

Music in Invocations of Indian Classical Dance Forms

Mrs.E.Sreelakshmi¹, Dr. J. Sankar Ganesh²

Research Scholar (Full- Time), Dept of Performing Arts, S.V. University, Tirupati
Guide, Dept of Performing Arts, S.V. University, Tirupati

Abstract

India is land of gods, vedas, and epics and also enriched with sages, saints and divine rituals. Since the ancient times, the literature, music, dance, painting and sculpture are considered as the several ways to worship the god to attain the grace of and thus the salvation. Among these, music and dance are considered as renowned cultural traditions in India. Music plays the major role in dancing.

In modern India 2 kinds of dance styles are said to be prevalent namely classical and folk. Among these the classical dance forms were originated from temple culture. India is known for its rich cultural and varied heritage. Diversity is the identity of the country. Today there are 8 classical dance forms recognized by Sangeet Natak Akademi of India and Ministry of Culture, Govt of India based on its style and uniqueness. They are namely Bharatha Natyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniyattam, Odissi and Sattriya. Although these classical dance forms evolved from different parts of the country, the roots could be traced from the famous Sanskrit text “Natya Sasthra” written by Sage Bharatha.

All these classical dance forms are bound to specific design of rules and technicalities, body movements, rasa and bhava etc. Music involved in these dance forms are based on the regional preference and influence. Different kinds of musical compositions were created to show the beauty of dance to the depth such as Jathi swaram, Swara Jathi, Pada varnam, Kirtana, Kriti, Padam, Sabdam, Tarangam, Ashtapadhi, Javali, and Thillana etc

This paper is to highlight the musical forms involved in the invocation part in each of these 8 Classical Dance forms of India.

Keywords: Alarippu, Pushpanjali, Kavuthvam, Mangalaacharan, Thodayam, Vandanam, Salaami, Choleketu and Raas etc.

1. Introduction

Invocations in Dance Forms are vibrant because it has to showcase the style and beauty of that particular Art Form with simple steps at instance. These occupy the opening items of the Dance Performance. Invocations in dance could be like invoking God, Praying Lord Ganesha or any other god, conveying “Namaskaram” to all, inviting the audience or explaining about the theme of the day in short etc. Generally, an impressive and attractive item would be chosen for this. In each of the dance form invocation differs and depends upon the style of that particular region, specific set of prescribed rules and technicalities involved in them. All these Dance forms follow either Bharatha’s Natya Sasthra or Abhinaya Darpanam of Nandikeswara.

In each of the Dance form invocation item has been explained under. Though there are many dance forms are all over the country, only 8 Dance Forms were recognized by Govt of India. They are

1. Bharatha Natyam
2. Kathak
3. Kathakali
4. Kuchipudi
5. Manipuri
6. Mohiniyattam
7. Odissi
8. Sattriya

Thus the music involved in these items could be discussed here under

1. Invocation in Bharatha Natyam

Bharatha Natyam is also known as “Sadir Natyam” or “Tanjavur Natyam”. This is the state dance of Tamilnadu which is very ancient and about 2000 years old and is a combination of **Bhava**, **Raga** and **Tala**. It was initially performed by Devadasi-s in temples and courts of kings. It follows the rules of Natya Sasthra. Though Bharatha Natyam exists since ancient times, the present repertoire (sequence of performance items) was set by Tanjore quartet namely Chinnaiah, Ponnaiah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu in early years of 19th Century.

Bharatha Natyam performance begins with ‘Alarippu’ which is considered as the invocation item. But in recent times Mallari, pushpanjali and Kavuthvam too are being performed as starting piece in Bharathanatyam which actually exist as part of temple traditions performed by Devadasi-s in ancient India. It is totally depended on regional preferences of Guru-s. Among these, Alarippu is considered as the major invocation item.

Alarippu – ‘Alarippu’ is the starting piece of Bharathanatyam where the dancer makes entry on to the stage to offer respects to God, guru and audience. Alarippu means flowering bud. This image is portrayed in a progression of movements beginning with the head and neck while using very little of the performance space. As the dance progresses, the movements incorporate more of the body and performance space. Alarippu will be accompanied by Nattuvanar, a verbal percussionist along with Mridangist on singing solkattu-s. This is usually done in many raga-s like Sankarabharanam, Sriragam and Naata etc. Different Tala-s like Triputa Talam, Adi Talam and Eka Talam are used in different tempos like Tisram, Chaturasram, Khanda, Misra and Sankeerna. Sometimes Ragamalika Alarippu also will be done using different tempos. It is a pure Nritha (dance without any expression) to invoke the god and to create the feel of divinity.

