



ISSN: 2582-9513

PRANAV JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

Pandit Lalan Piya's contributions to the musical forms of Kathak

Varsha kolhatkar

Co- author - Dr. Manjiri Deo

Sri Sri Guruji University, Cuttack

Contact- 1102, Pratap Tower, Kolbad road,

Thane west, Maharashtra 400601

23

Musical form is the structure of musical composition. In Indian classical music there are 2 basic forms: Hindustani and Carnatic classical with many sub forms. In Indian classical dances musical forms have a very important part to play and Kathak also follows the tradition. Kathak is a classical dance style of North India, which was associated with Hindustani musical forms from the beginning. Singing styles like Dhruvpad, Dhamar, Thumri, Dadra, Tarana, Chaturang, Bhajan etc. give completeness to Kathak dance. The compositions are written by kathak dancers as well as poets and musicians. One such great poet, musician, kathakar is Pandit Lalanpiya(1856-1926). His 12 books in the form of Photocopy and PDF are available. The most important book, Lalan-Sagar published(2nd edition) in 1927 includes 1345 compositions. He has narrated in his foreword to Lalan Sagar that it includes Dhruvpad, Dhamar, Thumri, Dadra, Faag, Kajri, Ghazal, etc. His compositions are written in more than 30 Tals including unconventional tals and subjects. Apart from 2-3 references I could hardly find any performances on his compositions hence it is necessary to understand and analyze his compositions, in the perspective of the Bhava and Taal Paksha of Kathak and conclude as to whether he has enriched the musical forms used in Kathak and the possibilities of inclusion of the same in Kathak repertoire. The dearth of compositions is limiting the scope of Bhaav paksh of today's emerging performers. Through this research paper, many classified dance compositions will be available to the dancers which will be an enriching experience for experimental dancers to perform on unconventional themes and untraditional Tals. For Research paper, a qualitative method of research is used which includes classification of his compositions into different musical forms, interviews with singers of Lalanpiya legacy, literature review, conclusion, and a dance performance to prove the conclusion. After extensive research I could conclude that Pandit Lalan piya ji has handled all the musical forms used in Kathak. Due to Pandit Lalan piya's diverse poetry and many musical genres, Kathak has been provided with a very rich medium of expression through which various types of dance performances such as Navras, Nayak-Nayika bhed, beauty of seasons, Devastuti etc. are possible.

Aim- Introduction of Pandit Lalanpiya's compositions to the Kathak world which would cover the entire compass of musical forms used in Kathak and would enrich the Bhav and Taal Paksh of new generation Kathak dancers.

Key words- Kathak, Lalanpiya, thumari, paran, tarana, navras, nayak-nayika bhed, musical forms

1. Introduction

Nataraja Shivji said to Bharatamuni, 'Nritvam ishtam svabhavatah (Dadhich 137). That means, human being loves dance by nature. Dance is a natural means of human expression. We can say that the art of dance was born to say something, to explain, to narrate.

Along with the progress of human, the development of telling something to others and expressing also continued. Many tribal dances and folk dances started. In the process, human being tried to give scientific framework to everything around and this is how even the classical dance styles were born to interpret singing, music, dance and dance drama. These Classical dance styles have retained the tradition of expressing themselves with rhythm and expression.

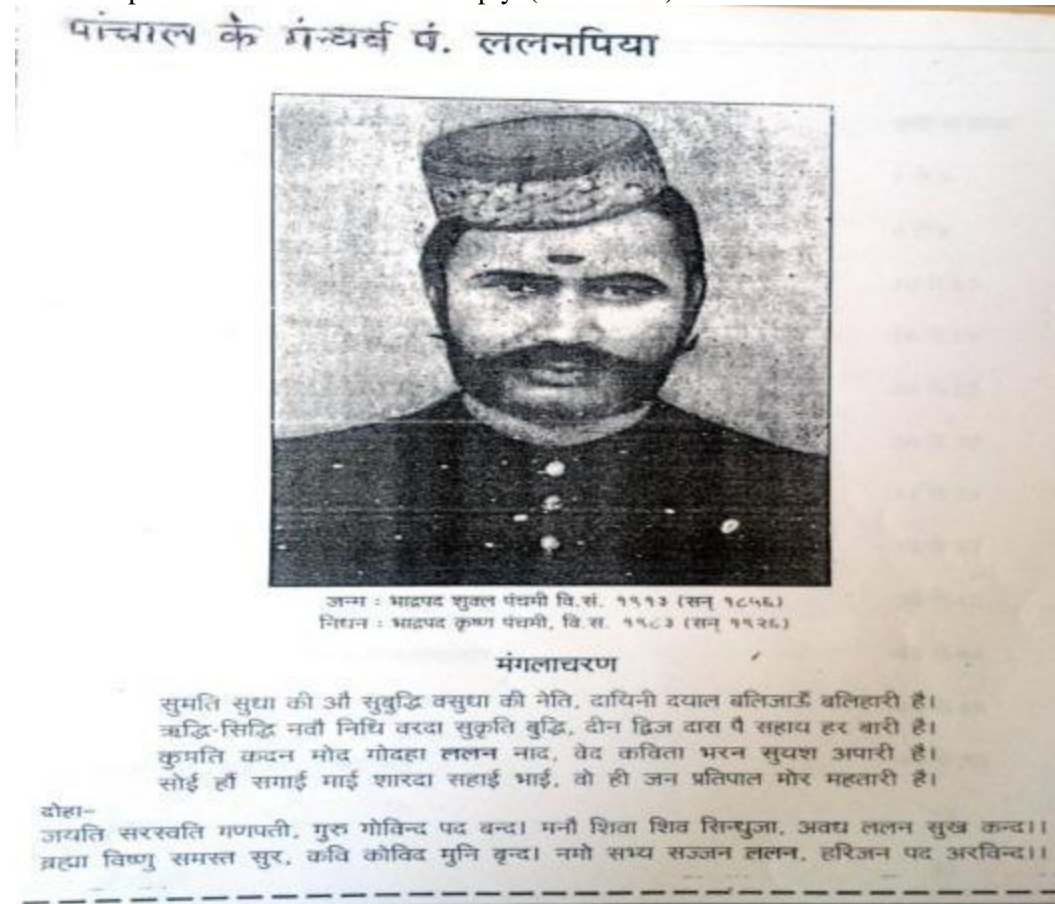
In story telling or narration, Kathak is the most important dance style. The migration from 'Katha Kahe So, Kathak Kahawe'(story telling is called Kathak) to 'Katha Kare So Kathak Kahawe'(story is performed is what is kathak) tells the evolution of Kathak.

