

Introduction to BHARATHANATYAM



Alagappa Performing Arts Academy
(Division of Performing Arts)



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, under- graduate and post graduate students with a comprehensive program of educational courses.

In its maiden venture, APAA has designed a comprehensive curriculum in Performing Arts with focus on Bharathanatyam, vocal and instrumental music to demonstrate the repertoire of culture that is imbedded in these classical arts. From an overview of the various art forms in India, to their rudiments, 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. Interactive DVDs vividly describe the precise execution of these arts. These valuable learning aids enhance the comprehension and make this a constructive exercise for students to understand the depth and versatility of these arts.

In collaboration with Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, APAA had developed academic programs that are offered directly or through established centers and institutions worldwide to enable students to obtain an undergraduate degree.



Introduction to BHARATHANATYAM Certificate Program

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This edition is specially published.

Alagappa Performing Arts Academy, in collaboration with Alagappa University, Tamil Nadu, India and accomplished artists in the field of Bharathanatyam, has developed a 'Structured Learning Program' in Performing Arts with focus on Bharathanatyam.

This program offers:

Certificate in Performing Arts	(1 to 3 year duration)
Advanced Certificate in Bharathanatyam	(1 year after Certificate)
Diploma in Performing Arts	(1 year after Associate Degree)
B.A. Degree in Performing Arts	(1 to 2 year after Diploma)

The above programs have been designed with specific course work 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. Muralidharan, 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 experienced dancer and Visiting professor of Fine Arts at the Alagappa University, Karaikudi for their continuous support.

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the books according to the high standard that we have established. Thanks to Mrs. R.K. Rekha, for formatting the book and enhancing its content. A special note of appreciation to Ms. S. Girija for the review of the book.

Bharathanatyam, the traditional classical art form of Southern India, has a distinctive repertoire and is a vibrant mode of cultural communication that unites art lovers from different cultures and countries. Alagap- pa Performing Arts Academy is fortunate to be among the very first to design such a program to provide a new dimension in educating art connisseurs of 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 if 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.

These Structured Learning Programs have now been enhanced to include other art forms such as Vocal and Instrumental Music and is now being offered by APAA globally.

Sincerely yours,

Ramanath Vairavan

Chairman & CEO,

Alagappa Performing Arts Academy



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 had 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 text-books 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 Nritta, Nritya 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 Shabdam (tradition basic dance item with introduction of Bhava). Students enrolled in this course will take 1 to 3 years to complete this program.

Advanced Certificate 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) Shabdam, Keerthana and Kavadi Chindu.

Diploma in Bharathanatyam

This program reviews the eternal passion of Abhinaya (facial expressions) and Angas (expressive communications through the body). During this one year program, training will be imparted in the Varnam, the piece de resistance of Bharathanatyam that is known for its grace, vigour and expressive brilliance, the Padam, Thodayamangalam / Pushpanjali and Jawali which explore the various Rasas, Bhavas and Nayikas and in the Tillana, the fast moving dance score.

Bachelor's Degree in Bharathanatyam

This program introduces the student to Bharathanatyam repertoire and its Nattuvangam. On completion of this one to two 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.



Sri Kailasanathar Temple, Kanchipuram

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1



Birth of Bharatanatyam

Human in forest (I & II Stone period) were capable of making hasty sounds only. In the early days of evolution, the sounds to indicate various animals, thunder, feelings were slowly standardized to spoken language. When people were communicating through drawings, they were simplified into symbols and then into written language. Both standardized spoken and written language together were the formation of various languages.

When that language expression was carried out with raga set to a particular rhythm became the music. Right from the origin people were communicating through gestures too. Music and gestures together were the origin for various form of dancing.

Dance which is a beautiful form of art can be defined as a sequence of expressive variations. Speech reflects the thought by way of words but in dance, every limb in the body reflects the thought of the conveyer. It can come in different forms but it renders the same meaning.

Dance in India is classified into two types,

- ❑ The Classical form
- ❑ The Folk form.

Bharatanatyam, a form of Classical dance, which can also be termed as the traditional and cultural treasure of India, marks its evolution thousands of years back, when the sage Bharatha wrote the treatise Natyasastra, and gave it life, exposing it to his hundred sons. Thus it has travelled far and long to where it stands in the world arena as the most enticing form of art. It takes its roots from Southern India, which is said to be the abode of magnificent temples and magnanimous Kings who hold major roles in providing luster and prominence to the art form. Bharatanatyam has seen different eras and has been handled and presented with individual creative backgrounds. So we have the different styles or Banis which mark the individual Master's thinking and creativity.

Bharatanatyam can project all aspects like Religion, Sentimental values, Yoga, Science, Myth, Philosophy and every day to day activity of every life form on Earth by beautiful patterns and movements. The expressive quality or Bhava of a performer can render plentiful meanings to the onlookers without having to use the help of words. The tune set and the rhythmic pattern of a definite performance can exhibit the differentiation in the moods. This has perfect coordination with Bharatanatyam which itself is the combination of Bhava (Expression) - Bha, Raga (Tune) - Ra and Tala (Rhythm) - Ta. This in turn provides the backdrop for Bharatanatyam to be devised by the sage Bharata.

This art form has also seen the era where it was considered as a dance form to be danced only by Devadasis or servants of Gods. The word Devadasi has the meaning embedded in its own, Deva - Gods and Dasi - servant. These Devadasis were not allowed to marry and have a family of their own. Instead they danced in front of God to please and serve him.

The history of Bharatanatyam dates back to thousands of years and its proof are the wonderful sculptures found in age old temples. These temples have played major roles in recent researches about Bharatanatyam. It is an art which is mystical about itself and the search for understanding it in all totality still continues. Practically all types of Indian performing arts trace their origin to religion, or have close ties with it. Some are specifically devoted to representation in religious contexts and are usually the preserve of hereditary practitioners, many of whom are still supported by Hindu temples. The dance form was nurtured in the Hindu temples and of course in the princely courts by these traditional practitioners for centuries before moving on into the performing auditoriums of today.

In South India, the dancers, dance teachers and musicians of the Isai Vellala community constitute a distinctive group of hereditary performing artists. For those who worked in temples, this group was further divided into the Periya Melam and Chinna Melam. The distinction centered on the type of instruments they played and whether they accompanied dance. The Periya Melam (literally meaning large band) included large

instruments such as the Nagasvaram (reed instrument) and Taval (drum). The Chinna Melam (meaning small band) included small instruments which used to accompany dance, such as the Mridangam (drum), Sruti (drone), Talam (cymbals), etc. The dance tradition was carried out by the Devadasis, servants of god. Although Devadasis undertook many functions, the accomplishment for which they are universally known is their dance. The Devadasi and her dance were important adjuncts to both religious and secular occasions. Devadasis also belonged to the Isai Vellala community.

To create beauty, to give pleasure, to communicate are the purposes of all art. To really appreciate Indian art, it is important to understand the purpose and the technique. For instance, in the famous Chola bronze statue of Nataraja (the Dancing Shiva), apart from the beauty of the form, the



balance in the proportions and the vivid impression of free movement, the sculpture signifies a vast, immortal theoretical truth. To appreciate the true beauty of Nataraja, the viewer must know the meaning of the symbols, the difficulty of the technique, and above all, the truth behind it. Shiva's dance is said to represent His five activities (Panchakriya), namely Srishti (creation), Sthiti (preservation), Samhara (destruction), Tirobhava (illusion & rest) and Anugraha (grace and salvation). These



are the activities of the deities Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheswara and Sadasiva. For comprehending this in all totality, an understanding of the Indian aesthetic traditions is very important.

The main purpose of Indian art is contained in one word: Rasa. Like most Sanskrit words, Rasa itself has a variety of meanings. In common manner of speaking, it means essence or juice, among other things. In the sciences, it stands for certain specific compounds and matter. In the context of the arts, it is the object of enjoyment in the aesthetic sense.

For our purpose, the word Rasa means flavor - the emotion that flavors the mind. The purpose of any Indian art is to create Rasa in the mind of the viewer, that is, to create an emotional situation, the essence of which is exclusively aesthetic pleasure. It is the equivalent of beauty in the purely philosophical sense. But what is meant by this concept of beauty or rasa? It is not the beauty of loveliness or prettiness, something which pleases, as we understand it in the physical sense. It is a pleasant expression that reveals the inner nature of things, regardless of the subject, where the theme, expression, content and form are in balance. This beauty cannot be measured, as it doesn't exist apart from the artist and the rasika (audience) who enters into this experience. A lovely dancer, dancing with skill and technical perfection, is not a thing of beauty in the aesthetic use of the term.

It is only when she is able to remove the audience from a practical appreciation of her dance to the realm of the inner meaning that her dance is trying to convey,



where both she and her dance dissolve into pure emotion, that the dance can be described as aesthetically beautiful. A vision of this beauty is spontaneous.

A rasa is said to be the result of, or to be produced by, a combination of bhavas or the sentiments or emotions that pass through the mind of the spectator during the course of a visual experience. The experience of bhava is brought about through the use of words, gestures and the presentation of emotional states, and the distilled essence of this experience is rasa. This experience is qualitatively different from the everyday emotions we feel, because it is not a direct result of our own actions and does not have to do with our own lives. It is the result of an empathetic response to actions in an environment entirely different from our own.

It is an emotion, therefore, borne out of distance, in a mind free from worldly realities, when the informed and sensitive spectator, understanding the symbols of the art, is led to an experience of emotional bliss, for however fleeting a moment. It is, and has to be, an intensely private experience, existing only for the duration of the techniques of the dancer's art to arouse a suitable emotional response in the mind of the spectator. This is the purpose and end result of all true art.

Indian dance grew out of the comprehensive dramatic technique of the ancient Indians, a technique which included music and song, literature and poetry and, of course, dance.

Since the purpose of the Natya, according to Sage Bharata, was instruction through entertainment and pleasure, and the attainment of rasa, an Indian artist was careful to keep the audience in mind.

Indian artistic traditions went deeper than mere cultural impulses. They were given a definite dimension over a period of time, and an Indian artist, far from being just a spreader of beauty and pleasure, became an instrument for realizing the Divine.

The Hindu philosophy that gave rise to this aesthetic theory believes in the essential Oneness of all Creation: that all things visible and invisible, are part of the same divine Creator, God, and that the purpose of existence is to realize this ultimate truth. This view emphasizes the individual soul, the individual effort and the individual realization of the Infinite. It creates enough Gods for each individual to find someone suitable, and it contains philosophies that cover all forms of devotion, from the purely cerebral to the purely physical. In such an individualistic philosophical environment, the development of group activities, such as dance or orchestral music, would necessarily be limited. So, within the framework of individual realization, the concept and purpose of Indian aesthetics has developed.

Thus the technique requires execution at multiple and complex levels along with an illusion of spontaneity. Being connected with philosophy and Ultimate truth behind all phenomena, abhinaya the art of gesture language has been a deliberate development through the ages and not an accident. It explains why the impacting factor in classical dance, is "suggestion" rather

than "realism" as the highest and truest conception of great art and beauty. It also explains why it is imperative that the audience actively uses its imaginative faculties.

