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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to History of Bharathanatyam

**E**very country, region or land is influenced by factors such as rulers, invasions, wars, culture, religion etc from time to time. Such influences are absorbed and reflected in language and art of the region.

There are many sources to document or record such developments. In today's world equipments to record visual arts like photo or video is possible. But before centuries such facilities were not available. More so, in systems that transmitted knowledge in a traditional *Guru-sishya* (teacher-student) method, the importance of such documentation has also not been accepted. This is because it was not intended to reach people other than the direct students.

In such a situation, sources that throw light on development of art are:

1. Literary works
2. Grammar texts
3. Archeological evidences and Inscriptions
4. History of Rulers/kingdoms

Bharatanatyam is the pride of South India especially the state Tamilnadu. All the above sources that essentially connect with this region shall be considered to get a picture of history of this dance style.

### 1. Literary works.

Language Tamil has the unique privilege of being acknowledged as a Classical Language. Tradition of authoring poems and grammar works has been available from what is termed as the '*Sangam Age*'. The period between 2 BCE and 2 CE is widely accepted to be the *Sangam* age in Tamil literature.

From this time the practice of recording in manuscripts has been there and a huge treasure of such works have been handed over from generation to generation. The treasure of Tamil literature can be classified into 6 time zones; they are:

- Sangam age
- Age of Ethics
- Age of Epics
- Bhakthi Literature
- Medieval literature

This is followed by literary works that can be called as recent or contemporary. This section deals with references of dance available in all these periods, subject matter relating to dance and the influence of dance in literature.

#### a. *Sangam age*:

Importance has been given to human emotions in this period and the subject matter has been treated in a unique way in this period. The concept of attaching landscapes with emotions is known. For this reason, the landscapes were divided into five – *kurinji*, *mullai*,

*marudam*, *neidhal* and *paalai* and were attached to three aspects of *mudhal*, *karu* and *uri*.

The five landscapes are connected with one principal emotion each. Accordingly, the emotion connected with each landscape is known thus:

<i>Kurinji</i>	- Union
<i>Mullai</i>	- Longing
<i>Marudam</i>	- Difference of opinion
<i>Neidhal</i>	- Lamenting
<i>Paalai</i>	- Separation

*Mudhal* includes time zone and the landscape. *Uri* is the prime sentiment attached with it. *Karu* contains 14 amenities. They are: the principal deity attributed to each land, upper class of people, labour class, living place, food, occupation, flower, tree, water, bird, animal, tune and instruments of melody and percussion.

Since each landscape has an attached tune, string instrument and percussion instrument, they go well with the emotion of the landscape. This naturally influences the dance, and dance movements are also distinctive to each landscape.

People lived in clusters during the *sangam* age. Obviously, their dance must have been only in groups. We find only group dances in all the '*aham*' poetry of that period. However, while dancers solicited the favors of kings, they went individually.

Names of dance numbers found in this period are: *kuravai*, *Thunangai* and *Veriyadal*. *Kuravai* is dance by 7, 8 or 9 members; females do *Thunangai*; *Veriyadal* was commissioned for specific causes. Both males and females did *Veriyadal*.

Mention of dances *kodukotti*, *paandardangam*, *kabaalam* and *oozhikkoothu* of Shiva are also found in *Sangam* poetry.

From the *Sangam* age poems, the following information is available:

1. Dance has been done both for entertainment and time pass.
2. Dances of Gods like Thirumaal and Shiva portrayed in the *puranas* were observed by the people
3. Both the ethnic Tamils and the Aryans who settled later, performed dance.
4. Each of the five landscapes had *kuravai* which was done by both females and males
5. *Thunangai* was the dance performed only by women.
6. People irrespective of labor class, middle class or upper class including the queens have performed dance.
7. Dancers did make-up and decorated themselves for dance
8. Dance group was headed by a chief
9. There were separate dance playhouses in townships

#### **b. Age of Ethics**

The period next to the *Sangam* age was the age of Ethics. Literature for Ethics did not have much reference to dance. This is because, during this period people wanted to withdraw from wars and lead a purposeful life. Literature that came up during this age was called as '*Pathinen-keezh-kanakku*'

This includes 18 works. They are: *Tirukkural*, *Naaladiyaar*, *Naanmanik-kadigai*, *Innaa Naarpadhu*, *Iniavai Naarpadhu*, *Kaar Naarpadhu*, *Malavazhi Naarpadhu*, *Aynthinai*, *Tirikadugam*, *Yelaadi*, *Aacharak-kovai*, *Pazhamozhi*, *Maamoolam*, *Innilai*, *Mudumozhik-kaanchi*, *Sirupanchamoolam* and *Kainilai*.

Reference to dance is scarce due the reason that most of the above were written by Jain saints. But they do refer that dance was prevalent in that period even though they do not give details of the subject matter or manner of dancing.

Tiruvalluvar in *Tirukkural* discloses the presence of exclusive dance space. But, *Naaladiyaar*, elevates dance by referring life force to divine force. *Naanmanikkadigai* indicates the necessity of continuous practice for dance. *Kaarnarpadhu* points out that, dancing women decorated themselves. *Yeladi* discriminates dance. Earning through dance was also discriminated, as found in *Kaiynilai*. *Tirikadugam* even blames dance to be the cause of suffering of village people!

#### **c. Epic Literature:**

Epic literature followed the period of Ethic literature in Tamil. Epic literature can be of two types, mainly with reference to their dimensions: The Big epics and smaller ones. Epics in Tamil literature are classified into *Aymperum kaappiam* (5 major epics) and *Aynchiru kaappiam* (5 minor epics).

*Silappadikaaram*, *Manimeghalai*, *Jivakachintaamani*, *Valayapathi* and *Kundalakesi* are called the five major epics. Of these, *Valayapathi* and *Kundalakesi* have succumbed to the tides of time. The five minor epics are *Sulamani*, *Neelakesi*, *Udhayanakumara kaaviyam*, *Yasodhara Kaviyam* and *Nagakumaara Kaviyam*. Of these five the last one is not fully available to us.

#### **Silappadikaaram:**

*Silappadikaaram* is the first epic literature in Tamil written by Ilango Adigal. *Muth-thamizh kaapiam* (Epic which has all the three facets of Tamil viz, literature, music and theatre), *Kudimakkal kaapiam*

(people's literature) are the other names to this epic. It contains 30 cantos. We have got commentary by two commentators to this work. The first one is by Arumpadha Uraiyaasiriyan (AU) and the next is by Adiyaarkku Nallaar (AN).

The prime characters in this epic are Kovalan, Kannagi and Madhavi. Along with the main story track, the epic also brings a vivid picture of music dance and life style of people at that period.

Silappadikaaram is supposed to be 2000 years old. But the accepted date of Arumpaduraiyaasiriyan is 9-10<sup>th</sup> Century (9 CE) and that of Adiyaarkkunallaar is 12<sup>th</sup> Century (12 CE). One can understand the huge lapse of time in between which gives space to changes and growth. Both the authors have explained in their own styles with reference to the practices of their times.

Silappadikaaram gives information about the award of '*talaikkol*' that was given to meritorious dancers.

The significance of the '*talaikkol*': The stick from the 'white-umbrella' of the defeated king is chosen and then studded with rare gems and gold. This is revered as a personification of Sayandan, son of Indra and washed with water from holy rivers, which is then taken in a procession accompanied by drumbeats and given to the meritorious dancer. Madhavi, the prime character of Silappadikaaram, won this honor and the author gives an account of her dance.

#### **Madhavi's dance:**

The dancer character Madhavi throws light on many aspects of dance and dance history of that time. She is said to have started learning at the age of five and had intensive training in 'classical' dance according to prescribed grammar, for seven years. Her

maiden performance was done in the presence of the King and was appreciated by all the scholars.

She was also given the honor of '*talaikkol*'. A detailed account of how she placed her foot into the dance arena, the musicians present and her performance are available through Silappadikaram and its commentaries. She performed invocation to deities before she went on to the main numbers of her performance.

Madhavi is said to have done '*kavutuvam-s*' in praise of Sun God performances during the morning performances and in praise of Moon God during evening performances. Apart from the classical performances for which she carefully adhered to the given techniques, she had also performed other dances known as '*desi*'.

*Desi* is understood as regional style or folk style. Such an account of *desi* dances is available from the descriptions of '*Indhra Vizha*' (festival to Indra). She performed the '*Pathinoru Aadal*' (eleven dances). These connect with the mythological story episodes performed by Gods: Shiva, Muruga, Tirumal, Kaaman, Uma, Tirumagal and Indrani.

#### ***Pathinoru Aadal:***

The eleven dances are: *Kodukotti* by Shiva, *Paandarangam* by Bharathi, *Alliyam* by Tirumaal, *Mallaadal* of Tirumaal, *Thudi* by Muruga, *Kudai* by Muruga, *Kudamaadal* by Tirumaal, *Pedi aadal* by Kaaman, *Marakkaal* by Uma, *Paavai* by Tirumagal and *Kadaichiyar aattam* by Indraani.

The term '*kooththus*' is often referred in Silappadikaram and its commentaries. A details study proves that it is equivalent to the term '*natyam*' of Natyasastra. Thereby it connects to both dance and theatre form of visual performances. Subsequent to *kooththus*, the text also identifies dances based on the landscapes called as

'vari-paadai'. They are *Vettuva-vari*, *Aiychiyar kuravai* and *Kundrak kuravai*. The vari-paadai-s eulogize gods and is connected with the principal emotion attached to the particular landscape.

Other than the dancer, qualities of the vocalist, poet, flute player, *yaz* (string instrument) and the dance theatre are also mentioned in Silappadikaaram.

### Dance Theatre:

The ambience in which the performances were conducted also seem to have well evolved and well thought of. Details of the Structure of a dance theatre known from this text are as follows:

- 1) The land chosen for construction should be free from evil omens
- 2) The theatre shall be of 7 'kol' measures in width; 8 'kol' measures in length and one 'kol' measure of height from ground level. Here, 1 'kol' is explained as an equivalent of 24 finger-length.
- 3) The roof shall be placed at a height of 4 'kol' measures
- 4) The performance area should have two door ways
- 5) The worship figure of four deities of nature should be represented
- 6) Lighting should be made such that the shadow of four pillars constructed on the corners should not fall on the dance area
- 7) Three types of screens (*ezhini*) shall be used. *Oru mugha ezhini* (Single sided screen), *poru mugha ezhini* (double side screen) and *karanthu varal ezhini* (roller-down screen)
- 8) Decoration from the roof be made of flowers and pearls

### Manimeghalai:

The author of this literature is Seethalai Saatanar, who lived in Madurai as a trader. This literature has its continuity from Silappadikaram. Manimeghalai is name of the child born to Kovalan (Hero of Silappadikaram) and Madhavi (dancer mentioned in Silappadikaram)

This epic has 30 story episodes. It details on the efforts of the heroine who took to Buddhism in her life and its spread to the human community. This book takes into account only those pertaining to the dance and its details. Accordingly, the details available through Manimeghalai are:

- 1) Reference to dance through words like - *koothu*, *natanam*, *naatiyam*, *avinayam*, *natakam* are found.
- 2) Teachers taught varieties of dance to students, who danced in the dance theatre. Manimeghalai gives the word '*nrittagan*' to a dance teacher and also refers to him as one of the five types of teachers mentioned in the Natyasastra. The five teachers are those who teach: literature, dance, string instrument, music instruments like flute and percussionist.
- 3) Mention of Kooththanool is also found in Manimeghalai. One Pandiya (Pandiya is name of a clan of Kings, one of the three important kingdoms that ruled South India. The other two are Chola and Chera Kings) offspring '*Mathivanan*' is considered to be the author of this text, which is termed as text for theatre. A name of theatre text '*Naataka-nannool*' also finds mention. This could be the same as the text known earlier for theatre, '*Mathivaanam*'

- 4) Dancers who learned the grammar of dance also were taught painting.
- 5) Mention of 'Bharatam' - text of dance grammar, is found.
- 6) Dancers to a number of 121 learnt and taught dance through generations.
- 7) There have also been dance of *abinaya* with storyline and without a story line in a song.
- 8) Of the 11 dances, *pedu* dance and *thudi* dance are cited. (*Pedu* is name given to a transgender).
- 9) Mention of the word 'thunivu' is found, which refers to the end of a *tala* cycle.
- 10) There have been a separate living area for the dancers
- 11) Dance has been known by the name '*bharatam*'

### Seevaka Chintaamani

This Jain epic was written by Tiruththakka thevar. It also has the name of '*mana nool*'. It contains 13 chapters and brings about Jaina philosophy. The story line revolves around the hero, Seevakan, who marries eight women in eight types of marriage. Later he takes to Jainism, becomes an ascetic and attains the final eternal abode.

Jain philosophy is against fine arts, especially, dance. Even then information connected with dance is available in some areas. Commentary by revered scholar Nachchinaarkiniyar is available for this literature.

The following details about dance are available from this epic:

- 1) Dancer learnt all necessary body movements, music, tone and decorative aspect and then only went on to present a performance in the 'stage'
- 2) The dance halls, where the public came to witness a performance, were called as *Aadambalam*.
- 3) There were dance halls (temporary) and dance theatres (permanently built)
- 4) Women dancers danced on the command of the king in royal and other festivals.
- 5) There have been separate schools to teach dance that could be performed in the royal courts.
- 6) There has been practice of building temples in memory of historic legends and their life history being enacted as drama.
- 7) Both the types of dance, *aham* and *puram* were danced.
- 8) There were separate streets in which the dancers and musicians lived.
- 9) Maiden performance was done in the age of 12.

### Five minor-epics

Succeeding the Five major epics came the minor ones, made with a purpose of taking forward the philosophy of Buddhists and Jainists. Since they were of the same number and were smaller in their volume they took the name of '*Ainchiru kaappiam*' (five minor epics)

They are: Neelakesi, Sulaamani, Udhayana kumara kaaviyam, Yasodhara kaaviyam and Naagakumaara Kaviyam. Of these, the last one is not available in full to us. Details of dance are not much found, since these religions do not accept fine arts in high esteem.

### Important details in connection with dance are:

1. Dance and drama were going strong in the period of this literature.
2. There were thousands of dancers.
3. People very well understood, appreciated and enjoyed dance.
4. In the middle of the beautiful street decorated with garlands, was situated the theatre. On that stage, the dancer performed karanam-s and its sequences
5. Both male and female dance experts have been there.
6. Female dancers used hand gestures in dance.
7. Pleasant words, music and dance made the place feel like heaven, where people watched with interest, the dance done by beautiful women
8. Dancers maintained slim figure and were good looking

Henceforth history and details of dance in the Bhakti literature period shall be studied.

### Dance in Bhakti literature (Literature with devotional contents)

In history of Tamil literature the *bhakti* literature period followed the Epic Literature. This period is also known as period of '*prabanda*' literature and minor literature period. In the later half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century came the Pallava rule. The Pallava rulers originally belonged to Jainism. But, from the time of Mahendran, we find a reconstruction of *Saivism* and *Vaishnavism* back in this land.

At this time, the *Saiva* and *Vaishnava* saints went from temple to temple in various places and sung songs praising the glory of the gods. Thus music and dance got a fresh spring of life once again in history. While the saints went from place to place, temples in each area were renovated. New temples were also built. Being able to draw people of interest and to effectively communicate religious ideas, music and dance were chosen. Thus it got attached with the temples and divinity.

Under these circumstances, the songs of *nayanmaars* (devotees of Shiva) and *Aazhwars* (devotees of Vishnu) became songs of devotion and prayer and dance too became an essential part of temple worship. Dance took few changes in its form and content and totally became a temple-art successfully.

This movement of *bhakti* that swayed the south also spread to the north. The domination of the *bhakti* movement gave rise to a variety of *bhakti* literature. The *itihaasas* of the north were translated to Tamil. *Puranas*, which extolled the greatness of God, were made. Each town had a temple and an associated *purana*.

The minor epics that followed, like *parani*, *ulaa*, also describe dance. Dance units are found in *Ulaa*, *Pillaith thamizh*, *Parani*, *Kalambakam*, *Pallu* and *Kuravanji*. Minor epics reflect human life of their respective period. Attributes given to a king or local hero were all transcribed to God and divinity. These became the essential subject matter for dance and devotion.

## QUESTIONS

### **One word Answers**

1. Which period in history is known as Sangam Age in Tamil literature?
2. What are the dances of Shiva, mentioned in Sangam age?
3. What is the other name of Silappadikaaram?

### **Short answers**

1. What are the sources that throw light on development and history of arts
2. What are the five landscapes and their associated shades of emotions?
3. What are the 14 amenities that are called as 'Karu'?

### **Detail answers**

1. What is the information available about dance in the sangam age?
2. Describe the details available in Silappadikaaram with regard to 'Dance theatre'
3. What was the condition of dance mentioned in Manimeghalai?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Grammar Texts**



**O**f the various grammar texts Tholkappiam, Panca marabu, Koothanool and Bharatasenapatiyam are dealt in this chapter.

According to available references, text by name, 'Agaththiyam' authored by Sage Agastiya is considered to be the earliest. This is known to have been a text for triple aspects of language: literature, music and theatre. The other names of texts that are available from various resources are: Thenisai (by Sikandiyar), Paerisai, naarai, kurugu, koothu, sayandham, guna-nool, muruval, seyitriyam, thanduvam, nandiyam, pannisai, thakkam etc. But none of these are available to us in full today.

Apart from Agaththiyam, also name of another grammar text, 'Aindiram' is also available. While both these texts are not available, the earliest of grammar texts available today is 'Tholkappiam'.

#### **Tholkappiam:**

Tholkappiam was written by Tholkappiar, which has been accepted by scholars to be a work of 5 BCE. Tholkappiar also gives an account of grammar works before his period.

This text consists of three major sections: *Ezhuththu* (letters), *Sol* (words) and *Porul*. Each section in turn has nine subdivisions. *Ezhuththu* deals with the alphabets, their varieties and origin. *Sol* explains the formation and structure of words and their functions. *Porul* brings about the nature of subject matter extensively.

Tholkappiam talks about two major divisions of subject matter in Tamil literature: *Aham* and *puram*. *Aham* brings about the love life of people. This is further divided as *kalavu* and *karppu*. While *kalavu* is love life before the wedlock, *karppu* is that after the wedlock. *Puram* brings out other aspects of life such as, valor, charity and conduct.

Presenting both these facets of human life came up literary works either in a dramatic exposition (*nataka vazhakku*) or realistic exposition (*ulagiyal vazhakku*). These two expositions have parallel names in Sanskrit. They are *Natyadharma* and *Lokadharma*.

*'Undaattu* and *Kondaattu*' have been the earliest instances of movements and dance. *Kondaattu* is celebration, generally of Victory, while *undaattu* is merry making consuming liquor. "*Undaattu*" finds place in the *Puram* aspect of life. After victoriously capturing the cattle from the enemies, the warriors divide them among themselves and make merry with drink. Warriors have celebrated their victory by dancing in front of and behind the chariot of the victorious king. This is classified as '*mun ther kuravai*' and '*pin ther kuravai*'

Another instance of dance is *veriyaattu* or *veriyaadal*. This is also referred as '*velan veriyaadal*'. Possessed with the divine spirit, '*velan*', the dancer/priest dances the *veriyaadal*. This happens when an ensuing disaster to the place is sensed.

*Koothars, paanars, porunars and viralis* are names that denote dancers and singers who used to travel from place to place and

perform in front of patrons and kings beseeching wealth. One such dancer who received wealth from a patron then gives guidance to a new dancer who is looking for a patron and opportunity.

Apart from the different types of dances listed above, Tholkappiam also points out necessary inputs for communication:

- i. Mudhal porul
- ii. Karup porul
- iii. Urip porul

These have been explained earlier.

**Connection of grammar concepts with dance:** *Uripporul* serves as a base, the *Stayi bhava*; *Karupporul* sets up the *vibhava* and serves as a lead to the *sanchari bhava*.

Further to these, the structured '*meiypaatiyal*' serves as an essential connection and also a strong base to construct and explore the *saatvika bhava*.

*Meiypaatiyal* is the study of body/physical expressions. In *meiypaaiyal*, Tholkappiar brings out the eight basic emotions; how and when they occur; the respective situations; the accepted and not accepted expressions to each phase, which dance has completely acknowledged.

To bring situation in a visual form, Tholkappiam speaks of three factors:

- i. Iutru
- ii. Etpor
- iii. Hunnam

*Kutru*: A statement and is said by whom. (It is not only important to understand a statement but also to know who says that, since a statement can shift shades, whether it is said by the hero, heroine or the friend.)

*Ketpor*: To whom it is said. (Again expression will take shades as to who is listening, whether it is the hero, heroine or friend.)

*Munnam*: Situation. (The whole ambience and the situation in which the poem is set, is *munnam*.)

### Pancha Marabu

Pancha marabu is a grammatical work done by 'Arivanaar' and has five sections. They are – *Isai marabu* (music), *Vaachiya marabu* (percussion), *Nritta marabu* (dance), *Avinaya marabu* (abinaya), *Taala marabu* (time cycle). Of the five, *Nritta marabu* and *avinaya marabu* are the two sections of Pancha Marabu that are directly connected with dance details.

*Nritta marabu*: Nritta is of 7 types. They are – *thandavam*, *nrittam*, *natyam*, *kuravai*, *vari*, *kolam* and *vagaik koothu*.

i. *Thandavam*: This is of two types – *chokkam* and *anandam*. This includes the 108 *karanams*. These have to be performed in front of Lord Shiva only.

ii. *Nrittam*: This is of three types – *desi*, *vadugu* and *singalam*. *Nritta* is dancing to the beats or set tala measure.

*desi* – dancing in standing manner

*vadugu* – dancing in a moving manner

*singalam* – dancing in a walking manner

iii. *Natyam*: This dance encompasses poetry and music. This again is of three types: *Tandavam*, *Nrittam* and *Natyam*.

Since natya includes both tandava and nritta, they find a mention here also.

- iv. *Kuravai*: Seven, eight or nine men or women hold hands together in a circular fashion and dance together. This applies the five land based emotions.
- v. *Vari*: This is dance using props like sticks, air bellow, rope, ball, bow and leaves and draping like a female. Most of them are used for playing.
- vi. *Kolam*: Simple synonym to this term is 'fancy dress'. The dancer dresses up like people from other countries (Like Srilanka, Egypt, Greece) dance. They also dress up like a warrior or magician.
- vii. *Vagaik koothu*: Dancers dress up like Gods, Goddesses and demi-gods and perform, which gives this dance the above name. This has 11 types of dances. They are: *alliyam*, *kudai*, *kudam*, *paandardangam*, *mall*, *kodukotti*, *paavai*, *kadaiyam*, *pedi*, *thudi* and *marakkaal*. Pancha marabu also delineates the gods to which each dance is attributed:

<i>Paandardangam</i> , <i>kodukotti</i>	–	<i>Shiva</i>
<i>Kudam</i> , <i>mall</i> , <i>alliyam</i>	–	<i>Thirumaal</i>
<i>Paavai</i> <i>koothu</i>	–	<i>Thirumagal</i>
<i>Kudai</i> , <i>thudi</i>	–	<i>Murugan</i>
<i>Pedik</i> <i>koothu</i>	–	<i>Kaaman</i>
<i>Marakkaal</i> <i>koothu</i>	–	<i>Kottravai</i>
<i>Kadaiyak</i> <i>koothu</i>	–	<i>Indhrani</i>

It shall be noted that there are minor differences in the names of Gods given, between the *pathinoru aadal* mentioned in Silappadikaram and this text.

*Thandavam* has been given special importance in this work. Accordingly, *thandavam* has to be done in the mode of '*aham*'. While *talam* is the important factor, it need not have music and *abinaya*. Panchamarabu further states that, the factor *tala* itself came from the *tandava* of God.

*Thandavam* is divided into 16 types, each having a specific name nature and reason for which it is performed. The names of the 16 *thandavas* as per this text are: *aadhi, anu, prakasam, peedam, pushpaanjali, puyangam, desi, oththu, needi, niyal, vaippu, vaguppu, vaakiyam, kavuththuvam, thunukku and thendabaratham*.

A careful study reveals the fact that all the 16 types fall under the *pancha-krityam* of Shiva: creation, preservation, destruction/dissolution, benediction and illusion/suppression/delusion.

Panchamarabu also divides the body and gives different types of possible movements to each art. Accordingly, there are 14 types of head movements, 15 eye movements, 66 hand movements, 43 leg movements and 108 Karanas that are discussed.

Pancha Marabu then, elaborates on the factors of *abinaya*. It is the hand gestures that find special mention for *abinaya*. Nine types of basic emotions find mention. Finally, the text moves to the description of the performance arena (*aranga illakkamam*) and the stick used to keep time measure (*pirambu illakkamam*).

### Kooththanool

Very few of our ancient texts have survived the test of time. One such precious text is the Kooththanool. Koothanool is said to have

consisted of 9 sub-texts. Each sub-text is called 'nool'. The nine *nools* are: *cuval nool, tokai nool, vari nool, kalai nool, karana nool, uthu nool, ical nool, avai nool & kaò nool*.

