



Kuchipudi Under The Indian Metaphysical Lens

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ABSTRACT

Kuchipudi, one of the Indian Classical dances, is rich in technique, music, grammar, shastra, sangita, sahitya and Chaturvidha Abhinaya. One underlying feature which is the most powerful yet subtle is Kuchipudi's deep philosophical fabric which not only teaches us about existence but also liberates us from suffering if dealt with properly. This research is about Kuchipudi's relationship with hardcore metaphysical aspects in the perspective of Indian Literature. As complicated and sophisticated it may sound, Metaphysics can be understood from Kuchipudi in a much easier way by all kinds of audience as it plays the role of an entertaining medium of philosophical knowledge transfer by being a dance drama tradition.

KEYWORDS

Upanishad	Cosmology	Indriya	Kalapam	Natyashastra
Panchabhoota	Yuga	Abhinavagupta	Brahman	Bharata Muni

INTRODUCTION

The Existence as vast as it is comprises various aspects like physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. The human spirit searches for knowledge for both immediate survival and far-sighted ambitions that guide one's behavior. This quest for knowledge is called Philosophy. With the knowledge from life experiences and tools of reasoning, one can understand the fundamental nature of reality, possibilities, causes and effects, identity, nature of consciousness etc. This quest for source of creation and being is termed as Metaphysics, one of the branches of Philosophy. Metaphysics is the study of the fundamental nature of being to answer basic questions like

“What is ultimately there and what is it like?”

Various philosophers have contributed to Metaphysics throughout the world, yet Indian contribution stands apart. The depth and critical analysis of Indian Philosophers is remarkable as they are free thinkers who respectfully question each other's works and churn the actual essence out from discussions & debates¹. This makes Indian Metaphysics its own critic for the best.

¹ These debates were called Shastrardh where one quotes the point of the previous one, followed by critical questioning, alternative views and conclusion

One can find an amalgamation of Metaphysics in every realm of life including Aesthetics. Indian art forms have it ingrained in them making them beyond just entertainment sources. Kuchipudi has an entire repertoire which reflects Metaphysical aspects of Philosophy.

INDIAN LITERATURE ON METAPHYSICS

The striking aspect of Indian Philosophy is it doesn't disintegrate the study of existence as special sciences like Metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic, Ethics, Aesthetics etc. It's a wholesome study of these sciences as one entity considering the relational influences of each other. Hence, it is called as Synthetic outlook of Indian philosophy.² The major literature on Metaphysics is the 4 Vedas (Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharvana) and Upanishads especially

- Taittiriya Upanishad
- Brihadaranyaka Upanishad
- Maitrayaniya Upanishad
- Avyakta Upanishad
- Aitareya Upanishad

Many philosophers contributed towards the literature which was studied & compiled by Madhavacharya³(1296-1391) as "Sarvadarshansamgraha", a compendium of the following philosophical systems.

- Chārvāka
- Buddhism
- Arhata/Jainism
- Ramanuja System/Sri Vaishnavism
- Dvaita Vedanta/Purna-Prajña Darsana/Tatva-vaada
- Nakulisa-Paśupata
- Shaivism
- Pratyabhijña(Kashmir Shaivism)/Recognitive System
- Raseśvara/Mercurial System
- Vaisheshika/Aulukya
- Akshapada/Nyaya
- Jaimini
- Pāṇiniya
- Sankhya
- Patanjala/Yoga
- Vedanta

Advaita Vedanta was studied & propagated by Jagatguru Adi Shankaracharya, one of the greatest philosophers from India. All these works, Ashtadasha Mahapuranas, Itihasas etc. have greatly explained about Metaphysics .

² From the book Essentials of Indian Philosophy by M. Hiriyanna, M.A, published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd., Ruskin house, Museum street, London, 1949

³ Not to be confused by Madhavacharya of Dvaita Philosophy from 13th Century

DISCUSSION

The major aspects of reality that are studied under Metaphysics are as follows. One can see the depth of Indian thought in the works mentioned above along with the references in Kuchipudi.