Kathak has been strengthened by incorporating the languages of different regions of North India and the culture of the people there. And this is the reason why diversity is seen in Kathak dance performance. This diversity is also visible in the basic literature of Kathak dance performance.

In the performance of Kathak dance, the literature and the method of singing are of great importance. It has been prevalent in Kathak to perform dance on the songs which have been predominant during the period. Dhrupad, Thumri, Dadra, Tarana, Hori, Bhajan, Stuti, many such song types have been the basis of Kathak dance. So it could be said that Kathak performance includes different Musal Forms specially in Nrutta and Nritya anga.

Apart from the compositions of respected Kathak dancers, Kathak dancers perform are on the compositions of many other poets and musicians.

One such poet-musician is Pandit Lalanpiya(1856-1926).



Regarding Thumri composers, Dr. Puru Dadhich writes, '---- Lalanpiya etc. are more than one name who's melodious Thumris are still popular in the music world (109). This is how I got introduced to Lalanpiya ji's thumris.

Mittu Kuncha resident Pt. Nand Lal Saraswat is known as 'Lalan Piya' Thumri Samrat. The biggest creator of Bandish's Thumri and the originator of the wonderful Dhrupad-oriented style in Bolbant, (youthindiatoday.com,2020)

He was born on Bhadrapada Shukka 5 in 1856 at Farukhabad and Bhadrapada Krishna 5, in the year 1926, he died at the age of 70. Lalan Piya did his education from his uncle Shri. Nanhe Mal ji, who was a scholar of Naadvidya and Tantravidya. In the chapter titled 'Swadesh Janmabhoomi Bhumika Varnika', he has described in detail his birthplace, lineage, and education. He himself used to tell Rukmini Marraige Katha in the temples.



On his 150th birth anniversary, Sanskar Bharti, published a monthly special Kalakunj Bharti (September 2006) and its theme was 'Panchal Ke Gandharva Pandit.Lalan Piya'.

The guest editor of this special issue was Mr. Omprakash Mishra Kanchan ji who has also written in detail on Lalanpiya's personality, literature, singing style in his book 'Panchal Ka Gandharva, Thumri Samrat Lalanpiya'. Kanchanji says that Pt. Lalanpiya's knowledge of melody and rhythm, both were unmatched. He was a great scholar and teacher of both music and literature (Kanchan,63).

All the bandishes of Lalanpiya are lyrical. Most of his compositions are of sitarkhani style (Modak 51,81).

Dr. Sonam Gupta ji presented her dissertation on the topic "Thumri Samrat Lalanpiya and his compositions - a musical study" at Bhatkhande Sangeet Sansthan University in 2009 and received doctorate degree.

Smt. Sushma Singhji has presented Research paper for her M.A. on the subject 'Literary and devotional spirit of Lalan Piya'.

125 thumris have been transcribed in the book 'Lalanpiya ki Thumriya' by Mr. Bhartendu Bajpai. He says in the preface of his book, "In the rendition of his fast rhythm, such a smooth flow of tone and rhythm is seen as if pearls are strung." The nature of the raga does not deteriorate even if it is sung in a very fast rhythm.

Smt. Shubha Mudgalji performed Thumris of Pt. Lalanpiya at NCPA. She says that she has learned Lalanpiya's compositions from her mentor (Pt. Ramashray Jha 'Ramrang') and they are very challenging for a singer (dnaindia.com, 28th June 2015).

Smt. Pooja Gupta ji says in relation to his creations that apart from Shringaar Rasa, calmness, compassion, humor and metaphor, anuprasa, similes, utpreksha, ornaments have also been used in abundance in his compositions. Braj, Awadhi, Kanauji are mixed and Lalanpiya has also used words of folk languages in abundance (22).

Dr. Shatrughan Shukla in his research work 'Thumri ki Utpatti Vikas aur Shaileyan', on page 155-156, has written, 'The coordination of music and high-quality literature is seen in his Thumris'.