The commentator to Kooththanool, S D S Yogi, roughly titles them thus:

- i. cuval nool: Book of Aesthetic emotions
- ii. tokai nool: Dictionary of dance forms
- iii. vari nool: Folk dances
- iv. kalai nool: Dancing Limbs
- v. karana nool: Combination of Dance Gestures
- vi. uthu nool: Time measure
- vii. ical nool: Music
- viii. avai nool: Theatre Architecture &
- ix. kannool: Summation.

The following are the important points to note from this text:

- 1) Emotions are real and come from the mind
- 2) Feelings give birth to emotions
- 3) Expression of emotions through the body is called '*meippadu*'. This view coincides with that of Tholkappiam.
- 4) The explanation given to *kooththu* is applicable beyond the barriers of time. Accordingly, '*Kooththu*' is that which has sub-shades of emotions as body, emotions as the mind and mind as life
- 5) The unique terminology of '*aalaththi*' and '*naalaththi*'. The concave nature from 'mind to external expression' is '*aalaththi*' and the convex nature of 'externals into the mind' is called '*naalaththi*'

- 6) While Tholkappiam and Bharathasastra count the basic emotions as eight, Kooththanool says nine.
- 7) The count of 48 sub-strands of emotions match well with that listed in the Tholkappiam.
- 8) Also explaining subject matter on the basis of '*kutru*', '*ketpor*' and *munnam* is similar to that of Tholkappiam.
- 9) Kooththanool says that emotions emanate from the three basic traits present in human mind. They are *amaidi*, *ookkam* and *odukkam*. This is parallel to the *Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* described as *Gunas*.
- 10) The division of the body made in the section of '*saippu*' is comparable to the concept of *karana-s*.
- 11) The classification and explanation of twelve types of dance is exceptional.

### Bharatasenapatiyam

Bharatasenapatiyam is one of the texts for grammar of dance, written in Tamil by Aadi Vaayilaar. Bharatasenapatiyam has three divisions, viz., *Anga Adhikaram* (Body), *Isai Adhikaram* (Music) and *Taala Adhikaram* (Time measure). Mention is also made of previous authors of dance texts, which are names of sages and demi-gods. Lord Muruga and Ganapathy are extolled in the opening verses.

Bharatasenapatiyam also compares the *tandava* with the term '*kooththu*'. While Silappadikaaram and Suddanandha prakasika list 11 types of *kooththu*, this text mentions 13 types. Additionally, it also states that Lord Shiva performed all these *kooththu* types.

Following are certain rare phenomenal information found in the text:

- 1) Hanuman annihilated the ego of Tumburu and Narada

- 2) Bharata was the name given by Shiva to Veeravallabhacharya
- 3) The swaras 'sa ri ga ma pa da ni' were given by Ravana
- 4) While Devi kept time, Shiva danced for the five sakti-s
- 5) The name 'nritta ganapathy' was given to Vinayaka by Shiva
- 6) Thus the grammar texts from time to time record the types and variations in dance and also try to codify dance by elaborating on practiced techniques of those dances.

### QUESTIONS

#### One word Answers

1. What is the name of the earliest grammar text?
2. What is the name of the earliest grammar text available today
3. What are the three sections of Tolkkappiam?

#### Give short answers

1. What are the five sections of Panca Marabu?
2. What is Vagaik-kooththu according to Panca Marabu? List them.
3. What are the 16 types of Thandavam mentioned in Panca Marabu

#### Detail answers

1. Explain the seven types of nritta units listed in Panca Marabu.
2. What are the noteworthy inputs on dance available in Kooththanool?

## Chapter 3

# History through Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagara Kingdoms



**D**ance and sculpture are interdependent on each other. Temple sculptures were carved with the help of dancers. Sculptures thus created are the evidences that help researchers to trace the art. The current chapter thus brings information on both these arts, which influenced each other internally externally.

From the Sangam Age followed by the Kalabras came different kingdoms by different rulers. Such Kingdoms that followed were: Pallavas, Later Cholas, Vijayanagara Kingdom, Nayaks, Marattas, before the advent of British rule in India.

### Pallava Age

The Pallava age is considered to be a golden era of artistic creations. Creations came up in six arts: architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance and theatre. Out of these, dance, sculpture, theatre and painting are discussed under.

As seen earlier, dance and theatre have influenced and been influenced by sculpture and paintings. Researchers have accepted them as supportive evidences for assessment of dance and theatre.

King Mahendravarma holds a special place for arts among the Pallava kings. He himself was a creator and supported creation in

various arts. His proficiency in painting is revealed by inscriptions at Maamandur and Cittannavasal.

He initiated the art of painting on stone, which were done with the help of dancing women. Painting of a woman in Cittannavaasal is in the form of '*lata vrischikam*'. His work '*Mattha vilaasa pragasanam*' in Samskrit, is in the format of satire and brings the religious setup of his period. He portrays in this literature, a kaabaalika – one who follows Kaabalikam (a sub sect of Saivist belief – living an immoral life)

He was also adept in dance and theatre. An inscription at Pallavaram, near Trichy, mentions '*sangkeerna jaati*', which shows that he must have made many jati-s for dance or tried to combine rhythmic beats. Researchers and scholars are also of the opinion that he is the first to have used the *sangkeerna jaati*.

Next to Mahendra Varma came Narasimha Pallava. He is responsible for numerous sculptures made at Maamallapuram, also called as *Kadal mallai*. The sculpture, 'Arjuna's penance', holds intense *bhaava* and is considered noteworthy till today.

Older string instruments *Yazh* and *Tambura* are also found as sculptures in Tirumeyyam. Sculptures of the *bootha ganas* playing percussion to *Urdhwa* dance is found in cave temple of Seeyamangalam. This demonstrates both dance and music of that period.

An assessment of sculptures in Pallava age sculptures reveal the importance given by them to dance. Dance was a ritual of worship. A *thaandava* sculpture of Siva, called *nritta murthy* is found in a cave temple of Seeyamangalam, which reflects '*karana*'. There are many such Pallava sculptures of Siva that reflect the *karana*. King Narasimhan instigated such sculptures.

Rajasimha Pallava, who succeeded Narasimha, was also a connoisseur of painting and sculpture. Kailasanatha temple at

Kanchi is a proof for this, standing the test of time. There are five sculptures of Siva with the *Kunchita* pose in this temple. *Kunchita* means bent; it is the name of 52<sup>nd</sup> Karana of the Natyasastra.

There is another sculpture of Siva with eight hands, holding *damaru*, fire, *pathaka hasta*, *ancita* hand, serpent etc. A similar sculpture is also found in the Iravathaneswar temple of Kanchi.

One another sculpture of Siva is found in the *lalaata tilaka karana* with eight hands holding *akshara maala*, fire, *kadga*, *paasa* etc and one hand rests on the head of Nandhi. Siva in *Taala samspotitha karana*, again with eight hands, holding snake's head, *chin mudra*, *abhaya hasta*, *ganga*, snake's tail and *gaja hasta* is also found in a dancing mood, along with Parvathi and *bootha ganas* nearby.

A sculpture panel in Vaikunta Perumal temple portrays group dance of men and women dancers. It shows a royal procession with six female dancers, two male dancers and one percussionist.

Dance paintings are found in the Cittannavaasal caves, near Pudukkottai. They are visible till the waist and the rest have faded due to the passage of time.

One more '*taala samspotita karana*' is found as sculpture in Talagiriswarar temple of Panamalai. Goddess Parvati is by the side, similar to that of Kailasanatha temple.

Pallavas, being admirers of the art, encouraged dance during their reign. An inscription states that 'Rangapataaka', wife of King Rajasimha was a great dancer.

Thus references to dance and music connected with temple are found. Additionally, the administration of temples was also handed over to temple dancers named *kanigai-s*. Those dancers who served the temples were called '*devar adiyaar*' [servants of the lord] who fell under seven categories.

They were: *dattai*, *vikrutai*, *preethyai*, *bhaktai*, *haritai*, *alangkarai* and *rudra-kanigai*. These women were responsible for music and dance along with the administrative work. Pallava age thus served as an opening to a whole new era of arts connected with temples and worship. This is known from the inscriptions of that period.

One inscription states that wife of Nandivarma Pallava contributed 15 *devar adiyaars* to temple service. From the inscriptions we get to understand not only that a number of *Devar adiyaars* were employed in the temple, but also the activity assigned to each of them, and the type of dance that have to be performed in each occasion.

#### Summary:

- 1) Pallavas came to rule the Tamil land after the Kalabras
- 2) Originally followers of Jainism they later converted to Saivism
- 3) *Thevaaram* and *Divyaprabandam* were compositions of this period
- 4) Importance to music, dance, sculpture and paintings were given
- 5) Works of stone such as sculpture, cave temples and stone temples were constructed
- 6) *Karanas* mentioned in the Natyasastra are found as sculptures
- 7) Paintings of dance and females dancers are also found.
- 8) Sculptures also show group dances
- 9) Queens have been dancers and Kings showed interest and encouragement

- 10) The Pallavas were the first to appoint women in temple service in the name '*dali-ilaar*' and '*devar-adiyaar*', who apart from administrative work also performed music and dance as part of temple rituals

### **Chola age**

Following the Pallavas came the Cholas to rule the Tamil land. Vijayalaya, later Chola king defeated Pallava king Aparajita and established the Chola dynasty. The two cities Kudanthai and Thanjai were their famous capitals. The Chola rulers from Vijayalaya till Paraanthakan II, concentrated more on expanding their territory, building protection to their land and check enemies. Not much happened in the development of arts, during this period.

But, the golden era of Cholas commenced with Rajarajan who ascended the throne. This era went on a full swing till the beginning of Kulothunga reign. It was a golden era for arts, literature, sculpture, and dance.

Prominent among the Chola sculpture, is the Peruvudaiyar temple in Tanjore. This temple, living evidence to the history was consecrated in 1012 CE and stands intact as evidence of glorious past of dance till today. There are many dance related sculpture in this temple. Important among them in the record of the 108 *karanas*, this must have been in their splendor at that time.

Bhartasastra and Kooththanool mention *karanas* as 108. Out of the 108, only 81 have been recorded as sculpture here. There is no explanation for the remaining 27. Adiyaarkkunallar calls this as '*sokkam*' in his commentary. He mentions, '*sokkam is sudda nrittam* and has 108 *karanas*'. *Suddha nrittam* is a series of dance movements done without song, set to rhythm.

Dance texts state that the *karanas* have to be performed only in temples in front of the lord. May be, that's why the sculptures have been made in temples.

Apart from the undone 27 *karanas*, the others have been done at eye level in chronological order in the outer side of the inner wall. The series start from the east and continue to south, west and north. But, there is blank space left for the 27. It is an unsolved mystery why it is left incomplete. In this temple, there are also sculptures of dancing Siva with 4 hands, holding any two of - *damaru*, fire and snake.

*Karana* sculptures are also found in Somalingaswami temple in Pazayarai, Sarangapani temple in Kumbakonam and Natarajar temple in Chidambaram. In these temples all the 108 are found.

Among the four gopurams in the Chidambaram, the oldest is the west *gopuram*. This was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> C AD at Vikrama Chola's reign. Names of the *karanas* and the appropriate verses from Natyasastra also feature in grantha script, under each *karana* in this *gopura*. Even names of Gods and Goddesses are inscribed in *granta* script.

The East *gopura* also belongs to the 12<sup>th</sup> C, built during the period of Kulothunga Chola. In this *gopura*, 15 sculptures have given in to the test of time, and the remaining 93 are in good condition. Similar *Karana* sculptures are also found in the south and North *gopuras*. Shrine of Sivakami Amman also has *karana* sculptures at the lower half of the walls in inner pathway.

The Sarangapani temple of Kumbakonam has a several sculptures and must have been built in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Here also, only 95 of the 108 *karanas* are found. These 95 are also scattered in various places in the temple – some in the outer pathway walls, some in the inner pathway walls.

The '*lalaata tilaka karana*', generally found with 8 hands, is with 18 hands in this temple. The sculpture is that of Siva.

Some of the *karana* sculptures are in the form of Vishnu or Krishna. But traditionally, only Siva is associated with *karanas*. So it is unique to find Krishna associated with *karanas* in this temple. But researchers still opine that those sculptures are of Siva. It is yet to be found, how Siva's sculptures are found in Vishnu temple and why the *karanas* were fashioned on Krishna.

The Chola art of sculptures had spread till the state of Andhra. One example is the Mohaanandeshwar temple. Siva with eight hands, in *Lalita karana* is found in this temple. He holds *trisulam*, *damaru* and snake. Similar type is also found in places like Mayilaaduthurai, Kuzhithalai and Kodumbalur.

The *karana* sculptures of Srinivasanallur temple are smaller in size. Siva has four hands, holds *damaru* and *trisulam*, and is in *Urdwa natana karana*. Close by, are found Nandhi and *Siva ganaas* playing percussion instruments like *gatam*.

Besides stone art and sculpture, the Chola age was also a golden era of Bronze idols. Most of them are in dancing postures. The Okkur Nataraja idol is now at Chennai Museum. This sculpture belongs to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century. It has four hands and is in *Bujangatraasitam karana*. Similar idols are also seen in places of Tandanottam and Tiruvarangkulam.

Other than these idols, noteworthy are those from Seerkazhi, Velangkanni, and Tiruvaalangkaadu belonging to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. They are in *urdhwa thaandava*, with eight hands. Unusually, the leg is bent like *lalaata tilaka*.

Bronze idols belonging to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, are also found in Tanjore Peruvudaiyar temple and Srimushnam temple. Siva idol reflects a

*thaandava* and along with musicians playing music instruments and Vishnu keeping time, '*taala*'.

A beautiful painting of Yoga Dakshinamurthy is in Tanjore temple along with two celestial women, supposed to be of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Temples, in places like Darasuram and Tribhuvanam have the dancing lord along with musicians and percussionists. Shiva in dance pose along with *bootha ganaas* playing music instruments, in Srinivasanallur; with artist playing '*pancha muka vaadhyam*' [five face drum] and a *tambura* player, along in Vaitheeswaran koil and Tharangambadi are seen as sculptures. The dancing lord is also painted in *Kanakasabha* of Chidambaram temple. With him are seen his devotees, the priest along with the King and queens.

*Devar adiyaar and Dali-illaar* appointed for temple service has a strict routine of work to execute. This routine is also found in the inscriptions. *Dali ilhaar* are women appointed for temple service. The word is split as dali+ill+aar, where, Dali means temple, ill means home – meaning those who took the temple as their home or those who spent their lives in temple service. There were many such in temples, says the Chola history. Among the *dali-illaar-s*, those who served the Siva temples were called *rudra kanigai-s* and those who served Tirumaal temples were called *Sri maanikkam*. Collectively they were known as *Devar adiyaars*. It shall be noted that the Pallavas initiated the practice of appointing women in temple service.

In Pallava period, these women were engaged in seven categories of temple services: stringing flower garlands, preparing sandal paste, preparing perfume powder, maintaining the jewels and gears of the God, singing during temple festivals in front of the deity, playing the music instrument and dancing – were their assigned duties. They were paid for these services from the kingdom.

They have also been granted land. Termed as *nattuvakkaani*, such lands are mentioned in inscriptions. Women who served the temples, came on their own interest, or sent by parents or sometimes acquired by the temples. Women who were brought from the land of opponents after war and victory were called as '*kondi-s*' and put to temple service.

Some of these women who served the temples also got married and look a normal life. But after such marriage they were not taken into temple service. There is an inscription that an army commander of Chola kingdom, married a *dali-ilaar*. That the *dali-ilaars* have donated gold jewelry to the temples, is also found in inscriptions. They were respected in high esteem. King Rajaraja appointed around 400 *dali-ilaars* in Tanjore Peruvudaiyar temple. These women were brought from different parts of his kingdom.

Their names, native place, allotment of house and salary, their assigned duties are all inscribed in the tanjore temple. These *dali-ilaars* performed music and dance in front of the deity in the sanctum sanctorum.

They were experts in their field and also taught them. The girls of the royal families learnt from them. There were two groups of dancers:

- Those who danced in the temples
- Those who danced in the courts

Those who took to dancing in the temples did not perform for the public. The court dancers performed for the public, but by rule, were not allowed to dance in the temples and in front of the deity. The type of costumes and jewelry they had to wear for temple dance were also prescribed, says recordings of Chola history.

### Summary:

- 1) Arts rose to heights in the Chola period
- 2) Dance sculptures were sculpted in temples
- 3) Dance units, *karanas*, are found in chola temples as sculptures
- 4) All the 108 *karanas* are not found in Tanjore Peruvudaiyar temple
- 5) The four temple gopurams of Tillai contain the *karanas*
- 6) *Karana* sculptures at Kumbakonam Sarangapani temple are under controversy of whether Siva or Krishna
- 7) Making dancing lord idols of bronze also reached their zenith
- 8) Instruments like gatam and pancha mukha vaadhyam were used as accompaniment for dance
- 9) Dancing lord is also picturised as paintings
- 10) The *devar-adiyaars* appointed for temple services served the temples and also were instrumental in the growth of music and dance.

After the Pallava and Chola reign the Tamil land came under Pandiyas, Nayaks and Marattas. Of these rulers, the Pandya kings contributed to some temples and sculptures. This period saw construction of huge temples. But, dance sculptures and inscriptions are not very resourceful. The glory of sculptures and bronze images specially belongs to the Chola Age.

### Dance in Pandya age

Succeeding the Cholas came up the Pandya rule in the Tamil land. In their reign, occurred frequent wars that affected culture. The Pandyas themselves on conflict split into two kingdoms, one having capital at Madurai and the other at Tirunelveli. This is the time when the invasion of the Mughal rulers and Vijayanagara rulers took place. Besides many odds, they did encourage arts and religion.

Siva temple at Ramanathapuram was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was later renovated in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> century. The temple is also known by other names, Natarajeswaram, Tiru-gnana-sambandha-nalloor and Tiruvenkabam, say the inscriptions.

Through their marital relationships with another clan called the Hoysalas, the practice of worshipping Siva as Nataraja [aadai vallaan], got initiated' opines Sethuraman, a research scholar in history, in this research on Hoysalas of Pandya Kingdom. As a proof to this, small dance sculptures are found in the sanctum and roof of the Tiru Ekamban temple. Thus, the custom of the Cholas, who made dance-sculptures in the sanctum sanctorum of temples, also continued in the Pandya period. *Karanas* like *talapuspaputa*, *varditha*, *valitha*, *katisama*, *bujangkatrasitha* and *ardha maththalli* are featured. These sculptures also expose the *stanaka* and *charis* involved.

We also get to understand that instruments like maddhala, udukai and talam were used for dance, from these sculptures. From the sculptures also understood is the influence of Hoysala expressions – the hair of both men and women dancers are been taken as a hair knot in the left side; women wear pearl strands.

### Summary:

- 1) Not many sculptures were made during the Pandya period
- 2) Worship of Nataraja came into being after their relationship with Hoysalas
- 3) Their relationship and mutual influence is seen through Tiruvegambattu dance sculptures
- 4) They closely followed the sculpture pattern of the Cholas

As seen above, though huge temple structures were done, less are resourceful for tracing history of dance. Following the Pandya rule, the Tamil land came under the Vijayanagara and Nayak Kings.

### Vijayanagara Empire

In ancient Tamilnadu, just like the Pallava and Chola ages, in the Vijayanagara period starting from around 14th century, great importance was given to the arts such as music dance and painting. The kings and queens as well as the common people were great admirers of fine arts. The Vijayanagara rulers had their capital at Hampi in north Karnataka but their empire extended all over south India. Starting from 1370 A D, the whole of the Tamil country came under Vijayanagara rule. Many of the temples of Tamilnadu today would contain Vijayanagara sculptures and among these there are some exquisite Nataraja images. There are many other places in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh which have Nataraja images in Vijayanagara style.

In a *mandapa* in Shiva temple at Perur near Coimbatore, there are many other very beautiful sculptures carved on every pillar. One of these Nataraja carved in Vijayanagara style, Shiva is seen with his right foot raised in the *lalaatatalika* pose. He is shown with sixteen arms and plays the drum as he dances. The old lady

Karaikkal Ammaiyaar is shown just below his feet clapping her hand to keep time (tala). Shiva dances on Apasmara (which represents ignorance) with Skanda and Vishnu on sides, one keeping time and the other playing the drum.

Another sculpture from the same place is Gaja Tandava murthy. In this form of dance, Shiva has one of his legs raised and bent. He has four arms and hide of the elephant almost looks like a 'halo' or *prabha* around him. The elephant head below his foot is almost like the usual figure of *Apasmara*. In the same place, there is another sculpture of Ganesha dancing on a mouse. His feet are seen tapping the back of the mouse. Just like the *karana* sculptures in the Bhrihadiswara temple, Tanjavour, the *Gopura* of Nataraja temple, Chidambaram and Sarangapani temple, in Kumbakonam, which belong to the Chola age, there are some *karana* sculptures of the Vijayanagara period also. These are found inside the *Gopuras* in the Vriddhagirieswara temple at Vriddhachalam and the Arunachaleswara temple at Tiruvannamalai. Here also the *karana* sculptures follow the rules given in Bharata's NS. The *karana* sculptures in the Vriddhacalam temple are of special interest because each panel has two figures suggesting the beginning and end of a movement.

Other than the deities portrayed in the dance poses, there are also some Vijayanagara sculptures of ordinary people dancing folk and Gypsy dances. They are shown on the pillars of the Vijayanagara Mandapas in the Varadarajaswamy temple in Kanchipuram. There are two figures, possibly gypsies holding two small sticks or *kollattams* to dance with each other. In another sculpture, a gypsy girl or Kurathi is seen in a dance pose wearing a skirt and holding a little baby.

### Bronzes

Although the bronze images of the Vijayanagara period are not so numerous or as famous as the Chola bronzes, yet there are few exquisite pieces which deserve mention. Krishna dancing on the snake Kalinga is a very favorite theme of the Vijayanagara age. One of these is from Sundara Perumal temple in Tanjavour district of Tamilnadu, belonging to the 15 CE. Another beautiful bronze of the same age is that of Balasubramaniya also from Tanjavour district now in the Government Museum, Chennai

### Paintings:

Among the paintings at Lepakshi in Andhra Pradesh which belong to the Vijayanagara period of the 16 CE, there is a very fine representation of Nataraja in the *Anandha tandava* pose. *Kaalaantaka* in another panel on the ceiling in this temple is depicted almost like Nataraja. Another painting here shows Nataraja in *Bhujangatrasita* pose. In the Varadarajaswamy temple in Kanchipuram there are many Vijayanagara paintings which have faded over the years but are still very beautiful. One of these shows Krishna dancing on the snake as '*Kalinganartana*', while another panel shows Vishnu seated with dancing figures near him. In the Shiva temple at Tiruvizhimizhalai in Tanjavour district there are many exquisite Vijayanagara paintings on the ceiling of the *Mandapa* which belong to the 15 CE. One of these is a dancing Krishna and in the center of the ceiling, there are beautiful figures of female dancers showing great movement.

During the Muslim invasion of South India, in the 14 CE many of the temples became very poor due to lack of patronage. The dancers attached to these temples also started taking up other professions and were ready to migrate to other places. It was after the conquest of the Tamil country by the Vijayanagara kings

that the temple administration was re-organised and temple dancers came to be patronised again.

#### **Inscriptions:**

Some Vijayanagara inscriptions give information about the dances during this age. In the Shiva temple at Tiruvottiyur near Chennai, there are inscriptions mentioning two classes of dancers attached to the temple. One is *Rishabhattaaliyar* and the other, *Devaradiyaar*.

#### **Foreign Travellers:**

Many foreign travelers visited the Vijayanagara capital city at Hampi. One of these was a Portuguese traveler named Domingo Paes who has written down all the details about his visit to the Vijayanagara Empire. He gives some interesting details about the condition of Dance in this empire. He mentions the women dancers who belonged to the Ganesha Temple at Dharwar, in Karnataka. He also describes the festival in the Virupaaksha temple in Hampi and mentions the temple Chariots and the procession of women dancers. He also describes the Navarathiri (Dussehra) festival for which the Vijayanagara temples were famous and mentions the activities of the dancers during this festival, their rich jewels and ornaments. The *Nataka shaala* or dance hall where the women danced and which had beautiful sculptures depicting women dancers are also described by him.

## **QUESTIONS**

#### **One word Answers**

1. How are sculptures helpful in understanding history of dance?
2. Where is the painting of a woman in 'lata vrschikam' found?
3. Who is the first to have made a mention of 'sangeerna jaati'?

#### **Give short answers**

1. What are the arts that thrived during Pallava age?
2. By what name were the temple dancers collectively known? How were they categorized?
3. Give a note on karana sculptures of Chola period

#### **Give Detail answers**

1. Give an account of sculptures that belong to the Pallava age
2. Through the sculptures, the Chola Kings contributed to the recording and practice of Karanas – Justify

## Chapter 4

### Nayak Kings



The Nayaka rulers were originally the feudatories of the Vijayanagara emperors. After the battle of Talikota in 1565 CE, the Vijayanagara Empire became weak and the Nayaka kings asserted their independence. The most famous Nayaka kingdoms of Tamilnadu were in Tanjavur, Madurai and Gingee. The Nayaka rulers were great patrons of fine arts and many dancers, musicians and painters migrated to Tanjavur and Madurai from Hampi, the Vijayanagara capital city. The Nayakas contributed a lot to the development of fine arts like music, dance and painting in the Tamizh country and it was called the 'golden age' of music and dance.

