

MUSIC FROM SOUTH INDIA KERALA

RECORDED BY JOHN LEVY ETHNIC FOLKWAYS LIBRARY FE 4365



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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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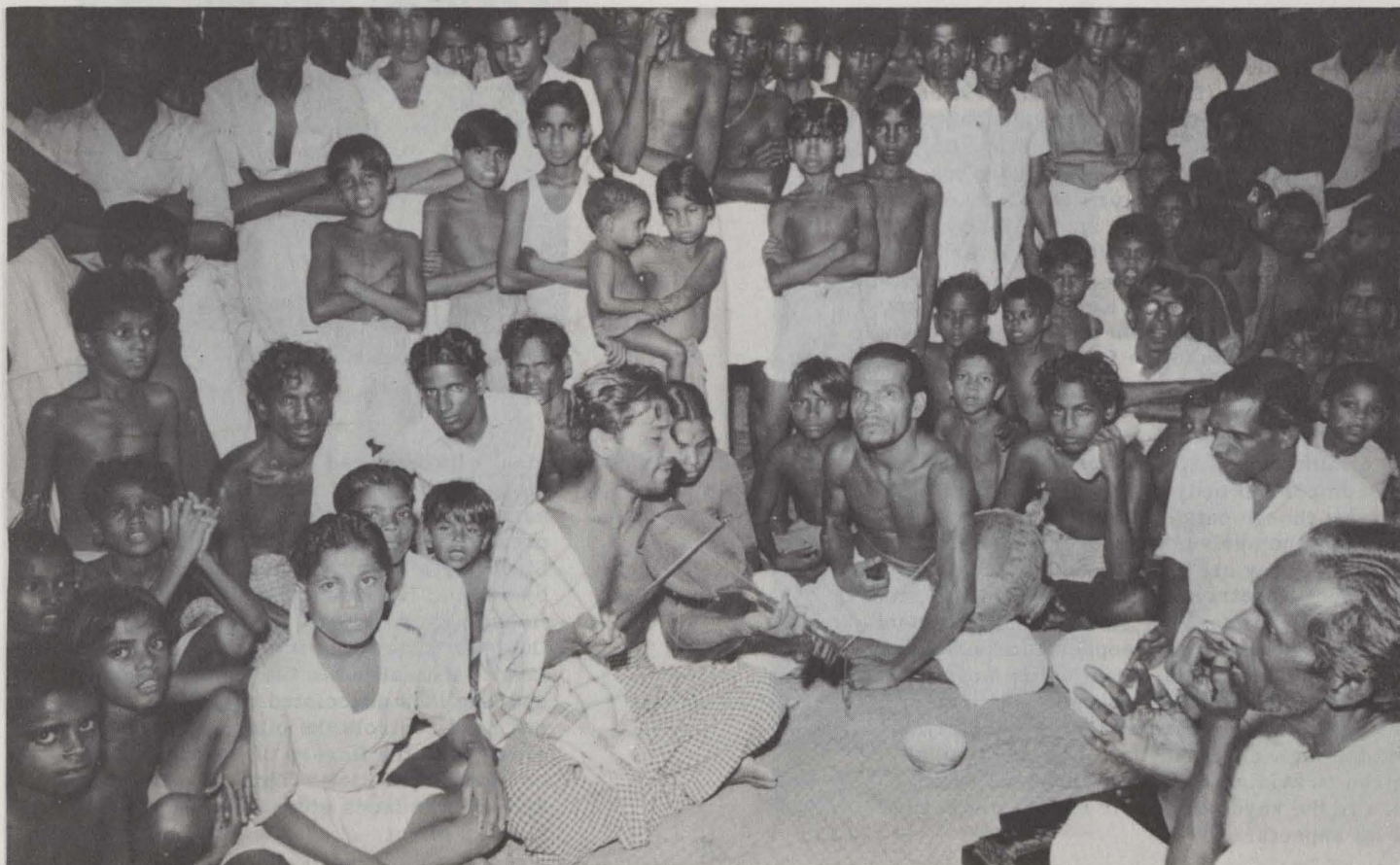
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MUSIC FROM SOUTH INDIA KERALA

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Recorded by **JOHN LEVY**notes and photographs
by John LevyINTRODUCTION.

Kēraḷa, more commonly known as Malabar, is a narrow strip of land between the Western Ghāts and the Arabian Sea to the extreme South of the West Coast of India. It is said to have been created by Paraśurāma, or Rāma with the axe, one of the three Rāmas and the sixth Avatār of Viṣṇu. He was a Brāhmin (the 1st or priestly caste). Because of the continual annoyance and persecution the Brahmins had to suffer from the Kshatriyas (the 2nd or warrior caste), he created this new country. It is a land of hills and valleys, rice-fields, rivers, inland waterways, coconuts, teak forests, tea (formerly coffee) and rubber plantations (the last two of fairly recent origin), and along the coast, of marvellous sands of many shades of colour from pure white to deep red which are now a source of raw materials for modern industry.

The population, the most literate in India, is mainly Hindu, and all the music in this album is of the Hindus. There are also long established Jewish (from about A.D. 490) and Christian communities (from about the same time) and in North Malabar, an influential Muslim community that has also been long established (several centuries). The people are called Malayāḷis: they speak Malayāḷam, a rich language with a Dravidian syntax and a vocabulary that has drawn considerably on Sanskrit. The Hindus of Kēraḷa are amongst the most orthodox in India (hence the frequent reference to caste in the following notes) and they differ from almost every other section of Hindus in that they had until very recently, and still retain the strong tendency towards, a matrilinear system of succession. The most important body of Hindus is that of the Nāyars: though outside the Aryan caste system (but they themselves have every variation of caste), they are by their bearing and temperament Kshatriyas. Unlike the Nāyars, the Malabar Brāhmins, the Nambūdiris, of whom the great Vedantic philosopher Śamkarachārya (8th century) was one, practice primogeniture in the male line but the younger sons marry amongst the Rvai Varmars (true Kshatriyas) and the high-caste Nāyars, who are thus of mixed Dravidian and Aryan descent, which also is the keynote of their culture, in many of its aspects.

SIDE ISide 1, Bands 1 & 2. PANCHAWĀDYAM.

Panchawādyam (lit. 5 instruments) is the name of a music played in the temples of Central and Northern Kēraḷa during their annual festivals. The musicians circumambulate the central shrine whilst they play. Though it is called "Five Instruments", there are invariably six different kinds: it is the Conch that is not accounted a musical instrument. The Conch is used only in religious ceremonies.