Songs, instruments, and dance are distinguished by rhythm. Lalan Piya's singing style as a heritage in today's generation have been kept alive by Shri. Vidyaprakash Dixit and he says, "The great musician Pt. Lalanpiya's mastery over taal is well known. In his thumris, taal and sam are not only extremely difficult to identify, but in a way impossible. Those who sing your thumris, or those who have heard them, he knows this very well," (17).

A total of 12 books of Lalan Piya ji are available today in the form of Photocopy and PDF, whose names are as follows:-

The most important book published in 1927 (second edition) is Lallan-Sagar. He has written 1345 compositions in this book. And there are maximum thumris among them. He had studied Taladhyayi (AD 1101) composed by musician Shri Munindra Muni and wrote a chapter on compositions based on 36 rhythms, 'Lalan Shiromnika' in the same Lalan Sagar Granth. After this the books available today are Lalan Phag, Lalan Sudhakar, Lalan Kajri, Lalan Latika, Lalan Kavittavali, Lalan Vinod, Lalan Prabhakar, Lalan Dohawali, Lalan Pramodini, Lalan Dwadash Padyavali etc

From the above it could be seen that many scholars, singers have explained about the tal and thumari compositions and difficulties in singing them but none of them have explained or even mentioned the dance presentation of their compositions.

Sushri Pushpalata Rastogi, the senior most singer in Lalanpiya tradition of singing, in her interview, has referred that she in her childhood had seen Shri Baburam Kathak, disciple of Pandit Bindadin Maharaj, performing Kathak in Mandir(). Sushri Kumkum Dhar ji had performed a thumari in Kathak dance style on his composition at Lalanpiya Mahotsav. Dr. Vibha Dadhich ji had mentioned that they have Kathak dance performance of his 2-3 compositions. Dr. Vrushali Dabke ji had performed a dance on Lalanpiya's composition in her 'Megh' dance. In fact, Bol Bannt thumari in Madhya Lay is very suitable for Kathak dance, but no other effort or research etc. is found



1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to analyze and understand whether Pandit Lalan Piya's compositions are encompassing the various musical forms used in Kathak and whether there is any enriching contributions of it to the musical forms of Kathak.

Lalanpiyaji's creations have the potential to enrich both the Nritya(pure dance) and the Nrutya(emotional aspects) of Kathak, and no study has been done on them, therefore it is necessary to research these aspects.

1.2 Scope and limitations

Classifying Lalanpiya's compositions from his main book Lalan Sagar in different musical forms and comparing it with musical forms used in Kathak so as to understand whether it has any qualitative impact on Kathak is the scope of this research.

It will be an enriching experience for experimental dancers to perform on the nontraditional tals and subjects described by Lalanpiya. Today, many new talents are emerging in the field of Kathak dance. But the literature of Bhav Paksha is limited to a few selected compositions. Through this research, large number of classified dance literature will be available to the dancers.

However the limitation in the research is the dearth of singers singing in Lalanpiya tradition due to the complexity of bandish and its Tals, which finally reflects in no dance performance.

1.3 Research Methodology

The methodology of qualitative analysis is used for this research. In this system, classification of his creations into different musical forms used in Kathak, interviews of singers of Lalanpiya tradition, musicologists and young kathak dancers and experimenting in performance of his compositions etc. are used.

2. Analysis

From the details given above in respect of his books it could be seen that the extent of Lalanpiya's compositions is very large and it would include the entire sentiment of Kathak in itself.

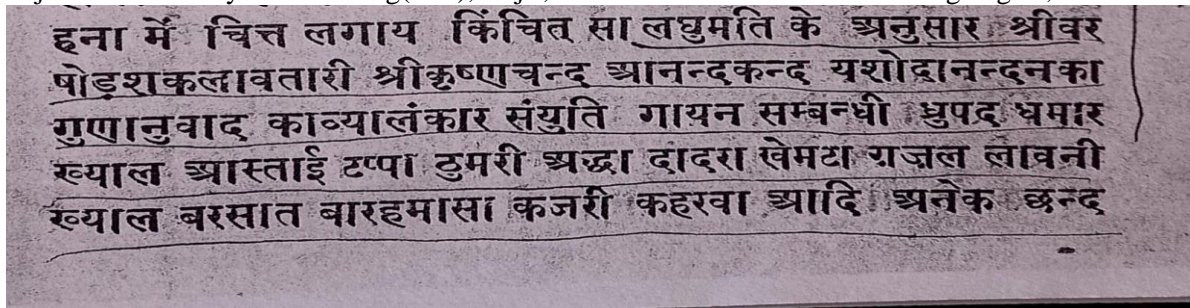
Before proceeding to analysis of Lalanpiya compositions, it is necessary to understand the commonly used musical forms in Kathak.

