
Concept of Dance as described in Agni Purana

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ABSTRACT:

Agni Purana is one of the eighteen Puranas. It is a voluminous work having as many as about 15, 000 verses, spread over 385 Chapters. The Agni Purana is a sort of encyclopedia that deals with wide-ranging subjects. Chapters 340 and 341, give some information about Dance, particularly relating to Anga-karma Abhinaya (actions, gestures, and movements). This puranic literature contains several references to dance and music which cannot be ignored.

The main purpose of the study is to examine the aesthetic value of the Natyashastra as well as its religious implications by examining all chapters pertaining to dance from the Agni Purana. This study is appropriate for the analytical research methodology. It attempts to critically analyse the information about Nrtiyadi-ranga-karma, which is a brief study of bodily actions in Dance.

Puranas have been influencing the value and purpose of life throughout the centuries and are valuable, as they supply the materials for the study of diverse subjects such as geography, cultural history, politics, education system, iconography, medicine, grammar, poetry, Alamkara, Chhandas, Rasa, Riti, Yoga and all fine arts including dance and music and this research paper is limited to only dance.

KEYWORDS:

Agni Purana, Angika Abhinaya, technical elements of dance, Natya Swaroop, Abhinaya Nirupana, Rasotpatti.

The Divine Origin and Spiritual Significance

According to the Agni Purana, dance and drama have divine origins. Dance is seen as a form of celestial expression, and dancers are considered the embodiments of divine grace and beauty. Agni Purana, says that dance and drama are sacred arts that can lead individuals to spiritual growth and liberation. Through dance, one can connect with the divine and transcend the material world, achieving a state of bliss and oneness with the cosmic consciousness. meanwhile performer is seen as a means to convey moral and ethical teachings to the audience, inspiring them to lead a righteous life and seek spiritual truth.

In this article, we will explore some of the techniques of dance described in the Agni Purana is especially important in terms of Nritta, Nritya, And Natya because after Natya Shastra, if there is a description of Natya in any Purana, then it is in Agni Purana.

Natya Swaroopa

Discussing about Natya Swaroopa of Agni Purana, there are 27 differences of drama have been described, which are as follows: Nāṭaka, Prakarana, Dīma, Ihamariga, Samaykara, Prahāsana, Vyāyōga, Bhāṣaṇa, Vīthi, Adaka Trōtakaa Dṛāmā, Saduka, Silpaka, Sanlapko Durgallikā, Prasthāna, Bhanikā Māvi, Gōṣṭhi, Haḷlīśāka, Kāvya, Srīgaḍita, Nāṭyarasaka Ullapāka And Prēdakhāna.¹

Rupakas

In Natya Shastra, Bharata Muni describes 10 rūpakas while in Agni Purana, 27 rūpaka variations are mentioned. Of these the latter gurus considered 10 types of rūpakas and the remaining 17 types of rūpakas are different forms, there are two characteristics of Natya.² General and special, General characteristics pervade all types of rūpakas and special characteristics are seen here and there.

Giving a detailed description of Natya, it is written in Agni Purana that there should be a Purvarda ritual at the beginning of Natya. it is Said to be 'Rangashala' or 'dancing place', where a pos-

sible obstacle takes place, for their peace Sutradhara who do Purvaranga by chanting hymns. Five types of Nandi are described in Agni Purana. follows:

देवतानां नमस्कारो गुरुणामपि च स्तुतिः
गो ब्राह्मण नृपादी नामाशीर्वादादगिियते।³

Meaning salutations to deities, praises to gurus, blessings of grays, brahmins and kings etc. are called Nandi.

Explaining the importance of the parts of poetry, it is written that just as a limbless man is not capable of any work, similarly limbless poetry is also not considered worthy of use, therefore, the situation of rasa bhav, vibhava anubhav, abhinaya, adak, etc. should be included in drama.

Abhinaya Nirupana

The Agni Purana, In Chapter 340 (NriyAṅga-karma-nirūpaṇam), the Agni Purana mentions Angas and Pratyangas. largely taken from the ancient Nr̥ttasutra and the Natyashastra.

