



Dance Configuration in the Telugu Literature during the Kākatīya period CHUDAMANI D

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Indian Dance is an ancient performing art form which has been transmitted from one generation to the next. The process of transmission happens in two ways.

- The training of the next generations (Practitioners or performers)
- The study of documents (Nāṭyaśāstra, Abhinayadarpaṇa etc.) coded with the details of dance (technique, movements, gestures, postures)

This ancient Indian dance has gone through many phases of evolution and can be seen in present-day manifest as various formats like Kūcipuḍi, Bharatanāṭyam, Kathakali, Kathak etc. The main evolution phase which can be considered as the initial phase was the evolution of “dēśī” dance forms (as mentioned by the mediaeval period theoreticians) from the standard “Mārga” form. Dēśī dance forms have a different structure, which deviate from the conventional formats. The derived new regional movements, behavioural patterns and cultures reflect in the dance form (movements, plot, stance).

The influence of socio, cultural and political changes in the society have always had their influence on the art forms which are carried forward to the next generation as tradition. Telugu Dance traditions have had a great influence on the sociocultural aspects which prevailed during Kākatīya Period.

Kākatīya dynasty ruled the Telugu region of south India during 1083 CE to 1323 CE. Kākatīya period is a golden period for art and literature. Music, Dance and other art forms were highly encouraged by the rulers. Literature is the only source to understand the Telugu dance traditions that were prevalent during the Kākatīya period. Archival study is the main methodology of this study. We can find two kinds of literary documentation. One is the text that is solely dedicated to document the art form. These treatises hold the generalised technical information like definitions, movement patterns and processes that were practised during the Kākatīya period. Another is the text of some other subject which has the references of dance in few contexts. These texts hold less information about the technicalities of dance, however with in depth analysis we can understand the allied aspects of the art form like instrumentation, ornaments, music, plot, context, scenography of the dance performance, relativity between the character (bearer of the art form) and the art form. All these elements provide nuances of the Kākatīya art forms.

To understand these details, archival study is the methodology to be followed. Reading a book is different from understanding it and analysing it. In this context, knowledge of history, literature and dance is a must to enhance the purpose of the study. Also, it's important to be in line with the author's objective which has no parameters.

Following are the dance treatises that were authored during the Kākatīya period

- Nṛttaratnāvalī- Jāyasēnānī – 13th century CE
- Mānasōllāsa - Kalyāṇī Cālukya king Sōmēśvara III - 12th century:
- Saṅgīta Samayasāra – Parśvadēva – 12th century:

Technique:

Dēśī Sthānaka-s (static postures), Dēśī Pada-s (feet movement), Dēśī Bhaumi Cārī-s, Dēśī ākāśikī Cārī-s, Dēśī Lāsyāṅga-s (components of Lāsyā like technicalities and elements of grace) are mentioned in the dance treatises (Saṅgīta Samayasāra – Parśvadēva, Mānasōllāsa - Sōmēśvara, Nṛttaratnāvalī - Jāyasēnānī) which have utmost similarities and a few deviations.

Dance forms:

Pēraṇī, Premkhaṇa, Sūḍa nartana, Rāsaka, Carcarī, Nāṭyarāsaka, Daṇḍarāsakam, Śivapriya, Cindu nṛtta, Kanduka nartanam, Bhāṇḍika nṛtta, Gaṭhisāṇī, Cāraṇa Nṛtta, Bahurūpa, Kollāṭa and Gaṇḍalī are the Dēśī dance forms mentioned in Nṛttaratnāvalī. (First Telugu Dance Treatise).

Reference to dance in Telugu Literature:



Author of a literature knits the main concept of his choice and the customs of the society. Mirroring the socio-cultural aspects in the literature is the primordial pattern followed by the authors. Here are the decoded elements of dance which were prevalent during the Kākatīya period

1. Dance of Lord Naṭarāja

Lord Naṭarāja is a dancer himself and many references in the literature have given the description of his dance variations (Tāṇḍava-s). Kākatīya dynasty is more prominent for Śaivism where we can find many impressions of Lord Naṭarāja in various forms that are mere example of Dēśī dance tradition ‘Bahurūpa’. Nannayya - Sri Madāndhra Mahābhāratam: Chapter 5 – poem #398

“Jaṅgama Stāvarātmaka sakala bhūta

Rūpa Bahuta Nonduta Bahurūpa Nāma

Dheyudai Yoppe.....”

