

window, a fascinating panorama of early morning rural life which, of course includes using the railway track as a pedestrian highway when not immediately required by trains.

TRICHUR

Overnight I have crossed India from east to west. I will not see another European, or indeed another westener, for over a week. On the way to the hotel I meet a working elephant going to work; he is carrying his lunch with his trunk. There is no question of midday straying from the shade, but I love wandering slowly around the streets of Trichur each evening as dusk falls. Life is a rich kaleidoscope of colours and textures with everywhere the different spices adding a wide aromatic spectrum between the extremes of pungent smell and delicate fragrance. Everyone is totally occupied by the business of survival. For most life is hard, yet there seems to be a relaxed serenity that is rarely to be found amidst the affluence of consumer oriented societies.

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

Calicut University's Department of Drama is located in an idyllic country setting about half-an-hour's drive from Trichur. The gracious old house and its extensive grounds

were left to the university by Dr John Matthai. A research centre and dormitories have been built in the gardens where several performance areas have emerged naturally among the trees. The journey, four times a day, along the aptly named Poothole Road, passing through villages of trimly painted houses set in a richly verdant landscape, has become part of the routine in which I share experience with a group of people whose talent and dedication I so admired in their Madras performances. Now I cherish their friendship and together we explore the design process of visual theatre, searching for visual metaphors for the Macbeth that is a thread motivating our workshop sessions. Or seek the optimum angles and colour for a light that supports, sculpts, reveals and yet conceals. With such people under such conditions, mutual discovery is the pleasure of the 'professor' and his student colleagues whose welcome is spelled out daily, in flowers, at the top of the stairs leading to our studio.

TRADITIONAL ARTS PROJECT

On Sunday we rest and I watch videos from the school's **Traditional Arts Project** undertaken with Ford Foundation funding. Using many techniques including photography and video recording under the direction

of Sankhara Pillai, traditional dramatic rituals from all over the state of Kerala have been researched and documented. The details of complex make-up procedures, the ground drawings and the 'performances' — all unchanged since the dawn of human behaviour — have been preserved just in time. With electricity penetrating even further into rural areas and television aerials sprouting, cultural change is inevitable. The rituals will no doubt continue to be enacted in some form, possibly homogenized for tourists. But for how long can a man continue to be transformed into a god eating a live chicken? I have never, never ever, seen acting with the total reality of the man playing a hissing serpent eating eggs, as recorded here on video. The origins of drama became clearer to me this morning.

POORAM

And they also become clearer to me this evening. After dinner we set off for the village of Arrattupuzha, our taxi joining the sundry vehicles weaving through the hundred, nay thousands, walking purposefully in the same direction. Our progress through the night is accompanied by our taxi playing the opening bars of 'Happy Birthday to You' everytime the driver takes his foot off the accelerator. He only ever

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