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BHARATANATYAM MARGAM - A REFLECTIVE PATH

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ABSTRACT

Among the classical Indian dance genres that have their roots in India is Bharatanatyam. Classical dance can be defined by having a theory, training method and explanation for expressive practice that may be traced back to old classical writings. The study of the classical texts, physical intensive training are necessary for classical Indian dances, which have traditionally involved a school or guru-shishya parampara. It is stated that the three syllables “bha-ra-ta” are the origin of the word Bharatanatyam. Bhava, Ragam, and Tala come together to form Bharatanatyam. Indian philosopher, Vedanta Desika, who propagated Ramanujam's theory, is credited with giving this significance. The ensemble of items presented in a Bharatanatyam recital is referred to as Margam. Many Gurus and dance practitioners continue to adhere to the structure, even though the dance repertoire is subject to periodic changes. This study uses a descriptive research methodology to analyse the items performed in a Bharatanatyam recital, their history and significance.

KEYWORDS

Margam, Tanjore Quartet, Bharatanatyam, Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Sabdam, Varnam, Swarajathi, Padam, Javali, Tillana, Slokam, Virutham.

INTRODUCTION

The four brothers Chinnaya, Ponnaya, Sivanandam, and Vadivelu, who made up the Thanjavur or Tanjore Quartet lived at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They had a significant influence on South Indian classical dance. In the process, they wrote several compositions, which had a lasting impact on Carnatic music. During the reign of Maratha King Serfoji II, the four brothers were court musicians in Thanjavur. Later, they were employed at Travancore, a princely state ruled by Maharaja Swathi Tirunal, who was also a talented composer and prominent patron of the arts. The reason they are most known is for bringing back and formalising Bharatanatyam, an ancient temple dance form, and making it into a recognized performance art [1].

The Margam (path) that is most commonly seen now is derived from a collection of works put together by four 19th-century brothers [2]. There have occasionally been changes to the repertory or the collection of pieces. The Tanjore Quartet popularised a repertoire that included Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Sabdam, Varnam/ Swarajathi, Padam, Javali, Tillana, and Virutham/ Slokam. But the repertory isn't quite the same these days.

Furthermore, the program scheduled today includes pieces like Pushpanjali, Kavuttuvam, Mallari, Thodayamangalam, Keerthanam, Ashtapadi, Kavadichindu, Kuratti, Thiruvagasam, Talattu, and Divyaprabandham. The margam of today combines peasant heritage and temple court, various streams have contributed to the repertory of today that includes :

- Ritualistic Tradition
- Devotional Tradition
- Dance Drama Tradition
- Court Tradition
- Folk Tradition.

The Tanjore Quartet brothers incorporated elements from temple and court traditions to create the Bharatanatyam repertoire known as Margam. It is the traditional dance routine that is performed in Bharatanatyam. Every dance showcases a distinct skill that the performer has developed over their artistic journey.

NRITTA, NRITYA AND NATYA

There are three parts to the composition of classical dance. Nritta, Nritya, and Natya are the names they carry [3].

- Nritta- It is pure dancing. It consists of adavus performed as jathis or korvai. The goal of nritta, the rhythmic section, is to produce lovely lines and movements for tala. It conveys no narrative at all.
- Nritya- It is a form of basic communication or expressive dance. The meaning of the words is expressed by the abhinaya hasthas, and the emotion is expressed by the facial expression.
- Natya - Drama is what Natya truly means. In addition to the nritta and nritya, it has characters and a story to follow. In essence, it makes use of angika, vachika, aharya, and sathvika—the four different forms of abhinaya.

ALARIPPU

Alarippu refers to "that which blooms." It also signifies something joyful. It is a nritta piece that is performed at the start of a concert. It is a Nritta item.

Three speeds are carried: Vilambitham, Madhyamam, and Dhuritham. It is executed with the anga, upanga, and prathyanga movements. The word "alari" is used as the name of the koothu in ancient texts. Alarippus has been composed by Bharatham Kasinathayya in a number of talas. The movements come first and build up one after the other starting with the first step. There are also movements of the neck, eyes, shoulders, elbow, wrist, face, waist, and feet.