Meaning: Śiva can also be called as “Bahurūpa” which means “Paḡaṭi Vēṣamu” (The same person enacts many characters with appropriate attires and dialogues). He is the only almighty who exists in every corner of the universe in different forms.

2. Dance as an Emotional Expression

Dance is the term used for bodily movements. Every movement is the result of an inner emotion. Extent of emotion can be realised through the intensity of the movement. Nannayya, author of the Āndhra Mahābhāratam, mentions dance, which carries the extremely intense overwhelmed emotion in Śālya Parvam, Ādyamu 2 –160,161 as

“When Mankana saint passing by the river Saraswathi, his finger was happened to touch a Halfa grass (old world perennial grass) then immediately it turned into a juice. Muni Astonished by the event and started dancing which caused a critical condition in the Universe. Then Shambhu appeared there and scratched his thumb finger, it released vibhuthi out of it. Then Mankhana realised his mistake of over pride and stopped his dance. The Universe got calm down

3. Dance as Entertainment:

Apsarā-s are referred to as young and beautiful women who excelled in dance. These apsaras are court dancers who entertained the gods with their extraordinary dancing skills. Laukika (wordly) and Daivika (divine) are two types of Apsaras. In Bhāratam, Balarāma while on his way to a pilgrimage, visited the place called “Bhūmikā” where the Apsarā-s sing and dance. (Śrī Mahabhāratam, Śālya Parvamu, Ādyamu 2, Vacanamu 157)

4. Dance during Celebrations

- The context or occasions of performance gives the importance of this art form during the life cycle – celebrations, new baby boy birth, marriages, yagnas, special occasions like entering into kingdom, crowning etc, of the people during Kākatīya period

- In the literature there are many references like Indrōtsavam, Raivatōtsavam, Rāvaṇa Samhāra Nṛtyamu, Viratuni Vijayanāda Nṛtyamu, Draupadī marriage, Abhimanyu Marriage, Pārvaṭī Kalyāṇam, Dharma Rāju Rājasūyam, Dharma Raju Aśvamēdham, Daśaratha Aśvamēdham, Kuvalaya entrance in to the kingdom, Arjuna entrance into the kingdom, Kumārasvāmi attaining Dēvasēnādhīpati, Arjuna’s birth etc. (These are from Āndhra Mahābhāratam)

- In Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritra written by Pālkurkī Sōmanātha, information about Vedyāṭa, Konaṅgiāṭa, Pēraṇī, Chindu, Shadow Plays, Paḡaṭi Vēṣamu (fancy show) which were part of Mahāśivarātrī celebrations is given.

- In Basava Purāṇa, Pālkurikī Sōmanātha mentions that Kolāṭa, Pātra, Gaunḍalī, Pēraṇī Kēlikā-s were danced during the Basavēśvara festival.

5. Performance venues

Nannaya described the ocean as a performing venue in a poetic way considering the artists as ships. (Mahā Bharatamu, Ādi Parvamu, Ādyayamu Vacanamu 27)



These are the different names used to refer to a performance venue in different literature.

- *Nartanaśāla* in Bhāratam, (Mahābhāratamu Ādi Parvamu, Adyāyamu p 324)
- Ayōdhya – “Śrī Naṭana Raṅgaśāla” (Lakṣmī Nāṭyaśāla) in Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇam (Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇamu- Adhyāyamu 2- P26)
- *Hamsāvalī Nṛtyaśāla* in Śōḍaśa Kumāra caritra (Śōḍaśa Kumāra Caritra –Adhyāyamu 6-53)
- *Hastināpurī Nāṭyaśālālu* described in Śakuntalā Pariṇayam (Śalya Parvamu- Adhyāyamu 1-86)
- Mountain - *Mayūra nartanaśāla* Kēyūra bāhu caritra, chapter 4 –201

“...mathakekulakella nruttarangamulaina

Ramaneeya kelisailamula yandu...”

