



PADABHEDAS IN BHARATHANATYAM ACCORDING TO ABHINAYA DARPAṆAM

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Introduction:

ABHINAYA DARPAṆAM, the Sanskrit treatise which is believed to have been written around 1000 CE by Sage Nandikeshwara serves as a comprehensive guide on the art of Indian dance and drama. The entire text is crafted in padya (poetry) which is considered to have been greatly influenced by Nāṭya Shāstra, the first ever treatise on Indian art forms, by Sage Bharathamuni. ABHINAYA DARPAṆAM helps in understanding the nuances of Abhinaya (expressions) which is the most important aspect in any art form. It offers a detailed exploration of Chaturvidha Abhinay; the four types of Abhinaya.

ANGIKA ABHINAYA

Expression using the body parts as the medium viz. head, eyes, neck, hands and feet

SAHARYA ABHINAYA

Deals with the external elements like costume, make-up, jewellery, etc.

VACHIKA ABHINAYA

Refers to the verbal expressions manifested through the recitation of verses, lyrics or dialogue, predominantly featured in drama.

SATVIKA ABHINAYA

Expression of inner emotion and psychological states, that is after a challenge for the dancers to attain. This ability of satvika abhinaya is considered the hallmark of a great dancer as it requires deep emotional involvement and control over one's expressions

Padabhedas in ABHINAYA DARPAṆAM:

Pādabhedas, the different types of foot positions and movements that are fundamental to the dance are explained in detail by Nandikeshwara in ABHINAYA DARPAṆAM. He generally classifies Pādabhedas as:

- Mandalas

- Utplavanas
- Bramhari
- Pādacharikas

MANDALA BHEDAS

The literal meaning of Mandala is “circular” or “rotational” movements. The types illustrated by Nandikeshwara are:

- **Sthanaka Mandalam.** Standing on samapada (both feet together) keeping the body straight with ardhachandra hasthas on either side of the waist. Sthanaka Mandalas
- **Ayatha Mandalam.** The dancer’s legs are spread wide apart and the knees are bent, creating a broad open stance.
- **Aalidha Mandala.** One foot is placed forward and the other back, with the body slightly turned and knees bent signifies preparation or readiness.
- **Prathyalidha Mandala.** If the position in Aalidha Mandala is reversed, it becomes Prathyalidha Mandala. In this posture the left foot will be away from the right foot.
- **Prekhana Mandala.** One foot is placed by the side of the heel of the other foot and kurma hashta is assumed.
- **Preritha Mandala.** To strike the ground with one foot on the side of the other foot at a distance of three vithasthas (27 inches) and to stand with the knees crossed holding shikhara hashta on the chest with one hand extending the other hand as pathaka hashta.
- **Swasthika Mandala.** Standing with the right foot put across the left foot and the right hand put across the left hand.
- **Motitha Mandala.** Standing on the toes and assuming tripathaka hasthas with both hands, if the ground is touched by the knees alternately.
- **Samashuchi Mandala.** If the ground is touched by the toes as well as the knees it is Samasuchi Mandalam.
- **Parshvashuchi Mandala.** Standing on the toes if the ground is touched by one knee on one side.

UTPLAVANA BHEDAS

Refers to the different types of leaps or jumps used in dance. They are:

- **Alaga Utplavana.** This is a simple leap where the dancer jumps straight up with both feet leaving the ground simultaneously and landing in the same position. It is often used for subtle expressions or transitions.
- **Kartari Utplavana.** In this type of leap, the dancer jumps with legs spread apart and then brought back together before landing. The term "kartari" refers to a scissor- like movement, which is reflected in the way the legs move during the jump.
- **Ashva Utplavana.** This leap mimics the movement of a horse's gallop. The dancer jumps forward, leading with one leg while the other follows, creating a sense of forward momentum.
- **Motita Utplavana.** In this jump, the dancer leaps up with a twisting motion, typically with one leg lifted higher than the other. This leap involves a certain degree of rotation or shift in direction

- **Kripalaga Utplavana.** This involves a high jump with both legs bent at the knees, often creating an impression of suspension in the air before landing. The leap is characterised by a more dramatic elevation.

BRAMHARI BHEDAS

Refers to different types of circular movements or spins used in dance. These movements are crucial to add grace and dynamism to a performance. There are seven Bramhari Bhedas as per ABHINAYA DARPAṆAM.

- **Utthita Bhramari.** This involves a simple circular movement where the dancer spins on one foot while the other foot is raised. The raised foot remains in a lifted position throughout the spin.
- **Chitra Bhramari.** In Chitra Bhramari, the dancer spins in a circular motion while moving the body in a zigzag or intricate pattern. This adds complexity to the spin.
- **Nartana Bhramari.** This Bhramari involves a spinning movement where the dancer's body moves continuously in a circle with both feet on the ground. It is a dance-oriented spin where the dancer covers a certain space while spinning.
- **Anga Bhramari.** In this spin, the dancer rotates while moving specific parts of the body, such as the torso or arms, in a circular manner. It involves a coordinated movement of different body parts.
- **Karna Bhramari.** This involves a spinning movement where the dancer spins on one leg, with the other leg lifted and bent at the knee, typically brought near the ear (karna). The bent leg may also be used to create decorative shapes or forms during the spin.
- **Kunchita Bhramari.** In Kunchita Bhramari, the dancer spins while bending the knees and maintaining a low centre of gravity. The movement involves a circular motion with a slight elevation and lowering of the body.
- **Akasha Bhramari.** This type of spin involves a leap or jump while spinning in the air, creating a sense of elevation and lightness. The dancer's body leaves the ground and spins before landing gracefully.

CHARI BHEDAS

Charis are the specific types of leg movements or steps used in dance forms. They are of eight types viz.

- **Chalana Chari.** If a foot is moved from its original place, then it is known as Chalana Chari.
- **Chamkramana Chari.** Moving Forward (jtruping) with the outer sides of the feet. alternately.
- **Sarana Chari.** Assuming Patāka hastas with both hands, moving forward dragging the heel of one foot with the heel of the other foot, like a leech.
- **Vēgini Chari.** Assuming Alapadma and Tripatāka hastas with the two hands, and moving forward quickly on the heels or the toes, it is considered as Vēgini Chari due to quick movement.
- **Kuttana Chari.** Striking the ground with the heel or the forepart or the entire sole of the foot.

- **Luthita Chari.** If in the swastika position of the feet, the ground is struck by the forepart of a foot, it is considered as Luthita Chari.
- **Lolita Chari.** After striking the ground (as was done earlier), if the feet, without touching the ground are moved forward slowly, then it is Lolita Chari.
- **Vishamasamchara Chari.** When the left foot is encircled by (placed on the right side of) the right foot and likewise the right foot is encircled by the left foot, alternately, and moving forward in this manner.

Conclusion:

Padabhedas are crucial for the execution and expression in Bharatanatyam. They play a significant role in defining the rhythm, grace, and narrative depth of the dance. Mastery of these foot movements allows dancers to convey a wide range of emotions and stories, enhancing both the technical and expressive aspects of their performance. Through careful study and practice of Padabhedas, dancers uphold the traditional aspects of the dance form while contributing to its ongoing evolution and beauty.

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