1. Cosmology

Cosmology deals with the study of the origin of the universe, its description, universal events, etc. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says,

**Taddhedam tarhyavyākṛtamāsit,
tannamarupābhya meva vyākri yata,
asaunamayamidamrupa iti⁴;**

“The entire universe was undifferentiated in the beginning. That one entity has manifested into various names and forms”

The one entity that is responsible for the universe is usually termed as Brahman which is nothingness. Universe emerges from this nothingness in eternal cycles of creation, preservation and destruction (pralay) from, within and into the same Brahman. This process is represented as “*Trimurti*” mentioned in *Maitrayaniya Upanishad* from Yajurveda as a trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar responsible for creation, preservation and destruction. They are the manifestations of the ultimate Brahman with “nama rupa”/name & form, in today's terms, **Electrons, Protons & Neutrons** in an atom. Several examples have been quoted to explain the oneness of the existence as follows.

- Clay/Clay utensils⁵
- Water/Wave
- Wood/Furniture

Clay, Water and Wood are the fundamental realities and Clay utensils, Waves and Furniture are just manifestations of them and not any separate entities. In fact the Clay utensils, Waves and Furniture are Clay, Water and Wood respectively before, during and after their specific manifestations.

The *Brahmanda Purana* mentions 14 lokas as follows.

1. Satya/Brahma-loka
2. Tapa-loka
3. Jana-loka
4. Mahar-loka
5. Svarga/Indra-loka
6. Bhuvar-loka (Sun/Moon)
7. Bhu-loka (Earth)
8. Atala-loka
9. Vitala-loka
10. Sutala-loka
11. Talatala-loka
12. Mahatala-loka
13. Rasatala-loka
14. Patala-loka

All together they are termed as “Triloka”, all the ones above the Earth plane, Earth plane and all the ones below the Earth plane.

- Kuchipudi has extensive items in its repertoire where Trimurti are depicted using Devata Hasthas mentioned in Natya Shastra.
- The Dashavatara Shabdam has a reference of Vamana Avatar of Vishnu where He is seen stepping on the Trilokas in a sanchari.
- Kuchipudi has stories of manifestations of Trimurti like Brahma creating, Vishnu protecting in the form of Avatars and Maheshwara destroying as Rudra.

⁴ 1.4.7, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*

⁵ Examples used by Adi Shankaracharya as Aparokshanubhuti in his Bhashyas

2. Fundamental energy

Upanishads speak about the ultimate energy throughout the universe as “*Adi Shakthi*”. The Shakthi manifests as Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati who are the energies of their consorts Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara due to which the Trimurti are able to fulfill their duties. The following table describes their duties

God	Duty	Required power	Adishakti Manifestation
Brahma	Creation	Power of creative Knowledge	Saraswathi (Goddess of Knowledge)
Vishnu	Preservation	Power of wealth	Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth)
Maheshwara	Destruction	Power of Energy	Parvati (Goddess of Energy)

Hence, Trimurti and Trishakti are not mere deities but scientific representation of the nexus of universal processes.

- The Trimurti and Trishakti are through several songs dedicated to them in Kuchipudi using the Devata Hastas from Natya Shastra.
- Kuchipudi Yakshaganas contain these characters in pivotal roles while depicting stories from Puranas, itihasas, etc.
- A Kuchipudi artist can generate an emotion, preserve the emotion and finish it rightly just like the eternal process with the help of Knowledge, Prosperity & Energy.

3. Matter and Energy

The *Samkhya School of Philosophy of Kapila Maharshi* mentions Matter and Energy as *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. The Prakriti/matter has Trigunas, the three primary attributes which determine the behavior of the matter. Scientifically, they are as follows.

- Sattva - Intelligence, Light
- Rajas - Motion, Velocity
- Tamas - Inertia, Mass

Panchabhoota⁶- Panchabhoota are the five basic elements in Prakriti that give rise to the Inorganic world i.e things, mountains, hills, rivers etc and the Organic bodies like plants, animals, humans and all with souls.

Each of these elements are simplified terms for higher and complex substances.

