

Comparative study of choreography in Keralanadanam and Bharatanatyam

Joy R (Research Scholar), Dr Sivaloganathan
Assistant professor department of music, Annamalai University, Chidambaram.

Date of Submission: 20-11-2021

Date of Acceptance: 05-12-2021

ABSTRACT

Enormous amount of developments have happened in the field of classical dance over centuries. Newer forms and styles have developed to enhance the rich culture and heritage. Choreography plays a key role in the success of a performing art. A detailed analysis and study wherein one can compare the choreography of an ancient art form like Bharatanatyam and a recently developed art form Keralanadanam has been done. All aspects that form a part of choreography like the hand gestures, the body movements, the feet positions, the costume and make up have been studied and compared.

KEYWORDS: Tandavam, lasyam, Bhava and Rasa, Angika, Aharya, Vachika, Sathvika,

I. INTRODUCTION

Natyashastra has divided dance into three parts, namely **Nrittham**, **Natyam** and **Nrithyam**. Dance is considered as the most special form of art. It is a dynamic offering to the supreme lord and is an integral part of temple rituals. It is the rhythmic movements of hands and legs, creating beauty in space while conveying a meaning and creating happiness in the minds of the spectators.¹

We would like to compare the choreographies of two art forms who belong to different lineage and time period, namely **Keralanadanam** and **Bharatanatyam**.

D) Origin

I.1 Origin of Keralanadanam

Keralanadanam has its origin in the ancient dramatic art form known as Kathakali. It was created about five decades ago by Dr. Guru Gopinath and is a contemporized version of the elaborate Kathakali². The fact that the origin of both art forms is different, the choreographic style will clearly differ in many ways. To elaborate on this we further look at each aspect.

I.2 History of the creation of Keralanadanam

Keralanadanam is a classical form. Though it involves both natyam and nrithyam, just like Kathakali, it has more inclination towards nrithyam.

The first presentation of Keralanadanam was on 12th December 1931 in Mumbai (1). The presentation was a duet performance by Dr. Guru Gopinath and the world-renowned dancer Ragini devi. Smt Thangamani, the wife of Dr. Guru Gopinath was also a part of this troupe. Guruji named this dance form as Classical dance of Kerala when it was first presented on stage. He also called it Kathakali Nritham.²

Dr Guru Gopinath succeeded in spreading the energetic Thandavam, graceful lasyam and mesmerising bhava abhinaya of Kathakali across the globe. In the book Natana Kairali written by Guruji, there is a mention of the origin of Keralanadanam from Kathakali.

The footwork, the Kalashams (rhythmic footwork patterns), the leaps and swirls, usages of Mudras, face abhinaya, special costumes of Kathakali were chosen and incorporated into this new art form. Even the Jewelry depicted in the sculptures on the walls and pillars of ancient temples were incorporated into the costume of Keralanadanam. This kind of a dance form was never imagined by anyone. This dance form became very popular as Kathakali dance. This has been described in the Grantham Keralanadanam by Smt Kusumam Gopalakrishnan.⁷

Keralanadanam is an offshoot of Kathakali. Kathakali is the ancient traditional art form of Kerala. Kathakali is a theatrical art form whose striking feature is the elaborate costumes and make up. Keralanadanam is that art form which has kept aside the elaborate costume and make up. It has adopted a simpler costume and makeup without compromising on the traditional flavour of the region. Starting with the traditional ranga Vandana (initial salutations)²², incorporating the body exercises, various rhythms or talas, their respective recitation syllables, corresponding feet movements, different positions and Mudras as per Hastalakshana

Deepika as incorporated in Kathakali, their variations included, Teermanams, kalashams and Hands feet movements in rhythm were incorporated and a form was created such that it can be enjoyed equally by both the learned and the common man.

This form was created in 1931 by Natanakalnidhi Dr. Guru Gopinath. This dance form was initially known as Classical dance troupe Kerala. Later on it was also known as Kathakali dance. After many years, it began to be known as Keralanadanam. Initially this art form did not cross the regional boundaries. Later people outside Kerala began enjoying it and Keralanadanam was performed at prestigious platforms outside Kerala. This art form which originated from Kathakali gained acceptance across the globe.

I.3 Origin of Bharatanatyam

Bharatanatyam has its roots in the Devadasi system where in young girls were offered to the temple. They received training from great gurus and became dancers of high repute who were connected to the temple.

