique, the continued misrepresentation of a dramatic form.

The description offered here of the mystique of Kathakali is not itself a fanciful creation. In 1969 was born the Gurukulam Kathakali Yogam in Ernakulam, Kerala. The Director, P.K. Devan, captures in the title of the company and in the literature published by his cultural foundation¹⁸ the full mystique of Kathakali. In the Gurukulam Kathakali Yogam's recounting of its own history and philosophy, the Kathakali mystique has been moulded into a living reality. As a cultural foundation, the programmes of the organization include: "*Daily Programme of Ancient Temple Dance 'Kathakali'*. This is India's one and only daily recital of classical dancing. *G.G.P. Dance School*, named after the 95-year-old exponent of Kathakali dance, Guru Gopala Panicker . . . *Yoga Health Institute*, to impart training in ancient Yogic exercises of India. *Visit India*, English Fortnightly which is the official Organ of the Foundation. *Cultural Tour Wing*, to present cultural recitals abroad and interpret classical arts and heritage."¹⁹ The full major details of the history and philosophy of the Gurukulam Kathakali Yogam are outlined in the excerpt (see box on p. 51) from the organization's own promotion materials.

The Gurukulam Kathakali Yogam is the realization of the logical extreme of the mystique of Kathakali. Other Kathakali troupes do not make such claims. But it cannot be ignored. It is as much a cultural reality in Kerala today as is the Kerala Kalamandalam. It *does* give performances in Ernakulam six nights each week, 52 weeks a year (largely attended by tourists from other States of India and foreign countries). This realization of half-truths is an example of cross-cultural contamination—how metaphor, generalized concepts, and romanticized descriptions have coalesced to recreate Kathakali in the mould of the mystique.

**SALIENT FEATURES OF 'GURUKULAM'
KATHAKALI COMPANY**

Gurukulam is India's most ancient system of education in which a student ('Shishya') lives with his teacher (Guru) and knowledge is passed on in a chain called "Guru Shishya Paramapara". 'Yogam' means Company.

INDIA'S KATHAKALI THEATRE IN ITS PURE FORM, WELL PRESENTED AND EXPLAINED. COMPANY BUILT UP IN A HUNDRED YEARS, HOLDING NATIONAL RECORD.

We have: A hundred years' reputation.
World fame.

All-India record in Theatre...

The only Company to explain the deeper meaning and philosophy behind the art.

The leader of the Company is the World famous dancer—SHIVARAM—supported by the best of talents in Kathakali.

Costumes are authentic, over a hundred year old and fantastic.

The income from our tour is to help our movement in reviving Traditional Theatre in India. So we request maximum possible price.

"TURN TO GOD AND MOTHER NATURE" is the message of this art, a message the whole world needs urgently today. For the first time we project this message through an exhibition of stones, tree-milk, tree bark, fruits, ancient costumes, etc.

WE WELCOME select groups of persons to watch the fantastic Kathakali make-up being applied in the green room—the fascination ritual of a man becoming God!

KATHAKALI IS INDIA'S ANCIENT RELIGIOUS THEATRE, ORIGINATED IN KERALA TEMPLES SOME 2000 YEARS AGO. COSTUMES ARE ALL RARE—AMONG THE OLDEST EXISTING PIECES—CONFORMING TO HINDU ICONOGRAPHY.²⁰

The first half-truth which needs correction is the idea that everything in Kathakali is invested with religious significance; that Kathakali is highly ritualistic. To state generally and without qualification that Kathakali is a religious rite is to assume that there is no difference between a ritual enactment, such as Teyyam, or an enactment of the Darika Vadha legend, a devotional enactment like Krishnattam, and Kathakali itself. Kathakali is religious, but only to the extent that all Indian art, all enactments of the Indian epics are religious. This says absolutely nothing in and of itself. Richard Lannoy's comments on the relationship of art and religion are relevant to the misconception that has arisen concerning the religious and ritualistic nature of Kathakali:

[Indian art]... affirms that there is no reality which is not divine, and furthermore, that there is no reality except that which is immediately apprehended.²¹

The distinctive characteristics of Kathakali developed through its *departures* from the already existent forms of dramatic enactment. In its departures *from* the devotional Krishnattam; in its departures *from* the Sanskritized temple drama of Kutiyattam; in its departures *from* the (basically) Dravidian folk ritual enactments such as Teyyam and Mutiettu. Kathakali gained, as an aesthetically evolved dramatic form, freedom *from* the purely devotional; freedom *from* the temple precincts and the limitations of Sanskrit; freedom *from* the restrictions (inherent in possession or trance dances of ritual enactment) on an actor/dancer's self-conscious process of creation.

