



A STUDY OF DANCE FEATURES IN SRI TĀLLAPĀKA ANNAMĀCĀRYA SANKĪRTANA-S

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Abstract

Indian classical dance is a composite art in which literature, music, rhythm, movement, and expression come together in performance. It is not merely a visual arrangement of bodily movement, but a mode of communicating emotion, devotion, and meaning through the body. This becomes especially important in compositions that are rich in **bhāva**, **rāga**, **tāla**, and scope for **abhinaya**, since such works naturally lend themselves to dance interpretation. In this context, 15th century poet **Śrī Tallapāka Annamācārya Sankīrtana-s** deserve special attention. Śrī Tallapāka Annamācārya, one of the most celebrated saint-composers in Telugu, is known for a vast body of devotional compositions dedicated mainly to **Lord Veṅkaṭeśvara** and **Goddess Alamēlumanga**. His kīrtana-s are marked by lyrical beauty, emotional depth, and devotional intensity. At the same time, many of them also possess a strong expressive quality, making them suitable for dance. This study, therefore, examines the **dance features inherent in Annamācārya's sankīrtana-s**, and with reference to their literary, devotional, and expressive dimensions, and their relevance to the **Bharatanāṭyam** and **Kuchipudi** repertoires. In Indian classical dance traditions, especially **Bharatanāṭyam** and **Kuchipudi**, the repertoire includes items that variously emphasise **nṛtta**, **nṛtya**, and **nāṭya**. In a similar way, many of Annamācārya's kīrtana-s—especially those shaped by **Śṛṅgāra**, **Madhura Bhakti**, **Nāyaka–Nāyikā bhāva**, **dramatic elements** and devotional inwardness—contain qualities that make them highly suitable for dance.

key words: Nṛtta, Nṛtya, Nāṭya, Sankīrtana-s, pada-s, Madhura Bhakti.



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INTRODUCTION

*“Gītam vādyam tatha nṛtyam
trayam sangīta muçyate”*

(Sangīta Ratnākaram, I-p 21)

In the Sangīta Ratnākara, Sārangadēva 13th Century musicologist states that sangīta comprises three components: *Gīta* (vocal music), *Vādyā* (instrumental music) and *Nṛtya* (dance). The term *Gīta* has a comprehensive connotation. Further, if dhātu is understood as the musical aspect based on Svara and mātu as the textual or literary aspect, nṛtya can't attain full communicative power without literature. Dance, especially in its expressive dimension, becomes meaningful integration of expression and text that renders the presentation intelligible to the audience. When Abhinaya is properly aligned with literary content, the presentation becomes clearer and more effective.

According to Bharata...

Abhinayās are four types:

1. Āngikam
2. Vāçikam
3. Āhāryam
4. Sātvikābhinayam

More broadly, dance, like human activities itself, involves the coordinated functioning of mind (mano), speech (vaak), and body (kaaya). **Āngika, Vāçika and Sātvika** are also called as **trividhābhinaya**¹. In that sense, Āngika, Vāçhika and Sāthvika may be viewed as important means through which feelings, word, and bodily expression are brought into performance. Among this vāçikābhinaya has a special connection with literature or padam, since it is the literary component that carries meaning into expressive dance. **Bharatha** explains that Gāndharvam or music consists Svara, taala, and pada, and that pada is the meaningful verbal component which gives shape to melody and rhythm. Any meaningful syllabic composition may be termed pada.



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“Gāndharvam yan mayā proktam svara tāḷa padātmakam

Padam tasya bhaved vastu svara tālanu bhavakam

Yat kincidakshara kritam tat sarwam pada sajñitam
tat padam dwividam smṛtam”

Nibadamça anibadam ça

(Natya Sastra XXXII-25-27)

It is of two kinds, **Nibaddha** (bound) and **Anibaddha** (un bound). It can be tāla or without tāla. Indian classical dance is a composite art in which literature, music, rhythm, movement, and expression come together in performance. It is not merely a visual arrangement of bodily movement, but a mode of communicating emotion, devotion, and meaning through the body. This becomes especially important in compositions that are rich in bhāva, rāga, tāla, and scope for Abhinaya, since such works naturally lend themselves to dance interpretation. In this context, the sankirtana-s/pada-s of **Sri Tāllapāka Annamācārya** deserves special attention. He is a renowned composer who wrote 32,000 kirtanas; among them, 14,328² are available today. His extensive body of compositions was categorized into three groups: Sringara, Vairagya, and Aadhyatmika kirtanas. Annamacharya encompasses all the genres to compose Margi, Desi, and folk forms of kirtanas. Śrī Tāllapāka Annamācārya who is considered as **the first Padha Kavita Composer in Telugu, one of the most celebrated saint composers in Telugu**, is known for a vast body of devotional compositions dedicated mainly to lord **Sri Venkatēsvara and Goddess Alamēlumanga of Tirumala**.

