

# Techniques in Bharathanatyam

**ALAGAPPA PERFORMING ARTS ACADEMY**

Alagappa Performing Arts Academy (APAA) is focused on developing structured learning programs to enhance comprehension of the quintessence in Indian classical performing arts. It is an integral part of the Alagappa group of institutions based in Karaikudi and Chennai, TamilNadu, India that caters to the need of primary, secondary, undergraduate and post graduate students with a comprehensive program of educational courses.

In its maiden venture, APAA has designed a comprehensive curriculam in Bharathanatyam to demonstrate the repertoire of culture that is imbedded in this classical art. From an overview of the various dances in India, to the rudiments of dancing, to clearly depicting the exquisite language of gestures, postures and rhythmical delivery, a student is guided through the various phases of this intricate art with textbooks that concisely explain its relevance and interactive DVDs and vividly describe the precise execution of the art. These valuable learning aids enhance the comprehension and make this a constructive exercise for students to understand the depth and versatility of this art.

In collaboration with Alagappa University, Karikudi, Tamil Nadu, APAA has developed academic programs that are offered directly or through established dance centers worldwide to enable students to obtain under graduate degree in Bharathanatyam.

**TECHNIQUES IN BHARATHANATYAM - DIB 01****Associate Degree program**

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This edition is specially published.

## FOREWORD

It is with great pride that we introduce Alagappa Performing Arts Academy, which in collaboration with Alagappa university, Tamil Naud, India and accomplished artistes in the field of Bharathanatyam, has developed a 'Structured Learning Program' in Bharathanatyam. This program offers:

Certificate in Bharathanatyam	(1 to 3 year duration)
Associate Degree in Bharathanatyam	(1 year after Certificate)
Diploma in Bharathanatyam	(1 year after Associate Degree)
B. A. Degree in Bharathanatyam	(1 year after Diploma)

The above programs have been designed with specific coursework and practicals that a student has to successfully complete to obtain the respective certification. Effective detailed aids like comprehensive textbooks have been designed to facilitate easy understanding of the various aspects of Bharathanatyam and appreciation of its rich heritage. Complementing the text books are interactive, user friendly DVDs that have been developed to enhance the learning process in practicing the art.

In this pioneering endeavor, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr. Madurai R. Muralidarn, Bharathanatyam dancer, singer, choreographer, composer, and Guru, who has acquired many laurels and credits for his dedication to the art

and Dr. M.S. Sarala, an experience dancer and visiting Professor of Fine arts at the Alagappa University, Karaikudi for their continuous support. I would like to make special mention of the primary authors of this book Miss. Lakshmi Sri ram and Mrs. K.R. Rekha for enhancing the content of this book and Ms. VR Devi, Miss Lakshmi Ramaswmy for coordinating the process.

Bharathanatyam, the traditional classical art from of Southern India, has to distinctive repertoire and is a vibrant mode of cultural communication that unites art lovers from different cultures and countries. Alagappa performing Arts Academy is fortunate to be among the very first to design such a program to provide a new dimension to this great performing art and help preserve its rich cultural heritage.

Generally, students of Bharathanatyam spend several years learning the art and perfecting the practice to perform the 'Arangetram'. Though this can take from 5 to 7 years, a formal or standardized platform for recognition of this effort is lacking. The primary focus of APAA's academic program is to reward students of this art with University accreditation. I am confident that students who enroll in this program will be able to demonstrate the value of their hard work and gain recognition for their proficiency in this art.

Sincerely yours,

**Ramanath Vairavan**  
Chairman & CEO,  
Alagappa Performing Arts Academy

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Alagappa Performing Arts Academy had designed a comprehensive curriculum in Bharathanatyam to preserve and propagate the repertoire of culture that is imbedded in this classical art., In collaboration with exponents in the field and Alagappa University Tamil Nadu, India APAA has developed a structured learning program that will enable students to obtain a Bachelor's degree in performing arts. From an overview of the various dances in India, to the rudiments of dancing, to clearly depicting the exquisite language of gestures, postures and rhythm, a student is guided through the various aspects of this intricate art with textbooks that concisely explain its relevance and interactive DVDs that vividly describe the precise execution of the art. These valuable learning aids enhance comprehension of the depth and versatility of this art. The following programs are now being offered:

### **Certificate in Bharathanatyam**

This program provides an overview of the fundamental concepts of Bharathanatyam with a historical perspective. The rudimentary concepts of Nritha, Nrithya and Natya are explained. To portray an aesthetic profile the student will learn about the types of instruments used in Bharathanatyam and understand basic dancing "parlance". In addition they will be exposed to "adavu" (The basic footsteps). A student will be required to perform a dance recital such as Alarippu, ( an invocation), Kavithuvam or Shabdham (tradition basic dance item with introduction of Bhava). Students enrolled in this course will take 1 to 3 years to complete this program.

### **Associate Degree in Bharathanatyam**

This program covers the basic and essential expression in Bharathanatyam. Abhinaya, its usage and importance are explained. On completion of this one year program after the Certificate, the students will realize the enduring and enthralling beauty of Bharathanatyam manifest in various types of Chari (walking pattern), different varieties of Alarippu, Jathiswaram (Combination of notes with Bharathanatyam steps) and Shabdham.

### **Diploma in Bharathanatyam**

This program reviews the eternal passion of Abhinaya (Facial expressions) and Angas (expressive communications through the body). On completion of this one-year program after the Associate Degree the student should know how to perform the Varnam, the piece de resistance of Bharathanatyam that is immensely traditional and known for its grace, vigor and expressive brilliance and the Jawali which explores the various Rasas, Bhavas and Nayikas.

### **Undergraduate Degree in Bharathanatyam**

This program introduces the student to Nattuvangam. On completion of this one-year program after Diploma the students will be prepared to execute choreographical combinations of footwork, hand gestures and expression. A thorough knowledge of Bharathanatyam acquired in other courses combined with this training in choreography enhances the students' ability to perform both traditional pieces and newer ones.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Brief Introduction to Concepts Discussed in the Book

Among the various aspects of India's glorious cultural heritage, the traditions of classical dance occupy the pride of place. Bharatanatyam is perhaps the most popular of these dance forms, the others being Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Manipuri, Kathak and Sattiriya.

In trying to grasp the various facets of this beautiful performing art form, we can see that, besides what can be called "pure dance" or rhythmic and stylized body movements, it has a strong abhinaya or mimetic/dramatic component.

When we speak of 'dance', it normally refers to beautiful, often stylized, body movements, usually to the accompaniment of music. Since Bharathanatyam has the abhinaya aspect as well, calling Bharathanatyam a dance form is inadequate.

Employing technical terms, 'nritta' is the word that means dance as pure physical movements while 'natya' refers to the dramatic component as well. Sri V.P. Dhananjayan, the veteran dancer and teacher, says: "the term 'dance' cannot be a true translation for our natya. It (the word 'dance') may be the closest equivalent to our nritta.... Bharathanatyam should be referred to only as natya....our performing arts encompass physical, mental and spiritual aspects (which is not captured by the word 'dance')."

In the previous books, we have seen aspects of physical movement that have been stylized in Bharathanatyam such as karana-s, chari-s, (gait), sthana-s (basic posture), adavu-s, movements of eyes, neck, hands, fingers, feet and also of minor parts of the body like ankle, toes, soles of the feet, etc. In this book we tackle expression of emotions (abhinaya) that is also an integral aspect of Bharathanatyam and other related topics.

## Abhinaya in Bharathanatyam

The word “dance” usually refers to beautiful physical movements. The nritya part of Bharathanatyam is what is properly called dance. And, Bharathanatyam has another, very important aspect, i.e. abhinaya or expression of emotions. When we consider the traditional margam or repertoire of Bharathanatyam, alarippu, kavattuvam, jathiswaram and thillana are the only nritya dominant items. The others are abhinaya items. Sabdam has very little space for nritya and is mostly abhinaya, while varnam places equal emphasis on nritya and abhinaya. Padam-s and javali-s are utterly abhinaya - oriented.

Thus, a Bharathanatyam dancer has to be adept not only at nritya or pure dance which includes adavu-s, korvai-s, karana-s, chari-s etc. but has to learn and practise the far more difficult art of abhinaya or mimetic expression of emotions. It is more difficult because it requires sustained and enormous practice as well as maturity to successfully accomplish without appearing affected and artificial.



Abhinaya or facial expression of love

So central is the place of abhinaya in Bharathanatyam that some famous and highly respected dancers have, in their mature years, been purely abhinaya exponents. Smt. T.Balasaraswathi and, in our own times, Smt. Kalanidhi Narayanan are known as abhinaya exponents and when they perform there is no place for nritya or pure dance. But we cannot conceive of a Bharathanatyam dancer achieving fame only for prowess in nritya.

## Natyashastra on Abhinaya

Abhinaya in Bharathanatyam too is highly stylized and sophisticated like other aspects of this art and much of it has evolved from the Natyashastra of Sage Bharatha. The Natyashastra is a very influential treatise of an early period of the Christian era attributed to the sage Bharatha.

For the theoretical underpinnings of the fine art of abhinaya, we turn to the Natyashastra for its discussion of bhava-s (emotions), rasa (aesthetic relish of the portrayal of these emotions in art) and the various technical aspects of such portrayal (vibhava-s, anubhava-s).

In popular Bharathanatyam parlance when one says that the dancer performed abhinaya, we mean facial expressions, but, in the technical parlance as found in the Natyashastra, Abhinayadarpanam etc., there are other aspects to abhinaya too. Abhinaya, as has been explained in the earlier books, is derived from the Sanskrit root ni, naya which means to carry, to bring; while the prefix abhi means towards. Abhinaya thus means to carry towards the audience the emotions that are represented in the drama or song.

## Four types of Abhinaya

The Natyashastra explores how emotion can be represented in drama through abhinaya and it analyzes the various types of such representation. All this can be derivatively applied to dance.

The dancer thus has to employ suitable body language (which involves anga-s and upanga-s as elaborated in earlier books), suitable words in dialogue or song, and (in drama especially) suitable costume; communication is also achieved through the most subtle of abhinaya which happens when the actor/dancer identifies herself with the character being portrayed sufficiently enough to be able to bring off involuntary manifestations of the emotion being portrayed.

Thus, according to Bharatha, there are four kinds of abhinaya: angika, vachika, aharya and satvika.

**Angika** refers to expression through the body. Obviously body language is a medium for conveying emotions. Body language includes the posture, position and movement of not only the hands and legs, torso, shoulders and other major limbs but also the eyes, nose, cheeks, chest. Obviously the angry person's body language is going to be different from the lover's body language. This is captured in angika abhinaya, the first aspect of abhinaya according to Bharatha.



The depiction of an old man is achieved by angika abhinaya - a bent body, straining eyes etc.



A story is told with the help of angika: Mother Yashoda is offering Krishna butter & father Nanda is urging the child to take it.

And then words - dialogue or song - also convey emotions. This is **vachika** abhinaya, the second aspect of abhinaya. In fact, anything audible in a theatre or dance production comes under vachika – the sound effect to convey thunder or an army advancing or a baby crying - all come under **vachika**.

Third is the **aharya** abhinaya which is the conveying of meaning by costumes. This is applicable especially in drama where the actor comes in dressed as his/her part. The costume itself will convey something to the audience. In a dance form like Kathakali, the colour of the paint on the dancer's face conveys something specific about the character. One can safely say that in a regular dance performance of Bharathanatyam (not dance drama) there is very little use of aharya abhinaya to convey a specific meaning. The costume etc. the dancer wears has no scope for conveying any specific meaning.

Finally, there is the **satvika** abhinaya which is far subtler than all the other aspects of abhinaya involving as it does the actor/dancer's identifying with the character being portrayed.

The first three aspects of abhinaya – angika, vachika and aharya - have been discussed in ADB 01 and ADB 02.

This book deals first with Satvika Abhinaya and moves on to the very central concepts of bhava (sthai bhava, vyabhichari or sanchari bhava,) vibhava, anubhava and rasa.

Other concepts discussed in the book are the nayaka-nayika types, vritti and dharmi.

### Brief introduction of the concepts discussed in the book

**Satvika Abhinaya:** While angika, vachika and aharya are in the realm of the physical, satvika moves in the realm of the mental, even, the spiritual. Angika refers to movement of the various parts of the body expressive of some meaning and vachika to the spoken dialogue or song which is expressive too. Aharya is what is expressed by the costume. But then above all these technicalities of portrayal is the actor/dancer identifying herself with the character and feeling the emotions intensely and yet with sufficient distance to be able to portray it. This alone makes possible expression of involuntary manifestations of feelings such as sweating, pallor, etc. This is the very important and subtle category of satvika abhinaya. Satvika refers to the subtle communication achieved by the artiste of maturity and when this happens, the effect is magical. It is when a performance is permeated by satvika bhava that true aesthetic pleasure is achieved.

**Bhava:** Bhava means emotion, human emotions that are portrayed in dance, drama, music, sculpture et al. Bhava is of two types: **sthayin** and **sanchari** or **vyabhichari**.

Sthayi bhava-s are the main or dominant emotions identified by Bharatha which when effectively portrayed, lead to the experience of rasa. Vyabhichari or sanchari bhava-s are subsidiary, fleeting emotions or emotions that are attendant on the main or sthayi bhava-s.

Sthayi bhava-s include love, fear, anger etc. and some sanchari bhava-s are suspicion, depression, jealousy, etc. All of them are human feelings and emotions but sthayi bhava-s are

considered supreme among these since they lead to rasa. As is evident from the examples, the sthayi bhava-s are major emotions while the others are attendant ones. For example feelings of suspicion or jealousy might be attendant to the feeling of love. In other words, while experiencing love, feelings of suspicion might fleetingly come and go. And thus these are called sanchari or vyabhichari.

Bhava is directly concerned with rasa, the ultimate meaning of all performing arts in India. When meaning (in drama and dance in the Indian tradition, this meaning is always of the nature of emotion) is effectively and aesthetically communicated, when the meaning touches the heart, rasa is created; the entire body is consumed by the rasa like fire consuming a dry stick.

**Rasa:** Rasa is the aesthetic transformation of emotions felt in ordinary life. So the emotion of love (rati) when aesthetically transformed in the experience of a play or the abhinaya of a varnam or padam in Bharathanatyam, becomes the sringara rasa. Ordinary emotions are called bhava. It is because they are transformed in the context of a performance whether drama or dance that we can enjoy even unhappiness as depicted in the performance. To Aristotle's question how do we enjoy tragedy as depicted in plays, the Indian answer is that it is rasa that we enjoy, not someone's suffering. It is the aesthetic portrayal or representation of pain that we enjoy in the play or dance performance. It is one thing for an actor to simply say "I love you" or "I am frightened" and another for the actor to actually evoke the emotion and present it to the viewer for aesthetic appreciation. This is rasa.

