

BHRAMARIS OF THE SAṅGĪTA SĀRĀMṚTA

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(The paper focuses on the *Bhramaris* of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmṛta* as discussed in a dance chapter called '*Nṛtāprakaraṇa*' of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmṛta* and attempts to compare the seven *Bhramaris* of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmṛta* which was in vogue during King Tulaja - I's time with that of the present practicing tradition. It also attempts to provide the photographs of the seven *Bhramaris* based on the description given by King Tulaja - I, in the *Saṅgīta Sārāmṛta*.)

Bharatanāṭyam is a classical dance form of Tamil Nadu where it evolved, developed and flourished. Presently it is learned and performed globally. The art of dancing practised by *Devadāsīs* (handmaidens to God or Dancing Girls who were dedicated to temples to serve the Gods) was known by different names right from the period of *Saṅgam* age, Chola, Nāyaka and up to the Maratha period of the 19th century and finally got rechristened as 'Bharatanāṭyam' in the 20th century.

Nandikeśvara's *Abhinayadarpaṇa*¹ is the first text which deals with Dance (*Nṛtya* and *Nṛtta*)² as an independent art. We can find a full and independent treatment of Dance (*Nṛtya* and *Nṛtta*) along with its principles for the first time only in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. Later writers of the treatises on Dance (*Nṛtya* and *Nṛtta*) proper followed this analysis. Nandikeśvara for the first time also talks about a female Dancer – danseuse and her characteristics whereas in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*³ an actor – hero is discussed. This may be the reason why most of the Bharatanāṭyam teachers and dancers/artists follow the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*.

During the Maratha period in 17th century, King Tulaja- I, patronized the art of dancing as is evident from his text *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta*. King Tulaja-I, composed the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* in Samskr̥tam which deals with the technique of Bharatanāṭyam, or more precisely speaking, Sadir⁴, had what evolved by this time.

Saṅgīta Sārāmrta

The *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* of King Tulaja – I, was written in 1735 A.D. It is a most important work on *Nṛtta*. There are several treatises available on Dance, especially during the 17th century, on regional traditions with specific techniques of Dance practice. But the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* is the first scientific treatise to codify and methodologically give the *Āḍavus* (the basic Dance units in Bharatanāṭyam) of *Sadir* which were in vogue in the 17th century. A Dance chapter called ‘*Nṛttaprakaraṇa*’⁵ of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* also mentions seven *Bhramarīs*.

Bhramarī

According to the Nandikeśvara’s *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, moving round is *Bhramarī*. While describing *Bhramarī*, he says-

“Here, we shall describe various flights (in a dance).”⁶

King Tulaja – I, has not given the definition of *Bhramarī* in the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* but he has given a detailed description and also the definition of each of the seven *Bhramarīs* of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta*. After examining the description of the seven *Bhramarīs* given by King Tulaja – I, I have come to a conclusion that *Bhramarī* according to *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* also means moving round or taking round.

Bhramarīs of the Saṅgīta Sārāmrta

Bhramarīs of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* are in existence and are practiced in *Nṛtta*, war or martial arts and are also found in folk tradition. The seven *Bhramarīs* mentioned in the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* are-

(अथ भ्रमर्यः)

(atha bhramarya:)

Meaning –

(Hence, forth the *Bhramarī*) *Bhramarīlu*.

They are –

1. Śuddhāṅga Bhramarī

भ्रमरिलु

स्थित्वा समपदं हस्तौ पताका संप्रसार्य च ।

उत्प्लुत्योभयतो भ्रान्तिं शुद्धाङ्गभ्रमरीं विदुः ॥

॥ शित्ताङ्गु ॥

bhramarilu

sthitvā samapadaṁ hastau patākā samprasārya ca ।

utplutyobhayato bhrāntiṁ śuddhāṅgabhramarīm viduः ॥

॥ śittāṅgu ॥

Meaning –

Standing in *Samapāda* having stretched the hands in *Patāka Mudrā*, then jump while taking round is called *Śuddhānga Bhramarī*.

Śittāḍgu.