Meaning: Peacocks are always can be found at the mountains which are considered as Nṛttarangamu (Stage).

6. Dēvadāsī Dancers

• Pāḷkurikī Sōmanātha (1240 – 1320) mentions the name Sāni in his works Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritra and Basavapurāṇa. He describes their beauty and dancing skills. He also mentions that these Sanis excelled in both Mārga and Dēśī dance styles.

• The term Vilāsini can be found in the Telugu literary works that refer to a courtesan (dancer). Nannayya in Mahābhārata Ādi parvam mentions the court of his patron.

"Mamtri Purohita Senapathi Damdanayaaka Danuvaarika, Mahaaprathananamātya, Saamini, Vilasini."

• In Kumārasambhavam written by Nannēcoḍha (1160 –1170) too the reference to word Vilāsini while explaining the details of King Himāvanta can be seen.

7. Dēśī Dance Forms

• In Āndhra Mahābhārata, Tikkana while describing the entry of Arjuna as Brihannaḷā (in Virāṭaparva) mentions that Arjuna was well trained in Daṇḍarāsaka, Gauṇḍali, Preṅkhaṇa and Pēraṇī.

1> Aranya parvam – adhyāyamu 3 – 101, Kanduka Krīḍā (ball game) in front of Sage Rṣyaśṛṅga

Muni Mundataganduka na

Rtana mrudu geetamula Yandudana Koushala me

Llanu juupi virachitaa lin

Ganayai munipatiki mudamu gaavinche madin

Meaning: Before the saint, the lady played with a ball and sung songs. She exhibits her skills in singing and dancing. She mesmerised the saint, hugged him and made him feel the pleasure of her company.

2> Saindhavuni tāla Kanduka Krīḍā – Drōṇa Parvam Chapter 4 – 322

Patu Sharamula Meediki daa

Patikin valapatiki napara Bhagamunaku Mum

Datiki jadala nadape samu

Tkata rayamuna Shiramuganduka Kreedagatin

Meaning: In the war, Arjuna cut the head of Saindhava using arrows, he moved that head to up, down, right, left, in to the sky, back, front – just like playing with a ball.

3> Śabara mātala madirapāna nṛtyam (Kumaara Sambhavam) chapter 6 - 45

Jeeriki kalludraavi madhasindura gaaisulanni kerriyal

Vaaruchu goudu geetamulu vaaduchu bolpugagraali yaaduchun

Gorada maaduchun batulakun vasavartulugaaka merakun

Meeruchu vannekaantuluraminturu tadvipiraantarambunan

Meaning: Śabara matā-s in the forest are drunk having consumed toddy, shouting louder, singing the songs (Goudu gīta-s – rendering toddy as poem), performing bhrahmarī nṛtyam (whirling movements), cracking dirty jokes referring to sex. They are not listening to their husbands and their behaviour is beyond the limits.

8. Nature –Ecstasy- Dance

Rhythmic movement of any element in nature is dance. Strong ecological balance can be seen in the literature of the Kākatīya period. Birds dancing are mentioned in different scenarios. Not only birds,



descriptions of other animals with reference to dance and music too are given importance in the literature during the Kākatīya period.

1 > Mayūra Mathali nṛtyam (Kēyūra Bāhu caritra)

”..... yeda velupu leni poodeniya jadindoogi

Yasamakaala sharjanyaakaala shanka mathilli nṛtyambu seyu

Mathakeki kekala kodu bhujanga kutumbambunu...”

Meaning: Due to the spring season, all the flowers in the garden have fallen down. And there is the hint of rain. Peacocks had the honey from those flowers and are hence dancing (madirapāna nṛtyam) and shouting in drunkenness. Snakes are scared and slither away from there.

