

Scope of Thematic Jati-s in Nr̥tya: An Observation

ARUN S

PhD research scholar-Department of Performing Arts Music and Dance,
JAIN (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru

Date of Submission: 08-07-2022

Date of Acceptance: 22-07-2022

I. INTRODUCTION

Bharatanāṭya is one the most popular dance forms of India and the world. The scope which Bharatanāṭya offers in terms of technique is dynamic. This is because it has beautifully incorporated the influences of other forms of art; Āṅgika, literature and music, Āhārya, influences from sculptures and above all the emotions and characters are truly inspiring.

At the level of expression, Bharatanāṭya has two major elements, referential and non-referential, Nr̥tya and Nr̥tta. Nr̥tta is the non-lyrical expressions and movements of sheer joy . Nr̥tya is referential expression in which the Āṅgika becomes a suggestion for a particular purpose¹.

In Bharatanāṭya , Abhinayahasta-s (hand gestures) are prominent in expression while in forms like Odissi, Manipuri and even Kuchipudi to an extent, Anga (body movement) comes in aid along with hasta as a Sthāna (posture) or Çārī (movement). With the strength of the oral tradition and experimentations of the practitioners, we have a dynamic form which is capable of sustenance and adaptation. Music and dance are inseparable; the strength and inspiration to dance is from the sāhitya (literature) and music.

Bharatanāṭya is primarily based on Karnāṭaka Saṅgīta ; the entire repertoire almost follows the system of Karnāṭaka Saṅgīta. However, there are a few specialties or adaptations, if we can say , in the Karnāṭaka Saṅgīta of dance. One such specialty is the concept of Jati of dance, which usually occurs as part of a *Korappu* (descending pattern of muktāya) or *Erappu* (ascending pattern of muktāya) in the Tani (a series of Korvai -s-patterns, followed by an elaborate Tirmāna) of Karnāṭaka Saṅgīta ; in Bharatanāṭya, Jati-s are danced- not necessarily the same patterns of the Tani, but the Jati-s are specifically composed to suit dance. We can definitely say that the patterns in a music concert and the Jati -s of Bharatanāṭya are different, mainly because of the purpose.

From the documentations available², we can observe that during the 1980's and more prominently in 1990's due to the experimentations of veterans like Pt. Kelucharan Mohapatra, Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam, Prof. C V Chandrashekar, Vid. Chitra Visverswaran among other prominent dancers, there was a new technique or new approach where the Jati-s were composed with an attribution of emotion(s), making them an integral part of the composition³. This gradually gained much significance and became a 'technique' of presentation and it is now one of the most widely used approaches, especially in the dance drama productions. . If we observe our history, we find this to be common in the descriptions of dance techniques in the Lakṣaṇagrantha-s⁴. However, our focus now is to understand their scope as technique. These jati -s with a specific intention or elaboration of Bhāva(s) are "Thematic Jati"⁵.

¹ In Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, this has been understood as referential Nr̥tta and non-referential Nr̥tta

² Archival videos of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Prasar Bharati archives and DVD publications- all of which are published by the respective bodies on various online platforms and some for public purchase.

³ Although Jati-s of Bharatanāṭya come as part of dance choreography, until this time and even the present time, Jati is considered as a separate segment or element different from the Abhinaya (dance elaboration of sāhitya)

⁴ Nāṭyaśāstra, Saṅgītaratnākara, Bharatārṇava, Nartananirṇaya among others (as observed by the author).

⁵ We can refer the writings of Dr. R Sathyanarayana and his commentaries on the Lakṣaṇa and Lakṣya . From the scholar's conclusions, the Thematic Jati-s were termed "Dharu".

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

The purpose of the present paper is to only understand the scope of Thematic Jati-s. It is important to remember that the Aesthetics of the Thematic Jati with respect to structure, Rasa-Dhvani and Auçitya needs a separate writing.