Photographs for *Śuddhānga Bhramarī* –



(Jump while taking round)

2. *Ākuñcitapādikā Bhramarī*

स्थितिभ्रमिस्थितिविधौ शिखराब्जपताकिकाः ।

करान् वर्तना प्राण्य (?) पार्श्वभ्यां भ्रमिरुद्धमः ॥

आकुञ्चितो (र ?) श्लिष्टाङ्घ्रिः सैवाकुञ्चितपादिका ॥

॥ येन्द्रिकट्टु ॥

sthitibhramisthitividhau śikharāvjjapatākikāः ।

karān vartanā prānya (?) pārśvābhyāṃ bhramirudbhramaः ॥

ākuñcito (ru ?) śliṣṭāḍghriः saivākuñcitapādikā ॥

॥ yendikaṭradu ॥

Meaning –

Having stood in the procedure laid out in the *Bhramā* position, having put the hands above the head in *Patāka Mudrā* while giving importance to their movement of rotation on the sides, keep the foot in the contracted position. This is called *Ākuñcitapādikā*.

Yendikaṭradu.

Photographs for *Ākuñcitapādikā Bhramarī* –



3. Ekapadā Bhramarī

स्थित्वैकेन पदोत्क्षिप्तप्रसारितपदं क्रमात् ।

.....भ्रमिरेकपदामिध्वा ॥

॥ वीशिङ्गायु ॥

sthitvaikena padotkṣiptaprasāritapadaṃ kramāt ।

.....bhramirekapadābhidhā ॥

॥ vīśikkālu ॥

Meaning –

Standing on one leg having stretched the other leg orderly is called as **Bhramī** which consist **Ekapadā**.
vīśikkālu.

Photograph for **Ekapadā Bhramarī**: –



This is used in the present practicing tradition by the same name **Ekapadā Bhramarī**. In this **Bhramarī** the performer/artist/dancer moves round alternately on one leg.

4. *Nipatya Prasāritapadā Bhramarī*

स्थित्वादितः समपदं शिखरौ संप्रदर्शय च ।

भ्रान्त्या प्रसारितकरं } भ्रमणं पूर्ववत् स्थितिः ॥

स्पृष्ट्वा प्रसारितपदं }

निपत्यशब्दपूर्वा सा प्रसारितपदा भवेत् ॥

॥ बिलुन्दुवीशि ॥

sthitvādita: samapadam śikharau sampradaśarya ca ।

bhrāntyā prasāritakaram } bhramaṇam pūrvavat sthiti: ॥

spṛṣtvā prasāritapadam }

nipatyāśabdapūrvā sā prasāritapadā bhavet ॥

॥ vilunduvīśi ॥

Meaning –

Having stood in *Sama Pāda* at first, then rotate the stretched hands and touch the stretched legs, then take your hands above the head and rotate and come back to the previous position. This is called *Prasāritapadā* which is prefixed with the word *Nipatya* (It will be called “*Nipatya Prasāritapadā*”).

vilunduvīśi.

Photographs for *Nipatya Prasāritapadā Bhramarī*: –



5. *Rekhinī Bhramarī*

उद्वेष्टितकटिन्यस्तशिखराह्वयहस्तकम् ।

उत्प्लुत्योद्धमिराख्याता रेखिनीभ्रमिकीर्तिता ॥ (?)

udveṣṭitakaṭinyastaśikharāhvayahastakam ।

utplutyodbhamirākhyātā rekhinībhramikīrtitā ॥ (?)

Meaning –

Bring both hands down which are above the head on the waist which is slightly raised and being rotated, then jump and take a round. This sort of *Bhramā* is known as *Rekhinī Bhramī*.

Photographs for *Rekhinī Bhramarī*: –



(Jump and take a round)

To some extent it matches with the *Ākāśa Bhramarī* of the present practicing tradition as here author says that - jump and take a round. The difference is that in the *Ākāśa Bhramarī* feet are fully stretched wide apart in a jump and then round is taken.

6. *Cakrasaṃjñikā Bhramarī*

सन्ताडय क्ष्मां पदा स्कन्धविन्यस्तशिखरं क्रमात् ।

भ्रमिपूर्वं पुरः पश्चात् सरणं चक्रमञ्जिका ॥

॥ शक्रशुत्तु ॥

santāḍaya kṣmāṃ padā skandhavinyastaśikharam kramāt ।

bhramipūrvam pura: paścāt saraṇam cakrasaṃjñikā ॥

॥ śakraśuttu ॥

Meaning –

Hit the ground with the foot, rest the head on the shoulders in an orderly manner and move in circular motion backwards and forwards. This is called *Cakrasaṃjñikā*.

śakraśuttu.