Indian art is in itself limitless. The only limitation is in the minds of the audience, and therefore that mind has to be opened and made receptive. Indeed, it could almost be said that a true rasika should be content to fill in the gaps in a performance with his imagination to achieve the ultimate purpose of rasa. Ancient dramatic critics were scornful of



spectators who looked within a dramatic work for a portrayal of facts or a material reality rather than the experience of joy. It was accepted that this experience depended entirely on the spectator's own imaginative capacity. Much in the same way as children entertain themselves by investing their toys with a rich and varied life, the spectator was expected to reach the state of delight by his own efforts. Otherwise, as the ancients have put it, the experience of art will be like wine in a glass - the glass cannot appreciate the flavor of the wine, any more than an uninformed audience can enjoy the rasa of the art.





2



History of Bharatanatyam

Bharatanatyam is perhaps the oldest among the contemporary classical dance forms of India. Its claim to antiquity rests not on the name, which is derived from the word "Bharata" and thus associated with the Natyasastra, but on the overwhelming literary, sculptural and historical evidence available.

Among the available references for dance, there is one, called as Lasyanga in Natyasastra. This is an element of 'nataka', which is a solo dance form. In this form, one actor plays many roles involving many moods.

The Natyasastra in this context also speaks of the actor as the narrator. Instead of many actors presenting a dramatic story, the solo actor presents,



through abhinaya, the particularly dominant state - Sthayi Bhava.

Bharatanatyam is a composite art, whose message is not merely to the senses, but also to the soul of the dancer and that of the perceiver. Due to this, one can comprehend Bharatanatyam as an art that conveys spiritual expression. This dance form cannot be adequately danced by anyone without respect for technique and for spiritual life.

It is an art that lifts one from earthly to everlasting values. Bharatanatyam developed itself into its current form through the perseverance of age old masters. The temple halls were the experimental fields of study and practice; the devotees were audience; the temple pillars were the fixed and carved edifices that guarantee the sustenance and stability of this dance form. In Indian performing arts, like any other allied arts, religion plays an important role.

The intimate association of dance with religion and as a ritual, a form of worship in the temples, is well established. The institution of the Devadasis, servants of God, contributed in being responsible for preserving the art. They would perform during temple worship, delighting the audiences with charming stories from our mythologies. These Hereditary practitioners were supported by temple funds and they became part and parcel of the sanctum sanctorum of these temples. They would dress themselves and present items during temple worship to delight the audiences, and they traveled far and wide to bring this dance form to the common folk. In ancient times, the system of dedicating young dancers

to the temples as Devadasis seems to have prevailed.

Dance has special mention in two important Tamil works, viz Silappadigaram and Manimegalai of the Sangam age (500 B.C - 500 A.D).

The sacred texts of the Saivagamas prescribed the mode of worship and referred to the consecration of dancing girls towards the service of the Gods. The temples were not only places of communication between man and God, but also strongholds of the Arts.

In the beautiful Natya-Mandapas (dance halls), Praharas (pathways) and Garbagrha (sanctum sanctorum) the dance dramas, ritualistic dances and the devotional numbers were done by the devadasis as offering to the presiding deities.

The present Bharatanatyam can be traced back to this form. It has been established from sculptural evidence that the technique of movement which this style follows can be traced back to the 5th century. The position



common to the classical dance (Margi style - the pattern of a performance) was the Ardhamandali (Half sitting position) with the out-turned knees. By the 10th century A.D., this basic position was common to dance styles from Orissa to Gujarat and from Khajuraho to Trivandrum. From about the 10th century A.D. in sculptures of dance, we find that the basic position of the lower limbs is common to remainder in every part of India.

After the 10th century, Bharatanatyam seems to have developed chiefly in the South and gradually came to be restricted to what is now known as Tamil Nadu. From chronicles, we learn that the Chola and the Pallava kings were great patrons of the arts. Raja Raja Chola not only maintained dancers in the temples in his kingdom, but was also a very great expert of music and dance. The tradition of the Natyasastra appears to have been widespread. The accuracy with which the artists of the Brihadeeswara temple in Thanjavur have illustrated the Karanas of the fourth chapter of the Natyasastra is adequate proof of their understanding of the laws of the dance form movement.

The Pallava and Chola rulers (4th to 12th centuries A.D) gave great stimulus to music and dance with the building of imposing temples in the South. This temple building tradition was kept alive by rulers, especially, the Pandya, Nayak and the Maratha until the end of the Nineteenth century. The institution of the great dance teachers known as Nattuvanars preserved the ancient dance art from generation to generation.

Around the 12th century A.D. we find that technical illustrations of dance movements were made in the

Sarangapani temple at Kumbakonam, Tamilnadu, South India and in the four magnificent gopurams of the Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, Tamilnadu, South India. Illustrations of the Charis and the Karanas are found in temples of Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Kumbakonam, Madurai and Kanchipuram. The sculptural evidences can be supplemented sufficiently by the sastras, textual criticisms, historical chronicles and creative literature of the period.

Between the 14th and 17th centuries, there was much repetition of dance poses already sculpted in the three main temples mentioned above. From the creative literature in Tamil, Telugu and Kanada, one can easily conclude that dance was a vigorous and living art.

During the Maratha rule (AD 1674 - 1854) over Thanjavur, the art of Bharatanatyam received considerable fillip. King Shahaji (1684 - 1711) wrote nearly five hundred Padams (short poetic compositions). These Marathi Padams are found in the form of palmleaf manuscripts in the Telugu script. These manuscripts are preserved in the Saraswati Mahal Library at Thanjavur.

King Tulaja II (1763 - 87) wrote the Sangitasaramrta, dealing with adavus (basic dance steps), which is a landmark in dance literature. During the reign of King Sarfoji II, the tradition of Bharatanatyam received its definite shape from the Thanjavur Quartet, Chinnayya, Ponnayya, Vadivelu and Sivanandam, the four brothers who were disciples of the composer Muthuswami Dikshitar, one of the trinity of South Indian Classical music.

Evolution & Development of Bharatanatyam

Devdasi

Devadasis were found in Tamil Nadu and we find references to them. In the sacred text called Agamas, Agama-Sastras are texts relating to the principles of temple building, the making of icons and codes of worship.

The institution of devadasis evolved in the context of temple rituals.

The temple dancers dedicated themselves to the service of God through their music & dance. The dancers were known as Devaradiyar (Servants of God).

The dancers were of the three types:

Devadasi, who danced in front of the deity in the temple.

Rajadasi, who danced in the courts of the Kings.

Alankaradasi, who danced at the weddings.

Dasi Attam

A system of presentation of dance developed, in which there was only a single dancer, and the dance came to be known as Dasi Attam. The dance was also called Sadir during the period of Maratha Rulers who were ruling Thanjavur. The kuravanji dance came into prominence during the 18th century. It was exclusively performed by the Devadasis during the annual festivals of certain temples in Tamil Nadu. Sadir was a solo dance from whereas kuravanji was a group production.

The Tanjore Quartet

During the reign of Raja Sarfoji, four brothers from Tanjavur catapulted into the lime light. They were Chinnayya, Ponnayya, Shivanandam and Vadivelu, the sons of Subbaraya Nattuvanar. They were equally well-versed in music and were the disciples of the celebrated music composer, Muthuswamy Dikshitar. They were attached to the royal court as musicians.



The brothers codified and framed the structure of the Adavus and defined the Margam tradition. Their work shaped the practice and teaching of Bharatanatyam for the centuries to come.

Decline of the Devadasis

After the death of Shivaji 11 in 1855 A.D, the traditional classical dance, Sadir and the dance community dependant on it gradually suffered a slow death due to the lack of patronage and the political turmoil that accompanied the advent of the British in India. During this period the Devadasis were engulfed by insecurity. Many of them became victims of poverty. There was a change in their code of ethics and conduct.

The promotion and preservation of the art declined and only the negative features of the artiste remained.

However there were many others who were educated and maintained their moral integrity. They were able to instill bhakti and ethical values in the hearts of the people through their music and dance.

History of Nattuvanars

Traditionally the Bharatanatyam orchestra was led by a male nattuvanar, who knew the dance choreography and music intimately. He was also a senior musician and in most instances, a dance teacher. The nattuvangam involves several duties striking cymbals, one of which is approximately three and the other two inches across, and held in either hand uttering rhythmic syllabus singing in the classical style of Carnatic music, controlling the tempo of the dance and conducting the orchestra. As each of these is an art in itself, it takes many years to become a nattuvanar. Skill in nattuvangam is important for a dance teacher; a recent innovation which has occurred in the last ten years is to dispense with the nattuvanar. This dance music usually lacks the tension and excitement that the percussive beating of the nattuvanar's cymbals brings.

Today the skills to perform nattuvangam and conduct dance recitals have been acquired by many musicians. Because many of these new nattuvanars do not teach dance, the word nattuvanar may now be used for a specialist who only conduct Bharatanatyam recitals. As the same time the ability to perform nattuvangam is an extremely important additional professional qualification for a dance teacher. With this they are able to present public performances to the students and thus attract more students. It gives teacher full artistic and financial control



over the performing situation of their students which they would not have if they had to hire a nattuvanar. If they lack the skill in nattuvangam, a teacher's only alternate is to train a nattuvanar, in their repertoire, otherwise their students will not be able to perform. Like-wise the dancers need a nattuvanar who is familiar with the repertoire if they wish to perform.

But the story is not complete without mentioning the contributions of the South Indian Saint poets and musicians. Bhakti or devotion, at its finest and purest, was instilled into tradition by these poets. The literary content of Bharatanatyam was provided by them, and their musical compositions determined the repertoire of Bharatanatyam. Between 1800 and 1920, Bharatanatyam, as a performing art, took a back seat. The performances used to extensively take place during Vasanthotsavams (temple festivals).

In 1926, a young lawyer by name E. Krishna Iyer played an important role in the revival of Bharatanatyam. He used to perform on various platforms in the attire of female Bharatanatyam dancer to remove the disgrace attached to the art. In 1927, E. Krishna Iyer organized the first All India Music Conference at Madras during a session of the Indian National Congress. As an offshoot of the conference; the Music Academy was born in 1928. For a decade, E. Krishna Iyer worked as one of its secretaries. National spirit coupled with the freedom movement was responsible for the increase in the revival of performances at various places. Some of the exponents in those days were Pandanallur Jayalakshmi and Jeevaratnam, Smt. Rukhmini Devi Arundale, disciples of



Pandanallur, Guru Meenakshisundaram Pillai, Ram Gopal, Mrinalini Sarabhai and others. From that time to now, a host of legendary figures have contributed to the centuries old art of Bharathanatyam.