III. ANALYSIS

Thematic Jati-s are regular jati-s with all the elements of a jati present, but the difference is, it is rendered to a particular Bhāva mostly catering to the actor to emote. Planning or composing a thematic jati work at various levels, patterns (Yati), combination of families of Sōllukaṭṭu -s (syllables), mode of rendition, use and support from the percussion instruments and voice modulations. These can also have dialogues included or short phrases of sāhitya as references to the vastu (idea or main plot). The significant difference between a regular Jati and a thematic Jati is the presence of carefully chosen Sōllukaṭṭu (s) which suggests the Bhāva in the sound and the quality of it along with the pattern, while a regular Jati will mostly be a set of attractive and similar sounding syllables (Samāna Śṛti) arranged appropriately as per some pattern.

Adaptation of various Sōllukaṭṭu-s and their families has been an influence from various percussion instruments such as, Chaṇḍe, Maddala/Mardala, Pakhawaj, Tabala and such others apart from the Mṛdaṅga, Khanjira and Morsing of Karṇāṭ aka Saṅgīta all of which has been the observations and notes of the artistes (percussionists and dancers). Lakṣaṇagrantha-s like the Nāṭyaśāstra, Mānasollāsa, Bharatārṇava, Saṅgītaratnākara and Nartananirṇaya discuss a variety of syllables in accordance to the percussion instruments⁶.

One of the most significant aspects of Jati, whether it is thematic or non-referential, is the voice modulation. The Nāṭyaśāstra gives various modes, exercises and directives for production of sound, voice modulations and sound embellishments for the actor. Although these are discussed in the context of dialogues and music, we can infer the same to Thematic Jati-s as well. It is interesting to note that the aspects discussed by Bharata can be seen in the practicing tradition. Bharata in the 19th chapter, discusses six primary embellishments of the voice, *high pitched tone, Illuminative tone, Grave tone, Low pitched tone, Fast recitation and Slow recitation* (Unni, 2007). Such articulations of the voice are significant in rendering a thematic jati for the over-all appeal. We have to remember that these depend on the nature and use of Sōllukaṭṭu and also the pattern of the composition. Use of appropriate kārve (pause) is an important factor as well. We should remember that the nuances are always developed by the artiste through intuition, observation and practice and the above factors are identifying features of it.

With respect to the use of the Sōllukaṭṭu-s, the practicing tradition with its dynamic nature and influences, follows to the Lakṣaṇagrantha in spirit and adaptation; however, a few syllables are forgotten because of the respective percussion instrument is extinct (however, chances of adapting them are still possible (and successfully done by a few artistes, since the development of electronic percussion instruments where the pitch and frequencies can be easily changed to have the desired sound). To get an idea of the closeness between the Lakṣaṇagrantha and the practicing tradition, we can look into some of the descriptions. The syllables prescribed by the Lakṣaṇagrantha-s (mainly Nāṭyaśāstra, Bharatārṇava and Saṅgītaratnākara) are,

Bharata gives sixteen sets of syllables in the Avanaddha Vādyā chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra: *k, kh, g, hg, t, th, d, dh, ṭ, ṭh, m, r, l, h* which are to be combined with *a, ā, i, ē, o, am*. Followed by this, he gives a few permutations and combinations as a scale for formation of the syllables and patterns. Bharata-s descriptions are not elaborate and serve as pointers, when we compare with other treatises. (Unni, 2007)

Like Nāṭyaśāstra, Saṅgītaratnākara also talks about the sixteen syllables. Sārṅgadeva terms these syllables as 'Pāṭah'. The sixteen syllables are- *k, kh, g, gh, t, th, ṭha, ḍa, ḍha, ta, tha, da, dha, na, ra and ha*.

Sārṅgadeva while describing the Paṭaha instrument also gives a special syllable *jhen* which emerged out of a Dēśi Paṭaha known as Uddaḷi.