On Band 1, each instrument is heard separately, announced by someone of the country, in the following order:

1. Conch (Śankhu).



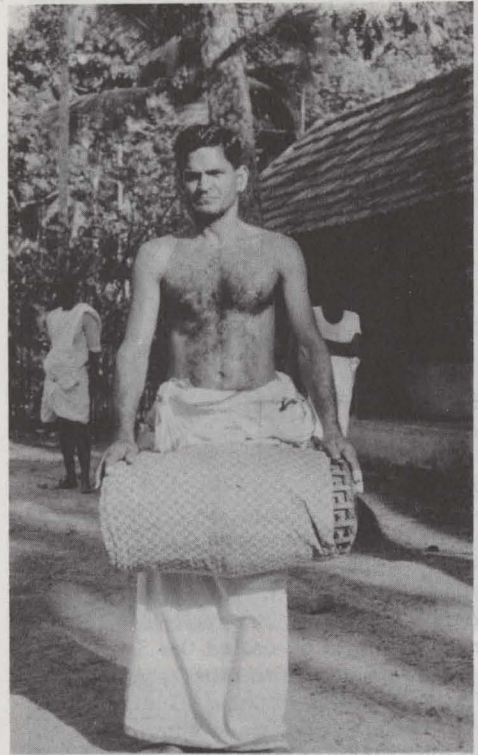
2. Idakka (pronounced Edakkyā), a small hour-glass shaped drum whose membranes, at each end, are tied together with braces, pressure on which alters the pitch. (Fox Strangways says the pitch may be altered by a sixth: the example of perhaps the finest player in Kēraḷa given in Band 4 on this side shows that it can be a whole octave). It is allied to the Northern Ḍamrū and like it is associated with Śiva. The left hand controls the pitch; it is struck either with the fingers of the right hand or by a small stick. Thin twine running across both faces gives it the slight buzzing effect.



3. Kombu, a semi-circular horn made of bronze.

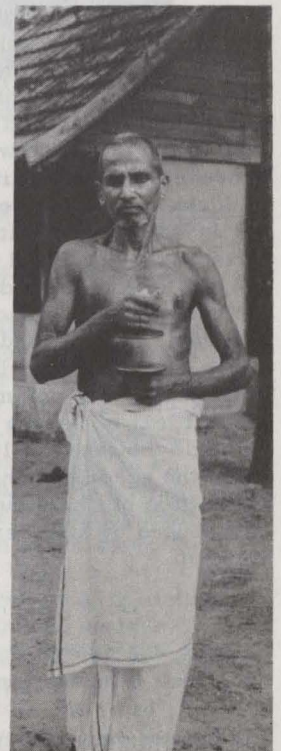


4. Maddalam, a large double-ended finger drum, of which two are used in this particular performance.



5. Timila, a long hour-glass shaped double-ended, finger drum, whose laces being free between the two ends act as sympathetic strings, producing a harmonic which can be clearly heard towards the end of Band 2. It is struck at one end only. Two are used here.

6. Ilataḷam (pronounced Elataḷam), a pair of medium-sized cymbals.



Side 1 - Band 2: PANCHAWĀDYAM.

The beginning and end of a performance that lasted nearly 18 minutes is given.

Panchawādyam often goes on for an hour or more. The players are Nārāyaṇa Marar and Party, from a Temple near Cochin.

NOTE: The photographs showing the players and their instruments are not of the players heard here but of another, larger group recorded two years previously.

Side 1, Band 3. ASHTĀPADI

Ashtāpadi (having eight lines), by which the famous Gīta Gōvinda of the 12th century poet Jayadeva is known in Kēraḷa, is 'a mystical erotic poem describing the loves of Kṛiṣṇa and the Gōpīs, especially of Kṛiṣṇa and Radha, who is supposed to typify the human soul' (Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary). It might be called the Song of Songs of India. Whereas in other parts of South India it goes with dancing (Bharata Nāṭyam), in Kēraḷa it has been sung by itself in temples since ancient times, giving rise to the style of singing known as Sōpānam, probably from 'the flight of steps leading to the Śrīkōvil (sanctum sanctorum) of temples which was the place allotted for the ritual singing of Ashtāpadis, (I am indebted for this information to an article by V. Mādhavan Nair in Volume XL, Number 1, December 1957, of MARG, published in Bombay, to which the reader is referred in connection with Kathakali). This style of singing in slow tempo has passed into Kathakali, examples of which are given in this album. The language of Gīta Govinda is Sanskrit, and Jayadēva prescribes the rāgam or melody for each of his verses. In Kēraḷa, the rāgams traditionally used have different names. I am sorry that considerations of time make it impossible to present a whole verse, but the following small excerpt from the beginning of the twentieth will give a good idea of how it sounds, to the traditional accompaniment of an Idakka, which is described in the note on Band 1. Jayadēva orders it to be sung to the melody Vasanta (Spring), and the accompaniment Yati. Here it is sung according to the tradition of the country in four successive rāgams, namely, Bhairavi, Gaula, Hindōlam and Hamsānandi, of which only the first will be heard. For the sake of those who are unfamiliar with the Gīta Gōvinda, the full text of George Keyt's translation is printed (published in 1947 by Kutub, Bombay), while the accompanying Sanskrit text is from the edition of Christian Lassen, Bonn, 1836, reproduced by kind permission of the British Museum.

GITA GOVINDA XI. 20.