Dance Sculptures in Temples

It is not an exaggeration to say that sculpture and dance are the twins of the mother art. They embrace one another in the shadow of religion and have grown in India. The various ancient dance postures engraved in sculpture have been taken as the grammar of dance.

To depict dance postures in sculpture, it was important for an artist to know them. We can see the beauty today in the dance postures engraved by the artists who learned about them. Throughout India, there are thousands of dance sculptures in various temples.

Tamil Nadu is known as the 'land of temples'. There are more than 30,000 temples in Tamil Nadu built by various dynasties. Tamil Nadu reflects early Dravidian art and culture, characterized by ornamented temples with soaring towers known as Gopuras.

Many great scholars and exponents have written books on Bharathanatyam based on their study of these sculptures. The sculptures not only help in researches

and studies but are also the beauty and valuable ancient treasures of the temples.

The temples were not just a place of worship and were a place for social gathering, education and celebration. The temples also acted as the storehouses for emergencies and many a temple also maintained hospitals. The art and craft flourished and was encouraged in the temples. Art was performed in all the forms, i.e., music, dance, drama puppetry and the like.

Dance festivals in temples are becoming prevalent in present times. Thus the artists acquire the opportunity to worship and present their homage to God by way of these festivals.

Significance of the dancing form of Lord Siva

According to Hindu mythology, Lord Nataraja is the representation of the three qualities of creation, protection and destruction. He receives mankind from the cycle of birth and death, worldly bondage and illusions and brings salvation.

Nataraja performed the cosmic dance in Thillai in Southern India. This place, which is present-day Chidambaram, is believed to be the centre of the Universe.

The radiant arch around Nataraja represents space or Omkara. He dances with four hands where one of his right hands hold a drum signifying Laya or rhythm from which all essential sounds are born and that which symbolizes creation. The other holds Abhayastham signifying protection for his devotees. One of his left hands holds a ball of fire representing knowledge and



symbolizes destruction, while the other points out of his lifted left foot symbolising surrender.

Ganga or the river Ganges, whose turbulent waters are caught up on the head of Siva, embodies the Citsakti, the cosmic force which is endless from heaven to earth. The elephant and tiger hides worn by him confirm his power and the right foot, in the Sthitapada posture (firm foot), crushes the evil Muyalaka, thereby signifying the destruction of desire, danger, miserliness, delusion, ego and jealousy which in Sanskrit are known as Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsarya respectively. The left foot raised as Kuncitapada, symbolizes the freedom of the soul.

The arch surrounding the dancing figure is interpreted as the Pancaksara, the five syllables Na - Ma - Si - Va - Ya connected symbolically with the sacred soubd Om.

It is said that the Supreme One dances in the soul, scatters the darkness of illusion (Maya), burns all impurities (Karma), destroys evil thoughts, showers grace and seeps the soul in the ocean of bliss (ananda).

The seven dances or the Sapta Tandavam performed by Lord Siva like Kalika, Gauri, Sandhya, Samhara, Tripura, Urdhva and Ananda Tandavam are believed to be performed at Tirunelveli, Tiruputtur, Madurai, in the graveyards, Tirukkuttralam, Tiruvalangadu and Chidambaram respectively.

Siva has been represented in various manifestations



A few of these are:

Ardhanarisvara - Siva is represented as half man and half woman. The right half represents his consort, Parvati.

Bhairava - Siva in a fearsome form, with whole body smeared with ashes, wearing a skull garland.

Bhilsatana - Siva in a mendicant's guise holds a bowl made of skull. The mendicant has a special spiritual status in Hinduism.

Dakshinamurti - Siva as a yogic personification of 'Guru'

Gajasamharamurti - Siva as a destroyer of the demon, Gajasura - elephant demon.

Gangadhara - Siva adorning the river Ganga in his matted locks or hair.

Kalarimurti - Siva, one who wins over Yama.

Nataraja - Siva, as the king of dancers lifting his left foot and dancing, symbolizing the pancakriyas.

Sundaresvara - Beautiful form of Siva during his marriage with Minaksi, where he lifts his right foot and dances.

Vinadhara - Siva is represented as holding the instrument, Vina.

South Indian Temples

Mahabalipuram

The ancient town of Mahabalipuram was a flourishing sea-port during the days of Periplus (1st century A.D.) and Ptolemy (140 A.D.). Mahabalipuram include 14 rock cut cave-temples called mandapas, 9 monolithic shrines called rathas, 4 sculptured relief rock

panels and the famous Shore Temple.

These structures were built by three successive Pallava Kings who developed the Dravidian style of temple architecture within the short span of a hundred years.



Mahabalipuram was a renowned centre of arts and culture during the Pallavas. The Mahabalipuram Dance festival attracts a lot of people both for its performers and the beautiful back drop where the performances take place. Artists from around the world take part in this festival and the festival exhibits a variety of both Classical and Folk dances.

The Dance festival starts on Christmas day every year; and is conducted on all Saturdays and Government holidays right up to the first week of February.

Brihadiswara Temple, Thanjavur

Brihadiswara temple at Thanjavur is within a huge compound with walls rising above 15m. The temple is made over a 29 m square base and has a soaring vimana and a stunted gopuram. The inner sanctum and the gopuram were constructed over a period of 12 years. It was constructed from a single piece of granite weighing around 80 tonnes. The dome was hauled into place along a 4-km earthwork ramp in a manner similar to the Egyptian pyramids.

When building the Tanjore Brihadiswara temple in the 11th Century, the great Chola King, Raja Raja Chola, intended to engrave the full 108 Karanas (dance units) by Lord Shiva in the first floor of the temple's Gopura Vimanam (temple tower crowning entrance). As Raja Raja went on a war journey, only 81 of the 108 Karanas are in the finished state.

The great Bharathanatyam exponent, Dr. Padma Subramanyam has done researches based on these 108 Karanas. In recent times, all these Karanas are depicted at Satara, by her untiring effort. This shrine is called Uttara Chidambaram.

The dance festival in the temple's premises witnesses a vibrant cadre of artists, both dancers and musicians from in and around India and abroad.

Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam

Sarangapani Temple is one of the famous temples in Kumbakonam. This temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu has a tall gopuram on the eastern side. This Gopura has the Karanas arranged horizontally but not in order. They are engraved with respective names and numbers. There is a difference of opinion between scholars, whether these sculptors are of Lord Vishnu's or Siva's.

Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram

Chidambaram is popular as the 'City of the Cosmic Dancer'. The Nataraja temple is an example of the Chola Architecture. The temple is dedicated to the Dancing Form of Shiva in the form of the Lord Nataraja. And is a tribute to the art of Bharatanatyam. The deity of this sthala is Nataraja who dances to the rhythm of the cosmic



sound in the form of 'OM' - the pranava mantra. The dance of Nataraja us the essence of the five sacred syllables (pancaksaram) interprets the fivefold manifestations of creation, preservation, destruction, illusion and salvation. Lord Nataraja activates the five functions through his dance.

Just as the human heart is not in the center of the body but only a little left, so also the sanctum is a little moved to the side and not in the middle. As human blood circulates only through the sides and not straight, the entrance paths to this shrine are only at the side not aligned straight.

In the Kanaka sabha, the eighteen pillars indicate the 18 puranas, the five pillar steps the pancaksara and the 96 silver interstices denote 96 cults. The five pillars of the chit sabha indicate the 5 senses. Of the ten pillars of the Brahma Pita, the lower six stands for 6 Sastras and upper 4 for the 4 Vedas.

In the Chidambaram Temple, there are four gopurams (temple tower crowning entrances) which seem

to touch the sky. At the entrance of these gopurams, the 108 Karanas are depicted in the form of a lady dancing there. For each of the female dancing forms, two line references from Natyasastras are engraved. The first Karana, from the 108 Karanas, has reference to this. Thus all 108 Karanas are carved from the top to the bottom of these pillars.

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The presiding deity of the temple is represented by the vacuum space, which is one of the five elements (Panca Bhutham) of the universe, the others being wind, water, fire and earth. It is known as the Akasa Lingam. The temple has the statue of Nataraja made in bronze, famous all over the world.

The Natyanjali festival is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is celebrated every year during the months of February-March. The festival continues for five days with in the temple premises. The dance festival begins on the auspicious day of the Maha Shivaratri. People from around the globe await eagerly for this occasion as it serves as both an educational and entertaining opportunity. Many artists both from India and abroad part take in the festival which exhibits a multitude of talents.

The Chidambaram Natyanjali Festival is an inspiration to many young people and a divine glory for its spectators.

Vriddapurishvarar temple at Vriddhachalam

In the Vriddhapurishvarar temple at Vriddhachalam in the four gopuras we can see the 108 karana sculptures. Other than this, in the temples of Darasuram and Thiruvannamalai, dance sculptures are engraved. All these bring fame not only to our country India but also to the Natyasastra forever as a treasure which cannot be destroyed by time.

Kapalishwarar temple, Mylapore, Chennai.

The Kapalishwarar temple is 8th century AD temple but has a contemporary structure. The construction of the temple is based on the descriptions in the Puranas and the Tevaram. The temple is dedicated to the Lord Shiva. The Dance and Music season of December sees a lot of artists performing in the temple's premises.



Parvati or Karpakambal is said to have worshipped Shiva here in the form of a peacock, Mayil. This story is also depicted in Bharatanatyam, relating it by way of Padams and Varnams.

NORTH INDIAN TEMPLES

Sun Temple of Konark

The grandest and best known of all Sun temples in India is the Konark temple in Orissa. The word Konark means corner sun. This dates back to the 13th century and it represents the highest point in Orissan temple architecture. The word Konark means corner sun.



The black pagoda at Konark is a grand and magnificent temple in the form of the Sun's chariot drawn by seven horses marking the 7 days of the week. The 24 huge wheels, magnificently carved and decorated, mark the hours of the day.

Konark city is well known for a dance festival every year in the month of December namely, the Konark Dance Festival. The Konark dance festival is held in an open-air theatre, which is close to the Sun Temple with the performances by the eminent classical dancers of India. The dance festival is a virtual feast to the lovers of the classical art forms of dance and music attracts tourists from across the globe. The various dance forms like Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri and Kathak are performed at the same stage. The art and culture of India comes through during the festival. Some of the Sun temple in India are:

1. The Dakshinarka temple at Gaya, Bihar, India
2. The Bhramanya Dev Temple, Madhya Pradesh, India
3. Sun Temple at Surya Pahar, Assam, India
4. Suryanar Temple near Kumbakonam in Tamilnadu, India
5. Suryanarayanawamy temple at Arasavilli, Andhra Pradesh, India
6. The Sun Temple at Modhera, Gujarat, India

Khajuraho: The tranquil town of Khajuraho, in the central state of Madhya Pradesh boasts which is well known for their sculptures. These glorious temples are the state's most famous attraction.

The sculptures include statues of gods and goddesses, warriors, celestial dancers and animals. These



temples celebrated a Hindu faith exuberant in its love for the divine. All life was seen as an expression of divinity, including human love. The union between man and woman was viewed as the culmination of devotion, symbolic of the union of the devotee with god and divinity. The other sculptures in these temples depict the daily lives of the people in the 10th and 11th centuries AD.