Mallari – In the word “Mallari”, ‘Malla’ means ‘wrestler’ or a palanquin bearer and ‘ri’ means ‘ghosha’, the sound made by the bearer. Mallari is a unique piece of music played by Nagaswaram (also called as Nada swaram) with the accompaniment of Dolu (Thavil) in temples during the procession of ‘utsava murthy’ or temple deity with song and dance. This kind of musical composition doesn’t have any particular language lyrics and contain only Solkattu jathis-s and syllables ‘thom – nam – thaka – dheem – tha- di – gina – thaam – thaka - dhina’ etc. Instruments such as Flute, Veena, Mridangam, and cymbals are used for this and a blend of all these with the grace of pure Nritha is used to depict the Aarti (Harathi) ritual of worship and deity procession.

The raga used in Mallari is mainly Gambheera Naata Ragam using various tala-s such as Tisra Jathi Triputa Talam, Rupaka talam and Adi talam in khanda gathi and chaturasra gathi etc. Performance of Mallari begins with Madhyama kalam (medium speed), gradually switches to Duritha Kalam (faster) by increasing the tempo and subsequently reduces to vilambam (slow). In continuation to this, the artiste once again switches to Madyama kalam, duritham (faster pace) and does tisram and further to duritham and gradually comes back to madyama kalam. This Mallari comes in various forms such as Periya melam, Chinna melam, Thaligai Mallari and Ther Mallari in temple tradition.

Pushpanjali - ‘Pushpanjali’ is a divine offering of flowers which meant to invoke the God, the guru, the orchestra, and the audience for their blessings before starting the performance. The hymn or Slokam in the pushpanjali praises the elephant headed Ganesha, the god for new beginnings and remover of obstacles. It will contain only swara syllables along with series of Solkattu jathis. It is a combination attractive raga phrases, suitable mukthayi koorpu-s (arrangement) and brings attraction to composition to invoke the god. The raga-s used here are Gambheera Naata, Salaga Bharavi, and Lalitha etc. Tala-s used are in wide range such as 35 Tala-s, with Jathi and Gathi bhedas.

Kavuthvam – This is one of the invocatory items specially dedicated to a particular deity. For example Ganesha Kavuthvam, Natesha Kavuthvam, and Andal Kavuthvam etc. It has a unique structure and begins with recitation of rhythmic solkattu-s followed by melodic rendition of lyrics and again end with Solkattu-s. Other varieties in Kavuthvam are Pachamukha Kavuthvam and Nava sandhi Kavuthvam with combination and in praise of multiple deities.

Raga-s used in Kavuthvam are Naata, Varaali, Hamsa Dhvani, Gowla, and Arabhi etc. Tala-s are used from 35 Tala system with different combination of Jaathi-s and gathi-s depending upon the style of composition. For example – Adi tala with chaturasram and Eka tala with Sankeernam etc. Instruments used in Bharatha Natyam are Violin, Mridangam, Ghatam, Kanjira, and Tambura, cymbals and for temple tradition, Nagaswaram and Dolu are used. The sequence of Bharatha Natyam Repertoire includes initially Alarippu, Jathi swaram, Sabdam, Swara Jathi, Pada Varnam, Padam (Vilamba kalam with abhinaya), Javali, Ashtapadi, Kriti/Kirtana, Tillana, and Sloka.

2. Invocation in Kathak

Kathak is an ancient classical dance form originated from North India covering Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarath and Maharashtra. Kathak is famous for its extraordinary and spectacular foot work and fast spins with Mughal influences. Unlike the other dance forms Kathak is performed by both Hindus and Muslims on the stage maintaining some difference in the invocation items. As per the repertoire Hindu kathak dancers will commence the performance with VANDANA or sthuthi like Guru Vandana, Ganesha Vandana, Mahadev Vandana and Vishnu Vandana including a slokam too sometimes. In Muslim tradition of Kathak, “Salaami” is the invocation part with which Nartak/Nartaki offers the salutation to the audience, which is known as ‘Namaskar Tukda’. Depending upon the different regions, the different styles of Gharana-s were formed by giving the importance to particular item. For Example, Lucknow Gharana is preferred to Bhava by performing Tumri-s and Jaipur Gharana is famous for fast spins and speedy foot work.

Raga-s preferred here are – Yaman (Kalyani), Bhairav (Mayamalava gaula), & Siva Ranjani, etc. Semi classical raga-s are also used for Kathak compositions such as Misra peelu, Pahadi, Bhagesri, Yaman kalian (Yamuna Kalyani), Behag, Bhoop (Mohanam), Bheempalasi (Abheri) etc.