वसन्तरागयतितालाभ्यां गीयते ॥

विरचितचाटुवचनरचनं चरणे रचितप्रणिपातं ।

संप्रति मञ्जुलबञ्जुलसीमनि केलिशयनमनुयातं ।

मुग्धे मधुमथनमनुगतमनुसर राधिके ॥ २ ॥

धनजघनस्तनभारभरे दर्मन्थरचरणविहारं ।

मुखरितमणिमञ्जीरमुपैहि विधेहि मरालविकारं ।

मुग्धे मधुमथनमनुगतमनुसर राधिके ॥ ३ ॥

शृणु रमणीयतरं तरुणीजनमोहनमधुरियुवाचं ।

कुसुमशरासनशासनवन्दिनि पिकनिकरे भज भावं ।

मुग्धे मधुमथनमनुगतमनुसर राधिके ॥ ४ ॥

अनिलतरलकिशलयनिकरेण करेण लतानिकुलम्बं ।

प्रेरणमिव करभोरु करोति गतिं प्रतिमुञ्च विलम्बं ।

मुग्धे मधुमथनमनुगतमनुसर राधिके ॥ ५ ॥

स्फुरितमनङ्गतरेगवशादिव सूचितहुरिपरिभ्रं ।

पृष्ठ मनोहरहारविमलजलधारममुं कुचकुम्भं ।

मुग्धे मधुमथनमनुगतमनुसर राधिके ॥ ६ ॥

अधिगतमखिलसखीभिरिदं तव वयुरपि रतिरणसङ्गं ।

चण्डि रणितरसनारवडिण्डिममभिसर सरसमलङ्गं ।

मुग्धे मधुमथनमनुगतमनुसर राधिके ॥ ७ ॥

स्मरशरसुभगनखेन करेण सखीमवलम्ब्य सलीलं ।

चलवल्लयवक्त्राणितैरवबोधय हुरिमपि निजगतिशीलं ।

मुग्धे मधुमथनमनुगतमनुसर राधिके ॥ ८ ॥

श्रीजयदेवभणितमधरीकृतहारमुदासितवामं ।

हुरिविनिहितमनसामधितिष्ठतु कण्ठतटीमविरामं ।

मुग्धे मधुमथनमनुगतमनुसर राधिके ॥ ९ ॥

सा मां द्रव्यति वदयति स्मरकथां प्रत्यङ्गमालिङ्गनैः ।

प्रीतिं यास्यति रंस्यते सखि समागत्येति चित्ताकुलः ।

स त्वां पश्यति कम्पते पुलकयत्यानन्दति स्विद्यति ।

प्रत्युद्गति मूर्हति स्थिरतमःपुञ्जे निकुञ्जे प्रियः ॥ १० ॥

अद्वानोर्निक्षिपदञ्जनं श्रवणयोस्तापिहगुहावलीं ।

मूर्द्धि श्यामसरोजदाम कुचयोः कस्तूरिकापत्रकं ।

धूर्तानामभिसारसवररुदां विश्वङ्गिकुञ्जे सखि ।

धालं नीलनिचोलचारु सुदृशां प्रत्यङ्गमालिङ्गति ॥ ११ ॥

काश्मीरगौरवपुषामभिसारिकाणां ।

आवदरेखमभितो रुचिमञ्जरीभिः ।

एतत् तमालदलनीलतमं तमिञ्चं ।

तत्प्रेमहेमनिकषोपलतां तनोति ॥ १२ ॥

हारावलीतरलकाञ्चनकाञ्चिदाम- ।

केयूरकङ्कणमणियुतिदीपितस्य ।

द्वारे निकुञ्जनिलयस्य हरिं निरीक्ष्य ।

व्रीडावतीमथ सखी निजगाद राधां ॥ १३ ॥

GĪTA GŌVINDA, verse 20.

Who made a song of coaxing words, bowing at
your feet in homage,
And gone now to the lovely clump of bamboos,
to the bed of passion,
O foolish woman, follow him who looks with
favour now,
O Rādhā, Mādhū's slayer!

O you who bear the weight of heavy thighs and
heavy breasts, come hither
With tardy tread that shames the goose and with
your jewelled anklets tinkling,
O foolish woman, etc.

Listen to his lovely noise, infatuating, and your
yearning
Where the flocks of cuckoos praise the reign of
him whose bow is flowers!
O foolish woman, etc.

O you with thighs like elephant trunks, these
creepers with their hands aflutter,
Their tendrils waving in the wind, appear to ask
you to the meeting!
O foolish woman, etc.

Consult your jar-shaped breast on which are
spotless streams of necklaces,
Which quivers undulating on the waves, the
surging force of passion!
O foolish woman, etc.

Your friends are all aware, you rogue, that you
are ready for love's conflict,
Go, your belt aloud with bells, shameless,
amorous, to the meeting!
O foolish woman, etc.

O you with arrows of Love for nails, leaning on
your friend, seductive,
Go to Hari, his ways are known, and know him by
his bracelets' tinkling!
O foolish woman, etc.

May this song of Jayadēva swell upon the necks
of people
Given to Hari, necks the beauty of their necklaces
surpassing.
O foolish woman, etc.

(Note: Gōvinda, Mādhū and Hari are names of
Krishṇa).

Side 1, Band 4: IDAKKA

An example of solo playing.

Singer, T. R. Śankaran Nambūdiri; Idakka,
P. M. Nārāyaṇa Marar, (not the same person
as in Band 1).



Side 1, Band 5: KĪRTANAM

Jīva bhāvatte nī talledā. Ragam: Khamas.

A kīrtanam is strictly speaking a devotional song of praise, but in a wider sense may be any song of a spiritual nature, so long as it also contains something for the heart. This kīrtanam, sung by the well-known Malayāli lady singer Parur P. V. Ponnamma, is by the late P. Dāmōdaran Pillai. It is written in the Tamil "abusive" style, in Malayālam. First, there is an injunction to put aside ignorance, in the tradition of Vedānta, and it ends by stating the need to take refuge at the lotus-feet of a great Guru, or spiritual teacher. Only a part is given; as sung, verses 8, 9, 14 & 18 are omitted. Every line ends with the long vowel 'a': to allow of this, the word printed in the margin is made to begin the second line of the couplet.