Purusha is considered to be that intelligent and driving force of the Prakriti to fulfill its purpose. Humans are made of a gross physical body which is Prakriti and the consciousness that drives the body to perform duties is the Purusha. The Consciousness travels through all these sheaths at different levels from survival to liberation.

- The Physical body of a dancer is the Prakriti and the consciousness with which he/she dances is the Purusha aspect.
- One can see numerous nuances in the Nayaka/Nayika in Kalpas, Yakshaganas and Nritya Natika according to the dominant “Guna” in their character. The gaits, expressions, body language, kind of steps, eye movements etc are meticulously designed as per the character’s Guna(Prakriti) & performed with utmost intelligence(Purusha).

⁶ From Ayurved and Yoga philosophy

- Panchabhoothas in the body can be practically experienced by a Kuchipudi dancer with different levels of aesthetic experiences as it is a dance drama tradition and not just movement of limbs.
- Ardhanareeswaram is an example of Purusha and Prakriti in the same person.

4. Time

The Indian systems are extremely sophisticated in terms of measurement of time from macro to microlevels. The *Vishnu Purana* and *Bhagavata Purana* talk about the time cycles in terms of Kalpas. It is mentioned that Brahma's day is equal to 1 Kalpa i.e 1000 Mahayugas or 4.32 billion years. Each Kalpa contains 14 Manvantara periods, each of 71 Yuga ⁷cycles i.e 306,720,000 years. Each Manvantara is followed by a Sadhya/Pralaya period before and after creation. Each Yuga Cycle is made up of Satyuga (1,728,000 years), Tretayuga (1,296,000 years), Dwarparayuga (864,000 years), Kaliyuga (432,000 years) in terms of Earth years.

Matsya Purana (290.3–12) lists the names of 30 *kalpas*, (along with 30 *pralayas* or nights) forming a 30-day month of Brahma. Also the units of time as per Vedas, *Manusmriti*, *Bhagavata Purana*, *Vishnu Purana*, *Mahabharata*, *Surya Siddhanta* are also mentioned as follows.

- The Puranic stories performed in Kuchipudi hold a time calculation of which Yuga they are from. The story of Kuchipudi presentations like Girijakalyanma is set in Satyug, Rama Natakam in Treta yuga, Bhagawath Geeta in Dwaparayuga, Chandalika in Kaliyuga etc.
- The time calculations in talam of a song is meticulously dealt in Sama Veda where time duration of pronunciation would completely change the meaning of the words.

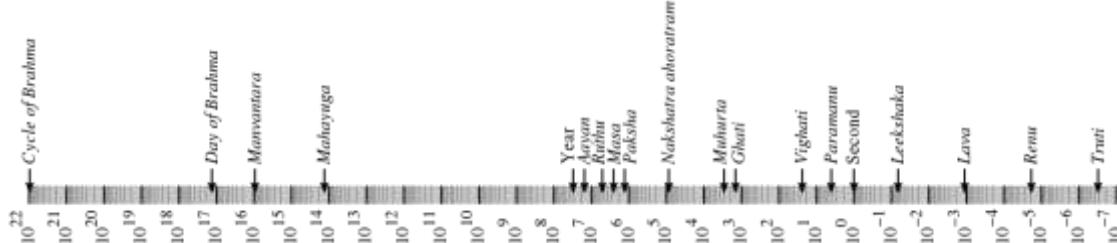
5. Mind and Matter

Upanishads say that the Mind has the following major parts

- Manas - Receives the external stimuli
- Buddhi - Analyses the stimuli with discrimination
- Ahamkara - Renders unique identity to the incoming stimuli
- Chitta - Consciousness through which all processing happens

The *Aitreya Upanishad* explains the 16 functions of the Mind as follows.

