



Usha Nangiyar in *Karthiyayani Purappad*



Kuttan Chakyar as Ravana

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repertoire, these two plays are classified as comedies (*prahasana*).

- <sup>22</sup> Quotation marks are discourse markers in Indian languages: *iti* in Sanskrit and *ennu* in Malayalam.
- <sup>23</sup> *annannu nalloru kuzhukutt' aayirunnu! aso cila duttha-praanikalude mada-maaccharyam-hetuv'-aayi para-vaaka-ppettu-poyat' aay allo! aso, enmaal ini asu kuuthi-paraka-venthaa! ennuvo gasi!* (Nambiar 1980, 24).
- <sup>24</sup> A typical Kerala rice-flour, banana and jaggery mixture wrapped in banana leaf and steamed up
- <sup>25</sup> The Malayalam enacting of the preparation of the *ada* includes a condensed 'recipe' in Sanskrit verse form: "Excellent chunks of coconut and plantain/ amazing, in a pot of purified butter/ sweet, delicious, thick, delighting the whole world/ hail to them!" According to Nambiar (1980, 26), the recital is accompanied by hand gestures that decode the 'inner meaning' as follows: "King Udayana is highly pleased with his ministers VasantakaI, Rumanvai and Yaugandharayanan". In the performance documented in 2013, the verse was recited with no hand-gestures to convey the 'inner meaning'.
- <sup>26</sup> 'Temple-servants', a category of different types of castes intermediate between Brahmins and Nayars
- <sup>27</sup> I am indebted to Volkhard Krech for bringing the studies by Axel Michaels to my attention (11/01/2016). I am also grateful to the Kate Hamburger Kolleg in the Ruhr-University Bochum for supporting my research on the structures of performances in Kerala during 2015-2016.

# Talas in Kutiyattam

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KARIN BINDU

## Introduction

The evolution of South Indian musical rhythm cycles (*Talas*) – whose origin go back to the time of the *Vedas* – focused more on the preservation of original and traditional forms (SEN 1994:54) unlike the north Indian music, which on the contrary got more influenced by invaders from Iran and Afghanistan.

The meaning of the term “Tala”, which arises from a complex philosophical time concept of the *Atharvaveda*, undergoes various interpretations (ROWELL 1992:180): Mylius (1987:184) translates the Sanskrit term “Tala” with “palmyra”, “clapping”, “clock”, “dance” and “musical instrument” as well as “flat surface.” Rowell also describes the term in relation to a measuring unit:

Following this semantic route, *Tala* thus signifies an action applied to, or making use of, such a flat surface, with division or measurement as its purpose. It is also an important unit of spatial measure in the visual arts, based upon the length of the hand (as measured from the wrist to the tip of the middle finger) or the length of the face. The basic meaning of *Tala*, then, is “span” – a span of space or of time. (Rowell 1992:190)

South Indian *Talas* consist of complex structures: Three main division elements (*Angams* such as *Drutam*, *Anudrutam* and *Laghu*) are responsible for the

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generation of a huge number of *Talas* in the Carnatic classical music by subdivisions in various *Jatis* and *Gatis* (PESCH 2009:392). The different additive combinations of beats (*Matras or Aksharakalas*) in the sense of smallest time units within the *Angams* and the modulation of speed allow lots of variations for the skilled percussionists of South India.

The 35 *Suladi Talas* of Carnatic Classical Music are based on seven *Talas*, the so-called “Sapta Talas” which are variable in five *Jatis* each. The *Anga Anudrutam* (U) comprises a single stroke on the drum, *Drutam* (O) two strokes, and *Laghu* (In) a variable number of strokes (WADE 1987:22) according to the *Jatis* “*Tisra*” (three beats), “*Chaturasra*” (four beats), “*Khanda*” (five beats), “*Misra*” (seven beats) and “*Sangirna*” (nine beats). In the signature of *Laghu* the “n” is thereby replaced by the respective number of beats (BHAGHYALEKSHMI 2004:17).