ജീവഭാവത്തെ നീതളെക്കൊ
ദാനന്ദഭാവത്തെക്കൊളെക്കൊ. -സച്ചി
രഞ്ജസ്വപ്നഭാവത്തെക്കൊളെക്കൊ. -സ്വയം
നിവിഷയാനന്ദനീയെക്കൊ. -അവ
കോശങ്ങളെപ്പോലെയല്ലെക്കൊ
കല്പനയല്ലാതെയുണ്ടെക്കൊ. -തോന്ന
അജ്ഞാതസത്തയൊന്നില്ലെക്കൊ
ലൊന്നിച്ചുണ്ടായിട്ടില്ലെക്കൊ. -നിനി
കത്തുതപഃഭാക്തതപഃദൃക്തപഃ
ലാഭാപരാജനനീയെക്കൊ. -ശിവാ
തോന്നലിന്നൊക്കെയുംസാക്ഷിയായും
നന്ദസ്വരൂപം നീയാണെക്കൊ. -സമൃദ്ധി
നിഷ്ക്രിയതപഃ നീയാണെക്കൊ. -സാക്ഷി
ദൃഷ്ടിയാൽകണ്ടതെല്ലെക്കൊ. -ഗുണ
തപഃ'ലക്ഷ്യത്തിൽനില്ലെക്കൊ. -നിനിൽ
കൂടസ്ഥസ്ഥാനീയാണെക്കൊ. -നിനിൽ
സാത്വികരാജസതമസ
ബന്ധാനിനക്കൊടുമില്ലെക്കൊ. -ശുദ്ധ
ദേഹരൂപങ്ങളെല്ലെക്കൊ. -നാമ
തോന്നിയഴിയുന്നതാണെക്കൊ. -സപ്പ
മാറാത്ത സാക്ഷിനീയാണെക്കൊ. -നിത്യ
പരറാടുമില്ലെന്നറിഞ്ഞെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ
നാമരൂപങ്ങളെല്ലെക്കൊ. -സമൃദ്ധി
ജ്ഞാനസ്വരൂപം നീയാണെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ
നാമരൂപങ്ങളും നീയെക്കൊ. -സമൃദ്ധി
രൂപമല്ലാത്തതും നീയെക്കൊ. -സമൃദ്ധി
കാലരൂപത്തിലും രഞ്ജയിൽ
മില്ലെന്നറിഞ്ഞെക്കൊ. -നിത്യ
ബന്ധവും മോക്ഷവുമൊക്കെക്കൊ
കൈവല്യരൂപം നീയാണെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ
ആത്മജ്ഞാനം നീയാണെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ
ബോധസ്വരൂപം നീയാണെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ
വേണ്ടാത്തമാഹംകളെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ
വ്യാപകനായ് വിളങ്ങെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ
സൂക്ഷ്മതമിശ്രസ്ഥലമാം
സൂക്ഷ്മാദിഭേദത്തെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ
ജ്ഞാനിരാത്മാനന്ദഭാവം
പരമജ്ഞാനം മരിക്കെക്കൊ. -പ്രകാശ

Knowest that nothing exists except it be known (perceived or thought of), and that two thoughts can never exist at one time.

Knowest that to claim that thou art the doer, the enjoyer or the perceiver is only to superimpose something extraneous on thy true Self.

Knowest that thou art pure happiness and peace shining as the untroubled witness in all thy thoughts and feelings.

Thou art that unattached Tattwa (Reality) itself: seeest thou this by exercising discrimination and allowing thyself to become enlightened thereby.

Knowest that the three bodies (physical, subtle and causal) and the three states (waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep) merely appear and disappear in thee (the Witness).

Knowest that thou art that changeless Witness and ever unattached.

Doest thou discard name and form as unreality, and knowest that thy true nature is none other than pure consciousness.

Even name and form are ultimately nothing but thyself.

Who is it that is actually affected by bondage and liberation? Not thou! Thou art thyself that changeless self-luminous peace.

Thou art thyself that eternal light, Thou art of the nature of pure consciousness.

Throw away thy wanton desires, and shine in the unmistakable glory of thyself.

The gross is only the denser form of the subtle and therefore throw away both as unreal.

Be under the lotus-feet of the self-luminous Guru ... and be happy!

Side 1, Bands 6, 7 & 8: KATHAKALI

From the special number of MARG (see Side 1, Band 3) on Kathakali: "Though Kathakali, as we know it today, is an art not more than three to four hundred years old, its actual roots can be traced to at least 1,500 years earlier. Kathakali marks the culmination of a long process of evolution during which the various histrionic arts of Kēraḷa had their birth and developed and paved the way for the eventual emergence of this composite art. Kathakali also symbolises a blending of the Aryan and Dravidian cultures, for, in shaping its technique Kathakali assimilated various elements which it borrowed freely from the dances, dramas and ritual performances associated with these cultures relative to their place in ancient Kēraḷa."

The singer's husband, Srī S. Bālakṛishṇa Pillai kindly made an English translation that conveys the general sense: to bring out the characteristic style would be impossible, and a commentary would be needed to make every word clear. This is hardly the place for a treatise on Advaita Vedānta! At the time of the recording, someone was felling coconuts and the crows were busily cawing, and I for one do not object. These are amongst the ever-present daytime sounds of Kēraḷa.

JĪVA BHĀVATTE NĪ TALĒḌA

O poor man! Caste away thy wretched jīvahood (state of being identified with the body) and assume the glorious state of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Throw away thy fear of the serpent in the rope and know that thou art by nature ever that uncaused Ānanda (bliss).



From "The Tradition: A Brief Historical Survey,"
by Mohan Khokar, which should be read
in toto.

"Anyone who has seen a Kathakali performance must have noticed two musicians singing songs on the stage: no one could have seen a performance without them. Through the medium of "Hastamudras" and facial expressions, the dancers translate certain specific ideas into visual forms for the audience. These ideas are not on-the-spot improvisations of their imaginative faculty, but those contained in the songs which provide the basic material for the dancers, material which they interpret through Abhinaya. (Abhinaya means pantomime). If there were no songs, the dancers would have nothing to interpret!" (In this connection, I may add that as they first come on to the stage, the dancers approach each of the two singers separately and greet them in the Hindu manner with hands together. J.L.).

"Of the team of two musicians providing the vocal music in Kathakali, the main musician is known as the Ponnāni and the minor partner as the Śinkidi. They supplement and complement each other in a manner that suggests complete mutual understanding. With occasional intervals they sing almost from dusk to dawn -- the usual time taken for a traditional Kathakali performance.

"Accompaniment for the songs (as well as the dances) is provided by a rather peculiar collection of musical instruments. It is to be specially noted that there are neither stringed instruments nor wind instruments in this collection. (Alas! see my note below about the present growing use of the reed-box. J. L.) The most prominent among them is the Chenda found only in Kēraḷa - a large drum beaten on one side with two slender curved sticks (and also with the hands in quiet passages J.L.) and producing a loud reverberating sound which penetrates to long distances. The Maddalam, also believed to be indigenous to Kēraḷa, is another type of large drum played on both sides with the hands. The Ponnāni himself keeps rhythm on the Chengalam, a metal gong beaten with a short stick,

while the Śinkidi plays a pair of metal cymbals called ḷatāḷam. Such an array of instruments clearly reveals one thing: the prominence given to Tāla (rhythm); and this is not surprising if we bear in mind the unmistakable sway Tāla wielded in Kathakali. There is some provision for acting without the accompaniment of singing; these are occasions for the actors to call together all their powers of imagination and improvisation. On these occasions, the percussion instruments continue to play in unison creating a fascinating background of rhythmic sound."

From "The Orchestra", by V. Madhavan Nair.

"This vigorous rhythm has been preparing the people all around into the mood of expectancy for the dance..."

"And as though the aid itself has carried the winged whispers to every ear, the people seem to know the particular drama which is to be acted, the chief actors, who they are, and what roles they are to play. (Which drama is to be played is not normally announced. J.L.).