The Nayak period is the first to give names of items in dance and known today in the Bharatanatyam style. The literary works (books and manuscripts) of the Nayaka age reveal the position of music and dance at that time. Many musical forms like Alaariippu, Swarajati, Padam, Varnam, Kuravanji natakas and Yakshagaanas were composed during this time. The Nayak rulers were Telugus by birth. Achyutappa Nayaka (1560-1614) was a very great patron of dance and invited many Kuchipudi dancers from the village of Kuchipudi in Andrapradesh to come and settle down in many

villages in the Tanjavur area over which he ruled. One of these villages was called Achyutarayapuram named after this king.

His son Raghunatha Nayaka (1600-1634) was also a patron of musicians and dancers. He himself was a talented musician, a musicologist and a composer. He was the author of new ragas like 'Jayantasena' and new *tala*-s like 'ramananda'. He also taught music to others. He is believed to be the author of the work '*Sangeetha sudha*'. He also composed a number of Yakshaganas.

His knowledge of the art of dance is seen from many of his literary works. He mentions 13 *samyuta hasta*-s, 24 *asamyuta hasta*-s, 30 *nritta hasta*-s, 5 chest movements, 9 neck movements, 7 leg movements, 7 side movements, 19 head movements, 10 hand movements and 6 feet movements.

A poetess of his reign named 'Rambhadraamabha' also mentions the *natyasala* at his court. It was decorated very lavishly with gems of different colors, silk and other decorations creating a dazzling effect. The king came to this *natyashala* followed by a number of dancers. Ramabhadraamba also mentions the qualities of an ideal dancer.

Raghunatha Nayaka's son Vijayaraghava Nayaka was also a patron of the arts. Many experts in music and dance flourished in his court. The great padam composer 'Kshetragna' was specially patronized by Vijayaraghava, in whose court he composed more than 1000 poems. He also composed 15 padams with mudra 'Vijayaraghava'. Kshetragna mentions that Vijayaraghava Nayaka himself was a very great composer and composed many Yakshagaanas.

#### Sculpture

There are many sculptures of Nataraja belonging to this period. The best sculpture of Nataraja in the *Aanandatandava* pose is

found near the *Dwajasthambha* of the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai. As usual great importance is given to the central figure of Nataraja but there are also sculptures of musicians at the bottom. There are also many tiny sculptures of Nataraja in the Meenakshi temple. In one of these, Sivakamasundari, his consort, stands next to him; Nandi plays the drum and Karaikkal ammaiyan with the beautiful smile on her face plays the cymbals.

Another beautiful sculpture of Nataraja belonging to the Nayaka period is from 'Tenkasi'. This figure is in the *lalaatatalaka* pose. He has 16 arms and carries many emblems like the drum, trident etc. His main left hand is in *Gajahasta*. The famous saints 'Patanjali' and 'Vyaghrapada' are on either side of Siva. In this temple there is another sculpture of Siva in *Urdhvataandava* with 10 arms.

### Bronze sculptures

Two bronze sculptures now in the Trivandrum museum in Kerala belonging to the Nayaka age of the 17 CE are very interesting. One shows 'Devi' clapping her hands and keeping time, and the other playing the cymbals.

### Ivory sculptures

In the Nayaka period many intricate sculptures in ivory were made. One beautiful ivory sculpture of Nataraja is now kept in the Srirangam museum. This sculpture shows the *Urdhvataandava* of Siva with 12 arms and Vishnu and Brahma on either side. Parvati is shown watching this dance. The sage Tumburu with one of his hand raised praises the Lord and in the other he holds the veena. A *rishi* probably Bharata is lost in admiration of Siva's dance and closes his eyes and claps his hands in appreciation.

### Paintings

There are a number of paintings of the Nayaka times in temples of Tamilnadu. Many of these show the dances of Shiva. One of the most beautiful paintings is found in the Kapardishwara temple

at Tiruvalanjuli in Tanjavur district. The whole story of Darukavana is shown here. A 16 armed Shiva is shown overcoming the snake created by the *rishis* to destroy him. Siva is seen in *Urdhvajanu* pose overcoming the snake. A beautiful and graceful Sivakamasundari watches him while Brahma keeps time and Vishnu plays the drum. Kubera the god of wealth plays the panchamukha vaadhyam and the gods from above floating on the clouds shower flowers on the divine dancer. In the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram there are also some beautiful paintings. They are seen on the ceiling at the entrance of the shrine of 'Sivakamasundari'.

Seen earlier, the mother tongue of Nayaks was Telugu. Even though they were not natives of the land, they adhered to the Tamil culture and encouraged the native arts. While the arts flourished with the encouragement of the kings, the language Tamil was pushed to a second place, as Telugu became their official language. Previously, the Pallavas and Cholas gave importance to Samskrit and later Telugu took front stage. Thus, Tamil arts got influenced by the other languages and culture, and in Nayak rule such influence came from Telugu.

Sevappa Nayak married the king's sister-in-law and earned the good will of the king and people. Sevappa Nayak was a religious person. In his time, the temple tower of Tiruvannamalai was built. Besides, he also roofed the temple towers of Tirupathi and Sri Sailam with gold. He was also a connoisseur of arts. In his time were written Ragunathabyutam, Sangita Sudha, Vijaya Vilasam, Rajagopala vilasam, all music-dance-drama literature. Atchutappa Nayak, who succeeded Sevappa Nayak brought Brahmins skilled in Bhaagavata mela, from Kuchipudi village and made them settle in a new village created for this purpose called, Melattur near Tanjore.

**Bhaagavatamela:** Only men perform Bhaagavatha mela dance. They also donned the women roles. This dance is alive and famous till today, carrying forward a distinctive tradition. Among the Bhagavatha mela dramas, famous is 'Prahlaada caritram'. The role of 'Narasimha' is done only by Brahmin heredities. This has been continuing till today through generations. The Bhaagavatha mela dance consists of intensive feelings. The core of internal expression, *satvika* is given prime importance, in the dance drama. Following Atchutappa, his son Raghunatha Nayak ascended the throne. This period is rightly called as the golden era of arts. The credit of making Tanjore as a cultural pinnacle goes to Raghunatha Nayak.

Fine arts of literature, music, painting and dance saw magnificent development. The king himself was adept in playing the veena. He ruled the kingdom for nearly 40 years. He was killed along with his son by the Madurai Nayaks, who then took over the kingdom. Chengkamala Das, who came later, could not carry forward his duties as a king and so handed over the kingdom to Ekoji, a Maratta Chief. Ekoji was a commander-in-chief of the Bijapur sultan. From him started the rule of the Marattas from 1675, which went strong later.

Like his predecessors, Raghunatha Nayak was also a good patron of arts. He has also written literary works called Kavyas. He also authored dramas 'Sri Paarijaata-praharana Natakam' and 'Sri Rukmani Krishna Vivaaha Yakshagaanam'. His works, Sangita Sudha and Valmiki charitram have a lot of information on dance and were written in Telugu.

Raghunatha and his son Vijayaragava have made several dance dramas. Some of dance dramas done during their period are: Sangita sudha, Bharata sudha, Sangita kadhāni, Sahitya ratnaakara, Caturdandi prakaasika, Raghunathabyutham, Raghunatha vilaasam, Swara mela kalanidhi in Sanskrit; Paarijaata

praharanam, Vaalmiki charitram, Rukmani parinayam, Gajendra moksham, Nala charitram, Ramaayanam, Vipranarayana catritram, Mannaaru daasa vilaasam, Usha parinayam in Telugu. Most of these were performed as dance.

In the court of Vijaya raghava Nayaka, were also poetess Krishnaamba, Rangajaamba and Leelavati. Rangamma was adept in 8 languages and has done dance compositions in 8 languages. Her Mannaaru Daasa Vilaasam and Usha Parinayam are especially noteworthy.

**Jakkini:** Another noteworthy dance of the Nayak rule that came up was 'jakkini'. This is said to have its reference in the text 'Brihaddesi'. 'Taala dipika' indicates jakkini to be a type belonging to '*Citra natya*'. Goddess Kali holding weapons such as sword, trident, bow and arrow is supposed to have performed Jakkini. This dance contains three elements: Jati, Saahitya and Swara. Of the three the Jati is considered important. Rhythmic phrases such as 'ellilaam', 'elaam' and 'le' will appear in between. They are generally set to tala cycles such as Adhi, Ada and Chaapu.

King Raghunatha Nayak was proficient in both music and dance. He created new music forms for dance. They are Ratileela, Thungaleela, Rangaabaranam, Ananya parigramanika, Abinandanam, Nandana, Anandana and Abimda. These could not stand the test of time.

Kshetrayya who visited this king has composed numerous sringaara padams. These are special numbers, performed even today. The 'padam' had the name of 'pada-kavita' in Nayak's period. Poetical words juicy with the love sentiment with plenty of scope for bhava, was called padakavita.

'Rajagopala Vilasam' written in the Nayak period, describes the dances and dancers of the period. Mannaaru Dasa vilasam, book containing daru, padam, davala and sobana was written during

the period of Raghunatha Nayak. He himself wrote 23 yakshagana dance-dramas.

Dance varieties such as *muka chali*, *yati nrtyam*, *sapta Sali*, *uduppa*, *druva*, *chowsapta*, *kavata*, *geetam*, *chindu*, *desi kattari*, *uibota*, *sapta nrtyam* are listed in 'Sangita darpana' a work of the Nayak period.

*Sangita muktavali* of Devanachaarya, discloses forms such as *pushpaanjali*, *mukachaali*, *suddha yati nrittam*, *raagaanga yati nrittam*, *sapta nrittam*, *rupa nrittam*, *deva nrittam*, *sapta chali*, *geeta prabandam*, *cuda geetam*, *chindu*, *daru* and *drupadam*.

Vijaya raghava Nayak in his *Vipra narayana charitram* states that the following components should be present in a drama for success: *gopika geetam*, *dvipadam*, *brahmara geetam*, *dandakam*, *srngara padam*, *savatyakam*, *plead*, *daru*, *hela padam*, *needi padalu*, *sangkeertanam*, *athyaama*, *sword swirl*, *gujjari*, *vilveedu*, *dandalasyam*, *induka kireedam*, *kuravanji*, *gujarati*, *desi variations*, *chow padam*, *pada keli*, *suba leela*, *jakkini*, *thoodu padam* and *pada chaali*.

Todaya mangalam, which is an opening number in a dance-drama written by Talapaakkam brothers – *jaya jaanaki*, *charanu*, *murahara*, *deve'sagana*, *maadhava* – hold a special place. New dance variety called Swarapallavi was also made. This is supposed to have done specially for *yati-nrityam*. This also had another name, 'jakka'

Padams, dance units with extensive scope for abinaya has been known by different names. The term '*Yela prabandam*' was used instead of 'padam'. Compositions of this type made in Kannada, Andra, Dravida and Grantha were called 'desa elam-s'. Of the above types, the Telugu '*elams*' attained prominence during the Nayak period.

**Yelam:** These come under the desi variety. So, colloquial words feature and the sentiment is love life [aham]. The history of Nayaks registers them as especially suitable for abinaya.

Muthuth-thaandavar who composed Tamil padams, was a contemporary of Raghunatha Nayak. In the Nayak period, songs for kummi and kolaatam, called as *darus* were composed. These songs are very much alike the kuravai songs.

Major dance-dramas such as kuravanji, Yakshagaanam and Bhagavatha mela thrived during the Nayak rule. The Nayaks built dance halls and encouraged dance in temples.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **One word Answers**

1. What were the two clans belonging to the Nayak period
2. Who is the noted padam composer, contemporary to Vijayaraghava Nayak?
3. Who was the Tamil padam composer, a contemporary to Raghunatha Nayak

### **Give short answers**

1. What were the new compositions that came up during Nayak age
2. Give short note on Bhagavatamela
3. Name some of the works authored by Raghunatha Nayak

### **Give Detail answers**

1. What are the details pertaining to dance available from paintings of Nayak period?
2. What were the literary works that came up during the period of Raghunatha Nayak?

## Chapter 5

### The Maratta Kings



**S**ucceeding the Nayaks, the Marattas came to power. Chengkamal Das the last of the Nayaks, approached Bijapur Sultan for help, to sustain his kingdom from the Madurai Nayaks. Bijapur Sultan sent his commander, Ekoji with an army.

Ekoji helped Chengkamal Das to save his kingdom from them in 1674 AD. Chengkamal Das was incapable to rule the kingdom peacefully, and so the control went to the hands of Ekoji in 1676 AD. Thus the rule of Marattas began at Tanjore.

After Ekoji, Sahaji came to power in 1684 AD. They thus opened a new era in the history of Tamil land, which was yet another golden period for arts and culture.

The chronological order of the Maratta kings is as under: (CE)

1. Venkohi @ Ekoji - 1676 – 1684
2. Sahaji - 1684 – 1712
3. Saraboji/Serfoji - 1712 – 1729
4. Tukaaji/Tulaja - 1728 – 1736
5. Ekoji II - 1736 – 1737

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 6. Sayaji       | - 1788        |
| 7. Pratap Singh | - 1739 – 1763 |
| 8. Tulaja II    | - 1763 – 1787 |
| 9. Amarsingh    | - 1787 - 1796 |
| 10. Serfoji II  | - 1796 – 1832 |
| 11. Sivaji II   | - 1832 – 1855 |

#### Sahaji

Sahaji was one of the most illustrious rulers of the Marattas. He was called as *Abhinava Bhoja*. Proficient in several languages like Telugu, Sanskrit, Marathi, Persian and Hindi, he was also a great scholar in Sangita and Sahitya. More than thirty works comprising dramas, *padas* and *Kavyas* have been ascribed to him. Music and dance reached high level of excellence in his days.

His titles are evidences of his quality: '*Sakalabhaasha bhusita*', '*Sakalaarthra viraajita*', '*Sakalacitra saahiti*', '*Sangita-bharata-samarrita*', '*Saahitya sangita bhoda*'. His works have been in three categories:

1. Dramatic and poetic works
2. Musical compositions comprising mainly *padas* in praise of his family deity, Sri Tyagesa of Tiruvaarur &
3. Works dealing with the science of music like the 'Raaga lakshana' manuscripts

Sahaji was a staunch devotee of Lord Tyagesa of Tiruvarur. In fact he had a system of relay bells to communicate the completion of midday worship of the Temple and only after that he used to have his meals. He had composed soul stirring *padas* in praise of this Lord. One Appa Sastri alias Sri Parabrahmaananda Yogi is said to have been his spiritual preceptor.

Sahaji was tolerant towards all religions. He had sung in praise of Vishnu even though his devotion to Tyagesa is well known.

He was not only an excellent composer, but also a musicologist. His works brim with his intellectual capacity and mastery over scientific and practical aspects of music. He invited musicologists to record popular ragas of his time, both the Carnatic and Hindustani genres. Thus came up 11 Lakshana manuscripts about the ragas. He himself dealt rare ragas in his work 'Sahaji Ragalakshanamu'

#### **Patronage:**

The title 'Abhinavabhoja' was given to him by scholars who had genuine admiration for his accomplishments in the different branches of learning.

His retinue included distinguished scholars, musicians, philosophers and experts in various branches of knowledge. Noteworthy of them were Raghunatha Pandit, Tryambakarayamaki, Anandarayamaki, Ramabhadramaki, Cokkanathamaki, Bhuminatha kavi, Srinivasa Diksita, Nallaa Diksita amongst many others.

He founded a *Brahmanical* colony on the banks of the river Kaveri for the perpetual performance of religious ceremonies and for the pursuit of knowledge. It was named after him as 'Sahajirajapuram' and grew to a stronghold of learning arts and sciences. This village later took the name of Tiruvisanallur.

Giriraja kavi, was at the top of the list and seems to be a favourite of the king. We also get references to court poets such as Vasudeva kavi, Raama Bharati, Somakavi, Periyappa kavi, Kasinatha kavi, Bharata kavi, Astaavadhaana kavi, Vina Ayyanna (son of Venkata kavi), Vaggeyakaaraagrani Rajogopala kavi, Akkanna Amaatya, Kavigiri, Balakavi Subbanna, Dhundi Raja, Muttukavi, Naranakavi and Sesaacalapati.

'Srungaaramanjari Saahijiyan' by Periyappakavi, depicting the life of Sahaji had been performed in the Tiruvarur temple during the Chitra month. Besides court poets and composers, there were also saint poets like Sridara Venkatesa Ayyaval, Bodendra Satguruswamy, Sadaasiva Brahmendra, Parabrahmaananda yogi, Ilvagnana Swamigal, Taayumaana Swamigal, Vaidhyanatha Desikar and the Tambiraan of Tiruvaaduturai Mutt.

#### **Compositions of the King:**

Sahaji was author of a number of works comprising drama, poetry, Prabanda, padas ad the scientific work, on Ragalakshana. Apart from compositions in various languages, he also composed in Manipravala, which bears testimony to his scholarship. He used 'Tyagesa' or 'Tyaga' as mudra.

On the Lakshya front his works are:

1. Bhakta Vatsala Vilaasa Naatakamu
2. Sacipurandara Naatakamu
3. Sri Krishna Vilaasa Naatakamu
4. Parvati Parinayamu
5. Rati kalyanam
6. Rama Pattabisheka
7. Rukmini Satyabhama Samvaadam
8. Valli Kalyanam
9. Vigneswara kalyanamu
10. Vishnu Pallaki Seva Prabandam
11. Sankara Pallaki Seva Prabandam
12. Pancaratna Prabanda

13. Tyagaraja Vinodha citra Prabandam
14. Santa kalyanamu
15. Sati daanasuramu
16. Saraswati kalayaanamu
17. Sita kalyanamu
18. Kiraata Vilaasamu
19. Krishna Lila vilaasam
20. Ganga Parvati Samvaadamu
21. Jala Kridalu
22. Draupadi kalayanamu

Of these works the music for Sanakara Pallaki Seva Prabandam also has been traced. In addition to these *natakas*, he has composed beautiful *padas* in *rakti* and *Ghana ragas* on *bhakti*, *sringara* and *vairagya* themes. They are collectively called as 'Tyagesa padagal' and are in Sanskrit, Marathi and Telugu.

The Saraswati Mahal Library has saved them for posterity which has classified the themes as: (total of 208 *padas*)

• <i>Bhakti padas</i>	50
• <i>Bhava padas</i>	5
• <i>Vairagya padas</i>	9
• <i>Sringara padas</i>	103
• <i>Hasya padas</i>	14
• <i>Niti padas</i>	24
• <i>Mangalam</i>	3

### His Prabandas:

His five Prabandas were different from previous understanding and it had both musical and dramatic significance. Prabanda literally means a poetical composition or a *kavya*. In his works, it denoted any *puranic* work or a piece of literature. Valmiki caritra and Raghunatha Ramayana of Nayak King Ragunatha are examples of the *kavya* type.

The nayak period is responsible for bringing life to Yakshaganas out of unsophisticated Street plays. It was Sahaji's contribution, which he called as 'Drsya kavyas' a fusion out of Prabandas and Yakshaganas. This type had plenty of scope for music and dance in its *nrtta* and *nritya* aspects.

### Pallaki Seva Prabanda

Pallaki Seva Prabanda type happens to be one of the earliest of *Geya natakas* in Telugu in the history of south Indian music. *Pallakiseva* is a kind of temple service very much in vogue in the temples of Tanjavur District. The deity will be taken out in procession followed by performance of music and dance. Sahaji has given full literary and musical treatment to the conception in his Prabandams.

### Sankara Pallaki Seva Prabanda:

The Sankara Pallaki Seva Prabanda has been performed during the annual Brahmotsavam for over two hundred years in Tiruvarur. To this, the king had endowed 10 *velis* of land to keep the continuity of the performances. It was the custom of the palanquin bearers to sing this Prabanda while the king was carried from Tanjavur to Tiruvarur.

Story line: 'Parvati desiring union with Parameswara, sends her sakhis with a message requesting Him to come to her.'

The *Sakhis* think of approaching God Parameswara through the services of the Ganges adorning his head, the deer adorning his hand, the serpent adorning his neck and the moon that sits on his matted locks. But they find them all to be untrustworthy and so they make a bold decision to make it in person, request of Parvati.

The beautiful description of the Lord being taken in procession to the accompaniment of Sangita mela frequently referred by the composer must have been a beautiful experience.

The opening song 'Kadalimpaku' suggestively depicts the rhythmic movement of the palanquin bearers set to Nadanamakriya raga. This grandeur has its contrast in the melodic song which Parvati sings addressing the Lord 'Nive daive Sikamani nive' in Saurastra raga, bringing the feelings of an ardent devotee. All the *darus* contain the svanama mudra of the King.

**Vishnu Pallaki seva** has the same story line where Goddess Lakshmi is the *nayika*. Her two sakhis who take the message are Manjubhasini and Priyamvada. Here the untrustworthy allies are Narada and Adisesha. Again, the story ends with Lord Vishnu who gets into the palanquin and proceeds to Lakshmi's resort.

This work consists of segments: *Sobanamu*, *pavvalimpu*, *daru*, *dvipada*, *padyas*, *dodhaka*, *dhavalambu* and *melukopu*. The mayuragati ragade is a rare addition. He fondly uses the Tamil word, 'kondadi' in apt places. The *daru* in which the palanquin bearers are given directions to carry it carefully, is interesting. They are asked to give sufficient time to the *apsaras* to dance before the palanquin and to enable the sages to witness the dance.

This work consists of 22 *darus* and varieties of verse forms like *curnika*, *kanda padya*, *sisa padya*, *utpala mala*, *campaka mala* and *dvipada*. They are placed at apt places wherein situations are highly emotional and critical.

**Pancaratna prabanda** is another important work. There is no special incident in the story. A band of five artists - two dancing girls, *nattuvanar* (named *navasiddha yogi*), *cencu kuravas* and a servant pay a visit to the court of Parameswara. The five artists perform excellent dances before him. The pleased Lord blesses them and their patron, Sahaji.

This work consists of *Ghana Natya*, It is full of dance score, *jatis*, *korvai* in different *talas* and reveal the sound knowledge of the king in these fine arts. The sequences of korvai, jati, Ganapati Kavittvam, daru are all tailored to perfection. This has less importance to *sahitya* and emphasizes on musical and rhythmic senses. The technical pieces like the *mohra*, *tirmana* and *jati* figure in a beautiful sequence. This Prabanda is a proof of Sahaji's sangita in both the scientific and practical aspects.

**Tyagaraja Vinoda citra prabanda** is in *manipravala* using Sanskrit, Telugu, Marathi and Tamil. Sahaji calls this as '*nataka*' and places it in six acts. This work is full of intellectual feats coupled with variety of novel art forms in music and dance. This work is also called as 'Sankara Kali Natana Samvada Nataka'.

The story line is rather simple. Goddess Bhadrakaali is proud of her extraordinary talents in the art of dance and throws a challenge to Lord Tyagesa. Taking the form of Nataraja, Sir Tyagesa curbs her pride and marries Her.

The argument starts with the nature of Deva natya, Raja natya and Desi Natya (i.e, heavenly, court and popular dance)

There is a 'Sapta-saagara-sulaadi-prabanda-lila' *daru* in Marathi which uses the *sapta talas* and seven *ragas*, Narayana gaula, Kannada gaula, Maalavagaula, Riti gaula, Purvagaula, chayagaula and Kedaragaula. He has also used novel varieties of musical forms such as Vidwatprasna *lila daru*, *Bhava lila daru*, *prabanda*

*lila* *daru*, *muktapadagrastha lila*, *Niraadhara lila*, *Savyaapasavya Bhaasaadvaya lila* all revealing intellectual attainments of King Sahaji.

Sahaji cleverly uses *swaraksharas* and places certain sentences that give different meaning when split in different ways. He has used *talas* like Simhalila, Hamsalila, Mallikamoda, Laghusekhara, Vanamaali, Basavasankara, Hanumatkumbha, Pancaghaatamatya etc. *Ragams* used include Madhyamavati, Gumma Kambodi, Bhairavi, Todi, Surutti, Kurinji, Asaaveri, Sankarabharana, Paadi, Lalita pancamam etc. This work is definitely an outstanding gem on his crown of creations.

#### **Yakshaganas:**

##### **Sacipurandaramu:**

This is an Yakshagana from Sahaji and deals with the story of how Indra kills the demon Puloma and finally marries his daughter Saci. This Yakshagana consists of *Todayam*, *Saranu*, *Mangalam*, *Daru*, *Vacanas*, *Maartrikas* and *padas*. The *Todayam*, composed in *Nata raga* and *jampa tala* figures in the beginning. This is followed by a *Saranu* in *Kedaragaula*. The ragas used in this work include – Pantuvaraali, Asaaveri, Sankarabharana, Naata, Kedaragaula, Saurastra and Mohana.

##### **Satidhaana Suramu:**

The story of this Yakshagana deals with the love of a married woman, belonging to a low caste for a Brahmin. The husband of the woman gives her away to her lover, the Brahmin who attains *gnana* and realizes the truth. The famous sloka ‘*Saantakaaram bujakasyayanam*’ figures in one context.