The seven *Talas* are called *Dhruva* (In O In In), *Matya* (In O In), *Rupaka* (O In), *Tripata* (In O O), *Jhampa* (In U O), *Ata* (In In O O) and *Eka* (In). By variations in the five *Jatis* they form the 35 *Suladi Talas*. For example *Eka Tala* can be played as *Eka Tala Tisra Jati* (I<sup>3</sup>) consisting of three beats, *Eka Tala Chaturasra Jati* (I<sup>4</sup>) consisting of four beats, *Eka Tala Khanda Jati* (I<sup>5</sup>), five beats, *Eka Tala Misra Jati* (I<sup>7</sup>), seven beats and *Eka Tala Sangirna Jati* (I<sup>9</sup>), nine beats.

The entire cycle of *Tala* is called “*Avarta*”, which is divided into the *Angams* mentioned. The first stroke of a cycle is called “*Sam*” or “*Samam*” (PESCH 2009:205).

While a popular part of the thirty-five *Suladi Talas* are played to the accompaniment of vocalists, instrumentalists and dancers on the percussion instruments *Mrdangam*, *Ghattom* and *Kanjira* by musicians of all castes, *Talas* in Sanskrit Drama *Kutiyattam* were originally played exclusively by men of the *Nampyar* caste on the percussion instrument *Mizhavu*. They have been accompanied by the cymbals playing women of the *Nangiar* caste. The performers of the Dramas exclusively derived from the *Chakyar* caste until the year 1965. In that year the Kerala Kalamandalam – up to the present day working as “Deemed University of Performing Arts” – started an institutionalized *Kutiyattam* department, which was opened to members of all castes to preserve the Performing Art from vanishing. Due to the efforts of all teachers and practitioners of various *Kutiyattam* centers like Ammannur Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam in Irinjalakuda, Natana Kairali, Margi in Trivandrum, Padmasree Mani Madhava

Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam in Killikkurissimangalam, the International Centre for Kutiyattam in Thripunithura, Painkulam Rama Chakyar Smaraka Kalapedam in Painkulam, Napatya in Muzhikkulam and Kerala Kalamandalm in Cheruthuruthy (VENUGOPALAN 2007:127-148), *Kutiyattam* entered into the UNESCO list of “Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” in 2001 (see also VENU 2002:118-122).

*Mizhavu* percussionists – which so far in scientific works get just as little attention as the instrument itself – communicate and co-ordinate specific *Talas* with (female) *Kuzhitalam* (cymbal) players, *Itakka* percussionists, temporarily with a *Timila* percussionist and with *Conch* in the beginning of the play. They also musically join the movements of the actors representing characters from the Indian national epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, the tensions and emotions of the performed stories and the *Devas* themselves. These are invited and praised at the beginning of each performance with specific rhythm patterns (*Mizhavuoccapettal*) and *Akitta* songs (BINDU 2013:18).

Sangeet Acharya (1956), Sambamoorthy (1960), Panchal (1984), Day (1983), Wade (1987), Chelladurai (1991), Nair in Sangeet Natak (1994), Popley (1996), Deva (2000) and Danielou (2004) were the only authors focused generally on Indian music instruments, who mentioned the *Mizhavu* as a percussion instrument.

*Talas* in the *Kutiyattam* exhibit by similar structures and designations relationships with the above mentioned *Sapta Talas* of the *Carnatic Music* tradition, but are handed down in only one variable that is phrased individually or following traditions to the context of performance. The main instrument *Mizhavu* represents more than just a musical instrument: It is felt and treated as anthropomorphic *Deva Vadyam*. Before the opening of the *Kutiyattam* for profane audience the *Mizhavu* only resided in specific temple theaters (*Kuttampalam*) and lived the “life of an ascetic (*Brahmachari*) by receiving the same rituals with the exception of the marriage ceremony (Nair in Sangeet Natak 1994:22); Rajagopalan in Paul 2005:30).

