

PARALLELS IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS ‘SANGRAHA’ SLOKA OF NĀTYAŚĀSTRA AND ‘VILAKKURUPPU’ OF CILAPPATIKARAM

Dr. LAKSHMI RAMASWAMY

Guest Faculty, Department of Indian Music, University of Madras, Chennai, India

Ph.D. Guide, Vels University, Chennai, India

Natya is a platform/medium that brings together a colorful fusion of many other arts, specially meant for visual arts and literature. The 6th chapter of Natyasastra enumerates 11 ingredients that are to be brought together (*sangraha*) for Natya. Cilappatikāram, which is an epic literature in Tamil, lists 14 ingredients that form part of dance/natya.

What are those ingredients? Are they same or different? How much are they applicable to today’s Natya? This article tries to bring the parallel traditions of Tamil and Sanskrit together to understand these essentials of Natya.

Ingredients

NS: Bharata calls them, ‘digest’. Natya is a digest of 11 such matters.

Rasā bhāvāh abhinayā dharmī vrtti pravrttya:

Siddhi swara ātōdyam gānam ranganca samgraha:

From the above verse, the ingredients mentioned are: *Rasā* (rasā), *bhāvā* (emotion), *abhinayā* (histrionic expression), *dharmī* (school of acting), *vrtti* (mode of expression), *pravrtti* (regional variation), *siddhi* (success of production), *swara* (musical note), *ātōdyam* (musical instrument), *gānam* (song), and *rangam* (theatre space).

Bharata’s answer also continues to indicate what is memorial verse and etymology:

Alpābhidhanēnārthō ya: samasenōcyatē bhudhai:

sūtrata: sā tu vignēyā kārikā arthapratharshinī

That is, ‘When a rule is explained briefly in a *sūtra* with a minimum number of words, it is called the memorial verse which shows the meaning of the rule clearly’. Later he also says, ‘etymology is the definitive meaning which arises in connection with various nouns, has rules of grammatical interpretation and includes significance of root involved. Along with the primary 11 ingredients, adding metre and etymology of words, a total of 13 ingredients is arrived at.

Cil: While describing Madhavi’s arangētram in Cilappatikāram Arangētruk kātai, Ilanko Atikal says,

*iruvakaik kūttin ilakkaṇam aṛintu
palavakai kūttum vilakkiniṟ puṇarttu..*

Accordingly, Madhavi had learned appropriate grammar for performing her *natyam*. She had learned the grammar of both the types of *kūttu*-s and brought many elements together as per ‘*vilakku*’

Ilanko Atikal just makes a mention of the word ‘*vilakku*’, while the commentators to Cilappatikāram, Arumpata-uraiyāsiriyaṅ and Atiyārkkunallār enumerate the ‘*vilakkuruppu*-s’

They are: *Poruḷ* (subject), *yōni* (nucleus), *virutti* (mode of expression), *canti* (segments/stages), *cuvai* (emotion), *cāti* (types of plays-rupaka), *kuṟippu* (cause of *cuvai*), *cattuvam*

(realistic manifestation), *avinayam* (feeling/expression), *col* (statements), *col vakai* (measurements of verses), *vaṅṅam* (metre/rhythm), *vari* (nayika variations), *cētam* (appropriateness).

Common ingredients

Directly Common

1. **Rasā & cuvai:** While Bharata enumerates eight, Aṭiyārkkunallār gives nine. Of them: *vīra*, *bhaya*, *bībatsa*, *adbhuta*, *hāsya*, *srngāra* and *roudra* are similar. The parallel of *Karuna* is *avala*. While *karuna* is felt by the person who feels compassionate towards another, *avala* on the other hand, is felt by the person who requires compassion. The ninth one is ‘*nativunilai*’ or staying equipoised.

Similar in Name, Varied in Content

1. **Vrtti & virutti:** Bharata gives four *vrtti*-s. *Bhārati*, *ārabhaṭi*, *sātvatī* and *kaiśiki*. *Vrtti* is mode of expression and the four modes are roughly known as verbal, action, emotional and graceful oriented. Aṭiyārkkunallār further expands on this in connection with the four *purusharthās*: ethics (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), pleasure (*kama*) and liberation (*moksha*). Accordingly, *sātvatī* has ethics as its purpose and the hero in the plot, is a divine person; *ārabhaṭi* has wealth as its purpose and a valorous person as the hero; *kaiśiki* has pleasure as its purpose and has a romantic hero and *bhārati* has a *kūttan* (performer) as hero who speaks and performs. It may be noted that the fourth *purushārtha* is not directly told.