The temples of Khajuraho display a wealth of sculptural beauty, evoking the splendor of the snow-capped Himalayas as well as the earthly pleasures of life.

Kandariya Mahadeo: This is the largest and most typical Khajuraho temple. There are about 900 statues. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, it soars very high. The sanctum enshrines a lingam, while the main shrine is elaborately carved and depicts various gods, goddesses, heavenly maidens in detail. The entrance arch, the huge pillars and ceilings are decorated with beautiful carvings that leave the visitor spellbound. The ceilings are particularly noteworthy and the pillars supporting them have intricately carved capitals

Matangeshwara Temple: This temple, which happens to be outside the precincts of the western group, is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It boasts of an eight feet high lingam. It is still a place of worship. South of this temple is the open air Archaeological Museum, which has a beautiful displayed collection of statues collected from the area

Duladeo Temple: Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the

highlights of this temple are the sensuous images of the heavenly maidens, and other beautiful sculptures.

Satara temple: Uttara Chidambaram temple was built by Shamanna recently in Maharashtra at Satara. Here the 108 Karanas are designed by Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam and are sculpted by Sri. Muthaiah Sthapathi with the blessings and guidance of Pujyasri Mahaswami of Kanchi.

Ajanta and Ellora: North-east of Bombay, near Aurangabad are two astonishing series of temples carved out of living rock over the course of fourteen centuries. During the 4th century AD in a remote valley, work began on the Ajanta caves to create a complex of Buddhist monasteries and prayer halls. As centuries passed, numerous Buddhist monks and artisans excavated a set of twenty-nine caves, some cells, monasteries and Buddhist temples. All of these were carved from the rock cliff at Ajanta. These caves are adorned with elaborate sculptures and paintings which have withstood the ravages of time.



The sculptures are finely wrought images of animals, guards and deities while the paintings tell ancient tales of courtly life and depict hundreds of Buddhist legends. Amid the beautiful images and paintings are sculptures of Buddha, calm and serene in contemplation.

Work started on the Ellora caves in the seventh century AD where another set of caves were created from living rock. Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism inspired these sculptors to create these elaborate rock carvings. The Buddhist and Jain caves here are ornately carved yet seem quiet and meditative whereas the Hindu caves are filled with a divine energy and power.

The most impressive and majestic creation at Ellora is the Kailasa Temple, a full-sized freestanding temple flanked by elephants carved out of solid rock. Pillars, podiums, spires and towers combine to produce an awe-inspiring representation of Shiva's Himalayan abode.

Elephanta Caves

The most profound aspect of the mighty Shiva is in evidence at the Shiva temple in the Elephanta caves. Situated near Bombay in India, these caves present an introduction to some most exquisitely carved temples. One can witness a symphony in stone in praise of Lord Shiva, created by India's expert stone carvers of the sixth century.



The Mahayogi posture symbolizes the meditative aspect of the God and here Shiva is shown in his most quiet and serene form. Other sculptures in these caves depict Shiva's cosmic dance of primordial creation and destruction and his marriage to Parvati and Shiva as 'ardhanari' (half-man/half-woman).

The Elephanta sculptures meaningfully convey the oneness of the human and the divine and the images transcend the scope of human imagination to achieve a grandeur that remains undiminished by time.



4



Dance in Classical Age

The history of dance reveals that from the earliest times, dancing has been intimately associated with religion.

The Sangam period has been assigned to the period commencing with the 5th Century B.C. and ending with the 4th Century A.D. The Sangam age in Tamil Literature was a period of great literary glory never to be surpassed in the history of any literature whatsoever. It was the production of a huge volume of Tamil poetry. The age was when the arts and the sciences flourished alike. The second century of the Christian era is called the 'Golden Age' in Tamil letters. Silappadhigaram and Manimegalai, 2 of the 5 major epics are believed to have been written during this Golden Age.

Silappadhigaram is not only one of the world's greatest literary masterpieces, but it is also a vast storehouse of information on the arts of music, dancing, building and other activities of the Ancient Tamils.

Silappadhigaram mentions that an ideal master must have thorough knowledge of the characteristics of the 2 broad divisions of Ahakkutthu and Purakkutthu. The Ahakkutthu and Purakkutthu referred to by Ilango Adigal, a poet from the Sangam age, are only the Nrtya and Nrta aspects of Bharatanatyam which are the 2 major aspects of this great art.

Purakkutthu or Nrta is pure dance which consists of movements of the body and limbs which are performed to create beauty and decorative effect and not to convey any specific meaning or idea to the beholder.

Ahakkutthu or Nrtya on the other hand is dance with facial expressions. i.e. a dance which is performed specifically to convey the meaning or import of a theme or an idea to the beholder. This Nrtya is accomplished through the use of suggestive facial expressions and codified gestures of the hands. The Pindi and Pinayal are the single handed gestures or Asamyuta Hastas and double handed gestures or Samyuta Hastas.

Drama in Tamil is also called Kutthu. It is an art which grew in harmony with music. In ancient times during festivities, artists (Kutthargal) entertained the public with their songs and dance. Paratavar and Kuravar, who were a group of nomadic folk, sang and danced for entertainment. Apart from them there were people who had this art as their profession.

In Sangam days, dance and song were prevalent in almost all fields. Of all the dancers of the Sangam, Valli kutthu, a form of folk drama was very famous. The theme of this dance was about the fame of Valli, the daughter

of a tribal chief, who brought prosperity and success to the country. Tholkappiar, a poet from the Sangam days calls it Vadavalli.

The scene of the Kuravar drinking liquor from bamboo pipes and dancing is described in Purananuru, a literary work from the Sangam days.

The scene of Paratavar dancing with the beat after drinking wine is also presented in Purananuru. This Kuravai is one among Varikutthu. This is danced by seven or eight or nine people holding hands together.

To remove bad things created by Lord Muruga, son of Lord Shiva, women sang of his fame and danced Kuravai, a form of folk dance. In 'Kurinji Pattu', Kabilar has mentioned a dance which is performed while standing on a rope. During festivals a Kutthu dance form called 'Tunangai' was danced in the streets.

The dance which was danced in front of and behind the chariot of the kings who had won a battle were called 'Munterkuravai' and 'Pinterkuravai,' respectively.

The dance which was danced by the victorious soldiers holding their swords is called 'Val Amalai.'

The epic which explains the fame of Kutthu in Tamil is Silappadigaram. The Kutthars of those days learnt all the 64 arts. The Koothu form pertaining to the kings is called 'Vethiyal' and those belonging to the rest are called 'Podhuvial'. Kuthars had training from the age of 5 to 12. After the Arangetrams which took place in the king's court, the Kutthi, the danseuse would receive gold and gems as a reward, and a title 'Thalaikol.'

This 'Thalaikol' was of a 7 hand span length. It was made of bamboo and was studded with gems. There were golden knots in between. At the beginning of Indira Vizha, a festival, Pooja was done to this. (This was reminiscent of the Jarjara Puja done in Purvarangam in dance). The stick was then given to the royal elephant and was taken for a procession along with the king who rode along with other ministers. It was then given to the dance teacher who was standing on the chariot. He would receive it and keep it at the Arangam, the performance stage. The lady dancer who received this was called 'Thalaikoli'. The Nattuvanar was called 'Thalaikol Asan'. The one who sang songs for dance was called 'Thoriya Mandanthai'.



5



Theoretical concepts of Bharatanatyam

Natya, Nrtta & Nrtya

Natya

Natya is a combination of Nrtya and Nrtta with a dramatic element to it. It is the dramatization of a theme. The most common themes in the repertoire of Bharatanatyam are mythological stories which sing praises of the deeds of the various Hindu Gods. Other themes include a number of stories of kings of different eras in whose praise many great poets have penned beautiful songs. Natya is thus the visual painting that the dancer draws to get the story across the audience. Natya thus involves, a story or a mythological episode, characters, aharya/props and bringing a theatrical experience through the rendition.

Nrtta

Nrtta has been defined as 'Nrttam-tala-layasrayam'

In classical aesthetic terms, Nrtta is pure dance that

creates sheer aesthetic delight (ananda) in the on lookers. Its basic constituents are tala and laya - time measure and rhythm. In Nrta the emphasis is on clarity of dance movements, with accompaniments provided by the Nrta Hastas or hand movements. Such movements have no hidden emotive contents and they are dance done for their own sake, creating patterns in space and time.



Nrtya

Nrtya is an integral component, using interpretative aspect of Bharatanatyam, conjuring up an attractive world of imagination. The Sanskrit term "Abhinaya" means to educate, or convey ideas to the audience. The AbhinayaDarpana, a Sanskrit text by Nandikesvara, states that actors educate the audience by stimulating in them the latent possibility of an aesthetics. This interpretation is done by movement of the limbs and gestures (angikam), by voice and through meaningful words (vacikam), by attire and decorations (aharyam) and by physical manifestations (sattvikam).



Abhinaya

Abhinaya is the art of communication. It is classified into four types:

1. Angika (physical expression)

2. Vacika (verbal expression)

3. Aharya (external expression)

4. Sattvika (internal expression)

The term Abhinaya is understood as facial expression in present day context. This actually means the combination of Mukhaja Abhinaya (expression through face) and Sattvika Abhinaya (expression the internal feelings).

A Bharatanatyam program that follows that Margam tradition begins with items like Alarippu and Jathiswaram which are based on Angika Abhinaya in which Nrta forms the main element. Subsequently there is a gradual increase in abhinaya (facial expression) with a combination of Nrta in Sabdam and Varnam after which Padams are presented that deal exclusively with Abhinaya. Sattvika abhinaya which is the term describing the internalization of the emotions of the character depicted by the dancer dominates these pieces.

Rasa

Rasa is the quality that makes an understanding between the artist and the spectator. It can be translated in the wide sense as relish or flavour but perhaps aesthetic experience gives a clearer idea of the real meaning. Rasa is a concentrated, knowledgable identification of spectator with the spectacle where as Tolstoy put it 'one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others, feelings he has lived through and the other people are interested by these feelings and also experience them.

Bhava

Bhava is the emotional and existing condition or state of the character portrayed. Bhava or state of being which is again divided into the sthayi bhavas, brought forth by vibhavas, anubhavas and sancari or vyabhicari bhavas produce the rasa.

Dharmi

Abhinaya falls into two categories namely Lokadharmi and Natyadharmi. While Lokadharmi presents emotive aspects in a natural manner in tune with the realities of life, Natyadharmi allows certain freedom and flexibility for creative embellishments. The difference lies in stylized presentation (Natyadharmi) that is the hallmark of Bharatanatyam and deviations into a more naturalistic mode of communication (Lokadharmi) that are sometimes necessary to convey the right mood or emotion.

For instance, using gestures like "Hamsasya" to indicate the flow of tears would be Natyadharmi, while actually shedding tears is Lokadharmi.

