

# **Evolution of Bharatanatyam and Performer's in 20th Century**

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN DANCE**

**By**

**D .N .Archana**

**Roll no - 16463100004**

*Research Supervisor*

**Dr. N.Muthukumaran**



**Department of Music**

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## **Introduction**

Indian classical dance tradition is a spontaneous expression of joy, harmony with nature & reflection of cultural heritage of India a Democratic country practising unity in diversity . Natyams principle function is to bring orderliness in society .The history of Natyam is entwined by the custom whose structure is accounted from the past. Indian classical dance is a solo dance performed at Temple as a service later patronized by Kings in Courts and moved to theatre as entertainment to public. Precursor of Natyam was called as Koothu, China melam, Sadir , Dasi Attam later metamorphosed as Bharatanatyam . All Indian classical dances call for high degree of perfection co ordination of hand, foot work, bodily movements and emotions flowing as facial expressions. ( Bhava -expression ) , (raga- music ), (tala – rythem ) Culmibation Bhavam , Ragam , Talam is Bharatanatyam . According to Sage Bharata’s Natya Sastra “One who performs the Natyam given by Lord Shiva through Bharata Muni and Tandu they will be “removed from all sins and reach Shiva loka thus attain Moksha .

## **Selection of Topic**

*“Evolution of Bharatanatyam and Performer’s in 20th Century”* topic selected in particular to understand how the divine Natyam descended to mankind , performed for Lord as a ristuletic salutation part of - shoda chora upachara at Temples , Dance passionately taught by Natyacharya lerant and performed effectively by dancers subsequently honed . Natyam is a powerful means of communication of human emotions thus a icon of our countries cultural heritage.

### **Eirlier work**

*New creation is based on the past as an inspiration.* There are many research scholars who have done study indept on History of Dance , Nritta Karanas , Asta Vidha nayikas , Kuravanji Natakam , Citrilakiyangalil Talangal , Natyasatra to name a few . Taking all as a motivation my study emphasize on Natyam origination , Natyam seen as relifs - dancing poses at temples and caves , Tamil litrature Sangam poetry dealing with the human emotions corresponding to Nyaika Nayaka bhavam , singnificance of Music which is the soul of dance dancer breaths through music in every cuve , turns , steps she performs ie Vageyakaras contribution of songs to suit the Natyam , Traditional Nattuvanars who have structured the Bharatanatyam and taught creating aspiring pathfinding dancer who with great dedication , practice and performance has taken Bharatanatyam to national and international reverence .

### **Objective of the Thesis**

The purpose of the study is to Re search the historical treasure of Natyam. A professional of any field needs to know the History, chorological developments of the subject he / she is involved. .Being a practioner of Bharatanatyam for 3 decades trained under tradional Natyacharya's I was inspired to compile the roots of the art form Bharatanatyam , its various factors contributed to its progress and its influence on present generation.

### **Limitations**

The collection of data has been conducted from the Bronze age -Anciant Indus civilization to 20<sup>th</sup> Century. How Natyam has evolved from Temple to theatre , how literature /Sculpture

/ Paintings / murals at temples and caves , Vageyakaras , Nattuvanars , legendary dancers have Contributed to growth of Bharatanatyam till 20<sup>th</sup> Century .

### **Research Problems faced**

1 Unable to get documantry video on how a devadasi danced or showed hand gestures for ritulestic item eg Kouthuvam chanted as hymns by priest before the Kautuka bimbam (utsava moorthy) of temple to ward of the evil .

2 No video footage available on oral teaching tradition by hereditary nattuvanars while choreographing a Tanjore Quartette Varnam or item to a disciple. Nattuvanars don't get up perform for teaching their disciples rather only showed actions. This is understood from interviews with their exsisting senior disciples.

### **Hypothesis**

Art form Bharatanatyam is globally spreading, is the quality intesifing and gratifying ?

Has advancement disturbed structured traditional boundaries of art form?

### **Research Methodology**

Multi dimetional research has been conducted .Historical research (collection of facts from books , commenteries on Sanskrit treatise , newsletters , journal ) , Descriptive research ie field research on oral teaching tradition , Qualitative reaserch as performance can be only felt Rasa ( Flavour ) with nessesary sensation , perception and attention by the observative research method .

### **Sources of data**

- 1 Codified text (Natya sastra & Abhinaya Dharpanam) commenteries.
- 2 Compositions by Vagyakaras of 12th Century to 20th Century.
- 3 Knowledge passed by Oral tradition, teaching method.
- 4 Details and pictures of figure found (Indus Valley Civilization's excavation from Mohenjodaro and Harappa sites) & Sulptures dancing god and goddesses in various south Hindu temples.
- 5 Frescoes in caves Bagh , Ajantha ( bhuddist life ) , Ellora ( bhrannical caves ), Sittanavasal
- 6 Mural painting in Hindu temples. (Tadavam of Shiva , Rasa leela of Krishna and Goddesses Kali dancing with Trident).

