

Ideology and the Architecture of Performance

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Ideology and the Architecture of Performance

The role of religious myths in reinforcing and legitimising patriarchal norms is critical and has been difficult to contend with. The interpretation of these myths through the traditional art forms, especially music and dance, carries a powerful effect that works at subliminal levels. Several attempts have been made to use traditional art forms to subvert patriarchal agendas from the women's perspective. Asmita, a resource centre for women, has explored the possibility of using traditional ballet as an instrument of feminist activism.

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Introduction

Asmita realised the possibility of using traditional ballet as an instrument of feminist activism and intervention at the Ninth Indian Association for Women Studies Conference in Hyderabad in January 2000. Four years later, we felt the need to take that initiative further by producing a second ballet that explored at greater depth not just the issue of violence but also the grammar of Kuchipudi. Another year later, in May 2005, we have ventured into Bharatanatyam with the first ballet, as an attempt to reach different audiences, and to experiment with another dance form. The beginning of new millennium seemed to awaken the need to experiment with a new medium.

Aware of the significance of culture in gendering society we reflected on the need to penetrate traditional forms and subvert the culture and norms perpetrated by tradition with fresh interpretations and perspectives. The role of religious myths in reinforcing and legitimising patriarchal norms is critical and has been difficult to contend with. The interpretation of these myths through traditional art forms especially music and dance carries

a powerful effect that works at subliminal levels. It is as if classical music and dance are trapped in a patriarchal idiom from which they cannot be liberated. Several attempts have been made to use traditional forms to subvert patriarchal agendas from a woman's perspective. Given the fact that the gendering of ordinary citizens and the shaping of their identities is derived largely from social norms strengthened by figures and stories from traditional mythology we felt that the reinterpretation of mythological characters especially women and a radical re-reading of the significance of their actions might be useful.

Conflict, War and Women

Work on conflict in the past two decades has looked at the specific implications of conflict for women. The organisation of mothers' fronts, specific mobilisations by women to promote peace and resist war, the ways in which family and community locks women into inescapable custody, through non-consensual marriage, widowhood and remarriage practices, the experiences of combatant women within militant movements and resistance struggles, the relationship between the violent masculinity of the armed forces and women at contested boundaries or on the borders of nations, are all areas that have been explored in depth in feminist

writings on conflict, especially on the subcontinent. Reflecting on this vast literature, we felt it was necessary to search for an effective way of disseminating the ideas thrown up by these writings. The starkness of the violence of war is most powerfully expressed through performative traditions. We then began to think about Kuchipudi dance as a medium. This decision was relatively easy because of the heavy reliance that Kuchipudi places on the interpretations of mythic traditions, especially the two epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata.

War and Peace

Having made the connection almost instinctively between the subject and the form, it was necessary for us to prepare the substance. Hence we met Uma Rama Rao who is a well-known teacher of Kuchipudi. When we discussed the possibility of producing a ballet on war and women, the first question she asked us was "Aren't women the root cause of wars?" Immediately we have decided to change our script and 'War and Peace' took shape. The question by a sutradhar, "isn't it true that it is women who are responsible for wars? Wasn't Sita the reason for the war between Rama and Ravana? Isn't it believed that without Draupadi there would be no war in the Mahabharata?" leads to the spinning of an entire narrative that begins with the experience of Sita, not "Ramachandra maharaja patni" [consort of Rama] but Sita, daughter of the Earth, dweller of the forest, lover of peace, who says,

Nay, not for me the weight of that crown!
Not for me the burden of that identity!

And what is the weight or the burden that Sita speaks about? "Sita bereft of peace by Rama's lust for power; Sita of sorrow appropriated by Ravana; Sita consummating her purity in the flames. To prove her virtue to a husband swollen with the pride of victory."

Abduction is not unfamiliar to our own realities. The history of partition especially of the Punjab, as documented by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin echoes this experience of abduction, recovery and rejection, so that Sita reflects not on the glorious battle, but echoes the eerie timelessness of her experience. Abduction is not a story of one side of a border alone, and it is often countered by deceit, appropriation and assault of women from the other side. Surpanaka is a figure that is central to the telling of the story of Rama's

exile. Yet, it is the telling of the story not of her violation, but of Rama's valour. It is this emphasis that has found expression in traditional classical dance. Narratives of partition in the subcontinent led us to exploring alternate interpretations of the figure of Surpanaka in the Ramayana, giving her a voice on par with and equal to that of Sita. For those who saw Surpanaka "the dravida maid/celebrating beauty, worshipping nature.../woman of the universe [who] pour[s] forth love/transcending barriers of caste and creed.../despised, reviled for desiring love/punished, mutilated for craving love/Surpanaka a flaming torch/living testimony to untold violation and shame", there was a curiosity and sudden realisation that a radically different interpretation can indeed be based on a history of the present.

