

RASA – RAGA – NRITHYA IN BHARATHANATYAM

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Submitted: 19.12.2019 **Revised:** 03.01.2020 **Accepted:** 16.01.2020

ABSTRACT:

Classical dance and music reflect the rich and varied heritage of our tradition and culture. Bharathanatyam's most powerful feature is the ability to express the meaning and emotion and also to transmit the same experience to the audience. The thematic content of the music and dance are the same. This is natural, as both art forms are South Indian in origin. Padam is one of the dominant components employed both in music and dance. Music composed for the dance padams typically makes use of rhythmic patterns (Talas) and melodies (Ragas) that suit the theme of the dance. The synergy between the two is important in transmitting the experience of the theme to the rasika. All the treatises unanimously declare that creating "*Rasanubhuti*" in the rasika is the ultimate goal of the performance. An artist's maturity, experience and superiority is measured by the portrayal of Sattvikabhinaya performed on padams. This topic of "*Raga Nrithyam*" explores the perfect blending of the two great art forms via padams.

key words: ragam, padam, nrithyam, rasa, abhinaya, rakthi

INTRODUCTION:

Bharathanatyam is the oldest performing art form consisting of purposefully selected sequences of human movements which have an aesthetic and symbolic value. Aesthetics deals with the nature of beauty, art and taste and with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called as the judgements of sentiment and taste. More broadly, scholars in the field define aesthetics as "critical reflection on art, culture and nature". Bharathanatyam has many dimensions. They include body movements, facial expressions, hand gestures, foot work, costumes, music repertoire and themes of performances. The two kinds of movement in bharatham are abstract and expressive. The abstract movements are done to show rhythm, to provide decoration and create beauty. There is no purpose but the movement is done for its own sake. Expressive movements convey meaning and show emotion through a vocabulary of hand gestures, postures, facial expressions. Their purpose is to portray a theme or feeling, and to transmit an experience of the art to the audience. Music and dance are inseparable artistic twins. The musical compositions used in bharathanatyam are unique in nature as they are composed on certain ragas which are by nature induces pleasure. Those ragas are termed as Rakthi Ragas. This article throws light into the fact that how the raga of Music and the Nrithya of dance influence each other during a performance and how well the aesthetic value of the bharathanatyam is appreciated when there is perfect blend of these two elements.

CONCEPT OF RAKTHI RAGAS:

According to Thesaurus Music is "an art of sound in time that expresses ideas and emotions in significant forms through the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony and colour". The central notion in the system of music is that of a RAGA. The word RAGA is defined as the "*act of colouring/ dyeing (mind/mood/emotion) and refers metaphorically to any feeling or passion*". The raga scheme was subjected to several transformations and divisions before it attained some sort of stability during Venkatamahin's period. There are several categories of ragas but only a few among the plethora of ragas have been accorded the status of 'RAKTHI RAGAS'. Attempts have been made to interpret rakthi in different ways. The origin of the word rakthi is hard to trace, but the term is used commonly to denote a manner of singing that is of an appreciated quality. It carries with it a sense of intense involvement or engagement. Rakthi is derived from the root word 'ranj'—

"*ranjayati iti ragaha, ranjayati iti rakthi*" – that which is pleasing, which engages the mind joyfully may be called as rakthi. RAKTHI RAGAS are primarily those which have more scope for the raga alapana than in tanam singing.

The most familiar Tyagaraja's Pancharatna Kritis on 5 Ghana Ragas- Nattai, Gowlai, Arabhi, Varali, Sree which are known to everyone. But the great Saint Tyagaraja did not compose the kritis as a cluster under the category of Ghana Ragas. Older text records these five songs merely as Tyagaraja compositions and not as Pancharatna Kritis. Not only these ragas unsuitable for elaborate raga alapana, but they afford limited scope for tanam exposition as well. However these ragas sound extremely attractive when they occur as short and fast changing ragamalikapieces at the end of the main tanam. When considering the raga swaroopa as an important factor, ragas such as Saveri, Sahana, Natakurinji, Reetigaulai, Dhanyasi, Anandabhairavi,

Kedaragaula, Surati, Devagandhari, Yadukula Kambhodhi, Nayaki, Saurastram, Neelambari, Huseini, Begada, Mukhari were known as Rakthi Ragas. Many senior musicians suggests that Gamaka-Oriented ragas as Rakthi ragas. The other group is called as Swara-Oriented ragas eg. Dharmavathi, Charukesi.