**Vibhava and anubhava:** These are the aspects of portrayal of the bhava-s by the actor/dancer. Vibhava-s are the external factors in the environment which can excite a particular emotion or bhava. While anubhava-s are the gestures and words that such excitation evokes - they are expressions of the emotion. The very well known aphorism about rasa in the Nattyashastra



goes as follows: “vibhava-anubhava-vyabhichari sanyogaat rasa nispattih.” Rasa is experienced when there is the effective combination of the vibhava, anubhava and vyabhichari bhava in expressing the sthayi.

**Nayaka – nayika:** The nayaka – nayika typology occupies an important place in many Indian art forms. Nayaka is loosely translated as hero and nayika as heroine or at any rate, the main male and female protagonists. In Bharathanatyam, the emotion of love is the subject of most songs and thus we find men and women in various situations of love. These various situations and moods are captured in the types of nayaka-s and nayika-s.

**Vritti and dharmi** is another set of categories discussed in the book. These are aspects of style – whether vigorous or gentle etc. whether dramatized or natural.

## CHAPTER 1

### SATVIKA ABHINAYA : Abhinaya at its subtlest

According to the Natyashastra, abhinaya or expressive communication of emotions in dance and drama falls into four types: angika (expression through body movements), vachika (expression through words in dialogue and song), aharya (expression through costumes) and satvika (expression of involuntary states). The first three, namely angika, vachika and aharya, have been covered in the earlier textbooks.

Satvika (pronounced **saatvika**) is a term much used in Sanskrit. Anything good and pure is called satvika; a person who is balanced and not prone to tempers, is steady and truthful is called one with satvika nature. Thus, Sri Rama is the embodiment of satvika guna-s (qualities), while Ravana would be the opposite. Even Lakshmana, the fiery brother of Sri Rama would not be described as satvika. On the other hand, Vibheeshana, the brother of Ravana, and a rakshasa who is a devotee of Sri Rama, would be satvika. Food that is not spicy, not overcooked or undercooked, food that nourishes without exciting any base instincts is called satvika food. Onions, garlic or chillies are regarded as non-satvika food. Satvika is a category that is much used in ayurveda.

What then are satvika bhava-s and satvika abhinaya? The word sat, from which “satvika” is derived, means real, existent, pure, true, etc. In fact, it can compare well with the English word “true”. The word “true” is used in phrases like true sentence, true description etc. It is also used in the phrases like true friend, true test etc. Satvika abhinaya means that abhinaya which is a true expression of emotions.

Consider a situation when a young girl in love is very annoyed with her lover. The boy approaches her and, though she longs for his love, she feigns indifference, and turns away. No smiles or loving looks. But when he touches her and she breaks into goose pimples. For all her resolve to not show her love for him, she cannot control this. It is involuntary. This is what is called satvika bhava and when employed in dance to express an emotion, it is called satvika abhinaya.

Satvika abhinaya is the involuntary expressions of emotional states. For instance, while in the grip of fear, a person might break into a sweat or start trembling. These happen involuntarily. A person's fear could also manifest itself by his widened eyes, etc. But, widening of pupils etc. are not involuntary in the sense that we can control them. One can try to appear calm and unperturbed even though in the grip of great fear, but one cannot control breaking into a sweat and other such bodily expressions. This, according to Natyashastra is a Satvika bhava. Similarly, when touched by a loved one, one might feign to be unaffected by controlling the smiles and eye language; but the body might break into goose pimples (horripilation). On hearing shocking news, one might experience a fainting fit without being able to control it. As a category of emotional responses, these are different from other emotional responses which are at the level of the physical and are voluntary. These are categorized separately by Bharatha as Satvika bhava-s. When the actor or dancer includes expression of satvika bhava-s during the dance or play, it is called satvika abhinaya.

Not only is satvika abhinaya different in this sense, but also in the manner in which it is performed. While executing satvika abhinaya, the dancer needs to attain a degree of involvement with what she is portraying so that she can actually feel the emotion and express it. It is only when there is this kind of involvement that the subtler expressions of emotions can happen. To express love, one might simply employ the technique of sidelong glances, pouting lips, appropriate gait (all of which fall in the angika abhinaya category). But satvika bhava-s appropriate to the emotion of love would be, depending on the context, trembling, horripilation, coloring of the face etc. which cannot be brought off by any simple movement of the body. This happens when the actor has achieved a certain level of concentration and oneness with the character or situation being portrayed. Thus satvika abhinaya can only be expected from mature artistes. The Abhinayadarpanam says: Satvika abhinaya is performed with satvika emotions (bhava-s) by those who know how to represent them.



Stambha, stunned.

The Natyashastra<sup>1</sup> lists eight expressions or conditions under satvika abhinaya and the method of expressing them:

### Stambha or Stupefaction

This expresses a stunned state which can be due to sorrow, wonder, fear and love. For instance there is the well known episode in the life of Lord Krishna.

As a baby He plays with mud and, as all babies are wont to, He puts some mud into His mouth. When the

anxious Mother Yashoda looks into Baby Krishna's mouth to see if there is any mud in it, she sees the entire universe in the little baby's mouth. This would be the right occasion for stambha. What wonder this is, to be able to see the universe with its suns and moons and galaxies, all inside her baby's mouth! Again, there is the famous episode of Kumarasambhavam when Parvati is tested by Lord Shiva in disguise. Parvati has been doing severe penance to win the love of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva disguises himself as young hermit and teases Parvati about her wasting time over someone like Shiva who has serpents for jewellery, who lives in the cremation ground, who has fearful gana-s for his servants and so on. Unable to tolerate the hermit's making fun of her Lord, Parvati lets out a few angry words and turns away. Only to be confronted by none other than Lord Shiva who reveals himself laughingly. This would be the right occasion for stambha in Parvati.

Bharatha suggests that stambha may be expressed by standing utterly still, body unmoving, eyes unseeing and limbs lifeless.

### Svedambu or perspiration



Svedambu or perspiration, fanning oneself

This is associated with fear, love, anger, illness, etc. The above episode of Parvati and Shiva would also be a right occasion for perspiration since Parvati is full of love for Shiva. The sight of imminent danger or death would also be an occasion for svedambu. When a person who has committed a crime is going to be found out, he might well break into a sweat.

Bharatha suggests that svedambu may be expressed by fanning oneself, wiping the perspiration, expressing need for breeze.

### Romanca or horripilation

This can be caused by touch of the loved one, by fear or by cold. When Lord Krishna applies sandal paste on the gopi-s, this would be the occasion for romancha.

According to Bharatha, this might be expressed by touching one's limbs as if the hair is on the end.

### Swarabhanga or break in the voice

This is strictly not applicable in dance where the dancer does not mouth words. In a play however, an actor can express love, fear, anger, etc. by allowing a break in the voice.

### Vepathu or trembling

This again is an expression of anger, fear, love or sorrow. When Draupadi is wronged by the Kauravas, an angry Bhima might be depicted as trembling in anger.

Bharatha suggests that this may be expressed by quivering, throbbing and shaking movements.

### Vaivarnya or growing pale

Vaivarnya or growing pale due to fear, anger, love, etc. Bharatha suggests that this may be expressed by feeling the pulse and by "changing the color of the face". Vaivarnya is really a little difficult to simply enact. It is truly a satvika bhava in the sense it would require the dancer to empathize with the character sufficiently to actually go through a change in pallor.

### Ashru or tears

Ashru or tears is caused by sorrow, happiness, love and may be expressed by the act of wiping off tears.



Ashru or Tears

### Pralaya or fainting

Pralaya or fainting caused by sorrow or fear and maybe expressed by collapsing in the ground.

Bharatha says that a play in which satvika dominates over other forms of abhinaya is *uttama* or the highest kind, while a play in which it has the same status as other forms it is *madhyama* or middle level and while a play where it is subordinate, it is *adhama* or of the lowest kind. Abhinavagupta says "*sattve natyam prathishthitam*" – the drama is supported by *sattva* or the *satvika bhava-s*. So also in the case of Bharathanatyam, a dancer who is accomplished will rely more on *satvika abhinaya* which is the most subtle and effective of all *abhinaya*, and also the most difficult, requiring maturity and great artistry.

In the context of drama in a situation when the heroine is suddenly accosted by the hero, the *satvika abhinaya* would be in the form of *stambha* (stunned motionlessness) or *swarab-*

*hanga* (break in the voice). In the context of dance, *stambha* might be possible to emote but other *satvika bhava-s* such as break in the voice, fainting, etc. are not possible.

In the context of Bharathanatyam, *satvika abhinaya*, in fact, means more than involuntary expressions of emotional states; *satvika abhinaya* means more than the eight forms of expression enumerated by Bharata. Often, in common parlance, when we speak of *satvika abhinaya* permeating a dance performance, we mean not these eight forms of expression but that the dancer was able to infuse life and feeling into the performance imbuing it with a rare quality that makes possible the experience of *rasa* or aesthetic relish.

*Satvika abhinaya* is so called because it is performed through the *satvika bhava-s* or *bhava-s* that are real. It is one thing for the dancer to simply make the gestures and facial movements appropriate to love and another for the dancer to actually feel the emotion and portray it on stage. Bharatha says: "*manasah samadhau sattvanispattirbhavati*." When the mind has achieved one pointed concentration, *sattva* is produced.

When the dancer achieves oneness with the character she is portraying, *sattva* is produced and this is achieved only when there is a certain degree of concentration and control. This is the difference between *angika abhinaya* and *satvika abhinaya*. *Satvika abhinaya* also involves the body such as in trembling or shedding tears which are all movements of the body after all and so might be *angika* too, but *angika abhinaya* does not require the mental state that produces true emotions while *satvika* proceeds precisely from such a mental state. This is why *satvika abhinaya* cannot be expected from immature artistes. Indeed, in lesser dancers of *satvika abhinaya* might well remain at the level of *angika abhinaya*. A dancer actually shedding tears when expressing the grief of a bereaved mother or rejected *nayika*, is performing *satvika abhinaya*. And this does happen during performances by great dancers. The ability to bring off *satvika abhinaya* depends on the emotional

maturity, performance experience and creative imagination of the dancer. All this, along with the very important dimension of familiarity with the musical and literary traditions of Bharathanatyam, can bring about a lysis or dissolution of the dancer's self in the dance performance, a deep involvement, which alone demarcates the excellent from the mediocre.

Thus, satvika abhinaya really falls in the realm of artistic genius transcending the physical aspects of technique, choreography, production values, etc. One cannot quite describe what satvika abhinaya is, but one recognizes it when one sees it or experiences it in the performance of a great dancer. Satvika abhinaya expresses a condition of the psyche and its expression proceeds from the innermost recesses of the soul and pervades the whole body of the dancer, leading to aesthetic delight or rasa in the viewer.

The best description of satvika comes from a dancer who herself was the undisputed queen of abhinaya during her time and for all times, a dancer whose dance was permeated by satvika abhinaya - Smt. T. Balasaraswathi. In a poignant passage that captures the dancer's art including angika, vachika and satvika abhinaya and the viewer's experience of delight or rasa-aasvadana, she says<sup>2</sup>:

"The greatest blessing of Bharathanatyam is its ability to control the mind....in Bharathanatyam actions are not avoided (as in meditation); there is much to do but it is the harmony of various actions that results in the concentration we seek. The burden of action is forgotten in the pleasant charm of the art - The feet keeping to time, hands expressing gestures, the eye following the hand with expression, the ear listening to the music, and the dancer's own singing. By harmonizing these five elements, the mind achieves concentration and attains clarity in the very richness of participation. The inner feeling of the dancer is the sixth sense which harnesses these five mental and mechanical elements to create the experience and enjoyment of beauty. It is the spark which gives the dancer her

sense of spiritual freedom in the midst of the constraints and disciplines of the dance. The yogi achieves serenity through concentration that comes from discipline. The dancer brings together her feet, hands, eyes, ears and singing into a fusion which transforms the serenity of the yogi into a torrent of beauty. The spectator who is absorbed in watching this has his mind freed of distractions and feels a great sense of clarity. In their shared involvement, the dancer and the spectator are both released from the weight of worldly life and experience the divine joy of the art with a sense of total freedom."

### Questions

1. How many expressions under satvika abhinaya are listed in the Natyashastra? Name and explain them.
2. What would be the appropriate satvika abhinaya expressions while depicting krodha or anger?
3. When the satvika abhinaya of svedambu is depicted, what bhava is likely to be heightened?
4. Explain what the satvika bhava of romancha is.
5. When a mother shows her happiness at her son returning after a long time, the satvika bhava appropriate would be

1. Vaivarnya (losing pallor)
2. Svedambu (perspiration)
3. Ashru (tears)
6. Match the following satvika bhava-s with the situations

Seeing a snake	romancha (horripilation).
Being insulted	pralaya (fainting)
Hearing of a loved one's death	vaivarnya (going pale)
Cool breeze	vepathu (trembling)

## CHAPTER 2

### BHAVA

#### A Discussion of Emotions as Presented in Dance



A woman in love waiting in anticipation of her lover (sthayibhava of rati)

Bhava (pronounced as bhaava) is the basic raw material of abhinaya. Bhava means emotion, sentiment that is depicted in drama/dance. These, simply, are human emotions that all normal persons feel - emotions such as love, fear, anger, suspicion, longing and soon.

In ordinary situations, emotions and feelings interpenetrate each other. Rarely does one experience a single emotion without other emotions also coming into play. So, for example, in fear, one might also feel flashes of hope, or one might experience despair or suspicion. This has been recognized by Bharatha and he categorizes emotions into two types: the sthayi bhava-s or dominant emotions and vyabhichari bhava-s or ancillary ones which are fleeting - which come fleetingly and then disappear to nourish and sustain the dominant emotion.

Thus, in a Bharathanatyam piece of a varnam, in which the composition depicts the heroine as yearning for her Lord to come to her, the overarching emotion is that of love. But there will be other fleeting emotions of



The woman expressing some anxiety and mild suspicion about the delay in her lover's arrival (vyabhichari bhava-s).

suspicion, (maybe he is with another woman?) despair (oh, he may never come back to me) which draw from, and in turn nourish and sustain, the main emotion of love. These then are the two kinds of bhava-s. The main or dominant emotion - of love in this case - is called sthayi bhava while emotions that come and go (fleeting) like suspicion, despair which are dependent on the context of the dominant emotion (in this case of love) are sanchari or vyabhichari bhava-s.