"The story is well-known, and the only surprise lies in the transformation of the hearts of the audience into the belief that what is being shown once happened. (For many in the audience, the story is lived as now happening. It is told that many years ago, at the Āramula Temple, in a scene where Kṛishṇa pleads in vain for the return of a stolen kingdom, an old man in the audience gets up, saying to the hard-hearted King, "If you will not listen to Kṛishṇa, you will listen to me", and with his sword, kills him. Since then, this piece has never been performed at Āramula. J.L.).

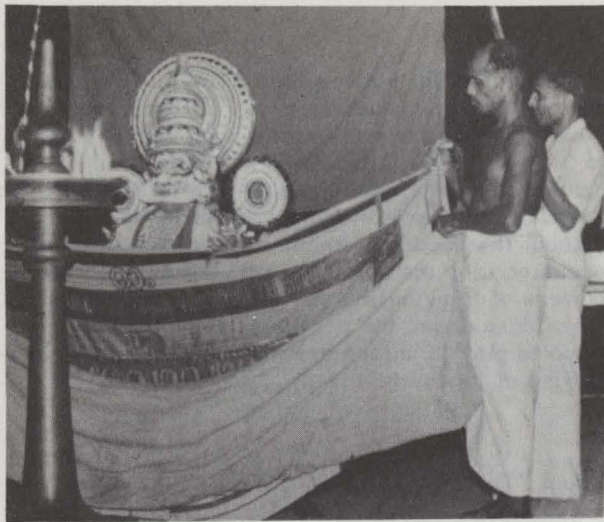
"This change, wrought by the imagination, is the one element to which both actors and the audience contribute their shares: the dancers, with the abhinaya, and the spectators by their sympathetic reception or acceptance of the story in stylised movements. The actors and the audience are together in a manner which is unique.

"As the actors and audience are one, there is no proper theatre. The play takes place in the compound of a temple, or in a nearby courtyard.

"The stage is about sixteen feet square, a kind of pandal (a temporary thatched shed), decorated with fresh leaves and flowers. It is level, and covered by rough-mats, with the eager spectators crowding on to the dance area and the dancers often walking through the audience.

"The fire of the great brass lamp is the focal point, which half reveals and half hides the shadows from which the characters will emerge one by one."

From "The Play", by Rasika.



"The Lamp"

Side 1, Bands 6 & 7: KIRĀDAN - The Hunter

This is one of the most affecting of the stories. Arjuna goes into the Himalayan forest to practice austerities as a preparation for his meeting Śiva, from whom he wishes to learn the art of archery. In the first scene, (Band 6), he is seen worshipping a little altar dedicated to Śiva. The splendid gradual build-up of the rhythm at the beginning of a drama is well shown here. In the second scene, which follows on without interruption, as do the others, while he is hunting an animal, a hunter and his wife, of a very low caste, appear and both claim to have shot the animal first. They quarrel and finally Arjuna starts shooting arrows at the hunter, who appears to be getting the worst of the fight. Meantime, the hunter's wife, very much concerned and very tender, tries to calm both her husband and Arjuna. She tells her husband, who is none other than Śiva and she Pārvatī, his consort, that he must not harm Arjuna, who has come to pay homage and learn from him, and Arjuna that he knows not whom he is opposing. Neither seems to take the smallest notice and finally Pārvatī exclaims: "May your arrows turn into flowers", and Arjuna suddenly realises that he is making a pūja (the Hindu form of worship) to Śiva himself. This poignant recognition is heard in Band 7, which closes the scene.



(Note: Even very fine singers like these now demand a reed-box to give them the śruti or tonic. It can be heard in Band 6, but elsewhere is unobtrusive. The cracked voice of one of the singers in Band 6 is unfortunately common at the beginning of a drama, but disappears as he warms up to the performance).

Side 1, Band 8: NALA CHARITAM -
The Story of Prince Nala.

This is a very short excerpt from the drama called Nala Charitam. It is generally considered to be the finest Kathakali in point of musical and literary beauty. I give this piece to illustrate the skill of the drummers. The scene is a conversation between Prince Nala and the Golden Swan. Just as Nala is about to shoot an arrow at the Swan, the Swan rather unexpectedly speaks to him and because its life was saved, it tells Nala of a beautiful Princess, and later, the Princess of the handsome Nala, who in the end marry. The rest of the story is a tragedy. Here the drummer imitates the sound of the flapping wings and the beak of the Swan.



Singers: M. E. P. Pillai & Gōpinathan Nāyar.

Drummers: K. Dāmōdaran Pannikar & Vāsudēva Poduwall.

Actors, whose anklets can be heard jingling when they dance: Mankūlam Vishnu Nambūdiri & Kudamālur Karunākaran Nāyar.

These are very famous dancers, and the other musicians are well-known too.

Side 2, Band 1 & 2: VILLAPICHANPĀṬṬU
(in Tamil, Villupāṭṭu
or SONG WITH A
STRUCK BOW).

This is said to be a very ancient form of folk-music, having its origin in Najilnāḍ ("the

land of the plough"), in the southernmost part of India, belonging until recently to Travancore but now merged in the Madras State, on account of its language, which is Tamil. (I hope in another album to give examples of Villupāṭṭu sung in Tamil, but since the present album is on the music of Kēraḷa, it seemed proper to give an example, which is quite traditional amongst the Travancorians of the South, in Malayāḷam, though it is never so good as Tamil Villupāṭṭu).

"The Villu is a bow, some 8 feet long, made either of a sturdy branch of a tree or of metal. The centre of the convex side of the bow is made to rest on the neck of a large-sized earthen pitcher (Kuḍam). The pitcher itself rests on a soft cushion or a circular disk-like thing with a concave cavity made of coconut fibre. Thus the bow when placed on the neck of the pitcher and held in delicate balance by the performer looks like a magnified (and very magnificent J.L.) crescent with its two ends looking upwards. There are numerous bronze bells hanging from the bow" throughout its length. The chief vocalist of the party (its leader J.L.) will be seated to the right centre of the bow with two slender wooden rods called Vīṣukōḷ, one in each hand. At one end of each rod, just near where the artist grips it, are found two cymbals the concave face of each facing and touching the other; it makes a sort of cavity, containing beads or small-sized metal balls or stones inside. The artist, while singing, will so artfully raise and move his hands holding the rods as to express the mood, or the bhāva, portrayed in the song, and deftly strike against the bow string producing the tāḷam, or time beat, synchronising with the stresses and the time beats in the song. This in turn will produce notes from the bells hanging from the bow. At the same time, the artist in charge of the big earthen pitcher (kuḍam) will raise simultaneous notes, by beating against the mouth of the pitcher with a cardboard-like plate, made for the purpose from a stiff and sturdy plantain sheath. The sweet sound emanating from the pitcher, owing to the pressure exerted on it both by the weight of the bow resting on its neck and the beats brought to bear on its mouth by the pitcher player, is perhaps more charming and melodious than that produced by any other percussion instrument.... The player, while he strikes against the mouth of the pitcher with his right hand, strikes at the same time on the body of the pitcher with a coin held in his left hand." In the party to be heard here, there is also a larger pitcher called ghaḍam, and invariably, an Udukku (this is the Tamil orthography for the Idakka heard on Side 1 of this record), a pair of wooden clappers called Kaṭṭa (Kaṭṭai in Tamil), and a pair of small cymbals, Jālar in Malayalam (and Jallarai in Tamil). All these percussion players join in the chorus.

