



## The Indian Traditional Performing Arts-Pluralistic Perspective

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### KEYWORDS :

#### Preamble:-

India is a country with heritage of great ancient traditions. This country even though principally has the base of spirituality; the religious foundation is given an equal importance. From the Vedic Period till today, efforts are consistently being put to nourish the ancient traditions and culture.

India is a festival loving nation. Also it's a country with many different performing arts. People of different religions, castes live happily and celebrate festivals in accordance with their own religions, traditions. Whatever we call as rituals, customs, traditions are basically related to some religious functions or festivals. We see this picture when we take into consideration the psychology of Indians. On exploring the minute details of the traditions & culture, we find that all these acts are basically to find joy and happiness, which rejuvenates the mind & body. The performing artist and audience both derive pleasure from the production & performance.

Any art for that matter, inspite of being supreme, makes its presence in the minds of all and everyone feels that it's their own joy. This art presentation process itself is very joyous. Watching performance of art is a happy augury and similarly, the artist gets indescribable pleasure during the performance. In the award conferring ceremony of Sangeet Natak Academy 2006, the then Honorable President of India, Dr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam said "Art, Music, Dance, Drama give connectivity to the multiple variants in the society. Music can reduce mental pressures & heaviness in the heart. Dramas can make people forget their day to day worries and also to reflect. Dancers can take you to a meditative world. Music indeed integrates minds, brings peace to the agitated minds and to positive thinking."

I feel, for all these performing arts, the solely important place is the Stage of Dais. This Stage only shows the versatility of Indian Performing Arts.

If we minutely study the journey of the tree performing arts namely Dance, Drama & Music, one thing prominently felt is that the purpose & presentation of art every time is to give realization of virtual pleasure and versatility through the performance. These performing arts find a place in the mind of every Indian. These performing arts show the picture of social life of Indians. Even though all these performing arts have accepted the transformation and its associated principles, they have not disturbed basic frame in the science of performing arts. That is why 'Performing arts' enjoy the supremacy.

#### How is the versatility?

While studying the Indians traditional performing arts, it is noticed that some of the performing arts have evolved from the feelings & emotions of worship. Out of the various feelings generated during the performance of these performing arts, the feeling of devotion, I feel, is important. Because after having a glance at the history of these performing arts, we find rise of some performing arts in such devoted feelings. If we take an example of an art, the seriatim from beginning the preparations before performance to the end of the presentation has some meaning. The internal transformation that takes place in human body through integrity, honesty, closeness achieved is primary due to performance of art. Performance by a group enables to get at a time the awakened status of minds of all group members.

Many a times it is stated that art is in the blood and mostly we get convinced by this statement because, the culture inscribed through

art flows through our blood. Any art for that matter firstly brings all human beings together and its subsequent presentation is the integrated emotional life. Indian performing arts are the centre of this culture and culture building.

To strengthen & consolidated relationship beyond blood relations, I feel, the "art culture" is essential. Due to many reasons, the Indian society is divided. Selfishness, superstitions, lack of knowledge & educations, politics etc. reveal that social transformation is a need of the hour and the solution to the problem lies in performing arts. Group psychology generates pleasure of living beyond caste, religion, creed etc. and it's an important task.

Thus the study of art done with curiosity clearly signifies that Indian Performing arts are the mirror of Indian Philosophy. Moreover, presentation of performing arts means the presentation of Indian Philosophy. Indian lifestyle, thoughts, behavior is reflected through performance of performing arts since art and life share an unbreakable relationship. Basically the purpose of performing

Thus the study of art done with curiosity clearly signify that Indian Performing arts are the mirror of Indian Philosophy. Moreover, presentation of performing arts means the presentation of Indian Philosophy. Indian lifestyle, thoughts, behavior is reflected through performance of performing arts since art and life share an unbreakable relationship. Basically the purpose of performing arts is to give joy, to entertain, to educate, to create awareness. In the stream of transformation, changes in accordance with time took place. The entry of performing arts in theatre introduced their form of presentation. Performances widened coverage and frame of performing arts. The hidden knowledge in the performing arts came to the surface in different forms and helped in developing the understanding about performing arts. Nurturing these performing arts is nothing but nurturing the traditions.