Tala-s are used based on the requirement of composition and preference of the composer. They are Trital or Teental (Adi talam) – 16 matra, Japtal – 10 Matra, Ektal – 12 Matra, Chowtal – 12 Matra, Ada-chowtal & Dhamaar having 14 Matra each, Saavari – 15 Matra, Rupak (Misra chapu)– 7 Matra, Keherwa – 8 Matra, and Dadra – 6 Matras are used along with Pancham Savaari (known as Layakaari).

Instruments are widely used in Kathak. Especially, Sarangi, Pakhavaj, Tabla, Sitar, Bansuri, Flute, Swara Mandal, Sarod, Jasraj and Tanpura etc.

3. Invocation in Kathakali

Kathakali is originated from the State of Kerala. It is known for its unique makeup and costume style. This classical dance form is the longest performance item which runs from dusk to dawn for almost 3-7 days. But now a day it has been reduced to 1-3 hours performance due to changed tastes of audience and changes in the life style in the society.

The invocation items in kathakali form a long series and sequence. As per the ancient practice a prior announcement will be done in the evening with the details of Kathakali play of the day which is called KELI using the instruments Chenda, Maddalam, Chengila and Ela talam.

Before commencement of the play AREMUKELI is done with Maddalam and Chengila, behind the curtain. In continuation to this, a brief 'Aalap' (Alapana) is done by singing only Akaaram which is known as "Mukha jaalam". This does not refer to any particular raga or Talam, The main singer specially called 'Ponnari' plays the instrument called "Chengila" and the supporting singer called as "Shankidi" plays a disc like instrument with a stick called "Ela Talam". Thodayam and Vandana Slokam also will be done behind the curtain (which is called as 'Ranga Puja').

Music involved in Invocation items of Kathakali - 'Thodayam' will be started in "Gambheera Naata" Raga and ends with "Madhyamavathi" raga for a duration of half an hour and then a Vandana Sloka will be in Kedara Gowla or in Kambhoji raga is performed. Then the curtain opens and the next item "Purappadu" will be performed as Ragamalika having raga-s Sankarabharanam, Thodi, Bhairavi and Mohanam etc.

Followed by this Tiraseela, Mala Padam, Ashtapadi, are performed and then the actual story play will start like a theme and ends up with 'Dhanashi' which is last item. Followed by this, the instrumental music like drumming continues for some time.

Tala-s used in invocation of Kathakali – Following Tala-s are used in the compositions of Invocations of Kathakali.

1. Chempata (equal to Aditalam) - having 8, 16 & 32 matra-s
2. Chempa (equal to Khanda Chapu Talam) – having 10, 20 & 40 matra-s
3. Tripata (Equal to Misra Chapu) – Having 7 matra-s
4. Adandha Talam (equal to Ata Talam) – Having 14, 28 & 56 matra-s
5. Panchari (Equal to Rupaka Talam) – having 6,12 & 24 matra-s
6. Muri Adandha – having 14 matra-s

The speciality in Kathakali is, most of the performance items are composed as Ragamalika and Talamalika. It does not limit to any one particular raga or Tala.

4. Invocation in Kuchipudi

Kuchipudi is one of the eight major Indian classical Dance forms, originated from state of Andhra Pradesh. Kuchipudi is known for impressive and expressive abhinaya with a blend of Tandava and Lasya movements. The Natya item 'Bhama Kalapam' composed by Siddhendra Yogi is the major part of this classical dance form. Kuchipudi will have some similarities with Bharata Natyam in the repertoire with few structural differences and style of dance.

Invocation - In Kuchipudi the stage performance starts with traditional prayer "Amba Paraku devi paraku" in Mohana raga set to Misra Chapu in Madhyama kalam that performed as a song or dance in the beginning in different tempos. This composition is about the goddess Bala Tripura Sundari and also praises Goddess Gowri, Parvathi and Saraswathi etc.

Followed by this, Pushpanjali (Namaskaram) will be done with slokam in Sanskrit like “Angikam bhuvanam” and “Guru brahma” along with a Telugu slokam “Subha kalpa tarurbhati”. This will be continued with a song “Brahmanjali tandava nritya srashtaku....divyanjali lasya kelana lolaku” performed by offering Namaskaram to Lord Nataraja, Mother earth, Siddhedra yogi (Founder of Kuchipudi) guru and the audience. This is tuned in Thodi raga set to Adi talam. Instruments used are Tambura, violin, Veena, Mridangam and cymbals etc.