"Arrangements for the performance of Villupāṭṭu are usually made on the ground in front of a temple. The performance itself is arranged as a rule in connection with the annual temple festival.... The dais for the players will be set up



in front of the temple to one side and the audience will be seated on the ground facing the Deity." (Quotations are from "Bow Song: A Folk Art of South Travancore", by K. P. S. Hameed, reprinted from Tamil Culture, Vol. V., No. 3 - July 1956).

The words are often based on stories from the sacred epics, the Māhābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, when the language is Tamil. When the language is Malayāḷam, as it is here, the words are either in praise of a Deity or a national hero of olden times.

Side 2, Band 1. Villaḍichanpāṭṭu, the instruments, in the following order, announced by the leader:

1. Villu (bow); 2. Ghaḍam (large earthen pitcher); 3. Kuḍam (earthen pitcher on which the bow rests); 4. Udukku; 5. Jālar (cymbals); 6. Kaṭṭa (wooden clappers).

Side 2, Band 2. Vēlu Tampi. (Tampi is the caste name of descendants of any Māhārājah of Travancore).

Vēlu Tampi:

മുവേലി കാലമേ - മുവേലി കാലമേ -
 മുവേലിക്കൊന്നിച്ച് പോട്ടു മാരി.
 നാടിന്റെ കണ്ണു മുറുത്തു വന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്
 നാലു കിലോൺ ചിറന്ന കാണോ.
 ത്രിപ്രേപ്പള്ളത്തിൽ ദൈവക്കുറുപ്പാലത്തു
 വേദനയിൽ കേൾക്കൂ നാടി പൊന്നോ
 കേൾക്കൂ മനസ്സും മേലിപ്പും മൊട്ടിട്ടും
 പാരിട മുക്കും മാനി വേലി.
 കേൾക്കൂ കേൾക്കൂ - ചന്തിയിൽ - ചന്തിയിൽ -
 കേൾക്കൂ മിഴിച്ചു നോക്കിയിൽ
 ദുഃഖത്താൽ - ദുഃഖത്താൽ - വേണാട്ടു
 ചിറക്കു മുക്കും മാനി മേലി മേലിട്ടു.

നാടിൻമേൽ ഭൂതാണു ഞ്ഞുകീറിപ്പിച്ചു
നാലകുവ,രിയ്യ - ഹേ വയ്യ
നാലയ്യ ക്കാഴ്ച - കൊല്ലാം മിടിപ്പാണു
നായും നരിയ്യ മീനാടിരിയ്യ.

ഞമ്പലത്തുകൾക്കൊന്നിരെയ്ക്കു നയ്യ
നമ്പൂരിയ നേതുമോ, രണ്ടരിയ്യ
തമ്പേറടിയു കരം ചിതു ചേതന
നമ്പൂരിയ, യി നാടിപൊത്തം.

കൊത്തു നടത്തു യാൽക്കെ വെടി ചത്തു
കൃത്യ പശ്ചത്തു ത്തുകൊ യിട്ടു.
കൃത്യ പരയ്ക്കു നാലുത്തും നമ്പൂ
ഉത്ത മിറ്റിയെൻ നാറ്റു പാത്തം.

Vēlu Tampi. (Only a part is heard on the record).

"Are we all living in the time of Māvēli? Are we all living in the time of Maveli? Has God taken birth in the Nāyar community in order to wipe away the tears of the country?

"When Srī Vēlu Tampi was ruling the country, there was no kind of suffering anywhere. All human hearts were filled with hopes and with love. The world as a whole was changed altogether. No untruthfulness and no deceiving anywhere. Unfaithfulness never walked with wide open eyes. No suffering and envy anywhere.

"Vēnaṭṭu (Travancore) was changed into a Satkarmaśāla (a hall where sacred rituals are done).

"There were no commanders who would extract wealth from the rich, no favourites for anyone. Nowhere in the country were there such kinds of dogs and jackals who would not for a moment have hesitated to kill another for the sake of some paltry sum of money.

"There was never an instance of temple worship falling into abeyance. There was no instance of the king being in want of something. The Nambūdiris (the Brāhmins of Kēraḷa) who always roam about proclaiming the royal taxes, beating drums, were never seen anywhere in the country.

"If anyone was known to be a burglar, his head was cut off and his body hung in public places. If anyone was known to have spoken a lie, his tongue was cut out immediately. This is how Tampi ruled the country."

Note: The Nāyars form the main population of Kēraḷa. They are of mixed Dravidian and Aryan origin. Their women, especially of the higher castes, used to be married to Nambūdiris, and often still are. They often have a kind of dumb resentment against the Brāhmins. (See the Preface to these notes). This song I take to be quite recent.

Side 2, Band 3: TIRUWĀDIRAKAḶI

This is a song and dance, with clapping of hands (kummi) done for their own enjoyment by Nāyar women in the planting season in the 6th lunar asterism (Tiruwādira - the word Kaḷi means "play, fun"), in the month of Mithunam (June-July). They dance slowly, but with vivacity, in a circle round a lamp, and beat their hands against each others'.



These pretty girls (see photograph), all the daughters of prominent families in Government service, wear Sāris. Until very recently, the Sāri was not worn by Nāyar women: they wore, and the older women especially in the country still wear, a white cloth wound round the waist with a separate white cloth tied round the bust.

The Performers are members of the Kēraḷa State Police villupāṭṭu Party.

(Tiruwādirakali)

In this song, the wives of Prince Uttaran are singing the praises of their husband. As they sing, the girls dance in a circle with peculiar poses and movements, walking sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another. The lilt is typical of Kēraḷa.