Photograph for *Cakrasaṃjñikā Bhramarī*: –



(Move in circular motion backwards and forwards)

7. Moṭita Bhramarī

एवं जातियुता नाना भ्रमर्यो लक्ष्यविन्मताः ॥

आकुक्षितक्षितिस्मृष्टजानुकं क्रमतः प्लुतिः ।

पार्श्वयोस्त्रिपताकाभ्यां मोदितं तदुदीरितम् ॥

॥ मण्डियडवु ॥

evam jātiyutā nānā bhramaryo lakṣyavinmatāḥ ॥

ākuñcitakṣitisprṣṭajānukaṁ kramataḥ plutiḥ ।

pārśvayostripatākābhyāṁ moṭitaṁ tadudīritam ॥

॥ maṇḍiyaḍavu ॥

Meaning –

Bhramarīs which are focused or concentrated towards respective **Lakṣyas** (postures or movements), touching ground with bent knees repeatedly showing **Patāka Mudrā** on either sides is acclaimed by scholars as **Moṭita**.

Maṇḍiyaḍavu.

Photographs for **Moṭita Bhramarī** –



The execution of this *Moṭita Bhramarī* resembles with the *Garuḍa Bhramarī* of the present practicing tradition.

द्विजानुमोदिताद्यास्तु भेदास्सन्त्यत्र नैकशः ।

ते निपुणैरुह्या.....लक्ष्यजसंमताः ॥

॥ इति भ्रम (र्यः) ॥

dvijānumoṭitādryāstu Bhedassantyatra naikaśa: ।

te nipunairuhyā.....lakṣyajñasaṃmatā: ॥

॥ iti bhrama (rya:) ॥

Meaning –

There are many variations like *Dvijānu*, *Moṭitā* etc. The experts have to assume them as per the approval of scholars.

Thus, end *Bhramarīs*.

Conclusion

The *Bhramarīs* of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* remain relevant for practitioners till this day. This emphasizes the far-reaching influence of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta*.

The grammar of dance described in the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta* retains its relevance in today's Bharatanāṭyam, folk traditions and in other *Nṛtta* styles. The *Bhramarīs* of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmrta*

clearly show the technique, importance and development of Bharatanāṭyam and other dance forms.

It also stresses the relevance of the *Saṅgīta Sārāmṛta* and other classical dance texts.

Notes

¹Nandikeshvara's *Abhinayadarpaṇa* is a most important book on *Nṛtya* and *Nṛtta*. Nandikeshvara is thought to have lived in the 2nd century A.D. and his identity, like Bharata's is difficult to ascertain.

²Classical Indian Dance (*Bhāratīya Nāṭya*) has 3 main components: *Nāṭya*, *Nṛtta* and *Nṛtya*. *Nāṭya* is the dramatic element of a stage performance. *Nṛtta* is pure Dance in accordance with rhythm and tempo, visualized by the abstract gestures of the body and hands and by extensive and precise footwork. Dance exhibits the beauty of the form, grammar and technique and need not always involve a theme. *Nṛtya* consists of a theme and the Dance narrations involve intricate hand gestures and facial expressions.

³The *Nāṭyaśāstra* is a monumental work dealing with drama and theatre, music, aesthetics, rhetoric, grammar and allied subjects as well as Dancing. There are contradictions regarding the date and authorship of Bharatamuni's *Nāṭyaśāstra* which has been variously dated from the 2nd century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D. However, Bharata is generally credited with the authorship of *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

⁴In the *Sangam* age and the Chola period, the art of dancing was known as *Kuttu*, *Adal*, *Nāṭyam*, *Dāsiattam*. During the Nāyaka period it was termed as *Nāṭyamu*, *Kelikā*, *Cinamelam*. During the Maratha rule (A.D.1674-1854) it was known as *Sadir Nauch*. In Marāṭhī language *Sadir* means 'To present'. In the court when the dancer was announced before

the King, it appears that the term *Sadir* became current and the nomenclature *Sadir Nautch* came into vogue.

⁵For details see, V. Raghavan, Introduction, *The Saṅgīta Sārāmrta of King Tulaja of Thanjāvūr*.

Edited by S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Madras: The Music Academy, 1942: iii-lxxxii.

⁶Ghosh, Manomohan. *Nandikesvara's Abhinayadarpana: A Manual of Gesture and Posture Used in Ancient Indian Dance and Drama*. Calcutta: Manisha Granthālaya Private Limited, 1997: 67.

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