The section of the ballet that spoke of the Ramayana ended with Sita and Surpanaka speaking together, as allies, of the untold violation of women in the war between the Aryas and the Dravidas. The insertion of the critical element in feminist politics, the need for women to build alliances across borders, boundaries and identities, even while acknowledging the fact of diversity, through the figures of Sita and Surpanaka, had dramatic effects on the audience. And in suggesting this, we were, in fact, drawing on the letter written by Pakistani women to the women of Bangladesh apologising for the violence perpetrated by the Pakistani army during the Bangladeshi war of independence.

Draupadi introduces the experience of disrobing, and the public humiliation of women—an experience that women's movements have had to confront time and again.

I Draupadi, stake for a husband's dice
My royal husbands' gifts
Beginning with a public disrobing
Moving through shame, abduction and
humiliation
In this world filled with Kichakas
Dusasanas and Saindavas

While Sita speaks of the lust for power, Draupadi questions the gains of war, a question echoed by the mothers' fronts across the subcontinent.

What were the gains of this war?
Save the destruction of brothers, sons,
friends?
The bleeding hearts of
Gandhari, Bhanumathi, Kunti and Subhadra?
The unending grief of bereaved mothers.

For Madhavi, the daughter of king Yayati who was gifted, as 'dana', by her father

to the sage Galava, the fulfilment of her father's obligation to the sage meant being left with one king after another in succession to bear sons for them so that the sage could collect the thousand white horses he desired in return. Forced pregnancies, the rape of Bangladeshi women and the experience of ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia forced us to re-examine the 'mythic' nature of this myth. Was this myth or was it, in fact, the story of patriarchy?

From the beginning of time
Woman's body the battlefield
bearing the clash of patriarchies
war after war in history
Played out on these bodies, of ours.
The abduction of women,
The disrobing of queens
The test of wives' chastity
The loan of maidens' wombs
Gifts of mankind's greed for war
Tragic trappings celebrations of victory.

Dividing nations! dividing races! dividing
women
Limb by limb torn and tossed into the
sacrifice
Collective rituals of destruction
Peaking to a crescendo of violence
Religion in arrogant dance of death
Streets soaked in blood
Littered with numberless dead
Women's bodies gashed open
Killed by kinsmen.

To save the chastity of women
Sons cutting off a mother's head
Brothers ending a sister's life
Husbands wiping out a wife
Sharply echoing sounds of grief
Cries of thirst cries of hunger
Cries for clothing to cover the self
The suffering earth spinning in mad despair.

The ballet was written before the US war on Iraq, and before Gujarat 2002. And yet all of this speaks of the violence of those times as well.

At the moment of abduction were we Hindu?
Did the moment of conversion turn us
Muslim?

Are we Hindu? Are we Muslim?
Are we Muslim? Are we Hindu?
Are we Hindu Muslim or Muslim Hindu?

Trapped in this deadlock of race and faith
What of the children we bear?
Whose faith do they carry?
What future do they hold?
Citizens governed defined by law?
Illegal creatures invisible to history?
What brittle justice will decide this?

The feminist project has been not just to speak of the impact of war but to underscore the urgency of peace. Bharathi's

song 'Santhi Nilava Vendum' opens out the song for peace.

Enough! Let us halt these rites of war
Let us open up space for loving and caring
Usher in harmony, peace and friendship
Heralding a spring after a bitter winter

The earth shall shine a brilliant green
The blue sky free to soar in hope
Rivers sparkling pure and clean
Forests swaying in the gentle breeze.

...
A world thrilling to the song of peace
A world lighting to the rays of hope.

'War and Peace' was taken to every districts in Andhra Pradesh and has completed 25 performances in four years, each performance witnessed by an audience of 600 to 1,000 people.