While nurturing the performing arts & retaining its original form intact, we notice that the performing arts also protect their self-esteem. In India, even if there is difference of opinions in context with the caste, religion, heredity, yet when it's matter of national integrity, people forget these differences to protect the national pride and esteem. This became possible due to performing arts and it's environment.

In every state of Indian there are different languages, traditions, lifestyles and performing arts of different state are co-related with these factors. Also some customs, traditions, religious & social festivals, respective calendars are associated with some of the performing arts. Some Performing arts are religious feelings and social esteem; some of the performing arts have successfully retained their existence.

In a nutshell, the following pluralistic perspectives attain importance with respect to Indian traditional performing arts:

- Indian traditional performing arts help in purification of body, mind & soul
- The cultural consistency is maintained due to the performing arts
- Performing arts are the media for developing social mind together with group psyche
- The informal education, which is more important than bookish knowledge is easily gained through performing arts
- The performance of arts influences the emotions of the performing group

- Performing arts give knowledge of ethical, moral values
- The basic function of performing arts is entertainment & education simultaneously.
- Study of performing arts is the study of science of Yoga
- Performing arts comment on the social, familial, political, educational problems & issues.
- Performing arts help to understand the importance of rituals in social life.

### Broad perspective of Theatre

When the purpose & base of the performing arts is so wide and deep, obviously a thought comes to the mind that wherever and in whatever form the performing arts are presented, is important to bring the performance in front of the world. Since its inception, Indian theatre is known for its broad perspective. Initially this theatre was linked with Sanskrit theatre. The term Indian theatre did not exist. Since the vedic period. The performing arts were performed. In spite of this background, it's difficult to determine the origin and time when the Indian theatre started. When Bharatmuni scripted Natyashastra (the science of Dramatics) the concept of Dramatics came in the form of literature. Similarly when we think about Dance. The first literature published was "Abhinay Darpan" written by Nandikeshwar. Music has also a resembling history.

In the beginning every art was presented in an unorganized form. However when it acquired the scientific form, the true picture came to the front. This journey of performances matters most while understanding the versatility of Indian traditional performing matters most while understanding the versatility of Indian traditional performing arts. Let us take the example of Bharatnatyam as an art of dance. Initially, Devdasi (female servants of God) used to perform dances in the temple area to earn their livelihood. That form of dance was known as Dasi Attam. Sadir Attam, Dasi Aat, Sadir Aat were also other names given to this performance.

This Devdasi tradition was abolished due to various anti-movements, the kings' court became the platform for the dance performances. Chol Dynasty, Nayak Dynasty, Sangam Dynasty, Bhosale Dynasty gave shelter to these performers and thus it got the honour. The behavioral pattern of the art changed by all means. Music, lights, Theatre Craft, Drapery, and Makeup underwent changes. This was done intentionally. The art achieved a higher status. It was purposely given a scientific touch and frame. The contribution of many in this is change was important. Tajavur Bandhu, Chinaiyya Ponaiyya, Vedivelu, Shivnandan thereafter Rukhmini Devi, Arundel etc deserve a special mention. When the art was presented in the open temple area, the light arrangement was simple; when it came to the king's court, it was a closed area. Hence the changes made accordingly were accepted. Similarly when it came in the form of literature and also some technical changes took place the new form was named as Dasi Attam. However, when it was presented before the common masses, it came through the medium of theatre. So, the prevailing form of Bharatnatyam was originally Dasi Attam. In view of these transformations, we understand that the raw form changed to the scientific form because of theatre.

In order to understand the transformations & changes, we can take brief review of aspects associated with dance performances in the past & present:

**In past** the performances used to take place in temple then in king's Court **but now** they are performed in public place i.e. in theatre names as sadir Attam now Bharatnatyam

In temple performer Devdasi, in king's court Rajnartika now classical Dancer In temple place of performance is in front of God or the place available in or nearby temple **At present** mostly theatre & in festivals organized the subjects Language-Tamil, Telugu-now no language barrier

Lights- As available i.e. oil Lamps, Bronze lamps covering all the stage wholly concentrated on the performer **whereas now** Lights- As per need & with various colors and with specific area with various kinds

In fact, Lighting arrangement underwent grate changes. Lighting developed as an art. Light boys use different kinds of lights. Floodlight,

spotlight, foot light disc light, rotating light. Par lights, on light color filter is used. Dimmers are used for opening & closing each item same as pulsar is also used for intensity purpose.