Kavuthvams are also performed in Kuchipudi as part of invocation such as Ganapati Kavuthvam in Atana & Suddha Saveri etc. Also patterns of birds, animals and gods will be drawn on the floor/stage, using feet with white chalk powder by singing devotional songs along with accompanying solkattu jathis. Ex - Mayura Kavuthvam, Simhanandana kavuthvam & Durga Kavuthvam etc.

The other repertoire items in Kuchipudi are Jathi swaram in Atana Ragam, Sabdam (Manduka Sabdam & Ramayana Sabdam), Tarangams like ‘Thaka thiku thom thaka thom thaka dhirana’ & ‘Bala gopala’ in mohana ragam set to Aditalam, Swarajathi, Pada Varnam, Padam, Jaavali & Tillana, Natya items like Bhama Kalapam and Srinivasa kalyanam with Patra Pravesa Daruvu-s will be performed. Now a day Annamacharya sankirtans, Ramadau kirtans and Tyagaraja Kritis are also being performed as part of Kuchpudi dance items.

5. Invocation in Manipuri

Manipuri dance has been originated from Manipur state of Northeast India. It is known for its special costume “Kumil”, an attractive cylindrical shape attire. ‘Lai Haraoba” the earliest dance form of Manipuri, which exists since 15th Century. It was said to be Gandharva-s were lived in this place in the ancient times. This dance form follows Vaishnava sampradaya Sankirtana Pattern. They specially perform “RAAS” dance which depicts the stories from Bhagavatha, Geetha Govindam (Jayadeva), and Maha Bharatha, such as childhood incidents of Lord Krishna and his other life incidents. Krishna and Radha are the main gods along with Gopi-s in these performances. The dance movements are very gentle and smooth. This is a “Lasya’ type of dance. Dancers will not wear ankle bells to their feet.

Music in invocations of Manipuri - Invocatory dance items in Manipuri are semi classical items. The performance starts with Sloka in madhyama kala. The beginning item is ‘Vandana’ is performed like Krishna Vandana or Vishnu vandana. As per ancient traditions, Maibee Jagoi (Dance) will be performed and most importantly Dasavathar will be done to invoke the Lord Vishnu. Followed by this, ‘Nata Sankirtana’ will be performed.

Music in these compositions is almost like Ragamalika-s and tala malika-s. Sometimes even 8 number of tala-s are performed together as series in a single composition. Few musical notes from Malav Raga and some local tunes are used in these dance items. Few of the Tala-s used are Chali, - 8 matra-s, Tanchap – 8 matra-s, Teen tal tevora chanda – 7 matra-s and Teental dasa kosha. The repertoire items include 3 styles of Raas Leela, Pung Cholam and Thang-Ta etc.

Instruments used in Manipuri dance are Pung (barrel drum) – rhythmic instrument, Pena (Bamboo) Bansuri, Kartal (cymbals), Esraj and Sankh (Conch).

Invocation in Mohiniyattam

This is another Classical dance form (other than Kathakali) from the state of Kerala known for its grace and beautiful movements with special half-white saree having a golden border, which is a special attraction. This is mostly a female dance. The invocation starts with ‘Cholkettu’ (Solkattu) on stage by

singing jathi-s and various series of Adavu-s will be performed along with Sloka-s. The sloka-s may be Ganesha Vandana or Vishnu Vandana etc. It is interesting to know one of Ganesha Vandana composition has been tuned in a rare raga namely “Lavangi” created by Dr.Mangalampalli Bala Murali Krishna.

Raga-s used in Mohiniyattam - Cholkettu-s are in different raga and tala combination. The compositions are in Ragamalika and Tala malika form. The combination of raga-s used will be depending upon the dance composers. For ex – A Cholkettu may have a combination of Raga “Saurashtra, Kedaram & Bhairavi”, another may have in the combination of “Ananda Bhairavi, Amritha Varshini, Nalina Kanthi, Lalitha & Saaranga” etc.

Tala-s are used like Tala malika which is combination of two or more tala-s such as Adi Talam and Misra Chapu with Tisra or Chaturasra gathi etc.

The invocation item ‘Cholkettu’ will be followed by Jathi swaram, Varnam, Padam, Kirtana, Tillana and /sloka that forms the repertoire of Mohiniyattam.

6. Invocation in Odissi

Odissi Dance form is originated from the State Odisha. This classical dance form was born in temples. The Nritya, Nritya, poetry and music harmoniously embellish this graceful dance form. Odissi was influenced by Ashtapadi songs of Jayadeva’s magnum opus ‘Gita govindam’ authored in 12th Century.