- 'Samjnana' or awareness
- 'Ajnana' or comprehension
- 'Vignina' or understanding
- 'Prajnana' or knowledge
- 'Medha' or retentiveness
- 'Drishti' or insight
- 'Dhriti' or resolution
- 'Mati' or opinion
- 'Smriti' or memory
- 'Manisha' or reflection



⁷ RV. 10.72 (2) Rig Veda mentions the 4 yugas explicitly

- 'Juti' or impulse
- 'Sankalpa' or conception
- 'Kratu' or purpose
- 'Asu' or vigor
- 'Kaamah' or desire
- 'Vasha' or will

Panchakoshas⁸- The human body is considered to be made up of 5 sheaths that appear to cover the atma. They are mentioned in the *Taittiriya Upanishad of Taittiriya Samhita* of the *Krishna Yajur Veda*. They are

- Annamaya kosha - Food sheath (Sthula Sharira) Physical body
- Pranamaya kosha - Breath sheath (Sthula Sharira) Physical body
- Manomaya kosha - Mind Sheath (Sukshma Sharira) Subtle body
- Vijnanamaya kosha - Intellect Sheath (Sukshma Sharira) Subtle body
- Anandamaya Kosha - Bliss Sheath (Karana Sharira) Causal body

The mind and matter interact at various complicated levels to be able to perform the duties as per requirement.

- As a Kuchipudi artist, in a dance drama tradition one gets to explore lots of psychological states which are a result of different levels of interaction between mind and matter. The performance is not mere movement of the matter/physical body. One can find a rigorous cohesion between mind and body to extract the right emotion, movement & Rasa.

6. Human Body

Sharirakopanishad and Garbha Upanisha explain about the human body. They mention that Human body is made up of the Panchabhootas and the Jiva or Soul.

Panchabhoota⁹- Panchabhoota are the five basic elements that give rise to the Inorganic world i.e things, mountains, hills, rivers etc and the Organic bodies like plants, animals, humans and all with souls. They are

- **Agni** (Fire) - The fire element is found in the body as body temperature and digestive enzymes.
- **Akash** (Space) - The Space element is found in the body as the empty space in stomach and blood vessels.
- **Jalam** (Water) - The Water element is found in the body as blood, plasma, sweat, saliva etc.
- **Bhoomi** (Earth) - The Earth element is found in the body as bones, muscles, skin etc.
- **Vayu** (Air) - The Air element is found in the body as breath, burp, fart etc.

Indriyas - The sense and action organs that help the body to communicate in and out to the external world.

*"Indram atma tasya sadhanam indriyam"*¹⁰

Indra means Aatma i.e. soul. Indriya is its saadhana/instrument for attaining knowledge.

1. Gnanendriyas - Organs of receiving knowledge - eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin
2. Karmendriyas - Organs of performing action - mouth/speaking, hands/grasping, feet/walking, genitals/procreating, and rectum/excreting.
3. Antahkarana- Manas, Budhi, Ahamkara, Chitta

They are tightly coupled with the Panchabhootas as follows

- Space¹¹ - Sabda/Sound - Ears
- Earth - Gandha/Odor - Nose
- Fire - Roopa/Color - Eyes
- Water - Rasaa/Taste - Tongue

⁸ From *Brahmanandavalli* Chapter of Taittiriya Upanishad of Taittiriya Samhita of Krishna Yajur Veda

⁹ From Ayurved and Yoga philosophy

¹⁰ From <https://www.eeasyurveda.com/2017/05/05/jnana-karma-indriya/amp/>

¹¹ From Essentials of Indian Philosophy by M.Hiriyanna, M.A, published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd., Ruskin house, Museum street, London, 1949

- Air - Sparsh/touch - Skin

The Gaudapada's Mandukya Karika on Mandukya Upanishad talks about the 4 states of consciousness as following

State of Consciousness	Nature of the state	Gnanendri ya	Karmendri ya	Antahkarana	Sound in AUM
Jagrut	Waking State	Active	Active	Active	A
Swapna	Dream state	Inactive	Inactive	Active	U
Sushupti	Deep sleep state	Inactive	Inactive	Only Chitta is active	M
Turiya	Ultimate reality	Inactive	Inactive	Inactive (Self in itself)	(silence)

These states of consciousness are compared with the sound of Om as A, U, M for the first 3 states and complete silence for Turiya.

Yogatattvopanishad talks about the tattvas in the body and mainly about Yoga Sutra, Hatha yoga and Kundalini. The 72,000 nadis in the body work as energy pathways which intersect at centers called Chakras.