2. **Abhinaya and Avinaya:** Both these terms seem similar. The explanations to these terms differ. *Abhinaya* is ‘that which leads to communication’ or art of communication. According to NS, it is of four types: *āṅgika*, *vācika*, *āhārya* and *sātvika*. *Avinayam* is *Bhāvakam*, says Aṭiyārkkunallār. He mentions that, it is of twenty-four types. Eg., One who has headache, one who is happy, one who consumed poison etc. In expansion of these terms, the body and face variations are given. So, *āṅgika* and *satvika* connections are given, while it seems not connected with *vacika* or *aharya*.

Conceptually common

1. **Bhāva & cattuva and kuṛippu:** The process of communication has minor variations between the two traditions. *Bhāva* which is present in a performer becomes the base for *abhinaya*. In other words, *bhāva* which is present in a person is unperceivable by the onlooker. The performer by his capacity converts such *bhāva* into *abhinaya*, which is perceivable to any onlooker. This internal factor is further divided into two in the Tamil tradition. They are *kuṛippu* and *cattuvam*. *Kuṛippu* is the impression that a person has in him due to his experience right from birth. *Cattuvam* is his inbuilt *guna* which comes by birth. With the inbuilt *guna* and with impressions that are created from birth, a performer for the sake of performance converts them into *abhinaya*. Therefore, in this context of inner impression converted to perceivable expression, *bhāva* is parallel to *cattuva* and *kuṛippu*.

Cattuvam is also known by another name, *viṅṅal*. It is of 10 types. They are: *meimayir cilirttal* (horripilation), *kaṅṅīrvārtal* (tears), *naṭukkam* (tremble), *viyarttal* (sweat), *tēṅṅam* (gather confidence), *kaḷittal* (excitement), *vizittal* (stare), *vetumpal* (sulk), *cākkāṭu* (death) and *kuraṅṅcītaivu* (voice change). These are parallel to the *satvika bhava*-s, which are eight according to NS. *Satvika bhavas* are: *sthambha* (still), *svēta* (sweat), *rōmāncā* (horripilation), *svāra bhāṅga* (change of voice), *vaivarnya* (change of color), *asru* (tears) and *pralaya* (faint).

2. **Bhāva & yōni:** *Bhāva* is further divided as *sātvika bhāva*, *sthāyi bhāva* and *sancarī bhava*. These are related with the subject matter in the script/poem to be performed and the manner in which

it is made to expand or progress. *Yōni* means ‘nucleus’, i.e, nucleus or the central theme of the production. Therefore, in this sense, *bhāva* is parallel to *yōni*.

3. **Col, col vakai, vaṇṇam & sutrā, kārika:** These pertain to the usage of words and metres. *Col* is of three types: *utcol* (talking to own self), *puracol* (telling others) and *ākāsa col* (voice over or external sounds). *Col vakai* is taking choice of words: classical or colloquial. *vaṇṇam* is metre. NS later brings all these in the section of *vācika abhinaya* where, Bharata gives explanation to *sutra* and *kārika*.

Found in Cilappatikaram commentary

1. **Vari:** *Vari* is connected with the *rasa, sṛngara*. This is of eight types. They are: *kaṅkūṭu vari, kāṇ vari, uḷ vari, puṛa vari, kiḷar vari, tērci vari, kātci vari* and *eṭutukkōḷ vari*. These are reactions of a maiden in love to attract her beloved. This is similar to the *aṣṭanāyikā* which are also known as *avastā nāyikā*-s. Even though the mention of the *aṣṭanāyikā* is not made in this ‘*sangraha*’, it finds mention later in NS, where Bharata deals with the types of women.

2. **Cāti:** This word generally means variation, and quite commonly understood as the four *varṇās: Brāhmaṇa, ksatriya, vaisya* and *sūdra*. [But, in this connection U Ve Swaminatha Iyer connects this word to the forms of play known as ‘*rūpaka*-s’. These forms are ten and well known by the name, *daśarūpaka*.] *Cāti* as included in this context is more likely to connect to ‘characterisation’. *Tolkāppiam* terms it as ‘*cāti iyalpu*’. This means the quality a person has due to his birth and acquires during his life situations. It can be understood as characteristic traits. Again, Bharata deals with these types in a separate section, even though not mentioned here.

3. **Canti:** This is of five types. They are: *mukam, pratimukam, karuppam, viḷaivu* and *tuyttal*. They signify the stages of growth of a tree to the stages of growth of the story, like a seed, shoot, branches, flowers and fruit.

Tuyttal is similar to *siddhi*, mentioned in the *sangraha* sloka. According to NS, *siddhi* is of two types. They are *manushi* and *daiviki*. *Tuyttal* is enjoyment or result of the whole play, and here no specific divisions like the above are found.