In *Kutiyattam* performances more than one actor is representing certain acts of a Sanskrit drama on the stage and two *Mizhavu* percussionists will play: The more experienced percussionist improvises in response to the movements and emotions of the actors, while the second player keeps the rhythm unison with the *Kuzhitalam* players. *Nangiar Koothu* and *Chakyar Koothu* performances are solo performances, which request only one *Mizhavu* percussionist and one *Kuzhitalam* player. Sometimes *Itakka* players also join the performance (BINDU



2013:37). Venu (2002:175-178) mentioned that various dramas written on palm books as well as the acting and production manuals (*Attaprakaram* and *Kramadipika*) are still strictly under custody of the *Chakyar* families.

During performances *Mizhavu* percussionists sit in wooden stands in the back of the stage, so their efforts to follow the actor's movements in a sensible way demand a lot of concentration and knowledge. The duties of the percussionists are not only focused on drumming but include a variety of functions in preparation for the performance and within:

They should know the meaning of each slokam, the differences in the *charis*, *kriyas*, *parikramanam* (literally circumambulation). They should have a thorough knowledge of the *Aattaprakaram* (acting manual) and *Kramadeepika* (stage manual). In short, the Nambiar should have a complete knowledge of *Koodiyattam*. The *Chakyars* need not know the playing of the *Mizhavu*. *Nambiar* should know this too. *Nambiar* must be more knowledgeable than the *Chakyars*. In *Koodiyattam*, *Nambiar* is first in importance. The *Nambiar* is the *Sootradhara* (a kind of director who appears on stage first to announce the gist of the play). From the beginning till the very end of the play, *Nambiar*s have the responsibility of stage. But since the *Chakyars* are seen in front of the stage, the spectators gave more importance to the *Chakyars*. (Interview with P. K. N. *Nambiar* 2006, BINDU 2013:115)

### ***Talas* in the *Kutiyattam***

At the beginning of my *Mizhavu* tuitions at Kerala Kalamandalam in 2005 my *Ashan* – the now retired K. Eswaranunni – told me about seven *Talas* in *Kutiyattam* whose specific use in connection with the 21 *Ragas* were described in the *Granthas* of his Guru P. K. N. *Nambiar*: *Eka Talam* ( 4 *Matras* ), *Tripata Talam* ( 7 *Matras* ), *Atanta Talam* ( 14 *Matras* ), *Dhruva Talam* ( 14 *Matras* ), *Laksmi Talam* ( 7 *Matras* ), *Murukiya Tripata Talam* ( 3.5 *Matras* ) and *Cempa Talam* ( 10 *Matras* ). The latter one is especially used in the instrumental art form *Mizhaviltayampaka*, played by three to five *Mizhavu* percussionists, Gong and *Ilatalam* players.

In another Interview K. Eswaranunni counted *Kutiyattam Talas* conceptually differing from the above mentioned: “Eka, Rupakam, Jhampa, Tripata, Madhyam, Dhruvam, Ata. Seven *Talas*.” In the following quotation he explains the distribution of sub-divisions within these *Talas*:

Eka Tala one laghu, Rupaka Tala two dhurutam, one laghu. Jhampa tala one laghu, one anudhrutam, one drutam. Triputa tala one laghu, two drutham, (lacht), Madhya Tala: laghu, two dhurutam, one laghu. Triputa tala: laghu, dhurutam, two laghu, Ata Tala two laghu, two dhurutam (Interview 2006, BINDU 2013:123).

Regarding exact number and names of *Talas* used in *Kutiyattam* there are circulating disagreements with other practitioners as well as authors. P.K.N. Nambiar (in *Sangeet Natak Special* 1994:105) lists nine *Talas*, using the term of "Aksharakala" for the number of beats instead of the term "Matras": Ekatalam ( 4 Aksharakalas ), Triputatalam ( 7 Aksharakalas ) Triputa instead " Murukiya Triputa Talam " ( 3 , 5 Aksharakalas ), Jhampatalam ( Cempa Talam , 10 Aksharakalas ), Dhruvatalam ( 14 Aksharakalas), Chempamatalam ( 8 Aksharakalas), Atatalam ( instead Atanta Talam , 14 Aksharakalas ), Lakshmitalam ( without specifying the Aksharakalas ), and Panchari ( 6 Aksharakalas ). Additional *Talas* as *Madhyatalam* and *Mallatalam* were used, whose playing style is unknown today.