I.4 Dance during various periods

Pre historic period

A bronze statue of a dancing lady appeared from the remnants of the Mohenjodaro, the sculptures of dancing humans on the walls of the temples of Indian, the paintings of dancing humans on cave walls throws light on the importance of dance and its development during the pre historic period.¹⁴

II) Tandava and Lasya

These aspects are used profoundly in both Bharatanatyam and Keralanadanam. The similarities lie in the force and vigour depicted in Tandava and grace and gentleness emphasised in Lasya. The Tandava of Keralanadanam is aptly supported by the musical instrument Chenda, while Bharatanatyam relies on the percussion instrument Mridangam. Hence Tandava style is naturally enhanced in a Keralanadanam choreography as compared to Bharatanatyam. The Kalashams are the highlights of a Keralanadanam choreography. The Kalasham is an outburst of vigour and enhances the Tandava aspect of Keralanadanam.

III) Hastas

The difference is primarily in the hastas or Mudras used while choreographing in both the art forms. Bharatanatyam follows the Abhinaya Darpana by Nandikeshwara and Natyashastra by Bharata muni whereas Keralanadanam follows Hastalakshana Deepika.

As per Abhinaya Darpanam, there are 28 Asamyuta hastas (single handed gestures) and 24 Samyuta hastas (double handed gestures) which can be used to choreograph the lyrical part of the composition.

There are additional hastas for ashta dikpalas, dashavataras, the gods and the animals.¹¹

In Bharatanatyam the mudras, whenever to be held in front of the chest, are held closer to one's body while in Keralanadanam, the Mudras are held away from the body when held in front of the chest. The overall visual effect of the choreography changes with the usages of hastas. The lyrical part is expressed using mudras. The names of the Mudras, their usages and their method of execution are different in both the styles. For example, in a Bharatanatyam recital, to show a king, one has to hold one hand in Tripathaka hasta above the head while to show a king in Keralanadanam, Pathaka (different from the Pathaka in Bharathanatyam) is used in both hands, held in front of the forehead and moved to either side. Pathaka is also used to show the banks of a river while in Bharathanatyam, ardhpathaka is used to depict the bank of a river.²¹

IV) Bhava and Rasa

Bharata in his Natyashastra says "na hi RASAdrite kaschidarthah pravartate". Bharata Muni very emphatically states in the Rasadhyaya of Natyashastra that "no meaningful idea is conveyed if the "Rasa" is not evoked."

The very core of the Sanskrit Natya theory is the creation of "Rasa". Every dramatic presentation was aimed at evoking in the minds of the audience a particular kind of aesthetic experience, which is described as "Rasa". Hence Rasa plays a very important aspect of choreography.

Both in Bharatanatyam and Keralanadanam, Rasa is created with the help of Chaturvidha abhinaya. Even though the principles of chaturvidha abhinaya remain the same, the method of incorporation varies in both these art forms. Chaturvidha abhinaya includes Angika abhinaya, Vachika abhinaya, Satvika abhinaya and Aharya abhinaya.⁴

IV.1 Angika abhinaya

Angika abhinaya is that which uses the anga or the body as a whole to convey a meaning. In Bharatanatyam, though the body does need to be bent and stretched for some of the steps, it is very different from the way the body is used in Keralanadanam.

"Chuzhippu" is a specific rotary kind of body movement that is used in Keralanadanam. This has been borrowed from Kathakali and is not there in Bharatanatyam. It forms a major part in all choreographies. In Keralanadanam, the torso moves in unison with the hands thereby uplifting the energy level of the dance. The tempo may not be fast, in fact most often it is medium paced.

In a Bharatanatyam choreography, energy is uplifted by increasing the tempo or speed of the

performance. This is particularly seen in the high speed Teermanams of interesting rhythmic patterns. Since Keralanadanam has originated from Kathakali, the choreography of Keralanadanam elaborately used the upangas and pratyangas . Bharathanatyam choreography used the drishti Bhedas , Shiro bhedas and greeva bhedas . In Keralanadanam, many other viniyoga (usages) of minor parts are used like the puta(eye lids) , nasika (nose) and bhru (eyebrows).⁵

IV.2 Vachika Abhinaya

Vachika abhinaya is normally not used in traditional choreographies of both the art forms.

IV.3 Aharya Abhinaya

Aharya abhinaya is used in both the forms differently. Bharatanatyam usually uses a traditional costume which may not be specific to any character. Bharatanatyam is traditionally a solo dance form , however it has been incorporated into the dance drama form also in the recent years. In the Natya or dance drama form , occasionally character specific costume is also used. Keralanadanam also uses a beautiful common costume for solo performances but it has the scope to use costumes specific to a particular character of the dance particularly in case of ballet for example in case of lord Krishna ,the royal woman thamburati , her maids and the farmers .This gives more colour and variety to a Keralanadanam choreography.⁸