Bhava, like all Sanskrit words, is derived from a root, in this case, the root Bhu, which means "to become". Bhava is so called because it (the emotion depicted in dance) leads to (bhu) a rasa arising out of various kinds of acting (angika, vachika etc.) Literally, then, the Bhava "becomes" rasa. In dance, the bhava or emotion of the character - say the nayika or the heroine in love - is portrayed with the use of various types of abhinaya and when this is skillfully and artistically done, it leads to the aesthetic relish which is rasa. Thus, bhava-s become (bhu) rasa.

#### Sthayi Bhava

The word "sthayi" means stable, enduring and sthayi bhava-s are identified as stable and dominant emotions or dispositions that are present in all of us, acquired as a result of experiences in our numerous past lives. All of us are capable of feeling love, anger, fear, etc. and so can empathize with their portrayal in art. Thus, even a person who has never been a mother, can empathize with such love when it is portrayed in dance as for instance in the famous padam *Krishna ni begane baaro*. This is possible because the sthayi bhava of love in all its varieties lies dormant in all of us. According to Bharatha, even if one may never experience motherhood in this birth, even such a person would have experienced it in some past life and it thus exists as vasana (latent impression) in a dormant form. This makes it possible for the person to empathize with, and relish, its portrayal in art.

There are eight sthayi bhava-s identified by Bharatha. Later, after Abhinavagupta, the famous Kashmiri commentator and aesthetician, nine sthayi bhava-s are recognized. The ninth is the bhava of shama which leads to the Shanta rasa. This is the concept of **navarasa** (nine rasa-s), a central concept in Indian aesthetics.

The Natyashastra lists eight sthayi bhava-s and has detailed instructions regarding how to enact them, who is capable of feeling them and so on. For instance, the emotions of love, valor are felt by noble heroes while fear, disgust and anger are supposed to be felt only by low characters.

According to Bharatha<sup>3</sup>, the sthayi bhava-s are

1. Rati or love, a feeling of pleasure. A traditional verse says: it is produced on achievement of desire. It is to be acted sweetly and gracefully. This leads to the experience of the Sringara rasa, a rasa that is immensely important in Bharathanatyam.

2. Hasya or laughter or the comic. A traditional verse says: it is produced when others and their actions are mimicked. It is expressed by smile, gentle laughter and a guffaw. It leads to the Hasya rasa.

3. Shoka or grief. This leads to the rasa of Karuna. This bhava is another important one for Bharathanatyam. It should not be confused with the emotion of love in separation or unrequited love which is termed vipralambha sringara where the lover is separated from the beloved. Here too the bhava would be rati or love and not grief, but love in separation. Shoka figures when, for instance, King Dasaratha has to send off his beloved son, Rama to the forest, or when Rati laments for her Lord, Madana, who is burnt to ashes by Lord Shiva's fury. The first is from the well known epic Ramayana while the second is one of the most celebrated passages from Kalidasa's Kumarasambhava.

4. Krodha or anger. Bharatha suggests different expressions of it depending on who is angry and with whom. If angry with an enemy, the expression is arched knitted brows, lips bitten, hands rubbed. When angry with one's servant on the other hand, the expression is by looking at him intensely without cruelty, with eyes widened and with gestures of threat and abuse. It leads to the Raudra rasa.



Anger provoked.

6. Bhaya or fear. This leads to the Bhayanaka rasa. It is to be acted by trembling of the body, by haste and confusion, with hands and legs trembling, and with distended eyes. This emotion is not appropriate in noble characters but only in inferior ones.

7. Jugupsa or disgust is to be acted by holding the nose, by cowering, by doubtfully looking about. This leads to the Bibhatsa rasa.

8. Vismaya or wonder leading the Adbhuta rasa. A job excellently done pleases and produces amazement at the fulfillment of the task so well.

The ninth sthayi bhava introduced by later theoreticians is Shama or spiritual quietude. This leads to the Shanta rasa or the rasa of mystical peace.



Fear

Thus the eight sthayi bhava-s lead to the eight rasa-s, as tabulated below:

STHAYI BHAVA	TRANSLATION	RASA
Rati	Love	Sringara
Hasya	Humour / the comic	Hasya
Shoka	Grief / pathos	Karuna
Krodha	Anger	Raudra
Utsaha	Valor	Veera
Bhaya	Fear / terrible	Bhayanaka
Jugupsa	Disgust	Bibhatsa
Vismaya	Wonder	Adbhuta
Shama	Tranquility / peace	Shanta

These eight (or nine) sthayi bhava-s are the basic material with which the dancer works. The dancer must express and bring out the chosen sthayi bhava effectively in order to bring about aesthetic relish (rasa) in the spectator. The Natyashastra details various techniques towards this end. In this depiction, the role of vyabhichari or sanchari bhava-s is very important.

### Vyabhichari Bhava-s or Sanchari Bhava-s

The word vyabhichara means deviation, going away from. Vyabhichari bhava-s are the transient moods or fleeting emotions in contrast to and leading to and strengthening the dominant emotion, that is, the Sthayibhava. They are deviations from the sthayi or dominant mood but ultimately go towards strengthening it in order to lead to rasa. For instance, feelings of anxiety, suspicion, etc. are fleeting emotions that are associated with the dominant emotion of Love. These then are sanchari

or vyabhichari bhava-s associated with the sthayi bhava of rati. Anxiety and suspicion are not dominant emotions in the way love, fear, anger etc. are. They do not stand on their own, but only in the context of a sthayi bhava.

According to Bharatha, there are 33 such vyabhichari or sanchari bhava-s which can be associated with the eight sthayi bhava-s.

What could be the reasons for distinguishing among emotions sthayi and vyabhichari? After all, the feeling of love is just another emotion like the feeling of jealousy. The first distinguishing feature is that sthayi bhava-s are dominant emotions while vyabhichari bhava-s are transient and fleeting emotions. The more important distinguishing feature, according to Bharatha, is the fact that it is only sthayi bhava-s that can achieve the status of rasa. It is only when sthayi bhava-s are effectively expressed on stage, that rasa is created. Rasa, the magical quality of the aesthetic experience, is the sthayi bhava transformed by the “alaukika” (unworldly) conditions of the stage.

The vyabhichari bhava-s are an important aspect of the portrayal of the sthayi bhava. Indeed, in explaining the relation between the sthayi and vyabhichari bhava-s, Bharatha says that vyabhichari bhava-s are like servants because their nature makes them dependent on sthayi bhava. A King, for example, becomes famous though he has a big retinue (to help him), even if some of the latter are big in themselves. Likewise, sthayi bhava alone achieves rasa, but with the assistance of the vyabhichari bhava-s.

A traditional verse<sup>4</sup> says : “A king is great among men; a teacher is great among his students; similarly a Sthayi Bhava is great among all bhava-s.

Bharatha lists 33 sanchari bhava-s<sup>5</sup>. While these have been enumerated in the context of drama, they are very well applicable to Bharathanatyam.



These transitory states are: Nirveda (detachment), Glani (weakness), Shanka (Apprehension), Asuya (envy), Mada (intoxication), Shrama (fatigue), Alasya (indolence), Dainya (depression), Chinta (anxiety), Moha (delusion), Smriti (recollection), Dhriti (contentment), Vrida (shame), Chapalata (agility), Harsha (joy), Avega (agitation), Jadata (stupor), Garva (arrogance), Vishada (despair), Autasukya (longing/yearning), Nidra (sleep/slumber), Apasmara (epilepsy), Supta (dream), Vibodh (awakening), Amarsha (indignation), Avahitha (dissimulation), Ugrata (violence), Mati (intellect), Vyadhi (disease), Unmada (insanity), Marana (death), Trasa (terror) and Vitarka (deliberation).

An explication of some of the more important and widely used vyabhichari bhava-s: Photo

1. Nirveda: depression. This can be the result of poverty, disease, insult, humiliation, abuse, censure, anger, separation from beloved ones, detection of unpleasant truth, etc. It is expressed by heaving sighs, hesitation, etc. with appropriate body and eye language. A traditional verse says: A dejected person sits in meditation, like a yogi, but with eyes full of tears and sighs with a pale face and vacant look. This bhava can be associated with both sthayi bhava-s of love and grief.



Nirveda, dejection

2. Sanka: suspicion. This is associated with both love and fear. When associated with fear, it is expressed by frequently glancing to and fro, covering the face, licking the lips, trembling, pale face, etc. When produced by the trick or deceit of a lover, it is to be acted to convey love.



Sanka, suspicion



Glani or languor

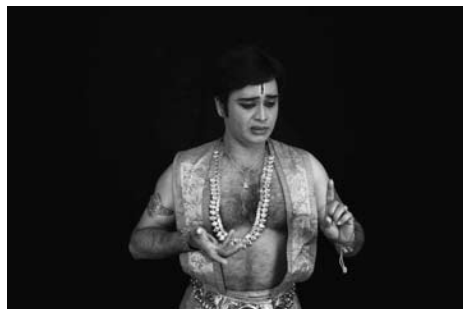
3. Glani: languor. This is produced by hurt, illness, austerity and old age and is expressed by weak sobbing, empty helpless looks and drooping limbs. This can be associated with grief, love.

4. Smriti: memory. It is remembrance of experiences happy and unhappy. "When a man recalls to his memory happy and unhappy experiences as they happened to him in the past, it is smriti". This smriti, due to seeing or hearing things, should be expressed by raising or shaking the head with raised eyebrows. This is frequently used in sringara as also in Raudra rasa.



Smriti, remembrance of things pleasant

5. **Autsukya**: yearning, uneasiness. It is caused by separation from beloved ones, repeated remembrance of it, sight of beautiful things and is expressed by deep sighs, downcast face, thoughtfulness and drowsiness, etc. It is also associated with the dominant emotion of love.



Smriti, remembrance of things unpleasant

6. **Trasa**: dread. It can be caused by lightning, rainstorm, roar of an animal, etc. and is expressed by cowering body, trembling, shaking, etc.



Trasa or dread

### Importance of Sanchari bhava-s

Although sanchari bhava-s are given a subordinate status among emotions, their portrayal is very necessary for the realization of rasa. According to Bharatha, rasa is achieved by the proper portrayal of sthayi bhava-s, and this crucially involves portrayal of sanchari bhava-s appropriate to the sthayi bhava that is being artistically presented. Appearing like waves in the ocean of sthayi bhava, these ancillary emotions (vyabhichari bhava-s) nourish the state of sthayi bhava.

Thus when the dancer or actor is trying to bring about sringara rasa by presenting the sthayi bhava of Love or rati with various techniques, it will not be enough for the dancer to simply express love in angika, vachika and satvika abhinaya. It is very important that sanchari bhava-s, which contrast the feeling of love and at the

same time feed it, are also portrayed - with the same devices of angika, vachika and satvika. Thus, the feelings of mild anger, despair, anxiety, listlessness, etc. will be depicted while portraying rati or love. This is true of contemporary Bharathanatyam.

### AUCITYA OR PROPRIETY IN THE USE OF VYABHICHARI BHAVA-S

The use of vyabhichari bhava-s while depicting any sthayi bhava with the intent of bringing about rasa-anubhava (experience of rasa), has to be governed by considerations of propriety. The classical sanskrit category of **aucitya** is very important here. The decision to use a particular vyabhichari bhava, the extent to which it is worked, etc. all can crucially assist or hamper the rasa-anubhava. While it is good, and even necessary, to bring in the vyabhichari bhava of say, despair while portraying rati or love, it will not help to overwork it. If that happens, then the rati will be lost sight of and instead of the vyabhichari bhava nourishing the sthayi it could actually hamper its realization. Due thought also needs to go into the decision to use or not use a particular vyabhichari bhava in a particular situation. The vyabhichari bhava of fatigue for instance might not be appropriate while depicting Veera rasa.

### Limitless Bhava-s

Bharatha himself says that there is no limit to bhava-s. He spoke of 8 sthayi bhava-s and 33 vyabhichari bhava-s, but there is no reason why one must limit oneself to that. Modern life with its many complications surely must give room for other situations but the basic emotions probably have been enumerated by Bharatha. It is equally possible that there are many more possibilities, many hues and colours of the myriad emotions that humans feel that can be effectively depicted in art. But, even if one may disagree with the lists and classifications of the

bhava-s dealt with by Bharatha, his work serves as a guide, a valuable guide, in understanding how the bhava-s interact with each other and how one may represent them in art.

### Sanchari in contemporary Bharathanatyam



Venugopala - the divine flute player

lifted the govardhana mountain (govardhanagiridhari), etc. This is called sanchari too.

While the technical meaning of sanchari bhava is as given above, in the context of Bharathanatyam the expression "sanchari bhava" is also derivatively applied to the exposition of the same line of the song in different ways. If the song has the heroine longing for Lord Krishna to come to her, she would depict Krishna in a myriad ways - as the cowherd (gopala), as one sporting the peacock feather on his head, as the bewitching flute player (muralidhara), beloved of the gopi-s (gopinayaka), one who



The one sporting a peacock feather on his head



The one who is the beloved of the gopi-s.



Oh! Where is he? - Vyabhichari bhava of autsukya

ing if He is with another woman (sanka). These are all various moods that can be depicted while bringing out the basic dominant emotion of love and are therefore called sanchari or vyabhichari bhava-s. Derivatively, this act of elaborating on a single line of the song in various ways is also called sanchari.



Isn't he coming yet? - Vyabhichari bhava of autsukya



Maybe he is with another woman?  
vyabhichari bhava of shanka



How sweetly he talked the last time he was  
with me - vyabhichari bhava of smriti



He is not going to come!  
Vyabhichari bava of nirveda

**Questions:**

1. What is bhava? Give instances of bhava from a day in ordinary life.
2. What are the differences between sthayi and vyabhichari bhava-s?
3. Take any abhinaya item you have learnt in your Bharathanatyam class and explain it in terms of sthayi and sanchari bhava-s.
4. Suppose you have to depict the emotion of fear, name any two vyabhichari bhava-s you could use.
5. Match the sthayi bhava-s with the rasa-s:-
 

Rati	raudra
Shoka	adbhuta
Vismaya	sringara
Krodha	karuna
6. Write a short note on aucitya.