Regarding the comparability between the *Kutiyattam Talas* and the rhythms of Carnatic classical music, the question arose whether the former constitute a borrowing from the classical period. This question was denied by P. K. N. Nambiar:

The saptatalas (seven talas) have been here much before. I won't say the talas used in *Mizhavu* are from the Carnatic music. There are variations like sangeernajaathi, thishrajaathi etc. There are terminological differences in the talas used. Although the maatra (time-beat) is one and the same, the way in which it is used differs in each tala. There are only seven talas. (Interview 2006, BINDU 2013:113-114)

The rules for implementing *Talas* in *Kutiyattam* are firstly set in rules where certain *Talas* are provided for specific *Ragas* (Sowle 1982:178; Nambiar in *Sangeet Special* 1994:105-106; Rajagopalan in *Sangeet Special* 1994:120-121; Rajagopalan in Paul 2005:33; Gramaprakasan 2007:24). On the other hand, the use of *Talas* in three kinds of speeds (*vilambita* - slow, *madhya* - medium, *druta* - fast) depends on other factors:

- 1.) On the kind of the characters shown
- 2.) On dance variations (*Charibhedas*)
- 3.) On the context due to performed situations and descriptions of nature
- 4.) On the representation of specific emotions (*Bhavas*).

For the interested readers it must be mentioned here that two most important editions on *Mizhavu* are available in Malayalam: The book “Mizhavu Nampyarude Kramadipika” by maestro P. K. Naranayan Nambiar, published in 2005, and the book “Mizhavoli” written by his pupil K. Eswaranunni in 2010, who has not only been head of the *Mizhavu* Department at Kerala Kalamandalam for 35 years, but also has taught most of the contemporary active percussionists.

In *Kutiyattam* there are three kinds of percussion systems, which are implemented by Mizhavu percussionists:

1. Areas that emphasize dance. 2. Areas that give prominence to histrionics. 3. Areas that are more expressional. When there are no characters on stage, there is a kind of playing on the Mizhavu. “Charikalakala vadyam / jathi kalakala vadyam / thappiyirangi thattu, nirgeetha, bandhananirgeetha parikramam” (Interview with P. K. Nambiar 2006, BINDU 2013:114).

1.) Percussion for *Kriya Nritham*: Here the term “Kriya” is translated as “dance step”, while “Nritham” means a form of motion, which is based only on *Talas* in the form of specific rhythmic musical phrases without specific facial expressions of the performers. In *Natya Shastra* – since more than 2000 years used as a basic instruction book by practitioners of all Indian performing art forms – Bharata called *Kriyas* “Caris”: The specific rules are subject and include movements of different limbs.

*Caris* are at this point divided into sixteen *Bhaumi Caris* (earthy) and sixteen *Akasikii Caris* (airy) as Bharata had already been described in detail. In *Kutiyattam* there are various types of *Caris*: *Praveshika Cari* (played when a character appears on stage) and *Naishkramika Caris* (if characters from the stage go back, or if something by force is held). Other *Cari* types are called “Brahmari” designated as *Ulprutha Bhramari*, *Eka Pada Bhramari*, *Chakra Bhramari* and *Kunjitha Bhramari*. Another *Cari* form is represented by *Parikramanam*: This form is used for scene changes, roll changes and change of locations. P. K. N. Nambiar also listed *Caris* as various forms of stylized walking such as *Kalappurattu*, *Natakkuka*, *Chelluntinatakkuka*, *Vattattil Natakkuka*, *Oti Natakkuka*, as well as special leg movements (*Yuddcachari*, *Krida*, *Mayilattam*, *Jatayuvinte Talam Chavittuka*, *Ulkkhattana*) (Nambiar in *Sangeet Special* 1994:108).