Sri Tāllapāka Annamācharya written the traits (principles) of Padam based on Bharata's Natyasastra named “Sankīrtana Lakṣanagrandam” in Sanskrit which is not available to us but the Telugu version of the same written by his grandson Chinna Tirumalācharya is accessible to us. For instance in his treatise, Annamacharya has mentioned that Pada-s are synonyms of Sankirtana-s. Having visualized Lord Venkata Nāyaka as the aim of these padā-s, and adhering to the rules of grammar of Bharata to compose padam. He had written in his 13th poem in ‘Sankīrtana lakṣanagrandham as.....



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“Bharatādi granthambula vivarinçina³

Laksanamulu Venkata bhūmi

Dharavara kīrtana lakshyamuluru

Padakavitā pita mahundirparicen

(Sankīrtana Lakshana grandam-13 poem)

In this manner since the era of Bharata the pada sāhitya has long been in existence. Bharatā's Nāṭya Sāstra is the basis for Annamācārya-s Sankīrtana-s. ***He also stated in sankīrtana lakshanagrandam in 14th poem that his vast variety genres of sankīrtana-s are examples for traits Sankīrtanāgrandam.*** His kīrtana-s are marked by lyrical beauty, emotional depth, and devotional intensity. At the same time, many of them also possess a strong expressive quality. ***Among the large body of Annamācārya's compositions, Nṛtta and. Nṛtya possibilities are embedded in specific kīrtana-genres***

In this study gives greater attention to the Śṅgāra Sankīrtana-s, especially those that are rich in *Nāyaka-Nāyika bhāva*, including compositions connected with the *samvādha Yaksha gāna-s* relevance to some of *uparupaka-s (Nṛtya)*. *Narahari-chenchulakshmi episodes, at the same time, Navarasa-s in Navanārasimha kīrtana-s, Rasa-Bhava* interpretation in *Adhyātma* and *Vairāgya* Sankīrtana-s are also brought in where relevant and Serendipitous aspects. Finally, the study seeks to illuminate how Annamācārya's devotional poetry continues to breathe within the aesthetics of dance and allied traditions. Nṛtta-Nṛtya and Nāṭya interpretation in Annamācārya sankīrtanas

The concept of Nṛttam, Nṛtya and Nāṭyam in Bharata's Nāṭyasastra and Abhinayadarpanam, as well as its interpretation in Annamācārya Sankīrtana-s, is significant. Nṛtta refers to pure dance, characterized by rhythmic movements and patterns without prominence of narrative or emotional expression, while Nṛtya encompasses expressive dance that conveys emotions and padārthābhinaya (vāchikābhinaya) through gestures and facial expressions. Nāṭya which



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includes Nŗtta, Nŗtya and drama. In the context of Annamācārya Sankirtana-s, these concept-s can be observed in how the lyrical and some syllable content effectively apt for devotional and dramatic themes embedded in his kŗrtana-s and their suitability to dance.

Dance is the confluence of 'Bhāva', 'Rāga', 'Tāla' and where the three aspects Nŗttam, Nŗytam and Nātyam are base for today's all Indian classical forms. The first texts that thoroughly explained these three aspects are in Sanskrit. The first significant text in Sanskrit regarding dance is Bharata's Nātya sastra. Following this text, many more have emerged concerning after this. After Bharata's Natyashastra, one of the most important texts related to dance is Nandi Keshvara's Abhinaya Darpanam. Bharata was the first to provide details about Nŗtta and Nātya only. Subsequently, another scholars like Abhinavagupta, Śaradātanaya, Śarangadēva, and Kumbhakarna offered explanations regarding these three aspects. The individual who provided a thorough explanation of Nŗtta, Nātya and created the new word Nŗtya from these aspects was Nandhikēśwara.