**CHAPTER 3****VIBHAVA - ANUBHAVA****How emotion is presented****VIBHAVA - ANUBHAVA :**

We have seen that, according to the Natyashastra, drama (and derivatively dance) is concerned with portrayal of emotions. This is done by using the fourfold categories of angika, vachika, aharya and satvika. We have also introduced the idea that the effective portrayal of emotion leads to the aesthetic relish of rasa. All this applies derivatively to the abhinaya aspects of Bharathanatyam. We have also seen that there are two kinds of emotions - sthayi bhava (dominant emotion) and vyabhichari bhava (transient emotions). It is the portrayal of sthayi bhava-s with the help of the portrayal of vyabhichari bhava-s that leads to aesthetic relish or rasa. Now we are ready to see how the sthayi bhava-s and vyabhichari bhava-s are presented so that the viewer experiences rasa. How do we portray the feeling of anger or suspicion, etc.? What are the various elements in this portrayal? The Natyashastra's answer to this question is **vibhava** and **anubhava**.

Consider a scene from a typical Hindi or Tamil movie. The heroine is attending her best friend's marriage. She is gorgeously dressed and looks lovely. The hero is the groom's friend or maybe brother. When the two of them encounter each other, the setting is right for the depiction of love. Using technical jargon, we have just been introduced to the vibhava-s for love. When the hero and heroine are finally alone for a few minutes, the hero teasingly pulls at her dupattah or shawl while

she blushes and flutters her eyelids, smiles, giggles, tries to free herself and runs away with smiling backward glances. These are the anubhava-s for love.

The above is only one possibility, one way of depicting love. But whichever way is chosen, the recipe will need vibhava-s, or, those elements in the play or drama that cause or trigger the emotion of love, and anubhava-s, or, the external manifestations or expressions of the feeling of love in body and verbal expressions. These are the vibhava-s and anubhava-s respectively. They are two important indicators expressive of the sthayi bhava which can lead to the experience of rasa. The well known aphorism from the *Natyashastra*<sup>6</sup> says: “*vibhava-anubhava-vyabhichari -sanyogat -rasa-nispattih.*” When the vibhava, anubhava and vyabhichari bhava-s come together, rasa is produced.

## VIBHAVA

Literally vibhava is that which leads to a perception in a special way (vi - bhavayati), it is a cause. It is the cause of words, gestures and facial expressions (anubhava) which express emotions<sup>7</sup>. In ordinary parlance, vibhava means understood. Vibhava-s are the determinants or stimulants to the emotions. Just as in ordinary life situations, emotions are excited by certain stimulants, so also in dance, emotions are to be presented as being stimulated by external situations. To cite the standard example, the emotion of love is triggered by the sight of a lovely lady in sylvan surroundings of, say a lake, with a beautiful moon and soft breeze. These are the stimulants to the feeling of love. And these are called vibhava-s.

## Alambana and Uddipana Vibhava

Vibhava is so called because it “brings to knowledge in a special way”. Vibhava is often translated as determinant or cause. In the context of drama, while trying to depict love or rati for instance, a beautiful and sensuous woman would be a “cause” for the viewer’s perception that emotion of love is being

presented. The stock example given to elaborate this concept is the presence of Sita and Rama or any other such well known couple, which would be the vibhava-s or determinants of the feeling of rati or love. However, just the depiction of these characters would not absolutely determine the feeling since Rama and Sita could be together in a variety of situations, not just the romantic. Now, if additionally, the setting includes romantic elements like the moon, a garden, scented and cool air and so on, surely the viewer comes to know in a special way (vibhava) that the feeling of love is being presented. There are thus two kinds of vibhava-s. The primary determinants (in this case the characters Rama and Sita) and the secondary determinants (moonlight, soft breeze, etc.) The primary determinants, sometimes translated as excitants, are called **alambana vibhava** and the secondary determinants which strengthen the primary ones are called **uddipana vibhava**.

To take another example, if the emotion of fear has to be presented in a play, the alambana vibhava could be a terrible demon or cruel king. Just the presence of these would signify that the emotion of fear is here being presented. The uddipana vibhava-s could be the surroundings of terrible things such as weapons, angry and cruel attendants or servants and so on. These heighten the emotion of fear that would be evoked in the viewer.

## Vibhava-s in Bharathanatyam

In drama, vibhava-s are presented on the strength of just aharya abhinaya. The characters (alambana vibhava) would come in dressed as their part – Rama or Sita or demons etc. and the secondary causes (uddipana vibhava) can be included in the sets such as a beautiful garden, etc. In Bharathanatyam, there can be no presentation of characters by the use of aharya abhinaya and one has to rely on angika abhinaya mostly. Thus there are well known postures to indicate various characters. For instance, when the left hand is held up high on the side with the shikhara mudra and the right hand is held low with the kapit-

ta mudra, and the stance is sama or avahita, this immediately conveys that the character of Rama is being presented. Alambana vibhava-s are thus presented with the help of specific mudra-s and stances that are well known in dance technique.

Uddipana vibhava-s are again to be presented with angika abhinaya. So the dancer could indicate the presence of the moon, the garden and the beautiful breeze through appropriate angika abhinaya.



Depiction of Sri Rama which could be a vibhava for love or valour or compassion

Of course, vachika abhinaya could well figure in too. The song or musical composition could itself communicate the alambana (main characters) as well as the uddipana (the surrounding context) vibhava-s.

Satvika abhinaya too would play a role in the communication of the vibhava-s. While depicting a beautiful garden with cool breeze, the satvika bhava of romanca or horripilation (goose pimples), for instance could indicate the presence of a cool wind.



Depiction of goddess Lakshmi which could be a vibhava for bhakti sringara or compassion (karuna).

## ANUBHAVA-S

Anubhava-s are the expressions through word, gesture and facial movement of the feelings aroused by the vibhava-s. They are so called because they are accompanied by (anu) words, gestures and facial expressions. Thus, when we have the vibhava of a beautiful woman, dressed in finery and the settings of a lovely garden, full moon etc. which are the vibhava-s for love, the anubhava-s could be sidelong glances of the woman, sighs, longing looks etc. which communicate her restlessness. When the hero enters, he himself would be another alambana vibhava and the hero would express anubhava-s of tender words and gestures, smiles and so on which, together, can produce the rasa of sringara. In the case of fear, the anubhava-s would be widened eyes, trembling limbs, etc.

Thus vibhava-s are causes or determinants or stimulants of emotions while anubhava-s are manifestations of these emotions through facial, bodily and verbal expression.

Of course, the vyabhichari bhava-s have an important role in the communication of rasa. Vyabhichari bhava-s too are expressed with the help of vibhava-s and anubhava-s.

Bharatha<sup>8</sup> says vibhava and anubhava are in accordance with well known practices of the world; they are what are established in everyone's experience. They are drawn from everyday experience. Thus one knows what can cause fear in a man (vibhava) and how a man in fear (anubhava) behaves. For example, anyone will respond with fear when a sudden noise is heard (vibhava) and there are well known ways this fear manifests itself - by a sudden jerk of the body, widened eyes and open mouth, colour fleeing the face, etc. These are precisely to be drawn upon while depicting the various bhava-s in drama and dance.

Some common vibhava-s and anubhava-s in Bharathanatyam



### Some commonly occurring vibhava-s are



The call of the cuckoo as a vibhava for love

be the alambana vibhava, while uddipana vibhava-s would be making a garland, the moonlight, the cool breeze, the call of the cuckoo bird, etc.



Wearing the tilak



Wearing jewellery of the ears



Making a garland of flowers to welcome her love



Nayika adorning herself with flowers in the hair

1. Beautiful woman or handsome man: vibhava for rati or love (sringara). This vibhava is depicted in most varnams when the nayika or heroine is depicted as waiting for her beloved to come or is already in his company. This would

Anubhava-s would be sighs, anxious looks in case the heroine is waiting for the lover to come; the anubhava-s would be smiles and sidelong glances in case of sambhoga sringara.



Anubhava-s for love



Vibhava, anubhavas for Baby Krishna

2. Young, mischievous child such as the child Krishna: vibhava for vatsalya sringara or love of mother for child. The very famous padam Krishna nee begane baaro in the raga Yamuna Kalyani is a good example of portrayal of this form of sringara. Krishna himself would be the alambana vibhava and his cute dress, anklets, his bells, and the peacock feather as well as his pranks are the uddipana vibhava-s since they go to heighten the lovability of Krishna.

Anubhava-s would be Mother Yashoda hugging and kissing him, chiding him, feeding him, singing a lullaby to put him to sleep and so on.

3. Sight of someone dying or wounded: vibhava for shoka or grief (Karuna rasa). When Lakshmana is critically wounded during his battle with Indrajit, this would be a vibhava for shoka or Karuna rasa. Again when Sita is carried away and Rama has to suffer separation from her, it is a vibhava for Karuna rasa. Anubhava-s would be appropriate face expressions, stooping shoulders, tears, etc.

4. When someone is wronged, it would be a vibhava for Raudra rasa. A good example is the story of Parasurama, the avatara of Lord Vishnu. Parasurama's parents are wrongfully killed by a wicked king, Kaartaveerya Arjuna. This is a vibhava for Raudra. As the story goes, Parasurama responds in anger by killing the entire clan of kshatriyas or the ruling clan.

5. Sight of terrible rakshashas or someone out to kill an innocent thing would be a vibhava for Bhayanaka.

Vibhava need not always be some persons. Even a natural or man-made phenomenon can trigger emotions. Thunder and lightning could be vibhava-s for fear. Poverty or disease can also be a vibhava for sorrow and so on.

Not only the sthayi bhava-s but also the vyabhichari bhava-s need to be depicted by appropriate vibhava-s and anubhava-s. The vibhava-anubhava-s associated with some of the vyabhichari bhava-s are given below:-

### 1. Nirveda or depression

Its vibhava-s or causes are: poverty, disease, insult, separation from dear ones, etc.

Its expression (anubhava-s) is through crying, sighing.

### 2. Asuya or jealousy

Its vibhava-s are good luck, glory, success of others.

Its anubhava-s are proclaiming others' faults, contempt and ridicule.

### 3. Alasya or indolence

Its vibhava-s are depression, illness, satiety.

Its anubhava-s are aversion to all activities, lying on bed, aversion to food, discontinuing work on hand.

### 4. Moha or fainting

Its vibhava-s are bad luck, calamity, excitement, shocking news.

Its anubhava-s are giddiness, falling to the ground, head spinning, etc.

### 5. Capalata or lack of stability or being stressed out

Its vibhava-s are attachment, envy, intolerance, etc.

Its anubhava-s are harsh words, loud condemnation, beating, killing, etc.

### 6. Avega or agitation, excitement

The vibhava-s are portents of storm and thunder, fire, elephant running amuck, bad news, natural calamities, etc.

The anubhava-s are physically collapsing, uneasiness, pallor, etc.



**7. Jadata or sloth**

The vibhava-s are hearing or seeing things one does not like, illness, etc.

The anubhava-s are silence, staring unwinkingly, not doing anything, etc.

**8. Garva or pride**

Its vibhava-s are another's prosperity, good looks, youth, learning, monetary gain, etc. which can be a reason for jealousy.

Its anubhava-s are contempt for others, argumentativeness, not replying, looking into the mirror to admire oneself, contemptuous laughter, rude words, disrespect towards elders, etc.

Having explained vibhava, anubhava, vyabhichari bhava-s as well as satvika bhava, we are now ready to explain the all important concept of rasa.

**Questions:**

1. What does the word vibhava mean? What is its role in dance?
2. Give two vibhava-s for the emotion of fury or Krodha.
3. What is anubhava?
4. Suggest two anubhava-s for the feeling of grief.
5. In the sabdam you have learnt, analyze any one part of it in terms of vibhava-s and anubhava-s.
6. Consider the following situation. The dancer is depicting a dark forest and eerie noises.
  - These would be the vibhava-s for the emotion of \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - Describe any two anubhava-s that would be appropriate in the above context.

**CHAPTER 4****RASA : Aesthetic Delight**

Rasa is one of the central concepts in Indian art and aesthetics. It was first articulated in the Natyashastra in the context of drama and soon became widely used and applied in other forms of art such as literature, painting, sculpture, music, and dance. The discipline of Alankarashastra, which concerns itself with literary criticism and with other fundamental discussions on the essence of literature, contains much philosophical discourse on the nature of rasa.

Rasa is, according to Bharatha, the ultimate meaning of natya. Without rasa, there is no meaning to drama - "na hi rasadrite kashcid arthah pravartate<sup>9</sup>."

What is rasa? Imagine that you are watching a monster movie or tragedy of the Romeo and Juliet type. You are definitely scared or moved. Your hair might stand on its ends or you might shed copious tears at the star crossed lovers' fate. But, is the fear or grief you are feeling the same as if you were really in that situation? Most people would say "no". The same could be said of the erotic feeling you get when watching a romantic movie -- it is not quite the same as when you are alone together with your loved one. The feeling of love or fear or grief is transformed in art, whether drama, or in a Bharathanatyam padam or in a novel or film. It is this transformed feeling or emotion that is experienced by the viewer/reader that is called rasa.

Rasa, as the word itself suggests, is something that is relished. The word rasa means juice or flavor which is to be tasted and relished. So, even the emotion of grief when presented in dance or drama, is relished. In the West, Aristotle was one of the first to pose the question of how tragedy is able to please. His question was how is it possible to feel pleasure while watching a tragic play. Natyashastra would answer this by saying that while grief itself is not pleasurable, the portrayal of grief in art such as in dance or drama or painting pleases, because it is the rasa which we relish. The emotion of grief is aesthetically transformed into the rasa of Karuna.

## What is Rasa?

The Natyashastra has this much quoted aphorism on rasa: *“vibhava-anubhava-vyabhichari-sanyogaat-rasanispattih.”* Rasa is produced as the cumulative result of vibhava (stimulant), anubhava (reaction) and vyabhichari bhava (transient emotion).

Interestingly, the analogy given by Bharatha<sup>10</sup> to explain the concept of rasa is a culinary one. Following are two passages from the Natyashastra comparing aesthetic relish (rasa) with the enjoyment of a well prepared dish:-

“Just as when various condiments and sauces and herbs and other materials are mixed, a taste (different from the individual tastes of the components) is felt, or when the mixing of materials like molasses with other materials produces six kinds of tastes, so also along with the different bhava-s, the Sthayi bhava attains the state of rasa (rasa, flavour, feeling).

But what is this thing called rasa? It is enjoyably tasted and so is called rasa. How does the enjoyment come? People who eat cooked food mixed with different condiments and sauces, etc., if they are sensitive, enjoy the different tastes and then

feel pleasure or satisfaction; likewise, sensitive spectators, after enjoying the various emotions expressed by the actors through words, gestures and feelings, feel pleasure, etc. This final feeling by the spectators is here explained as the various rasa-s of natya. Those who are connoisseurs of tastes enjoy the taste of food prepared from (or containing) different materials; likewise, the intelligent, healthy persons enjoy various sthayi bhava-s related to (i.e. expressed by) the acting of emotions.”