Sārṅgadeva gives five rhythmic phrases which emerged out of five faces of lord Shiva. Nāgabāndha emerged out of Sadyōjāta, Svastika out of Vāmadēva, Alagṇa out of Aghōra, Śuddhi out of Tatpuruṣa and Samaskhalita out of Īśāna. Each of these five phrases had seven phrases in each. Totally thirty phrases altogether. The Nāgabāndha patterns is, *tana - gina - gina - naga- naga. giḍa- giḍa - tagi - gida - gida - gida - dattha - kita - tara- kita- tata- kita- takita- thengi- thenthi*.

Sārṅgadeva gives the Ādiśabda for the syllables, they are: *tha, dhi, thom, nam*. The phrase is called Ganeśa Pāṭah. And it is invoke Lord Ganeśa's blessings to a beginner. The author as well gives the seven

⁶ Interested readers can study the author's M.Phil dissertation essay, submitted to JAIN (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru in the year 2015.

Śuddha Varṇa -s (syllables in this case) of the Mṛdanga . They are: *tha, dhi, tho, tengh, hengh, nam, doun*. (Shringy, 2007)

Nandikeśvara, the author of Bharatārṇava, says that the following syllables were heard by him when he witnessed Shiva-s and Devi-s dance. We can observe that more than individual syllables like in Nāṭyaśāstra , the syllables here are in patterns It is described in the thirteenth and the fourteenth chapter. The description is very elaborate. An example can be seen here to understand the pattern and the nature of the syllables- *tatta-ta-tari-ku ka kina thā-kiṇa kiṇa thā thā-kikiṇa- ṭi ta na ka ja ka thā*.

janaku dhariku-kukuni-kukuna-naku-jhem- na ku ja ka ki ta ta ri kum dari ku kum tattā -tham gi ta - ki ta ki na na ku - ku ku tām tom ki ta tā

Followed by such elaborated permutations, Nandikeśvara also prescribes the syllable patterns for group dances, Peruṇi, Preṅkhaṇi, Kalāsā, Kundali and Danḍikā forms . In the 15th chapter, there is a discussion of *Ādiśabda*- the primary dance syllables. The syllables *tā, thāi, tom, nam* are called *Ādiśabda* or the original syllables because they are were conceived first and they are to be fitted to Dhruva Tāla and performed accordingly. (Shastri, 1998)

The above syllables and patterns quoted are only examples and samples, but the description of the authors are much elaborate. Still, the from above few alone we can definitely find out the closeness of the contemporary practicing tradition with the Lakṣaṇagrantha-s.

With respect to other aspects of Jati, we can look at the thematic jati to observe the scope and grandness which a thematic Jati offers.

This thematic jati is used for the Pātra Prave śa of Rāvaṇa composed by Vid. D V Prasanna Kumar for the dance drama production Puśpakayāna curated by the Department of Performing Arts and Cultural Studies, JAIN (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru.

Overpowered by lust and having lost a stable mind, Rāvaṇa plans to kidnap Sītā; reckless, boastful and having never thought of any of his actions before, Rāvaṇa is always hasty with pride and power⁷.

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
rē * rē *	rē * rē *	rē * hurrē	* hurrē	* hurrē	nagaṇa-ra	gaṇa-jaga	ṇa-tagaga
rā * va ṇa	* asura	gu * ṇa *	ga * ḷa *	rā * va ṇa	****	****	****
ragaraga	ṇa-nagana	gaṇa-tagata	gaṇa-jaga	jagaṇa *	rā * va ṇa	****	****
rē * naga	ṇa- rē *ta	gaṇa-rē *	jagaṇa-rē	*dagaga	ḍṛgutadi	* im-ta	(dharikītom)
(kīṭataka dharikīta)	(tom)- rē rē rē	rē hurrē* hurrē	*hurrē *	(kīṭataka dharikīta)	(tom)- (kīṭataka dhari-)	(-kita)- rē rē rē	rē hurrē* hurrē
*hurrē *	(kīṭataka dharikīta)	(tom)- (kīṭataka dhari-)	(-kita-tom)- kīṭataka	(dharikīta- tom) rā	* va ṇa *	asura- (gu ṇa)	gaḷa-
rā * va ṇa	****	****	****	rā * va ṇa	****	****	****