#### **Natakas:**

**Candrakekara Vilaasa Nataka** is another *abinaya nataka* of the king. The theme is the well known story of *Siva* drinking the poison of *Kalakuta*. From the vacana of the *Sutradara*, we can make out that it has been enacted as a dance drama. It has a *todayam* in the beginning in *Gaula raga* followed by a *mangala* in *Gumma kambodi raga*.

**Pancabhasa vilasa**, as the name suggests is a *nataka* in five languages. It has four *darus* in Tamil and *abinaya padas*.

Influence of *Gita govinda* is seen in the work of Dhundiraja kavi, who calls his work as ‘*sahavilasa gitam*’ where he praises his patron eloquently. ‘*Sahaji rajastapadi*’ is also on the model of *Gitagovinda*, but the author is unknown. Following the model of *Astapadi* later we have works like ‘*Sivagitimalika*’ and ‘*Ramastapadi*’

#### **Kuravanji Natakas:**

They gained huge popularity during Sahaji’s reign. The famous Tyagesa Kuravanji was enacted in the temple. This work is well like all the available kuravanji-s. Rajamohini, the heroine pines for her divine lover Lord Tyagesa. Kurvanji arrives and assures her of success in her love.

It is no exaggeration that the court of Sahaji grew to be a distinguished centre of scholars, poets, musicians, philosophers, grammarians, musicologists and it was the cultural and moral strength of the king that inspired them all and brought forth the literary and music wealth of the age.

### Sarabhoji I (1712-1728)

Sarabhoji I was a great scholar and wore the title, 'Vidya Bhoja'. Like his brother, he continued patronizing literature, music and dance.

Giriraja kavi who decorated the court of Sahaji continued with Sarabhoji. His sringara padas in praise of Sarabhoji and the spiritual compositions of Sadaasiva Brahmendra are notable works of his reign.

He was pious and charitable. He presented the Brahmins with *agraharams* at Tiruvengadu and Tirukkadalaiyur. One such village was named after him, 'Sarabhojirajapuram'. The tradition of literary plays in the temples continued under the patronage of the king. 'Vidya Parinaya' was an allegorical play of his minister, which was enacted in the festival of goddess Anandavalli at Tanjavur. The story line is the marriage of the individual soul with *Vidya* or spiritual wisdom.

### Tukkoji alias Tulaja I (1728-1736)

To recon with the name of Tulaja is his monumental work, 'Sangita Saramrita'. He was the youngest of the three brothers. Following his elder brothers, he gave liberal gifts to scholars and pundits.

Himself a scholar, musician and composer of merit, in pursuit of scientific knowledge in music he dealt about it in his treatise. It was during his period the Hindustani sangita paddhati became popular in the Tanjavur court.

Owing to a difference of opinion with his brother Sarabhoji, Tulaja lived in Mahadevapattanam for sometime. It was then the temple of Sri Adivaraaha swamy was built and he installed the deity himself and performed the utsava.

Like Sahaji, Tulaja formed the theme of many padas composed by his court poets. They also bear testimony to his musical attainments. 13 padas by Tulaja in praise of the family deity Lord Candramouliswara have been preserved as manuscripts. There are also a variety of padas in Sanskrit, Telugu and Marathi with the name of Tulaja, dedicated to Candramouliswara.

Apart from scholar, linguist and musicologist, he was also a master of other difficult sciences such as Ayurveda and Jyotisha.

#### Poets and scholars:

Tulaja had in his court two important Sanskrit poets and distinguished scholars, Ghanashyaama and Maanabhatta.

Ghanashyaama composed an allegorical drama, 'Navagraha caritra' after the model of Yakshagana. There are patra-pravesa darus marking the entrance of kancuki, Indra and dancers.

Dramas of advaitic themes have been composed by writers. Krishna Misra's 'Prabotha Candrodaya' is one such work. Paramaananda Yogi's 'Mukti Kaantaparinaya' and Tsalla Virayya's 'Viveka Vijayam' are examples.

There are quite a few erotic padas done by the court musicians and composers in praise of the King. They seem have been inspired by Kshetrayya padams. While Kshetrayya's works have 'muvva gopala' as ista devata, these erotic works are in praise of the king.

#### His works:

Tulaja is a distinguished author of fine yakshaganas. His nataka in Telugu entitled, 'Sivakama sundari Parinaya Nataka' is an excellent piece of work.

It deals with the story of Parameswara's marriage with Parvati. Lord Siva and the Lord of mountains with his beautiful daughter Parvati come to attend the celebrations conducted at the Adivarahaswamy temple. Narada conveys the beauty of Parvati to Siva. Finally this leads to the marriage of the divine couple.

The play begins with an invocation to lord Vigneshwara and other gods. He also places his salutation to his parents and two elder brothers. Along with the mastery of literary composition, his knowledge of the Puranic lore and reflection of his philosophical bent is seen in this work.

There are *pravesa darus* for the arrival of Himavan, Parameswara and Parvati. Ragas used are *naata, vasantabhairavi, kalyani, bhairavi, mallaaru, todi, saurastra, nadanamakriya, goulipantu, saaveri, ramakriya, sankarabarana, ghantarava, brindavani, dhanyasi mohana* etc.

Another work of nataka genre is 'Rajarajanava Vidya vilaasa Nataka'. The theme is both symbolic and philosophical. The knowledge of the *advaita tattva* and its greatness is the plot.

'Atma' is conceived as a king, residing in the 'Pundarikapuram', the fundamental abode of God in the Human form. 'Jiva raja' is identified as the king of this '*sarira*' or the physical body. The ministers of Jivaraja are 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' and give him the best counsel. 'Maya' is the mother of bad qualities. 'Adharma' is never patronized by Jivaraja and he complains Jiva's attitude to 'Atmaraja'. 'Moha' is sent to find out the truth. 'Dharma' cautions Jivaraja about the Mohana yogi who demonstrates the sixty four arts before Jivaraja by way of testing his integrity. In the meanwhile Jivaraja remains engrossed in meditation and finally the divine light descends on him, as Lord Siva gives him *darshan*. The story ends with the marriage of Maya's son '*kama*' with '*rati*'. Thus the theme is both lofty and sublime.

The arrival of '*moha*' is indicated in *mohana* raga and arrival of '*ananda*' is in *Aanandabhairavi* raga. The *daru* which announces the *darshan* of lord Shiva is in *Sankarabharana*.

Tulaja's Sangita Saramrita represents an important landmark in the history of music. A scientific codification of the ragas in vogue is available in Sahaji's Lakshana manuscripts and Tulaja's Sangita Saramrita. He refers to Vyasaraya, the Madhva saint as his guru besides quoting *suladis* of Purandaradasa as laksyas for some of the ragas.

There are 14 chapters in the work with subjects: *sruti, suddasvara, vikrta svara, graama, murchana, jaati, prabanda, tala and prakirnaka*. This work popularized the work of Venkatamaki and is also unique in its treatment of Raga and Ragalakshana.

### Ekoji II (1736-1739)

Like his illustrious predecessors, he was also a scholar and had commendable knowledge of Sanskrit, Marati and Telugu. He was highly proficient in sahitya and sangita and was the author of 'Samksepa Ramayanam' and 'Tyageswara Kamalamba Parinayam'. He was a devout bhakta of Candramouliswara.

### Patronage:

Ekoji was a great admirer of dance and had in his court a famous dancer, Muddumanga. He honored her profusely with gifts. She had extra ordinary talent and did varieties of dances such as jakkini, padacali, tullal, abinaya and to each one of them the king presented a '*muktyala*', pearl necklace. She rose to a position of court dancer and was recipient of royal honor.

### Works

He describes himself as son of Hamsamamba and Tulaja in the sahitya. Being a devotee of Candramouliswara, his work 'Tyageswara kamalamba Parinayam' is dedicated to Him.

His has also composed a fine dvipada work on Sri Rama. His Vigneswara kalyana is also called as Ganapati Natakam. The theme of this play is the marriage of Siddhi and Buddhi with Vigneswara.

His works on various gods in both Sanskrit and Telugu have been classified:

- Niti padas - 18
- Sringara padas - 27
- Bhakti kirtanas - 28

Besides the above there are about 86 compositions in Marathi. Ekoji occupies a deserving place in the history of music as a fine composer and playwright.

### **Pratapa Simha (1739-1763)**

Pratapa Simha was the son of Tukkoji and Uma. He was famous for his patronage for poets, composers and musicians. His court continued as the seat of music, dance, drama and literature.

#### **Patronage**

The famous Virabhadrayya of Merattur, who made swarajati and varna compositions, and Matrubhuta kavi were under his patronage.

We get to know a lot of details regarding the king through an erotic work, 'Radhika Santvanam' by Muddu Palani. She was a highly talented dancer of his court. She was proficient in *Bharatasashtra* and great scholar of Telugu. She was requested by Tirumalaachaarya to write this work, in which she praises the king as a patron of art, letters, poets and musicians alike. Muddu Palani also wrote 'Saptapadaalu' which consists of captivating modes of expression. It is inspired by Aandal's *Tiruppavai*.

There are manuscripts that contain *swarajatis* and *sallam darus* in praise of both Pratapa simha and Amara Simha.

#### **Works**

Pratapasimha himself is said to have composed 12 dramas in Marathi on puranic subjects.

### **Tulaja II (1763- 1787)**

The credit of bringing a fresh era of vainikas, saint poets, nattuvacharyas, musicians and dancers is due to Tulaja II. His reign is to be marked in golden letters in the history of music. Tulaja was a contemporary of Saint Tyagaraja. The trinity Muthuswamy Diksitar, Syamasastri and Tyagaraja swept the whole of South India with their soul stirring music.

He spent generously for the growth and welfare of art and artists. He was a great scholar in Sanskrit, Marathi and Telugu.

#### **Patronage:**

Vina Tirumalai Iyer's son Vina Adiappier was the court Vidwan of his court. Expert vocalist Venkatasubbiah was gifted 5 *velis* of *nanjai* land (Veli is a measurement scale followed by locals. This seems to be approximately equal to a hectare in metric measurement. Nanjai is fertile land). The king invited all distinguished musicians and dancers to his court.

The famous nattuvanar, Sri Mahadeva Annaavi was thus brought from Tirunelveli for the purpose of systematizing the art. He was famous for his kirtanas and varnas in Tamil and Telugu. He brought with him two dancing girls Vanajakshi and Muttumannar. They pleased the king by performing for a varnam, '*Bhosala Tulajendra Raja*'. Tulaja presented him with a big house in West Main Street at Tanjavur and 10 velis of nanjai lands.

Other distinguished teachers patronized by the King were Gangaimuthu and Subbaraaya Odhuvar. The latter was the father of four illustrious brothers known by the name, Tanjore Quartette. A number of varnas, svarajatis and salaam darus were composed in praise of Tulaja. In appreciation he presented a building opposite to the Great temple at Tanjavur, which is still called by the name, nattuvacavadi. The four sons became court vidwans of Tanjavur.

Sonti Venkatramayya, guru of St Tyagaraja was the leading *aastaana vidwan* of the court. Vina Kalahasti Iyer, the maternal grandfather of Tyagaraja was also in the court, to whom a *sarvamanya* of lands was gifted.

Paccimiriyan Aadhiyappayya the famous composer of 'Viriboni' varnam flourished in his court. Tulaja presented to 11 strottiriyam people a hamlet at Tiruturaipundi named after him as 'Tulaja maharajapuram'.

Tavil player Mahalingam was gifted 1 ½ veli nanjai and ½ veli punjai. Patronage was extended to Kattu vina Bhagavatar, in connection with the '*arubattumoovar*' festival at Adikumbesar temple at Kumbakonam.

The enactment of Bhagavatamela natakas was popular during the period of Tulaja. Merattur Venkataramana Bhagavatar who made the natakas enjoyed liberal patronage of the king. The king also made an endowment in 1786 for continuous staging of the natakas.

Rama Brahmam, father of Tyagaraja was the expounder of Ramayana at the king's court. Ramaswami Diksidar also enjoyed royal patronage.

Historical accounts say that there were around 360 such artists in the court and their duty was to give a performance in the royal

presence. Sonti Venkataramanayya enjoyed a unique *ardhasimhasan* with the king.

It was during the reign of this king that Rev Schwartz, the Danish missionary came to have his headquarters in Tanjavur. Later it is to this missionary Tulaja entrusted his son Sarabhoji II to be cared.

The Trinity of Karnatic music were not lured by the royal patronage. But their parents and ancestors had the benefit of it in their life time. The high standard of musical appreciation was one of the important factors which drew the best from the musicians.

### Amarasimha (1787-1798)

Sarabhoji (adopted) son of Tulaja being a minor, Amarasimha his step brother, ascended the throne. He was a devotee of Lord Candramouliswara and Sri Rama. He was known for his strict adherence to Hindu Dharma.

Amarasimha like Tulaja II gave extensive gifts and *sarvamanya* to the learned and religious. He was a fine composer of dramas in Marathi. Despite his political preoccupations he kept himself engaged with them.

He held his own court at Tiruvidaimarudur after Sarabhoji claiming the throne with the help of Rev Schwartz.

### Patronage

Šivarajamantri was the minister to Amarasimha, also encouraged arts and literature. He requested Matrubhutakavi, to produce a musical drama and honored him for the work.

Matrubuta kavi composed '*Parijata paharana Prabandam*' where he offers genuine praises to the minister as well as eulogizing his

king for his character and personality. It could be recounted that the work 'Trsiragiri padas' was done by this kavi. Matrubuta kavi refers to Amarasimha's patronage to music, musicians and dancers.

A manuscript of swarajati collections in praise of both Pratapasimha and Amarasimha are available, done by an unknown court poet.

Amarasimha invited Ghanam Krishna Iyer, the famous composer of Tamil padams to his court. He spread the Ghana-marga style of music during his stay here. Ghanam Krishna Iyer composed padas in praise of the king Amarasimha and from his headquarters at Tiruvidaimarudur, used to visit Kumbakonam, Nallur, Tiruvaiyaru and other places and sang in praises of the presiding deities in those temples. Krishna Iyer did around 73 compositions which are valued for the richness of musical conception and depth in feeling.

He also had the opportunity to learn the Hindustani style of singing from Ramadas. Ramadas was appointed as *astaana vidwan* by Amarasimha.

There were regular dance performances in the court by devadasis who encouraged them by his support. A state record holds an order that the dancing girls were dissuaded from composing songs in praise of him. In fact, a dancer was fined doing so, in spite of the East India Company's instructions not to do so.

The two kings in Tanjavore and Tiruvidaimarudur, seemed to vie each other in fostering musical learning.

Tanjavur came under the leadership of Sarabhoji II who is revered as a **scholar prince and the architect of the Saraswati Mahal library.**

### Sarabhoji II

An adopted son of Tulaja II, he was entrusted with Rev Schwartz, on whose influence he learnt various languages – Sanskrit, Telugu, Marathi, English, German and French – along with knowing western culture. The benefit of English education allowed him to appreciate and admire western classical literature.

#### Patronage:

He patronized all branches of learning, *sangita*, drama, medicine, literature, astronomy etc. It was the aim of all musicians to demonstrate their skill in his presence. His minister Varaahappa Diksita pandita was a great scholar, good player on the *vina*, piano and violin.

Debut of Ghanam Krishna Iyer in the Ghana *marga* style took place in his court and it was Pallavi Gopalayya who approved his talent in the stream.

There have been competitions between Syama Sastri and Bobbili Kesavayya. In order to get the best coaching for great masters, people flocked into Tanjavur. Periya Tirukkundram Subbaraama Iyer, Sundaramayyar and Krishna Iyer migrated to Tanjavur for benefitting from that atmosphere.

Expert instrumentalists of *Vina*, *Gottuvadhyam*, *Naagasvaram*, violin, *Saarangi*, *Tavil*, *Mridangam*, Flute, Dulcimer, *Mukhavina* and clarinet lived at this time.

Dance took its zenith with Subbaraya Odhuvar and his illustrious sons along with many disciples of theirs. They composed a number of *pada varnas*, *sabdas* in praise of Lord Brhadiswara and the King. They systematized Bharatanatyam and made special composition for dance. Sarabhoji presented them with *birudas*, palanquins and royal favours.

Nattuvanars Gangaimuthu, Sabhapati also received his royal patronage. Besides Bharathanatyam he also encouraged, *Kuravai*, *Kuravanji*, *Modi* dance, *Kinjini*, *Terukkoothu*, dummy horse dances and fifty varieties of *pinnal kolattams* were performed in his court.

Kottaiyur Sivakolundu Desikar's 'Sarabhendra Bhupala Kuravanji' was regularly performed in the annual festival of Tanjavur Temple. Another regular feature was 'Manmatha nataka' of the Tanjavur quartette.

Tiruvazhundur Subramanyam was a wonderful player of Nagaswaram and received a silver nagaswaram from the King. He learnt the art of *Ghana marga*, *cakra taana* and a number of Tamil *kirtanams* from Ghanam Krishnayyer.

For *Bhagavata mela* purpose, villages of Tepperumaanallur, Sulamangalam, Siyamangalam, Oothukkaadu, Saliyamangalam, Nidaamangalam were given special attention. The *Bhagavatamela* artists were given lands, houses, cash, titles and gifts. Sarabhoji had also gifted *manyas* (Gift) to the *Bhagavata mela* natakas. Enactment of the dramas in the Natakasala attached to the royal establishment was a regular feature. The court actors and dancer who took part in these received an *inam* of Rs.20.

There have been rules and code of conduct for the dancers and musicians: They were not supposed to adorn themselves with head ornaments like *candramaa* etc., silk tape for their plaits. Their sarees should not be decked with *kusumbi naada* or border. They were not allowed to wear the *kum kum* (vermillion) in a crosswise manner. The court dancers had to maintain their dignity. The *nattuvanars* should not wear upper garment and had to wear them in their waist leaving their chest and shoulders uncovered.

Special exemption was granted to his favorite dancer Sundari and her descendants, who also got an additional amount of Rs.15,

besides usual remuneration. She was given a special remuneration of Rs.20, every *Vijayadasami* which was also enjoyed by her heirs. She had the unique honor of performing the first item in special occasions.

Sarabhoji started a school to teach oriental learning called, 'Vidya kalanidi'

Apart from Bharathanatyam, Hindustani and western dances also got appreciation. Sarabhoji paid monthly salary in cash and kind to instrumentalists and court *vidwans*. Permission for leave of absence was to be obtained by those in court service. Fines were collected from those who broke rules.

*Lavani* singing had got a special liking and such singers flourished.

The luminous list of noteworthy stalwarts of his court includes: Sonti Venkataramayya, Tanjore Quartette, Ghanam Krishna Iyer, Venkatasubbaiyer, Aanai Ayya, Vedanayakam Pillai, Ramadaas, Veyigitapaidaala Gurumurthy Sastri, Vina Subbukutty Iyer, Vina Kalahasti Iyer, Talanaayar Krisha Iyer, Todi Sitarama Iyer, Sankarabharana Seenu Iyengar, Addhukhaan, Vina Perumal Iyengar, Musical Trinity, Kavi Venkata Suri (author of Sanskrit *Nowka Caritra*) along many others.

#### Works:

Sarabhoji was a great writer of many fine works. His Devendra Kuravanji and Tristala Yatra Lavani are interesting compositions. He also authored many *kathaas* and *natakas*.

In Devendra Kuravanji, as in all Kuravanji literature, the Kurava woman tells the heroine about her qualities of the Hero. Geography is brought out in beautiful poetic form. He has used ragas like Syaamakalayani, Suratimallaar and Nagavaraali.

Sarabhoji had a taste for Maratha folk pieces. His *Lavani* pieces were also popular. He also composed special dance compositions in Marathi for *Natya* programs.

He has composed many *sabda*, *varna*, *pada*, *swarajati*, *abinaya pada*, *tillaana*, *gita*, *prabanda*, *kavuttuvam*, *alaru*, *jatis* and *korvais*.

#### **Saraswati Mahal Library:**

The Saraswati Mahal Library is a precious house of invaluable treasure. Sarabhoji had a passion for books and the collection of books was his sacred duty. He spent lavishly in collecting rare books and manuscripts on any subject of oriental study.

He built an empire of learning and Saraswati Mahal Library stands today comprising the precious collection of works in Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, Persian, German, Latin, Urdu and other languages. The wide range of subjects include religion, philosophy, music, drama, dance, *jyotisha*, medicine, astronomy, comparative religion, sciences and other branches of knowledge.

It is a monument to Sarabhoji's multi dimensional personality. He himself was a combination of a gifted composer, writer, scholar, linguist, critic, artist, musician, *rasika* and master of Ayurveda.

The collection is a synthesis of various traditions – Dravidian, Sinhalese, Canarese, Sanskrit, Persian, Marathi, Telugu and Western. The nucleus of the Library dates back to the Nayak period, 16<sup>th</sup> century, known as 'Saraswati Bhaandaaram'. Manuscripts of the Nayak period belonging to the court and court poets are found in palm leaves.

Many a scholars and critics have acclaimed it as the most wonderful collection in the world. Sarabhoji's pilgrimage to Banaras, which was immortalized in his 'Tristala tirta yatra lavani' resulted as an additional collection in the Library.

The total number of manuscripts is more than 40000 out of which Sanskrit is 30000, Marathi 5000, Tamil and Telugu 2000 each and other languages about 500.

The manuscripts that deal with music and dance throw light on the tradition of the bygone eras. Obsolete compositions like Prabandas etc of today are saved in the archives of the library. It is a great source of inspiration and resource for seekers of knowledge.

#### **Impact of Western music:**

History records a strong influence of western music in this period. Sarabhoji had a great liking for the western music and had collected instruments like, Violin, Clarinet, Dulcimer, Piano, German flute, Tambourine and Harpsichord. He organized the Tanjavore band who played these instruments.

The library archives has copies of note books containing songs in western staff notation and the theory explained in a lucid manner by Thomas Chapman and copied by W Holdworth with wordings, 'for His Majesty, the Raja of Thanjavur', dated 1.3.1775. There are about 150 books on western music preserved in the library.

The king also took help from European musicians staying in India for getting the instruments of the band repaired and maintained. He himself composed songs for the band. Violin and Piano became very popular with the south Indian musicians.

Some of the letters preserved in the Library show the king's interest in western music. A letter by Silvestre De Costa contains few tunes for practice. Sarabhoji also wanted to take lessons in western music from Mr Martensen is indicated in one letter. Sarabhoji had shown interest in both the practical and theoretical aspects of western music.

## Sivaji II

The last of the Maratta rulers was Sivaji. Following all his predecessors, he continued the noble work and patronage. The Saraswati Mahal Library has many compositions in praise of this king like *varnas*, *svarajatis*, *sallam darus* and *tillaanas*.

The Tanjore Quartette were his favourite musicians, who composed quite a number of dance compositions with Sivaji as the hero. A manuscript entitled, 'Sivaji Sisamulu' describes the talents and accomplishments of Sivaji. He gave liberal gifts and *sarvamanya*.

### Patronage:

Like the Tanjore quartette, many other compositions in his praise were produced. Sivanandam, one of the quartette, was the author of *padas* in Tamil, *javalis*, *taana varnas*, *chouka varnas*, *sabdas* addressed to him. He seemed to have encouraged both Tamil in Telugu in particular.

Tamil dramas, 'Pandikeli Vilaasa Naatakam' by Narayana kavi, 'Madana Sundara Prasaadana Santaana Vilaasa' by Arunachala kavi are examples.

Like Sarabhoji, Sivaji was a lover of *lavanis* and had extended patronage to it. He himself was the theme of many such *lavanis*. Lavani Venkata Rao was a prominent *lavani* singer of his court and was composed many in praise of the King. Sivaji himself acted as the final judge in *Lavani* contests held in the court. A *ragamalika* *lavani* with Saveri, Sri, Kannada and Punnagavaraali is dedicated to Sivaji.

That performers were appointed and salary and emoluments given to them for playing different instruments in the *Natya* and *Sangita saala*, finds recorded in State documents. This list mentions name

of Rahman, Hindustani musician and *mridangam* players Kamakshi and Somaji Gopal Rao Shinde. It also gives account for various purchases made in connection with the instruments.

We also find western music concerts held in the court and emoluments have been paid to those artists. Names like singers: Gamis, Marta Bayins, Joseph Francis Hecobar, Archibald Francis, composer: Sayid Hussain, Singer Krishna Ramaswamy, Mridangam player Hiraaj Gopal Rao are featured. Instruments were also manufactured for both learners and performers.

Records also show acceptance of 12 Brahmin music teachers employed by the State in the Natakasaala of Tanjavur court. They were restricted to take tuitions outside and in such a case fine had been collected as disobeying contract.

With the encouragement of the Maratta kings arts and sciences glowed as gems otherwise would have just been valueless pebbles.