Yoga-Kundalini upanishad states the lists of Chakras as

- Sahasrara (Top of the head)
- Ajna (between the two eyebrows)
- Vishuddhi (root of the neck)
- Anahata (heart)
- Manipura (navel)
- Svadhishtana (near genital organ)
- Muladhara (base of spinal cord).

They are centers of Kundalini Shakti (power, energy, subtle force) which is situated at the lower most chakra i.e Muladhara. With different levels of practices and experiences it can be made to travel to Sahasrara after which the soul attains Moksha or Liberation from life and death.

- In Kuchipudi, liberation is depicted with one hand near the Muladhara and one at the Sahasrara with thumb and index opening from a fist. This indicates Moksha i.e traveling of Kundalini through the chakras.
- In the Vachika Abhinaya of Kuchipudi, one can find the mention of Panchaboothas as a witness to the events and incidents. Ex: Draupadi Vastrapaharanam scene
- AUM sounds are used extensively in Kuchipudi. Ex: Shiva Panchakshari stotram

INDIAN METAPHYSICS & AESTHETICS

Aesthetics is the study of beauty and art which leads to attaining spiritual and philosophical states of mind. A strong relationship between Indian Metaphysics and Aesthetics can be found in the following works.

1. Natyashastra by Bharata Muni in 200 BCE

The 4 Vedas are the oldest literature of Indian Metaphysics. When Lord Brahma combined the knowledge of all the 4 vedas, a fifth vedic text was formed called Natyaveda from which arized Natya Shastra by Bharata Muni. It is considered to be the oldest and most detailed literature on aesthetics. It not only provides technical explanations of how a dance or drama should be formally presented but also involves philosophical aspects which have the potential to reach inner levels of experience for both performer and audience.

Indian philosophy starts with a pessimistic note that there IS suffering in life but it's only in the beginning. It ends with a hope and probable solution to surpass the suffering and attain Moksha. Similarly, Indian dramas usually end with a happy ending and not as a tragedy. They are deeply ingrained with the philosophy that there is always hope to surpass suffering.

Indian Scriptures talk about the world as a gigantic Play run by the Sutradhari i.e Paramatma himself. All the living beings are considered to be playing their parts in the play with different characters in different incarnations. One is supposed to perform Nishkaama Karma to avoid adding to the baggage of Karma. Hence, we can see a direct relationship between Indian Metaphysics and Dance & Drama.

Indian Classical Dances like Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, etc which follow the Natya shastra, are performed in temple sanctums as offerings to the Lord. They are rich in moral and spiritual value with texts grounded in philosophical nature.

2. Abhinavabharati by Abhinavagupta in 11th Century

Abhinavagupta has written Abhinavabharati as a commentary on Natya Shastra which remains as one of the most important literature for all art forms. His hold on aesthetics is so strong that his Rasa theory can help us transcend the psychological states effortlessly.

Abhinavagupta explains the Shantha Rasa as the source of all the Rasas. Every play starts with it first. As a response to Stimulus, the sthayi bhava inside us is invoked followed by various Sanchari bhavas leading to Sathwika Bhavas responsible for Rasanishpathi. One needs to go through this process to evoke any of the 8 Rasas. After that, once again we come back to Shantha Rasa. Abhinavagupta compares this phenomenon as the process of a Soul manifesting from Shiva, the Paramatma who is silent and still, into different forms, goes through the ups and downs of life and returns to the stillness with Paramatma eventually. He calls this as Rasadvaita Darshana¹², the Non-dualistic Philosophy of Aesthetics. He uses the term "Brahmananda Sahodara"¹³ i.e he calls the aesthetic joy as the Sahodara i.e Sibling of Spiritual joy i.e Brahmananda.

Importance of the Nataraja Pose

In Indian tradition, Lord Shiva is considered to be the father of Dance, Music, Art etc. The Nataraja is the most famous pose of Dancing Shiva throughout all the dance forms. Every part of it has philosophical value.

