

A Study of Indian Classical Dances

Kunsoth Manjula

PG College subedari Kakathiya University

Abstract:

Dance is a series of movements and steps that march the speed and rhythm of much. Dance is a part of the rich cultural heritage of India. Its theme is derived from mythology, legends, classical literature, everyday life and nature. Both classical and folk dances owe their present popularity to institutions like Sangeet Natak Akademi and other training institutes and cultural organizations. The Sangget Natak Akademi gives financial assistance to cultural institutes. It also awards fellowships to scholars, performers and teachers. This is to promote advanced study and training in different forms of dance and music.

Introduction

India has thousands of year old tradition of fine arts and classical and folk music and dances. Some of the world-famous dance forms that originated and evolved in India are Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniattam and Odissi. All these dance forms use basically the same 'mudras' or signs of hand as a common language of expression and were originally performed in the temples to entertain various Gods and Goddesses. They were also effective in carrying forward the various mythological stories from generation to generation while entertaining the audiences. It eventually became a part of 'Natya Shashtra', as propounded by Sage Bharata to compile and forge some rules and regulations of entertaining arts.

With time, the classical dances evolved to include the expressions and themes from social life and experiences. Lord Shiva is said to be the 'Nataraja' meaning 'King of All Dances', who is said to perform the Cosmic Dance that delicately balances life and death and all that is happening in the Universe in harmonious cycles.

Bharatnatyam, popular in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, is said to be revealed by Lord Brahma to Bharata. Kathak is the art to tell a story and is a form of North Indian classical dance. Later, it became courtly entertainment.

Kathakali from Kerala makes use of colorful masks and costumes and belongs to Kerala. Kuchipudi is the dance drama of Andhra Pradesh that combines Natya, Nritta and Nritya. Manipuri, as the name suggests, is from Manipur, the Northeastern state of India, and is a combination of many dances prevalent in the region. Mohiniattam from Kerala is a solo female dance and is known for its rhythmic and unbroken flow of the body movements. Odissi from Orissa is a dance of love, joy and intense passion.

Bharatnatyam

Bharatnatyam is one of the most popular classical Indian dances. Bharatnatyam is more popular in South Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Bharatnatyam dance is almost 2,000 years old. It is believed that Bharatnatyam was revealed by Lord Brahma to Bharata, a famous sage who then codified this sacred dance in a Sanskrit text called the Natya Shastra. The

Natya Shastra is one of the fundamental treatises on Indian drama and aesthetics.

Kathak

Kathak is one of the most important classical dances of India. Kathak is said to be derived from the word katha, meaning "the art of storytelling." The Kathak dance form originated in north India and was very similar to the Bharatnatyam dance form. In ancient India, there were Kathakars or bards who used to recite religious and mythological tales to the accompaniment music, mime and dance.

Kathakali

Kathakali is the classical dance form of Kerala. The word Kathakali literally means "Story-Play". Kathakali is known for its heavy, elaborate makeup and costumes. In fact, the colorful and fascinating costumes of Kathakali have become the most recognized icon of Kerala. Kathakali is considered as one of the most magnificent theatres of imagination and creativity. Kathakali dance presents themes derived from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and other Hindu epics, mythologies and legends.

Kuchipudi

Kuchipudi is one of the classical dance forms of the South India. Kuchipudi derives its name from the Kuchipudi village of Andhra Pradesh. In the seventeenth century the Kuchipudi village was presented to the Brahmins, who were experts in staging dance and drama. Kuchipudi exhibits scenes from the Hindu Epics, legends and mythological tales through a combination of music, dance and acting. Like other classical dances, Kuchipudi also comprises pure dance, mime and histrionics but it is the use of

speech that distinguishes Kuchipudi's presentation as dance drama.

Manipuri

Manipuri is one of the six major classical dances of India. Manipuri dance is indigenous to Manipur, the North eastern state of India. The Manipuri dance style is inextricably woven into the life pattern of Manipuri people. The most striking part of Manipur dance is its colorful decoration, lightness of dancing foot, delicacy of abhinaya (drama), lilting music and poetic charm. The Manipuri dance form is mostly ritualistic and draws heavily from the rich culture of the state of Manipur.

Mohiniattam

Mohiniattam is a classical dance form of Kerala. Mohiniattam is derived from the words "Mohini" (meaning beautiful women) and "attam" (meaning dance). Thus, Mohiniattam dance form is a beautiful feminine style with surging flow of body movements. Mohiniattam dance in Kerala developed in the tradition of Devadasi system, which later grew and developed a classical status.

Odissi

Odissi is one of the famous classical Indian dances from Orissa state. The history of Odissi dance is almost two thousand years old. Odissi is a highly inspired, passionate, ecstatic and sensuous form of dance. Like most of the South Indian classical dances of India Odissi too had its origin in the Devadasi tradition. The state of Orissa has a great cultural history.

Conclusion:

Bharatanatyam like any other art form has a scientific and systematic classification based on its usage, standard and entertainment value. The forms figuring in Bharatanatyam are codified in such a way that they follow the time honoured concepts and principles. The dancers even after the lapse of two thousand years, have been following the directions and rules laid down by eminent scholars like Bharata, Nandikeśvara and others. The forms are devised artistically and beautifully and they enable the dancer to reveal her artistic talent, genius, knowledge and originality. The term Bharatanatyam is believed to have its origin from Natyasastra of Bharata who is supposed to have invented it. Another version is that the dance combined in it the aspects of drama, music, stage, colour, rhythm, poetry etc. Taking the initial syllables of Bhava, Raga and Tala codifies even the term Bharata. In later times the treatise of Bharata is found depended upon for various classical dance, folk dance. Tribal dance etc.

References :

<http://travel-blog.waytoindia.com/different-dance-forms-of-india-with-states/>

<https://www.britannica.com/list/6-classical-dances-of-india>

<http://www.indian-heritage.org/dance/dncefrms.htm>

Dances of Kerala, Trivandrum, 2000

Dance Dialects of India, Delhi, 1972 pp. 116-119.