*“Yo asau dhwanivishesha
Swaravama vibhooshitaha
Ranjako Janachittanam
Rasa raga udaahritaha”*

There is a reference to ‘dhwanivishesha’ in this sloka from Brihadesi. Scholars have suggested that dhwanivishesha may be taken to connote sruthi and that its integration with music ensures a highly enjoyable melody. Rakthi could therefore be taken to connote this very melodious quality and ragas thus oriented can be called rakthi ragas. However, with the passage of time, there has been a change in the definition of fundamental ideas like melody. Ragas like Saveri, Sahana and Natakurinji for instance, are not entirely dependant on the arohana and avarohana but gain their form and beauty from the nuances of the phrases unique to them. The creation of these phrases in the artist exposition of these ragas is guided by dhwanivishesha or special sound. Such techniques in handling rakthi ragas can only be learnt from a guru or derived from their usage in compositions of great composers.

RAGA-NRITHYAM:

The term Raga-Nrithyam can be perceived better via the bharathanatyam item which gives greatest scope for the expressive mode or Nrithyam i.e. Padam. Padam may be described as a musical monologue. To understand the meaning of Padam it is very essential to comprehend relationship between the heroine (Nayaki) and the hero (Nayaka). In padam, human soul is represented by female lover (jeevatma) longing for union with supreme being (paramatma). This type of relationship is called as Sringara – Bhakthi (devotion through love is the highest, dignified kind). Padams give the widest scope for abhinaya, expression of sentiments, emotions, feelings, moods including all shades possible. Padams include Pallavi, anupallavi, and charanam in contrast to the yester years padams wherein there was only Pallavi followed by two or three charanmas. For dance not all charanams are selected, just one or two most beautiful lines are enough. Padams are set to Rakthi ragas. This is where the concept of RAGA-NRITHYAM. The expressions are performed for the elaborate raga alapana and the sangatis in between the lines of the padam. Aesthetic creativity in the art that goes by the name ‘Manodharma’ (that which rises out of your consciousness subject to certain principles) or ‘improvisation’ is an endangered facet of dance these days. “There is no learning manodharma in the strictest sense of the term. But there is a lot of grasping of what a particular line of the lyric conveys and how best it could be interpreted through the means of gestural dance” says Aniruddha Knight. The doyen of dance, B. Chandrasekhar had once succulently put it, “Indian dance imbibes a highly stylised, codified language of gestures where the language of the lyric is interpreted through dance in three categories, viz. Kavyartha (meaning of the composition as a whole) followed by Vakhyartha (interpreting each line of the song) and Padhartha (word by word meaning in the lyric). The dominant mood (Sthayi Bhava) is first projected to the audience; then the complimentary and transitory moods are presented through vakyartha and padhartha. The padhartha gives ample scope for sanchari bhava (emotive expression while moving to rhythm and song) where word to word interpretation with relevance to the situation is presented by the dancer through as many gestural meanings as possible, showcasing the artiste’s skill at emotive output to the hilt. It should be clear from the beginning that manodharma is an active process wherein the artiste is able to create an illusory world through sheer expression and emotion in a structured manner. Creativity doesn’t mean the dancer takes to her own innovation beyond the realm of reason and Sastra; that would make it entirely loka dharma; it should actually be a fine balance of natya dharma and improvisation. The concept of manodharma is not learnt but is absorbed. One fine example is the padam “Netrandhi nerathile” in huseini ragam , a rakthi ragam, wherein multiple abhinayas are performed for a single line. To make the performance attractive, the dance also improves the nrithya part spontaneously and the vocalist also improves by modifying the way he/she delivers the single line. There should be a better understanding between the vocalist and the dance performer.

CONCLUSION:

The concept of raganrithyam is complete when a bharathanatyam dancer performs by imbibing the music or the raga composed for the dance song and improving the abhinaya according to the gamakas and other nuances rendered by the vocalist. This quality can be called as Musicality of the dancer. Understanding the essence of the rakthi raga and delivering the same via hand and facial gestures is important for the success of any dance repertoire. Raga rendered by the vocalist should also done without flaws and the dancer who performs for that particular raga should also understand the essence of it and deliver the performance without flaws. All the treatises unanimously declare that creating “*Rasanubhuti*” in the rasika is the ultimate goal of the performance. An artist’s maturity, experience and superiority is measured by the portrayal of Sattvikabhinaya performed to

padams. This topic of “*Raga Nrithyam*” explores the perfect blending of the two great art forms via padams. This concept of Raga-Nrithyam is understood by the following lines of Sarangadeva,

*“Geetham Vadhayam Tatha Nrithyam
Sangeetham Muchyahte”*

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