In Natyadharmi, the dancer uses "Mrgasirsa" hand gestures to call someone, while a casual wave of the hand would convey the same meaning in Lokadharmi Abhinaya.

A dancer performing in the mode of Natyadharmi may use the "Suci" hasta held at the chest level, twirling it around to indicate giddiness. In Lokadharmi, the dancer actually holds her head and staggers to convey the same meaning.

Units of Dance

Limbs of the body are classified as Angas and Upangas. Hastas are of three types - Asamyuta (single), Samyuta (double) and Nrtya (dance) hastas. The first two predominate in Nrtya while the third predominates in Nrtya. The movement of hasta is called Hasta pracara. Sthanalas are postures either standing or sitting or resting.

A combined and correlated movement of the waist, thigh, shank and foot is called cari. Since the foot is important in these four limbs, it is generally being mentioned that cari is padapracara i.e., the movement of foot.





6



Traditional Concepts of Bharatanatyam

Siksarambham (Initiation of Learning)

In the ancient method of learning, the student has to take an oil bath and an elderly person will take the student to the class. The students carry with them coconut, beetal leaves, fruits and new clothes as an offering to the Guru and get their blessings.

The Guru after receiving the offerings applies kumkum on the forehead and commences the classes. It is customary for a student to perform the Katakavardhana or Sikhara mudra with heels together and tap the ground with both feet, one after another. After paying respect to Mother Earth in reverential gesture he / she offers salutation to the Almighty and the Guru. This serves as a preamble and is in vogue from time immemorial.

In olden times there were certain qualities / lakshanam that performers / teachers had to possess to become eligible to exhibit their talents in their respective field of arts. Anyone who lacked in these

was considered in eligible and was disqualified to perform. AbhinayaDarpana quotes the techniques that build qualities desirable for a dancer as follows.

Tattikumbidal (Salutation)

The class or concert always starts and finishes with the tattikumbidal / Namaskaram. These are Tamil and Sanskrit words for salutation.

The feet are together (samap5da position) Hold the hands at the chest level holding Katakamukha or Sikhara keeping a distance of one span. Look forward. Slightly with a dip lift right leg and stand straight.



Slightly with a dip lift and strike the left leg. Stretch the armstowards front with Sikhara hasta facing inwards



Bring both the Sikhara hastas towards the shoulder.



Extend arms, sweep shoulders, parallel to the and after changing them brought down in a semi hand movement.



Extend Sikhara to pataka, sikhara hands are brought down in a semicircle follow the right hand movements slowly descend to aramanclalam. Sit in muzhu-manclalam, bringing arms parallel to touch the floor in catura hasta.

Turn palms inwards and brings hands to eyes to do obeisance to Goddess Earth



Bring the hands to the top of the heads for supreme being.

Get up gradually looking to the front and come back to sama position, feet together turn.

Tatti kumbidal is performed at the beginning of every dance practice and performance.

It signifies a spiritual approach to the dance. The dancer requests forgiveness from Mother Earth (Bhomi Devi) for stamping her. She also seeks purification of the dance arena / stage and blessing from the presiding deities, her elders and gurus and her audience.



Posture

Perfect posture is the main quality which a student should aim to attain. Like Yoga, the perfect posture helps in balancing the inter relationship between the body and the mind which is the central component for dance.

Each posture in Bharatanatyam is backed by a rationale and falls within prescribed parameters.

Several years of training, dedication and hard work is necessary to master Bharathanatyam. Abhinaya Darpana, the ancient dance treatise speaks of the qualities expected of dancers as follows:

yato hastas tato drsti
yato drstis tato manah
yato manastato bhavo
yato bhavas tato rasalr

Where the hand goes, there goes the eye, where the eye goes, there goes the mind, where the mind goes there goes the emotional state and where the emotion goes there arises the sentiment.

In other words, a perfect performance is one where there is complete synchronization of the hands, the eyes, the mind and the emotion of the dancer.

Dancer's workout (Guidelines for practice)

A few workouts which are useful in the execution of the Adavus are described below.

The first important rule is to wear a proper outfit in which you can see your body line and feel comfortable so that you can work with proper alignment. Wear the



material which is suitable and can breathe better like cotton / blend with light polyester. You can wear a salwar kameez with slits on the sides of the kameez, with a long dupatta draped or the mini saree with the Blouse and Pyjama.

General Rules:

1. Saustavam should be adopted and all the three tempos should be practiced. The gastras describe six

tempos.

2. Practice should be done in front of the mirror. Without perfecting the adavus you should not get trained in Alarippu, Jatisvaram and Padam because the foundation will not be strong.

3. When you practice the adavus the sollukattu should not be told openly.

4. When you perform adavu it should be neither very fast nor very slow and always be in the right tempo.

5. Strike the foot with the front toes and not with the heels, the resulting sound should be pleasing and firm so that the dancer would be able to perform for a longer time.



7



Basic Foot Steps

Adavu

The term Adavu, the unit of contemporary dance has many interpretations regarding its origin. Historians believe it must have had its origin from the erms adu, adaivu, adal, adagu and meikkattadaivu, etc.

In Tamil, the term Adavu is derived from the Tamil word 'adaivu,' which means 'to reach' or 'to arrive,' i.e. starting from a particular point and reaching another.

What words are to a language, Adavu is to dance. It makes communication meaningful while fusing different aspects of dance to create a seamless continuity and fluidity.

Adavu have also the same combination as Karana mentioned in the Natyasastra, but Adavus are not Karanas.

Adavu comprises three major components, sthanas, hand gestures and feet movements. Karanas of Natyasastra comprises of Sthana (body position) Cari

(leg movement) and Nrta Hasta (the movement of hands). Karana is the precursor of Adavus done today. Bharata's Natysastra describes 108 types of Karanas. However, today's adavus are only 300 years old and are very different from Bharata's Karanas, which placed a clear emphasis on full use of legs and not just the feet as in modern times.

Sorkattu (Rhythmic Syllables):

Two different types of rhythmic syllables are used for Adavus. One is the Thatthaharam used in Vaguppu (class). The rhythmic syllables like Thai ha Thai hi, Thaiyum Thatha, Thaiyum Taha, Ditthithai, Tha Thai Thai Tha are used by teachers to teach students in class. The same Adavus, when mixed with Jathi, are produced on the stage as Mrdanga word patterns. The rhythmic syllables like Thadinginathom, Kitathaka Tharikitathom and Jumjum tatanaka are very beautiful to listen to, but difficult to pronounce. So, when the students murmur these words while dancing it will not be good. If the dancer sports a smile, not compromising on lip movement at the same time, the expression will not be ruined. One should learn to practice the Thathahara words which are normally used with Adavus. After becoming well trained while dancing on the stage with proper word patterns and the knowledge of Jathi, it is important to pronounce the Thalam as well. It is to be noted that all the adavus listed below are done in three to four tempos known as 'kalams.'

The classification / execution of these adavus varies from one school to another.

I. Thattadavu - Striking the floor with the sole of the feet

The word 'Thattu' means 'to strike.' The flat sound of striking the dance floor, using the hollow of the foot is a knack that is to be mastered by a student of dance. The first position is called the Natyaarambam, or the beginning of dance, where the basic stance is 'Araimandi,' where the hands are outstretched with the Pataka hand gesture.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sitting posture, where the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel
2. Hand Gestures: Hands on Waist
3. Variations of Hand Gestures: Hands in Pataka hasta with arms extended in Natyaarambham.
4. Rhythmic Syllables: "Thai Ya Thai Yi"
5. Foot Position: Mardhitham
6. Method: After assuming the Mandala Sthanam, with wrists on the waist, the arms should be kept in line with the body. Lift each foot and step on the ground with a precise and firm beat in exact timing to the rhythmic syllables. The number of times each foot strikes the ground is the only variation in this adavu group. It should be done once with each foot, twice with each foot, and so on.

II. Nattadavu

The word 'Nattudhal' in Tamil means 'to firmly root' or 'reinforce'. In Nattu-adavu, the use of heels is

prominent. It is performed by stretching one leg and striking with the heels.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sit, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel.
2. Hand Gestures: Tripatakam
3. Variations of Hand Gestures: Patakam, Katakamukham and Alapadmam
4. Foot Positions: Ancitam, Agratalasancaram and Svastikam
5. Rhythmic Syllables ; "Thaiyum Thaththa Thaiyum Thaha"
6. Method: Right foot extended in Ancitam, diagonally to the right, with the knee held straight and then brought back to step firmly in first position. At the same time, the extended right hand in Tripataka gesture the palm is turned up followed by palm down. This is repeated starting with the left foot and hand.

There are 8 variations to this group depending on the following factors:

- 1) Number of times each movement is done or how the extended Ancitha pada is held.
- 2) Whether the foot is brought back to original position immediately or held in position perfectly balanced, while the other foot is struck firmly.

There are variations of the same step with a 'Thai Thai Dhi Dhi Thai' at the end. The foot is also held in Agratala Sancaram or Svastikam and the hand gestures vary.

III. Mardhita adavu / (Mittu Adavu)

The Mardhita Adavu is also called 'Mitttu Adavu' or 'tha thai thai tha' adavu, since the body and the hands make a full swing to the front and sideways during the movement.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel.
2. Hand Gestures: Katakamukham and Alapadmam
3. Variations of Hand Gestures: Patakam, Tripatakam and Sikharam.
4. Rhythmic Syllables: 'Tha thai thai tha-dhith thai thai tha'
5. Foot Positions: Udhghattitam and Mardhitam
6. Method: Right foot strikes in place while the right hand is extended in front in Alapadmam. Then right foot strikes again a little more to the right and forward while the right hand is stretched to the side; the left foot is then held behind the right in Svastikam while the right hand is stretched to the back. Right foot strikes again in place while the hand is brought back to the original position.

This exercise is repeated starting from the left side. In this adavu, one foot follows the other with in erring precision while the hands assume Mudras changing from Katakamukham (from chest level) to Alapadmam. The exercise may vary in terms of direction or the hand gestures.

IV (a): Pakka Adavu - 'Thai thai tham' Adavu

The Pakka Adavu can also be described as the Reaching Adavus, wherein the dancer strives to reach the sides. It is also known by the sorkattus as 'Thai thai tham' Adavu, since the body and hands make a full swing to both the sides and also above the head during the movement.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel
2. Hand Gestures: Katakamukham, Alapadmam, tripatakam and Dolam etc.
3. Variations of Hand Gestures: Patakam, Tripatakam and Sikharam.
4. Rhythmic Syllables: 'Thai thai tham - Thai thai thai'
5. Foot Positions: Udhghattitam and Mardhitam
6. Method: Right foot strikes on the side while both the hands are extended above the head in Katakamukha mudra with the left foot striking and returning to original positions and with the hands crossed at wrists in Alapadma mudra. The exercise is repeated on the left side and may vary in terms of direction or the hand gestures.