¹² Aesthetic Philosophy of Abhinavagupta by Dr.Kailash Pati Mishra Published by Kala Prakashan, Varanasi, 2006

¹³ Aesthetic Philosophy of Abhinavagupta by Dr.Kailash Pati Mishra Published by Kala Prakashan, Varanasi, 2006



- The front right hand denotes an affirmative blessing of protection
- The front left hand points towards his raised foot indicating that all those who surrender to him are protected by him
- The back right hand holds Damaru which is a representation of Sound as creative force in nature
- The back left hand holds Fire is a representation of Destructive force in nature
- The Circle of fire around him represents the circle of birth and death from which one can come out only through devotion and spirituality.
- The dwarf under his right leg is Apasmara, the king of Ignorance. Nataraja causes ignorance to cease to exist.
- Right Earring ¹⁴ is Makara Kundala denoting his sagaciousness
- Left Earring is taaTanka denotes divine femininity
- Snake represents the Kundalini Shakthi
- Yagnopaveetham¹⁵/sacred thread denotes purity of being
- Third eye denoting his ability to see beyond physical
- Crescent moon bestowing material pleasures
- Ganga represent Sampath Samriddhi or prosperity

INDIAN METAPHYSICS & KUCHIPUDI

Kuchipudi, one of the Indian Classical Dances, rich in technique & aesthetics is a Dance-Drama tradition. It comprises texts full of philosophy along with use of Chaturvidha ¹⁶Abhinaya, Hastha, Siro, Drishti, Greeva, Pada bhedas, Charis, Mandalas, etc. It has a history of Kalapas, Yakshaganas, Nritya Natikas and Solo items like Kauthwam, Jathiswaram, Shabdam, Keerthana, Krithi, Padam, Javali, Ashtapadi, Tarangam, Thillana etc.

Ranga Pooja

The Ranga pooja is a set of rites performed before beginning a concert as a prayer for a successful presentation. Various offerings like water, incense smoke, light, Jarjara Flag of Lord Indra and drawings with flour are used. It's a reflection of the philosophical value of the concert rather than just a mere presentation. Different Jathis are used to enter on stage with the offerings. Hence, it is considered to be an auspicious start.

¹⁴ https://sanskritdocuments.org/sites/giirvaani/giirvaani/nataraja_symbolism/nataraja_symbolism.html

¹⁵ https://sanskritdocuments.org/sites/giirvaani/giirvaani/nataraja_symbolism/nataraja_symbolism.html

¹⁶ Natya Shastra, N.P Unni

Gollakalapam¹⁷

Gollakalapam is one of the most philosophical works in Kuchipudi written by Bhagavathula Ramayya in the 18th century. He was proficient in vedas, music, dance, yoga, astrology and was a Hatayogi. This indicates that a person requires a vast knowledge of metaphysical aspects of life to be able to create such masterpieces. Some of the striking features that indicate metaphysical relationship of Kuchipudi in Gollakalapam are as follows.