Domestic Violence

After four years of taking 'War and Peace' around we felt the need to address other issues even while keeping this one alive. The debates around the Domestic Violence Bill were at the peak. The AP state legislature had begun to roll back the gains of the women's movement by making Section 498 A compoundable. The rhetoric within courts and police stations shifted to speaking about the treachery of women in bringing cases against unsuspecting husbands. And yet, women continued to suffer grave assault, often leading to death within the matrimonial home. The year 2004 forced us to address the issue of domestic violence in a more effective and powerful way. On March 8, 2004, 'Lakshmana Rekha' was presented to an audience of 5,000 predominantly rural poor women from different districts, after a public hearing on violence against women.

Lakshmana Rekha: The traditional invocation that the dance begins with celebrates Jotiba and Savithribai Phule, Durgabai Deshmukh, Chityala Ailamma, Suvarthamma of Karamchedu, the women of Chundur and the activists in the anti-arrack movement. In replacing goddesses with dalit women and women's rights activists and introducing them through their struggles, the ballet makes a radical shift in re-orienting viewers.

The 'Lakshmanarekha', divides the public from the private ensuring the protection of women who conform to the codes of the private spaces in patriarchies. And we have the habit of glorifying the renunciation of the pativaratas even through

popular media. What, we asked ourselves, would these actions of pativratas – written and unwritten, who have been iconised – look like if they were stripped of the colour of sacrifice. Gandhari, who blindfolded herself on her marriage to the blind king Dhritarashtra has been traditionally seen as an ideal wife and a companion. Given the fact of forced, non-consensual marriages, and the abuse that women face in these subservient relationships, Gandhari's act becomes one of vengeance:

This is my vengeance
My raging anguish
My eyes shall not gaze upon a husband
I do not choose
No companion will I be
to a man I do not love
No service or shoulder will I offer
To a lord forced upon me.

Urmila, Lakshmana's wife is left behind while Lakshmana follows his duty to be with Rama at all times. She goes into a deep slumber that lasts 14 years.

Within my eyes a fathomless ocean
of anger and bitter sorrow
An unvoiced war cry resounds in my heart
Rejecting my wifely duties
Slumber is the weapon of my satyagraha.

For Renuka, the wife of sage Jamadagni and the mother of Parasurama, a fleeting moment of desire results in death and the gift of life is a gift from father to son.

What is the price of chastity?
What is the power of motherhood?
Should the heart not falter even for a moment?
This then is the price of chastity
This then is the power of motherhood
For a life restored in charity
Where is left the desire to live
Or the heart to serve?
Chastity is but a pot of sand
Motherhood but a magic deer
What price these thrones empty of authority
or meaning?

The roots of the subjugation of women go far back in history. Feminist literature has raised the question of origins, and Uma Chakravarti's work in this direction with reference to ancient India is well known. The critique of dominant notions of patriarchy must be accompanied by some suggestion of its material bases:

If woman is nature and man the ruler
and civilisation is
but the destruction of nature
The never ending saga of slavery woven
around conquest
the grihapatni sliding into the mould of
pativrata

And the epoch of defeat beginning with
the loss of the mother right
For aeons of time women's lives
Captive, anguished, unfree, violent
Imprisoned in the home, filled with anguish
devoid of freedom, filled with violence
continuously stepping within the bounds
of the Lakshmana Rekha

Production and Performance

War and Peace and Lakshmana Rekha, our two major productions of 75 minutes duration each with lyrics set to tune and pre-recorded, have made extensive use of contemporary feminist research and texts to draw connections between myth and the violence of war in our day. The specific work that we drew upon were borders and boundaries to speak about the experiences of women during partition, Sri Lankan women's war poetry, the violence against women of Bangladesh during their war of independence, the reports from the Vienna Tribunal and other writing on ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, drawing parallels between these and the abduction of Sita, the dishing of Draupadi, the mutilation of Surpanaka and the forced pregnancies in Madhavi's case – none of which are read in this fashion – together and in a manner that foregrounds the use of extreme forms of violence as the way in which patriarchal power has been and continues to be entrenched in our cultures.

Apart from introducing deeply political contemporary themes into traditional, classical dance, the ballets have interrogated in fundamental ways the construction of gender, ideology and hegemony in the theory of dance itself, and especially the theoretical underpinnings of Kuchipudi. While we cannot at this point engage in an exhaustive analysis of this aspect, it is necessary to dwell briefly on a few critical aspects that will indicate patterns in the encrustation of gendered ideologies in the performative traditions of dance.