The Rāgam is Husēni and the Tālām (rhythm) Chaippu: The song is taken from the Kathakali drama called Uttaraswayamvaram.

Side 2, Band 4: KANIYĀN PAṬṬU -- ASTROLOGERS' SONG.

The Kaniyāns are a low caste of village astrologers and umbrella makers. They have their own songs and accompany themselves on the iḍakka and the jālar (the small drum described under Side 1, Band 1, and cymbals). In this song, a part only of which is given, the father (see photograph), who sings the solo, and one of his sons, each sound an iḍakka, whilst another son sounds the cymbals. Both join in

A black and white photograph of a Hindu Brahmin man sitting cross-legged on the ground. He is shirtless, wearing a white dhoti, and has white ash (vibhuti) applied to his forehead and upper arms. He is holding a mridanga drum in his lap.

செய்து காண்போம். பின்னர் தயக்கம் இல்லை.
(அவ்வாறு உடனடி, நான்.)

[illegible]

forms of a Vēlan and a Vēlatti and sang these songs from the Māhābhārata (the great epic poem) for forty-one days.

I give part of two songs, sung by Nārāyaṇa and Pāpu (short for Padmanābhan), one of them playing for the other on their own special drum, which they called Bhāratachāra, probably for Bhāratacharaṇam, meaning a wandering musician who recites the Mahābharata.



Band 5. Nārāyaṇa.

Band 6. Pāpu.

Side 2, Bands 7 & 8: KUṬAVARKAḶI

The Kuṭavāṇas are described in Gundert's Malayālam Dictionary (1872) as a wandering tribe of basket-makers, snake-catchers and Gypsies. Those recorded here, from Central Travancore, lead a settled but poverty-stricken life, being hired agricultural labourers. They are said to have come originally from Āndhra, where the language is Telugu, via Tamīlnāḍ. Their appearance is typically tribal: wiry, curly hair, short stature and flattened noses. They sing in parallel harmony, probably not by accident, since on the two occasions I heard Kuṭavarkaḷi in this village, there was only a slight difference of a semi-tone in the middle of the three on which they sing.

Band 7. Gaṇapati Stōtram -- In Praise of Ganapati.

Ganapati, or "Ganēśa, the god of wisdom and of obstacles (the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, or according to one legend of Pārvatī alone; though Ganēśa causes obstacles he also removes them; hence he is invoked at the commencement of all undertakings and at the opening of all compositions... he is represented as a short fat man with a protuberant belly, frequently riding on a rat or attended by one, and to denote his sagacity has the head of an elephant, which however has only one tusk." (Monier-Williams, Skt. - Eng. Dict.). The singers stand during this song with hands together in worship.



Band 8. Nāgachuṭṭu - SNAKE DANCE.

The words of this well-known and ancient Tamil song, "Ādu Pāmbē" -- "Dance, Snake!", call on the snake that is portrayed round Śiva's neck, to undulate and show itself. The language here is neither pure Tamil nor pure Malayālam but has something of both and the words are much simplified. The singers dance, going round in a circle with undulating snake-like movements; each one holds a small stick in each hand and beats them alternately against both of his neighbours' sticks. This is called Kōḷaḍi.

Leader and soloist: Chellappan.



Side 2, Bands 9, 10, 11 & 12. SARPAM PĀṬṬU (Serpent Song) or Puḷḷava Pāṭṭu.

According to Gundert (1872), the Puḷḷavans are a caste employed in medicine, using for that purpose mantrawādam (incantation, sorcery) with kaḷam (depicting a human or other figure with panchavarṇam (five colours) in grain, or as here, in sand, coloured white, black, red, orange and green, singing (puḷḷuvāpaṭṭu) at the snake-groves (frequent in Kēraḷa), accompanied by the tap of the puḷḷavakuḍam (earthen pitcher, see under description of instruments), their females acting

as midwives in the North. These songs belong to fertility rites. Their nature will emerge from the translations given below. Pullavans are called for when the wanted male child and also female child (for the Malayālis are still, in feeling if no more everywhere in law, matriarchal) has not been vouchsafed.

Band 9. The instruments. Traditionally, the instruments would consist only of Vīna (Prof. P. Sambamūrti calls it Vīna kunju and says that a snake-skin is used to cover it, but see notes on each instrument), Pullavakudam and perhaps Tālam (cymbals). However, I could not refuse to record the other instrumentalists who turned up for the specially arranged performance near Cochin without offending a number of good people. These foreign sounds do not in any way disturb, and I kept them at a distance from the microphone so that in effect only the two important instruments can be clearly heard. Even purists, amongst whom I am one in principle, cannot object and I for one find the result ravishing. The instruments are heard in the following order:

1. Jinjera, a tambourine; 2. Vīna, a bowed monochord that bears no resemblance to the classical Vīna. It is of about the same length as a violin, with a circular sound box, covered with the skin of an Iguana lizard (Lacerta Monitor, Uḍumbū). It is made of Jackwood; 3. Tālam, a pair of small cymbals; 4. Pullavakudam, an earthen pot whose base is removed and replaced by the skin of an Iguana, which is pasted on. Through its centre a small hole is made and a string attached to it by a knot. This string the player fixes to his left foot (he is seated cross-legged on the ground) and with his right hand, by means of pressure from a small wooden cylinder on the taut string, he can adjust the tension and so the pitch of the instrument, which make the Pullavakudam a friction drum; 5. Bulbul, lit. nightingale, a silly little zither with a keyboard, certainly of recent origin; 6. Morsing (as it is called in South India, but really the North Indian Morchang (lit. peacock-harp), a Jew's harp).

The chief singer is also the Vīna player, and he is joined in the chorus by his wife.

Band 10: "Oh excellent serpents, please tell me how I can beget good children, to carry on the family? There are 1000 serpents, some of you must know the answer.

നമ്മൾ 1000 ഉണ്ണു നാരി
നല്ലവരായി ഉണ്ടാകാൻ ഉള്ളൂ
ദൈവം അമ്മയെ

പൊട്ടിക്കൊടുത്തു നാരി
കുറച്ചുപറന്നു നാരി നല്ലവരായി
പൊട്ടിക്കൊടുത്തു നാരി വന്നിട്ടു
പൊട്ടിക്കൊടുത്തു നാരി വന്നിട്ടു
മറ്റു കുഞ്ഞു പിറവിക്കാൻ.
കുറച്ചു കൊല്ലം നാരി
വന്നുവന്നുവന്നിട്ടു പൊട്ടിക്കൊടുത്തു
ദൈവം അമ്മയെ
പൊട്ടിക്കൊടുത്തു നാരി

"Kāśyappan (Kāśi is the ancient city of Benares), the king of all serpents, thus speaks to them all:

"When you lay eggs, don't break them!". So saying, Kāśyappan went away to perform tapas (to practice religious austerities).