4. **Cētam:** this is of two types: *Ariyam* and *Tamiz*. It denotes the conventions in each tradition and language and the performer has to appropriately use it according to relevance of the story or plot undertaken and the situation in which such plot is set.

Cētam is in other words known as ‘appropriateness’. This is also the name of one of the schools of thought that came after Bharata, expanded by *Kśemēndra*.

Found in Nāṭyaśāstra

1. **Dharmi:** This is roughly translated as ‘school of acting’. They are of two types: *nāṭyadharmi* and *lōkadharmi*. These can be understood as conventional and realistic types. i.e., that which follows grammar of performance and that which is mundane as seen in day to day life.

This is close to *vēttiyal* and *potuviyal* which is spoken later in 39th verse of the same chapter in Cilappatikāram. *Tolkāppiam* calls them as ‘*vazakku*’ and lists *nāṭaka vazakku* and *ulakiyal vazakku*, besides also making a mention of ‘*pulaneri vazakku*’.

2. **Pravrtti:** *Pravrtti* means regional identity or variations. Traditions, customs, language etc vary from place to place. The land is divided into *Avanti, Magati, Panchali, Odra magati* and *dakshinathya*.

This classification overlaps and finds place, on the ‘*col vakai*’, which is one of the *vilakkuruppu*-s where the regional variations are accounted for.

3. **Svara, ātōdhya, gānam:** These are connected with the musical support to a performance. Melody, percussion and vocal contribute to the musical support.

Even though this is not added in the '*vilakkuruppu*', later Ilanko Aṭikal makes a mention of the melody, rhythm and vocal music.

4. **Rangam:** *Ranga* is the performance space. NS discusses widely on the selection, site plan, construction, performance and seating areas, green rooms etc.

Cilappatikāram also details on the whole process of the play house. Right from the selection of soil to the lighting and decoration are discussed. But, this is not included in the list of *vilakkuruppu*-s.

Ingredients and their Contribution to the Performance

The '*sangraha*' and the '*vilakkuruppu*-s' thus bring to the attention of the choreographer/director, the various concepts that need to be put together for a classical performance. It is overwhelming that so much of details have been thought of and brought together in a sense of an idea, holistic in nature.

In both the traditions, certain concepts come under their respective heads and certain others, are dealt with, in other sections. But they have not been ignored. Study of these ingredients shows the following:

1. The understanding of the nucleus is the first in a performance
2. Thereby setting up of the base on which the production is further built upon.
3. Various concepts put together for a performance
4. The performance is approached as a holistic experience
5. The aim of the performance has always been, *rasa* or *cuvai*
6. The acting skills of the performer is multi-layered
7. There is a process of creativity in adding the required ingredients
8. Almost all the ingredients have to be taken into consideration for this process
9. Apart from the skill of the director and performer even the performance space and the siddhi are contributors
10. Depth to which a director or performer has to delve: language, meaning of words, its regional variation
11. Further, simple meaning of a word or sentence alone is not sufficient, rather the understanding of script/poem should go beyond the *padārtha*
12. Importance of the right input from the music orchestration or music orchestra
13. Type and mode of abhinaya to be used or employed
14. The combination of the *bhāvas*
15. The various types of *bhāvas* and their permutation combination to explore the depth and width of the scripts
16. Each of the ingredients are complex on their own and need individual study
17. The performer's talent and skill in bringing out so much of thought into actual action as performance.
18. Interaction at various levels: script and director; director and performer; performer and performance space; the performance space and the audience, all part of the final relish
19. Cilappatikaram highlights the unperceivable *gunā* of the performer, that gets converted by the skill of the performer to perceivable expressions

20. Natyasastra highlights the total ambience of performance inclusive of the music orchestra and the performance space

Conclusion

The grammar texts and the commentators have immensely contributed not only to the number of the ingredients but also variations of each such ingredient. Both the traditions (Sanskrit and Tamil) also indicate the correct understanding of the subject matter and using only all that which are appropriate to give a holistic experience.

The study of these factors indicates the knowledge and understanding required by one who wishes to create a production. The traditions are parallel, travel in the same direction to finally bring the much spoken about rasa or cuvai.

This article is just the tip of an iceberg, where the writer has indicated the many facets that get into a creative process of a visual performance. Each of those units enumerated (13 in NS and 14 in Cil), is a huge topic by itself and can be dealt widely to know the contribution, value and depth, individually.

It is finally up to the director or the choreographer to first know, understand, discuss, revel, apply and explore them, so as to bring them in all richness and splendour possible in classical arts - in the right way in the right combination, of course to the right audience at the right time.

References

1. Natyasastra - of Bharatamuni: Pushpendra Kumar.
2. Cilappadiaram - Moolamum Uraiyum: U.Ve. Swaminatha Iyer.
3. Experience of Creating Productions.