- Gollakalapam is a dance drama full of Philosophy and science of Advaita Vedanta with the dominant rasa as Shantha.
- It is considered to be a Nrithya Yagna, a very auspicious fire sacrifice (representative) from which everyone is benefited from its fruits as it gives a Summary of Yoga shastra and path to brahma gnana.
- It is a religious and philosophical discussion between milkmaid and Brahmin where the Brahmin is too proud of his lineage from birth and self proclaims his greatness over the milkmaid or Gollabhama who is from a lower caste.
- The reason Gollabhama was chosen for this was Milk belongs to Martya lok (Mortal world), Ghee to Swarga lok(Heaven). The Curd which comes in between these two is a preform of the Hawis, representing as a bridge between the mortal humans & knowledge of the Devas in Heaven. Hence, the lady who carries all these “Yagna Sambaralu” is dearer to Gods.
- She speaks about Pancheekarana (union of Panchabhoota), Pancha Prana Vayu, Upavayuvus, Jnanendriyas, Karmendriyas, Trigunas, Panchakoshas and other metaphysical aspects.
- She explains how Angavikshepana (body movements) cause satisfaction to vayu, agni, jalam, how Padabhedam/footwork causes satisfaction to bhoomi and Bhavabhinaya to Akasha.
- Pindothpathi ¹⁸- Gollabhama explains about the process of formation of the fetus in the mothers womb and questions how is anyone greater when we all go through the same process of birth.
- After the intercourse between Man and Woman, She explains how male/female/eunuch/twin embryos are formed depending on the chromosomes of Sukla¹⁹(Sperm) and Naarisonithamu(Ovum).
- Stages of Formation of Fetus during the 9 months.
 1. Shirassu (Head)
 2. Bahudvayam (Arms)
 3. Udaram,Paada, Hastha (Abdomen, Feet, Hands)
 4. Navarandhramulu (Nine apertures)
 5. Raktamamsamulu (Blood and Muscles)
 6. Nakha, Dantha, Kesha, 72000 nadis (Nails, Teeth, Hairs, Energy pathways)
 7. Poorna jivam(Fully developed body), Umbilical cord
 8. Realization of karmas of previous birth
 9. Birth with maya covering up the truth of past birth
- He then takes birth, grows as a child, young person, old person and experiences “Arishadvargas” i.e Kaama, Krodha, Lobha, Moh, Mada & Matsarya, performs karmas, leaves body and takes birth again. Hence Gollabhama says that when this process is same for all of us then how is someone greater than other?

“Mrithpindamekam²⁰ bahubhaandarupam / Suvarna mekam bahu bhaashanadyam

¹⁷ Gollakalapamu Paper by Naarapuraju Srilatha in Natyamanjari by TSNA, 2021

And Comparative study of Chathurvidhabhinayas between Kathakali and Kuchipudi Yakshagana by Dr. P.Rama Devi, 2013,

¹⁸ Gollakalapamu Paper by Naarapuraju Srilatha in Natyamanjari by TSNA, 2021

Comparative study of Chathurvidhabhinaya between Kathakali & Kuchipudi Yakshagana by Dr. P.Rama Devi, 2013

¹⁹ Kuchipudi Kalapas, An odyssey rediscovered, Dr.P.Rama Devi, 2004

Goksheera mekam bahuvarnadhenum | Shareerabhinnam paramatmamekam”

- She concludes Pindothpathi as follows - The body is burnt after the death. If the body alone was really divine then burning it would have been a sin like “Brahma hatya”. Hence, one does not become greater by the mere gross/physical body nor by which caste one is born in.
- Karma Siddhanta - She explains how everyone is born as Shudra (Lower caste) and one becomes a Brahman(Highest caste) by doing good karma not just by body or birth

“Janmana Jayate shudraha”

- Aatma Yagnam ²¹- Gollabhamma explains about Aatmayagnam and the samagri or ingredients that are needed to perform it for the desired fruit of Moksha. She mention the follow representations of ingredients to be offered in the Yagna or Sacrificial fire (representative)
 - ❖ Mind and ego - Rutvija/Priest
 - ❖ Omkara - Yupasthambham or pillar used during sacrifice
 - ❖ Jnanendriyas or sense organs/Kamendriyas/Pranavayu - Sacrificial animal
 - ❖ Pranvanandam or om sounds - Mantras
 - ❖ Saantidanti uparati - Abstaining sexual pleasures
 - ❖ Titeekshana - Patience - Vessels used for yagna
 - ❖ Preaching of god - Agni
 - ❖ Knowledge - Somras - Elixir
 - ❖ Mind with staunch devotion - Sword
 - ❖ Problems of life - Materials to offer
 - ❖ Foolishness - Wick
 - ❖ Kaama - Oil

- One should dissolve the identity and feel as manifestation of brahman and do the duties. Such brahman is called Brahma Somayajulu
- Atlast the Brahmin agrees that she is not just gollabhamma but Muktikantha i.e the bestower of liberation through knowledge.

Bhamakalapam ²²

Bhamakalapam is a magnum opus of Siddhendra Yogi from the 13th Century.

