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Significance Of Dhruvā And Daru In Indian Dance Drama

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Abstract: Daru is analysed as a descriptive poem about characters in a play. It is assumed to have derived from Dhruvā songs, which are musical compositions about different elements of nature. Chapter 32 in *Nāṭya Sāstra* mentions about Dhruvā songs.

Aim: The aim is to study the importance and effectiveness of Daru in dance dramas, as well as how they have been used. Exploring how it contributes to storytelling, emotional engagement and the unique aesthetics of Indian dance drama.

Index Terms - Dhruvā, Daru.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian dance drama is one of the most popular ways of telling stories. *Nāṭya Sāstra*, written by Bharata Muni, is the first text in the history of Indian theatre to try to depict the performer's minds. *Nāṭya Veda* was considered a manual for theatre workers to help the performers of ancient India. Playwrights like *Bhāsa*, *Kalidāsa*, *Shūdraka*, *Vishākadatta*, *Bhavabhūti* and *Harsha* created many Sanskrit dramas in the first centuryⁱ.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A play was described as a poem (*kāvya*) that is to be seen and heard (*drshya kāvya*). Therefore, Songs and music play a pivotal role in enacting a playⁱⁱ.

Indian drama has given its incredible impact and limit to perfection since ancient times. Drama is basically a form of performing arts where the utilisation of dialogues, music, and dance enacts stories. The history of Indian drama dates back to the ancient Vedic period. Looking back towards the bygone historical path, the beginning of the ancient dramas owes to the Rig Veda for its monumental source material, together with *Purūrava*, *Urvashi*, *Yama* and *Yāmi*, *Indra- Indrāni*, *Sarma – Pāni* and *Ushas Suktās*. Even the epic of Ramayana, Mahabharata, was instilled with specific techniques of dramaturgy. As such, the origin of dramas from the early Vedic age is considered the most authentic and authoritative among all the later creations. Bharata Muni is regarded as the founder of the Indian dramaturgy, and he described Indian drama as the fifth Veda. Thus, Bharata is often acknowledged as the father of Indian theatrical arts. Bharata's *Nāṭya Sāstra* appears to be the first attempt to systematically devise and contrive the technique or, rather, the art of drama.ⁱⁱⁱ With the development of theatre, the songs gained a distinct identity. Earlier, people used to chant mantras in melodic lines, which can be accepted as the evolution of songs. But when this was adopted in the theatrical performances, it achieved distinct uniqueness, popularly known as the Dhruvā songs.

The song sung during the Vedic age was known as *Gāndharva*; when the songs were adapted in theatrical performances, it was known as *gāna*. The *Gāndharva* songs were sung to worship god, and the music performed for the *nāṭya* to demonstrate different situations was called *gāna*. In simple terms, Gitika was

considered *Gāndharva*, and Dhruvā was considered *gāna*. Later, when Bharata expanded the construction of songs in the *Nāṭya Sāstra*, he elaborated different dimensions and uses of songs that were different from the Vedic traditions known as the Dhruvā songs. The Dhruvā songs were used on various occasions for theatrical performances. Chapter 32 of *Nāṭya Sāstra* primarily deals with the Dhruvā songs, their specific employment, forms and illustrations.^{iv}

The origin of the term Dhruvā can be directly linked to the Dhruvā, or stage songs extensively detailed in the *Nāṭya Sāstra*.

"The dramatic songs par excellence were the Dhruva-s in which *varna*, *alamkāra*, tempo (*laya*) *jati* and *pāni* regularly occurred." (Ghosh,1995).

In *Nāṭya Sāstra*, five classes of dhruvā songs are described, each serving a specific purpose.

- *Prāvēśiki*- related to *pravēsa* (entry)
- *Akśēpiki* - *akśēpa* (diversion)
- *Naiśkramiki* - *niskrama* (departure)
- *Prasādiki* - *prasāda* (calming)
- *Antara* - *antara* (transition) (Ghosh, M.A. 1995 The *Nāṭya Śāstra*.)

The first Dhruvā is *prāvēśiki* (entry), where before the beginning of the performance, the worship is offered to the gods in the *pūrvānga*, that is, during the preliminaries before the commencement of instruments, offering prayers to shiva^v.

Themes of various sentiments sung at the entrance of characters on the stage are referred to as *Prāvēśiki Dhruvā*.

Songs sung at the exit of characters to indicate their departure are called *Naiśkramiki Dhruva*.

Songs sung to divert the audience's attention from shortcomings in the performance or when the principal characters become gloomy, absent-minded, angry, etc., are referred to as *Antara Dhruva*.

Songs sung to calm the audience after they have experienced something that strongly aroused their emotions are known as *Prasādiki Dhruva*.

Songs sung on occasions such as being captured, obstructed, fallen, attacked with illness, dead, or in a swoon are referred to as *Akśēpiki Dhruva*.

From their detailed description, the Dhruva appear to serve as a form of background music, indicating the actions and moods of different characters in a play. These suggestions are conveyed through the content of the songs as well as through their meter, language, tempo, and *tāla* (rhythm). (Ghosh, M.A. 1995 The *Nāṭya Śāstra*.)

