The concept of theatre in *Naatyashastra* and classical artforms of Kerala

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Theatre is an English term which is synonymous with *Arangu* in Malayalam. *Arangu* which is also known as stage where all art forms are systematically expressed or performed. The word theatre is derived from Greek word *theatron*. According to Christopher B. Balm the word theatre which means a space to see [1]. Theatre is a very critical component which plays a crucial role in actor/actress artistic expression and a transit point between actor and audience.

The history of Indian dances traces its origin from IndusValley civilization and Harappa Culture. With the work of Bharata's *Naatyashastra* Indian art forms got a classical and scientific base. *Naatyamandapa* are the crucial component in all India Art forms. *Naatyamandapa* in Udayagiri is the classical example as per the standards compiled by Bharata. Most Traditional art forms like Kathakali, Koottampalam, Kooth all are performed in *Naatyamandapams*. How the structure of stage in Kerala art forms like Koottampalam, Kathakali, and Krishnanattam, that here widely discussed in this paper.

**Naatyamandapam in Naatyashastra**

According to Bharata, *Naatyamandapavaram* classified into three with reference to its style namely *Vikrishtam*[^2], *Caturashram*[^3] and *Tyashram*[^4] each of them are constructed in specific style of measurement i.e. *Jeshtam*,[^5]*Madhyamam*[^6] and *Kanishtham*.[^7] Measurement style is divided into two *Hastaashrayam* and *Dandaashrayam*. Major measurement system are 108 *Dandu*, 64 *Kol*, 64 *Dandu* 32 *Kol* and 32 *Dandu* for each, six for *Vikrishtam*, *Caturashram* and *Trishram*. So totally *Naatyamandapas* are 18[^8].

Structure of *Naatyamandapas* changes with the changes in characters, if Devas are the main characters then Mandapas will be *Jeshtam* (*Mandapam*), Human people (*Kanishtham*). Dima is a *Roopaka* where Devas or Asuras plays the major role in which warfare is the main theme for that *Jyeshtham* is the preferred *Mandapas* because its size really fits.

Each *Naatyamandapam* is equally divided into three spaces *Rangapeetham*, *Prekshaagriham* and *Nepathyam*, all these are constructed in a strict scientific sense. *Kaliyaru* is otherwise known as *Rangapeetham*. *Prekshaagriham* is the equal half of altogether of *Naatyamandapam*. Sculptured Pillars of *Naatyamandapas* are the imaginative boundary of inner space. Rest of the half is equally divided in to *Rangapeetham* and *Nepathyam*. *Naatyaranga* is constructed in Square manner supported by four pillar in each edge and three in each sides all are decorated with sculptors and mural paintings. There is a common roof for *Naatyamandapam* and also a separate one for *Rangam*. It is known as *Vithaanamach*.

As per Bharata's *Naatyalakshaa* the width of *Rangavedi* must start form one wall to another, must be divided into equal portions with pillars.

**Koottampalam in Kerala**

*Koottampalam* has got a golden status in Kerala’s art history. Both *Koottampalam* and *Kooth* performed in it where as *Ottampalam* is space for learning Vedas, Shastras and Mantras. Other popular name of *Koottampalams* are Naatyagriha, Naatyamandapam etc. In the words of P. Unnikrishnan Nair, *Koottampalam* is a Naatyagriha bestowed with the presence of deities and deities[^9]. *Koottampalamin* is an ideal platform for the arts like drama, skit etc. Its considered important as one among the Panchapraasaadams. *Shreekovil*,

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[^3]: *Caturashram*.
[^4]: *Tyashram*.
[^5]: *Jeshtam*.
[^6]: *Madhyamam*.
[^7]: *Kanishtham*.
[^8]: Measurement style.
Kalaashamandapam, Agrashala, Balikallu,Koottampilam are thePanchapraasadas.Koottampilam is a popular art form in Kerala which is widely performed in Koottampilams, where the importance is given to movements and expressions of the artist. As per the structural configuration Naatyamandapam is constructed in three styles namely Mukkon, Caitram and Deerghacaturam. These types of models can be seen in so many parts of India but in Kerala only DeerghacaturamKoottampilams can be seen.

Naatyamandapam and Koottampilam
There is a notable difference/sameness in both Koottampilam and Rangavedi proposed by Bharatamuni. In Naatyashastra, Bharava defines the shape of Naatyamandapam as Shylagphaaakaara-KaaryashyaalguaanaaakaurdhiboomirnaatyamandapamandavaatayapanptonivaatoDheerashabdabdhakaali[10].The constructions of Roof of Naatyamandapamare in the style of Shylagphaaakaara, a popular style which is exists form BC 1st century[11].The major advantage of this is the voices of the actors are clearly expressed without any disturbance. Most of roofs in Koottampilams are constructed in Guhakritti. To avoid echoing walls and roof are supported with wooden blocks.