2 > varshā ṛtuvu - śikhaṇḍī tāṇḍava keli (Bhāratam) Aranya parvam chapter 4 - 137

Arudagu Tatpayodha samayambuna nokkata vistarille Nam

Baramuna Nambuda Dhvaniyu, Balvala Bhoomula Bhoori Darduro

Tkararavamul, Maheeruha Shikandhamu landu Shikandhi Tandavaam

Tara madhamanjula svanamudhaara tarambaguchun vanambunan

Meaning: Rainy season is the happy period for all beings. Thunder storms, frogs sound from the ponds, peacocks performing tāṇḍava dance with open feathers.

3 King Tolakari – dance of Peacock, Kumārasambhavam

Aakrokkaranu raajumrola nijaraavaanantageeyaabranaa

Daikaatodyamu goorchi mroya suragopaambhojaraagatrinnaa

Neekodyaddaridasmakasthala lasannrutyory rangasthalin

Geekii paatramu laade bhaavamuga nutksheepaagra pinchambhulai

Meaning: Rain is considered as king, storm sounds as instrumentation, Mountains filled with Arudra insects are considered as performing stage decorated with diamonds and the peacocks are considered as performing artists.

Bold expressions like the sensual ecstasy were wisely articulated the constitution of Dance

Performance as below

, “Rati līlā” Lāsya - Kumārasambhavam chapter 8 – 180

Gala naadabulu manjugaanamulu gaa, gaancheelasatkinkini

Kalanaadambulu Hrudyavaadambulu gaa, gaantooru peetonatha

Sthala Rangammula Gaamudannatiku Dojjam Gooda Naadimpagaa

Lalanaa paatramu laadi roppa ratileelaasya lolaasyalai

Meaning: The poet compares the women who are playing uparati as dancers. The sounds of extreme love and happiness is like the sound of the pigeon and considered as songs. Bells on the waist are considered as the instrumentation, and the thighs of the husbands are the stage (performing spaces). Manmatha is the Nāṭya guru, performing the role of sutradhāra (director). All the women are performing the Ratilīlā Lāsya.

Dēśī Dance Reformations:

• Some of the Telugu dance traditions for example Kōlāṭam, practiced during the Kākatīya period have been carried forward to the current generation and are also highly encouraged by the temples and other folk organisations.

• E Krishna Iyer named a dance form as Pēraṇī which is not adhered to the norms of Nṛttaratnāvalī

• Dance forms like Pēraṇī have been reformed by Dr. Naṭarāja Ramakrishna that does not follow the norms of Nṛttaratnāvalī for instance the entrance of āṭṭa bodaka (tonsure) at the beginning and Viśva Vikāṭa Nāṭya-s at the end.

1. "Sarvavādyam" is an offering to the god that consists of 72 items of which one is Śuddha Nṛttam and the other Pēraṇī.

2. During the revival of "Sarvavādyam", few contents from the Telugu dance drama called Sundarēśvara Vilāsamu (written by Mārupeddi Cemgalvarāya Śāstrulu (1810 – 1900), a Telugu scholar) have been incorporated into it.



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3. Māṅguḍi Durairājayyar has done research in Pēraṇī and Śuddha Nṛttam and reformed a dance on mud pot and named it as "Paṇḍarīṅgak kūttu", now it is called as Pēraṇī.

Conclusion

- Tracing the performing art through an insight into literature is a tremendous work.
- The researcher should have the knowledge of history, literature and arts.
- Coding or scripting a performing art may not give the exact visualisation of the movement.
- The researcher may deviate from the actual intention of the author and may arrive at something new.
- However, the hint of dance traditions existence is itself a great help to revive the heritage.
- Many Dēśī dance forms or movements can be revived on the basis of the definitions given in the treatises, so that the rich culture of Telugu region can relive its eminence.
- Further work can be done to emphasise on the promotion of the Telugu dance forms.
- In the context of performing arts, performance is the primary source any other coded data is secondary source, while reforming the performing art with the help of literature is the amalgamation of tradition and principles (contemporary thoughts) of the reformer.

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