**Previously** Time was mostly evening but now as per programme or functional arrangements or availability of Theatre.

**In past** the performing artists were mostly females **but today** both male & female.

**Stage décor** was temples' view & **what we see now** is that new theme is arranged on stage as decoration.

**Previously** there was No recognition as a Subject of study **whereas now** recognized as a subject of study.

No training was in past & **today** systematic & intense training is given.

The performance was mainly to please God, King, and Royal Man **but now** the unpleasant elements are abolished from the dance in performance there is no sequence mostly praising of God, King, and Royal man performance took place.

### Costume

Fully covered pyjama on top of which nine-yard jari silk saree stitched as plait & joined in front portion. The beauty of each angas should be projected.

**Now** costume is well designed. Light, Weight, size, Color is considered in lighting the beauty of dancer costume is colorful & comfortable sari stitched in Dhoti type plaits joined in front portion also covered with small plates near to waist half blouse with Dupatta jari border is used for Decoration of costume.

### Make-up:-

Turmeric powder, eyes with Anjana, tilak on the forehead, red lipstick on lips, alta on Palms & Feet; oil base foundation matching the color of the artist. Light colored shades or mascara on eyelids, eyebrows are shaped neatly with black eye brow pencil.

Now-a-days art of facial makeup developed highly used of cosmetic, which will be less harmful. Pink colored Powder is applied with powder puff evenly. Pancake in the skin coloured applied with sponge. Eyebrows with eyebrow pencil lipstick with brush.

### Previous Ornaments:-

Bangles, earrings, neck less

**Now** Armllets, bangles, earring, necklace on head chandrasury, a veni with decorated flowers in attractive manner.

### Music :-

Mridangam & Pair of ymbals

**Now**, Mridangam, Veena, Violin, Ghatam, flute, manjira (Thalam) Tanpura (Electric)

After innovation & study systematic performance 'Margam' is introduced in Margam systematic items are introduced scientifically.

### Expectations

It was obvious to accept the changes since it was a time of human progress. The common masses had to accept these transformations & changes in the social, political & academic streams. This process was not harmful for the performing arts. At times, we apprehend that the future transformations may be detrimental for the performing arts. In the era of competitions, just for the sake of globalization, the original frame & form of performing arts may be disturbed thereby causing harm to the pluralistic perspectives of the Indian traditional performing arts.

The invasion of Remix on the melodious & emotional musical recitations is exemplary in this regard. Similarly, the ugly and shameful physical movements in dance performances have eclipsed the very sanctity & innocent form of original dance. This is my seriously felt

apprehension as a performing artist. The musical world is talking the language of battlefield. The artist are falling a pray to the alluring prizes awarded in the musical competitions organized by different electronic media. Even though the aim of such competitions is explore the real talent, they do not bring the grooming process of the performing artists to the limelight and also the very essence of performing arts is lost in such events. Hence from this august dais, I appeal to all the performing artists and art lovers, that the need of the hour is to protect & preserve the treasure of Indian traditional performing arts.

### Conclusion

When we look at the Indian Cultural scene today, we understand that hundreds of performing arts co-exist even today. They are presented in their traditional form and in accordance with the customary. Finding the origin, rise, development of these performing arts is difficult. Documentation & dissemination of vital information on the performing arts that are on the verge of ending, has become essential. Video Record of theatrical performances offers the most viable alternative in this regard. Under the mask of professionalism, the blind acceptance & imitation of Western Culture has resulted in commercialization of the performing arts. The criterion of professional approach is applied to the performing arts but the attitude exhibits only the commercial angle of vested interests, As a result, the original form of Indian traditional performing arts gets affected. Their performances are valued in terms of money. The electronic media have reached the homes but the vision is distorted in the process of modernization & globalization.

These presentations are mistaken by the new generation as the new variety of performing arts. We all must put a concerted and consolidated effort to stop this invasion on the Indian culture & Indian traditional performing arts. It's also essential to find out a golden mean between the traditional & modern outlook of the performing arts.

Finally, the rich heritage & treasure of Indian traditional performing arts along with the pluralistic perspectives should be passed on to the next generation so that the performing arts reach the masses in future also.

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