In Bharata’s concept of Naatyamandapam the walls are constructed with mud bricks. Small window are fixed in sides for proper air passage, so that further disturbance from environment can be avoided (Kiliivaati).Roofs are constructed in such a way to defend thunder, storm and rain. Two pillars are constructed in parallel both inside and outside of Rangavedi outer side is bigger than inner side. There is space in the corridor where the audience can sit. The same can be seen in Koottampilams of Kerala.

According to BhararataPrekshakasthaana is in the middle part of Naatyagriha. The sopanas constructed in the middle part is space where audience sits. There are three types of Prekshakas, ie Gods, Kings,andhumans each having separate Naatyagriha. If there are more sopanas it is meant for human, if it is less meant for Rajas. As per Bharatasanotion Naatyamandalas should be medium in its size. Actors and Audience should be seated in a face to face manner as the same follows in Kerala too. Prekshakasare not allowed to sit in the floor and corridor.

The concept of Arangu (theatre)in Kerala Art forms
Stage is an indispensable part of any art forms it is unique space where actor forms, it is a unique space where actor/audience relationships exist in a cordial relationship of exchange[12]Arangu is used in a mutual cordial relationship of exchange. Arnagu is used as a synonymous to Rangavedi, Abahinayaavedi,Natanavedi. Three words are employed in same meaning.

Arangubeing used for an artist forms, there are two types of Arangu (1) closed structure (2) open structure which is mainly used for local art forms. There are two types of open theatre in Kerala.

The stage of Krishnanaattam
Dance is the critical component in Krishnanaattamnow widely plays in the location were once ruled by zamorins i.e. Palakkad, Mankada, Nilambur, Neiyiruppukovilakams. Temples are like Guruvayur, Trikkavu, Trikkandiyur, Hanumankavu, Tiruvambadi, Keraldeeshapuram, Nirakkaitakotta[13].

The audience of Krishnanaattambelongs to upper strata of the society i.e. Brahmins, Varmas etc... So they performed in those places like Agraharams, illams and Kovilukams. Krishnanaattamis widely performed in close space. But today it can be performed in any parts of the society.

Now a day’s Krishnanaattamis widely performed in the stage of Guruvayur temple. The stage itself is an open space. Nilavi%akkuk is the imaginative boundary of Krishnanaattamwhile performing in the stage. In the play time Singers are positioned in the middle backside of the Arangu, artist plays Shudhamadda%am and Toppimaddalam are situated in both sidesIdlakka artist also positioned with them. Artists are performed in the middle space where the boundary is from Ka%iv%akkuk to the place where Ponnaani and Shinkidi stationed.This is the ideally measured space where Krishnanaattamis performed.

The stage of Kathakali
Kathakali is a unique blend of Art, Literature, Nritya, Music, Drama, Mela etc. So it is widely known as Sundararaka. It is based on the epic Ramayana, compiled by KottararakkaraTampuran. Kathakali is the advanced version of Ramanattam compiled KottarakkaraTampuran. Shriramavataram to Pattabhishekam are the major eight Khandas in the play.

TheArangu for Kathakali is highly important as Kooth, Koottampilam and Krishnanaattam. This art can be performed in ideal space without any restrictions. The Arangu of the play is constructed in rectangular shape, where the floor is plastered with cow dung, each side is having pillars, sides and roof are covered with palm and coconut leaves. It is known as Kalipanthal.

Kalivilakku is located in the middle of theArangu, curtain is in the backside of Kalivilakku. Singers are located in the back side. Musicians are placed in the right side of the stage.

The stage of Koottampilam
Koottampilam is a temple art form which is developed in Kerala temples, performed mainly in Koottampilams. This particular art form is protected and nurtured by the elite sections of the community and performed in a specifically constructed space. Naatyathaaana and Prekshaksthana are two critical components inAranganu.

Mizhaavu is placed in the middle of the (Naatyathaaana) back side. Kurunkuzhal is located and positioned in the right side. The singers are located in the right side; actors are located in left side.

Arangu plays a prominent role in all Keralaite art forms i.e. Kathakali, But plays like Balisugreewayatham, Kucelapravesham, Narasimhaprasvetham in all most of the times actor comes very close to audience and performs it well. Both Koottampilam and Krishnanaattam follow the same system.

Observations
(1) Most of the Classical art forms of Kerala are performed in structured space. But in folk arts are performed in open theatres.
(2) The concept of Naatyamandapaproposed by Bharata is widely seen but we can see changes with regional differences.
(3) Koottampilams of Kerala are different in its construction-measurement style, not as the same proposed by Bharata.
(4) During the play in some context in Kerala artist used to perform outside of the space. This may due to the influence of local folk arts.

(5) There is a widespread inequalities exists as Bharata comments, the forward caste is allowed to view these arts by sitting in front of the row and low caste must view the show by staying in outside of the Naatymandapa.

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