"Alarippu, which is based solely on rhythm, brings out the unique charm of pure dance." In this item, the dancer's movements release and coordinate her limbs, calm her mind and body, and get her ready for the dance. [4]

JATISWARAM

It's a Nritta item that begins with a jathi followed by several korvais. Thus as the name implies, it is made up of swarams and jathi. According to manuscripts from the Vijayanagara era, Swarapallavi is a Nayak period performance, the precursor of Jatiswaram.

The Jatiswaram is a type of pure dance composition where the dancer combines multiple rhythmic patterns inspired by a piece of music [5]. The melody and time metre of the music are determined by the ragam (melody) and thalam (time measure) of the Swaram, or musical notes. The item begins with a straightforward jathi and moves through a korvai sequence. However, for the Swaram, there are no words or sahityam.

The swaras are used almost decoratively, conveying neither sentiment nor meaning. As a result, it is a lovely dance number that highlights the idea of dance as a visual interpretation of musical note patterns.

SABDAM

The Sabdam is referred to as yasho geetham or salamuduru. This item introduces Abhinaya. Sabdam uses gestures to explain the lyrics of songs. This composition consists of brief lyrics headed by a jathi. The miming is purposefully simple, presenting only the word's literal illustration through movement and gestural interpretation [6].

The Sabdam song has extremely simple lyrics. It effectively uses the virtues and majesty of a king or divinity. The song (saahityam) is typically divided into stanzas, with a brief Korvai (nritta steps) in between each stanza. A distinct story may be told in each stanza, or there may be one story told in total. However, the piece as a whole focuses on a single individual and one theme.

VARNAM

It is the centrepiece of a Bharatanatyam repertoire and accords Nritya and Nritta equal weight. The lyric is equally important and provides plenty of scope for the performance's topic. Shringara (love), or Bhakti, is the primary emotion.

Varnam is divided into two sections:

- I. Purvaranga - Muktai svara is denoted as "chittasvara" in the first section, which also contains Pallavi, Anupallavi, Muktai Swara, and Muktai Swara sahityam.
- II. Uttaranga - Charanam and Charana Swaras (also known as Chitta Swaras) are included in the second section.

Some Varnam will only have Sahityam, while others will also have Charanam and Charana Sahityam. The Charanam Swara and Sahityam portions come after the Charanam. The Varnam addresses the subject of love and longing for a partner. The narrative of Varnam revolves around the nayika's pain and yearning for a final union with the Nayaka, who is portrayed as the king or the Lord himself and in whose honour the Varnam was written [7].

Varnam is made up of jathis from Trikaala. Three speeds are used to execute sollukattus: Vilambam, Madhyamam, and Duritham. Kuraipu, the final section of Trikaala jathi, is performed once and does not need to be repeated. The kuraipu's last sequence is called muktaipu. Every jathi is followed by aridhi, which are footwork-accompanied rhythmic patterns that serve as the end to nritta sections.

SWARAJATHI

Its structure is thought to be comparable to Pada Varnams. The ones that are usual for dancing have a structure similar to Padavarnam, with a few major differences [8]. They also have rhythmic syllables, such as sollukattus. Until Padavarna took its place, this kind of Swarajathi was utilised in dancing. It mostly follows the Prabandha lakshana, which consists of the following elements: the musical note Swara, the rhythmic syllable Patha, the lyrics Pada, the short word Biruda (used for exclamation, such as "O," "Ha"), and the rhythmic structure Tala.

Swarajathi's structure is quite similar to that of Padavarna. Pallavi, Anupallavi, Muktaisvara, or "Chittasvara" as others refer. Under Swarajatis, dance compositions are thought to be structurally quite similar to Varnams. The distinction is that, unlike in Varnam, where there are Muktai Swaras and Muktai Swara Sahityam, Swarajatis consist of Muktai Swarajati, or Swaras mixed with Sollukattus without any subsequent Sahityam. Another distinction is that Charana Sahityam is sung after Charanam Swaras.