The totality of *Caris*, which also include ritual movements, and the implementation of certain musical rhythmical phrases form – according to his

opinion – the “skeleton” of the musical and rhythmic Ensemble play (*Melam*), the dances being in the foreground (BINDU 2013:94).

2.) *Melam* based on the emotionally significant storyline in *Kutiyattam* in response to changing *Ragas*, *Rasas* and *Bhavas*:

Here the adjustment of *Mizhavu* play from the more experienced percussionist is required in various situations, expressed emotions by the characters on stage during a Performance. Details on face, eye and hand movements can not be seen by the percussionists because of the already mentioned backward position of the *Mizhavus*. Only because of their contextual knowledge musical improvisation of the percussionists responds to all physical movements of the actors (Nangiar in Sangeet Special 1994:107).

*Mizhavu* percussionists learn the following terms for that kind of task:

- *Mudrakku Anusariccu*: The *Mizhavu* follows the *Mudras* (hand gestures) of the actors;
- *Abinayattinanusariccu*: The *Mizhavu* follows the expression of the characters;
- *Attattinkottuka*: The *Mizhavu* follows body movements;
- *Ilakiyattam*: The *Mizhavu* follows leg movements (steps, jumps);
- *Anvayiccattam*: When the character is singing *Slokas* (Sanskrit verses), important words are supported by the drum;
- *Colliyattam*: *Slokas* and *Mudras* are performed together with the *Mizhavu*. (BINDU 2013:94)

As mentioned above specific *Ragas* sung by characters in *Kutiyattam* and *Kuttu* performances demand the accompaniment of certain *Talas*. The following *Sloka* contains all *Ragas* used in *Kutiyattam*:

*Muddhan srikanthi tondartan; indalam muralindalam;  
Veladhuli punar danam; Viratarkan ca tarkanum;  
Korakkuranni paurali; Puranirum tatheiva ca;  
Dukkhagandharavum ceti; Pancamam bhinnapancamam;  
Srikamaram Kaisikium; ghattantariyum ANTARI;  
Svaranama nnalivannam; pattum pattumatayitum  
(Chakyar in Sangeet Natak 1994:74)*

The twenty-one ragas of *Kutiyattam* are thus named: *Muddhan, Srikanthi, Tontu, Artan, Indalam, Muralindalam, Veladhuli, Danam, Viratarkkan,*

*Tarkkan, Korakkurunni, Paurali, Poraniru, Duhkhagandharam, Cetipancamam, Bhinnapancamam, Virapanchamam, Srikamaram, Kaishiki, Ghattantari and Antari* (BINDU 2013:95).

Detailed knowledge about the use of special *Talas* for just itemized *Ragas Mizhavu* percussionists will receive during their training. Lots of knowledge in that matter P. K. N. Nambiar also has integrated into his book “Mizhavu Nampyarude Kramadipika.”

*Kutiyattam* performers show characters from the Indian national epics Mahabharata and Ramayana including their emotions (*Bhavas*). *Satvikabhinaya* – the representation of the inner life – is the most important element in *Kutiyattam* performances. The facial expression of nine emotional states, that require years of exercises by the performers, is called “*Rasabhinaya*.” These feelings are divided into nine main categories: *Rathi, Hasa, Shoka, Kroda, Utsaha, Bhaya, Jugupsa, Vismaya, Sama* (Love, Joy, Grief, Anger, Power, Fear, Horror, Astonishment and Quietness. SURESH 2005:28). In all genres of Indian performing arts these feelings are transmitted through four types of expressions (*Abhinaya*) to the audience, that respond to that nine *Bhavas* with the perception of *Rasas*. These nine perceived emotional states also differ terminologically from *Bhavas*: As *Rasas* they are called *Sringara, Hasya, Karuna, Veera, Raudra, Bhayanaka, Bheebatsa, Adbhuta* and *Shanta*.

The art of how to react on these *Bhavas* on their drums also represents a difficult task for the *Mizhavu* percussionists and requires several years of practise (BINDU 2013:97).