On witnessing a well produced and well-enacted play, one experiences a pleasure which according to Bharatha is analogous to the feeling of pleasure after eating a well prepared dish. In the preparation of the dish, various kinds of ingredients and cooking processes are used just as in the play various characters, emotions and situations are woven together. A gourmet, as distinguished from a glutton, relishes the various tastes that come together to create the final flavour of the food, so also a sensitive viewer relishes the various emotions and their interplay portrayed on stage and this culminates in the experience of rasa.

## RASA BHANGA

Just as in preparing a dish, an ingredient which is used a tad too much or too little can spoil the taste of the dish, so also in the depiction of a bhava in dance, if any of the aspects of the presentation is over used or underutilized, then there will be rasa bhang or a disruption of the aesthetic experience. Thus, in depicting the emotion of love, various vibhava-s, anubhava-s and vyabhichari bhava-s all have their roles to play. The selection and treatment of these depends on the artiste, the playwright or the choreographer. If, for instance, the vyabhichari bhava-s of suspicion or depression (which actually are appropriate in the context of love) are overdone, then instead of the rasa of sringara being experienced, the whole effort could well get sidetracked into something incoherent. Thus aucitya or appropriateness is the main aesthetic challenge here.

In the case of Bharathanatyam, anaucitya or lack of propriety can assume many forms. Beginning from the stage décor, costume of the dancer, the music which could be too loud or too soft, down to the actual choreography and the execution of it by the dancer, everything needs to be carefully looked into and taken care of. A slip up in any of these can cause the viewer to carry back not the best experience.

### Sahrudaya

This is an important concept closely tied up with rasa. Sahrudaya is samaana hrudaya or “one whose heart is similar (to that of the artiste)”. This is the sympathetic viewer. Unless the viewer is sympathetic and sensitive, no art process culminates in rasa.

### Eight rasa-s of Natyashastra

The Natyashastra<sup>11</sup> lists eight rasa-s with the ninth rasa being added later on.

The eight rasa-s are:

1. **Sringara**, which springs from the sthayi bhava or basic emotion of rati or love
2. **Hasya**, which is born from the sthayi bhava of hasya or humour
3. **Karuna**, from the sthayi bhava of shoka or grief or pathos
4. **Raudra**, from the sthayi bhava of krodha or anger
5. **Veera**, from the sthayi bhava of utsaha or valor
6. **Bhayanaka**, from the sthayi bhava of bhaya or fear
7. **Bibhatsa**, from the sthayi bhava of jugupsa or disgust
8. **Adbhuta**, from the sthayi bhava of vismaya or wonder.

The ninth rasa, added later on by Abhinavagupta is the Shanta rasa which springs from the sthayi bhava of sama or quietude or peace.

Let us see what the Natyashastra<sup>12</sup> has to say about each of the rasa-s in detail, who can depict them, how they are to be depicted, what the vibhava, anubhava and vyabhichari bhava-s appropriate to each rasa are.

### Sringara rasa

Sringara means love and beauty. This is the emotion used to represent that which appeals to the human mind, that which one finds beautiful, that which evokes love. This is indeed the queen among all rasa-s and the one that finds the most frequent portrayal in art. It can be used for the love between friends, the



Sringara

love between a mother and her child, the love for god or the love between a teacher and his disciples. But the Sringara or love between a man and a woman is easily the most popular form of this rasa. In Bharathanatyam, often it is love for the Deity of a

great temple such as Nataraja of Chidambaram or Lord Krishna, and so on. Rich imagery is associated with this love. The sweet anticipation of a woman as she waits for her lover is as much Sringara as the passion she feels for her first love, a passion that so heightens her sensitivity that even the moonbeams scorch her skin. The love of Yashoda for baby Krishna is also Sringara.

Let us see what the Natyashastra has to say about it.

This is based on the sthayi bhava of rati or love. In ordinary language, whatever is pure, holy and resplendent is referred to as sringara (as in the phrase bedeck oneself with). In many Indian languages, the act of decorating and adorning oneself (especially by women) is described as sringara.

Sringara is appropriate in the case of men and women of healthy youth. It is of two kinds: sambhoga (fulfillment) and Vipralambha (non-fulfillment or separation). The two kinds are often referred to in Bharathanatyam as love in union and love in separation.

Sambhoga sringara is stimulated by the spring season, garlands, scent and other anointments, and ornaments; by listening to or gazing at the lover; delightful music, beautiful gardens, etc. These are the vibhava-s for sambhoga sringara.

It is worth noting that all these still survive in contemporary Bharathanatyam abhinaya. When the dancer depicts the nayika as waiting in anticipation for the lover to arrive, she shows it by weaving garlands, applying anointments, jewelry, adorning herself etc.

Sambhoga sringara must be expressed by loving looks, arching eyebrows, side glances, graceful steps and gestures as anubhava-s.

As for vyabhichari bhava-s that would be appropriate, leaving aside laziness, disgust and cruelty, all the 33 can be used.

A traditional verse says:-

Sringara rasa is produced by seasonal flowers and ornaments, by enjoying the company of beloved persons, music and poetry and by diversions like going to a garden. This should be acted by graceful looks and words and sweet speeches and smiles and by pleasing and attractive gestures."

In the case of Vipralambha sringara, or love in separation, the vyabhichari bhava-s would be dejection, fatigue, suspicion, jealousy, anxiety, impatience, sleepiness, dreaminess, lassitude, forgetfulness, etc. Vipralambha sringara has to be distinguished from Karuna or the rasa of pathos or grief. Karuna involves disinterestedness or indifference consequent to curses, misery, separation from loved ones with no hope of union, loss of wealth, death of loved ones and so on. In Vipralambha, on the other hand, there is interest or hope despite impatience, anxiety, etc.

The Natyashastra contains elaborate instructions regarding the gait of characters while depicting sringara rasa.

While depicting sringara, the gait or chari should be easy and graceful. The lover must enter, the female messenger showing the way. He should show his understanding of the message by appropriate gestures.

The lover must wear attractive garments, jewelry and garlands. He should walk slowly in graceful steps in the atikranta chari. His hands should always follow his feet, hand rising when the foot is stepping.

The gait (chari) of one in secret love will be different. The lover should wear only a few ornaments and clothes as suited to the occasion and with drooping limbs, he should walk in slow and silent steps in the company of the female messenger. He should act as if fearful of any sound, constantly in expectation; body trembling, he must have a faltering gait because of anxiety.

## Hasya rasa

Hasya rasa is associated with joy or mirth. It can be found in the depiction of simple lightheartedness or riotous laughter and everything in between. Teasing and laughing with a friend, being amused and carefree or simply feeling frivolous and naughty



Hasya

-- these are all facets of Hasya. Lord Krishna's childhood, filled with pranks, is one of the common sources of Hasya in all ancient Indian art forms. Clearly, where there is Hasya, all is well with the world, there is joy all around and all are of good cheer. There is also the lower or baser kind of humour - laughter at another's disfigurement or clumsiness or speech defects which too can be a source of Hasya.

Let us see what Bharatha has to say about this:-

Humour (Hasya) is the sthayi bhava of Hasya rasa. It is stimulated by vibhava-s such as disfigurement of dress, decoration, impudence, greed, incoherent speech, deformed appearance, mistakes, etc. It is expressed by anubhava-s like expanded (or blown) lips, nose, cheeks and wide staring and contracted eyes, holding one's sides, etc. Vyabhichari bhava-s are lassitude, laziness, sleep, etc. A traditional verse says:

"With the wrong kind of ornaments, with abnormal behaviour, with distorted speech, and with strange costumes and disfigured gestures, when one laughs, it is Hasya rasa." There are listed six varieties of laughter:-

1. smita or gentle laughter: the smita of high characters is expressed by slightly puffed cheeks, by graceful glances and without showing the teeth

2. hasita or laughter: when the face and eyes are full blown, the cheeks puffed and the teeth slightly showing, it is normal laughter (hasita) of the high characters

3. vihasita or broad smile: the characteristics of vihasita of the middle characters are contracted eyes, gentle but slightly loud laughter and face gradually reddening

4. upahasita or satirical laughter: When the nostrils are distended and when the eyes look with a squint and when the shoulders and head are bent, it is upahasita (satirical laughter) of the middle characters

5. apahasita or silly laughter: The apahasita (silly laughter) of the lower characters is laughing in the wrong context with tears in the eyes and head and shoulders shaking

6. atihasyita or loud laughter: And finally, tears flowing from the eyes, voice loud and screeching and sides firmly clasped are signs of the atihasyita.

The first two types are appropriate to high characters while the last two are appropriate to low characters.

In Bharathanatyam, depiction of the childhood pranks of Krishna would be instances of Hasya. Krishna stealing the clothes of the gopi-s and their mortification, Krishna throwing stones at the post of gopi-s drenching them with the milk or water they were carrying on their heads, are all instances of Hasya. Another commonly portrayed theme for Hasya is the Sita swayamvara where all the kings try their might at lifting Lord Siva's bow and miserably fail. The pathetic display of the Kings is often portrayed to evoke Hasya.

### Karuna rasa

Karuna is grief and compassion. The feelings of unspeakable tragedy and despair, utter hopelessness and heartbreak, the sorrow caused by parting with a lover, the anguish caused by the death of a loved one are all Karuna. So also, the compassion and empathy aroused by seeing someone wretched



and afflicted is Karuna. The sympathy and fellow-feeling that sorrow engenders in the viewer is also Karuna. Karuna can be of a personal nature as when one finds oneself depressed, melancholy and distressed. More impersonal sorrows relate to the despair regarding the human condition in general, the feeling that all human life is grief and suffering. It is Karuna of this sort that spurred the Buddha on the path to salvation.



Karuna

Let us see what Bharatha has to say about this:

Its sthayi bhava is shoka or grief. The vibhava-s or stimulants for this would be curse, pain, calamity, separation from beloved ones, loss of wealth, imprisonment, etc. The anubhava-s would be shedding tears, pallor, losing color of face, drooping limbs, sighs, absentmindedness, etc. The vyabhichari bhava-s here would be disgust, exhaustion, anxiety, impatience, excitement, delusion, confusion, fear, regret, helplessness, forgetfulness, laziness, feeling stunned, breaking down, etc.

Two traditional verses in this connection are:

“Karuna rasa is produced by seeing near and dear ones die or killed and by hearing unpleasant things. It is to be acted by weeping, fainting, lamenting, and crying loudly and also by physical fatigue and hurt.”

Gait (chari) in Karuna rasa should be slow with eyes blinded by tears and limbs drooping, hands thrown up and down. This is in case of low and middle characters. In high or noble characters, gait must be slow but steady, tearful, heaving deep sighs and looking upwards.

## Raudra rasa

Raudra is anger and all its forms. The self-righteous wrath of kings, outrage over audacious behavior and disobedience, the fury caused by an offence, the rage evoked by disrespect and anger over injustice are all forms of Raudra. It is probably the most violent of rasa-s, Raudra also encompasses divine fury and the fury of nature which is used to explain unexpected calamities and natural disasters. In Indian mythology, Lord Shiva as



Raudra

destroyer and Lord Vishnu in his Narasimha and Parasurama avatars, the sages Viswamitra and Durvasa are all prone to anger and they are associated with the Raudra rasa.

The Natyashastra has this to say about the rasa:

Its sthayi bhava is krodha or anger. This emotion is naturally connected with evil spirits, rakshasha-s, people of violent temper, etc. Its vibhava-s are anger, boldness, censure, abuse, insults, lies, provocation, harsh words, cruelty, spite, etc. It is expressed by actions such as beating, cutting, inflicting pain, striking, attacking with weapons, shedding blood, dragging, etc. Other anubhava-s are widened eyes, knitted eyebrows, gnashing teeth, biting lips, puffing up the cheeks, rubbing the palms, etc. The related vyabhichari bhava-s are cold blooded

ness, animal energy, excitement, intolerance, fickleness, cruelty, vanity, trembling (with anger), sweating, stammering (due to anger-incoherence).

The gait (chari) prescribed for this: while depicting the anger of terrible characters like rakshasha-s, walk with feet raised high and spread far apart. In contemporary Bharathanatyam, this gait is actually employed to depict rakshasa-s. It is also employed to depict the Narasimha avatara.

### Veera rasa

Veera is heroism. It represents bravery and self-confidence. Manliness and valour are the trademarks of a Veera or a fearless person. Courage and intrepidity in the face of daunting odds is heroism. Boldness in battle, the attitude with which Soldiers go to war, and the valour with which they fight and die are all aspects of heroism. Rama, the hero of the epic Ramayana, is typically the model for this rasa. His confidence



Veera

and heroism while facing the mighty ten-headed demon king Ravana are part of Indian legend, folklore and mythology. A somewhat different type of heroism is displayed by characters like Abhimanyu, who went to war knowing fully that he would be severely outnumbered and almost certainly die and yet fought so bravely as to earn accolades even from his enemies.

The Natyashastra says on this:

The heroic or utsaha sthayi bhava is associated with brave and noble characters. The vibhava-s or stimulants for this are courage, determination, chivalry, justice, strength, bravery, brilliance, readiness to sacrifice, absence of distress, fortitude, etc. All noble and high characters display such characteristics. It is expressed by fearlessness, steadfastness, skill (in war), large-heartedness, etc. Its vyabhichari-s are understanding, self command, self confidence, excitement, intelligence, memory, etc.

“Veera rasa is produced by an energetic, determined and unrelenting nature which is neither taken by surprise nor by confusion. It is to be well acted by challenging words, and by deeds showing courage, boldness, bravery, and self confidence.”

The chari or gait prescribed for this is parsvakrantha and sucividdha, steps should be quick and vigorous.

### Bhayanaka rasa

Bhaya is fear. The subtle and nameless anxiety caused by a presentiment of evil, the feelings of helplessness evoked by a mighty and cruel ruler, and the terror felt while facing certain death are all aspects of bhaya. The fear for one's well being and safety is supposed to be the most primitive feeling known to man. Bhaya is the feeling evoked while facing something that is far bigger and more powerful than oneself which threatens one's well being. Bhaya is the feeling of being overwhelmed and helpless. Dread, cowardice, agitation, discomposure, panic and timidity are all aspects of the emotion of fear.