Nŗtta and its interpretation in Annamācārya sakŗrtana-s:

Bharata Muni described Nŗttam as a combination of **karana** (pure movements) and **Angahāra-s** (major limb movements). Abhinavagupta further explained that dance is the union of Karana-s and Angāra-s (combinations of primary movements) and gave classification for this. Bharata also referred to dance as a combination of Tāndava (vigorous, masculine) and Lāsya (graceful, feminine) forms. **Sudda Nŗttam or Sokkam**, according to **Adiyārkkū Nallār**, the 12th-13th century commentator on **Silappadikaram**. This is pure dance, consisting of the 108 karanas described in Bharata's Natyasastra. There is no expression, no story— just the



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technical grammar of movement laid down. Scholars like Dhanika and Dhananjaya described the concepts of Nŗtta as

“**Anyadbhāvāśrayam nŗttam tāla layāśrayam**”¹³. (Daśarūpākṣaram, page No. 4)

Without any expression which includes tāla and laya is known as Nŗtta. Various classical theorists have described the characteristics of Nŗtta in different ways. **Nandikeswara included all these characteristics of Nŗtta, classified Nŗtta further into Dēsi (regional/popular) and Mārgi (classical/standardized) styles.** He also classified them into Tāndava and Lāśya forms. In the context of mārgi, he mentioned **Śuddha Lāśyam** (pure grace movements) and it's various methods, though a detailed explanation for this was not fully provided.

For Dēsi Nŗtta, he described five types:

- 1.Pērani – Performed praising the hero (Nayaka), with vigorous movements Performed by men.
- 2.Kundali – Performed by female dancer (solo).
- 3.Prēnkhana – Involves various Karana-s (movements) and Bhramaries (spins).
- 4.Dandalāśya – A rhythmic erotic movements and Raasa leela play performed with wooden sticks ,without primence of lyrics.
- 5.Kalasha lāśya:dance with karana-s and bramari movements

In this variety of the Dēsi Nŗtta segment, **Dandalāśya** features rhythmic movements and the Raas Nŗtta of the Gujarat style, which is suitable for Annamācārya kōlāta Sankīrtana-s. There are numerous Sankīrtana-s that are appropriate for kōlātam, which



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prominently highlight Nŗtta(rhythmic pettern-s) in relation to Krishna songs.One of the Annamacharya Sankirtanam Pallavi starts with a small Jathi, and the charanam-s are accompanied by lyrics. In the last line of the Charanam, added a small syllable. Asthana Sangita Vidwan of TTD late Sri Bāla Krishnaprasad composed it into mohana rāga, Ādhi Talam, Chaturasra gait. This composition is mixed with the nritta aspect syllables, and the Charanam is filled with lyrics.In this kīrtana Nŗtta is more impotant than Nŗtya.

Pallavi:

Rāgam:Mōhana

Tālam:Ādhi

tattā digudi dhim dhim taka dhim dhim

titti tittiti titi titi titi||

dānavavadanā vitānadāna sam-

dhāna rudhira nijapāna midām |

nānā bh

ūta ghanānām gānam

dīna janānām tittiti titi ||

Concept of Nātya,Nŗtya and intrepretation of Nŗtya / Uparūpaka-s in Annamāçārya Sankīrtana -s

Nātyam: “ Nātyam tannāṭakam çaiva pūrva kathā itham”¹²

(Abhinaya Darpanam, page-)

Nātya is a performance based on a narrative. It is only when the “Nātya” is combined with other arts like Angahāra-s,Abhinaya, music and dramatic elements and it can provide allure to the audience, thereby bestowing happiness. Rūpaka-s belong to this



form. Nŗtta and Nŗtya have originated from “Nātya”. It can be like solo or group performance. example kuravai and Bāgavathamēla. Annamacharya composed kŗrtana-s that depict Lord Krishna's life, from His birth to His married life with the Gopika-s. He fought against the Kauravas; however, He ultimately stated last charanam of sankŗrtana-s that this Krishna is nothing but Lord Venkatēswara. TTD collected all in sequence and established a name as “**Srikrishna Thathvam**”, featuring eminent dancers, making it a nrutya rupakam that is nātya. He is Not only about lord krishna,he also penned about Sri Rama,Nrusimha avathara and so on.