In terms of the syllables *rē* and *hurrē* are particularly used to bring out an effect of the “shout”; whether it is the cry of Prakṛti that Rāvaṇa has arrived or Rāvaṇa himself announcing his arrival is left to the imagination of the dancer, the composer has beautifully suggested in the Jati. We have to observe that although Ra-kāra is Alpaprāṇa, it gets a quality of Karkaśa (rough, harsh or screech) because of the immediate use of the syllable *hurrē* which needs an additional exhaling of the breadth for the pronunciation and therefore also adding a pressure to the *rē* syllable. This is purposefully done by the composer for the desired effect of the nature of Rāvaṇa. A slight pause after *hurrē* also adds to the beauty. The combination of *rē* and *hurrē* syllables will sense as “loud” and “something dominating”, when it is heard. The syllables *ragaṇa, nagaṇa, tagaga, jagaṇa, kīṭataka-dharikītom* naturally lead to faced paced recitation suggesting the Āvega of Ra ṅvaṇa. Rāvaṇa who is impatient by nature is mesmerized by the beauty of Sītā ; and looking at her from a distance has made him more agitated and having no patience in possessing having her, a precious price! as he admits in the Rāmāyaṇa. In the jati, the Varṇa-s *ra, ṇa* are Karkaśa-varṇa-s which demand specific or intended pronunciation (because of the quality of the Karkaśa-varṇa) and does not smoothly merge with other syllables, and therefore intending deliberateness (in the minds of the listener) in the over-all listening experience. If we observe, each time the word Rāvaṇa appears in the Jati, there is either a Kārve (pause) or there is a syllable which is mellow, therefore the stress of the word Rāvaṇa is higher which suggests that “*Rāvaṇa the great! is here*”, which is Utsāha (zeal) to himself and Bhaya to the Prakṛti- which is again an Uddīpana (cause) for his Utsāha.

⁷ “*” is used to mark the Kārve (pause).

The composer has brilliantly used Çaturaśra gati for the jati. This aspect is important because, among all the gati-s, Çaturaśra gati has a quality of making itself invisible while giving Puṣṭi (strengthen) to the content. Tryaśra, Khaṇḍa, Mīśra and Saṅkīrṇa have a distinct and innate feel present. For example, Tryaśra and Mīśra most aesthetically cater to Rati and Khaṇḍa caters to Vīra, this is because of the structure. In Tryaśra, the structure of 1-2-3 repeatedly appearing creates a joyful metre for Rati and Hāsa and related emotions to flourish. And in Khaṇḍa, the structure 12-123, gives an over-powered-ness, the second 1 which comes after the first 2, is like a hit on the 2 to exert its power, which naturally suit Vīra and Krodha emotions.

But Çaturaśra-s strength is that it supports any emotion naturally because of the constant 1-2-3-4 which gives an almost plain and flat structure to fill in; from the view of structure, many patterns can be easily fitted in the structure of Çaturaśra and it will cater to it seamlessly. In the jati, we see pattern of three's and five's. Five which is Khaṇḍa which is 2+3, is explored as it is in the jati. *rē-nagaṇa* series has created a feeling of Bhaya and an atmosphere filled with tension- 3 which is greater than 2 is pronounced greater therefore establishing dominance over other things; and in the pattern of Tryaśra there is a sense of hurry. Both the patterns end with the shout as *Rāvaṇa*, therefore catering to the Sthāyi. Another strength in the jati is that different patterns are set as per the break of the Āvarta (cycle), this means that any pattern can be repeated as per the visualization of the dancer.