Here are a few points where Swarajati and Varnam are similar and different. One of the oldest genres of musical compositions is the Swarajatis. Many of the Swarajathis composed by the Tanjore Quartet Brothers were created especially for the presentation of Bharatanatyam.

PADAM

This kind of composition was created specifically for court dances. The word padam denotes mature or slow. The dancer can elaborate and interpret this composition in many ways. The padam's limited vocabulary allows the dancer greater freedom. It involves a range of emotional tones. Padams provide numerous assessments, hence it is important to carefully consider their meanings [9].

The linguistic barrier makes it challenging to fully convey the poetic meanings of padams, yet a mastery of their melodic elements is sufficient to elevate the work to the ultimate of musical brilliance. The sections of the padam are one or more charanam, an optional anupallavi, and a pallavi. The song's concept or theme is introduced in the Pallavi, then Anupallavi and Charanam expand on it.

JAVALI

During the Maratha era in the 19th century, this work became part of the court repertory. The Javalis' music is relatively quicker than the Padams' [9].

Both Padams' and Javalis' have the same love theme, which is the heroine's longing for her beloved. While much of the content of Javali deals with usual love, the feeling is particularly powerful in Padam. There is a lot of sarcasm and humour in Javali, along with lighter music and informal language. The Padam's sangitam and sahityam are both strong. It typically has one or two charanams along with a Pallavi, Anupallavi. Some javalis do not, however, have anupallavi. Javali is typically sung quickly and mostly in Telugu or Kannada.

TILLANA

Taranas of the North served as inspiration for this. Captures eye-catching arrangements and is a Nritha item. Pratapa Simha, the Maratha King, incorporated it into the custom of court dances. Avarthanams are set by constructing korvais and singing the Pallavi many times.

Generally, it is completed in three stages: mei adavus are created in the first stage, a pancha jathi korvai is weaved in the second stage, and permutations and combinations of adavus set to korvai are used in the third step. The anupallavi and, often, the charanam sahityam come next. Words or sollus such as jham, tajham, taka tajham, kitataka, tomdir, dhalanga, nom, tat, dhit, tanom, dirana, dhim, and so on are used. As a grand finale, brisk stances and movements are included towards the finish of the recital [10].

SLOKAM / VIRUTHAM

Slokas are Sanskrit verses, while Tamil verses are called Virutham. Their nature is one of dedication. A specific verse is chosen and paired with one or more ragas. The singer then starts to recite a few phrases on her behalf. The dancer then expounds on the chosen words using her own imagination. There is no Tala set for Viruthams.

CONCLUSION

T. Balasraswati states that the Bharatanatyam recital follows the layout of a magnificent temple [11]. We go through the Gopuram, or outer hall, of Alarippu, pass through the Ardhamandapam, or halfway hall, of Jatiswaram, proceed through the Mandapam, or great hall, of Sabdam, and finally arrive at the deity's holy precinct in Varnam. This location provides the dancer with a wide range of expression through the dance's rhythm, modes, and music.

The Varnam allows the dancer to experience self-fulfilment to the highest extent possible while allowing her to fully express both her own creativity and the art's legacy.

The padams now come, as you dance to them, you can feel the serenity and containment of walking into the sanctuary from the outside. The vastness and luminosity of the outer corridors vanish into the shadowy inner sanctuary, and the Padam's soul-steering song and abhinaya triumph over the Varnam's rhythmic virtuosity. Dancing to the Padam is like being at the point in worship when the drum beats stop and the lights fade to a simple, solemn chant of sacred verses in God's presence. Then, amid some noise and excitement, the Tillana breaks into a moment akin to the last campfire burning. At this point, the devotee takes to his heart the God he has thus far honoured outside, and the dancer concludes a customary order by dancing to a brief devotional verse.

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