III. DARU TRADITION

Daru is a descriptive poem about characters in drama. In the world of theatre, Dhruvā and Daru-s are shining examples of how to express feelings well in "*Geya Nātakās*," which is like singing opera. They each have unique qualities that make them special, and when they come together on stage, it's like they complete each other, making the whole show more interesting and exciting.

Daru-s in our *Nāṭya* and *Geya Nātakās* have a distinctive structure that sets them apart. Typically, they start with a section called the "*Pallavi*," followed by the "*Anupallavi*," and then they have multiple "*charanā-s*." This format highlights the depth and complexity of Daru-s, allowing them to unfold their narrative gradually and explore various themes in detail.

During the Nayak rule in Tanjore, the Daru first appeared within the context of Yakshagāna performances. This marked the inception of Daru-s, which gradually evolved to become an integral component of dramatic representations across various theatrical traditions.

The earliest traced Yakshagāna performance in Andhra Pradesh is attributed to "Sugriva Vijayamu" by Kandakuru Rudra Kavi, a poet who flourished in the court of Krishnadevaraya. This seminal work marks an important milestone in the development of Yakshagāna, reflecting its rich cultural heritage and its patronage by influential rulers like Krishnadevaraya. In addition to employing a variety of *rāga*, the music of Yakshagāna was intricately woven into complex metric verses.

By the time of Vijayaraghava Nayak, the bombastic forms of Yakshagāna started to fade away. Instead, more captivating Daru-s, set to appealing *rakti rāgā-s*, became popular. These Daru-s used fewer verses but were highly engaging, capturing the attention of the audience with their melody and emotion.

During the Maratha rule in Tanjore, Daru-s gained widespread popularity and became integral components of the multitude of *Nāṭya* and *Geya Nāṭakas* composed during this period. These compositions flourished, enriched by the incorporation of Darus, which captivated audiences with its emotive power and melodic charm.

The musical form of Daru is frequently encountered in Telugu and Tamil dramas and operas such as Yakshagāna, Bhagavata Mela Nāṭakas, Kuravanji Nāṭakas, and Therukkoothu. It belongs to the realm of applied music, where its essence lies in being a narrative song.

In many instances, entire dialogues within these dramas and operas are structured as Daru-s. These compositions encompass a wide range of themes, including historical and mythological narratives, tales of love, and even expressions of gratitude or praise towards a patron. Thus, Daru-s serve as versatile tools within these performances, seamlessly integrating storytelling, emotion, and cultural expression.

A distinctive characteristic of Daru-s is the abundance of textual content within them. The *sāhitya*, or lyrics, holds significant importance in these compositions. Structurally, Daru-s closely resemble *kīrtanā-s*. While some Daru-s consist of the traditional *pallavi*, *anupallavi*, and *charana* sections, many are simplified to include only a *pallavi* and multiple *charanā-s*.

Indeed, the abundance of *charanā-s*, sung to the same musical accompaniment, is a distinctive feature of Daru-s. This characteristic adds to the richness and depth of these compositions, allowing for a diverse exploration of themes and narratives within the framework of a unified musical structure.

The Dhruvā songs exhibit similarities to certain features of Daru-s found in our post-medieval operas and dance dramas. For instance, the concept of "*pravēśika*" in *Nāṭya Sāstra*, which signifies a song announcing the entrance of a character onto the stage, finds its counterpart in the "*Pātrapravēśa Daru*" of Bhagavata Mela and Kuravanji Nāṭakas.

Daru-s have been categorised into various types based on their intended functions or roles within the context of performance.^{vi}

Daru-s are mostly in *madyama kāla*. There is also the use of *vilamba kāla*, depending on some circumstances. There are simple *tāla-s* like *ādi tāla* and *rūpaka tāla*, and the use of *chāpu tāla-s* is more. "*Chāpu tāla* is often found in Bhagavata Mela dramas. *Rakti rāga-s* are predominantly used. Most of all, there are no complications in the *rāga* movement. Daru-s can be classified according to the actions they indicate - *swāgatha daru*, *pralāpa daru*, *hecchārika daru*, *pādavandanas daru*; and depending on the occasion, there are many types of *varnana daru*, *praveśa daru*, *samvāda daru*, *uttara-pratyuttara daru*, *kummi kōlāta daru* and so on" (Kothari, & Pasricha, 2001).^{vii}

IV. CONCLUSION

Daru stands out as a versatile and vital component of Indian dance drama. It enriches the narrative and enhances emotional expression and dramatic structure. By seamlessly blending music, dance, and dialogue, the Daru is a powerful medium to convey rasa and bring the story to life, underscoring its indispensable role in traditional Indian performance.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ⁱ indianmediastudies.com/indian-theatre

ⁱⁱ <https://sreenivasaraos.com/tag/dhruva.songs/>

ⁱⁱⁱ www.indianetzone.com

^{iv} www.irjmsh.com

^v www.irjmsh.com

^{vi} Kuppaswamy, & Hariharan. (1992). Darus in Karnatic music. *The Journal of the Music Academy*, LXIII

^{vii} <https://www.granthaalayahpublication.org/Arts-Journal/ShodhKosh/article/view/1572/1168>