The highlight of the Jati is the use of Kārve. Each time *Rāvaṇa* is recited in Uçça (high pitched) or Mandra (Grave accent), there is a significant Kārve. The genius of the composer can be seen here. Like how, darkness encircles the sky, like how the killer readies itself just before pouncing on its prey, same is *Rāvaṇa*- the darkness, is the whole intention behind the use of the Kārve; in fact, this imagery is told by Vālmiki in the epic. The beauty is that after all the brisk patterns comes the *Rāvaṇa* followed by a long pause, to register the emotions and implications behind it. One can also observe the sadistic nature of *Rāvaṇa* here, he does not kill or destroy something at once but he draws pleasure in draining out slowly- to watch someone suffer. While, Lakṣmaṇa pleads Sītā to not to send him away in search of Rāmā, *Rāvaṇa* on the other hand draws pleasure from the situation thinking about the success of his plan, quietly.

We should observe that this Jati is not composed to be danced as Nṛtta by the composer but it is meant for the over-all impact. Meaning, the dancer as *Rāvaṇa* should not be matching footwork with the patterns but should only “act along” with suitable Sthāna-s so that the idea is effectively communicated. In fact, this is one of the main differences which can be observed in the pattern and Āṅgika of a regular Jati and a Thematic Jati. In the regular Jati, the pattern exuberates Harśa Bhāva (joy) and Nṛtta supports the same; while in a Thematic Jati, Nṛtta is referential and cannot be any combination of movements, it must essentially cater to the Sthāyi; it is essential that the visualization of the jati is done by sensing the pattern, the Kārve, and quality of sound (Sollukṛttu) in relation with the emotion. This is essential in the non-referential Nṛtta of the Jati as well, but it is imperative in the case of Thematic Jati. This is more evident in muktāya, after the set Tirmāna is completed, the jati still continues as *Rāvaṇa* with Kārve which suggests that it is not meant for Nṛtta but for the over-all impact because immediately after the Jati and *Rāvaṇa* phrase, will come the sāhitya or the next element of the production.

Such is the scope of Thematic Jati-s. The same principles are to be applied by the composer as well for composition of Jati. These are applicable for regular Jati-s too, but more so for thematic Jati-s.

IV. CONCLUSION

The present paper only discusses the scope which a thematic jati offers in terms of technique, and not the aesthetics, because of the boundaries of a journal paper. With this background and from the above limited observation we can understand the scope and potential which a Thematic Jati offers to dance. The study should be conducted from the view of Dhvani and Vakrokti for the complete understanding of the topic.

Although, Bharata describes the aspects of Vāçika and voice in particular with respect to that of dialogues and music, we can definitely infer the same principles to the recitation of the Jati. Due to the lack of the documentation, unfortunately there has been no structured system of teaching or learning of composition of Thematic Jati-s in the practicing tradition. Studying Lakṣaṇagrantha-s and inferring the same might help in developing a systematic pedagogy.

From the contemporary practicing tradition of traditional theatres, we can observe that the usage of Sollu-s along with the sāhitya (literature) is a very common practice; and this has beautifully taken its shape in Bharatanāṭya; we can see that the concept of Thematic Jati is gaining more popularity as a technique, especially in the dance drama tradition because of the effectiveness of the communication of the character or the theme. Studies such as these, by including the Aesthetics will not only give a direction in understanding and appreciating Thematic Jati but will also help in understanding the logic of composition. With a wholistic

approach, we can look at a theoretical understanding of the Thematic Jati, which shall open new possibilities of exploration.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Sastri Vasudeva K, 1998, *Bharatarnavam*, Tamil Nadu: Thanjavur Maharajaserfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library.
- [2]. Shringy R K, 2007, *Sangitaratnakara of Sarangadeva*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- [3]. Unni N P, 2014, *Natyasastra: A text with introduction, English translation and indices*, New Delhi: NBBC Publishers and Distributors Pvt. Ltd.
- [4]. Sreenivasan Arun, *Emanation of Mnemonic Syllables of Nāṭyaśāstra with special reference to Rasasūtra of Bharata*, M.Phil dissertation submitted to JAIN (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru, 2015.
- [5]. *Kaṇi Kathāmaṇi*- A dance drama production curated by Department of Performing Arts and Cultural Studies, JAIN (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru, 2018.

ARUN S "Scope of Thematic Jati-s in Nṛtya : An Observation ." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 27(07), 2022, pp. 66-70.