The 'bhakti' and 'srungara rasas' are important not just to representational forms but to an understanding of lived experience as well. To that extent, all rasas in a sense bridge the distance between performance and life. However, it is precisely through an unpacking of this connection that one discovers that the theory of rasas is trapped in webs of patriarchal ideologies in ways that mirror realities. It is, of course, a fact that women performers and 'bhaktins' have time and again subverted hegemonic structures and resisted them, and there is

work that has explored this dimension both with reference to music and dance in different parts of India. Yet, the performative and material contexts of rasas have remained confined within frameworks of dominance notwithstanding shifts within those frameworks. Within that women have largely been confined to expressions of bhakti and srungara.

The confinement to and prescription of domains of agency and expression are most evident, for instance, in the language used to describe the 'nayaka' ("ever victorious", "warrior without peer", "glorious emperor", "vanquisher of valourous kings") and the 'nayika' (compliant consort, petulant or pining lover), especially in terms of figures of speech and moods. For the nayika, the most appropriate moods are absolute surrender, sorrow, grief and love – depicted through stillness, laughing or smiling. In that context women are the 'ashtama bhoga' – subject/objects, not agents/creators/protectors with the power to give or take life. Apart from words, there is a hierarchy of language as well, with men of the upper castes speaking Sanskrit and women and shudras speaking Prakrutam. Gender, therefore, suffuses the pedagogy of dance in unspoken, unquestioned and pervasive ways.

In this context, both War and Peace and Lakshmana Rekha peel off different layers of this encrustation in radical ways. The woman is no longer consort, sister, wife and mother. Nor is she a willing unquestioning subject, who allows the reification of her subservience. The moment the woman gets transformed into an active agent/creator, the pathos is replaced by resistance and the static smile by anger. In representing the questioning of the fundamentals of patriarchal subjugation on stage, the rasa travels from performance to lived experience forcing self-reflection on the dancer – a point that has been elaborated on in the next section.

Moving from a hegemonic binary portrayal of good and evil – the god/protector and the 'rakshasa' to a portrayal of diversity – equally positioned, equally valued, results in learning a different grammar of representation, one that does not exist within the pedagogy of Kuchipudi as it is taught today. Surpanaka need not be portrayed as repulsive, lacking in grace, heavy on her feet, or a caricature of unwomanliness. This was something the dancers in War and Peace understood gradually. That Surpanaka, like Sita can be portrayed as a graceful woman, and

need not be shown in opposition to the norms of human-celestial conduct.

Finally on the point of the tradition of dance, the 'Dasavatara' is a very typical presentation in Kuchipudi. The laya, the raga and the method convey the essence of the dance form. For scholars of Kuchipudi tampering with the Dasavatara is unimaginable, and we were advised not to do it. But if one is in fact thinking in terms of incarnations, and of re-inscribing woman's place in the body politic, what better way is there than to present the various incarnations of women? With a minor alteration in metre – purely precautionary – we presented the Dasavatara of aspirations as the culmination of Lakshmana Rekha, as the only possible resolution to the confinement of the lakshmana rekha:

I aspire to
cross the frontiers of learning
to excel in games of speed and skill
to soar into space exploring
search and research the
paths of science
to reach unimagined heights
of glory in music and dance
to paint the world richly
sculpt the human form to perfection
to lead struggles to victory.

The writing of these ballets has been the fulfilment of a dream. The power of the lyrics comes from a firm commitment to feminist politics, and an immersion in the shared history of that politics and writing. Once the lyrics were complete, it had to be set to music. While we got a skilled music composer, as the production team, we took an active part in the entire process of approving, modifying and recording the music – suggesting appropriate ragas, beats and speed that would reflect the mood and our intent.

Kuchipudi as a dance form was one that excluded women completely in its early history. When women took to the stage, their parts have been largely restricted to playing consensual consorts, or depicting the 'srungara rasa'. Kuchipudi has a long tradition of male dancers and the gender lines in performance are very strong where the women rarely use the raw power that men do in the dance, relying much more on abhinaya and soft, yet skilful movements. The fact that this dance form had never used the interpretations we were introducing before meant that the dancers had to draw very differently from their repertoire. The pathos, dependence and sorrow be replaced by anger, strength, grief

and resistance. This was a crucial intervention. Traditionally female movements, and a concentration on 'srungara' would be completely inadequate in bringing out the intensity of women's suffering or the power of their anger and resistance. We then suggested to the women in the troupe that they should use the swing, the vigour and the power of the male dancers in combination with the soft grace of the female dancers in order for the lyrics to come to life and in order for women to be portrayed with strength of character rather than their relapsing into eternal pathos.