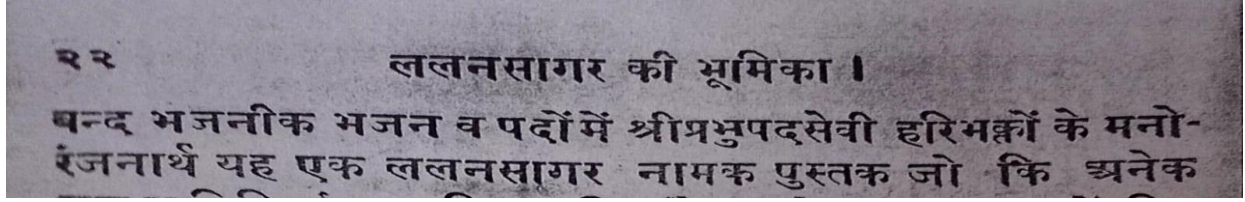
The repertoire of Kathak includes Nrutya, Nrutya and Natya (Azad 19).The pure dance Nrutya includes That(poses),Amad, Tode, Paran, Tarana, Sargam etc. The Nrutya includes Vandana, prayers, devotional songs which includes Roopvarnan, Stuti, the great deeds of dieties for mankind the stories, the dasya bhav etc. in the form of Pada, Bhajan Dohe, Thumari, Kajari, Hori, Dadra, Gazals etc. the natya ang includes stories in Gathbhav and it some times uses the poetry to take the story ahead.

Now the classification of his compositions in the light of above is necessary.

It is established that the name of Pt. Lalan Piyaji is at the highest place among the talented creators of Thumri of Laya-Bol-Baant. He was not only a writer, but also a musician, singer, a storyteller and rhythm king. He revisited the definition of Music and included Batana in it. He states, "It should be known that singing, playing, dancing and narrating together is called music."

He has said in the role of his Lalan Sagar that in this book, Dhruvpad, Dhamar, Astai, Tappa, Thumri, Adha, Dadra, Kajri, Barhamasa, Khemra, Ghazal, Lavani, Kaharwa, Hori etc. have been penned down and directions for singing is given. It is known from the mere names of other books like Laln Phag, Laln Kajari etc. that they include Phag(hori), Kajri, Radhakrishna and Ram-Sita's Yugmageet, Ritu Geet etc.

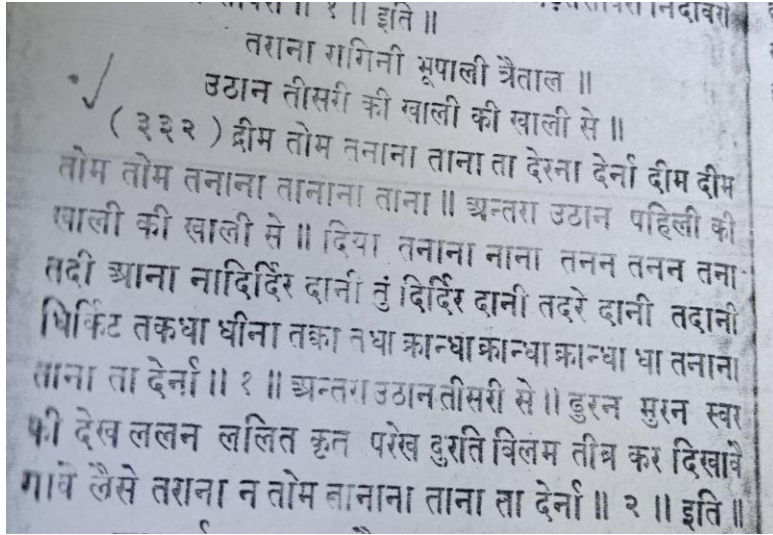




Smt. Pushpalata Rastogi and Dr. Vidya prakash Dikshit ji in their interviews explained that varied expressions are displayed in his creations. Shringar, devotion, vatsalya, compassion, etc. are cherished in his creations. Very picturesque and describing many incidents, his poetry is an excellent means of expression for the dancers.

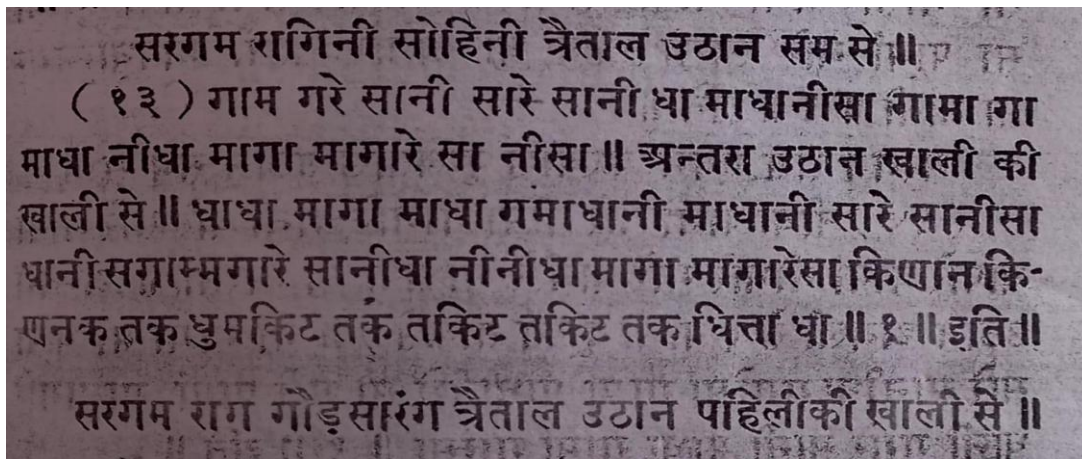
2.1 Musical forms handled by Pandit Lalanpiya which are similar and used in Kathak.

2.1.1 Tarana



Tarana is very important part of Kathak performance specially in Taal Paksh and Lalan piyaji have composed many such Taranas in Teental.