Nŗtyam:

Nŗtam is the combination of expression and pure dance. In Nŗtya, the principal facets are Nŗtta, and pārhābhinaya.

Vāçikābhinaya is of two types.

They are:

Predominant in vākya, that is phrase or sentence

Predominant in padārtha, that is word to word meaning

That which is predominant in vākya that is sentence, is Nātya or Rūpaka. That which is predominant is padārtha or poetry is Nŗtya or Uparūpakam¹⁸

Bharata Muni has explained only about Rūpaka-s and has not mentioned Uparūpaka-s. It is likely that Kōhala has explored about Uparūpaka-s¹¹. Further Abhinava Gupta has categorized them as 20, Śāradātanaya as 22, Bhōja and Hēmaçandra as 12 and Viśwanātha as 18. These Uparūpaka-s are segments of Rūpaka-s. Out of 18 Uparupaka-s some uparupaka-s apt for selected kŗrtana-s of Annamayya. Annamāçārya has described about the various practices pertaining to Nŗtya aspects in his treatise “Sankŗrtanā Lakṣaṇam” from the 50th poem to the 66th poem¹⁰. In this Sankŗrtana padāvaḷi, there are some aspects with regards to Uparūpaka-s. He has specifically mentioned about the usage of rural vocabulary in “Hallisaka” in his “Sankŗrtana Lakṣaṇam”. This Uparūpaka is similar to his Kōlāta genre Sankŗrtana -s. Apart from this, the Samvāda Yakṣagāna-s composed by him resemble “Kāvya Uparūpaka-s”. Some of them are reminiscent of “Śrī Gadhita Uparūpaka-s”.



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Kīrtanās related to hallisaka :

“Kolanilōna Munu Gōpikalu”

Rāga – Mukhāri

Pallavi:

Kolanilōna munu gōpikalu
molaka navvulatō mrokkirinīku ||

Çaraṇa – 1:

Pirudulu dāṭina pinçhapu ṭalakala
turumulu vīḍaga toyyalulu
aridi nitambulandune dāçuka
muripepu karamula mrokkirinīku ||

Çaraṇa – 2:

Niddapu mānamu nelatalu lōguçu
gaddari toḍalane gaṭṭuçu
mudduṭungarambula karamulatō
muddulu guniyuçu mrokkirinīku ||

Çaraṇa – 3:

Pāliṇḍla penubhārambula
mūlapu merugulu munçaganu
vēlapu priyamula vēnkaṭēśaninu
mūlaku pilaçuçu mrokkirinīku ||



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In this kīrtana, the Gōpika-s have placed their clothes in a corner and gone to bath, when Kṛṣṇa steals their clothes and teases them. The episode can be performed in nṛtyābhinya in beautiful manner.

Kavya uparupaka yakshagana sankirtana

1. cençita – Narasimha Swāmy

Samvāda Daruvu

(24th Volume – 159) p-107

Pallavi

Çelle gade nī māṭa çençeta nīku ----- Narasimha Swāmy
çellubaḍigalaçōṭa jeppanēṭikayyā || ----- Çençita

Çaraṇam – 1

Çiguru payyada yēlē çençeta nīku ----- Narasimha Swāmy
çiguru māyaḍavilō sēnāsēna } ----- Çençita
niguru basiḍi çēla nīkēlayyā mā- }
pagaṭu merupu gonta pasiḍi rāle ||



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“Ēla rāḍamma”

Volume – 12, Song - 235

Pallavi

Ēla rāḍamma yintirō vā-
ḍēla rāḍamma nannēlinavāḍu ||

Çaraṇa – 1

Paççani pulugula baḍimīda nunḍu-
paççaviṇṭi pinnabāluni taḍri
paççaniçāyala bāyani bangāru-
paççaḍamu gaṭṭi bāgainavāḍu ||

Conclusion:

Annamayya composed not only bhakthi geners,he also penned numerous dance elements in his tresuretrove pada-s.The present study takes the view that Annamācārya’s compositions,in their ability to be embodied and communicated through dance.Their value for dance lies not only in devotional content, but also in their **performative potential**. They can sustain emotional nuance, expressive elaboration, and character-based interpretation, all of which are important in classical Indian dance. For this reason, Annamācārya’s kīrtana-s may be seen as a valuable source for the enrichment of the dance performance.



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