In contemporary performance of Kuchipudi collective performance with several dancers of equal stature and experience is practically unknown today, individual skill always being centre stage. This requirement of collective performance brought about a radical shift in dynamics between dancers – not always smooth and easy to resolve – and meant that each dancer had to focus not just on her part but on the whole. For us, it also became an attempt to bring notions of collectivity and sharing that we had learnt in feminist praxis into a very different arena – so the production also, it turned out, served a pedagogic purpose.

Impact of the Performance

The public reaction to War and Peace has been characteristic. Viewers relaxing to the melody of traditional music and the graceful movements of traditional dance found that imperceptibly they had entered a world of violence, greed and horror. The reality of that world seldom depicted on stage through this medium has had a startling impact on middle class audiences. The subversion of traditional legends and characters has been radical in its effect.

Initially masked by the safety and sonorousness of the music the lyrics quickly take over in intensity. Similarly the traditional costumes and movements and footwork of the dancers seduce attention and lull the conservative mind into acceptance and enjoyment. Suddenly the total impact of lyric music and dance, initially so safe and familiar, burst upon the consciousness of the viewer, forcing him/her to think critically of the contradiction inherent in the myth. The violence of shattering long held beliefs and cherished assumptions is matched only by the violence of the reality of women's lives that it strips naked centre stage.

While the audience has generally been mesmerised with the performance, one

incident deserves special mention. Draupadi talks of a world peopled with Kichakas, Dusasanas, Saindhavas, pointing to different parts of the audience. In Andhra University in Visakhapatnam, male students reacted with catcalls and hooting the moment Draupadi entered the stage. When they were done with the catcalls, the lyrics reached "I Draupadi...moving through shame, abduction and humiliation/in a world filled with Kichakas, Dusasanas and Saindhavas", the dancer in very powerful movements, pointed in the direction of the catcalls through the stanza. There was a stunned silence in the auditorium and the sense of shame was palpable.

There has been a powerful impact on the audience with reactions of shock and disbelief often showing. Younger women react even more quickly wanting a "rebellion" or "resolution" on the stage itself. Yet another response has been that the ballets force an almost immediate reflection on the viewer. The noted Kuchipudi exponent, Sobha Naidu was a chief guest at one of the performances of Lakshmana Rekha. In her address after the performance, she said these lines – "Who am I? A human being or image? A breathing stone? A wooden doll? What is the direction of my future? What is the meaning of my life? Who am I?" – forced her to engage with these questions herself. Uma Rama Rao, the first choreographer of War and Peace moved in the course of the performances from wondering whether women were responsible for war, to reflecting on the reasons why women find it so difficult to continue in the performing arts after marriage, speaking about the constraints and pressures that families and reproductive roles brought to bear on women performers.

The impact of the introduction of Surpanaka into the narrative in this manner became a problem to us when the ballet was to be telecast on Doordarshan in the national network. The single demand made by Doordarshan was that Surpanaka should be left out. This was a difficult issue. Censorship has been an issue that women have had to contend with on a regular basis over a long period. The censorship of women's voices is as old as patriarchy itself. In an act of resistance, therefore, should we accept this censorship, or should we bend to it. A difficult and painful question. Yet, we decided to go ahead and accept the demand because, we wanted the ballet to reach as many people as possible

across the country, and this was a rare opportunity. In all the live performances however, the 'rakshasi' portrayed as a young woman humiliated, mutilated and violated for daring to love across racial barriers shocks the audience as it echoes the horrors of the present.