2.1.2 Saragam

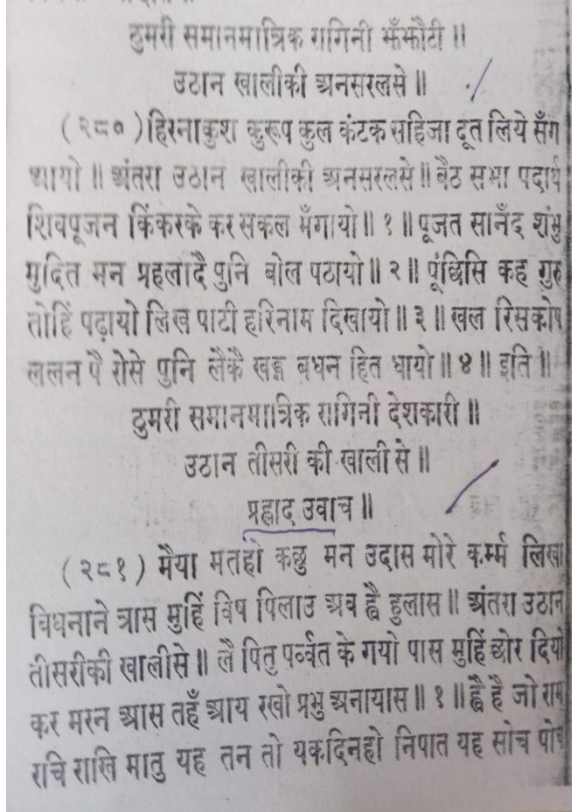


The sargam is very special form of music in which the Kathak dancers can include many themes or subjects e.g. in above Sargam the evolution of Earth from fish to human beings was shown in the prayog-



Lalan Lalitya. Unfortunately, there are very few sargams readily available and this dearth could be reduced by working on the Sargams written by Lalan piyaji.

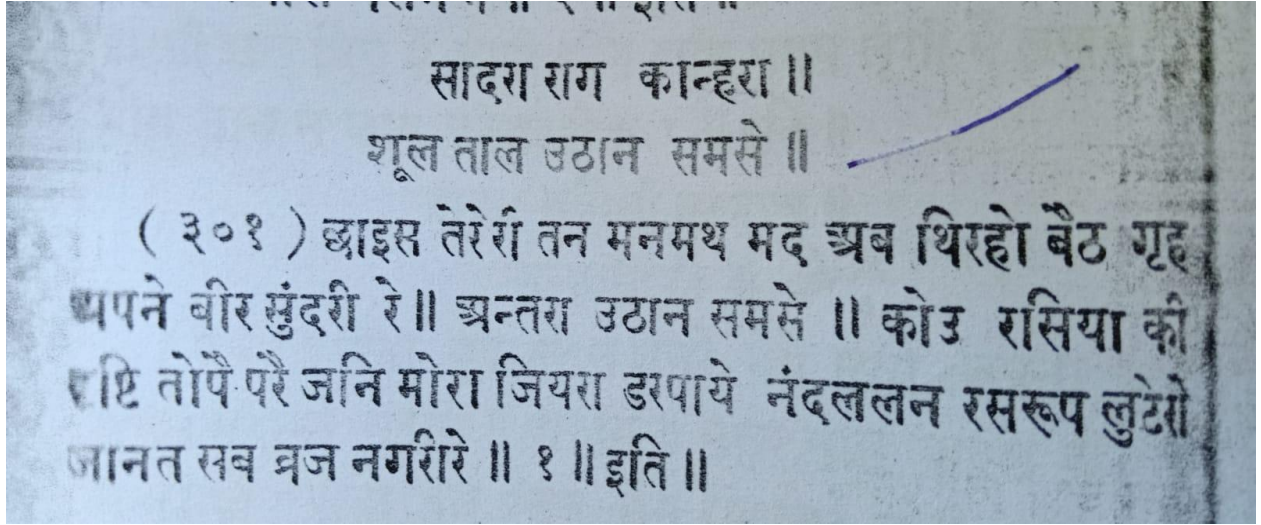
2.1.3 Thumari on unconventional subject



Hiranyakashyap with his Servant enters the court and ask to bring the material for Shiva puja. After worshipping Lord Shiva, he calls his son and asks about the teachings of his Guru or teacher. When Prahlad writes the name of Narayan, Hiranyakashyap is very angry and proceeds to heat him. The thumari next to this narrates the dialouge between Prahlad and his mother where he narrats as to how his father tried to punish him and he still survives as god saved him. He further asks his mother not to criticise father and asks her to give the poison as proposed by his father.

The Kathaks story telling could be well threaded in this with 2 thumaris which are on very unconventional subject including and followed by Gatbhava of Narsinha awatar.