IV (b): Pakka Adavu or 'tha thai thai tha' Adavu (Moving):

Pakkam in Tamil means 'sides' and in this context it denotes sideward movement.

1. Basic Stance; Mandala Sthanam or Half-fitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel.
2. Hand Gestures: Katakamukham, Alapadmam, Dolam etc.
3. Variations of Hand Gestures; None
4. Rhythmic Syllables: 'Tha thai thai tha'
5. Foot Positions: Udhghattitam and Mardhitam
6. Method: In this Adavu, the dancer moves to the sides with one foot flat and with the other placed behind, resting on the toes. The hands move in Alapadmam and Katakamukham around the body in a circular fashion.

V. Villadavu

This Adavu is based on Nattadavu. The word 'Villu' in the Tamil language denotes a bow. Thus the whole body arches toward the side in the Adavu.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sitting posture, where the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, the legs turned out in parallel.
2. Hand Gestures: Katakamukham and Alapadmam
3. Variations of Hand Gestures: None
4. Rhythmic Syllables: 'Thaiyum thath tha thaiyum tha ha'
5. Foot Positions: Ancitam
6. Method: Right foot extended in Ancitam to the right

side of the body while the left foot strikes; hands in Alapadma hasta; then right foot is turned to Kuncitam and the body is turned towards the left while the eyes follow the right hand, hands in Katakamukha hasta, and the left foot strikes.

Then the right foot is extended in Ancitam to the front while both hands are extended toward the foot in front; hands in Alapadma hasta, and the left foot strikes once again, followed by the right foot coming back to its original position and hands in Katakamukha hasta, concluded by the left foot striking.

This entire process is repeated, reversing the feet.

VI. Kutthadavu / Ettadavu / 'Thath thai tha-ha' Adavu

Like in the 'Kudhithumettadavu Mettu', the dancer jumps low with perfect poise with her toes firmly footed on the floor. This is an important adavu, which is used very often in the Nrta sequences. The step is executed with precision and grace, which makes this step a very important aspect of the pristine form of Bharatanatyam.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half- sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel.
2. Hand Gestures: Tripatakam
3. Variations of Hand Gestures; None
4. Rhythmic Syllables: 'Thath thai tha ha-dhith thai tha ha'

5. Foot Positions: Agratala Sancharam and Udghattitam
6. Method-1: With right foot striking and at the same time extending the right arm with hands in Tripataka hasta; palm up, to the right side and head turned towards hand; then reversing this exercise on left side; this is followed by a low jump on both feet and at same time looking at the Tripataka hand in front of the chest, hand in palm up position; then turning palm down, lifting face to look straight and same time striking the right foot on floor, while left foot remains in raised heel position.

Method-2: Hands in Tripataka hasta in front of the chest with the palms facing each other. At 'Thath,' the right foot strikes while the dancer extends the right hand to the right side toward the floor while the palm facing the audience.

At 'Thai,' the left foot strikes holding the same position

At 'Tha' the body jumps low, well-balanced and at the same time, the hand extends above the head, palm up.

Then at 'Ha,' the right foot strikes and the right hand comes all the way down to the floor in a sweeping motion.

This is repeated on the left side.

Palms of both hands face upward in front of chest in Tripataka hasta.

At 'Thath,' there is a jump on both toes with body in perfect balance.

At 'Thai,' the hand is extended to the right side towards the floor, palm facing the floor. At 'Ta' and 'Ha' the same set of motions is repeated on the left side.

Then again, both sides are repeated but this time the hand is taken diagonally forward and upward, palm facing out.

VII. Thattimettadavu

The Tamil word "Thattu" means to beat "Mettu" means 'to strike.' In these steps, which comprise of the five different nadai groups, the dancer uses her/his whole foot, in combination with striking only the toes on the floor or only the heel on the floor.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel.
2. Hand Gestures: Tarnracuclann, Patakam etc.,
3. Variations in Hand Gestures: Kapittham, Katakannukham, Dolam etc.,
4. Rhythmic Syllables or Sorkattu:

'Thakitta'	(3 beats)
'Thaka Dhimi'	(4 beats)
'Thaka Thakitta'	(5 beats)
Thakitta Thaka Dhimi'	(7 beats)
Thaka Dhimi Thaka Thakitta'	(9 beats)
5. Foot Positions; Samam, Udhghattitam and Agratala Saficaram

6. Method; Striking the right foot flat; the toes of the left foot are first hit followed by the left foot hitting the heels. The numbers vary from 3 to 9 in total beat counts. All the foot work patterns are the same as above except the increase occurs with the use of the heel on both feet in 'Thaka Dhimi,' where the entire foot strikes followed by the lifting and placing of the right heel. This followed by the toe heel movement of the left foot. Thus, by adding a 'Thai' or flat strike and by joining the Thakitta and Thaka Dhimi, the dancer can increase the beats from 3 all the way to 9 or more.

VIII. Kudhitthu Mett'adavu / Mettu Adavu:

The word 'Kudhitthu' in the Tamil language means 'to Jump.' Thus, in this Adavu, the jump is executed by using the toes of both the feet. After jumping lightly with both the toes, the heels strike the floor together. Different kinds of hand movements are possible with the same kind of footwork in 'Araimandi.'

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel.
2. Handgestures: Katakamukham, Alapadmam, Tripatakam etc,
3. Variations of Hand Gestures; Sikaram, Patakam etc,
4. Rhythmic Syllables : 'Thai ha thai hi.'
5. Foot Positions: Agratala Saficaram, Ghatithotsedham
6. Method: Jumping on toes of both feet with a proper

poise and stance, followed by placing the heels firmly on ground with full force, this movement of toes and heel is known as Udghattitam. The hands, at first, are in Katakamukha hasta in front of chest and then are extended in Natyarambham and Alapadma hasta, followed by Svastika Alapadmam in front of chest, and then either extended sideways or held in same place while the hands change to Katakamukha hasta.

For each gesture, the dancer performs the toe-heel movement.

Hands can also be held in Tripataka hasta and each hand is gracefully stretched to the sides, and taken in are from low to high.

IX. Sarikai Adavu / Thai ya thai yi Adavu.

In this Adavu, the dancer uses the gliding movement (This adavu uses the gliding movement or Sarukkal) of the feet and hands in the standing position. Effective use of the toes and heel and the jerking movement at the end to the set measure, make this an interesting combination. This is one of the rare Adavu sets in the pure dance repertoire that does not use the 'Araimandi stance.

A variety of hand gestures like gestures like Hamsapaksam on the shoulder and Ardha Chandran on the hips.

1. Basic Stance: Sannapadam
2. Hand Gestures; Patakam, Katakamukham and Alapadmam

3. Variations in Hand Gestures: Dolam and Mrg8irsam
4. Rhythmic Syllables : 'Thai-ya thai-yi'
5. Foot positions: Sampadam and Tadam
6. Method: The entire step is based on the swing of the body while the legs may either slide on the floor or be lifted and placed. The adavu begins with a slide towards the right with the hands stretched sideways in Pataka formation. What follows this is the slide towards the left, which continues till the point of origin is reached and the hands assume Patakam at the chest level. Similarly, during the forward slide, the hand gestures are changed to Katakamukham and Alapadmam.
7. Variations: This movement involves swinging the foot in front, side and back also.

X. Simir Adavu

Simir is 'to open.' This Adavu is performed with the hands opened out from the original position. It mimes movements that go with drawing beautiful, oblique lines.

1. Basic Stance: Muzhu Mandi
2. Hand Gestures: Patakam, Tripatakam, Katakamukham, Alapadmam
3. Variations in Hand Gestures: Dolam, Mrg8irsann
4. Rhythmic syllables : 'thai-thai-thath tha' or Thath-thai-tham'
5. Foot positions: Suci, Udghattitam
6. Method: This movement involves slipping the foot in front, side and back. During the execution of this

Adavu, there is a beautiful spring action when one leg is outstretched backwards from the Muzhu Mandi stance.

XL Mandi Adavu

Though this Adavu is known to have 25 distinct forms, currently only 4 or 5 are practiced. "Mandi" means 'to sit all the way down to the floor, with bent knees.' (Movements lowered to the ground level and balanced on the toes) - a slight jump on toes followed by the knee touching the floor.

1. Basic Stance: Mandi or Full-sitting posture (Motitam)
2. Hand Gestures: Tripatakam
3. Variations in Hand Gestures: Patakam, Katakamukham, Alapadmam, Sikaram
4. Rhythmic syllables : '1Tham dhi tham, thai tha thai' or 'Thaiyum thath tha thaiyum tham'
5. Foot positions: Muzhu Mandi
6. Method: With body in full sitting posture, the dancer jumps on the toes and then places her knee or the other on the floor. Hands are extended sideways in Tripataka Hasta and with right palm up and then placed down when the right knee hits the floor. Then this movement is repeated on the left side. Extensions of hands and extension of the legs are the known variations in this group.

XII. Sarukkal Adavu

This Adavu may also be called the gliding adavu.

A prominent feature in this Adavu is the swing of

the body while the legs may either slide on the floor or be lifted and placed. "Sarukkal" means to slip or slide. This movement involves slipping the foot in the front, side and back. This Adavu is also called the peacock Adavu as the movements involved are similar to that of a dancing peacock.

During the execution of this Adavu, there is a beautiful spring action when one leg is outstretched backwards from the Muzhu Mandi stance.

1. Basic Stance: Muzhu Mandi
2. Hand Gestures: Tripatakam, Katakamukham, Alapadmam.
3. Variations of Hand Gestures: Dolam, Mrgagirsam
4. Rhythmic Syllables or Sorkattu: Thangidu thatta dhinna / thaka dhimi-thaka janu/ thath thai tham-dhi thai tham.
5. Foot Positions: Muzhu Mandi
6. Method: The entire step is based on the sliding of one foot or both the feet. The Adavu begins with Sikara gesture, with a leap and a slide of right toes to the right side, with the right hand stretched left side in Pataka gesture. These movements are reversed. Variations can be with the Katakamukha / Alapadma gesture. Similarly, during the foot stretched backwards.

XIII. Sutral Adavu or Bhramari Adavu.

This step involves a beautiful deflection of the body. Foot positions change from leaps and turns to stretches that comprehensively demonstrate the variations.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanann or Half-sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel / Samapadam or standing posture.
2. Hand Gestures; Shikaram, pathakam, Katakamukham, Alapadmam etc.
4. Rhythmic Syllables or Sorkattu; 'Thalangu thorn / Thath-thai tham-dhith thai tham
5. Foot positions: Muzhu Mandi
6. Method; Hands begin with Sikaram and using the tapping of both feet, the hands change to Patakam and then the body turns to Muzhu mandi positions, hands in Katakamukham. The movements then involve a turn towards the front with legs and arms outstretched in Alapadma position. Then a full turn with hands above head completes this step.
7. Variations: Moving sideways, half-turn and full-turn positions etc.