### SUMMARY

- Sahaji was one of the most illustrious rulers of the Mahrattas. He was called as Abhinava Bhoja. He knew many languages and was a scholar in Sangita and Sahithya. Music and dance reached high level of excellence in his days.
- His works have been in three categories:
  1. Dramatic and poetic works
  2. Musical compositions comprising mainly *padas* in praise of his family deity, Sri Tyagesa of Tiruvaarur &
  3. Works dealing with the science of music like the 'Raaga lakshana' manuscripts

- Sahaji was a staunch devotee of Lord Tyagesa of Tiruvarur. Sahaji was tolerant towards all religions. He was not only an excellent composer, but also a musicologist
- His retinue included distinguished scholars, musicians, philosophers and experts. Noteworthy of them were Raghunatha Pandit, Tryambakarayamaki, Anandarayamaki, Ramabhadramaki, Cokkanathamaki, Bhuminatha kavi, Srinivasa Diksita, Nallaa Diksita
- Giriraja kavi, who was supposed to be the grand father of Sri Tyagaraja was at the top of the list and seems to be a favourite of the king
- He founded a *Brahmanical* colony on the banks of the river Kaveri for the perpetual performance of religious ceremonies and for the pursuit of knowledge, which was called as Shahjipuram.
- Shahji was author of a number of works comprising drama, poetry, Prabanda, padas ad the scientific work, on Ragalakshana. He also composed in Manipravala. He used 'Tyagesa' or 'Tyaga' as mudra.
- Of these works the music for Sanakara Pallaki Seva Prabandam also has been traced. His works were collectively called as 'Tyagesa padagalu' and are in Sanskrit, Marathi and Telugu.
- His Prabandas were Pallaki Seva Prabanda, Sankara Pallaki Seva Prabanda, Vishnu Pallaki seva, Pancaratna prabanda
- His Yakshaganas were Sacipurandaramu , Satidhaana Suramu
- Natakas were Chandrasekara Vilaasa Nataka and Kuravanji Natakas

- Saraboji I wore the title 'Vidya Bhoja' and was a patron of literature, music and dance.
- Giriraja Kavi and Sadaasiva Brahmendra made their compositions during his reign
- Tulaja was the author of 'Sangita Saramrita'. He also wrote nataka 'Sivakama Sundari Parinaya nataka' and 'Rajarajanja Vidya vilaasa Nataka'
- Apart from being a scholar, linguist and musicologist, he was also a master of other difficult sciences such as Ayurveda and Jyotisha.
- Ghanashyaama and Maanabhatta were distinguished scholars of his court.
- Tulaja quotes Vyasaraya as his guru besides the Suladis of Purandaradasa.
- Ekoji II was the author of 'Samksepa Ramayanam' and 'Tyageswara Kamalamba Parinayam'.
- He had in his court a famous dancer, Muddumanga, who was very talented.
- He also authored niti padas, sringara padas and bhakti padas.
- Pratapasimha patronized Matrubuta kavi and Virabhadrayya
- Muddu Palani, a talented dancer of his court authored 'Radhika Santvanam', an erotic work and 'Sapta padaalu'
- Pratapasimha himself composed 12 dramas in Marathi

- The credit of bringing a fresh era of vainikas, saint poets, nattuvacharyas, musicians and dancers is due to Tulaja II.
- Tulaja II brought Mahadeva Annai and his students Vanajakshi and Muttumannar to Tanjavur.
- Other distinguished teachers patronized by the King were Gangaimuthu and Subbaraaya Odhuvar and his sons, Tanjore Quartette
- Sonti Venkatramayya, guru of St Tyagaraja was the leading *aastaana vidwan* of the court.
- Paccimiriyam Aadhiyappayya the famous composer of 'Viriboni' varnam flourished in his court.
- Merattur Venkataramana Bhagavatar who made the natakas enjoyed liberal patronage of the king.
- It was during the reign of this king that Rev Schwartz, the Danish missionary came to have his headquarters in Tanjavur. Later it is to this missionary Tulaja entrusted his son Sarabhoji II to be cared.
- His contemporaries were the Musical Trinity
- Amarasimha ascended the throne since Sarabhoji was a minor.
- Matrubuta kavi composed 'Parijata paharana Prabandam'
- Ghanam Krishna Iyer composed padas in praise of the king Amarasimha
- There were regular cance performances in the court by devadasis.

- Sarabhoji II An adopted son of Tulaja II, he was entrusted with Rev Schwartz, on whose influence he learnt various languages
  - He patronized all branches of learning, sangita, drama, medicine, literature, astronomy
  - Expert instrumentalists of *Vina, gottuvadhyam, naagasvaram, violin, saarangi, tavil, mridangam, flute, dulcimer, mukhavina* and clarinet lived at this time
  - The list of noteworthy stalwarts of his court includes: Sonti Venkataramayya, Tanjore Quartette, Ghanam Krishna Iyer, Venkatasubbaiyer, Aanai Ayya, Vedanayakam Pillai, Ramadaas, Veyigitapaidaala Gurumurthy Sastri, Vina Subbukutty Iyer, Vina Kalahasti Iyer, Talanaayar Krisha Iyer, Todi Sitarama Iyer, Sankarabharana Seenu Iyengar, Addhukhaan, Vina Perumal Iyengar, Musical Trinity, Kavi Venkata Suri
  - Sarabhoji started a school to teach oriental learning called, 'vidya kalanidi'.
  - Apart from Bharatanatyam, Hindustani and western dances also got appreciation.
- Lavani* singing had got a special liking and such singers flourished.
- Sarabhoji was a great writer and authored many *kathaas* and *natakas*. authored many *kathaas* and *natakas, sabda, varna, pada, swarajati, abinaya pada, tillaana, gita, prabanda, kavuttuvam, alaru, jatis* and *korvais*.
- He was a combination of a gifted composer, writer, scholar, linguist, critic, artist, musician, *rasika* and master of Ayurveda.

- Sarabhoji had a passion for books and the collection of books. He built the Saraswati Mahal Library stands today comprising the precious collection of works in Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, Persian, German, Latin, Urdu in wide range of subjects include religion, philosophy, music, drama, dance, *jyotisha*, medicine
- Sarabhoji had a great liking for the western music and had collected instruments like, Violin, Clarinet, Dulcimer, Piano, German flute, Tambourine and Harpsichord. He organized the Tanjavore band who played these instruments.
- The last of the Maratta rulers was Sivaji. He continued the noble work and patronage.
- The Tanjore Quartette were his favourite musicians, who composed quite a number of dance compositions with Sivaji as the hero
- Like Sarabhoji, Sivaji was a lover of *lavanis* and had extended patronage to it.
- Lavani Venkata Rao , Kamakshi and Somaji Gopal Rao Shinde, Gamis, Marta Bayins, Joseph Francis Hecobar, Archibald Francis, composer: Sayid Hussain, Singer Krishna Ramaswamy, Mridangam player Hiraaj Gopal Rao were the known artists of his period
- Performers were appointed and salary and emoluments given to them for playing different instruments in the *Natya* and *Sangita saala*.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Who was Shahji? Name some of his titles.
2. What were his literary works?
3. Name some poets in his patronage.
4. What are the Yakshaganas written by Shahji?
5. Who was called ‘Vidya Bhoja’? Who were his contemporaries?
6. What is the name of the text authored by Tulaja I? What were his other compositions?
7. Who was the famous dancer patronized by Ekoji II?
8. How are the compositions of Ekoji II categorized?
9. Who was the famous nattuvanar brought from Tirunelveli? How was he connected with the Tanjore Quartette?
10. Who was guru of Tyagaraja?
11. Who was the spear head of Bhagavata mela nataka compositions?
12. Who was the Danish missionary under whom Serfoji II was entrusted?
13. What did Muddu Pazani do?
14. What was Ghanam Krishnayyer known for?
15. Name some musicians patronized by Saraboji II
16. What were the rules and code of conduct for the dancers and musicians?

17. Give a short note on: 'Vidya kalanidi'
18. Collections on which subjects are found in Saraswati Mahal library and in which languages
19. Name some artists of Sivaji II period
20. List a few compositions of Saraboji II

**Answer in detail:**

1. Write in detail about Shahji's Prabandas.
2. Write notes on Shahji's Natakas.
3. Write briefly about the poets patronized in Shahji's court
4. What were the contributions of various poets during the maratta reign from Serfoji I to Amarasimha
5. What are the names of various dancers we get during this period? What were their contributions?
6. What were the various natakams that were composed during this period?
7. 'Sarabhoji had a great liking for the western music' justify.
8. Who was Saraboji II? Explain his contributions to the field of music and dance.
9. Who was Sivaji II? What were his contributions?

## Chapter 6

### History of some dance items



A little of lasya makes devi happy while a little of tandava makes shiva who is along with his ganas, happy.

*"Yatkinchchil lasyamethena devii dustathi nityasaha  
yatkinchit thandavam thena somaha sanucaraha shiva:"*

This means, Devi is happy with 'lasya' and Soma is happy with 'tandava'. So, even the Gods are made happy not with the same element but with different elements. The classical dance called Bharathanatyam, which we see on stage today had names such as '*sadir*' and '*nautch*' in early days. It was also called by names, *aadal*, *koothu*, *dasiyaattam*, *bharatam*, *chinnamelam* and *natyam*.

The framing of today's repertoire of a dance recital is attributed to the Tanjavur Quartets – brothers – Chinnayya, Ponnayya, Sivanandam and Vadivel. The dance repertoire framed by them contains: *Alarippu*, *Jatiswaram*, *sabdam*, *Varnam*, *keerthanam*, *padam* and *Tillaana*.

In the practical aspect of presentation, today's repertoire contains items like: *Todayamangalam*, *Pushpanjali*, *kavuthuvam*, *Mallari*. Beyond the various items presented in the temples and the courts,

when dance came to be presented in a proscenium stage, there also came items that were works of improvisation and fusion.

**Sangita muktavali** of **Devendra** gives the following items of dance repertoire:

- Pushpanjali*
- Mukachali*
- Sudda yati nrityam*
- Sabdam*
- Suda gita abinayam*
- Gita abinayam*
- Prabanda nartanam*
- and also *sindu, daru* and *druvapadam*.

King **Tulaja** in his “**Sangita Saramrita**” also gives a list of items in a dance recital. Even though the external names look different, the roots can be traced back for the dance items of today. While some items have same names but differ in *vinyoga*, others have a different name but same *vinyoga*.

**The following passages are intended to bring a discussion about:**

Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Sabdam, Pushpanjali, Kavutuvam, Svarajati, Javali & Tillaana

### Alarippu

**History & antiquity:** Texts such as ‘**Suddananda Prakasam**’ and ‘**Bharata Sangraham**’ have the word ‘alaari’ as the name of a *kooththu*. Anyway, the text does not give the mode of presentation. The other parallel names found are: *alaru, alari, alaripu, alar poo* and *allarippu*. The common understanding is that this item is of

later origin probably one or two centuries. In fact a specific type of playing the nadaswaram before the mallari is known by the same name, ‘*alarippu*’

**Features:** This is an invocatory item in Bharatanatyam and is considered to be similar to a prayer. It is performed using the movements of *anga, upanga and pratyanga* moved systematically and is like a warm up of the whole body. It comes under the pure dance structure – i.e., ‘*nritta*’, where no words to communicate a meaning is used. Dance syllables either sung with *sruti* or just narrated as *chollus* are used. Recent choreographers also use a juxtaposition of ‘*Tirupugazh*’ in the same rhythm structure, which is sung syncopating with the *chollus*.

**Unusual ones:** The tisra alarippu is the first item learnt by a learner of dance, which is also danced in the first dance recital – the Arangetram. As the name implies, the dance syllables are set in tisra - the three beat cycle. Apart from the tisra alarippu also kanda, chatusra, misra are commonly done. The sangeerna alarippu is a rare one. One of our recent dancers has even released a set of cassettes containing 35 alarippus set in all the basic suladi talas in combination with the *panca nadais*.

**Mode of performance:** Alarippu generally starts with the *anjali hasta* and *sama pada stanaka*. Movements can be broadly divided into three segments: *stanaka, motita* and the final *theermanam*.

From the first posture, movements follow and add up one after the other – movements of the neck, eyes, shoulders, elbow, wrist, waist and feet. In practical usage, the movements done in *samapada stanaka* are again repeated in the *motita stanaka* (full sitting posture). The third segment consists of ‘*tha tei tha ha*’ and ‘*di di thei*’ adavus which conclude with a *theermanam* pattern. Some choreographers have included different *devata hastas* for salutations to principal deities. Others have only the *anjali hasta*

used above the head for salutation to deities (*deva vandanam*), in front of the forehead for salutation to the guru (*guru vandanam*) and in front of the chest for salutation to the audience (*sabha vandanam*).

**Chollus/significance:** The chollus used start as '*tha-tha-kaarams*' – "*taam di taam, tei ta tei...*", performed in three speeds. The movements added one after the other brings to mind, a process of a flower blooming. The parallel idea of flower blooming is also found in odissi where the name '*pallavi*' is used.

### Jatiswaram

**History & antiquity:** The manuscripts available from the Vijayanagara period show the name *swara pallavi*, which was an item that came to be performed during the period of the Nayak rulers. It should be the predecessor of *jatiswarams*. **Sangita Ratnakara** notes the '*vadya and nritya prabanda*', which must have used the playing of instruments where different '*pata's*' were played.

Devanacharya in his '*Sangita Muktavali*' describes '*jakka*', which also follows patterns of rhythm also called as *kootha varnas*. There were varieties of '*pata's*' – *swara pata, kara or tala pata*.

1. Swara pata used music and was sung; tala pata used rhythmic sounds and also clapping of hands/fingers. There were also
2. tantri badda patas which came out of string instruments (ta, ka, ta, na)
3. susirodbhava patas which came out of wind instruments (du, taa)
4. muraja patas from percussions (dimi, tagina, ta, di, thom, nam)

Sangita muktavali notes '*yati nrtyam*', '*raaganuka yati nrtyam*', which are also parallels of today's jatiswaram.

**Features:** As the name implies, a jatiswaram has both – *jati* and *swaram* and comes under '*nritta*' or pure dance category. Therefore, there is no scope for abinaya. While *jati* is a rhythmic syllable, *swarams* are musical notes set to a specific raga and tala structure. In a margam presentation, jatiswaram takes the second place after the alarippu.

**Compositions and composers:** Common are the *jatiswarams in aadi, rupakam and misra chapu talas*. The other tala patterns are rarely used. Eg – *kalyani, saveri, hindolam and hamsanandi jatiswarams*.

**Mode of performance :** Most of the jatiswarams have a *pallavi swaram* structure followed by two or three additional *swaram* structures. After the first *pallavi* the *jati* is done. Thereafter more calculations of rhythm, mostly going along with the pattern of the composer's ideas is done.

The swara patterns that follow are weaved with more complicated rhythmic structures. After every korvai, a particular movement with *pataka hastam* is generally done. Also a movement involving '*tattu*' and '*naattu*' is done, for moving back with *kadakamuka, alapadma* or *tripataka* and *dola hastas*.

**Chollus/significance:** The word *jati* must have come from the word '*yati*'. The swaras themselves form the *datu* and *matu* in a *jatiswaram*. Sometimes a *sahitya* containing meaningful words are also found. Then the name, '*swarajati*' is used.

### Sabdham

**History & antiquity:** The term '*sabdham*' literally means 'sound' or 'word'. This word is also found in the kuchipudi and Yakshagana

traditions. The Tanjavur Quartets themselves have composed many sabdams. So, sabdams have been performed for little more than the recent two centuries. Even though sabdams are called as '*yaso geeti's*', which mean eulogising a lord or king, there are also *srngara sabdams*.

**Features:** Sabdam takes the third place after the alarippu and jatiswaram in a margam repertoire. It is interesting to note that all the sabdams available today are set to the *misra chapu tala*. They are sung either fully in '*kamboji' raga*' or as *ragamalika* starting in '*kamboji' raga*'.

Most of the sabdams start with the syllables '*tat tei ye tei tat ta taam..*' Chollus like '*tadana tandana*', '*tadimi dindimi*', '*taakunam tari*', '*taakina tatta kina*' are common. Meaningful words make an entry giving an opening to abinaya after the first two 'nritta' items. Thus sabdam falls under the '*nritya*' category.

The term '*kavitham*' or '*Kavit*' is used for a similar structure in Katak dance. It contains words of praise of a King or Lord. Words such as '*salamure*', '*paraak*' have been used. Eg '*padmanabha salamure*', '*pratapa simha boopala salaamure*'. Probably, the term '*salaam*' had been used to bring humility in front of a king and it has travelled down south with the advent of kings during different rules. Invariably it also signifies the influence of the Mughal court practices.

The term '*salaamu*' itself is sometimes used instead of 'sabdam'. They were also known by the name '*salaam daru*'. This item has even travelled down to *singala* country, where words such as '*souda*' and '*vandamana*' are used.

Another noteworthy feature is using a particular line as a referri. That is, a particular part or a full line is sung often.

Common sabdams are *gopala sabdam*, *venkatramana sabdam*, *mukunta sabdam*, *kodanda rama sabdam*, *subramanya sabdam* etc.

Apart from the sentiment of 'praising', there are also sabdams which take a story line. Eg. *Ramayana sabdam*, *tripura samhara sabdam*, *mandooka sabdam*, *dasavatharam & Gajendra moksham*.

**Unusual ones:** The Ramayana sabdam done in kuchipudi is set in chatusra structure and uses *ataana raga*. Book on Sabda by the name, '*Sabdam alias Tala Solkattu*' has been published by the Saraswati Mahal Library. It contains works of Bharatam Kasinatha kavi, King Sahaji, and Bharatam Narayana kavi. Here the treatment of *sollukattu* or its sound pattern finds more importance than its sahitya content. Also, most of them have rhythm inbuilt unlike the misrachapu compositions of later period. Examples are *Salyaka Sabdam* (*boar*), *Sasaka sabdam* (*rabbit*), *Sikroda Sabdam* (*squirrel*), *Manduka sabdam* (*frog*), *Bramarakeeda Sabdam* (*bee*), etc. Variety of talams like *viNayaka talam*, *rupaka taalam*, *adataalam* have been used.

**Compositions and composers:** Sabdams of Nayak period are very different from the ones of later Maratta period. In the Nayak period we have sabdam compositions in Adi bharatam text of Vijayaragava Nayak period. Others have been by Bharatam Kasinathakavi and Bharatam Narayana kavi. King Sahaji's sallam darus are also under this category. In the second phase, starting with the Tanjavur Quartets and Swati Tirunaal, many composers have done sabdams.

**Languages:** Most of the Sabdams are in Telugu, while there are also some in Tamil.

Mode of performance: Sabdam generally starts with the syllable, '*tat tei ya tei tat ta taam; dalangu tam tadinginatom*'. A small jati without extensive complications is done, which is followed by the pallavi of the sabdam. At the end of every *sahitya* line, a small rhythm structure follows with *chollus* sung musically. After the final line of sahitya, a little elaborate chollu comes as conclusion. Traditionally, even though stories and eulogy are used, the *sancari* element of bhava is not done in sabdams.

### **Pushpanjali**

History & antiquity: *Pushpanjali* as a dance item is opined to be of recent origin. Thanjavur Quartets, have not included this unit in their *margam* format. But the name is not something new in our ritualistic context. The offering of flowers has been done from time immemorial. Dr Padma Subrahmanyam opines that it should be more than 1000 years since *pushpanjali* came into vogue.

Recordings of information are available that the *deva nartakis*, who were also called as *devaradiyars* have performed pushpanjalis as a part of their routine temple ritual dance. In fact, the 1<sup>st</sup> landing in the Tanjavur Brihadiswara temple in which the Karanas are sculpted, has open space like doorways from which the dancers could offer flowers directly on the huge Linga which is in the *Garbagraha*.

Natya sastra lists out two types of rituals, '*antar yavanika*' and '*bahir yavanika*'. Principal deities and lords of different directions along with Brahma, and the jarjara are worshipped for the performance to go on without hindrances of any sort. This was a part of the *antar yavanika*. At the end of stage preliminaries, the *bhaaratika* enters the stage for a flower offering. The curtain goes up.

Candrasekhara, in '*Pampaasthaanavarnanam*', mentions the following:

'When the curtain rises up, the chief danseuse took her *pushpanjali* pose behind a thin transparent curtain. In her classical *tribanga* pose for pushpanjali he describes the dancer as 'looks like a thrice bent rainbow of Indra'. The vocalist is accompanied with a lute with the dulcet notes of the pushpanjali song.'

Sarngadeva in *sangitaratnakara* gives the following:

The orchestra plays the melapaka prabanda first and the gajara. At this time, the danseuse takes up a firm, beautiful pose behind the curtain on the stage with pushpanjali. [Here, *Matanga* mentions that the dancer is in '*samapada*']

Then, the accompaniments orchestrate and she comes to centre stage and performs the flower-offering. She then performs the purely formal dance, involving a *desi lasyanga* unit.

**Matanga** points out more elaborate on the units of the formal dance to be performed on the occasion. Nartaki enters the dance in *samapada*, displays the *samdamsa hasta* and *nikuttita* with the left foot.

The text '**Pancha Marabu**' lists a separate set of talas for pushpanjali. It is a question as to even understand the vinyoga of these talas. The talas mentioned are: *Parvati locana, gokulam, kanda gangaalam, raasa cudamani, vira vikramam, vanamalikai & vasantam*. 'Venba's number 132 and 146 of Pancamarabu lists out these talas for pushpanjali.

Pushpanjali is also associated with or part of 'ranga puja'. The ritual of hindu and buddhist tantriks afford inexhaustible material for the ritualistic connections with the presentation of dance and music. The various systems of yoga such as the hatha and kundalini also prescribe the ritual uses of the *mudra* to arouse certain vibrations.

One of the important slokas of ranga puja is:

*"bharata kula bhagya kalike  
bhava rasaananda parinama kale  
jagadaiha mohana kala  
jaya jaya rangaadi deva devi"*

Flowers in Indian tradition symbolize selflessness. So is the dancer, who offers herself body and soul to the Supreme Soul.

**Features:** As the name implies, the dancer brings flowers and offers them as salutation. The traditional stage is decorated with lighted lamps and the principal deity is worshipped even before the curtains go up. After the flowers are offered *nritta* elements are performed with different permutations and combinations.

**Unusual ones:** Out of the 108 karanas listed in the *natyasastra* the first one is called as '*talapushpaputam*'. It is exactly the sentiment of offering of flowers. Dr Padma Subrahmanyam, who has worked on the revival of karanas has choreographed pushpanjali with this karana.

**Compositions and composers:** Most of the pushpanjalis are set to naattai or gambira naattai ragas. Mostly the *sarvalagu* pattern is preferred, since it is the opening number in a concert.

There are a number of pushpanjalis. Some traditional numbers are still performed for which the composer is not known. Eg '*Tat tho daga taam tandandam dindindindin taga todanga takku taa thei...*'

**Mode of performance:** The dancer enters the arena with handful of flowers and offers them. She bows down to the principal deity, the teacher, orchestra and the audience and then proceeds to perform a sequence of rhythmic patterns. Sometimes the dancer makes an entry, performs a sequence of rhythmic patterns and after finishing the muktayi or kuraipu, gathers the flowers to offer.

Pushpanjali is generally followed by a sloka in praise of a deity mostly, ganesha or Nataraja.

**Chollus/significance:** The whole of pushpanjalis are set to chollu kattu-s. Chollus like '*datto daga taam*', '*tho tho din ga*', '*thonga thonga*', '*takku taatei*' are common. Recent compositions are done with various syllables like '*Jhem*', '*takuntari*', '*kukuntari*' etc.

#### Kavuttuvam:

**Origin/History:** We find usage of '*kavutta*' and '*kavuttuga banda*' in our literature. The *kavutuka banda* is the band (rope/thread also called as '*kaapu kattal*') which is tied to ward off evil and to shun mishaps.

**Famous ones:** The family of Tanjavur Quartets is responsible for its fame, even though it was not intended to be a concert number. The *panca murti kavutuvams* and the *navasandi kavutuvams* are well known. We also find a record of '*navagraha*' kavutuvams.

**Form/Content:** Kavutuvams have 'syllables' or 'mnemonics' twined with sahitya. Sahitya here means words with meanings, addressing a deity and not in the way it is used in a padam or varnam.

**Mode of performance:** As told earlier, it was not meant to a concert number, instead a ritualistic offering specifically done during temple festivals invoking the favour of the dikpalas or gods of nine directions. The *asta-dikpalakas* (gods of eight directions) along with Brahma who takes the centre make the compositions as nine.

Due to its connection to rituals, it is not meant for entertainment of public. It has so been kept secretive and taught only to chosen disciples.

#### Svarajati:

**History:** This type of composition is an innovation of the Maratta period. As the name signifies, it has swaras and jatis interwoven

with the Sahitya. The earliest accounted Swarajati is the 'Huseni' Swarajati by Melattur Virabhadrayya in the 18 CE

**Types/Features:** Three types of Swarajatis have been in vogue since their inception.

1. Those intended for music practice: *Abhyasa gana*: These are simple compositions with swara and sahitya (No jatis are found). Eg. Saambasivaa yanave
2. Those intended for music performance: *Sabha gana*: These compositions also do not have jatis, but are more suitable for trained singers. They contain both swara and sahitya. Eg., Syama sastri's Swarajatis
3. Those intended for dance: *Natya gana*: These compositions have collukattus along with the Sahitya. Some composers have also made jatis. Eg., 'Ye maayalaadira'

**Mode of performance:** In a dance concert, Swarajati takes the position of a varnam, the central number. Owing to the multilayered sahitya and complexity of swara and jati, it justifies its placing. Most of them are in 'madhura bhakti', while some take 'bhakti' as their theme. The older counter part of the swarajatis could be the 'kaivara prabandams'. The mode of performance of swarajati is thus very similar to that of Padavarnams.