### **Structure of the Thesis**

Unit 1	Anciant arts of Indus Valley civilization
Unit 2	Orign of Natyam
Unit 3	Heritage of Natyam in Tamil Litrature
Unit 4	Sculpture / Mural paintings in temples & caves / literature written under various Dynasty led to Opulence of Natyam
Unit 5	Natyam a temple art tradition
Unit 6	Vakgyakaras composition aptly accompanied for Natyam urupidi performed in present day concerts
Unit 7	Practioners of Bharatanatyam : Natyacharya , Pathfinder and Accomplished performers
Unit 8	Bharatanatyam at present is Globally developing : Merits and Demerits

	<p>Bibliopgraphy</p> <p>List of name of the Litratutre, books, journals, newsletters refered for the research work.</p>
	<p>Anexsure /Appendix</p> <p>Research related photographs, audio &amp; video footage on discussion and ineterviews of experts .</p>

- **Unit 1 Anciant arts of Indus Valley Civilization**

In site of Mohenjo daro a rare bronze figure of dancing girl was found in nude bodily forms. . It has led to assumption that it represents a dancer and Tera cotta figures ie mother godess’s effigies was discovered. .In Harappa culture there are many representations of bulls. Later in Hindu mythology bull Nandi understood vehicle of lord Shiva (Rishabavahanam).

- **Unit 2 Orign of Natyam**

Lord Brahma compiled the Panchamaveda, *Natya Veda* taking essence from other 4 vedas thus asked sage Bharata to popularize Natyaveda . Bharata wrote the Natyasastra comprehensive work on techniques, & science on dance, drama and music consisting of 36 chapters. Codified treatise on Bharatanatyam Abhinayadarpanam - Mirror of Gesture’s created by Lord Nandikeshwara .

- **Unit 3 Heritage of Natyam in Tamil Litrature**

Koothu and Natyam is discussed in Tamil literature Tollkapiam , Pathupaatu & Ettuthogai , Kootanool , Panchamarabu and Silapadikaram . In Tollkapaim

Poruladigaram land is classified into Aintinai (Kurinji, Paalai, Mullai, Marutham, Neithal) 5 emotions attached to each Tinai and poems of Pathupaatu and Ethutogai is based on Aham (love life) Puram (Public/war life). Kalavu (pre marital love) and karpu (married life) relationship between Talaivan and Talaivi. Kootanool mentions Totruvai creation of Nayam, Koothu classification, and dance limbs. Nrittamarabu in Panchamarabu gives reference aspects of Tandavas, Hasthas, Chari, Stambhas, various types of Abhinaya. In Silapadikaram the Arangetra Kadai explains debut performance of Madhavi at Indra Vizhai (Marutham Tinai) details how a Adukalam should be laid, the 11 dances performed by Madhavi, Talaikol title given to her, the training undergone by her in Natyam and the expertise Natya & Isai asiriyar, Tanumai, Yazh, Kuzal players.

- **Unit 4 Sculpture / Mural paintings in temples and caves / literature written various Dynasty led to Opulence of Natyam**

Mauryan dynasty under illustrious king Ashoka 84,000 stupas were built. Lion Capital of Ashoka is national emblem of India, Yaksha local divinities survived Mural painting is at Bagh, frescoes at cave Ajantha, Bhrammical Ellora cave depicts many relief of God and Goddesses of Hindu Mythology. Chalukyan dynasty exist noteworthy dancing Shiva in Badami caves, Ravanaphadi rock cut temple image of Ardhanareehwara, Ramalingeshwara having a wooden chariot with stone wheels and Shiva Nataraja, Durga Temple at Aihole. Pallavas carved out the temple in solid block of Granite forming rock cut architecture and later structured. The pallavas outstanding works are seen in Mahapalipuram (Shore temple, Arjuna Penance, Pancha Rathas), Kailasanathar Temple and Vaikunta Perumal Temple at

Kanchipuram , Talagirishwar temple at Panamalai . The prime temples of Imperial Cholas are Chidambaram Nataraja temple cosmic dancer in Ananda Tandavam posture Cit Sabha seat of enlightenment and Bragadeeshwar temple at Tanjore lord Shiva as mystic Linga . In both the temples Nritta Karanas are sculptured. King Raja Raja I Patronised 400 Thalicheri – pendugal involved in dancing, singing and temple service. The inscription in temple gives details about , dance guru, dancers details such as row, street and house number they lived, Kothu kanni and natuva kanni. Meenakshi amman and Nelaiappar temple have ample dancing sculptures at temple Mandapam under Pandyan dynasty .Sittanavasal abode of great souls beautiful wall paintings with vegetable colours has left a permanent cultural impact on tamil society. Vijayanagara empire – in Hampi Virupakshi temple themes from Ramayana and Mahabharata covered the ceilings. Wooden chariot from Virupakshi temple is pulled in a very colourful procession accompanied by the women dancers, Lepakshi and Perur temple in Coimbatore illustrate Vijayamagara style. Skilful paintings are seen in Kerala temples, Cultural exuberance of dancing figure reliefs curved in soap stone in Hoysala construction at Karnataka . Tanjore Nayak and Marathas period was a zenith for art , architecture and literature .