XIV. Paichal Adavu or Utpluta Adavu

This Adavu embellishes the endings or Korvais or series of steps. The leaps and jumps taken by the dancer are on an instinctive and excited state and thus the entire experience is that of a precise finish and beauty.

1. Basic stance; Mandala sthanam or Half-sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel / Samapadam or standing posture.
2. Hand Gestures; Katakamukham, Alapadmam

3. Variations of Hand Gestures; Tripatakam, Patakam, Sikaram etc.
4. Rhythmic Syllables or Sorkattu; 'Thangidu thath tha dhin-na; thath-thai-dhith thai tham; thalangu thorn.
5. Variations of foot positions : Samam, Udhghattitam
6. Method: Measured leaps, turns or jumps into Muzhu mandi position.

XV. Korvai Adavu / That thai tham Adavu

The word 'Korvai' in tamil means 'to compile' or 'to string together'

A combination of Tattu, Nattu, Svastika, Paichal, etc are performed in this Adavus. In the context of Adavus, it means to string together several feet positions in a sequence.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel
2. Hand Gestures: Shikaram, Alapadmam, Tripatakam
3. Rhythmic Syllables: That thai tham
5. Foot positions: All Varieties

XVI A. Theermana adavu / Makuta Adavu - 1/ thari-kita-thom

'Makutam' in Sanskrit means crown, and true to its name, this Adavu forms the high point of a concert. This is an important Adavu, since a given dance sequence like a Korvai or a Thirmanam usually ends with this. It is

generally performed at a faster tempo and the dancer appears to draw straight lines when this Adavu is performed.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala Sthanam or Half-sitting posture, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel
2. Hand Gestures: Tripatakam
3. Variations of Hand Gestures: None
4. Rhythmic Syllables: 'Dhi dhi thai' or 'Tha dhi gina thorn'
5. Foot positions: Nattu
6. Method: The Tripatakam right hand is extended forward, palm up, while the right foot is extended forward in Akita padam. During the execution of 'Dhi dhi thai' the foot strikes while the right hand is brought towards the chest with palms up or forward, then at the 'Thai,' the right foot strikes while the right hand is extended, all the way towards the back with the palm turned back. Variations can be given when one increases the number of steps before the 'Dhi dhi thai' is done, 'Thai dhi dhi thai,' 'Thai thai dhi thai,' and so on

XVI B. Theermana adavu / Makuta Adavu - 2 / Kita-thakathari-kita-thom

This Adavu can also be called the Makuta Adavu. This is an important culmination Adavu, which gives a variation to the 'Thadhi-ghina-thom' Adavu.

Many of the Korvais or sequence of Adavu end with this step, because it gives a finality to the number of steps set.

1. Basic Stance: Mandala sthanam or Half-sitting posture position, wherein the dancer holds her knees folded and turned outwards, with the legs turned out in parallel
2. Hand features: Patakam, Ardha-chandra and Alapadmam
3. Variations in Hand Gestures: Katakamukham
4. Rhythmic Syllables or Sorkattu: 'Kita-thaka-thari-kita-thom'
5. Foot positions; Aficitam, Mardhitam
6. Method: Hands start in Patakam and then the left hand stretches back in Ardha-chandram / Katakamukham and then Alapadmam and goes above the head and diagonally comes down in the front to reach the opposite knee. At same time, the right foot executes the 'Dhi-dhi-thai' Adavu.

This whole process is reversed. Additional taps or counts known as 'Thai' or 1-2-3 count, increase the length of this Adavu



CLASSIFICATION OF ADAVUS

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Tattu Adavu | striking the floor with the sole of the feet. |
| 2. Nlattu Adavu | Striking the floor with the heel with the toe kifted upwards. |
| 3. Mardhita Adavu | Brushing the floor with the foo |
| 4. Pakka Adavu | Svastika position is given importance. |
| 5. Vill Adavu | Whole body is arched |
| 6. Kuttu Adavu | Striking the toes of both feet simultaneously, with a slight jump. |
| 7. Thatti Mettu Adavu | Strike the ground, raise the h e e l and restrike resting the toes on the ground. |
| 8. Kudittumettu Adavu | Jumping on toes and striking the ground with the heel while retaining the toes contact with the ground. |
| 9. Sarikai Adavu | To move without lifting the foot/feet. |

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 10. Shimir Adavu | The body movements go withdrawing beautiful oblique lines |
| 11. Mandi Adavu | Importance is to muzhumandi |
| 12. Sarukkal Adavu | Sliding |
| 13. Sutral Adavu | Whirling |
| 14. Paichal Adavu | Leaps and jumps |
| 15. Korvai Adavu | A combination of Tattu, Nattu, Korvai Svastika, Paichal, etc. |
| 16. Makuta Adavu | Usually as an end of a sequences. Every "korvai" or sequence of asavus ends in conclusion called the thirmanam. This is a sequence of 3 repetitions of the same step that are either identical or in ascending order. |

SANGITA

Sangita is defined in old texts as follows:

"Gitam vadyam nrtyam trayam sangitamucyate"

This means vocal music, instrumental music and dance are mutually dependant on each other and sangita includes all these three arts together.

According to history it is from Sannagana, that the music of India developed. The primary treatise on this is the Samaveda and its sub-text (Upaveda) Gandharvaveda. The earliest available text in music what

we know today is Sage Bharatha's NatyaMstra.

Some of the great composers on dance were Kshetrajna, Tanjavur Quartet, Muvallur Sabapathy Iyer, Melattur Venkatarama Shastri, Dandayudapani Pillai, Papanasam Sivam, and others. It is essential for a dancer to understand the sahitya or meaning of the lyrics and rhythmic variations of the musical compositions in order to do justice to the compositions.

LAYA

It is the tempo speed or kalapramana. Three degrees of speed / laya are recognized for all practical purposes:

Name of	laya	Speed
	Vilambita	Slow
	Madhyma	Medium
	Dhurita	Fast

Jati

It is a minute division of the time cycle within each avartanam, since each avartanam can be set to different internal rhythms.

These are five in number :

Name	Counts	Rhythmic Syllables
TiSram	3	ta ki ta
CatuSram	4	ta ka dhi mi
Khanclam	5	ta ka ta ki ta
MiSram	7	ta ka dhi mi ta ki ta
Sankirnam	9	ta ka dhi mi ta ka ta ki ta

TALA

Tala or the time measure forms the back bone of music and dance. It is the regulating factor for both the music and dance compositions. The Nrta sequences are composed by permutations and combinations of the aclus, woven together for a certain time measure and rhythm. Thus for a student of dance it is very essential to know about the time measure or tala. This will help the students to commence or end the dance sequence, before going to the next sequence or the Abhinaya line.

In Bharatha's time there existed 108 talas under the Margi form (based on old technical treatises). Later many new talas came into being under Degi form (informal, local forms).

The different types of talas are distinguished by the different combinations of laghu, dhrtam and anudhrtam. Laghu is one beat followed by a specific count marked by counting the fingers. Dhrtam is one beat and one open palm while anudhrtam is just one beat.

The various Talas are distinguished by different Avartanas. Avartana is one full cycle of counts in a particular tala. For e.g. Adi Talam has 8 counts. When we complete 8 counts we say that one Avartana is complete. The next 8 counts will be the 2nd Avartana.

In the Carnatic music system seven talas are used most frequently: Aksara and Jai

Talam	counts	laghus	anudhrtam	dhrtam
Dhruva	14	3	-	1
Mattiya	10	2	-	1
Rupaka	6	1	-	1
Ada	14	2	-	2
Tripata	7	1	-	2
Jampa	10	1	1	1
Eka	4	1	-	-



Treatises on Dance

The following are the names of a few Sanskrit texts on Dance! Natyasastra, Sangita Ratnakara, Nitta Ratnavali, Bharatarnavarn, Abhinaya Darpanam & Sangita Saramrta and in Tamil, Tolkaplyam, Paricamarabu & Kottanal.

Natyasastra written almost two million years ago by Sage Bharata a treatise that discusses all relevant subjects connected to the stage. This voluminous work composed almost entirely in 6000 couplet and is divided into 36 chapters. Besides other valuable data on the history of ancient Indian culture, the Natyasastra discusses topics about:

Chapters of Natyasastra:

1. Origin of Natya
2. Construction of Play-house
3. Worship of Gods of the Theatre
4. Characteristics of Bharatanatyam Dance
5. Rites of the Prologue

- 6 Rasas or Sentiments
- 7 Exposition of Emotions or Bhavas
- 8 Actions of the Head
- 9 Gestures of Hands
- 10 Actions of Limbs of the Body
- 11 Carl movements
- 12 Mandala Movements
- 13 Different Gaits
- 14 Divisions, Usages and Conventions
- 15 Section on Prosody
- 16 Enumeration of metres
- 17 Characteristics and Embellishments
- 18 Use of Languages
- 19 Formation of Sentences
- 20 Ten types of Dramas
- 21 Enumeration of Junctures
- 22 Divisions of Styles
- 23 Costumes and Makeup
- 24 Generic Representation
- 25 Art of Courtesans
- 26 Special Representation
- 27 Indication of Success
- 28 Classification of Musical Notes
- 29 Rules of String Instruments

- 30 Rules of Wind Instruments
- 31 Rules of Solid Instruments
- 32 Dhruva Songs
- 33 Rules of Covered Instruments
- 34 Types of Characters
- 35 Distribution of Roles
- 36 Descent of Natya on Earth

The Abhinaya Darpana was written by Nandikesvara presumably between 3rd and 4th century AD. Abhinaya Darpana's script is in telugu and it is generally believed that Nandikesvara hailed from andhrapradesh. This book consists of 324 slokas in a single chapter. Unlike the Nlatyagas- tra, the Abhinaya Darpana predominantly deals with the gestures of head, eyes, neck, hand gestures representing Gods, Dasavtaras, castes, relations, etc. and the mandalas, utplavanas, bhramaris, cans and gatis employed in dance. All South Indian dance forms like Kuchipudi & Bharatanatyam follow this text extensively.

The author of 'Natysastrai is undoubtedly the Sage Bharata who was initiated by Brahma himself in the art of Dancing. All of the important styles of Indian classical dances are based on the rules laid down by Bharata in his treatise.

Hence each of these styles is a regional variation of Bharatanatyam. However, what we now call Bharatanatyam is, in fact, strictly traditional and the purest form of dance. This dance form has survived in the southern part of the subcontinent in spite of centuries of social and political disturbances. This 3000 year old art is still

as fresh and fascinating as it must have been when it inspired the sculptors who have left their imagination on stone. Thus India became a land where the teaching of the Sages and Saints was imparted not only through learning and philosophy but through arts, music and dance.



9



Repertoire of Bharatanatyam

The sequence of performance in Bharatanatyam has been structured and codified by the word Margam. This sequence and brief description of each item as seen from the earlier times is given Below:

Alarippu : Alarippu means to adorn with flowers or blossoming out. The dance gradually starts with a simple movement of the eyes, neck, hand and feet and blossoms out displaying beautiful abstract movements in accordance with the drum syllabus recited by the nattuvanar playing the cymbal. This is usually an invocatory item.