#### Javali:

**History/origin:** The origin of javalis is not very long. They blossomed in the Maratta courts. They are short pieces with catchy tunes. They are mostly erotic in content, sometimes with an underline of esoteric meaning.

Scholars quote two roots for its name reasoning: The Sanskrit 'java' which means 'fast' and in Kannada 'javadi' which means 'lewd

poetry'. In Marathi it means 'gesture of eyes in the language of love'

**Form:** Javali is one of the surviving examples of court music of Maratha period, which had influence of north Indian music forms of *Khayal* and *Tumri*. Available javalis are in Kannada and Telugu.

They are similar to *padams* with the *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and multiple *charana* sections. Some do not have *anu-pallavi*, instead *pallavi* and multiple *charanams*. Unlike the *padams* which mostly address the Gods, javalis address the kings also. The *nayika* making amorous calls to the *Nayaka* which lies in the lines of *Samboga Sringara* and the *nayika* who addresses the *Nayaka* who has been deceitful, in the lines of *Vipralamba Sringara* are found.

**Mode of performance:** Primarily an *abinaya* oriented item, Javali requires the skill of *sahitya* interpretation. It thus allows on the spot improvisations on the layers of meaning. Since the characters portrayed are human, it adapts better in a *loka dharmi* mode.

#### Tillana:

**History/Origin:** Tillanas are said to be born of inspiration from 'Taranas' of the North. They are short attractive compositions. They are also said to be born out of syllables of 'konnakkol'. They also fall in line with the *Karna prabandas* which use 'patas' and have been also called as 'nritta prabandas'. The earliest of available tillanas is by Veerabhadrayya in pantuvarali raga, Adi tala. Pratapasimha the Maratta king included it as a part of court dance tradition and it gained popularity from the period of Tulaja onwards.

**Form/Content:** Presence of syllables, 'tillaana', 'dir dir tillana', 'taraana', 'dith tilaana' is the marking feature of tillanas. The *pallavi* made of such syllables also allows singing variations. The *anupallavi* is followed by *carana sahitya*.

**Mode of performance:** Even though the sahitya is present at the end, it falls under the category of 'nritta' item. The pallavi is used to make korvai improvisations. The korvais are generally done in three stages. The first stage has *meiy adavus*, the second uses permutation combination of adavus set into korvais, the third and final section is woven with the *panca-jaati korvai*.

Falling at the end of the concert in today's repertoire, Tillana is generally set to a fast pace. Brisk movements and picturesque poses are included, to bring the concert to a grand energized finish.

**Unusual ones:** We have accounts of various composers from its inception till date for Tillanas. There have been Tillanas in rare talams like '*simhanandanam*'. We also find ragamaalika and taalamaalika Tillanas.

### Conclusion

It is very common in Indian philosophic studies to trace the beginning of anything to the vedas. Natyashastra claims:

*"Jagraah Paatyam rgvedaat saamabyo geethameva cha  
Yajurvedaadabinayaan rasaan atharvanaadabhi"*

This is just a sample to bring the connection between spiritual beliefs and arts. Dance and other fine arts have not only a utilitarian function, but also a spiritual and cultural function in India. This objective of Indian art is perhaps its most distinguishing feature. It is strongly believed that sincere devotion to the art, humility and a religious approach in the artist will undoubtedly provoke noble sentiments in the audience. To the artist, the body is a temple, the outlook, the *aaraadhana* and sincere dedication of the self to the art, the *nivedana* to the lord Nataraja.

When Lord Nataraja – The Dancer King danced, in the vigorous tandava style, his flying hair became the vastness of space; the

rhythm in his feet, the eternity of time; his movement was manifested as motion of the whole universe. His ornamentation the sun, the moon and the stars which washed aglow the inky void of space; his very breath became the scriptures; when he sang it became language. There also evolved 'rasa'

Through such a cosmic dance he does the *pancakriyas – sristi, stiththi, samhara, tirobhava* and *anugraha*. The finale of the *ananda tandava* culminates in *visranti* of re-creation, the Lord's *damaru* bursts forth into rhythm and creation starts again.

This is Indian dance. Bristling with multiple modes of symbolism, it envisions dance in the rhythm of heavens in the rhythm of life in the rhythm of all expression. Hence it is said that dance and music are integral adjuncts of yagnakarma. In secular life they attained the unique status of being equalled to the Bliss of Brahman.

### Summary:

- 1) Items like alarippu, jatiswaram and sabdam are of a later origin, around two centuries ago
- 2) Pushpanjali apart from being a dance item resonates more of a ritualistic and spiritual context
- 3) Composers from early time have made an effort to innovate and bring new shades into existing dance items and repertoire
- 4) Sabdam: 'Most of the shabdams begin with kamboji raga and set to misra chapu tala in Bharathanatyam repertoire' of today
- 5) Due to the recent 'compact' structure of performances, jatiswarams, alarippus and sabdams find less exposition.

- 6) One thing that comes to mind is a saying by Smt. Balasaraswati refers to the dance repertoire to a temple structure. Just as a devotee crosses over 'prakarams' to reach the central sanctum santorum, so are the initial items like alarippu and jatiswaram. The central piece has always been the varnam.
- 7) The efforts of the Tanjavur Quartet have to be commended for formatting the margam structure.
- 8) Even though thematics have come into the recent style of presentation margam will ever remain with its own charm.

### QUESTIONS

#### **One word Answers**

1. What are the *chollu-s* in Alarippu known as?
2. What are the names that feature in Sangita muktavali that could be considered parallels of today's Jatiswaram?
3. What is the purpose of Kavutuka banda?

#### **Give short answers**

1. What are the features of Alarippu
2. How is a jatiswaram performed?
3. Name some composers of shabdam

#### **Give Detail answers**

1. Describe the history, features and mode of performance of Alarippu
2. What are the features of the item, 'sabdam'?
3. What are the various references available for Pushpanjali. Give respective details.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Banis and Nattuvanar tradition**



According to rules concerning temple worship (Agamas), dance and music are necessary ingredients of daily *puja* of deities in temples and those were strictly adhered to in South Indian Temples from around 5 CE till the end of 19 CE. Hence, this classical art form flourished due to the dedicated practice and performance of the temple dancers (devadasis) and their exponentially expert guru-s. These guru-s, who were known as 'NATTUVANARS', possessed the quintessential qualities of being well-versed in all the departments of Bharatanatyam. Their extremely special qualities included singing, keeping the beats and conducting the dance and especially, composing the dance items and that included choreography also. The origin of Nattuvanar tradition dates back to about 2000 years ago, but, many references and legends are available from the Pallava period (5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> CE). The tradition rose to its glory from Chola period (10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D) and was at its peak during Nayak (14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D) and till the end of Maratha period (First half of 19<sup>th</sup> century). Mostly, these Nattuvanars belonged to the 'Isai Vellalar' community hailing from Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Thiruchirapalli districts of Tamil Nadu. Apart from those who inherited the art from their family tradition, there were also those

who belonged to the nadaswaram, thavil, mridangam and singing tradition and out of sheer love for this art, got trained in it from the masters who inherited it.

This lesson will cover **only those Acharyas who came direct from the Nattuvanar tradition** and also few of the popular ‘bani’s (style of Bharatanatyam) which emerged and are followed even by today’s generation.

‘Bani’ means ‘style’. In any spoken language, could be noticed variations in pronunciation which are understood as regional dialects. Even though the language is the same there are these regional variations. Similarly, there are variations in dancing method according to different teachers. When such variations take a consistent shape and forms a complete methodology and body language, it is known as a specific style, ie., ‘Bani’. The most important of Bani-s known in Bharatantayam according to nattuvanars of traditions are known by the name of places like, Tanjavur, Pandhanainallur, Vazivur, Kancheepuram and Kuttalam.

## TANJAVUR

### The Tanjore quartet – their ancestors and descendants

The four nattuvanar brothers, Chinnaiya, Ponnaiya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu put forth enormous efforts to format the repertoire of Bharatanatyam performance and it is being followed even today. Apart from that, they even composed many songs in the categories of Melaprapthi, Alarippu, Jathiswaram, Shabdam (or Salam Daru), Swarajathi, Padavarnam, Thillana, Javali etc., and created a new format for the performances. For that sake, they even systemized the Adavu (steps) structure. Their music guru Muthuswami Dikshithar, in recognition of their talent, named them ‘Sangeetha bharata sahitya sireshtah’. Their ancestors belonged to Tanjore

only. But, after the Nayak period, they got settled in Madurai and Tirunelveli.

### Tirunelveli Senthilvel annavi

This first name which we get as far as this family is concerned is this. We learn that he was supported by a Lord named ‘Pillaiyan’ (1629-1679). Senthilvel annavi had three sons, Mahadevan, Gangaimuthu and Ramalingam.

### Mahadeva annavi (1734-1791)

On the invitation of King Tulaja, Mahadeva Annabi is believed to have come to Thanjavur with two of his disciples, Vanajakshi and Muthu mannar and settled there. We also learn that King Tulaja honored him by giving him a house in Melarajaveedhi of Thanjavur. It is believed that, later, the descendants (Tanjore Quartet) of his brother’s (Gangaimuthu nattuvanar) family started living in that house. His sons were Sivanandam, Vadivelu and Gurumurthy nattuvanar(1760-1802). Gurumurthy nattuvanar took up the tradition in his own way and trained Pattanam Muthuswamy nattuvanar((1781-1846), daughter Kanthimathi and son Sudhamathalam Thambiappan(1785-1839). The renowned artists in the lineage are Chennai Jagannatha Nattuvanar (1836-1907), Nelliappa nattuvanar (1859-1905), Kandappa nattuvanar (1899-1942) and Ganesa nattuvanar (1923-1987).

### Tirunelveli Gangaimuthu nattuvanar (1737-1798)

He was the second son of Senthilvel Annabi. One of the best dance masters of his period. The famous dancer, Manikkam was his disciple.

### Thanjavur Subbaraya Nattuvanar (1758-1814)

Son of Gangaimuthu nattuvanar, he settled in Thanjavur at an early age of 19. Impressed by his immense talent, King Tulaja appointed him as his court dance master and also made him in-charge of Bhrihadiswara Temple duty. His younger brother, Chidambaram, was the master of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshithar. Subbarayar's sons were the famous Tanjore Quartet, Chinnaiya, Ponnaiya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu.

### Thanjai Chinnaiya (1802-1856)

He was the first son of Subbaraya Nattuvanar. On the request of Subbarayar, King Tulaja arranged for music training of the four brothers under Muthuswamy Dikshithar. After years of rigorous training the brothers returned to Thanjavur. Attracted by the family tradition, they took up dancing, and made a mark in the field by their innovative approach.

Sarfoji II became the king in 1798. Mostly western musicians adorned his court. There was very less importance given to our own classical musicians and dancers. Such attitude of the king led to difference of opinion between the musicians and the king. Hence, many shifted to other provinces. The four brothers first stayed in Orathanadu, then in Mannargudi and then went to Madurai. From there they went to different provinces and were honored at every place. Then, all four became the court artists of Mysore province. Chinnaiya alone stayed back there and was highly supported by the then king, Mummadhi Krishnaraja Udaiyar. Chinnaiya composed many Varnams, Tillanas, Javalis in his praise and formed a base for Tamilnadu's Bharatanatyam. We get

references that Bavani and Chikkadevamma were his disciples. Though in the later years, King Sivaji, son of Sarfoji II requested him to return, Chinnaiya refused and died in Mysore in the year 1856.

### Thanjavur Ponnaiya (1804-1864)

To accomplish his goal of giving new form to the repertoire of Bharathanatyam, Ponnaiya took Thiruvarur Kamalam (she was under the tutelage of Sri.Muthuswamy Dikshithar along with Ponnaiya, and hailed from a traditional Devaradiar family) as his disciple. Later, his notable disciples were Mannargudi Meenakshi (great grandmother of famous musician Rajagopala Pillai) and Thirunelveli Manikathammal.

When King Sivaji invited the brothers back to Thanjavur, Ponnaiya and Sivanandam accepted and returned. Ponnaiya has many Varnams, Keerthanams and Thillanas to his credit. In his lineage there is also known Sangitha Kalanidhi Thanjai. K. Ponnaiya Pillai, who has also made many contributions to this field.

### Thanjai Sivanandam (1808-1863)

He took up the art at a very early age and composed many songs for Bharatanatyam and also classical music performance. He and King Sarfoji's son Sivaji were close friends from childhood. Not a day went by, without the friends meeting each other. When a difficult situation arose to leave Tanjavur, both Sivanandam and King Sivaji missed each other. So, when the King invited them to come back, Sivanandam and Ponnaiya accepted and returned. Sivanandam's famous Thodi raga padavarnam, '*'thaanike thagujanaraar'*' is on King Sivaji.

Sivanandam had two sons, Mahadeva nattuvanar and Sabapathi nattuvanar. Mahadeva nattuvanar was the guru and father in law of Panthanainallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai.

### **Thanjai Vadivelu (1810-1847)**

Youngest among the four brothers, he rose to fame very soon. After training in Carnatic music under Muthuswami Dikshithar, he learnt violin from the court Western musician, Isaac Johnson. At one stage he started innovating and played Carnatic music in that western instrument. From then on, violin took an important place in our classical music. On admiration of his talent of playing violin, King of Thiruvananthapuram, Swathithirunal, presented him a violin made of ivory.

Seergazhi Narayaswamy pillai, Varahappaiyya, who was a minister in the court and Thanjavur Vengoparao are few of prominent violin artists who were his disciples.

On learning about his mastery over the art, King of Thiruvananthapuram, Swathithirunal invited him to adorn his court spread the glory of Carnatic music. At that time the brothers had difference of opinion with King Sarfoji and hence Vadivelu accepted the invitation and settled in Thiruvananthapuram. He was appointed the court musician and the king fixed his salary as high as Rs.100/-pm at that time.

Mangammal, Neeraal and Kanakamala of Thanjavur, Srirangam Nagarathinam, Thiruchendur Ramanatha Manikkam were all his notable disciples of dance.

The dance which was performed by the Kerala temple dancers, 'Mohiniaattam' was at the brink of losing its glory and popularity. This worried the king very much, but, thanks to the contribution

of Vadivelu, the art was reformed and gained fame with all new beauty. Many feel that this might be the reason for Mohini Aattam having slight influence of Bharathanatyam.

Certain references imply that he had one daughter and her sons were Chidambaram nattuvanar and Swaminatha nattuvanar.

### **Thanjavur Mahadeva Nattuvanar (1832-1904)**

He was the son of Sivanandam. He learnt Bharatham from his father Sivanandam and uncle, Ponnaiya and violin from uncle, Vadivelu. In those days, Mukaveena (kind of flute) was one among the accompaniments in a Bharathanatyam performance. He got trained in that and also in playing western instrument, Clarinet. During those days itself, playing of Mugaveena got reduced gradually. Hence, he introduced Clarinet as one of the accompaniments. He was the first person to have played Carnatic music in a Clarinet.

Few of his well-known disciples were Nagalapuram (now in Andhra) Vedammal, Seerkazhi Chellam – Ammani sisters, Thanjavur Royal family Krishnaswamy Rao Jadav and many more. His disciples Pandanainallur Meenakshi Sundara Nattuvanar and Thiruthuraipundi Swaminatha nattuvanar later became his sons-in law. The famous Thiruvarur Gnanam also learnt the art from him for some time.

### **Sabapathi Nattuvanar (1836-1894)**

Sabapathi nattuvanar was the younger son of Sivanandam. Thanjavur Kusalambal (Cine fame T.R.Rajakumari's grandmother), Melattur 'Bharatham' Natesaiyer and many of the Devadasi family women learnt dance under him. His sons were Kannuswamy nattuvanar and Vadivelu nattuvanar.

### **Thanjavur Kannuswamy Nattuvanar (1864-1923)**

He was the eldest son of Sabapathi nattuvanar. He learnt Bharatham from his father and uncle Mahadeva nattuvanar. He turned out to be one of the best nattuvanars of his age. At one point he had to leave Thanjavur. The prince of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwad was married to one of the Maratha princess of Thanjavur and as a gift from the bride's side a group comprising many Bharatanatyam dancers, Nattuvanars, Nagaswara vidwans and Thavil vidwans were sent to Baroda. Kannuswamy nattuvanar was one among the group. He was given Rs.75/- as salary and Rs.15/- as allowance.

He has a long list of disciples. Thanjavur Rajayi I, Rajayi II, Veenabashini, Ammana alias Saraswathi, Kamalambal, Kaamu Kannammal alias Kamakshi, Baroda Chandirabai (daughter of Gauri ammal, who was the first bharatanatyam dancer to go to Baroda) are few of them.

Kannuswamy nattuvanar was famous for his neatness in body language (angasutham), while performing the Adavus or even while performing the toughest of the padavarnams. The same he expected from his students and hence people of yesteryears would aptly say, 'disciples of Kannuswamy nattuvanar means glittering like pure gold'.

He had a daughter and son. Son K.Ponnaiya Pillai rose to fame as one of the best Carnatic musicians.

### **Thanjavur Vadivelu nattuvanar II (1869-1941)**

He was the youngest son of Sabapathi nattuvanar. He never showed any interest in the family art during his younger days. But, God's Grace was fully showered on him and at one point started off training students in Bharatham with the best of its

kind. Kamakshi, Sister of his brother's disciple, Ammana ammal was his first student. Both the guru and the shishya served as the best artists in the court of Ramanathapuram king. In appreciation of his incomparable talent, the king showered him with gold. Till that time, such act was rare of its kind as only best dancers were given this honor, but not nattuvanars.

### **Thanjavur K.P.Kittappa Pillai (1913-1999)**

He was the son of famous Sangeetha kalanidhi k.Ponnaiya Pillai, who was the son of Kannuswamy nattuvanar. One among sangeetha mummurthigal is Syama Shashtri. His grandson, Natesa Shashtri was his tutor in music. Later he learnt both music and mridangam from his father. He started his life as a Carnatic singer, but later shifted to teaching Bharatham, as even that art was in his family tradition. For that sake he put up lot of hard work to form new 'jathis' and got his grandfather's approval to incorporate them into the items he taught. Soon the world recognized his extraordinary talent. His long list of disciples includes famous artists like Vaijayanthimala, Hemamalini, Menaka Thakkar, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Indhrani Rehman, Padmaja Srinivas, Madurai 'Narthagi' Natraj, Canada Hari, Indu Varma and many more.

He served for the art in Mumbai and Bangalore too. Annamalai University invited him to head the newly formed Dance Department. He served there for 3 years. Then he returned to Thanjavur for retirement. But he had to take up serving as Dance Professor in the Music Department of Tamil University.

He presented many dance productions like Sarabendra Bhubala Kuravanji, Navasandhi Nrithyam, Aalayageethavaadya nrithyanjali and Rudu samharam.

He was honored with Sangith Natak Academy award in the year 1974. Chennai Tamizh Sangam honored with 'Isai Perarignar' title. He has many awards and titles to his credit.

There were many nattuvanars in the tradition who had specially trained extraordinarily talented dancers belonging to the devadasi tradition. Subbaraya nattuvanar (not in the lineage of Tanjore Quarter), whose other details are not available, trained Ammachathiram Gnana-Sundaram sisters and Ettaiyapuram Kannammal (last court dancer of Ettaiyapuram). Kallidaikuruchi Umaikannu nattuvanar trained Urkaadu Shanmugavadiyamma. Ennkann Govindaraja nattuvanar trained Ennkann Ambujam and her cousin Ennkann Rajalakshmi and also Ennkann V.Saroja (E.V.Saroja). Kuppuswamy nattuvanar trained Karaikal Sharadambal (who served Rukmini Devi's Kalakshetra for four years). Krishnarayapuram Sundareswara Nattuvanar trained 'Abinayasaraswathi' RangaNayaki and Krishnarayapuram Meenambal. Papanasam Vadivelu nattuvanar trained Kumbakonam Varalakshmi, Banumathi, Pattammal and SaaraNayaki and Thajavur Sharadambal alias Saamba. Papanasam Thambikannu trained Kumbakonam Gomathi. Kumbakonam Shanmugasundara nattuvanar trained Kumbakonam Girija Pakkiriswamy. Sankaran nattuvanar trained Sankarankovil Swarnam. Sikkil Ramaswamy nattuvanar trained Sikkil Vedavalli. Chennai Jagannada-Nelliappa nattuvanars trained Chennai Abinayam Andal and Salem Pappammal and Radha. Seiyur Balasubramania nattuvanar trained Seiyur Sharada. Thanjavur Kuppuswamy nattuvanar trained Thanjavur Mohanambal and Kokilambal. Kandappa nattuvanar trained the renowned dancer, 'Abinaya saraswathi' Balasaraswathi.

There are many other dancers who devoted themselves to the service of God, but either their teachers or the details about their teachers are not known. One among them is Chidambaram Vaippi. History propagates that she saved the idol of Lord Chidambaram Nataraja from the Muslim invader Tippu Sultan.

Apart from above mentioned persons who came in the lineage of Thanjavur tradition, there were innumerable other talented artists who served the art. Few amongst them, with their own innovative ideas, (but within the boundaries of classicism) formed certain renowned style of Bharatanatyam, having their own mark and tradition. Popular styles among them are Pandanainallur, Vazhivoor, Kuthalam, Kanchipuram, Chidambaram, Kaattumannar Koil, Ammachathiram, Karaikal, Ayyampettai, Orathanadu and Thiruvidaimarudur. In the modern times, mention has to be made to the style propounded by Smt.Rukmani Devi Arundale, the founder-director of the institution, 'Kalakshetra'. It is a combination of Thanjavur and Pandanainallur style.

Now, let us further look in detail few of the above mentioned styles and their prominent nattuvanars and dancers.

### PANDANAINALLUR

#### Muthaiyya Nattuvanar I

During the reign of Sahaji, Muthaiyya nattuvanar served the royal court. Even his father in law, Sivaprakasa Nattuvanar served the same court. Muthaiyya conceptualized and conducted 'Thiagarajakuravanji' in Thanjavur Brihadeeswara Temple, every year (It is to be noted that Thiruvarur Thiagesar Kuravanji is a different one). His grandson was Muthaiyya Nattuvanar II.

#### Muthaiyya Nattuvanar II (1822-1881)

He married a close relative of Ammachathiram Abiramasundara Nattuvanar. He trained RangaNayaki, Venubujambal and Suseela. His only son was named Suryamurthi (1843-1897), who was a literature person. Though Suryamurthi inherited carnatic music, Bharatham and playing of mridangam from the family tradition, he mastered Tamizh language and became a Tamizh teacher. His

close associate was the famous Gopalakrishna Bharathi who wrote 'Nandan Charithram'. Hence, he got the opportunity to set music to few of Gopalakrishna Bharathi's poetry, among them, 'Nadamadinar' set in Vasantha ragam is very popular and being staged even today. He married Kuttiammal, daughter of one among Tanjore Quartet, Ponnaiya. His daughter Kuppammal was married to Thanjavur Kannuswamy Nattuvanar. His son was the famous 'Natya kalanidhi' Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai.

#### **Pandanainallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai (1869-1954)**

Though there were innumerable talented nattuvanars in Pandanainallur, who served the art, the one big name which made this small town in South India shine as a hub of Bharatanatyam was Pandanainallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai.

He started learning music and violin at a very early age of 4. His father felt that he should be well versed in many languages and hence arranged for teaching him Telugu and Sanskrit. At the same time, his close relative Pandanainallur Kumaraswamy nattuvanar taught him Bharatasasthiram and aspects of Abhinaya and when he attained the age of eleven, taught him playing the Veena. For three years he underwent rigorous training in Bharatanatyam under Mahadeva nattuvanar who came in the lineage of the Tanjore Quartet.

He started his career assisting his guru Kumaraswamy nattuvanar. Along with him he used to do nattuvangam for his master's disciple, Thiruvazhapudur Kalyani. Later, he started performing nattuvangam all by himself for her. Apart from her, he has performed nattuvangam for few shows of his disciples, Pandanainallur Thangachi and Pandanainallur Sparanjitham only. After the demise of Kumaraswamy, Kalyani Ammal came under his direct tutelage.

He took his disciple Kalyani ammal's brother Thiruvazhapudur Ponnu (Ponnuswamy) as his assistant. Over period of time, all the young girls from the dancing tradition family of Pandanainallur became his disciples. He has trained many well-known artists, such as Thangachi, her sister Rajamanikkam, Rajayi ammal (mother of famous Pandanainallur Jayalakshmi), Aparanjitham, Nagarathinam, Kanakammal, Jeevarathinam, Jayalakshmi, Banumathi – Balachandira sisters and many more. Apart from them, there were disciples who came from nearby towns. Thiruvazhapudur Rajalakshmi – Jeevarathinam sisters (daughters of Kalyani ammal), Jeevarathinamala (daughter of Rajalakshmi ammal), Thittaicheri Subbulakshmi – Sampurnam sisters and Thiruvidaimarudur Rajam (later came to be known as Lakshmi rajam and acted in movies) Disciples from other states were Ramgopal, Chennai Kalakshetra founder Rukmini Devi Arundale, Thara Chaudury, Bangalore Krishnarao, Santharao, Mrinalini Sarabai, Baroda Kubernath Thanjorkar, Nataraj Ramakrishna, Leela Ramanadhan, V.C.Logaiyya and many many more. On the request of Smt. Rukmini Devi and E.Krishna Iyer, he came to Chennai to teach in Rukmini Devi for some time. His assistant Pandanainallur Chokkalinga Nattuvanar started teaching in Kalakshetra. Later, Pillai stayed in Kumbakonam for some time to teach Mrinalini Sarabai.