In Chapter 341, describes the importance of the four types of Abhinayas and remarks that the four factors Angika, Vachika, Aharya, and Satvika play a dominant role in bringing out the best that exists in a Natya composition.⁴

In Agni Purana, the relationship between these four different concepts of abhinaya is associated with four functions. Among these,

स्तम्भादः सात्विको वागरंभो वाचिका अंगिकाः।
शरीरारंभ आहार्यो बुद्धरिम्भपरवृत्तयः ॥

Chittarambha (start of mind) is related to sattvika abhinaya, in which mystical emotions are expressed through sattvic emotions.

Vagarambha is related to oral performance.

Buddhayarambha is related to the acting, which includes customs, habits, and trends.

Sarirambha is related to physical performance. In which efforts

are demonstrated through steadfast attitudes.

In this way, the thought of Rasa Bhava is elaborated in Abhinaya Narupana of Agni Purana.

4.1 Angika Abhinaya:

The performance of Anga, Pratyanga, and Upadas is called Angika Abhinaya. The special efforts of the hero-heroines are showcased through Angika Abhinaya. The twelve avatars that spontaneously appear in the heroine's Angika movements are⁵ Leela, Vidhithi, Vilasa, Vibhrama, Kilkinchata, Mohayita, Kuttamita Bibboka, Lalita, Viritta, Kreeditha and Keli. In this way the thought of Rasa Bhavadi is elaborated in Agni Purana but not coted in Natyashastra. In Agni Purana, the six angas and six prathyangas are

शरिः पाणरिर पार्श्वङ्कटरिवधरिति क्रमात्⁶

4.2 Shiro-bedha:

There are thirteen actions of the head (Shirobedha); which are the same as given in the Natyashastra. Agni Purana gives Lalita for Lolita

4.3 Drsti-bedha:

Thirty-six movements of eyes (Drṣṭi-lakṣaṇam) are mentioned, among which, eight are the Rasa-drstis, related to the expressions to emotions and sentiments. another eight related to sthaya bhava dristi and rest twenty are sanchari bhava dristhi.

दृष्टिस्त्रिधा रसस्थायिसंचारिप्रतबिन्धना ।
षट्त्रिंशद्भिर्भेदवधिरा रसजा तत्र चाष्टधा ॥
नवधा तारकाकर्म भ्रमणचलनादिकिं ।
पोढा च नासकि ज्ञेया नशिवासो नवधा मतः⁷

4.4 Kaninika Karma (Tara Karma):

which occurs when the pupils of the eyes. The Purana refers to nine actions of the eyeballs (Tara) but mentions only two names Bhramari and Calana. were as Natyashastra refers eight actions of

eyeballs.

4.5 Bhru bedha:

Agni Purana mentions just four types of actions of the eyebrows (Bhru)- Patana, Bhrukutimukha, Sthayi and Sanchari. However, the last two were not included among the seven types of eyebrow movements enumerated in the Natyashastra.

4.6 Griva, Nasika, Nisvasa, Adhara, Cibuca, and Mukha

Agni Purana refers to six different actions of the nose (Nasika), without enumerating them by name. The Purana refers to nine actions of respiration (Nisvasa). But these were not mentioned in the Natyashastra. The Purana refers to six actions of the lower lips (Adhara); seven actions of the chin (Cibuca); six actions of the face (Mukha); and, nine actions of the neck (Griva), however without naming them.

4.7 Hastabhinaya

The Agni Purana also refers to various actions of the hands (Hasthas) single and combined (Asamyukta and Samyukta). It mentions the twenty-four Asamyukta-hasthas in the same order, with slight variation, as mentioned in the Natyashastra. i.e., for alapadma (uttala padma) of natyashastra Agni purana termed it as kaalapadma.

As regards the Samyukta-hasthas, they are twelve in number in the same order as Natyashastra but Natyashastra mentions thirteen Samyukta-hasthas. The Pushpaputa is omitted here.⁸

4.8 Vaksha, Parsva, uru,

The Purana also refers to five actions of the chest (vaksha); five actions of the sides (Parsva); and, five actions of the thighs (Uru). But there are no details with respect to khati (waist) and jhanga, these are neither specifically named nor discussed in detail.

4.9 Udara

The Purana names the three actions of the belly (Udara)as Duratiksama, Kanda and Purana. The Natyashastra gives Ksama, khanda and Purana. The movements of the feet (Pada-bedha) are mentioned as being various, but the mention of any specific number is not made.

Thus, the Agni Purana gives a very brief account of the “Nrtyadi-rangakarma”. Thus, the Nrtyadi-ranga-karma, information about the bodily actions in Dance, is very brief. And, in certain cases, it differs slightly from the Natyashastra.