Bhayanaka

The Natyashastra has this to say:

Fear is the sthayi bhava here. Its vibhava-s are crimes committed against kings and preceptors (when one commits a crime one is afraid of the consequences), wandering through dark forests, empty houses, darkness, movements of owls and jackals, seeing and hearing rakshasha-s and other fearful creatures. Its anubhava-s are trembling of hands and legs, parched mouth, licking the mouth, perspiration, flight, loud lamentation, wide opened eyes, or eyes flitting to and fro, loss of colour of the face, break in the voice, etc. Its vyabhichari bhava-s are being stupefied, sweating, stammering, pallor, confusion, fear, loss of memory, etc.

Bhayanaka is natural in low characters and also found in middle (neither low nor high and noble) characters. It can also be found in high characters but has to be enacted with restraint in that case. The anubhava-s would be hand and legs trembling, cowering body, mouth parched only. In low characters it will be expressed by loud lamentation, wide eyes or with eyes flitting here and there also. Low and middle characters, lacking in spirit, must open wide their eyes, should look this side and that with trembling body and quick steps, they should walk with hands in the kapota gesture. When the character hears a strange noise or sees a strange animal, they should depict fear by executing the aksipta chari. The feet should walk in quick steps in edakakridita chari, now near to and now far from each other. The hands must follow the feet.



Bibhatsa

### Bibhatsa rasa

Bibhatsa is disgust. The emotion evoked by anything that nauseates us, that revolts or sickens us is Bibhatsa. When something comes to our notice that is coarse

and graceless, beneath human dignity, something which revolts or sickens us it is Bibhatsa that we feel. When Prince Siddhartha, as a young nobleman, saw for the first time sickness, old age and death, he was moved to disgust which later metamorphosed into sorrow, deep introspection and peace, as he transformed into Gautama, the Buddha -- or the Enlightened one. Not surprisingly, this emotion is usually represented fleetingly in dance.



Bibhatsa

Disgust (jugupsa) is the sthayi bhava here. Its vibhava-s are seeing or hearing undesirable things, ugly and evil things. Its anubhava-s are withdrawing the body, leering, spitting, by holding the nose, etc. The vyabhichari bhava-s are loss of memory, agitation, excitement, confusion, sickness etc.

The gait prescribed for depicting Bibhatsa is as follows: when something disgusting such as a cremation ground or battlefield with corpses strewn around is seen, the steps would be close to each other, sometimes in quick succession, sometimes wide apart, as if avoiding stepping on objects, with the feet in edakakridita chari. The hands should accompany the feet.

### Adbhuta rasa

Adbhuta is wonder and curiosity and vismaya is the sthayi bhava. In the Sanskrit tradition, the poet or the artiste is said to experience wonder when he views his own work. "What is this that I have created?" is the awesome feeling they are said to experience. When Sri Krishna reveals his Vishwarupa (cosmic form) to Arjuna, it is vismaya that Arjuna experiences. The awe that one feels when one comes across something divine and supernatural, some power or beauty that is remarkable and





Adbhuta

never seen or imagined before is Adbhuta. Adbhuta is the curiosity of man regarding the creation of the world and all its wonders, the astonishment caused by seeing something unusual and magical. The appreciation of a marvel that goes beyond the routine and the mundane is Adbhuta. The glory of a king returning from a successful battle and the magical feats of a God are both Adbhuta to a common man. Adbhuta is when divinity makes a surprise appearance in the world of earthlings.

The Natyashastra has this to say: Surprise or vismaya is the sthaya bhava of Adbhuta rasa. It is stimulated by (vibhava-s) sight of divine persons, by the sudden achievement of whatever is desired, etc. Its anubhava-s are distended eyes, unwinking steady glances, thrill, tears and word of appreciation. The vyabhichari bhava-s are being stunned, shedding tears, stammering, excitement, etc. "Whatever act or deed or appearance is out of the ordinary should be considered as the stimulus of the Adbhuta rasa. It is to be acted by crying, praising, trembling, stammering, etc."

### Shanta rasa and Navarasa-s

After Bharatha, there were a few attempts to add other rasa-s to the eight enumerated by him. Some proposed that bhakti (devotion) is an independent rasa but these and others did not find widespread acceptance. However, Shanta rasa has found such acceptance. Thus, we talk of navarasa (nine rasa-s) and not ashtarasa (eight rasa-s).

Shanta rasa: Shanta is peace, tranquility. This has shama or quietude for its sthaya bhava, penance and contact with Yogis

(hermits) are vibhava-s. There are many who argue that Shanta rasa is not a rasa at all since it cannot be depicted in dance or drama. Shanta is the absence of all other emotion it is a stillness that cannot be portrayed in abhinaya. It is a state of inaction.



Shanta

Abhinaya is not possible without movements. But the feeling of tranquility or mystic peace is such a vital aspect of Indian culture that it will not do to leave it out of the ambit of art. And as a matter of fact, dancers have depicted the life of the Buddha which evokes the Shanta rasa.

### A Summary

Summing up, the Natyashastra has this to say of the logic of emotions and their artistic presentation with the aim of evoking rasa:-

1. There is a specific number of emotions - sthayi and sanchari bhava-s.
2. Some emotions are permanent (sthayi bhava), irreducible mental states, while others are transient and dependent (sanchari/vyabhichari).
3. Emotions are caused by their objects (vibhava), manifested by their expressions (anubhava), and nourished by other ancillary feelings (vyabhichari bhava).
4. A dramatic composition (derivatively a dance piece) is an organization of various emotions, dominant and subsidiary, but it invariably subordinates the weaker ones to a dominant expression.
5. Emotions are brought together not indiscriminately, but according to a logic of congruity and propriety (aucitya).
6. Emotions are manifested in drama by a combination of situational factors. In drama, this can include event, character, language, lighting, costume, gesture, music, etc. In dance it is by depiction of vibhava-s, anubhava-s and vyabhichari bhava-s.

Thus, each rasa is associated with a sthayi bhava and vyabhichari bhava-s which when depicted with appropriate vibhava-s, anubhava-s and satvika bhava-s lead to the aesthetic experience. There is also a traditional association of each rasa with a particular deity and a particular colour. There may be some psychological basis to these associations.

### Following are two tables

1. The first is a table of rasa, and the corresponding bhava-s, vibhava, anubhava and satvika bhava.

2. The second is a table of the colour and deity that each rasa is associated with. This is a theme occurring in the Natya-shastra.

**Table 1**

Rasa	Sthayi bhava	Vyabhichari bhava-s	Vibhava-s – stimulants	Anubhava-s - expression	Satvika bhava-s
Sringara (love)	Rati (love)	Depression, anxiety, suspicion, joy, forgetfulness etc.	Beautiful things, young woman, man, lovely surroundings	Smiles, glances, sighs	Horripilation, trembling, pallor
Hasya (humour)	Hasya	Laziness, sleepiness	Inappropriate dress, speech, mistakes, greed, uncouth appearance, etc.	Laughter, blown lips, cheeks, eyes wide, holding one's side	Tears
Karuna (pathos/grief)	Shoka	Disgust, exhaustion, anxiety, impatience, delusion, confusion	separation from dear ones, loss of wealth, death, injury	Weeping, lamenting, fainting	Fainting

Raudra (anger)	Krodha	Excite- ment, cruelty, vanity	Battle- front, Harsh words, fights, inflicting pain	Gnashed teeth, wid- ened eyes, biting lips, etc.	Trem- bling, sweating
Veera (valour)	Utsaha	Self pos- session, determi- nation, memory, etc.	Courage, chivalry, sacrifice, bravery	Fearless- ness, steadfast- ness	
Bhayana- ka (fear)	Bhaya	Being stupefied, stam- mering, confusion, loss of memory	Seeing/ hearing strange things, empty houses, dark for- ests	Limbs trembling, eyes flit- ting to and fro, face losing colour.	Fainting, trembling, sweating
Bibhatsa (disgust)	Jugupsa	Agitation, loss of memory, confusion	Seeing, hearing unpleasant things	Leering, spitting, holding the nose, withdraw- ing the body	Fainting
Adbhuta (wonder)	Vismaya	Being stunned, excite- ment	Sight of divine persons, wonderful creations of man and nature	Unblink- ing wide opened eyes, lifting arms in praise and wonder	Tears, stammer- ing, pallor

Table 2

Name of Rasa	Deity associated	Colour associated
Sringara	Vishnu	Dark brown
Hasya	Pramatha	White
Karuna	Yama	Indian Rock dove
Raudra	Rudra	Red
Bhayanaka	Kala	Black
Veera	Indra	Golden
Bibhatsa	Mahakal	Blue
Adbhuta	Gandharva	Yellow
Shanta	Narayana	White like kunda flower

### Sringara as the mainstay of Bharathanatyam

The theory of navarasa is very important in the performance and appreciation of Bharathanatyam. Even though the dancer has to engage with the nine rasa-s, it is also true that of all the nine rasa-s, sringara or the emotion of love and its portrayal are the mainstay of Bharathanatyam. Bharathanatyam celebrates sringara in the way very few art forms do. Smt. T. Bala-sarawathi, in well known article has argued poignantly for the centrality of sringara in Bharathanatyam. She says sringara is the cardinal emotion which gives fullest scope for artistic improvisation, branching off continuously into the portrayal of innumerable moods full of newness and nuances. Indeed, if we take a careful look at the sanchari bhava-s and satvika bhava-s, we find that most of them are associated with the sentiment of love. In the repertoire of Bharathanatyam, most, if not all, of the varnam-s, padam-s and javali-s and even sabdam-s are filled with the sthayi bhava of love which when effectively expressed leads to sringara rasa. Often it is bhakti sringara – love for a God like Krishna or Siva or Muruga. This is so especially in the varnam-s. Padam-s and javali-s portray love of a more secular

kind. Indeed it is difficult to put up a Bharathanatyam performance without sringara. It is the queen among bhava-s as far as Bharathanatyam is concerned.

Most of the songs and compositions in the traditional Bharathanatyam repertoire Among the traditional repertoire of songs and compositions most express love in its various forms. Love of man, of god, love for one's child, love that has achieved fulfillment, unrequited love, the desperate lover, the angry one, the jealous one, the patient one – every hue and colour of the sentiment of love has been explored in these songs which are expressed in very stylized language of gestures, body movement and facial expressions.

### IMPORTANCE OF RASA

Any art without rasa is incomplete. Dance without rasa will be purely a mechanical exercise of body motions and physical movements. When the dancer successfully conveys the message in the poem to the spectator and in the process spectator reciprocates with sensitivity, rasa is said to be created.

It is only when dance results in the evocation of rasa that it rises above the level of a mere physical exercise, and becomes a meaningful creative enterprise.

The main artistic challenge in the evocation of the rasa is the sensitive handling of the bhava-s, and use of appropriate vibhava-s and anubhava-s to represent the various bhava-s. Perhaps the most important aspect here is the appropriate use of sanchari bhava-s. The choreographer/dancer has to be conscious of the aucitya or propriety here and be careful not to overwork any sanchari bhava and at the same time has to employ them appropriately.

In the Indian traditions of spirituality and mysticism, rasanubhava is likened to experiencing spiritual bliss where the spectator transcends the ordinary level of experience of differences and merges into the unity of the aesthetic experience, forgetting his self.

### Questions :

1. Name the nine rasa-s.
2. How would you depict the rasa of wonder – describe appropriate vibhava-s, anubhava-s and the vyabhichari bhava-s that can be used in such a depiction.
3. Name two vyabhichari bhava-s that would not be appropriate to the depiction of love.
4. The two types of sringara are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Pick the right answer: while depicting a rakshashi's (demoness') laughter the type of laughter, appropriate would be:  
a) smita    b) atihasta    c) vihasita
6. Write a short note on a) rasa bhanga; b) interplay of sthayi and vyabhichari bhava-s in the creation of rasa with reference to any particular rasa.

## CHAPTER 5

### NAYAKA NAYIKA

The nayaka-nayika classification is a prominent motif that figures in Indian arts, especially after the medieval period. This categorizing of the hero (male protagonist) and heroine (female protagonist) into predominant types is a common theme that can be found in painting, literature, drama, music and dance.



Nayaka - nayika

The word “Nayaka” means one who leads and we can find this word appended to other words to indicate leader of a group. Thus, “Raghunayaka” (Raghu – nayaka) is Sri Rama since he is the leader of the Raghu clan; Gananayaka is Lord Ganesh

since he is the leader of the gana-s, the attendants of Lord Siva. “Nayika” in ordinary parlance is often used in the sense of wife or consort.

In the context of dance and other forms of art, these words are used to refer to the hero and the heroine, the main characters whose story is being told - whose love, or indifference,

whose passion or infidelity, anticipation in love or torment at separation, anger at deceit or pleas for reconciliation is being told. In Indian art, the musical forms of padam and javali, and some traditions of painting, notably miniature painting, have used



Radha Krishna, the archetypal nayaka - nayika

this theme extensively, portraying nayaka-s and nayika-s in their various moods. Another well known literary work that deals with the theme of nayaka nayika is the Geeta Govinda of the saint poet Jayadeva who has sung about the passionate love between Krishna and Radha in these songs called Ashtapadhi.

Nayaka-nayika are generic terms used to refer to the hero and heroine of songs or paintings depicting love. If, for example, there is a song which sings of the unfaithful lover, how would one refer to the woman singing it? The word nayika is used for this purpose. Again there are various traditions of painting, especially miniature painting, which depict women in various moods. The women in these instances are collectively referred to as nayika. Since many of these paintings depict Lord Krishna and the gopi-s, Radha is often the nayika in these paintings. Again in the songs of Jayadeva, the great Sanskrit poet of the 12th century whose songs depict the love of Krishna and Radha, Radha would be the nayika in most of these songs. Many songs also depict the state of mind of Krishna, the nayaka. In Bharathanatyam, the padam-s of Kshetrajna, the great Telugu poet, also explores the theme of nayaka-nayika. In this case too, Lord Krishna or Muvvagopala as he calls Him, is the nayaka.

It is worth mentioning that these types of man and woman are all in the context of sringara or love. The nayika classification is based on situation of the woman in love - 1. whether her

lover is with her or away from her, 2. whether her lover is faithful to her or not, 3. whether she is patient with her erring lover or not, 4. whether she is experienced in love or not, etc.

The classification of nayaka too is based on whether he is faithful to her or not, whether he loves with arrogance or with charm or with grace and dignity or with total infatuation etc.