IV.4 Satvika Abhinaya

Satvika abhinaya is a representation of the psychic condition of a person. This concept is dealt in choreographies of both Keralanadanam and Bharatanatyam. The types of Sathvika abhinayas are same in both the art forms. Here the main focus is on mukhaja abhinaya which uses upangas and pratyangas. The usage of eyes plays a major role.¹⁶

V) Thala

Rhythm is inseparable from dance and this is referred to as tala in Indian classical music and dance. The tala patterns used for Bharatanatyam and Keralanadanam have similarities and differences too. To explore that , let us enlist the talas in each form. Bharatanatyam is based on the “Sapthatala” which are seven basic talas namely Dhruva , Matya, Rupaka, Jampa, Triputa , Ata and Eka. Keralanadanam also has seven basic talas which is Chempada, Chamba, Panchari, Triputa, Adantha, Muriyadanta and Eka thalam.³

The Dhruva thalam of Bharatanatyam has 14 aksharas, Ada has 12 aksharas , Matya thalam has 10 aksharas, Triputa and Jhampa have 7 , Rupaka has 6 and Eka thalam has 4 aksharas.

The Chempada Thalam of Keralanadanam music has 8 aksharas , Chamba Thalam has 10 aksharas, Panchari Thalam has 6 aksharas, Triputa has 7,

Adantha thalam has 14 aksharas , Muriyadantha has 7 and Eka thalam has 4 aksharas.⁵

Here we note stark similarities and differences too . Both the art forms use Triputa and Eka which have the same aksharas in both forms . The Chempada thalam is similar to Adi Talam since both have 8 aksharas. The Chamba thalam and Matya Thalam are similar with 10 aksharas each . The Muriyadantha thalam is similar to Triputa and Jhampa , each having 7 aksharas.¹³

Though there are similarities in the thala patterns , the nritta of Bharatanatyam and Keralanadanam are very different from each other. This is because the basic body positions used are different. In case of Keralanadanam ,to do nritta, the dancer takes a stance with the legs spread wide apart. In case of Bharatanatyam , for adavus , the basic position of the legs is half sitting(ara mandalam) where toes and knees are turned outward and the heels are placed at a distance of about 2 inches.

The striking feature of the nritta in Keralanadanam is the kalasham. The Kalasham is a rhythmic footwork exclusive to Kathakali, which has been adopted by Keralanadanam. This is the aspect which brings out the energy in the dance form. A Keralanadanam choreography is enhanced with the use of Kalashams which are interesting and beautiful.²¹

The striking feature of a Bharatanatyam nritta part , that can be considered equivalent to the kalashams of Keralanadanam are the Korvais, Teermanams and Aridhis, all of which have scope for interesting rhythmic patterns adding beauty to the choreography.

VI) Music

The music used in Bharatanatyam is Carnatic classical music while that used in Keralanadanam is Kathakali music . The instruments used in these forms are different from each other . In Bharatanatyam , the musical instruments used are the mridangam, violin , flute and Veena. In Keralanadanam, the musical instruments used are the maddalam, Edakya and Chenda.

VII) Repertoire

A traditional Bharatanatam repertoire encompasses Alarippu , Jathiswaram, Shabdham, Varnam, Padam, Javali and Thillana.¹⁴

A traditional Keralanadanam repertoire comprises of Rangapooja or Nritanjali, Sarinritam, Kathakali Padam (male) , Kathakali Padam (female) , a Padam , Keerthanam , Ashtapadi, Ekanganritham, Kalasha nrittam, Shlokabhinayam.³

In the Rangapooja , also known as Rangavandana, is the beginning of a Keralanadanam repertoire.¹⁰

The differences and similarities in music, abhinaya , costume and musical instruments used resulted in different and yet beautiful choreographies in both the art forms.

VIII) Nritta

Nritta , that is pure dance, is that part of the art form which differentiates dance from drama. Nritta is done to specific rhythm. In Keralanadanam, the steps are called “chuvad” while in Bharathanatyam the steps are called “Adavu”.³

A variety of steps are used in the choreography both the art forms. Using a chuvad in Keralanadanam is done by taking into consideration the need of the style , namely Tandava or Lasya. In situations where the dancer enacts the dance of Shiva , he chooses the Tandava chuvad namely Madhyavarthi chuvad and Parshavarthi Tandava chuvad. Similarly when a Keralanadanam dancer enacts the role of Goddess Parvathy dancing , she chooses Madhyavarthi Lasya chuvad and Parshavarthi Lasya chuvad. There are Adi tala teermanams , kal talavatta teermanams, half talavatta teermanams and mukal tallavatta teermanams which are used in the choreography. (One Talavata is one cycle of the talam) Keralanadanam nritta has an interesting feature known as Kalasham. Kalashams are coordinated movements of the body parts and foot work done in rhythm to a particular Thalam. There are many types of Kalashams like Vattam etta kalasham, eda Kalasham , Sapta kalasham, Ashta kalasham and Veliya kalasham.^{5,18,21}