In Odissi, the invocation starts with “Mangalaacharan” which invokes an auspicious environment through which the dancer marks his/her entry on the stage to invoke the blessings of Lord Jagannadha (Incarnation of Vishnu) for an auspicious beginning. This will be followed by Pushpanjali (offering flowers to god). Then it continues with BHOO MI PRANAAM, a salutation to mother earth, then to the Guru, followed by to the accompanying artists, and audience. Then the dancer prays Lord Ganesha to remove the obstacles with his blessings. The sequence further continues with Trikhanda Pranaam, a three- fold salutation to God, Guru and the audience. Further sequence occupies Batu Nritya or Batuka Bhairava (fast paced Nritya), Ardhanari sthotram and Dasavathara Sthotram forms the Nritya part and it ends up with Moksha (Or Mokshya).

Raga-s involved in Odissi – There are different types of Odissi raga-s such as Kalyana, Nata, Bhairavi, Shree Gowda, Karnata, Baradi, Panchama, Dhanasri, and shoka baradi

The traditional tala-s used in Odissi are

1. Ektaal – 4 Matra-s
2. Khemta – 6 Matra-s
3. Tripata – 7 Matra-s
4. Adi taal – 16 Matra-s
5. Adda tali – 14 Matra-s,
6. Jhampa – 10 Matra-s
7. Ardha jampa – 5 Matra-s

Apart from above mentioned Tala-s few other tala-s like Rupak Tala, Sariman Tala, Kuduk Tala, Yati, Asta and Matha Tala are also in use. In 1896 AD, Odissi musicologist Padmanava Narayana Deva mention about “Saptha Tala system along with five Jathi bheda” that exists in Carnatic Music in his book “Tala Sarbasara Sangraha”. Hence odissi often borrows few Tala-s from Carnatic music system too. Mardala (Pakhawaj), Tabla, Violin, Flute, Sitar, Tanpura, Bansuri and Manjira are the instruments used in this dance form.

7. Invocation in Sattriya

Sattriya is the classical dance form performed in the state of Assam, existing since 15th century developed in 'Satra-s' (Hindu monasteries) as "Ankiya Nat" by Madhav Dev & Srimanth Sankar Dev of Vaishnav tradition. This Dance form was restricted to perform only inside the monasteries and was banned to do open performances till the end of 20th century. Hence, Sattriya remained unknown to outside world. In the year 2000, this dance form was recognised by Govt of India and formed as one of the 8 Classical Dance forms.

In this dance form, the invocation commences with a hymn (known as 'Ghoxa'), followed by this, 'Vandana' will be performed. This may include Guru vandana, Krishna Vandana or Rama Vandana etc. Followed by this, the item JHUMURA will be performed. Jhumura includes Ramdani, Geetor Nach and Mela Nach which forms Suddha Nritta.

The Raga-s include a wide range namely Amat kalyan, Basant (For Raas also), Tur basant, Pareng, Sindhura & Suhai are used for Invocation items.

The Tala-s include – Ek Tala, Thukkani (3 Matra-s) Tal, Chuta Tal (4 Matra-s) in chaturasram, Pari tal, Sutkala Tal, Saruvisham Tal, Jaman Tal, Jyothi Tal, Mela Jyothi tal, Dharm Jyothi Tal, and Kharman Tal etc. The repertoire includes Mati Akara, Krishna Nach, Nadu bhangi, Gopi Nach, Chali, Borgeet, Sutra Dhara, Bor Prabesh, Mela Nach, Ankiya Naat, Kharman, Mukthi mangala bhatima etc.

Conclusion – It is observed that music in all of these eight dance forms are unique. Also the raga-s used in Bharatha natyam, Kuchipudi and Mohiniyattam are Carnatic classical raga-s and tala-s obviously, the 35 Tala system with jaathi and Gathi bedham. Kathakali has a different Tala system when compared to other three South Indian dance forms, whereas, the Kathak follows Hindustani raga and Tala system. In Odissi, the combination of both Carnatic and Hindusthani raga-s and a few ancient Odissi raga-s are being used. Manipuri uses only a few raga-s and Tala-s, whereas Sattriya is having rich raga and Tala system.

Authors' Biography



1st Author – E.Sreelakshmi, Research Scholar (Full time) in Carnatic Music (Vocal), Dept of Performing Arts, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh



2nd Author – Dr. J. Sankar Ganesh, Asst Professor, Dept of Performing Arts, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh

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