He also trained many nattuvanars. Thiruvazhapudur Swaminatha Nattuvanar (his first disciple and son of Kalyani ammal), Pandanainallur Chokkalinga Nattuvanar, Muthaiyya Nattuvanar III (his son), Subbaraya nattuvanar, Subramania nattuvanar, Swaminatha nattuvanar (son of Subramania nattuvanar) Kaalaiyarkovil Chellaiyya nattuvanar and Sivayam Nagappa were all his disciples who learnt nattuvangam and art of teaching dance.

Katumannarkovil Muthukumara nattuvanar used to visit him every now and then to clear his doubts or learn certain aspects.

He was such a strict guru that he never allowed even a slight deviation in perfection by his students. Though he lost his eye-sight in one eye at an early age, nobody could even think of dodging him as his eye-sight on the other eye was very sharp.

He was an expert in forming 'Jathis' with tough calculations and meters. He would form tough jathis according to the capability of the disciple. For the sake of Pandanainallur Jayalakshmi's performances alone, he had created many 'special' jathis. We learn that he has formed around 700 such tough jathis.

Meenakshisundaram Pillai was rarest of an artist who never accepted any awards or titles. In 1943, Jagannatha Baktha Sabai in Chennai Egmore forced him to accept the title 'Natya kalanidhi'. After that, many institutions and organizations wanted to honor him with awards/titles, but that humble extraordinary artist never accepted.

In this lineage and tradition, other notable personalities are Pandanainallur Muthaiyya Nattuvanar III (1900-1979) (son of Meenakshisundaram Pillai), Sethu nattuvanar (1803-1863), Kumaraswamy nattuvanar (1846-1907), Arunachala nattuvanar (1873-1939), who trained famous danseuse Chennai Swarnasaraswathi, Veenaikara Pasupathi (1871-1908), Subramania nattuvanar (1900-1945), Chokkalingam nattuvanar (1882-1968) (trained Kumbakonam Girija Pakkiriswamy and her daughters Alamelu, who later turned cinefame Sripriya and Meenakshi), Swaminatha nattuvanar (born on 21-3-1927, taught Kumbakonam Sulochana of devadasi tradition and still serves for the art in his hometown), Pandanainallur Subbaraya nattuvanar (born on 7-12-1914, still serves for the art in Chennai), Pasupathi

nattuvanar, Pandanainallur P.Srinivasan (does not hail from nattuvanar tradition), Baroda Kubernath Thanjorkar (born on 25-12-1921) and many more have taken (taking) the tradition ahead.

### KANCHEEPURAM

#### **Pacchaimuthu Nattuvanar (1789-1886)**

Born in a family of mridangam and natyam tradition, he learnt the art of nattuvangam playing from his father. He travelled to many provinces and was honored by many kings. Mysore Maharaja Krishnaraja Udaiyar appointed him as the court vidwan. He treated him as his friend and made him stay back in Mysore itself. Once he said that it is possible to draw a lion on the floor with rice flour, while performing simhanandana tala in mridangam and after 15 days proved it in front of the king and courtiers. Another time, he proved his talent once again by training a horse and making it dance to a Bhairavi raga varnam. In recognition of his achieving this milestone, the king honored him with the title, 'Aswathaadi'.

Due to old age when Pacchaimuthu wanted to go back to Kancheepuram, the king promised to give him anything he wanted. Pacchaimuthu asked for the Royal traditional Chamundeswari idol and the king kept his promise.

In the year 1856 when the news of Pacchaimuthu nattuvanar's demise reached the king, he immediately sent his offerings of last honors of Sandalwood for the pyre and Rs.1000/-

#### **Kancheepuram Thiruvengada Nattuvanar (1868-1945)**

Aswathaadi Pacchaimuthu nattuvanar had a son by name Guruvappa Muttukarar (1821-1870) who shifted his residence to Edappalaiyam, near Chennai George Town. He trained his nephew (sister's son), Kothandaraman in mridangam and dance. Kothandaraman had two sons and one daughter. One of the sons,

Thiruvengadam, learnt mridangam from Guruvappa Muttukarar's son, Kanniyappa Mudaliar and nattuvangam from his father. He was a very talented artist. Chennai Swarnasaraswathi, who later settled in Delhi, was his disciple. Seiyur Manickam nattuvanar, Kancheepuram Ellappa nattuvanar are notable personalities who learnt nattuvangam from him. Kancheepuram Aathikesavalu Mudaliar was the permanent mridangam player for Thiruvendaga nattuvanar's programmes.

His father Kothandarama nattuvanar trained Kancheepuram Kannammal sisters, who were from the renowned devadasi tradition.

#### Kancheepuram Ellappa Nattuvanar (1908-1974)

Guruswamy mudaliar was a nagaswaram player in Kancheepuram. He married sister of Thiruvengada nattuvanar. His son was Ellappa Nattuvanar. Ellappa nattuvanar lost his mother at a very early age and hence his uncle, Thiruvengada nattuvanar brought him up. He learnt carnatic music from his father and mridangam from a relative, Varadaraja Mudaliar. Thiruvengada nattuvanar taught him all the aspects of Bharatanatyam and made him a nattuvanar. At that time, Kandappa nattuvanar, who was a descendant of Tanjore Quartet family, settled in Kancheepuram. Ellappa befriended him and in due course learnt further nuances in nattuvangam from him. He went to an artist, Chinnaiya Naidu, who had expertise knowledge of all aspects abinaya and gained a lot from him. All of the above knowledge and expertise made him shine as one of the best nattuvanars at a very early age of 17 years. He then started his career as assistant to Kandappa Nattuvanar, who was in the famous dancer T.Balasaraswathi's troupe. At a point when Kandappa nattuvanar had to leave to Almora to serve in Udal Shankar's troupe, Ellappa took over as full time nattuvanar in Balasaraswathi's group. He was very talented in forming new

Jathis. At one stage he trained Ganesan, son of Kandappa nattuvanar and made him serve for Balasaraswathi's troupe, before quitting the same.

Many dancers came under his tutelage. Yamini Krishnamurthy, Ramgopal, Chitralekha, Chandralekha, Thara Ramaswamy, Sabeen (Wife of present Arcot Prince), Udupi Lakshminarayan, Lakshmi Vishwanathan, Anni Mary Gaston, who changed her name to Anjali are few of the renowned artists who learnt under him.

He was awarded many titles and awards. Bharatha Sasthra Ratna is one of them. But, he never attached any title with his name.

The Kancheepuram tradition was enriched with another lineage of nattuvanars too. They were Kannappa nattuvanar (1900-1952), his brother Chinna Kannappa nattuvanar (1906-1954), Sadasiva nattuvanar (who went to Bangalore and his name changed to Sadasivayya) and another Sadasiva nattuvanar (1834-1914).

#### VAZHIVOOR

Vazhivoor Nagappa Pillai was a Thavil vidwan. His daughter's son, Veerappa nattuvanar was basically a Thavil player, but later took up nattuvangam. He had one daughter and her two sons were Samu and Arumugam.

#### Vazhivoor Manikka Nattuvanar (1873-1949)

He was both a singer and nattuvanar. His father Samu Pillai has composed few Thillanas, Shabdams and songs on Lord Gnanasabesan. His Suradi Raaga Thillana on Mysore King Samaraja Udaiyar is very famous.

Manikkam learnt both Carnatic music and Nattuvangam from his father. His father in law was Thanjavur Kuppuswamy Nattuvanar. Manikkam gained more knowledge in nattuvangam from him.

He trained many dancers, Madurandagam Neelalosani and Ceylon Ranjana were prominent among them. He performed nattuvangam for all the programmes of Madurandagam Jagadambal. He was the guide to his nephew (son of Bagiyam ammal, sister of Manikkam), the famous Vazhivoor Ramaiyya Pillai.

### Vazhivoor Ramaiyya Pillai

Ramaiyya Pillai was not under direct tutelage of Manikkam nattuvanar. His first guru was Thirukazhukundram Duraiswamy nattuvanar and later learnt from Kaatumannarkovil Muthukumara nattuvanar. His uncle also taught him certain aspects.

Ramaiyya Pillai came to limelight with his prime disciple (baby) Kamala. His first student was T.M. Pattammal. He has a long list of disciples, who turned out to be renowned dancers. Few among are, Hemamalini Vijayaragavan, Vaijayanthimala, E.V. Saroja (hailed from devadasi tradition), Malathi Domnick, Radha (Kumari.Kamala's sister), Radha (T.Sadasivam's daughter), Kanaka Srinivasan, Padma Subramaniam, Chitra Visveswaran, Hemalatha Sarma & Vijaya Rajan,(they both first learnt from Kaatumannarkovil Muthukumara Nattuvanar), Komala Varadhan (her first guru was Seiyyur Thiruvengada nattuvanar), T.D.Kusalakumari, T.Jothilakshmi and many many more.

They were also many singers who joined his troupe and later became nattuvanars themselves. To name a few are, P.S.Gopalakrishnan, K.R.Radhakrishnan, Swamimalai Rajarathinam and K.J.Sarasa. Those who joined him to learn nattuvangam are Mayuram Ramaswamy, Nattaran Kottai M.A.Krishnan and S.K.Kameswaran (first he was under Vaitheeswarankovil Mahadeva nattuvanar).

He has also worked as dance director for many movies (period when classical dance was given importance in movies).

Such was his rendition of Jathis, that the audience would be awestruck during every programme. He was awarded many titles, to name a few are, Natyakalakesari (1948), Isaiperarignar (1961), Kalaimamani (1963), Sangeeth Natak Academy award (1966) and India's highest award, Padmashree.

His wife, Gnanasundaram ammal has written a book on Bharatanatyam. His son Samraj is a dance teacher too. Another son, Manicka Vinayagam is a music director.

### KUTTHALAM

#### Kuthalam Muthukrishna Nattuvanar

References point out that he was one of the talented nattuvanars of his period. But his correct period is not available. He lost one of his arms in an accident. From then on, very rarely he did nattuvangam on stage. If at all he had to do so, he would hold one of the cymbals in between his legs and with the other one in his hand would perform extraordinary jathis.

Aalangudi Vadivelu nattuvanar was his disciple. This has been documented by Vadivelu nattuvanar's brother, Duraiswamy nattuvanar.

#### Kuthalam Veeruswamy nattuvanar (1874-1944)

He was born in a traditional nattuvanar family. His elder brother Kuppuswamy nattuvanar was disciple of Narayanaswamy nattuvanar, who was a close relative.

Veeruswamy learnt nattuvangam from his elder brother. But, he was very popular in the field than anybody else in the family.

Many wanted Veeruswamy to come and stay in their place to teach them dance. But, Veeruswamy always felt that the disciples should come to him to learn.

Vaitheeswarankovil Kanakambujam (she is now a teacher in Chidambaram Sivasakthi Dance School), Vaitheeswarankovil Suseela (who has acted in few movies) and Kuthalam Pappa are few of his well-known disciples.

His grandson, Kumbakonam Shanmugasundara Nattuvanar lived in Lucknow.

#### **Kuthalam Ramaswamy Nattuvanar (1916-1991)**

Ramaswamy was son of Veeruswamy nattuvanar. First he was under the tutelage of his father, then, also learnt under his uncle, Kuppuswamy nattuvanar for two years.

He not only did nattuvangam for his students, but also did for few of other guru-s' students. He had many students, Mayiladudurai Sundarammal, Vaitheeswarankovil Kanakambujam (first she was disciple of Veeruswamy nattuvanar), Vaitheeswarankovil Rajabakiyam and Suseela, Puduchery Santha, Mayiladudurai Mallika, Samayapuram Santha, Arayapuram Jothilakshmi are a few to name.

He was very unique in the field as he was very simple and innocent in nature. That quality itself did not allow him to reach height of fame, though talented, but he always stayed a modest person. Others in the field always addressed him as 'Milagu nattuvanar'. Tamilnadu Government honored him with 'Kalaimamani' in the year 1976.

#### **Kuthalam Ganesa Pillai (1906-1979)**

He comes in lineage of nattuvanar family who belonged to Pandanainallur. In the family, his father Chinnayya Pillai was the

first to shift to Kuthalam. He was both a nattuvanar and violinist. He was the disciple of Pandanainallur Nataraja Nattuvanar (Nataraja nattuvanar was the first guru of Kaatumannarkovil Muthukumara nattuvanar). At first, Ganesa Pillai learnt Nagaswaram at an early age of 7, from Thiruvidaikkazhi Rajappa Pillai. But, he did not take up that as his career. Then he learnt mridangam from the famous, Mayuram Kuppuswamy Pillai. Though he got lot of offers to play mridangam, he wanted to focus on Bharathanatyam, so started his course under elderly nattuvanar, Pandanainallur Nataraja nattuvanar. Then, his father Chinnayya Pillai was his guru.

At one stage, Ganesa Pillai felt that shifting to Chennai will help him grow in his field and hence in the year 1954 he relocated to Chennai. Along with him two of his disciples also shifted to Chennai. Both in Kuthalam and in Chennai he trained many dancers. Notable among them were, Rajalakshmi Kalanidhi, Indira Rajan, Thiruvazhapputhur Muthulakshmi, Malathi Dominick, Actor K.Sarangapani's daughter Vijayalakshmi, Santha Baskar, Thiruvarur Thilagam, Kumbakonam Radhakrishnan and many more.

Ganesa Nattuvanar has also choreographed certain dance dramas. Till 1948, in Thirukazhukundram temple, two famous dramas composed by Perai Jagannatha Pandithar, used to be staged. In the year 1969, in the Tamil Isai Conference, Ganesa Pillai reformed these dramas and presented them as dance dramas at Chennai Raja Annamalai Mandram.

He has been the dance director for few of Tamizh movies too. He has been awarded many titles and awards by many organizations. 'Natya Kalai Kondal' awarded in the year 1947 in Thiruvarur temple by famous musician T.Lakshmana Pillai, 'Natya Kala Gnana Siromani' awarded in the year 1948 in Chennai Kapaleeswarar temple, Bharata Kalanidhi by Chennai 'Indian Institute of fine arts'

in the year 1959, Natya Selvam and Chithirasenan are few of them. But he refused to accept Kalaimamani award of Tamilnadu Government. He started his dance school, 'Indian Cultural Academy' in the year 1969.

Apart from above said main tradition of nattuvanars, there are few others who need mention for their enormous contribution to the field. They are:

#### **Kaatumannarkovil Muthukumara Nattuvanar (1874-1960)**

His mother's side was a family of nattuvanar tradition. He started his learning under Pandanainallur Nataraja nattuvanar. Then he came under the tutelage of Pandanainallur Arunachala nattuvanar and did his arangetram at an early age of 9. He performed along with his sister, Kannammal, till the age of 19. Attracted by the art of rendering nattuvangam, he wanted to take up that line and started his training under Veenaikaara Pasupathi, who was basically a veena player, but also mastered the art of nattuvangam as he inherited the family tradition. He also learnt certain aspects of nattuvangam and natya sasthiram from Pandanainallur Meenakshisundaram nattuvanar.

In the year 1921, Muthukumara Pillai wrote a book with 29 chapters, 'Sangeetha Swaragnana Bodini'. In the year 1936, he came to Chennai. E.Krishna Iyer recommended his name for training students of the Institution, Kalakshetra. He could serve there only for a year. Bangalore Ramgopal wanted him to work for his institution in Bangalore and hence Pillai went there and stayed for two years.

Famous dancer/actress baby Kamala (later known Kumari Kamala) was his disciple for 2 years before coming under the tutelage of Vazhivoor Ramaiyya Pillai. From the year 1948, for 3 years he

served in the well-known academy of Mrinalini Sarabai, 'Darpana Arts Academy'.

He has an unending list of students. Few notable among them are, M.K.Selvamani, M.K.Saroja (wife of dance laureate Mohan Kokkar), Kumari. Kamala, Kalakshetra Rukmini Devi, Mrinalini Sarabai, Ramgopal, Nalanajan, Canada Janak Kendri, Founder of Chennai Saraswathi Gana Nilayam K.Lalitha, Palakkadu Saroja, T.K.Narayanan, T.V.Soundararajan, and Sujaya Dikshith.

Those who turned nattuvanars after his tutelage are Sikkil Ramaswamy nattuvanar, Vaitheeswarankovil Mahadeva nattuvanar, Chidambaram Kunjithapaadam and P.R.Govindaraja Mudaliar. Even Karaikal Dandayudapani nattuvanar became a great natyaacharya only by the guidance of Muthukumara nattuvanar.

#### **Karaikal Dandayudapani Nattuvanar**

Born to the nagaswara exponent Natesa Pillai, he learnt music from his father at a very early age. For advanced learning in music, he was under Tiger Varadachari for nearly 6 years. He joined as singer in Chennai Kalakshetra at the age of 17. During that period, he got attracted towards the art of nattuvangam and started learning under Kaatumannarkovil Muthukumara Pillai. At age of 26, Dandayudapani Pillai left Kalakshetra and started teaching students privately.

Dandayudapani not only trained students in dance, he also wrote many songs for the sake of dance performances. Around twelve of each of Jathiswarams, Varnams and Thillanas were created and he published them as 'Aadalaisai Amudam', which is popular among many professional dancers. He has also written another book, 'Bharata Sasthira Nul Vilakkam'.

## Chapter 8

### Devadasi System



The practice of 'worship' by mankind has its roots in the 'fear' factor. Man's worship started with adulation to 'nature'. Man realized that 'nature' was more powerful than him; he feared the calamities that could arise out of nature's fury. Flood, fire, earthquakes and diseases created a factor of fear and man wanted to safeguard himself from those disasters. He worshipped the Sun, Sea (water), Fire and Land that gave him objects of sustenance. Thus he praised the *Surya*; paid tributes to *Varuna*; extolled *Agni* and admired *Bhudevi*. This type of nature worship is not only seen in India but also in most of the early civilizations in the world.

The harmony of male and female sexuality was believed to ensure happiness, fertility and prosperity. The Mother Goddess was considered to be a symbol of fertility. Rituals hailing the Mother Goddess and celebrating her marriage with her Male consort were created. This developed into the practice of offering the girl child to the temple, when a family faced difficulties. It was believed that the girl will be a mediator between man and god and will ably channelize all blessings for a happy life.

Not only in India, but in various other civilizations also such dedication of women is found. Religious beliefs in Cyprus, Babylon, Syria, Greece and Armenia also bring to notice that women religion and prostitution were linked together.

In Indian soil, through various periods the status of women has been changing. The recordings of Vedic period shows that women have been held in high esteem and any work taken up by a man is incomplete without his wife. Sage Yagnavalkya says, 'Women are the embodiment of all divine virtue on earth. Soma (Lord) has bestowed all his purity on them. Gandharva has given them sweetness of speech, Fire has showered all his brilliance to make them attractive.' We have accounts of women scholars such as Sulabha, Maitreyi, Gargi, etc.

In Mahabharatha, women are seen as pivots of entire social organization. Women have also been educated. Still one passage reads thus, 'Woman is illusion and has a weak mind that cannot be trusted. She is the sharp edge of razor'. Similarly in one passage of Ramayana a similar criticism is observed. A woman is compared to flower and honey for her face and speech as also razor to her heart, for the interior thought, no one can know.

In the later Vedic period, there is further deterioration in the status given for women. Women were denied status of equality with men; education was denied or made difficult. Polygamy was accepted and status of women was undermined. Hindu religion and Brahmanical beliefs gave the husband, status of God and widow remarriage was not allowed. There was a practice of 'sati' where the wives embraced death along with their husband in their funeral pyre.

This was followed by the age of Buddhism and Jainism. Buddhist philosophy basically spoke about the mind and its eight-fold path

He has scored the music for the Hollywood movie 'The River' and also sung one song in that movie. He has been the dance director of many Tamizh movies. He has produced many dance dramas also. They include, 'Andal', 'Sivagamiyin Sabadam', 'Padmavathi Kalyanam', 'Kaviri thanda Kalaiselvi', 'Kumbesar Kuravanji', 'Krishnathulabaaram', 'Silappadikaaram' and also composed songs and produced 'Sitrambala Kuravanji'.

The long list of his disciples includes Lalitha –Padmini sisters, Vaijayanthimala, Srividhya, Jayalalitha, Kalyani Sekar, Usha Srinivasan, Malathi Srinivasan, Savitri Balasubramanian, Chamundeswari T.Banumathi and many more. He trained his brothers Pakkiriswamy, Dakshinamurthy and Thirukokarnam Kalyana Sundaram and also Uma Anand, Nadana Sigamani Chandra and Chidambaram G.Shanmugasundaram in nattuvangam.

Highly intellect, Dandayudapani Pillai was honored with many awards and titles. 'Kala Sigamani' (1965), 'Natya kala chakravarthi' (1969), 'Natyakalanidhi' and 'Bharata kalai vithagar' is few of them. He was the first nattuvanar to be honored by Indian Government with the title,'Padmashree' (1970).

Other renowned nattuvanars and dance teachers in the tradition are Karaikal Pakkiriswamy Pillai, Dakshinamurthy nattuvanar, K.J.Sarasa and Uma Anand.

**Chidambaram** is also one of the places famous for its renowned nattuvanars. Legends available give details about Subramania nattuvanar (1864-1925), Rathinasabapathi nattuvanar (1888-1952), Chidambaram Swaminatha nattuvanar I (1874-1946), Govindaswamy alias Thambaiyya nattuvanar (1911-1993), Swaminatha nattuvanar II (1890-1945), Chidambaram Sabapathi nattuvanar (1848-1912), Chidambaram Subramania nattuvanar II (1878-1954), who trained famous dancer Sivagama sundaram,

who was dedicated to the devadasi tradition and Chidambaram G.Shanmugasundaram.

Great traditional nattuvanars like Pandanainallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai were instrumental during the formative years of The Kalakshetra. With the Genius of Smt Rukmani Devi Arundale and with many scholars and musicians, this school has spread its branches throughout the world today and well known *Bani* by itself.

## QUESTIONS

### One word Answers

1. What is 'Bani'?
2. Who were the Tanjore quartet?
3. What was the title given by Muthuswami Dikshitar to the Tanjore quartet?

### Give Short answers

1. Who were the disciples of Pandanainallur Meenakshi sundaram Pillai?
2. Give a short note on Kancipuram Ellappa Nattuvanar
3. Give names of some renowned dancers trained under Vazivoor Ramaiyya Pillai

### Give detail answers

1. Draw a chart showing the Tanjavore lineage of Nattuvanars
2. What are the contributions of Thanjavur Vadivelu?
3. What are the contributions of Kitappa Pillai to Bharatanatyam?

of truth. In the religious field women came to occupy a distinctly superior place. 'Bhikshuni Sangha-s' are seen. Buddhism denied the soul and gave importance to existing human beings without disparity. In Jain belief, woman was not equal to man. But, both the systems allowed and developed rational thinking.

The earliest record of dedication comes from a cave at Ramgarh in the Vindhya hills, inscribed in Prakrit. It describes that 'Devadina (a painter), loved Sutanuka, the slave-girl of the God'. Later mention is made in works of Mahakavi Kalidas in 3 CE. Several Puranas also recommend that arrangements should be made to enlist the services of singing girls to provide vocal and instrumental music at the times of divine services. The Bhavishya purana says that the best way to attain Suryaloka is to dedicate a bevy of women to the solar temple.

Before the building of huge temples came into being, dance and music were connected with nomadic bards. They were a group of people who went from place to place in search of wealth and support. They exhibited their talents in front of the kings and patrons. The nomadic group consisted of *Panar, Virali and Koothar*.

During the progression of time, when the *Agama-sastras* were done and huge temples were built, a parallel routine is observed between the King in his Palace and the God in the temple. All the luxuries that the king was given in his palace were transcribed to the God in the temple. Like the King, the God was also given paraphernalia like flag, drum, etc and to make him happy, the devadasis sang and danced as would be done in the court of the Kings.

With the advent of Muslims, position of women reached lowest levels. Yet with the beginning of Bhakti movement, women got upliftment in the society. Saints like Chaitanya, Nanak, Meera,

and Kabir stood for women rights and their participation in religious worship.

In the Tamil hymns of Sambandar, association of *devadasis* to temples is mentioned. Manickavacar's work also throws some light on this system. That there were women who did various services in the temple is known from, '*Tiruporcunnam, tirutellenam, tirucazhal, tirupoovalli, tirutol-no'kkam, tiruponn-oosal and tiru-ammaanai*'. These *devadasi* tradition songs are of folk nature and probably contained simple steps. This reference also represents a completion of synthesis of the bardic Tamil culture and *Brahmanic* tradition of ritual and philosophic thought.

The Jagannath Temple at Puri followed the custom of dedication of girls to the Lord. This custom continued even after India's Independence. *Devadasis* of Puri were known by names, '*Ganika*' and '*vesya*'. They were revered as, '*calanti devi*' which means 'walking goddess'. In Karnataka, the term '*basavi*' is given. The other names found are: *Jogatis, Patradavaru, Veshis, Muralis, Sani, Bhogam and Maharis/Mahanari-s*. *Jogtinis* in Karnataka and *Murlis* in Maharashtra have similar traditions. They worshipped God Khandoba and were also identified as *Kalavanti-s, Bhavins and Upadasis*.