### 3.) *Melam* during passages without characters on the stage

The course of a *Kutiyattam* performance can lead to situations where there are no actors on stage. In those moments *Mizhavu* percussionists are given the opportunity to show and develop their musical skills independently: When there are no characters on the stage, there must be at least percussion performance in order to keep off the boredom of the spectators and thus to give impetus to the stage.

Other possibilities of percussive expressions without actors are offered by several orchestral temple art forms, which only in recent decades were developed by P. K. N. Nambiar and K. Eswaranunni.

This category include not only the before mentioned *Mizhaviltayambaka* but even more *Melams* such as *Mizhavoli* (consisting of nine *Mizhavu* percussionists),

*Mizhavilkeli* (an orchestra consisting of *Mizhavu*, *Maddalam*, *Centa*, *Gong* und *Ilathalam* players), and *Mizhavilpancharimelam*. The latter one has been developed by K. Eswaranunni including the play of thirteen *Mizhavu* percussionists (BINDU 2013:99).

### Notation of *Talas* in *Kutiyattam*

The notation for the *Talas* used in *Kutiyattam* is in mnemonic syllables called *Vayttari* in Malayalam. The types of syllables here differ from both the *Jatis* (individual rhythmic syllable) of *Carnatic Music* as well as the designated "Bols", syllables of North Indian rhythms, also from the rhythmic syllables used for other South Indian percussion instruments like *Maddalam*, *Centa*, *Timila* and *Tavil*.

Rajagopalan (in Paul 2005:32) mentioned in an article about the *Mizhavu* only few *Vayttaris* such as "Tha Ki Ta" or "Dhi Ka Tha Ka, Dhi Ka Tha Ka, Dhi Kat ha ka Tha" to illustrate examples of tutorials.

During my first lesson by K. Eswaranunni at Kerala Kalamandalam in 2005 I learned the syllables "Ti", "Ki", "Ta", "Tu" and also "Ka". Special syllables like "Trem," "Nrittum" and "Ritum" as well as "Ti", "Ke," "Him", "Tei," "Tum", "Ri" and "R" are used in specific rhythmic phrases: At the beginning of a *Tala* (*Vattamttukottuka*), in the final phrase of a *Tala* (*Vilakkuka*), with specific rhythms like *Atanta Talam*, *Laksmi Talam* and in the intermediate phrases called "*Kriyas*". All syllables include their playing techniques on the drum itself (BINDU 2013:171).

In contrast to the diversity of impact possibilities on the Carnatic percussion instrument *Mrdangam* that is linked with an equally large number of *Vayttaris*, only two basic strokes are possible on the *Mizhavu* that run with the whole hand, while other variations of playful "tabs" in the just mentioned syllables, consist of finger combinations. The basic strokes are denoted by "Ta" and "Tu", the "Ta" showing similarities to the "slap" on the West African Djembe drum: This suggests, that the hand touches the front center of the drum in such a way that the finger slap by themselves onto the membrane producing a bright "popping" sound. The "Tu" stroke is also slapped, but only with the middle finger and ring finger to the front edge of the drum. The sound thus produced, reminding the slightly noisy descending sound of humans swallowing, deeper than the "Ta" (BINDU 2013:175).

*Mizhavu* pupils at Kerala Kalamandalam write down each rhythmic arrangement in Malayalam written *Vayttaris*. In most cases not the counting times are written, but the corresponding number of strokes (*Matras*). Long phrases

are repeated by them at first only by speaking the syllables with a teacher until the entire phrase was internalized like a poem. Just then the implementation to the instrument can take place. For practising, pupils use small wooden drums (*Abhyasakuttikal*) instead of the huge copper drum. But only the copper drum, having a small “ear” in the front of its body, produces the sacred sound of “Om” while being played (BINDU 2013:172).

The just mentioned way of writing down rhythmic patterns is not enough for external or foreign students to detect the exact relationships between counting, *Kriyas* and the *Vaittaris*.

For that reason I have designed an appropriate representation of the *Kutiyattam Talas* in tabular form. An explanation of the playing content of the respective line can be found in the right column. This notation technique I used especially for the transcription of those seven *Talas*, which I learnt from my Guru K. Eswaranunni in 2005/2006, assisted by K. Achuthanandan at the *Mizhavu* department of Kerala Kalamandalam.