- Bhamakalapam is a dance drama full of Madhura Bhakti and Dvaita Siddhanta with the dominant rasa as Sringara.
- Siddhendra has written about a fictional incident between the characters Sri Krishna, Satyabhama and Madhavi where Sri Krishna and Satyabhama have a fight and are separated and Satyabhama is feeling the pangs of separation. She takes the help of her friend Madhavi to reunite with Sri Krishna.
- It revolves around how Satyabhama, being a proud and self centered woman has to go through different levels of giving up her belongings, pride and Ego to reunite with the Paramatma²³, Sri Krishna.
- The pratyaksha ardham or visible meaning of the play is very close to day to day lives of common people but the Paroksha ardham/hidden meaning is that Jeevatma has to give up the ego to reach Paramatma, This makes it different from all plays as it amuses common man and scholars too.

²⁰ Kuchipudi Kalpas, An odyssey rediscovered, Dr.P.Rama Devi, 2004

²¹ Gollakalapamu Paper by Naarapuraju Srilatha in Natyamanjari by TSNA, 2021
And Comparative study of Chathurvidhabhinayas between Kathakali and Kuchipudi Yakshagana by Dr. P.Rama Devi, 2013

²² Kuchipudi Kalpas, An odyssey rediscovered, Dr.P.Rama Devi, 2004

²³ Comparative study of Chathurvidhabhinayas between Kathakali and Kuchipudi Yakshagana by Dr. P.Rama Devi, 2013

- One can see how Satyabhama is initially delusional and attached to her belongings especially her nose pin which is a mark of pride as a wife. Only when she forgoes all the delusion of attachment to anything, she reaches the Paramatma.
- We can compare her struggles with those of a human trying to make way in this Bhavasagar or ocean of maya towards the shore of Moksha. One goes through innumerable psychological states feeling different kinds of emotions like Satyabhama till she realizes the actual reality without being influenced by Maya.
- Satyabhama Jada - Satyabhama adorns a well decorated long hair plait which was presented by Vishwakarma to Lord shiva and passed on to Satyabhama. It has deep metaphysical meaning to it as it contains the following

- ❖ Adisesha on the Apex (Snake)
- ❖ Surya Chandra (Sun and Moon)
- ❖ Lord Brahma
- ❖ Achyuta with Lakshmi
- ❖ Shiva and Parvati as Ardhanareeshwara
- ❖ Dikpalakas, Sages, scholars
- ❖ 27 stars graded according to size
- ❖ 3 spherical balls representing Tribhuvanas/3 worlds
- ❖ Additional 3 balls to each of the previous one representing 9 planets
- ❖ The total 12 balls represent the 12 rasis/zodiac signs

Hence the Jada represents the entire universe.

Yakshagana

Kuchipudi Yakshaganas are full of stories from epics showcasing various incidents with a metaphysical message. These stories aim at aligning the audience towards the path of knowledge of Moksha, Karma, surrender and devotion. One can see multiple rasas, especially Veera, Srinagara and Hasya. Some of the Yakshaganas are

- Rama Natakam
- Usha Parinayam
- Mohini
- Rukmangada
- Sasirekha Parinayam

Ekapatrakelikalu

The Solo items in Kuchipudi are performed on songs usually full of devotion and inherently carry a philosophical value too. One can feel the psychological moods shifting with the nuances of the performances. Some of them are

- Keertanas by Annamayya, Ramadadu, Tyagaraju, Syama Sastri, Muthuswami deekshithulu, Swati Tirunal, Purandaradasa, Minupalle Subrahmanyam Kavi, Adhyatma Ramayana Keerthanalu, etc.
- Shabdam (Dasavatara)
- Kauthwams

Songs on Lord Shiva

- Shiva stuthi
- Shivashtakam
- Tripura samharam
- Ananda Tandavam
- Natesha Kauthwam

Songs on Devi

- Maheshwari Mahakali
- Durge

- Jaya jaya vaishnavi durge
- Kamakshi stuthi

CONCLUSION

Kuchipudi consists of a spectrum of items and presentations through which one can experience the Metaphysical aspects of life mentioned in Indian Literature. It is not only a highly developed art form technically but also appeals to the audience aesthetically. It is a powerful medium, when utilized meticulously can drive souls towards Moksha by performing it or even by watching it.

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