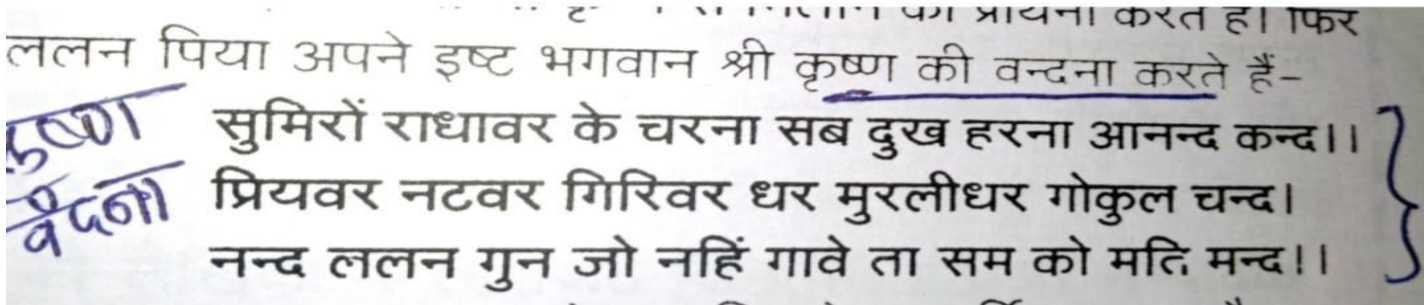
I performed this live on 22 Oct 2022 at Dwarakadhish temple near Roha.



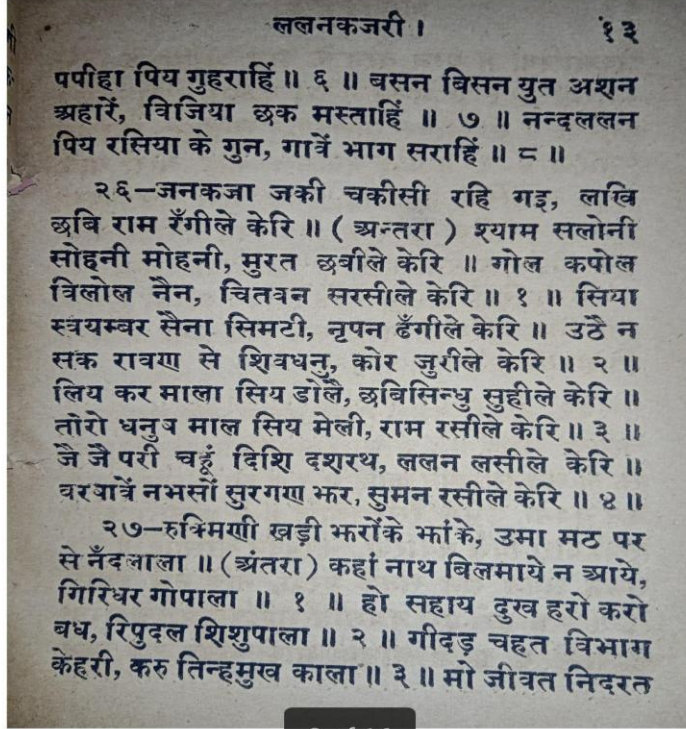
This Thumari-sadara is in Shul tal which is not commonly used Tal for it as well the subject is different wherein the friend is worried. So this composition is challenging for kathak dancers from the point of view of its unconventional Tal and subject.

Friend asks Radha that please do not go out as you are looking very beautiful and your mind is thinking about love only. I am really worried that some romeo of vrindavan specially the naughty Krishna may steal your mind. So better be at home.

2.1.5 Krishna Vandana



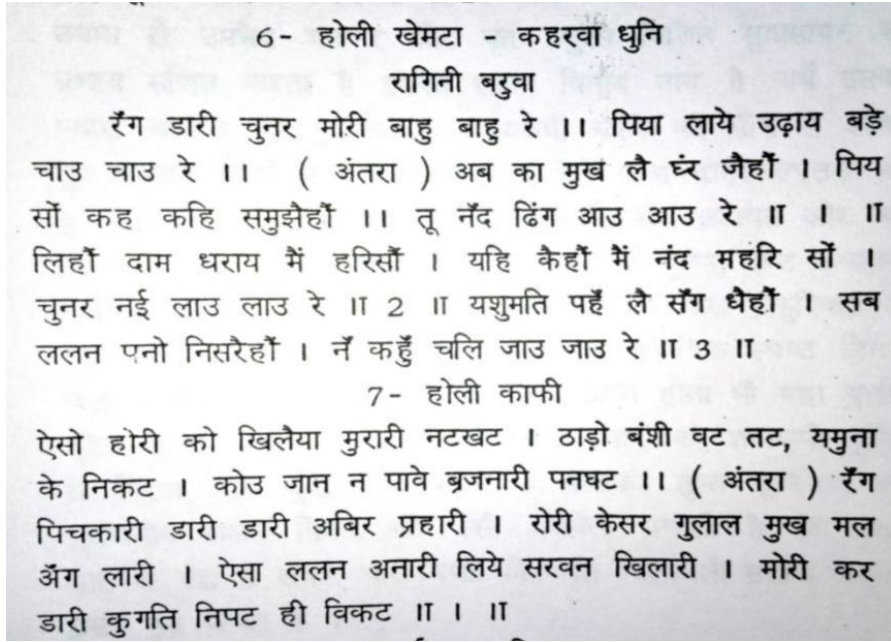
The krishna vandana says that he who remembers and worships Radha var i.e. krishna will be relieved from all sorrow and those who do not praise HIM are not worthy. He used many names for Krishna which gives ample scope to dancer to depict lord krishna. In Lalan lalitya program performance was done.



