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DETERMINANTS OF DANCE IN NARTANANIRNAYA

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ABSTRACT

The Nartananirnaya is regarded as the most prominent and essential text written in Sanskrit by Pandarika Vitthala in the late 16th Century. The major subject of Nartananirnaya is dancing and the description of the dance forms explained in the text acts as a source for revisiting the history of Indian dance and music [1]. Pandarika Vitthala covers many dance forms of various areas within India that were prevalent at his time. The author states about the regions of India where the particular style developed, the language of the songs, methods of communication and also gives specific details about dance forms practiced in a region. Pandarika Vitthala, a multifaceted artist, researcher, and writer, had the chance to observe and engage with both the various regional traditions of India and more modern customs imported from Persia. It also served as a textual authority and a theoretical foundation for subsequent discussions of the theory and practice of music and dance. This study provides an insight into the factors determining dance mentioned by Pandarika Vitthala in his work Nartananirnaya. An increasing order of importance in specifying the qualities and characteristics of the determinants of dance has been followed by the author which is a unique method of representation.

KEYWORDS

Dance, Music, Cymbal, Mridangam, Singer, Dancer, Nartananirnaya.

INTRODUCTION

Dance and music are two forms of art that are frequently connected. Music can be composed and improvised, and it can be made with instruments or the human voice. A physical manifestation of music or rhythm is dance. Dance and music can be used in conjunction to convey stories and feelings. The musical and dancing traditions of many nations are all different.

The instruments and music are crucial in establishing the overall ambiance and mood of the performance in addition to providing the musical accompaniment for the dance [2]. The dancer's movements and facial expressions are strongly related to the rhythms and melodies of the music, and the art form depends on how well these two elements interact.

A significant amount of literature describing the theories, methods, terminology, and details of dance in all of its forms has been created over the years [3]. Many technical terminology and notions from the Natyashastra were revised and given entirely new perspectives in various works from the later period in light of the regional instantaneous cultural practices of the time. The old dance styles were also frequently given new forms and enriched with fresh techniques. As a result, Indian dance traditions were given new life at each level, giving them a new vibrancy and making them relevant to the times. The Indian classical dances have continued to thrive even today because of their persistent ability to adapt to changing circumstances without compromising their core standards [4].

Considering the suggestion of Emperor Akbar, Pandarika Vitthala stated that he had written the text with details of music and dance,

“Akabara nr̥parucyartham bhuloke sarala sangitakam idam kṛtam” [Nartananirnaya, Vol-1]

To delight King Akbar, this straightforward Sangita is created all over the world in a wide variety. May it bring joy to the hearts of the kind.

The performances of the dancer and the ensemble which includes the singer, the cymbal player, the mrdangam player, the flute player determine the effectiveness of the dance. The title of the text is Nartananirnaya because these elements serve as the determinants of the dance.

In terms of talam and layam, the Mrdangam and the Cymbal support the rhythmic aspect because the performance is more obvious to the audience than the other, the former is of greater importance. Following the descriptions of the Cymbal player, comes the Mrdangam player. The singer also known as Gayaka, provides the melodic support for the dance with the support of music and is given next-highest priority in the dance performance. Finally, the text deals with the most important aspect of a dance performance, the dancer, following the hierarchical arrangement of the components of Dance.

CYMBAL PLAYER

The musician who plays the nattuvangam is known as the Nattuvannar. It consists of a pair of tiny cymbals that are held in two hands and played with great precision and accuracy [5]. The nattuvannar uses the cymbal to maintain the thalam and rhythm portion throughout the dance performance. Additionally, the cymbal supports the dancer and the audience when adavus, jatis, or challenging teermanams are performed. The cymbal is played by the nattuvannar, but it also helps the entire orchestra to keep the talam's rhythm consistent.

*“lakṣyalakṣaṇasampanno guṇavān pratibhāpatuḥ
saṅgītavādyanṛtyasthakālajñastāladharṭṛkaḥ”* [Nartananirnaya, Vol-1, Ch-,sloka-3]

He is endowed with goals and characteristics and is virtuous and talented. He knows the time in music, instruments and dances and holds the rhythm

Pandarika Vitthala states that the cymbal bearer is endowed with both theoretical and practical knowledge of dance and possesses high talent. The desired qualities and characteristics of the cymbal bearer are listed.

Quality encompasses precise knowledge about the following

- Paatas (sound syllables) produced by percussion instruments,
- Alamkaras (structuring paatas in various syllabic combination), Kavita (poetry), as well as the ten Sancaras (mutual movement between two thalams), performing postures, and the Stuti-sabda (meaningful paata syllables in praise of Gods/Kings) method of Cymbal performance.

Characteristics are the following.

- He should have good contours and be handsome.
- He should also play with an attractive posture.
- He should be skilled at playing the Cymbals and a specialist in percussive-instrumental phrases.
- He ought to have a solid understanding of YatiTala, and pace (Laya).
- He should be well-versed in Graha, such as Sama and Visama, who is adept at executing both soft and harsh (percussive) syllables.
- He needs to be proficient at taking up (Graha) and resting (Moksha) during Nattuvangam, both of which correspond to the vocalised syllables.
- He should also be a specialist in 10 Sancararas, have sufficient stamina, and exhibit strong attention to detail.