## ASHTA NAYIKA

“An angel of truth and a dream of fiction,  
A woman is a bundle of contradiction,  
She’s afraid of a wasp, will scream at a mouse,  
But will tackle a stranger alone in the house.  
Sour as vinegar, sweet as a rose,  
She’ll kiss you one minute, then turn up her nose,  
She’ll win you in rage, enchant you in silk,  
She’ll be stronger than brandy, milder than milk,  
At times she’ll be vengeful, merry and sad,  
She’ll hate you like poison, and love you like mad”.

Anonymous

Every culture has glorified its women and celebrated various moods of women in story, song, poetry, and painting. What would art be if it were not for woman and her tantrums, woman and her love, woman and her jealousies? India too has celebrated this bottomless source of story and song.

The feminine finds a threefold division as devi (goddess), heroine (nayika) and ganika (courtesan). Thus, a nayika is not a goddess, but very much human but she is also not a courtesan for whom love is but mere business. A nayika is a woman, married or otherwise, who, within the prevailing norms of social interaction, finds vent for her love, either by violating those norms or by going along with them. Songs describing her mental state, her attitude, her actions, her desires and the reactions of others are found in abundance in the Bharathanatyam repertoire.

A classification of the nayika and her moods is found in the well known ashtanayika classification. Ashta is 8 and ashta nayika refers to eight types of nayika-s or women in love in relation to their lovers. These types portray the heroine in different situations.

## The Ashtanayika-s are

- Abhisarika
- Kalahantarita
- Khandita
- Proshitapathika
- Swadheenapathika
- Vasakasajjika
- Virahotkanthita
- Vipralabdha

**Abhisarika** - She is the nayika who boldly goes out to meet her lover. The abhisarika arranges a tryst (abhisara) with her lover at an appointed place, and goes there to rendezvous with him. She does not care for wagging tails and suspicious looks but only for her love.





An abhisarika, dressed and boldly going to keep her tryst with her lover

**Kalahantarita** - She is a woman who is repenting her hastiness in quarrelling with her lover which has resulted in their separation. The kalahantarita nayika severely reprimands her lover and then spurns him, even after he falls at her feet before all of her friends. She is called kalahantarita because of her activities and emotions such as delirious, incoherent speech, anguish, debility of body and mind, and taking long, drawn-out breaths.

**Khandita** - She is a lady who is angry with her lover for causing disappointment. The khandita nayika is one whose nayaka finally appears long after the appointed time for meeting, often bearing signs of amorous pastimes with another nayika. The reaction of the khandita nayika could vary – she could take very long, drawn-out breaths due to anger, and not speak a word to her beloved or she might lash out at him with no holds barred or might shower sarcasm on him and soon.



A Khandita nayika taking the errant nayaka to task

**Proshitapathika** (or proshitabhartrika) - She is a nayika who is suffering in the absence of her beloved, who is away on a long journey. Her behaviour includes melancholy, inertia, anxiety, and not sleeping, dressing or bathing herself. Sleepless and disconsolate, she counts the days until he returns. This would be vipralamba sringara at its most poignant. Sita in her anguish during her separation from Rama, Radha in her suffering when Krishna has left for Mathura are both archetypal instances of this Nayika.



A proshitapathika sorrowing in the absence of her lover

**Swadheenapathika** (or swadheenabhartrika) - She is the one who is proud of her husband's or beloved's love and loyalty. The nayika whose priyatama (lover) is submissive to her and who always stays with her is called swadhina-bhartrika. She has many activities such as enjoying pastimes with him in the forest, playing in the water with him and picking flowers. Lord Krishna's wife, Satyabhama is often portrayed as a swadheenapathika.



A swadheenabhartrika in the company of her lover

**Vasakasajjika** - She is the woman who is preparing for the arrival of her beloved, by decorating herself and her surroundings to provide a pleasant welcome to her lover. The vasa-ka-sajja nayika ornaments and perfumes her body and prepares and deco-



A vasakasajjika dressing up in anticipation of her lover's arrival

rates the place of meeting in eager anticipation of her lover's arrival, determined to engage in smara-krida (the games of Kamadeva). Hoping that her lover will come when he gets the opportunity, she gazes down the path along which her lover will approach, glorifies her lover, and hears his lila-katha (songs glorifying him) in the company of her sakhi-s, and at every moment eagerly waits for a messenger to bring news of her lover.

**Virahotkanthita** - She is the lady who is separated from her lover and is yearning for reunion. When the nayaka is late for the rendezvous, the restless nayika who becomes excessively impatient and eager to meet her lover is called utkanthita (restless, anxious). Since she is utkanthita from separation (viraha), she is called virahotkanthita. Her heart burns in agony, her body trembles, she speculates as to why her lover has not come, she loses all desire to do anything, and she describes her own sorry plight, shedding tears of lamentation – these are the activities of the utkanthita nayika.

The condition of vasaka-sajja could ultimately transform into that of utkanthita. When the vasaka-sajja has been waiting since the pre-arranged time of her kantha's (lover) arrival, and sees that he has not come, she changes her mind and thinks, "Perhaps he could not come because of the influence of another nayika." Bereft of the company of her most beloved kantha, she grows excessively eager and restless. She is then called utkanthita nayika.

**Vipralabdha** - She is the nayika who is disappointed that her lover has not turned up at the tryst as he promised. Sometimes, by the will of providence, the nayaka is unable to come for one reason or another, even after fixing the time and place of the tryst by a signal or hint. The nayika who is severely afflicted by pangs of separation from her beloved at that time is called vipralabdha. She shows many different types of behaviour, such as decrying her own worthlessness, becoming anxious, lamenting, weeping bitterly, sighing deeply, and fainting.



A vipralabdha disappointed that her lover did not turn up

Among the eight types of nayika, three – the svadhina-bhartrika, vasaka-sajja and abhisarika – are cheerful at heart, and adorned with ornaments and other decorations. The remaining five nayika-s – namely khandita, vipralabdha, virahotkanthita, proshitabhartrika and kalahantarita – do not have any ornaments and finery. Their hearts are afflicted with anxiety and they lament bitterly.

There is another classification of nayika-s based on their experience in lovemaking:

**Mugdha** - Inexperienced in love.

**Madhya** - Partly experienced in love.

**Pragalbha** - Matured in the art of love.

This Pragalbha Nayika is further classified as

- Dheera
- Adheera
- Dheeraadheera

The **mugdha** is the bewildered and innocent nayika, who has newly discovered her youthfulness (nava-yauvana): She desires union with her lover, but in loving affairs, she acts in a contrary way. Her friends control her. Although she is extremely shy in the intimate activities of sensual love, still she tries her best to arrange for sambhoga with her lover in a covered way, hiding from the view of others.

In the case of the **madhya nayika**, her impulse for passionate love is very strong, but she is also shy. She is a fresh budding youth (nava-yauvana), and in her speech there is a touch of arrogance.

The **pragalbha nayika** is in full-blown youth (purnayauvana). She is blinded by pride and extremely eager for sensual love.



She is expert in fully expressing a variety of bhava-s, and she is qualified to overwhelm her lover with prema-rasa (the passion of love). Her words and deeds are extremely profound (gambhira) and mature.

Pragalbha nayika-s display three types of behaviour **dheera**, **adheera** and **dheeraadheera**. The nayika who jokingly speaks crooked words with her beloved after he has offended her is called dheera; the nayika who furiously rebukes her lover with harsh words is called adheera; and the nayika who tearfully uses crooked words against him is called dheeraadheera. The supreme excellence of all rasa is evident only in the madhya nayika, because of the mixture of mugdha and pragalbha in her nature.

### Another classification of nayika-s is

**Sweeya** - Married and faithful to her husband.

**Parakeeya** - Married but in love with another man.

**Samanya** - A free woman, who truly belongs to any man for a price.

**Jyeshtha** - The preferred one.

**Kanishtha** - The other woman.

### Another classification based on the basic character of the nayika is :

**Uttama** - Self-controlled and tolerant.

**Madhyama** – Literally, the middle one, who gives as she gets.

**Adhama** – Literally, the low one, who has no self restraint.

The **companion** to the Nayika plays an important role in any padam, javali or Ashtapadhi. This companion is the one to whom the Nayika will convey her feelings, she is the one who

will take the message, if any, from the nayika to the nayaka, she is the one who will sort out the differences between the nayika and the nayaka. This companion is usually a girl who is close to the Nayika.

### The classification of the companion is as follows

- Daasi - Servant
- Sakhi - Friend
- Kaaroo - Woman from a lower caste
- Chatriya - Step Sister
- Prativamshini - Neighbour
- Lindini - Saint
- Shilpani - Artist
- Swaa - Nayika herself as a messenger

### Ashtanayika in Bharathanatyam: Padam-s and Javali-s

Varnam-s, padam-s and javali-s mostly have one of the nayika-s at the centre of events, padam-s and javali-s especially so. Some padam-s do have a nayaka at the centre, such as Jayadeva's Ashtapadhi-s with Krishna at the centre.

Some well known padam-s and the type of nayika described in them are considered below. – Padams- Pending

Choodare adinadace, a padam composed by Kshetragna, the well known Telugu poet, and in the raga Sahana, portrays the abhisarika nayika or the woman who goes out boldly to meet her lover. The song is presented as sung by gossiping women who talk about the nayika going out without fear of her in-laws or neighbours to meet Lord Krishna (muvvagopala).

“Look at her, how she goes out without a care to keep her tryst with her lover. She does not even care that her dress is slipping and that people will gossip. This woman married into an honorable family, walking out so charmingly dressed to meet Him - just look at her! Does she have no fear? Is she a woman or a tree?”

This padam offers immense scope to depict the abhisarika nayika, the one who goes out boldly to meet her lover, all dressed up and not worrying in the least about social repercussions.

Another Tamil padam with the abhisarika as its theme is yarukkagilum bhayama set in the Begada ragam composed by Subbarama Iyer.

**Idai vida veru venumo sakshi** in Saveri, by Subbarama Iyer is a popular padam describing the Khandita nayika. In this padam, the nayika points out various tell-tale signs of the nayaka's infidelity and after pointing at each, she asks rhetorically and angrily, “Would anyone seek more proof than this (for your infidelity)?” The nayika confronts her lover and mercilessly picks out these signs. The anger of the nayika and her disappointment are brought out well in the padam and offers good scope to the dancer for abhinaya.

Indendu vacchitura, in the raga Suruti is another padam portraying the khandita beautifully - here anger and sarcasm reign supreme and the nayika turns away her errant lover. “How is it that you are here? Don't you know that 'her' house is not anywhere in this street? Have you lost your way?” In both the padam-s the nayika directly confronts her lover.

**Aduvum solluval aval innamum soluval** in raga Saurashtram, a Subbarama Iyer padam, presents a slight variation and a subtly different form of anger of the **Khandita**. In this padam, the nayika exudes bitter sarcasm and repressed anger at her rival's new found fortune. Her rival, who once approached her for small and big favours, is now the favoured one with the lord

and is flaunting her clothes and house and jewellery. “Oh, why will she not say this and more? It is no fault of hers....” says the khandita in this padam. Here the khandita does not confront her lover even though she is bitterly angry and very disappointed with him; she is helpless since there seems to be little she can do about it. The nayika type hovers between the khandita and the kalahantarita.

**Aasai mugam marandu pocche** by Subramania Bharathi presents the **proshitapathika** nayika: “That beloved face - I have forgotten; of what use are these eyes of mine when they can't see his face even in memory.” This is a gopi lamenting Krishna's absence.

thenai maranthirukkum vandum, oli chirappai maranthirukkum puuvum

vaanai maranthirukkum payirum, intha vaiyam muzhuthum illai thozhi'

“Is it possible that the bee forgets the nectar or that the flower forgets the sunshine or the crops forget the skies? Then how is it that I cannot even recall his face so I can capture it in this portrait?” Such is the gopi's lament.

‘I see a vision...but that's nowhere close to the beauty of Kannan (Krishna). The features here in the sketch are close enough, but that tender smile is still missing.’

kannan mugam marandu ponai inda kangalirindu payanundo

vanna padamumillai kandai ini vazhum vazhiyennadi thozhi

Of what use are my eyes when they aren't able to picture him. I don't even have his picture...how am I going to survive!

**Teruvil varano avan tirumbi parano** is a well known Tamil padam sung in Jaunpuri Raga, portraying the vasakasajjika adorning herself and asking “Is He coming down the street? Is

He looking back to catch my glimpse?” While it is often interpreted as the heroine getting dressed up for the nayaka’s attention, there are also traces of the virahotkanthita in the padam. In the second charana she says: “there is no one to take my message to him....why, for no fault of mine, does he spurn me thus? Thus, the padam has a delicious ambiguity.

**Smarasundaranguni** in the Raga Paras is a well known Javali composed by Dharmapuri Subbaraya Iyer. In this the **svadheenapatika** is portrayed. The scenes where the lover enjoys her music and relishes her company are described.

**Sa virahe tava deena, krishna, from** Jayadeva’s Ashthapadhi, is a good example of the virahotkanthita. In this ashtapadi, Radha’s sakhi (friend) tells Krishna about Radha’s condition in her separation from him. “Even the cool sandal and the moonbeams she finds scorching - such is her suffering. The cool malaya sameera (breeze) stings her like a thousand serpents. This is Radha’s condition in separation, Krishna, come and meet her.”

### Varying Interpretations of padam-s and javali-s:

Padam-s and javali-s can be interpreted by the dancer - choreographer with subtle differences. This can be explained with the help of the padam netru andi nerattile, the Tamil padam in the raga Huseni that portrays the vipralabdha nayika.

nEtru andi nErattile nlrADum karai taniE

nerungi ummai jADai kATTi alzhaita aval yAro swami

Yesterday at dusk, on the river bank, who was that woman who approached you closely and gestured at you?

VErtti mAmayil Erum kandA nlr avaLum edirmozhiyAai

nirkkaayiE shokkaiyiE pakkatil irundEn svAmi

Kanda (Muruga), the victorious one, riding the beautiful peacock, standing face to face with that woman, getting mesmerized in each other’s beauty – I witnessed this too as well.

munnaLil enniDattil sondam pOla kitta vandu

muthu muthAi sarasamADi mOham athai tandu

mannava un ninaivu kondu, annam kaNDu oru mAdham uNDu

vArumayyA en duraiyE, tlrumayyA en kavalaiye

Once the other day when you were so close to me, you came to my place and we had sweet conversations and kisses giving me immense pleasure.

Oh, King of my hearts, please come back to me and solve all my confusions and anxieties.

The padam describes the nayika asking her lover about this other woman who made obvious gestures at him just the previous day at dusk. The nayika tells him she saw the woman, she saw her making those gestures at him and she also saw him mesmerized by that woman’s charm.

