



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

BHARATNATYAM A CLASSICAL DANCE OF BHARAT:.

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Abstract

Bharatnatyam Dance is considered to be over 2000 years old. Several texts beginning with Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra (200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.) provide information on this dance form. The **Abhinaya Darpana** by **Nandikesvara** is one of the main sources of textual material, for the study of the technique and grammar of body movement in Bharatnatyam Dance. There is also a great deal of visual evidence of this dance form in paintings and stone and metal sculptures of ancient times. On the gopurams of the Chidambaram temple, one can see a series of Bharatnatyam poses, frozen in stone as it were, by the sculptor. In many other temples, the **charis** and **karanas** of the dance are represented in sculpture and one can make a study of the dance form.

It has been aptly said that BharatNātyam is a symbol of beauty and aesthetic perfection. As a philosophy, it is a search of human soul for ideal. As a religion, it is the man's quest for the Supreme and the desire to unite with the Ultimate. As a science, it is to attain the perfection of body technique and corporal movement and as poetry, it is the symbol of rhythmic lyricism.

History

Dance as a form of Worship

The intimate association of dance with religion and as a ritual, a form of worship in the temples is well established. The institution of the Devadāsīs, servants of the God, contributed in perpetuating and preserving the art. In ancient times, the system of dedicating young dancers to the temples as devadāsīs seems to have prevailed.

Dance has special mention in two important Tamil works Silappadikaram and Manimekhalai of the Sangam age (500 B.C – 500 A.D).

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

In the beautiful Nata-Mandapas (dance-halls) of the magnificent temples, the devadāsīs used to perform ritual dances as votive offerings to the presiding Deities.

Sculptural and Historical Evidence

The present BharataNāṭyam can be traced back to this form. It has been established from the sculptural evidence, that the technique of movement which this style follows can be traced back to the 5th century, the position common to the classical dance (mārgi style) was the ardhmandali position (also called aramandi , with the out-turned knees. By the 10th century A.D. , this basic position was common to dance styles from Orissa to Gujarat and from Khajuraho to Trivandrum. From about the 10th century A.D. in sculptures of dance, we find that basic position of the lower limbs is common to relics in particularly every part of India.

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

The magnificent temples built in the South during the rule of the Pallavas and the Cholas (4th century A.D – 12th century A.D) are a living testimony of their love for architecture, sculpture, paintings and primarily their belief in religion and devotion to the Gods. The Chola Kings maintained hundreds of Dancers in the temples. The tradition was nurtured, sustained and kept alive by the successive Pandya, Nayakas and Maratha Rulers till the end of the 19th century. The Bhakti movement, the poets, the Vāggeyakāras, the saints, the musicians and composers helped the growth of this art.

About the 14th century A.D. we find that technical illustrations of dance movements were made in the Shārangapāni temple at Kumbakonam and in the four magnificent gopurams of the Natarāja Temple in Chidambaram. Illustrations of the charis and the karanas are found in temples of Gangaikonda, Cholaपुरam, Kumbakonam, Madurai and Kancheepuram. The sculptural evidence can be supplemented amply by the Shāstras, textual criticisms, historical chronicles and creative literature.

Between the 14th and 17th centuries, there was much repetition of dance poses already sculpted in the three main temples mentioned above.

Literary Evidence

From the creative literature in Tamil, Telugu and Kanada, one can easily conclude that the dance was a vigorous and living art. During the Marathā rule (AD 1674 – 1854) over Thanjavur the art of BharataNāṭyam received considerable fillip. King Shāhaji (1684 – 1711) wrote nearly five hundred padams (short poetic compositions). These marathi padams are found in the form of palm-leaf manuscripts in the Telugu script. These manuscripts are preserved in the Saraswati Mahal Library at Thanjavur. King Tulaja II (1763 – 87) wrote the Sangitasamrita which deals with adavus, the basic dance steps, is a landmark in the dance literature. During the reign of King Serfoji II (A.D 1798-1832), the tradition of BharataNāṭyam received its definite shape from the Thanjavur Quartet Chinayya, Ponnayya, Vadivelu and Sivanandam, the four brothers who were disciples of the composer Muthuswami Dikshitar, one of the trinity of Carnatic music.

Introduction

Bharat Nāṭyam, the Indian Classical Dance from South India-Tamil Nadu, has been one of the oldest and the richest classical dance of India. It's antiquity lies about 3000 years ago with a mythological as well as a historical origin. It was initially known as Sadir-attam (court dance) and also Dāsīattam (performed by the daasis-the servants of God).

In its popular connotation, the name Bharat Nāṭyam is understood in two ways:

It is the dance (nāṭyam) , that beautifully blends the three elements – 'Bha'-Bhāva (from expressions), 'Ra'-Rāga (from musical melody) and 'Ta'-Tāla (from rythm).

The name 'Bharata' is after the great author of the treaties, "NATYA SHASTRA"(an encyclopedia on Dance, Drama and Music).

As in any classical dance form, BharatNāṭyam requires total dedication, vigorous practice and full concentration. A basic training of minimum 6 years is required to present a full recital on stage. It requires a mastery over the technique of movements to achieve grace, balance, suppleness, physical endurance and a faultless sense of rhythm.

Technique

As in any Indian Classical Dance, BharatNatyam too requires vigorous practice, hardwork and full dedication. In order to achieve the balance, grace and mastery over the technique, one has put in her/his best effort, dedication, faith and interest.

Training-

Namaskar, Adavus, Korvais, Abhinaya, Margam, Arangetram...

Language of Gestures-

The angika abhinaya and Abhinaya Darpanam Shlokas for Head, Eyes, Neck Movements, Hands gestures , etc

Margam-

Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Shabdham, Varnam, padam, Tillana

Referance-

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