Note: Kāśyappan is known as one of the 7 Rishis, (Rṣi) or ancient sages. Kadru is the mother of the Nāgas, or serpents, though she was a human being.

I give the words of the next two songs, though there is no space to reproduce them in this album.

"Kadru and Vinuda were with Kāśyappan. From Kadru. Kasyappan had a thousand serpent children. As for Vinuda, she was barren." Then follows the name of some of Kadru's children. "Kāśyappan is the cause of this earth. Vāsuki (one of his sons, and one of the 8 serpent kings) is coiled round the earth. The king of serpents lives at Maṇṇarśal (Nr. Māvēlikara, in Central Travancore, where there is a famous serpent temple) and the queen lives at Velurwaṭṭam." The song gives a list of other places, in the South West of India, where the serpents have settled. "They are all Dharmadēvas (Gods of Justice)."

Then follows the dancing song. Figures of

നമ്മൾ 1000 ഉണ്ണു നാരി

നമ്മൾ 1000 ഉണ്ണു നാരി

തൊഴുതേൻ - ഏകദേശം . സമുദായ
രക്തങ്ങളും . - അറുപതുവൻ തങ്ങളും
 പാട്ടൻ ഗാനങ്ങളുടേതുതന്നെ . തൊട്ടി
 കിൻ വിളിച്ചു , ഭാരവരും , പാട്ടി
 നാഗപരാദി . വാട്ടുപോലെയുള്ള
 തൊട്ടിയെ , കിട , തട്ട അമ്പലം
 ഭൂമി നിറയ്ക്കു . പാലാഴിയിൽപോ
 ലിടെണ്ണ , ഭക്തിയെ . വിളിക്കുക
പാട്ടി , ഗണപതി . പട്ടുരുട്ടിയു
ന്നു . പട്ടു പതി . പാലാഴി പെണ്ണ
പട്ടിയെ . മറ്റൊന്നി കിടന്നുനി
 യുണ്ടു പെണ്ണകളെ

All over the Central and Northern Kēraḷa, during the Festival of Onam, the Malayāḷi New Year, at the time of the 22nd constellation Aquila, at the New Moon in September, people of all ages and conditions play on the Vil, a little bow used as a percussion instrument and known in this connection as the Ōnavil. It is more usually children who play on it, and in that case, no special rhythm is used. But grown-ups often play it with precise rhythm, as in this recording where the style known as Teyyampaka is heard. Teyyampaka belongs properly to Chenda Mēlam, the art of drumming peculiar to Kēraḷa, where

elaborate rhythms such as Panchāri, Pan̄ḍi and others, of which Teyyampaka is the most subtle, are employed. The basis of Cheṇḍa Mēlam is the drum called Cheṇḍa, already heard in the Kathakālī. I should have liked to offer examples of this Cheṇḍa Mēlam, but there is no possibility in this album. Instead, the same style will be heard to the charming sounds of the Vil.

In this connection, a well-known musicologist, my friend Peter Crossley-Holland was present when the recordings were made, and has kindly allowed me to publish his notes,

"The ensemble consisted of four Malayālis. (I may add that the two Nambūdiris are Brāhmins and the two Poduwalls of high caste, half-Brāhmins, with a temple function, called Ambalavāsis, J.L.). One held a flat pair of cymbals (Tālam) about 4 inches across and the other three began fitting together their musical bows. The arc of each bow was made of palmyra and was about 4 feet long, $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, and its width tapered from about 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in the centre to about 1- $\frac{1}{4}$ inch at the ends. The ends each had an open notch to receive the 'string'. This latter was made of bamboo and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch wide and slightly less thick. The ends of the bamboo expanded in spatulate manner, so that each spatula, placed on the far side of a notch, secured the 'string' to the arc.

"Before the two portions of the bow were fitted together the arc was flat, but in order to receive the shorter length of the bamboo the arc was bent into a bow shape and subjected to considerable tension.

"One of the vil-players (see No. 3 below) placed his instrument horizontally on a long box, steadying the centre part of the arc on the box with his left hand. In his right hand he held a wooden striker about 4 to 5 inches long and this, in general shape, was rather like a pencil except that the diameter suddenly decreased in the centre. The other vil-players had similar strikers but held their bows differently. Each folded his left arm across his chest, allowing fingers 3, 4 and 5 to rest on the right shoulder. Thumb and index finger held the top end of the arc: the centre passed across the folded arm at the triangle of the elbow; and the bottom end projected freely below the arm. The bow was thus supported by some pressure on the shoulder, and by passing over the arm. The striker, held in the right hand, struck the bow near its lower (left-hand end, players 1 and 2; right-hand end, player 3) producing a percussive twang of appreciable pitch.

"Player 1: note of high pitch; very active and complex figuration.
Player 2: semi-tone lower.
Player 3: an octave lower than Player 1.
Player 4: untuned (cymbals).

"The metrical framework was provided by

Players 2, 3 & 4 and the periods were well marked throughout, as all players (including Player 1) emphasized the main beats. The accented notes of Player 4 were full and free clashes of the two cymbals whereas the other notes acquired a stranger timbre through the rims of the two cymbals being partly in contact during the process of striking. (Indian cymbals are always played in this way. J.L.) Against this background Player 1 took the creative initiative and varied his rhythm and figuration with great enterprise. His playing was very sonorous in effect, and he managed to vary his timbre in a fascinating way by all kinds of dexterities in the manner of striking his 'string'.

"One of the outstanding features of this kind of music was the interplay of semi-tones. On strong beats the two notes occurred together but when, immediately afterwards, Player 1 was heard alone, it always lifted the music up, both semi-tonally and, by some undefinable connection, psychologically as well. (In this performance, the semi-tone is a major interval; I have heard it on occasions with the semi-tone a minor interval. J.L.)

"The performance, which in this instance, lasted 13- $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, but was quite usually more than double this length, began slowly and deliberately, then worked up, growing in subtlety and exhilaration. At the end there was a kind of gallop pressed to the limits of physical exertion and the effect was certainly stimulating to the listener."

I have had to reduce the length by fading out after the beginning and fading in towards the end.

Players: C.M. Nīlakantha Nambūdiri, C.M. Purushottama Nambūdiri, K.P. Kṛishṇa Poduwal and P. Kēśava Poduwall.



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