Rasotpatti

In Agni Purana, Rasa is originated from the expansion of Sattvati qualities of God. Love for God gives rise to beauty, Anger produces Sharpness, Enthusiasm to Bravery, and Hesitation to Bhibhasya Rasa.⁹ These are the four main Rasas, from which the other four Rasas arise. Shringaara gives rise to Hasya rasa, Raudra gives rise to Karuna rasa, Veer rasa to Adhbutha rasa and Bibhtasa to Bhayanaka Rasa. such an interpretation of rasa is not mentioned in Natyashastra.

In this way, the interpretation of Rasa in Agni Purana is unique and no one else has given such a theory of Rasotpatti, the later Acharyas have also followed Agni Purana. In Agni Purana, a total of 8 rasas are considered as Shringara, Hasya, Raudra, Karuna, bhibhatsya, Bhayanaka, veera and adbhuta. Apart from this, Shant Rasa has also been accepted.

Rasa-Bheda: In Agni Purana, all the rasas have been described.

Shringar rasa: There are two types of Shringar sambhoga and Vipralambha. It also consists of two distinctions, prachanna (hidden) and prakasha(visible). Four types of Vipralambh, Shringar have been described – Purva Ram, Maana, Prayasa, and Karuna. In addition to these, two other types of Shringar are verbal and behind-the-scenes.

Hasya: The six types of Hasya Rasa are smit, Hasita, vihasita, , upahasita, apahasita and atihāsita.

Karuna: According to Agni Purana, there are three types of Karuna Rasa. Dharmopadyata janita, Cittavilasa janita and shoka janita.

Raudra: There are three types of raudra rasa, Angik Vachik and Nepathya

Veera: There are three types of Veera Rasa - Daanveera, Dharmaveera and Yudhveera.

Bhayanaka: There are three types of Bhayanaka rasa, Kritrama, Aparada janya and Vitrasika.

Bibhatsa: There are of two types from the point of view of Udvejana and Ksobhana.

Adhbutha: In Agnipuran, as per the view of Abhinaya chatkaratishay has been called a adhbutha rasa. It has two distinctions, (Vaakakriyaatmak and Nepathyakriyaatmak).¹⁰

The permanent sense of peace is shanta rasa¹¹

In Agni Purana, a close relation between Rasa and Bhava has been told. Because the expression of rasa (feeling) is done by bhava (emotions). It is written in Agni Purana that bhavyate rasa abhi: Rasa is felt through Bhava, that is, bhava and rasa are dependent on each other. Emotionless rasa and rasaless emotion cannot even be imagined.

Social and religious Festival: The Agni Purana acknowledges the role of dance and drama during social and religious festivals. Elaborate dance performances and dramatic enactments are integral parts of these festivities, bringing communities together and fostering a sense of unity and devotion was the main Aim.

Conclusion:

Natya, as described in the Agni Purana, serves multiple pur-

poses. It entertains, educates, and inspires the audience. The Agni Purana highlights the transformative power of dance and drama on society. It emphasizes that art has the potential to shape cultural values, moral ethics, and social norms. By promoting themes of righteousness, compassion, and virtue, dance and drama play a crucial role in uplifting society and guiding individuals on the path of righteousness. The Agni Purana portrays dance and drama as sacred and divine forms of artistic expression. It underscores their spiritual significance inspiring, educating, and uniting people. These performing arts continue to be cherished and, the role they play in worship, and their ability to be practiced in modern-day India, reflect the enduring legacy of the wisdom shared in the Agni Purana

In the above Research study on the Concept of Dance as described in Agni Purana results many similarities and dissimilarities related to techniques of dance. All these details of Nritta, Natya, and Nritya serve as a guide for dance practitioners and performers of the present day. The techniques mentioned in this sacred text continue to inspire and enrich the world of dance, perpetuating the legacy of this ancient art form for generations to come.

Endnote:

1. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. ch -338/14 page-490
2. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. Ch- 338/4 page-490
3. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. Ch-336/9 page-491
4. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. Ch-341. verse 001
5. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. page 495
6. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. Page - 495
7. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. Ch- 341 / 10-11 page-495.
8. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. Page - 495
9. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. page 492
10. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. page-496
11. Vedavyasa. Agni purana. page-492

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