Kathakali is ritualistic, but only in a vestigial sense. There are rituals, and there are Rituals. To give *oversignificance* to a ritual structure speaks only of a need on the part of the observer/describer to invest acts with too much meaning. Many rituals associated with Kathakali are vestigial structures today, which have become habitual rituals, just as any habitualized pattern of behaviour is a ritual, with no meaning beyond the act itself. For the Kathakali student who enters the *kalari* (classroom), and daily touches the floor, his chest, and head, this habitualized ritual has absolutely no self-conscious significance. The gestures *do* have significance as a part of the general pattern of what one does during daily training. We also need to know that this same gesture pattern is used by the Malayali when he bumps into another person on a bus. It's a way of saying 'excuse me' to the floor, or the person.²²

Just as over-signification leads to half-truth and misrepresentation, so romanticizing through highly metaphorical language leads to an idealized image of Kathakali's environment. Kerala is a land of brilliant green, dense forests, etc., but Kerala is (like all of India) also a land of complex cultural change, of contradictions caused by the juxtaposition of modern and traditional patterns of life. Kathakali cannot, and does not, escape this dilemma. Clifford Jones presents a beautiful picture of the Kerala setting for Kathakali:

Away from the business of the day, in a suburb outside the city... the sun slowly disappears behind a dark lattice of coconut palms on its way to melt into the sea... The air is still, almost breathless... Then in the early evening very suddenly and clearly you may hear the sharp, bell-like drums of *kellikkottu* announce that nearby tonight there will be a Kathakali drama performed.²³

Unfortunately Jones does not tell us who it is that is noticing this lovely sunset. No mention is made of the fact that on this same night the Trichur Kathakali Club could be preparing for its monthly programme by clearing the proscenium stage, setting up the footlights, microphones, etc. Or, that

at such an indoor performance one of the members of the Kathakali Club will translate (while the performance is going on) the *mudras* (language of hand gestures) to the audience so that they can understand what the actor is 'saying'. We may not like such modern devices to spoil the pristine purity of an idealized vision of Kathakali, or any other traditional art form, but this happens and it is as much a part of Kathakali today as is the traditional setting which Jones describes.²⁴

Technique of the Actor

The mystique of the actor and actor-training are perhaps the most exaggerated of the half-truths which have evolved around Kathakali. They are also the most damaging. "The subjectivity of the personal quest" is most obvious in this distortion. Iyer and Barba, by utilizing such terminology as "possession" and "transformation", state directly that the actor himself undergoes a magical transformation into the character he is acting on stage. Such statements confuse the visual, external transformation of the actor, via costume and make-up, with the internal process of preparation for and acting of a character. To confuse the external appearance of the created illusion, which is a hallmark of Kathakali (and for that matter *all* Asian theatre) with the training for, and approach to, characterization in acting, is to propagate a totally false impression of the Kathakali actor's technique.

Possession or transformation of the actor-dancer indicates the erasing of any self-conscious approach to the craft of acting. Lannoy has described possession, occurring during many Indian seasonal festivals, as "a particularly violent form of unconscious incursion in an ego that is still relatively weak and not yet fixated in consciousness. Paradoxically, every manifestation of ecstatic paroxysm . . . entails a plunge into the depths of self, shutting off reciprocal communication. The subject often has no memory of what he has said or done in trance"²⁵. Part of the confusion in the perception of the acting process stems from a language problem. Kathakali actors consistently state that 'ideal' acting (i.e., on the best night for the actor) occurs when the actor 'becomes' the character. Two key terms in Malayalam are most often used by actors to explain this process. They are *tadatmyam* and *ayi* (past tense *akuka*). One dictionary translates *tadatmyam* as "identification, communion: becoming one with"²⁶, and *akuka* as "to be, to become"²⁶. Following are typical response from two actor-teachers when asked the question, "What makes for the best acting?"

Natan kathapathravumayi tadatmyam prapihanam.
(The actor reaches identification with the character.)

Natan Kathapathravum ayi alinru cherunnu.
(The actor becomes absorbed in the character).²⁷

All actors, in answering correlative questions, state that necessary for achieving *tadatmyam* is in-depth study of the epics and *puranas*, as well as study of individual characterizations (i.e., the self-conscious process of understanding nuances of various characters to be acted). Full 'identification' with the character is achieved by undisturbed and directed concentration on the character during performance. This process is no more mysterious than the process of the Western actor who by full focus of concentration identifies with the character on stage²⁸. For all actors, as the periphery of consciousness during performance, is the knowledge, as one Kathakali actor stated so well: "I always know I'm acting."