The first line of each *Tala* chart read from left to right represents the counting of a complete cycle (*Tala Avarta*) consisting of whole and sometimes of half strokes (*Matras*). Whole beats are identified by numbers, half beats by a “+” between the beats (BINDU 2013:176-177).

The second line symbolizes the corresponding *Kriyas* that emphasizes (“x”) or unstressed expressed by hand gestures: The first blow, whose symbol “X” is underlined, is played accentuated.

The symbols “x”, “1” and “2” in accordance with the notation of *Kriyas* (hand movements), are varied as in the Carnatic music according to the number of beats (*Matras*). The “X” is referred to as “Sam” and played audibly by a clap, the “1” represents a tap with the little finger of the right hand to the palm of the left hand, the “2” represents a tap of the right ring finger of the right hand onto the left palm. All other numbers are tapped thumb-typed ward with the following fingers of the right hand as it is also done by the *Kriyas* of Carnatic rhythms.

The third line already includes the starting phrase of a *Tala* (*Vattamittukottuka*), which will be replaced thereafter in subsequent lines of a continuous *Tala* cycle (*Olukku*), the last line including a rhythmic ending pattern (*Vilakkuka*). Underlined syllables symbolize an emphasis. The “#” symbol indicates a longer pause like the length of a quarter or eighth note to Western notation, a “\*” indicates a shorter pause comparable to a sixteenth rest (BINDU 2013:177).

Notation Example: *Triputa Talam* (BINDU 2013:179)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Counting
X	1	2	x	v	x	v	<i>Kriya</i>
	Ti	Ti Ti	Trem Ki	Ti Ki	Trem Ki	Ti Tare	<i>Vattamittukottuka</i> des <i>Tala</i> , „Tare“ = „Tareketa“
Hakataka ( <u>T</u> ikataka)	Takataka	Takataka	Tikataka	Takataka	Tikataka	Takataka	Continous rhythm of <i>Triputa Talam</i>
<u>T</u> ikataka	Takataka	Takataka	Ta*Ta Ti	Ke ta ta*	Ta Ti*Ta	Ke ta ti*	At number 4 the <i>Vilakkuka</i> starts
Trēm							Trem = Flam stroke, right after left hand in short interval