Jathisvaram: It is an item of pure dance displaying beautiful rhythmical patterns. The music is composed of svaras or musical notes set to a particular raga and tala. The item starts with a simple Jathi followed by korvais.

Sabdam : Abhinaya is introduced in this item. The lyrics in the abdam are very simple and based on deities or sometimes the patrons. The four lines in the Sabdam

are interrupted by small Jathis.

Varnam: Varnams performed in a dance recital are called as Pada Varnam. Varnam meaning colour is a blend of both pure dance and abhinaya in depth. It is an item of Nritya and the most complex piece in a Bharatanatyam recital.

Padam: Padams give exclusive importance to abhinaya. The music structure of the padam consists of Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam

Basically Padams deal with the lovelorn heroines in various moods. Generally, the tempo of the Padams are slow.

Javali : Javali are lighter forms of padams both in music as well as theme. The lyrics are more direct. Abhinaya is more of realistic approach. _lavas are sung in faster tempo than padam.

Kirthanam: Kirthanams are basically devotional music addressed to various deities. So the Abhinaya is also Bhakthi based. The dance is elaborated on the episodes and stories from mythology.

Thillana: Thillana is an item dominated by Nrta, pure dance. Beautiful, rhythmic patterns are woven together highlighting the aesthetic dance movements. The sahityam ends with the signature or mudra of the music composer.

Mangalam: The recital generally ends with a mangalam, a short prayer in praise of the supreme based on the bhakti mood. It is an auspicious conclusion seeking the Almighty's blessings for good things.



10



Scope for Bharatanatyam

Dance gives an experience in which an artist can feel and express the emotions of the character performed. An actor who takes up the different characters feels their emotions psychologically, becomes one with them, forgets himself and is not able to control himself. The audience who sees this will not be able to express their happiness and excitement in words. The audience can share the joys and sorrows of the character within their heart. Thus, dance can be experienced both by the artist and the audience.

This dance which makes the knowledge of a person grow sharper, makes the watching audience feel that their artistic knowledge has increased significantly. The soul transcends the intellect. Devotion enables one to achieve spiritualism and growth. There are three different paths of knowing God, namely, the way of Bhakti (devotion), Karma (action) and Mariam (wisdom). All of these help a person to know God through their thoughts, words and actions, and through the utmost



devotion. As one can achieve spiritual satisfaction through dance, dance was considered as an important feature of worship in temples.

In today's fast moving world, Bharatanatyam has established its individuality in many ways. It has become an art which gives exercise not only to the body but also gives financial support to the artist. Many who have learnt this art have brought it to foreign countries, not only to spread the art, but also to improve their own financial position. People belonging to different religions show interest in this art and enjoy it. At present in foreign countries, many dance schools are being started in almost every street, and all different types of students (diverse in age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) join these schools and learn the art. This has proved the fact that Bharatanatyam is growing to be an eternal art.

Bharata says in his Natyashastra that those who practice this art properly and those who watch and enjoy it will surely attain moksha ie. spiritual bliss.

There is a lot of connection between features of the individual such as body, mind, intellect and soul. We work hard and lead our lives based on our intellect. We derive happiness from the emotions that arise in our hearts. Just as the happiness of body and mind are important, so also is the happiness of the soul. Dance gives happiness to all aspects of an individual-the body, mind, intellect and soul. This happiness is felt not only by the dancers but also by the sahrdaya ie. the audience who are of same mental calibre.

The specialty of dance is filling a vacuum with



beautiful organized patterns. To make the movements of the body more attractive, the dance needs a beautiful structure. From a young age, every part of the body should be given practice and training. As a result, the nerves and the bones become strengthened. The body thus gains strength and elegance. Glowing eyes and a radiant appearance are the gifts of dance too. Dance shapes the body and makes the audience feel happy to see the dancers. Nowadays one can see students all over the world who study the history of Bharatanatyam, its rules and principles with a lot of interest and without spoiling its ancient tradition. A 50 year old man can look 25 due to the practice of Yoga. Proper practice and training in dance can also give such results. The main aim of Yoga is to curtail the body and mind. The same is an aim of dance, which hence becomes a form of Yoga.



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Glossary

Abhinaya	- Communicating the idea to the audience through body, speech, costumes and mental conditions.
Adavu	- Basic foot steps (combined with hand gestures) in Bharatanatyam.
Akgiki Can	- Movement of the legs with one foot or both raised in air.
Angahara	- Combination of Karanas or longer sequence of garland movements.
AngaSuddham	- The perfect stance of the body.
Araimandi	- The basic stance for Bharatanatyam which is the Mandala sthana or half-sitting position.
Arangetram	- Debut recital, the first recital given by a dancer on stage.
Asanas	- Sitting postures.
Asravya	- that which is not heard.
Bani	- a term used to describe different various styles of Bharathanatyam.
Bhava	- Feeling
Bhumi caa	- Movement of a foot when the feet on the ground.

Brahmasutra	- Balance of body along the vertical median.
Cari	- the movement with a single foot at time.
Desi	- Regional variations. Guru One who dispells darkness/ preceptors of Vedas/ the name given for all teachers of traditional arts.
Karana	- A combined movement of hands and feet in dance.
Krti	- A musical composition in Karnatic
Mandala	- Combination of Caris / used for portraying fighting sequences.
Margi	- Traditional
Mrdangam	- A two headed drum played to accompany Karnatic music Vocal or Instrumental, as well as dance styles such as Bharathanatyam, Kuchipudi etc.
Nataka	- A dramatic composition.
Nattuvangam	- A pair of cymbals used for conducting dance recitals.
Nattuvanar	- A person who holds the cymbals, speaks the rhythmic sollukattus and conducts a Bharatanatyam orchestra. - Dance comprising of dramatic contents.
Natya	- Dance Comprising of dramatic

	contents.
Natyagrha	- A playhouse
Natyarambham	- Hands stretched out in shoulder level for commencing the dance.
Nrtta	- Rhythmic dance.
Nrtya	- Mime along with rhythmic dance.
Padam	- A poem set to music and enacted in Bharatanatyam.
Pindibandha	- A group choreographical pattern.
Ranga bhumi	- The stage.
Rangamanclapam	- Auditorium
Rasa	- The essence of an artistic experience.
Recaka	- Flowing movements of the limbs which connect the acions.
Saustava	- Upright position of the body.
Sthana	- Postures which represent some deity.
Sollukattu	- Rhythmic syllables.
Tattukazhi	- A block of wood and stick that are used in a Bharatanatyam dance class.
Tattikumbidal	- Salutation to Mother Earth done before starting to dance.
Vina	- A variety of stringed instrument with frets set in wax.



Certificate Course

1. The dancers who dances in front of the deity or in the temple premises are called as
a. Devadasi b. Alankaradasi c. Rajadasi
2. Combination of 6 or more karanas is called
a. Mandala b. Angahara c. Chari
3. Texts relating to Temple Puranas are called
a. Vedas b. Agamas c. Upanishads.
4. The name Big temple is given to the temple at
a. Chidambaram b. Tiruvannamalai c. Thanjavur
5. The immediate predecessor of today's Bharatanatyam form is
a. Aadal b. Koothu c. Sadir.
6. The Natyanjali Festival is conducted in the temple at
a. Kanchipuram b. Chidambaram c. Tiruvannamalai
7. Natyasastra was authored by
a. Abhinava Gupta b. Nandikeswara c. Bharata
8. Hereditary artists group performing dance were called
a. Orchestra b. Periya melam c. Chinna melam
9. The main purpose of Indian dance is
a. Rasa b. Entertainment c. Devotion
10. The five activities represented by Shiva's dance is known as:
a. Pancaakshara b. Pancakriya c. Panca baana.
11. Vaal amalai was dance done with
a. Tail b. Sword c. Maalai
12. Adavu literally mean
a. To reach b. step c. Exclaim

13. Tattu means to
a. Extend b. Stretch c. Strike
13. Tattu means to
a. Extend b. Stretch. c. Strike
14. Villadavu is based on
a. Naatadavu b. Sharakkadavu c. Paiydhall adavu
15. Meettu adavu uses sollukattu
a. Tat tei tam b. Ta tei tei to c. Tei ya tei yi
16. Makuta adavu is another name of
a. theermana adavu b. tatta davu c. Panca nadai adavu
17. Sangam age work that throws light on dance is
a. Silappadikaram b. Abinaya Darpana c. Bharatarnava
18. The Elephant faced God is named as
a. Shiva b. Brahma c. Vinayaka
19. The Goddess of Prosperity
a. Lakshmi b. Durga c. Saraswathi
20. The word Korvai means to
a. To slip b. To jump c. To compile
21. In Mishra jathi how many syllable are there
a. 5 b. 7 c. 4
22. Exhibition of Emotions is called as
a. Bhava b. Abhinaya c. Rasa
23. How many Avatharas of Vishnu are there?
a. 7 b. 8 c. 10
24. The Kalakshetra a premier institution for fine arts was established by
a. Balasaraswathi b. Rukmini Arundale c. E. Krishna Iyer
25. Bharathanatyam is the combination of 3 elements?
a) Bhava, Raga, Tala b) Bhava Rasa Taala c) Bhava, Rechaka, Taala



1. How are temples related to the realm of Classical Indian Dances?
2. Briefly elaborate on the dance statues found in the temples of Southern India.
3. What is the significance of the sculptures found in the Temple at Chidambaram?
4. How are the temples in North India related to Bharatanatyam?
5. Explain about the different dance festivals organized in the temple premises in India.
6. Explain the terms 'Muntherkuravai' and 'Pinther kuravai'.
7. Define 'Kuthu'.
8. Write short notes on the following terms :
a. Thalaikol b. Thalaikol Asan c. Thoriya Madanthai

(Fill in the blanks)

1. Parvathi is said to have worshipped Shiva in the form of _____. At Kapaleshwarar temple in _____
2. The Nattuvanar was also called as _____, and who sang songs for dance was called _____
3. _____ Koothu consists of body and limbs _____ koothu consists of facial expression.
4. The dance which was performed in front of and behind the chariot of Kings who won battle was called as _____ and _____.
5. _____ adavu is to open and _____ adavu is to glide.
6. _____ means to beat and _____ means to strike.

(Match the following)

1.	Qualities of Danseuse	steady and balanced in poi lowhince
2.	Qualities of a Percussionist	learned in the marge and desi style of music
3.	Qualities of a Dancer	Able to utter accurately each rhythmic sequence.
4.	Qualities of a Nattuvanar	Humble without the arrogance of knowledge
5.	Qualities of a	guru nimble with fingers
6.	Qualities of a Singer	the body arches like a bow
7.	Villadavu	Dancer sits all the way down with knees bent.
8.	Mandiadavu	charming, young and moderate stature City of Cosmic Dancer.



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Notes:

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