MRIDANGAM

A percussion instrument with ancient roots is the mridangam. A double-headed wooden drum from southern India. In a nritta sequence, the dancer's motions, particularly those of the feet, are also accompanied by the mridangam, which serves largely to clarify how the jatis are executed [6]. For instance, drumming quickly and loudly to convey fury, softly to depict knocking on a door.

*“dhvanimēlavidā pāṭatālādiguṇavēdinā
mṛdaṅgō vādyatē yēna sa mṛdaṅgīti gīyatē”* [Nartananirnaya, Vol-1, Ch-2, sloka-1]

She knew the melody of sound, and she knew the qualities of the drums and other instruments. The instrument used to play the mrdanga is called mrdangi.

The chapter on mridangam in Nartananirnaya states that a mridangi player is someone who plays the mridangam and is skilled in the blending of sounds, pataas, and tala. The qualities (Guna) and flaws (Dosha) of the mrdangam artist as well as his proper position, finger and palm skills, varied instrumental compositions, repertory for accompanying dance performances, and more are listed.

The following elements are covered:

- Different types of Mridangam players known as Vaadika (plays in contest), Mukhari (composer and teaches dance), Bharika (professional player), Gitaanuga (accompanies vocal music).
- the Mridangam player's strengths (knowledge of thalam and layam, production and performance of instrumental sounds, ability to perform strokes skillfully) and weaknesses (ignorant of thala).
- The characteristics of the mridangam like materials used, measurements and more are listed.

GAYAKA

To help the audience grasp the purpose of dance, the singer serves as an interface between the dancer and the audience. A singer can perform a song in several talas and speeds at a music concert, but not at a dance concert. The dance's choreography determines how often even a single phrase is repeated.

*“śuddhacchāyālagābhijñō mūrchanāgrāmatānavit
satālō rañjakam gītām yō gāyati sa gāyanaḥ”* [Nartananirnaya, Vol-2, Ch-3, sloka-1]

He knew the pure shadows and the tone of the faint village. A singer who sings a colorful song called Satala

In the chapter Gayaka Prakaranam, the initial section begins with the definition, the singer is referred to as one who is skilled in ragas and prabandhas, is knowledgeable about ragams, and sings with aesthetic appeal. , his or her position and significance in a dance performance, as well as his or her strengths and weaknesses. It then moves on to discuss various singing styles, how to reproduce melodic parts in a song (Ragalapa), and how to build a raga.

There are ten categories of vocalist defects that are well-known among singers. One who can't sing at a high enough pitch, doesn't understand talas, shouts loudly, and stretches out their neck, chin, head, eyes, and hands while they sing and more.

Pandarika enumerates a singer's virtues (Guna).

- He should be well-versed in following and controlling the start and end of the song according to the layam and thalam.
- The voice should be melodic as well as audible to a particular distance.
- Specialist in knowing the intricacies of ragas and prabandhas in a pleasant and cultured voice.
- Recognizes and carefully follows the dancer's moves, providing the necessary vocal accompaniment.
- Extensive knowledge of both the Marga and Desi Music

NARTAKA

This dance performance related chapter discusses the pros and cons of the individuals participating in the dance recital.

*“dēśabhāṣākālābhāvarasavidyāndanāyakaḥ
nartanalakṣyalaṣṣmajñō yō nartayati nartakaḥ”* [Nartananirnaya, Vol-3, sloka-1]

He is the leader of a group of scholars of country, language, art, emotion and taste. A dancer who knows the goals and objectives of dancing

A Nartaka (Dancer) is said to possess the following qualities (Guna)

- Complete knowledge of all four forms of Abhinaya.
- The necessary talent in maintaining layam and thalam.
- A strong willpower to learn the art.
- A good dancer should be able to express rasa and bhava as well as be able to follow both instrumental and vocal music.

Abhinaya, the general term for the depiction of meaning (descriptive and representational), is carried out in four ways: verbally (Vacika), physically (Angika), emotionally (Sattvika), and visually (Aharya). In contrast to the practical, everyday expressions (loka dharmi), the dance is conveyed through dramatic modes of communication (natya dharmi) that adhere to theatrical standards. Together, these two Dharmis makeup Chitrabhinaya, or special representation. The movement and arrangement of various bodily parts in an abstracted artistic manner are the subject of the segment (Adhikarana) on Nrta [7]. Essentially, it is about dance grammar.

CONCLUSION

The word “Sangita” is an abstract phrase. It consists of vocal music as well as instrumental music and of dance. “*Gitam, Vadyam tatha Nrtyam trayam Samgitam uccyate*”. Following a detailed study, we are able to declare that the Nartananirnaya established the groundwork for additional, fascinating, and radical transformations that eventually occurred in the art forms, particularly the dance. According to the author, the text's four Chapters are structured in a format called Sopana-marga, which is based on the increasing order of importance of the subject, much like staircase climbing. Thus the accomplishment of a successful dance recital depends upon all the above mentioned factors. In general, music and instruments play a crucial role in Dance, giving the rhythm and melody that motivate the dance and build an atmosphere that draws spectators into the show thus making the recital an aesthetic delight.

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