- **Unit 5 Natyam - Temple art tradition**

Deva - God , Dasi -Servant . Devadasi women lived their life as dancer and worshiped the God paying salutations through their artistry. Girl was dedicated to temple in young age *Bothukatudal*. She is a Nithya sumangali . At the temple when

Brahmin priests performed poojai the devadasi used hand gestures to portray the hymns.

Later dance was patronized by the Royal courts as Raja nartakis .

### **Unit 6 Vakgyakaras composition aptly accompanied for Natyam urupidi performed in present day concerts**

Vageyakaras lived from 12<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century have given many composition to their credit aptly suitable for Natyam . These urupidies gives a scope for dancer to perform rythem , abhinyam ( portraying Nava Rasa , Bakthi , Sringra Bakthi attributed to various deities , Erotic love songs executed with grace based on Loka dharmi ), Interpretative hands and sanchari ( story telling ) . The urupidies include Kouthuvam , Alarippu , Jathiswaram, Sabdham , Pada Varnam , Swarajathi , Padam , Keeratanai , Javalli, Devarnama , Thillana in different languages Tamil , Sanskrit , Kanada, Telugu , Hindi & Marati which are performed in todays concert .

### **Unit 7 Practioners of Bharatanatyam : Natyacharya & Performers**

The Anti Nautch movement banned the minor girls dedication to temple & temple dancing . Reputation for dance was bad, how to popularize this art? E . Krishna Iyer & Rukmani Devi Arundale laid the roots and resuscitated the art of Bharatanatyam. . 6<sup>th</sup> Annual conference of The Music Acedemy, Chennai is were Sadir was officially proclaimed as Bharatanatyam . Natyacharyas moved from Tanjore to Chennai to teach Bharatanatyam. Sri Meenakshisundaram Pillai , Sri Chokkalingam Pillai and Sri Subbaraya Pillai were the doyens of Pandanallur Style . The decendent of Tanjore quartette Chinnaya 6<sup>th</sup> generation was Sri Kandappa Nattuvanar followed by his son

Sri K. Ganesan both of them taught Smt Balasaraswathi the eminent dancer , Sri Mangudi Dorairaja Iyer founder of Melatur style , Sri Vazhuvoor Ramaih Pillai made Natyam polished and graceful trained many popular dancers of that time ,Sri K.P Kittappa Pillai was instrumental for reviving the Navasandi kouthuvam , Sri Muthuswamy Pillai very famous dance teacher in film industry and teaching foreign students created one hand adavus and choreography which had many jumps leaps in different direction , Sri K.N.Dhandayudapanni pillai following female nattuvanars also were emerging and excelling in par with man . All the nattuvanars were capable of singing had profound musical knowledge. The nattuvanars / Natyacharya were heroes in Natyam industry created distinctive dancing stars Smt Rukmani Devi Arundale , Smt Balasaraswathi , Smt Mrinalini Sarabhai , Kalanidhi Narayanan , Smt Vijayanthimala bali , Smt Kamala galaxy of successful dancers from various Bani . They are the roots who have holded the foundation of art very strong thus grown out with many branches ( accomplished dancers 20<sup>th</sup> century ) showering the yield of Bhartanatyam its refined aesthetic form viewed by all the rasikas of art .

- **Unit 8 Bharatanatyam at present is Globally developing : Merits and Demerits**

Due to digitalization Bharatanatyam is learnt across globe. Is quality escalating and gratifying? Has growth disturbed structured traditional boundaries of art form?

Tradition is like a Catalyst through which we have to travel by adding to the richness and greatness of this divine art form. Growth should never be the cause for

alarming the determined foundation laid by pioneers. We are left with storage of rich knowledge given by our senior which is to be pursued and passed to the next generation without diluting it. Right Teacher /Guru / mentor will teach the traditional roots with high values. Tradition is not a myth it is a path .Changes are always constant should be adopted without disturbing the authenticity of the laid boundaries. Consistent Passion, Practise and Performance are fundamental decree. Everytime you dive into Divine Ocean of art you can find a new pearl. . Natyam is life time process.

### **Bibliography**

List of name of the Literature, books, journals, newsletters, bring referred for the research work.

### **Anexsure /Appendix**

Research related photographs, audio & video footage on discussion and interviews with experts of the field.