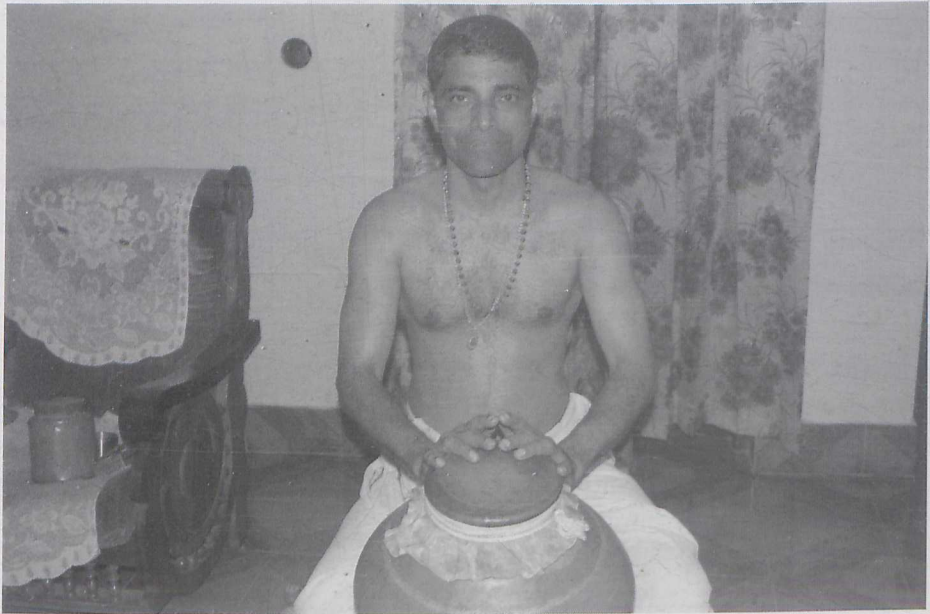
*Triputa Talam: 7 Matras*

*Nilakottuka* passages in which a *Tala* is played continuously, and *Ennamkottuka* phrases in which variations and musical ornaments are produced, generally require strong “Slap” strokes on the drum played with full power. Syllables like “takataka” and “tikataka” allow lots of sonic as well as speed variations. Herein the percussionists are also inspired to develop their own “Ennams” (ways) of playing (BINDU 2013:183).

The combination of strictly well learned phrases according to the three kinds of percussion systems in the *Kutiyattam* with the individual skills of the percussionists and the good quality of the *Mizhavu* will contribute to the success of a *Kutiyattam* or *Kuttu* Performance, both of them being regarded as “Visual Sacrifice”. The music in performing arts is always regarded as “bed” for the “dance” as P. K. N. Nambiar pointed out in his interview 2006.

The *Mizhavu* itself is considered as a mighty energy source due to the force obtained through initiation. According to my own observances the energy flow of the drum takes place in seven ways: 1.) The penetration of the instrument awakens the energy of *Nandikeshvaran*, the resident in the instrument, and transmitted together with the power of percussionists on the instrument; 2.) By conformity of the player’s breath with the breath of the *Mizhavu*; 3.) By playing the invocative *Mizhavoccapetuttal* for the expulsion of the *Asuras* (demons) and the invitation





K. Eswaranunni, Cheruthuruthy 2010. Photo: Karin Bindu



Mizhavu Thayambaka, Kalamandalam Troupe, Calicut, 2010. Photo: Karin Bindu



Author practising on *Abhyasakuttikal* with Anoop and K. Sajith Vijayan, Mizhavu Department, Kalamandalam 2006, Photo: Manef Bindu

of the *Devas* (deities); 4.) By transmitting power from the *Mizhavu* onto the performer behind the curtain (*Marayilkriya*); 5): By synchronizing the play with movements of the performers; 6) By intensifying *Bhavas* (emotions); 7.) By coordinating and communicating *Talas* with other musicians (BINDU 2013:205).

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# PERFORMANCE

## REVIEWS

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### DELHI DIARY

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LEELAVENKATARAMAN

#### EXPLORATIONS KEEP PACE WITH THE ORTHODOX FORMAT IN THE CAPITAL

COME Janmashtami with the inevitability of most events being centred round the Krishna theme, and the Delhi scenario offers two perennials which remain relevant for their own reasons. One is Shiram Bharatiya Kala Kendra's Krishna Ballet extravaganza, which over the years has been a staple at the Kamani, its richness of costume and stage settings watched with devotional fervour, making it the common man's delight. The other, quite different presentation is Uma Sharma's *RadhaMadhav* at the IIC, which attracts its niche audience who lose themselves in its old world flavour of Raas and Uma's penchant for abhinaya based on old Urdu and Hindi poetry.

Annual day celebrations for dance institutions become very important in providing performance space for the less known dancers who as faithful disciples over the years constitute the mainstay of a teacher of dance. Watching Bharatanatyam expert Jamuna Krishnan's students AnnaikaAhuja, Gayatri Seth, TvishiDuggal, LavanyaBedi, ChandsiKataria, HridikaSoni and the only south Indian name AnjanaNatarajan take the Chinmaya auditorium stage in a programme, one had to applaud the fact that our classical dances, have attracted several aspirants, in an inter- regional cultural pollination. Here was a whole crew of students from the North performing items like Pushpanjali in Nattai followed by Alarippu, Jatiswaram in Hamsadhwani, Keertanam in Mohanam "Yen pallikkondeerAyya", Tillana in Kadanakutoohalam, along with dance based on Sanskrit verses on Lakshmi, and verses from *Krishna Karnamrutham*, and coming nearer home a MeeraBhajan in Hindi. That poetry which has inspired so much of