3 of 16

रुक्मिणी खडी झरोके,

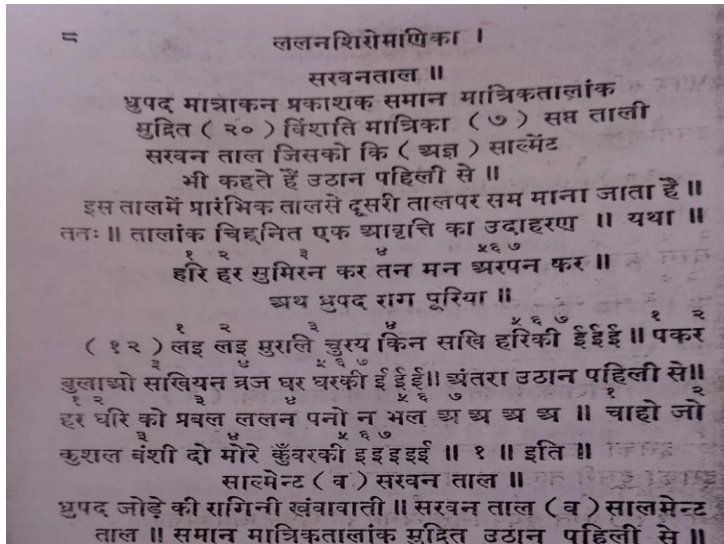
Rukmini is not ready to marry Shishupal. She is waiting for Krishna and says that inspite of listening to the very bad words used by Shishupal the Vulture, am alive as I want you to come and punish him for his deeds. Please come fast. Such subject is not handled in normal kathak performance as no such compositions are available to the dancers. This composition gives immense potential to show nayikabhed, nayak bhed and virah as well her anger, shringar etc to have Rasa Pradhan performance.

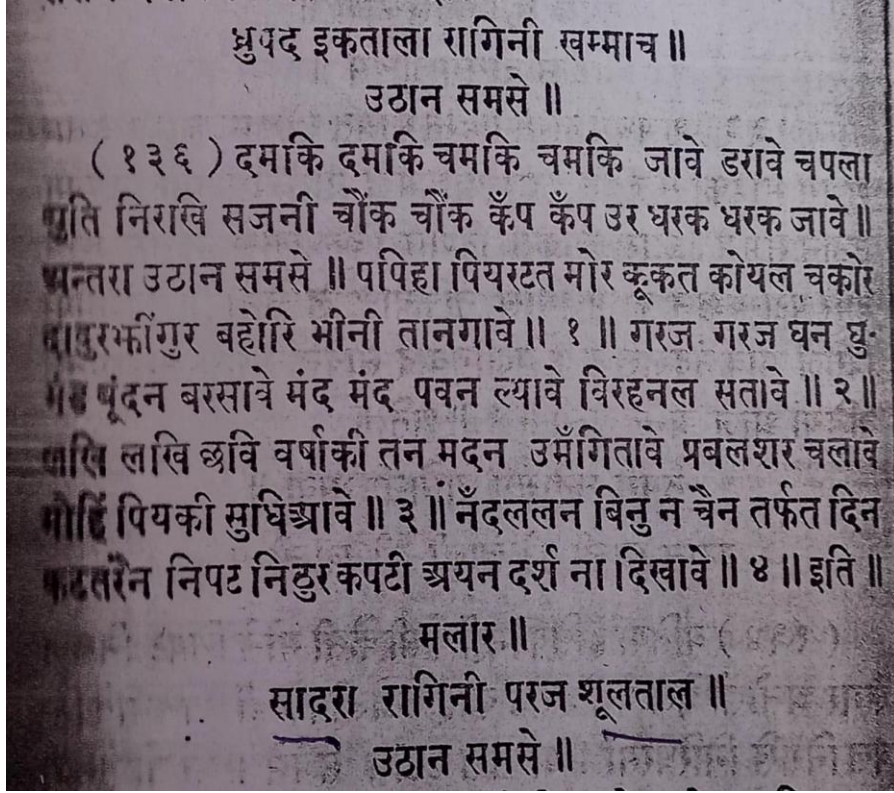


होरी रागिनी बरुवा
रंग डारी चुनर मोरी बाहु बाहु रे ॥

My beloved bought this chuni and you colored it .Now how can I face people at home? How can I convince my husband,? Come with me to Nanda, I would ask her(your mother Nanda rani) to make payment for the chunari or bring me a new one. I will take your act to Yashoda ji. All your naughty act will be punished. you don't go anywhere. This hori has a different perspective than the normal Hori presentation where Gopi ask Krishna not to colour her and finally they play with colors. Hori is very important part of kathak repertoire but such expression of asking Nanda rani to compensate the loss etc. is very different from normal abhinaya done on Hori.