The actors are not priests: they are actors, seeking during each performance to achieve the ideal characterization. On the best night this ideal will include the actor giving his fullest concentration, prior to performance, to reflection upon the character he is portraying that evening, how he has performed the part in the past, and what changes, alterations, or additions he might make this evening. However, during the make-up process he will often *literally fall asleep* while the *chutti* (the built-up make-up frame, made of rice paste and paper used for certain characters) is being applied. His gait and gesture *will* become completely changed, not due to a magical transformation, but because, now tightly strapped and bound with layer upon layer of skirts wrapped by costume assistants, the costume restricts natural movements, distorts any movement. The costume itself forces gesture and gait from the realistic mode into the stylized mode which is Kathakali's created illusion. This process shows the integral relation and high degree of development of costuming to an aesthetically evolved choreography.

If the actors are not priests, then they don't need 'initiates'—they need dedicated students. Kathakali training is rigorous, but it is *not* a yogic, or a meditative discipline. It is a physically and technically demanding form of training. To romanticize this fact by implying that the students, through self-denial, choose to live a Spartan existence is totally false. The students live simply because life in Kerala is lived simply. Even today, with 40 per cent of Kerala's people below the poverty level, luxury items like full furnishings are the province of only the middle to upper classes²⁹.

Training of the Actor

Concerning the schedule of training, when presented without mention of the Kerala cultural milieu, the training sounds astonishingly difficult to the

Westerner. The training can be understood in the proper perspective when we know that most people will be asleep by 10.00 p.m. at the latest; that many forms of early education, such as Vedic studies, began at 3:00 or 4:00 a.m.; that the coolest time of day is the early morning hours; and that many people continue to work as many as 10 to 12 hours a day. William Logan provides the following description of the lives of the Namboodiri community from the late 19th century:

As a rule the people of this caste lead very simple lives... They rise very early in the morning, 3 a.m., and immediately bathe in the cold water of their tanks. They spread their clothes out to dry and proceed almost naked to their religious exercises in the temple. After this and till 11 o'clock the more religious of them read and recite their Vedas. At 11 o'clock they dine, and after that devote themselves to various employments including the keeping of a solemn silence. In the evening they bathe in oil and again resort to the temple till about 9 p.m., when they sup and retire for the night.³⁰

As a classical or traditional form of dance-drama in India, the Westerner might assume that such forms are unchanging. Kathakali began as an evolved form from various sources in its cultural milieu. It *did* achieve its basically characteristic style and form at one point historically, but Kathakali has continued to evolve and change through the years, responding to its cultural environment, to innovative artistes, etc. Evidence for this continuous process of evolution in the form is seen in the simple fact that there existed in the past, and still exist today, three distinct styles of Kathakali, associated with the general geographical areas of north, central, and southern Kerala. Most attention has been paid to the style of the Kerala Kalamandalam, simply because it has wider notoriety internationally. Changes of other kinds may be briefly mentioned: the removal of the small, thin-lined *cutti* from the female characters earlier in this century; the total changes in the costuming of servants and other smaller roles; the widening of the skirts of the major characters; the changing of schedules for specific parts of training (i.e., *rasa* and *abhinaya* training, formerly in the evening, but now from 3.30—4.30 p.m. at the Kerala Kalamandalam); the increase in the number of drums utilized on stage at one time, therefore increasing the sound output, etc. The list is almost endless. The mystique of tradition is an imaginative construction in the mind of many Westerners and Indians who imagine that there is an ideal form in the hoary past which can today be preserved in all its pristine purity by lovers of the art. No such ideal form ever existed, nor can it ever be reconstructed.

The impetus given by Artaud, Grotowski, Barba, and Brecht to exploration through Asian theatre for Western production have yielded new input for experimentation on both structural and practical levels.

However, such benefits to the 20th century dialogue between Eastern and Western theatre will provide little in the way of meaningful results if the kind of misrepresentation explored here continues. Theatre artistes need to differentiate between descriptive studies, personal narrative, and projected practical uses of observations/experiences from other cultures. Above all, there must be a continuous attitude of self-criticism on the part of writers—an examination of one's own cultural biases.