In Bharatanatyam several musicians and nattuvanars have composed Teermanams in various Talams like Adi talam, Roopaka talam, Jhampa talam and other Talams too. However many Bharathanatyam dancers have often performed to their own choreography to Teermanams or Jathis that they compose themselves. In Carnatic classical music , one cycle of a thalam is called Avarthanam.¹²

The choreography changes as per the rhythm pattern. Variety of Adavus are used like Natt adavu , Parapara adavu and Korvai adavu. The highlight of the nritta part of a Bharathanatyam choreography is the flourishing Teermanams and the concluding Aridhi. Interesting Nritta choreography is usually seen in a Bharathanatyam Thillana.¹⁵

II. CONCLUSION

This comparison between choreography of Bharathanatyam and Keralanadanam gives us a very interesting finding . It is possible that the two styles can be performed together by sharing the music styles and borrowing a few aspects from each other

to create an interesting outcome. Such kind of creativity will help in further development of art forms and also play a major role in their propagation.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bharathamuniyude Natyasasthram vol 1 & 11, Kerala Sahithya Akademy , Thrissur, Kerala.1987, P. 14 to 76 & 285 to 290
- [2]. Natana Kairali, Dr Gurugopinath, Gurugopinath Natanagramam,for Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Kerala, Revised Edition, 2019, P 18 to 50.
- [3]. Natyakala Sidhanthavum Prayogavum,P G Ganardhanan,Mathrubhumi Books, 2004,P.218 to 248
- [4]. Mohiniyattaom , Charithravum Attaprakaravum, Kalamandalam Kalyanikutti Amma,D C Books, 1992, P.62 to 75.
- [5]. Kathakali Praveshika, Prof. Vattapampil Gopinathapilla, State Institute of Languages, 2002, P 137 to 143.
- [6]. Gaveshana Praveshika, Dr M V Vishnu Namboodiri, State Institute of Languages, Kerala Bhasha Institute, 2001, P 12 to 27.
- [7]. Keralanadanam . Chithra Mohan, Kerala Bhasha Institute, 2017, P. 1 to 32.
- [8]. Kathakali Plays in English, Agatha Jane Pillar, Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala, 2003, P 36 to 41.
- [9]. Natya Nireekshanan, Guru Chandrashekhar, National Book Stall, Kottayam , 1986, P. 3 to 10.
- [10]. A yoga of Indian Classical Dance ,Roxanne Kamayani Gupta,Library of Congress Cataloging- in- Publications Data ,1999. P 15 to 45
- [11]. Dance Gustures, Mirror of Expressions, Abhinayadarpanam, Dr. P Rmachandrashankar, Giri Agency Private Limited, 2007. P. 24 to 30.
- [12]. Natyaprayogangal, Dr T G Shylaja, KeralaBhasha Institute, 2008, P. 1 to 12.
- [13]. Natyakala, Abhinayapatam, P G Ganardhanan ,Mathrubhumi Books,2012, P. 190 to 212
- [14]. Abhinayadarpanam In Nandikeswara, Dr. Manomohankhosh, Culcutta, Manisha GrandhalayaPrivate Limited, 2006, P. 5 to 17.
- [15]. Kalayum Avishkaravum, Nithyachaithanyayathi,Kollam Impliment, April 1993. P. 1 to 10.
- [16]. Kathakaliyile Kanappurangal, Gopinathapilla , Vattapampil, Kerala Bhasha Institute, October, 2011, P. 102 to 112.

-
- [17]. Kathakaliyum Sahithyavum, Madhava Warriar, Idasseri, Vidhyardhi Mitharam Book Dipo, Sarvodayam Press, July, 1955, P.10 to 47.
- [18]. Keralathinte Thanathu Kalakal, Vishnu Namboothiri, Kothammooori, Kerala Bhasha Institure, 2003, P. 3 to 7.
- [19]. Aranginte Porulthedi, Kathakaliyum Koodiyattavum Ithara Rangakalalalum, Current Books, January, 2006, P. 14 to 17.
- [20]. Kathakali Mudra Nikhandu, Venu G, Thekkan Chitta, Kerala Smaskarika Prasadheekarana Vakuppu, 1994, P.3 to 90.
- [21]. 21.KeralathileThalamelangal, Sanalkumar Thamburan, Antharashtra Kerala Padanakendram,2000, P 13 to 55.
- [22]. Gurugopinath Anubhavangal Padanangal, Gurugopinath Natanagramam Prasadheekaranam,2011, P. 3 to 32
- [23]. Keralanadanam, Kusumam Gopalakrishnan,2008, P 7 to 12.