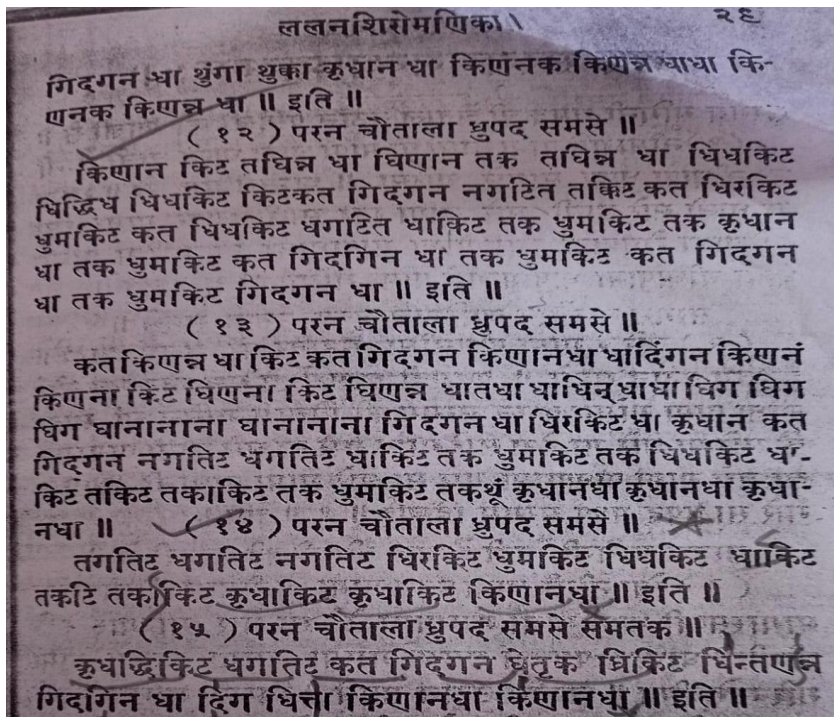
2.1.8 Drupad in Uncommon Tal Sarvan





Dhrupad is forgotten part of Kathak performance but Padmashri Dr. Puru Dadheech have worked extensively for its revival and Lalanpiya Dhruvads are very important as they deal in shrungar or virah as well than the bhakti rasas which is normal notion. It breaks the barriers so as to include nayika bhed in it.

2.1.9 Paran in Chautal



Paran is very important part of Taal paksh of Kathak performance as it shows the training and command over Taal and laya. Pandit ji has written many parans specially in chautal which is basically a Pakhawaj Taal.

3. Conclusion

The analysis shows that Pandit Lalan piya ji have handled all the musical forms used in Kathak. The famous young dancers of Kathak Shri Vishal Krishna and shri Rudra Shankar Mishra in the interview mentioned that the compositions of Lalan Piya would give new perspective to the Kathak Abhinay paksha and both have stated that they would experiment with the unconventional Tals and subjects as well.

Musicologist Dr. Chaitanya Kunte ji stated that he has heard few thumaris sung specially by Pandit Ulhas Kashalkar but never came across any kathak performance on the same. In his interview he further stated that he would volunteer himself for music and training singers of the various musical forms written by Lalanpiya. Dr. Vidya pakash Dikshit has already started the training session with Shri Shreerang Tembe, singer who sung the compositions in the Program of Lalan Lalitya.

4. Lalan Lalitya

For 90 years, this is FIRST ever known performance of this wide range on the compositions of Pandit Lalan piya. All the above compositions were part of the program.

The program unfolded in front of audience on 22 Oct, Dhanateras at Dwarakadhish Mandir, Apate Fata, Roha.







work cited

- Azad, T. Kathak Darpan, Nateshwar Kala Mandir, 3rd edition, 2020
- Bajpai, B. Thumriya of Lalan Piya, Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1977
- Dadhich, P. Kathak Nritya Shiksha Part II, Bindu Publications, Fifth Edition, 2013
- Dadhich, P. Nrityasutram, Bindu Publications, 1990
- Dixit, V. 'Lalanpiya and Taal', Kala Kunj Bharati Special Issue, 150th Birth Anniversary of panchal Gandharva Pt. Lalan Piya, September 2006 and Interview on 17th February 2022
- Gupta, P. 'Lok Rasa se Abhishikta kruti - Lalan Phag', Kala Kunj Bharati special issue, 150th birth anniversary of panchal Gandharva Pt. Lalan Piya, September 2006
- Gupta, S. Thumri Samtat Lalanpiya and His Compositions - A Musical Study, Dissertation at Bhatkhande Sangeet Sansthan University, 2009
- Krishna, V. Interview on 10th January 2023
- Kunte, C. Interview on 29th December 2022
- Lalan Piya, Lalan sagar,
- Mishra K. 'Thumri tradition, Lalanpiya and Lalansagar', Kala Kunj Bharati Special Issue, 150th Birth Anniversary of panchal Gandharva Pt. Lalan Piya, September 2006
- Mishra K. Panchal Gandharva Thumri Samrat Lalanpiya,, Sanskar Bharati, 1994
- Mishra, R. Interview on 10th January 2023
- Modak, S. Thumri, Vijay Prakashan, 2009
- Mudgal, S. 'Celebrating Lalan piya', dnaindia.com, 28 June 2015, accessed on 5/4/2021 at 3.30 pm.
- Rastogi, P. Interview on 16th February 2022
- Shukla, S. Origin, Development and Styles of Thumri, Directorate of Hindi Medium Implementation, Delhi, 1991
- Singh, Jaidev. 'On behalf of the Academy' Arpan Patri Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi, 7 April 1977
- Singh, Sushma. 'Lalanpiya ka Sringer Bhaktimay hai', Kala Kunj Bharati Special Issue, 150th Birth Anniversary of Panchal Gandharva Pt. Lalanpiya, September 2006
- youthindiatoday.com, 5/11/2020 Compiler, Vidyaprakash Dixit, accessed on 16/7/2021 at 8.30pm