The moment that we chose to put out the first performance was unforgettable. The National Conference on Women's Studies held in Hyderabad was organised by the Indian Association of Women's Studies. There were the scholars whose work we had drawn on, people with shared ideas in common for decades, young scholars committed to feminism and women's studies. While we did not get too much of feedback from the delegates of the conference, we went on to take the ballet across the length and breadth of the state. Writers, poets,

artists, common people flocked to our performances. The troupe changed, there were always new dancers ready and able to step in with ease, what mattered was that the performances must not stop. For us at Asmita, this ballet has become a powerful tool for the dissemination of feminist ideas among those people who are not yet exposed to them. And it is a powerful medium to speak about the pervasiveness of violence in women's lives. [27]

[Both the ballets, War and Peace and Lakshmana Rekha were written by Volga and produced by Asmita Resource Centre for Women. All translations into English are by Vasanth Kannabiran. The primary responsibility for production and coordination was taken by Akkineni Kutumba Rao and Vasanth Kannabiran. Kalpana Kannabiran helped with the research.]

Kanavu – Where Learning Happens

An Ethnographic Account of a Learning Space

A discussion of the ethnography of an alternative school/commune, Kanavu in Wayanadu district of Kerala. It explores the diverse learning spaces and methodologies that have been incorporated into its system, where learning happens for children who participate.

ALEX M GEORGE

Many alternative visions of schooling have emerged in our country. Kanavu in the Cheengode village of Wayanadu district of Kerala is one such exploration. More than a school it is a commune – a way of collective living, where learning happens at its natural phase. Many writers/philosophers as Tolstoy, Tagore and Krishnamurthi have pondered on and experimented with the school system, but what makes Kanavu different?

Kanavu is a bold initiative of K J Baby, a dramatist and writer. His play 'Nattugadhika' tells the story of resistance by tribal groups against the dominance of colonial masters and feudal lords. 'Nattugadhika' in itself is the ritual of cleansing a village of evil spirits; in its dramatic form it demonstrates the need for tribal social/cultural lives to be purified of evil spirits/influence of the colonial masters

and lords. His novel *Mavelimantram* deconstructs the folklores of a tribal group, along with a court judgment on the sale of tribal youth, by one feudal master to another, to tell the story of how tribes have been colonised in every possible manner.

Kanavu at present has nearly 40 children of all age groups up to 17. One could probably summarise an ordinary day as one that begins with the recital of classical ragas and ends with a dance to the beat of the 'thudi' (a tribal drum). It is probably this blend of folk with classical that makes the atmosphere at Kanavu different.

Every night before children go to sleep, they evaluate the day's activities. These would include the following items: (i) performance at the kalari (ground in which the traditional martial art of Kerala is performed) with different weapons including the sword; (ii) at the kitchen where the day's 'kanji' or tapioca is cooked; (iii) with cows in the forest or cleaning its

stable; (iv) in the fields to harvest the rice; (v) theatre activities; (vi) retelling stories; (vii) colours they have played with on paper; (viii) butterflies that were observed; (ix) working at the tailoring machine; (x) pushing up the jeep in the early morning; (xi) plants to care for; (xii) younger ones to look after.

Kanavu began when the writer K J Baby, and members of his drama group felt disenchanted with the schooling system. Most of the senior students themselves are children of the drama group members. Children saw their parents involved in theatre and in music. This writer himself had become disenchanted with the competitive nature of social-school life.

One remarkable dialogue in the drama 'Nadugadhika' is about schooling – the 'Gadhikakaran' (sutradar) tells the tribal chieftain:

There, there in the streets, his school days over, he is trying to impress upon himself all the pseudo characters, all those sham versions of history. Already it has been revealed unto him that all his miseries arise from the existence of his tribe, his people, if he remains there, he is sure to absorb those renderings of history depicting his people as useless, as traitors, and as unworthy of existence. Come, let us get him away. Let us bring him home. Let him realise miseries don't end by running away from them [Baby 1996].

While dreaming of an alternative, Baby recognised that it was amongst the tribals that collective living still seemed to endure. Modern schooling and society has destroyed elements of fraternity amongst human beings. He felt, probably the best way to enter into the lives of children could be through 'thudi' and 'kuzhal' (flute like musical instruments). Thus from the very beginning music and other art forms were given great importance.

A couple who live in the commune – the 'kalari gurukkal' (traditional martial art form of Kerala) and 'Mohiniyattam' (a dance form of Kerala) teacher have instructed the senior children for nearly six years. At the kalari, few have also picked up the ayurvedic massaging techniques. Kanavu has given great importance to the learning of music, dance, theatre, martial arts, painting, etc. Every child in the group has mastered a musical instrument. Most of them also practise pottery. The senior group of students at Kanavu has gone outside the campus to be trained in learning terracotta and sculpture. Few of them are also learning auto mechanics, etc. Even as