This padam can be interpreted in many subtly different ways. No doubt that the nayika is none too pleased with her lover’s dalliance, but how will she confront him? This is where the dancer’s interpretative skills and choice comes into picture. The nayika can ask the question angrily or bitterly, with dignified composure, or by throwing a little tantrum, she could impart a gentle reprimand or shower sarcasm, she could ask him in a hurt way or in an indignant way, she can be forgiving or unforgiving, she could show disgust or disbelief and so on. How this mood is carried right through the padam and how it is maintained is where the dancer’s skill will matter. The nayika in this padam can be depicted as uttamaa or the excellent one with dignity and composure, one who will retain her calm in the most trying situations or she can be depicted as the madhyama who can be sugar or poison depending on how she is treated.

## The Nayaka Bhava

Just like the heroines, the moods and emotions of the hero are also classified into different divisions. The main division is:-

- Dheerodaatta. Dheera means brave, steady etc. and udaatta means high, noble etc. This is the hero who, like Rama, is lofty and noble in his bearing and his love.



Sri Rama, the archetypal dheerodaatta

- Dheeroddhata. Dheera means brave, steady etc. and ud-dhata means proud, conceited, arrogant. This is the hero who, like the demon king Ravana, is valorous alright, but is conceited and arrogant about his power. This is reflected in his actions and words such as abducting Sita, banishing his own brother Vibheeshana and so on.



Ravana, the arrogant hero-dheeroddhata

- Dheeralalita. Dheera means brave etc., while lalitha means playing, amorous. Vatsaraj or Udayana of the play Swapnavasavadattam is the archetypal hero of this type who is so immersed in his love for his lady (Vasavadatta) that he neglects his duties. In the play, he loses a part of his territory because of his amorous preoccupations!

- Dheerashanta. Shanta means peace, tranquility. This is the hero, exemplified by the Buddha, who has conquered his passion and is steady and lofty in his thought, action and words.



Dheerashanta - The prince of peace, Gautam Buddha

## The other classification is:

Pati - Married and faithful to his wife.

Upapati - Married but in love with another woman.

Vaisika - One who pays and enjoys women.

## Further Nayaka classifications:

Anukoola - Faithful to his wife, as Lord Rama

Dakshina - Loves all his wives or women, as Arjuna

Drishta - When rejected, pleads to be accepted by his woman, as Vaali

Shatha - The deceitful one, as Lord Krishna

Most of the ashtanayika bhava-s are experienced by the Nayaka, but it is more common to find the nayika being portrayed than the nayaka.

The nayaka's companion plays an important role too. This companion is categorized as:

- Peetamardhana: a friend
- Vita: companion of a prince or a dissolute young man
- Cheta: a servant
- Vidooshaka: the funny man or the court jester

### **Sringara and bhakti: Padam-s without the nayaka-nayika bhava**

Most of the padam-s, javali-s and varnam-s in the contemporary Bharathanatyam repertoire deal with the nayaka-nayika bhava. At the centre of these compositions is a woman or man, more often a woman, in a particular situation of love, in a particular state of mind and dealing with it in a particular way. This has been indicated earlier when the centrality of sringara rasa in Bharathanatyam was pointed out.

But there are compositions which do not fall within the nayaka-nayika scheme of things. Well known padam-s of Gopala krishna Bharati such as varugalamo iyya or enneramum undan sannidhiyile which depict the ardent devotee's state of mind fall outside the nayaka-nayika scheme. There are varnam-s which are entirely about bhakti or devotion to god, describing the beauty, splendour and grace of divinity.

Indeed, the nayaka in many varnams with whom the nayika engages in many moods, is often a deity. Some of such oft occurring deities are Thyagaraja (Shiva) of Tiruvarur, Ranganatha of Srirangam, Kapaleeshwara of Mylapore, Muruga or Subramania and so on. In the padam-s of many composers, the nayaka is almost always a deity; in Kshetragna's padam-s, it is Muvva Gopala, and in Jayadeva's case, of course, it is Krishna and the nayika is Radha. It is held by some that even when there is no such explicit reference to a deity in a composition, the love described between man and woman is really a metaphor for the love the devotee feels for his god.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. List the eight kinds of nayika-s.
2. In the varnam mohamana what is the type of nayika portrayed and what is the type of nayaka portrayed? Can you think of some other interpretation of the varnam so that a different kind of nayika is portrayed?
3. What are the different companions of the nayika? What is the importance of the companion?
4. Match the following women in various situations with the nayika type:
 

Sita in Lanka	mugdha
Sakuntala meeting Dusyanta	abhisarika
Radha seeing Krishna dallying with another	Virahotkanthita
Radha setting out to meet Krishna	khandita
5. What are the nayaka types? How would you classify Krishna?



## CHAPTER 6

### VRITTI-S AND DHARMI

Style is the man is an old and oft quoted saying. This is particularly true when it comes to artistes, to dancers and musicians and painters and actors.... How do you execute your adavu-s – is it forceful or does grace dominate over force and vigour? How do you perform the abhinaya - is it understated or does it tend towards the dramatic? These are all matters of style. The concepts of vritti-s and dharmi-s capture some aspects of this vast phenomenon of style in dance. Both the concepts are found in the Natyashastra, as applied to drama.

The word vritti means movement or behaviour or mode of conduct. In dance and drama, it refers to the style of the composition. The four styles enumerated in the Natyashastra, are Bharati (predominantly verbal, relying on dramatic speech), Satvati (relying on subtle acting to communicate emotions), Arabhati (relying on exaggerated and explicit movement of limbs) and kaisiki (relying on delicate movement of limbs and facial expression as well as on colourful costume and jewellery).

The concept can be explained by referring to how communication is achieved in common experience. Obviously, speech achieves communication. Even movement – either walking fast or slowly or standing still can communicate a state or feeling or even an opinion. If one walks away when addressed by

someone, it communicates an opinion and feeling. Facial looks too communicate effectively, with or without the conjunction of bodily movement. The way one dresses is well known to be an effective communicator. Even the ambience of one's work place or home communicates subtly.

In an application of this common matter of experience, Bharata lists the four styles of dramatic composition.

Like much else in the Natyashastra<sup>13</sup>, the concept of vritti is introduced and elaborated in the context of a mythical situation. In this case, Lord Vishnu is engaged in a battle with the asura-s (demons) Madhu and Kaitabha. The four styles exhibited by Lord Vishnu while engaged in battle with these two asura-s were pronounced by Lord Brahma, who witnessed the fight, as the four vritti-s.

#### Bharati vritti

This is a style where predominance is given to speeches made in Sanskrit. It is employed only by male actors who announce their own names. It is said that initially Lord Vishnu and the demons engaged in a fierce exchange of words and abuses and this is the origin of this style.

#### Satvati vritti

This is described as: "That which is endowed with the quality of sattva (vigour), and where there is good behaviour, where there is exuberance of joy and absence of shoka (pathos) – that is satvati vritti.

In the battle between Vishnu and the demons, "the bow of Vishnu - the sarnga, as it was turned this way and that, was brilliant and flashing in quick turns and its steadily increasing sattva created the sattvati style."

In this vritti, there is abhinaya of speech, gestures and episodes described in vigorous words. There is very little Karuna (pathos) or sringara (love) but the rasa-s of Veera (valour), Adbhuta (wonder) and Raudra (terror) predominate. The characters are bold, constantly challenging each other.

### Kaisiki Vritti

This vritti is one where the artistes are mostly women, wearing charming costumes in a colorful way and where there is plenty of dancing and music and the story is of love and its enjoyment. The main emotions here are love and humour.

### Aarabhati vritti

Here one finds daring (of a wrong kind), in the form of deceit, fraud, falsehood, bragging, garrulousness, etc. In this there would be falling, jumping, crossing and many kinds of magic and conjury.

Each of the four vritti-s has four types. The application of this concept in Bharathanatyam is in so far as it can be applied to rasa-s. In the rasa-s of love and humour, the vritti adopted should be Kaisiki. In the Veera, Bhayanaka and Adbhuta rasa-s, the vritti employed should be sattvati; in Bhayanaka, Bibhatsa and Raudra, it should be Arabhati and in Karuna and Adbhuta, it should be Bharati.

In Bharathanatyam, when musical effect is used to add drama at any point – say, during a sanchari sequence, that would be Bharati vritti. The voice and drums and other instruments could, in unison, create a dramatic effect. Satvati vritti is called the grand style and involves high level of involvement and maturity in the artist. It is connected to satva and satvika bhava and is the style when the artist is able to bring out and communicate emotions through an intense use of facial and bodily movements.

The other two vrittis are characterised by particular uses of the limbs. Arabhati is the vritti used to depict fight, fraud etc and involves movements such as jumping, falling, leaping etc. Kaisiki would be the complement of this, as it involves delicate, soft movements of the limbs, and indeed of the whole body. If Arabhati can be characterised as tandava, kaisiki is lasya. In a dance drama, Kaisiki also involves colourful costumes and jewellery.

There are some interesting associations of the four vritti-s as given below:

Bharati is born from the Rigveda which emphasises the spoken word - the hymns and chants.

Satvati is born from the Yajurveda which emphasises the conduct of rites.

Kaisiki is born from Sama veda which details the way the hymns have to be sung as well as the gestures that must be used during the sacrifices.

Arabhati is born from the Yajur veda which, among other things, also deals with black magic etc.

Another association is with the four types of abhinaya:

Bharati is obviously vachika abhinaya; Satvati crucially involves satvika abhinaya; Arabhati involves angika while Kaisiki involves both angika and aharya.

### PRAVRITTI

This refers to regional stylistic variations. This too is particularly applicable to drama and will have its relevance to dance dramas too.

According to *Natyashastra*<sup>14</sup>, there are four kinds of pravritti-s – Avanti, Dakshinaty, Panchali and Odramagadhi. These actually refer to regions in ancient India.

Pravritti is that variation of dresses, language, mannerisms, behaviour, customs, etc. that we find among the people of different regions of the country.

### **DHARMI**

Bharata, in the *Natyashastra*<sup>15</sup>, refers to two different natures (dharma) that plays can exhibit. A play can be performed by using realistic actions and other devices, or it can be stylized and dramatic. He calls the former kind of plays *lokadharmi* and the latter, *natyadharmi*.

**Lokadharmi:** A play in which men and women in their own nature, without any change in appearance and without any stylized gestures, behave and act naturally is called *lokadharmi*.

**Natyadharmi:** A play in which speech is artificial and exaggerated, actions unusually emotional, gestures graceful, is *natyadharmi*. That also is *natyadharmi* in which voice and costumes are not from common, ordinary use.

When a well known theme is dramatized investing characters with emotions, it becomes *natyadharmi*.

In dance, the preference of each dancer for *natyadharmi* or *lokadharmi* determines the main character of the *abhinaya* style. For instance, well known dancer Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam uses a lot of *lokadharmi* in her *abhinaya* whereas in the *abhinaya* of veterans like Smt. Kalanidhi Narayanan, the use of *lokadharmi* will be limited.

There can be no doubt that the mainstay of *abhinaya* in dance is *natyadharmi*. Stylization is highly desirable and *lokadharmi* should be used sparingly as if to pepper the exercise.

### **Questions :**

1. What are the four *vritti*-s?
2. *Kaisiki vritti* is employed in ----- and -----  
----- *rasa*-s.
3. While depicting *Raudra*, the ----- *vritti* would be appropriate.
4. What is *dharmi*?
5. Describe how you would depict the following situations using *natyadharmi*: a) a woman angry at her lover's infidelity; b) mother Yashoda scolding young Krishna for his pranks.
6. Describe how you would depict these using *lokadharmi*: a) *nayika* waiting for her lover to show up; b) man trying to explain and console an angry *nayika*.



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3. The Natyasastra, p 66.
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5. The Natyasastra, p 67 - 75
6. The Natyasastra, p 55.
7. The Natyasastra, p 64
8. The Natyasastra, p 65
9. The Natyasastra, p 54
10. The Natyasastra, p 55
11. The Natyasastra, p 54
12. The Natyasastra, Chapter VI
13. The Natyasastra, p 168 - 169
14. The Natyasastra, p 113
15. The Natyasastra, p 115

## **GLOSSARY**

- Abhinaya*** : The art of conveying emotions, ideas in dance through body movement and facial expression; also through words and costume
- Aharya*** : Costume and make up in dance
- Angika*** : Pertaining to the parts of the body, expression through bodily movement
- Anubhava*** : Bodily and facial expressions caused by excitants (causes) of emotion (vibhavas)
- Ashtanayika*** : Traditional classification of heroines in love situations into eight types
- Aucitya*** : Propriety or appropriateness in art
- Bhava*** : Human feelings/emotions
- Bhaya*** : The emotion of fear
- Javali*** : A musical composition of love that is used in abhinaya in Bharatanatyam
- Jugupsa*** : The emotion of disgust
- Krodha*** : The emotion of anger
- Loka dharmi*** : Portrayal of ideas, emotions in dance with strong realism
- Natya*** : A combination of pure dance with mimetic aspects
- Natyadharmi*** : Portrayal of ideas, emotions in dance in a stylised manner
- Natyassastra*** : A compendium of dramaturgy from the early parts of the common era attributed to Bharata muni which serves as reference for many art traditions of India

<b>Navarasa</b>	: The theory that there are nine dominant emotions that art portrays aesthetically
<b>Nayaka</b>	: A hero in a love song or play
<b>Nayika</b>	: A heroine in a love song or play
<b>Nritta</b>	: Pure dance without any mimetic aspect
<b>Padam</b>	: A musical song of love that is used in Bharatanatyam abhinaya
<b>Rasa</b>	: Human emotions aesthetically transformed in an artistic presentation, savoured by the cultured viewer / listener
<b>Rati</b>	: The human emotion of love
<b>Sanchari bhava</b>	: Fleeting emotions that arise in the context of a dominant emotion
<b>Satvika</b>	: expression of involuntary manifestations of emotions
<b>Shoka</b>	: Human emotion of sorrow
<b>Sthayi bhava</b>	: Nine dominant emotions recognised in the Indian tradition
<b>Vacika</b>	: Conveying emotions through words; in Bharatanatyam the songs used in performance constitute vacika
<b>Vibhava</b>	: That which excites or causes emotional responses; also called the determinants (of emotions)
<b>Varnam</b>	: The central piece in a Bharatanatyam recital, it is the name of a particular kind of musical composition which is interpreted in dance
<b>Vyabhichari bhava</b>	: Same as sanchari bhava
<b>Vritti-s</b>	: Incorporation of regional stylistic features in drama
<b>Vismaya</b>	: Human emotion of wonder

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