#### **Devadasi customs and rites**

To understand the word '*devadasi*', it is split as '*deva*' and '*dasi*'. *Deva* refers to God and *dasi* refers to servant. Thus the word meant, 'servant of God'. This grew to a system, where young girls were dedicated to the temple for service. As seen earlier, the origin of the system is connected to the custom of worship of Mother Goddess and religion has played a major role in Indian society and the system of devadasis gained impetus due to the faith of people in religious traditions.

Initiation as a *devadasi* starts with the taking of the vow. Sometime the vow is taken by the parent even before the child is born. An auspicious date is chosen for the initiation rites.

The girl anoints herself with oils and takes a bath. She is then taken to the temple. The custodian of the girl worships the deity and offers aarti. The sacred necklace of beads is tied around the girl's neck. This ceremony is called, '*Bottu-katta*'. In the evening the parents of the girl feed the entire community as if they are celebrating a marriage.

With this wedding-like ceremony she becomes a consort of the God and her presence and visit to houses was considered very auspicious. Since she could never be widowed, she was called as '*nityasumangali*'. She was invited for auspicious occasions. Sometimes, the black bead from her necklace was requested to be added to the wedding chain of newly-wed. By this, that the new bride will also be a *sumangali* forever is wished.

While this is a general pattern of rites, there are minor variations according to regions. In Bijapur area the dedication is called as '*Gajepuja*' and the girl is thenceforth called as '*Jogati*'. This ritual is generally done on a full moon day and it is performed either in the temple or even at home.

A hot *mudra* is pressed on the left arm of the dedicated girl in some temples. In some regions, the girl goes around carrying a begging bowl asking for alms. The begging bowl is called '*pardi*' and everyday she chooses five doors for this.

The devadasis did not come from any particular caste or class. They were dedicated from various sections of the society rich and poor and from various communities. Women who were brought from other places after winning a war were also left to temple

services. There have been devadasis who in the sole aim of temple service dedicated themselves to the temple.

#### Duties

Other than their training in music and dance, they also have had routine education, knowledge of literature and poetry. Their other genres of training have been, making flower garlands, preparing perfume powder, beauty services, keeping accounts, maintaining the idols and maintaining the jewelry and costumes used for decorating idols.

One important duty for which the devadasi was sought after is performing the '*kumba aalatti*'. This means waving of a lamp which is in shape of a *kumba* or a pumpkin. This ritual is done to ward off evil eye. Generally after the temple deity goes on a procession and come back into the temple, this ritual is done. It is understood that many evil eyes may have been cast on the deity and this is taken off. The same ritual was also practiced for the King. The devadasis had turns to do this ritual and not all of the devadasis in the temple were allowed to perform this ritual.

#### Repertoire of devadasis

Ritual songs	:	stotra, curnika
Ritual performances	:	pushpanjali, kavutuvam
Artistic compositions	:	alarippu, varnam, padam
Devotional songs	:	laali, taalaattu, tirupalliezhuchchi
Festival compositions	:	kolaattam, sarva vadhyam & dance dramas
Social	:	mangala, nalangu, tamaash paattu, sondha kavithvam etc

### Daily ritual performances:

Early morning	: <i>Tirupalli ezhuchchi</i> (To give a wake-up-call song)
Morning	: <i>Vizha puja, kaalaichandhi puja/ siru kaalai sandi</i> (song, going around temple)
Utchi kaalam	: Mid-day service
Evening	: <i>Saaya ratchai</i> : kumba deepa, sing mangalas. <i>Pushpanjali/ suddha nrittam</i> and <i>kaikaattu murai/ periya</i> and <i>siriya murai</i> people and their path of movement)
Late evening	: <i>Ardha jamam</i> : laali, unjal (sing songs placing the idols in a swing)

### Tasks

In total three types of tasks by the devadasis:

1. Propitiatory tasks (*balidana, purshpanjali*)
2. Ritual (*circumambulation, laali, echcharika, unjal, nalangu*)
3. Festival/entertainment: *sadir kacheri – alarippu, sabdam, jatiswaram varnam, pada, javali, tillaana.*

Devadasis have been grouped under 7 categories:

1. *Datta*: One who gives herself as a gift to a temple
2. *Vikrita*: one who sells herself to the temple
3. *Pritya*: one who offers herself as a temple servant for the prosperity of her family

4. *Bhakta*: one who joins temple due to her strong devotion to the deity
5. *Hrita*: one who is enticed away and is presented to the temple
6. *Alankara*: one who is well trained in her profession, well decorated and presented by a King to the temple
7. *Rudraganika*: One who is employed in a temple and gets regular wages from the temple for singing and dancing at the time of worship.

While '*rudraganika*' is the name given to devadasis in '*saiva*' temples, in *vaishnavaite* temples, the name given is '*Sri Manickam*'.

There are also legends that connect with the devadasis. Two of them are well known:

**Renuka**: Renuka, wife of Sage Jamadagni is also mother of Parasurama. Her daily chore was to bring water from the river for her husband's rituals. Due to her power of chastity, she was able to make a pot out of river sand in which she brought water. One day she sighted a Gandharva sporting with his wives. For a moment she lost her mental composure and due to this she was not able to make the pot. The sage came to know about this and ordered his son to cut off his mother's head. Parasurama obliged his father's order immediately. A pleased sage was ready to grant any boon he asked for. Parasurama requested to revive his headless mother. The sage told his son to bring a human head. Parasurama brought a head of '*matangi*' belonging to a mang tribe. True to his words, the sage brought her back to life. Henceforth she was known as '*Yellamma*' and was worshipped by all the village folks.

**Urvasi**: Urvasi is one the three pretty celestial dancers. Once while dancing in the court of Indra she met Sayandan and stopped dancing

for a moment. Sage\*\*\* cursed her to be born in the earth and she was born as a dancer in the earth.

Thus a sanctity and talent has been given attributes to a *devadasi*. The glory of the system geared slowly and reached its peak during the Later Chola period. Then onwards is observed a slow decline both in the status and respect.

#### **Details of Devadasis known through various kingdoms:**

The period between 2 BCE to 2 CE is known as Sangam age. This is followed by Post-Sangam Age of earlier Chera-Chola-Pandya kings. The next period, around 4 CE is influenced by Buddhist and Jain beliefs. By the last period of 5 CE, the Tamil land was under the Pallavas that was followed by the Later Cholas by 9 CE. Then came the rule of Vijayanagara Kings, the Nayaks and the Mahrattas which was put to an end by the advent of British. The following are the references available through this period of time.

#### **Pallava Inscriptions:**

The inscriptions and literature of Pallava age reveal that the women dedicated to dancing were called 'devaradiyal', 'talicheri pendugal' and koothis. Among the women dancers there were 7 types: *Dattai, Vikrutai, Prittiyai, Bhaktai, Hridai, Alankarai and Rudrakanigai*.

These dancers were greatly respected in society because of their proficiency in dance. The works of the Alwars and the Nayanmars praise these dancers. They gave performances during festivals and on special occasions and the expenses for these were met from the temple funds. An inscription in the Kailasanatha temple, kanchi, mentions the name of Rajasimha's queen, Rangapataka. Her name indicates that she was a very gifted dancer. The

'muktishwara' temple in kanchi and the shiva temple at Tituvottiyur maintained a no. of women dancers to perform during worship and special festivals and the inscriptions in the 'muktiswara' temple, kanchi, belonging to the 8<sup>th</sup> C AD, to the reign of Nandivarman II states that his queen Dharma Mahadevi gave to the temple 15 dancers to participate in temple worship. The names of all the 15 dancers are mentioned clearly in this epigraph.

#### **Chola Inscriptions:**

There are many inscriptions of the Chola age, which provide information about the dancers attached to the temple. Their main duties were to sing and dance in front of the deity at specified times daily and also accompany the deity during processions. Along with others they performed many other jobs like gathering flowers from the temple garden, making garlands for the deities, cleaning the temple and other services. From the chola inscriptions we come to know that these dancers had a respectable place in society and rich people dedicated their daughters to the service of the temple and god. They were called 'talippendir' (temple women) and devaradiyars (servants of God). Many kings, ministers and also common people gave land and money for employing dancers and musicians in the temples. Special mandapas were built in the temples called 'koothambalam' or 'natasabha', 'nrittamandapa' & 'natya mandapa' for holding dance performances. There was a dancing hall at Nagai called 'natyasalai' in 1062 AD.

In the chola age the practice of employing dancing girls in the temples increased. Rajaraja I who was a great patron on cultural and artistic activities employed 400 dancing girls in the Brihadiswara temple, which he constructed in Tanjavur. These dancers were brought from different parts of the kingdom and made to reside in Tanjavur. He made provisions for their

continuous service in the temple and gave lands houses and cash to them. A very long list containing their interesting names is found among the inscriptions of this temple. Sometimes these dancers who were very proficient were also given titles. The lands granted to the dancers were called '*kuttukaani*'.

The names of many dance masters are also found here. They were called nattuvanars and they were respected and honoured with titles like '*nrittamarayan*', '*nritta-peraraiyan*'. Higher income was given to them and the lands granted to them were called '*nattuvakkani*'.

A 13 CE Pandya reference describing the way in which *patiyilaar* and *tevaratiyaar* are supposed to dance are found in the record of kingly arbitration. Accordingly before the deity's curtain was raised, the *patiyilar* danced, but afterwards the *tevaradiyar* danced.

#### Vijayanagara Inscriptions:

During the Muslim invasion of South India, in 14 CE many of the temples became very poor due to lack of patronage. The dancers attached to these temples also started taking up other professions and were ready to migrate to other places. It was after the conquest of the Tamil country by the Vijayanagara kings that the temple administration was re-organised and temple dancers came to be patronised again. Some Vijayanagara inscriptions give information about the dances during this age. In the shiva temple at Tiruvottiyur near Chennai, there are inscriptions mentioning two classes of dancers attached to the temple. One is *Rishabhattaaliyar* and *Devaradiyaar*.

#### Foreign Travellers:

Chinese traveler Chan-Ju-Kwa visited Gujarat and he mentions that over 20,000 dancing girls sang twice daily offering flowers in Buddhist temple.

Marcus Fuller, a Christian missionary who travelled in Konkan and Goa notices and writes that, 'in the service of the idols in the temple of Lord Mangesh in Goa, women were presented to the Gods in their infancy by their parents'.

Many foreign travelers visited the Vijayanagara capital city at Hampi. One of these was a Portuguese traveler named Domingo Paes who has written down all the details about his visit to the Vijayanagara Empire. He gives some interesting details about the condition of Dance in this empire. He mentions the women dancers who belonged to the Ganesha Temple at Dharwar, in Karnataka. He also describes the festival in the Virupaaksha temple in Hampi and mentions the temple Chariots and the procession of women dancers. He also describes the Navarathiri (Dussehra) festival for which the Vijayanagara temples were famous and mentions the activities of the dancers during this festival, their rich jewels and ornaments. The *Nataka shaala* or dance hall where the women danced and which had beautiful sculptures depicting women dancers are also described by him.

#### Nayaka age

The literary works (books and manuscripts) of the Nayaka age reveal the position of music and dance at that time. Many musical forms like *alaarippu*, *swarajati*, *padam*, *varnam*, *kuravanji natakas* and *Yakshagaanas* were composed during this time. Mother tongue of Nayak rulers was Telugu. Achyutappa Nayaka (1560-1614) was a very great patron of dance and invited many kuchipudi dancers from the village of kuchipudi in Andrapradesh to come and settle down in many villages in the Tanjavur area over which he ruled. One of these villages was called Achyutarayapuram named after this king.

A poetess of his reign named 'Rambhadraamabha' also mentions the natyasala at his court. It was decorated very lavishly with

gems of different colours, silk and other decorations creating a dazzling effect. The king came to this natyashala followed by a number of dancers. Ramabhadraamba also mentions the qualities of an ideal dancer.

### Maratta Age

Following the fall of the Nayak Dynasty in Tanjavur, the Maratta rule was established in this region in 1676 by Ekoji I. They continued the cultural tradition of the Nayaka kings and patronized music and dance.

Some of the prabandams like the 'Sankara pallaki seva', 'Vishnu pallaki seva' are unique productions where the dramatic literary musical and dance elements are all seen. The 'sankara pallaki seva' prabandam was performed during the annual brahmotsavam for more than 200 years in Tiruvarur, before it was given up.

This continued in the same way in successive Sahaji, Tukkoji (Tulaja I), Ekoji, & Pratapasimha's rule. Another important milestone was in the reign of Tulaja II (1763 – 1787). He was one of the greatest patrons of composers, musician, dancers and nattuvanars. He was a contemporary of saint Thyagaraja. Some of the dance experts in his courts were Gangaimuthu and subbaraya Odhuvars who was the father of the famous 4 brothers of Tanjore. As a reward for his great compositions, Tulaja gave him and his descendants a building just opposite the Brihhadeeswara temple in Tanjavur which is till known as '*nattuva-chavadi*'.

The entanglement between the court and temple was so intense that in 1847 AD the king of Tanjore removed a number of devadasis from the temples of Tanjore and Kumbakonam and sent them and their dance-masters along with his daughter who was to marry the Maharaja Sayajirao III. They were considered part of wedding dowry of the princess.

### British period

When the British came into this country, they were quite puzzled by the women attached to temples. The set up of 'family' life of the devadasis and their association with the temple priest and kings were unacceptable to them. They only found it as a dignified prostitution. They brought the move to totally abolish the attachment of women with temples. Arguments were raised for and against such abolition and finally the 'Prevention of dedication' was passed on November 26, 1947.

Changes that came up regarding the Act connected to the Devadasis:

Between 1800 and 1860 the British court system had recognised devadasi customary law as applicable to inheritance, adoption, and property ownership. Recognition of this customary law was restricted to women dedicated to temple service, and the court refused to apply it to prostitutes or fallen women.

Challenges to the special customs of the devadasis arose over time. In civil courts, the validity of devadasi adoption was questioned because:

- Such adoptions were not sanctioned by the textual *brahmanical* law
- The 1861 penal code prohibited prostitution of minors.

On September 12, 1927, V Ramadas Pantulu, a representative from Madras Presidency moved the following resolution:

"This council recommends to the Governor General in Council to introduce legislation at an early date to prohibit the practice of unmarried minor girls being dedicated to temples as devadasis. This resolution resembled Gour's 1922 proposal in that it

recommended the government draft devadasi reform legislation. However Pantulu added a recommendation that struck at the economics of the devadasi system. He suggested that the system continued because devadasis were dependent on inams, land endowments, given as payment for temple service. He proposed that if the government purchased the inams from the temples and deeded them over to the devadasi families currently benefiting from them, then these families would feel no economic need to adopt /train daughters to continue the devadasi tradition.

Dr S Muthulakshmi Reddy, a well-known doctor, social worker, and activist on behalf of Indian women was the first woman to serve in the Indian Legislature. In Nov 4<sup>th</sup> 1927, she proposed the following resolution:

"this council recommends to the government to undertake legislation or if that is for any reason impracticable to recommend to the Govt. of India to undertake legislation at a very early date to put a stop to the practice of dedication of young girls to Hindu temples for immoral purposes under the pretext of caste, custom or religion."

She described the dedication of girls and young women to temples for immoral purposes as an injustice perpetrated on the young and slur on Indian womanhood. She believed that the main factors influencing the continuation of devadasi dedication were ignorance, superstition and poverty. From her perspective as a physician, Dr Reddy argued for the devadasi reform legislation for the sake of public health and the well-being of the community. Dr Reddy's arguments in favour of her resolution were quite modern in tone. She believed the existing laws were inadequate and that temple reform was necessary. She was particularly critical of the temples for using inams and salaries to encourage devadasi dedication. Furthermore, those temples and the priests who served

In them taught children that promiscuous intercourse was a caste dharma.

Many reactions came up to Dr Muthulakshmi's arguments, more so, to Ms Katherine Mayo comments about devadasis in her book, 'Mother India'. The Hon. Sir C P Ramaswami Ayyar, affirmed the Government's willingness to respond to enlightened public opinion and enact measures. He admitted that at times girls and women might have been dedicated as devadasis for the purposes other than temple services.

The devadasis organised and mobilised to protest attacks on their religious and economic status. They complained that passing the proposed resolution would prejudice the public against devadasi dedication. They claimed that both law and religion had sanctioned their customs that legislation affecting their customs would be a deviation from the religious neutrality pledged by the govt. and that there was a need for further public discussion on the matter. They objected penalising the entire community and appealed to modern values such as freedom of religious expression and the importance of education to bring about social change. They feared seizure of property, which they inherited, if the dedication were banned. Instead of ban on dedication the devadasis proposed that society educate rather than eliminate their community, asserting that this would raise them to the social position they once held.

Criticisms were raised by Nayar and Satyamurty for total eradication and Dr Reddy agreed to withdraw the amendment. Accordingly, in cases where a devadasi received revenue from land, it shall continue till her lifetime. This was passed in 1929. Arguments continued and changes came up time to time. Anthropologist Amrit Srinivasan noted that by 1947, the dedication of girls to deities had been almost completely abandoned and that the real aim of the Prevention of Dedication Act was to purge

Indian dance of its association with immorality. A new Bill was floated again on Nov 26, 1947.

While the laws prohibiting devadasi dedication effectively eliminated or diminished the roles of devadasis in prestigious temples, such dedications continued in village temples and shrines. To support the existing devadasis a solatium was announced. This was given for fifteen years that was totally removed by the Devadasi Act of 1950.

## QUESTIONS

### **One word Answers**

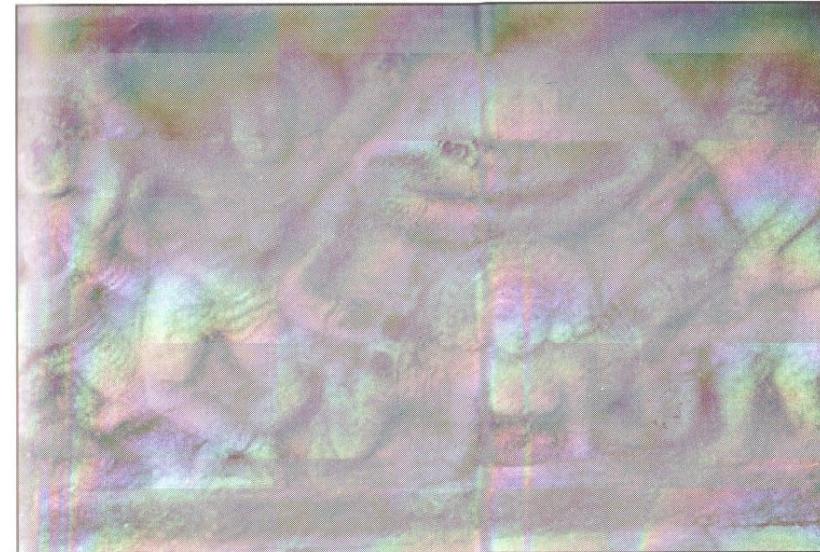
1. For what was early worship did?
2. What did mother Goddess symbolise?
3. What were the other countries that had a tradition of dedication of women to temples, apart from India?

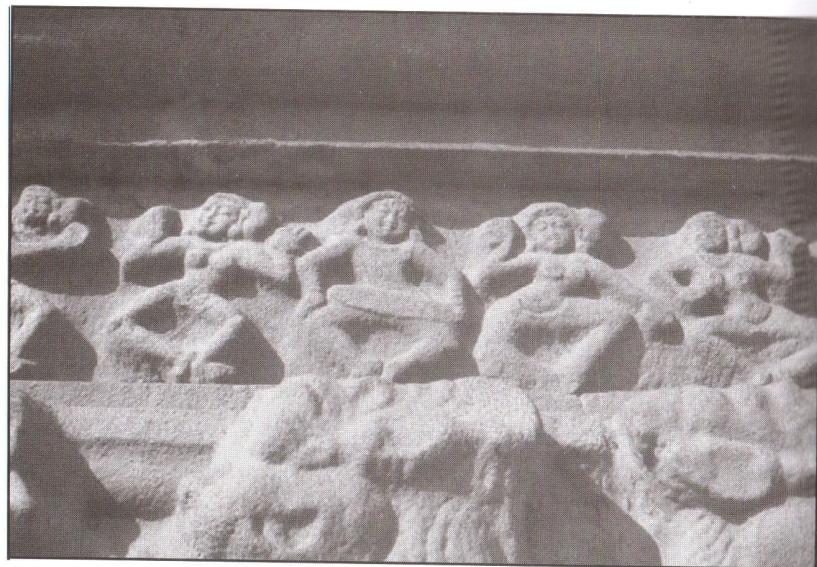
### **Give short answers**

1. What are the rituals associated with dedication of girl as devadasi?
2. What were the duties given to Devadasis?
3. Give a short note on repertoire of devadasis

### **Give detail answers**

1. What are the legends associated with devadasis?





## GLOSSARY

Bhakti	: Devotion (especially towards God)
Saivism	: Belief of Lord Shiva
Vaishnavism	: Belief of Lord Vishnu
Itihaasas	: Sanskrit word that means History
Puranas	: Stories that connect with mythology
Agastiya	: Name of a Sage. He is supposed to have done the earliest grammatical work, 'agaththiyam'
Aham	: Subject matter that connect with love and family life
Puram	: Subject matter that connect with war, society and ethics
Mun ther kuravai	: Kuravai dance performed in front of the chariot of a victorious king
Pin ther kuravai	: Kuravai dance performed following the chariot of a victorious king
Veriyaattu/ veriyaadal	: A dance done with high vigor, possessed with a divine spirit
Koothars, paanars, porunars and viralis	: Team of dancers and musicians
Mudhal, Karu, Uri	: Concepts connecting with exposing a subject matter
Meiypaatiyal	: Body language or Expression from the body; (Mei – body; paadu – expression; iyal – branch of study)
Kutru	: Speech/speaker/communicator
Ketpor	: To whom or for whom it is communicated

Munnam	: Situation/ambience
Desi, vadugu and singalam	: regional, adjacent telugu speaking area, from srilanka
Gunas	: Internal self/nature of a person; Philosophy states three variations: Satwa, rajas, tamas
Lata vrischikam	: a karana that literally means, 'creeper scorpion'
Sangkeerna jaati	: Jaati is type; sangkeerna is mixing or adding two different concepts
Yazh	: String instrument
Tambura	: drone
Bootha ganas	: Attendants of Lord Shiva, dwarf like creatures
Urdhwa	: Lifted up or raised
Thaandava	: Vigorous or masculine
Nritta murthy	: idol in a dancing form
Karana	: Karana is a co ordinated movement of body, comprising of anga upaangas, charis and nritta hastas
Nritta hastas	: A set of hastas given by the Natyasastra. They are movement oriented and not static
Kanchi (Kanceepuram)	: Name of the Capital city of the Pallavas known as a centre for learning and assembly of renowned scholars. One of the early places that was known as a centre for education
Kunchita	: curved
Damaru	: A small double sided drum held by Lord Shiva

Lalaata tilaka karana	: Name of a karana, that literally means, 'making a mark on the forehead'
Akshara maala	: String of beads; generally used for counting during mediation
Kadga, paasa	: Axe and String (Symbols held by Lord Shiva)
Taala samspotitha karana	: Name of a Karana that literally means, 'clapping hands for tala'
Chin mudra	: Hasta held by Lord Dakshinamurthy; similar to hamsasya
Abhaya hasta	: Hasta which means,'bless', similar to pataka
Ganga	: river Ganges
Gaja hasta	: hand position similar to a dola held across the torso
Kanigai-s	: dancing women
Devar adiyaar	: dancing women; servants of the Lord
Thevaaram and Divyaprabandam	: Religious hymns in praise of Lord Shiva and Vishnu
Gopuram	: Temple tower
Granta	: Name of a script
Trisulam	: Spear with three sections
Gatam	: music instrument that resembles a pot made of clay
Bujangatraasitam karana:	Name of a Karana, that literally means, 'fear of snake'
Kanakasabha	: Name of Lord Shiva's temple at Chidambaram; literally means, 'Golden hall'

Panca sabha	: Five places where Lord Nataraja is installed in dance halls
Panca boota sthala	: Five places where Lord Nataraja is associated with the prime substances of space, air, fire, water and earth
Nattuvakkaani	: gift of land given to a dancer or dance teacher
Mandapa	: roofed structure like a hall
Kollattams	: dance (aattam) done holding and striking short sticks
Dwajasthambha	: The flag post in a temple
Rishi	: Sage
Brihaddesi, Taala dipika	: Names of grammar texts
Geya nataka	: Poetical work that means audible drama
Drshya kaavya	: Poetical work that means visual drama
Pallaku	: Palanquin
Deva natanam	: dance for lord
Raja natanam	: dance for king
Desi natanam	: regional dances
Sumangali	: Honor/Position of a wife whose husband is alive
Mudra	: A hot seal

**List of suggested reading to be given:**

History of Tamil's Dance, By Dr S Raghuraman.

Bharatakalai Peraasangal and Marabu tandha Maanikkangal by  
Dr B M Sundaram