Although Barba's article on 'The Kathakali Theatre' did much to create the mystique of Kathakali explored here, it does not take away from the value of his own experimentation, or that of Grotowski, with Kathakali exercises. Barba's 1972 article, 'Words and Presence'³¹, is a remarkably lucid account of his own *working opinions* concerning utilization of Eastern theatre techniques in Western practice. We need to continue this experimental search. We need to continue to utilize sources of all kinds as stimulation for new insights, including Asian theatre. But we also need to be aware of our own cultural biases and needs. Perhaps with a self-critical stance at hand, a reassessment of Kathakali can begin. □

NOTES

1. London: Luzac & Co., 1935.
2. Vol. XI, No. 4, Summer (1967), pp. 37-49.
3. *The Theatre and Its Double* (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1958), p. 92.
4. Iyer, p. 92.
5. 'The Psychology of Eastern Meditation', *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol XI (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1958), p. 559.
6. Richard Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree* (London: Oxford, 1971), p. xxiii.
7. Unfortunately, by the time that Clifford and Betty Jones published their book, *Kathakali* (N.Y.: Theatre Arts Books., 1970), the cumulative effect of the popular image had been well established. Jones, publications on Kutiyattam and other forms of Kerala performance are carefully researched and deserve full attention of anyone interested in Asian performance. However, the Jones book on Kathakali, although in general a well balanced and realistic assessment of the form, retains enough of the cliché-ridden terminology of the popular, romantic image, that without specific qualification of terms and processes, the Kathakali mystique was often still implied.
8. Iyer, p. 23. Barba defines Kathakali as ritual theatre, a mixture of dance and pantomime, religious inspiration and mythological tradition". (p. 37).

9. 'Traditional Disciplines in Training', *Sangeet Natak*, No. 24, April-June (1972), p. 56.
10. Jones, p. 2.
11. *Visit India*, (Cochin; Vol. VI, No. 1 (Nov. 1, 1976), p. R1.
12. Iyer, pp. 52-53 (*italics mine*).
13. Barba, p. 49.
14. p. 42.
15. p. 42. Jones' description carries in its total impact this image of transformation. "The atmosphere of the dressing room is subdued, intent, concentrated. The elaborate transformation of professional actor into epic character is taking place before one's eyes. Bit by bit the individual personality is obliterated by elaborate painted patterns and finally after an hour or more under the hands of the master artist, who applies the fragile white cutti, he is still further transformed... Facing a lighted lamp the actor pauses in meditation, then in respect touching the feet and receiving the blessing of the senior actors present, he leaves for the stage—girded like some fantastic royal gladiator for the test of his craft." (p. 20)
16. Iyer, pp. 25-26. Barba utilizes this same passage in his article.
17. Barba, p. 45.
18. See *India Foundation (Regd.)*, under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act XII of 1955.
19. *Visit India*, back cover. P.K. Devan is "Research Scholar in Kathakali, first and foremost to interpret the art to the masses daily for the last six years, winning international acclaim".
20. Selected from promotional letter, *Gurukulam Kathakali Yogam*.
21. Lannoy, p. 4.
22. The original meaning of this habitualized gesture was to ask pardon of the earth goddess for stamping on her. During interviews, some students said that they knew that this was what it meant originally, but never thought about it. It has no significance for them outside of the act itself. Other students, especially younger students, merely perform the gesture because it has been taught through observation of the older students.
23. Jones, p. 5.
24. Jones talks about the necessity for change in Kathakali in the final chapter of his book. "The confrontation of a changing society, changing systems of values, economic patterns, and education, are pressures brought to bear upon the life or death of many of

India's cultural treasures. The methods of approach to the problem of inevitable change are many, and whatever may be the vagaries of the quality of the emerging, transforming product, change it must" (p. 98). In spite of this awareness, the image of Kathakali left with the reader is not a *complete* picture of what these changes mean in terms of performance, performance conditions, etc.

25. Lannoy, p. 198-199. Anyone who has seen a trance dance as well as a Kathakali performance knows that there is a difference between 'the two processes for the performers; however, the problem is in attempting to communicate clearly to an audience which has not had such an experience for comparative purposes.
26. C. Madhavan Pillai, *Malayalam English Dictionary* (Kottayam: National Book Stall, 1976).
27. Translation assistance was provided by Vasudevan Namboodiripad and M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri.
28. A detailed study of Kathakali acting techniques from training to performance is presently in progress.
29. "Nearly Forty per cent of the population of the state; about eighty lakhs of people, live below the level of subsistence i.e., without an income of one rupee a day." ('The Ruling Class and Its Governing Elite of Kerala', by R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Journal of Kerala Studies*, I July, 1973), p. 37.
30. *Manual of the District Malabar* (Madras: Govt. Press, 1906), p. 129.
31. *The Drama Review*, 16, (March, 1972), pp. 47-54.