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NAYIKAS AS A THEME FOR THE BHARAT-NATYAM CLASSICAL DANCE STYLE

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SUMMARY OF THE PAPER

There are many things outside the accepted repertory of the Bharat-Natyam style which lend themselves to the subtle gestures and movements of this style. But perhaps from among these themes the interpretation of Nayikas offers scope for the most intimate and exquisite rendering of human emotions. The interpretation of some of these Nayikas by Shrimati Bala Saraswati and by Shrimati Rukhmani Devi have already shown the possibilities of the use of 'Abhinaya' in the interpretation of this theme.

The present writer wishes to draw attention to the fact that:

- i The type of Nayikas enunciated by the poets and dramaturgists of the ancient and mediaeval periods, are comprehensive and uncannily true to individual personal traits;
- ii That they are more adequately definable through Bharat-Natyam Abhinaya and dance movements than even in the metaphors of poetry;
- iii That the love tentions between the Nayika and the Nayaka, as rendered in Bharat-Natyam technique are redolent, apart from the general longing and aspiration of the love-torn soul in the allegorical love between human and devine, of many fantasies, confusions, and perplexities which the folk poetry of India and the individual psychology of the modern period has brought to light; Thus type classifications of Nayikas prove to be nearer the contemporary psychology of the unconscious and personal human emotions than have been accepted so far. And the distinction between the classical style of dance and folk feeling breaks down, making Bharat-Natyam more easily accessible to the folk.

The tenderness of the feelings of the various Nayikas can only be shown in their subtle differentiations if the whole group of Nayikas is demonstrated in their detailed significance for dance.

The present writer, will give an exposition of the accepted classification of Nayikas, according to the Sanskrit and Hindi texts of writers like Dhanangiya of Dasruba and Keshav Das of Rasika-Priya. The basic eight Nayikas are both analysed as types and in their relation to individual traits.

And of these eight Nayikas three types are chosen for demonstration through actual Abhinaya and dance movements. The commentary on the demonstration draws attention to the relations between some of the gestures and the sources of love tensions in the soul-body.

It is suggested that so lovely a theme as a moods of the various Nayikas be increasingly adopted as part of the regular repertory of the Bharat-Natyam style, to extend the scope of this art and to bring it nearer the living poetic tradition of our country.

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NAYIKAS

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The subject of Nayikas is such a vast one with all the elaborations and developments by later writers and interpreters, that it is impossible in these few short pages to deal but with the most important original classifications as they have come down to us from the original writers on the subject.

The Nayika is the beloved of the Nayaka or the hero. The very word Nayika like Nayaka means one who leads. Nayika is the leading lady just as Nayaka is the leading man.

The Nayika is supposed to be full of charm, beauty, youthfulness etc.

Bharata Natyasa has developed the art of expressing all shades of feelings, and so it can convey the Nayiks' emotional reactions in all kinds of dramatic situations.

The Nayikas have not only become an important part of literature dramas and poems but they have also become a source of inspiration to pictorial art. We see many paintings of such Nayikas by the 17th and especially 18th Century Rajput and Kangra artists. Many writers, dramatists and poets have described these Nayikas most beautifully in various languages.

Bharata, the author of Natya Shastra classified the Nayikas into 3 types only according to their relations with their lovers (Avastha-anusar). But the later Sanskrit writers having accepted these 3 types, have further classified them according to various principles. For instance Dhnanjiya of Dashrupa, Visvanatha of Sahitya Darpana, Shardatanniya of Bhavprakasanam and Ehanu Dutta of Ras-Manjari have dealt with the above subject in a detailed and thorough way. Some Hindi writers like Keshav Das of Rasikapriya and Harishankar Sharma of Ras-Ratnakar have also further developed them.

This further classification of Nayikas amount to many hundreds but the standard writers have agreed to fix the number at 334.*

There are two short Sanskrit couplets;-which will summarise the whole classification of Nayikas. These are from Bhav-Prakasanam of Shardatanniya.

The gist of these couplets is this:

Swakeeya Nayika is of 13 types while Parakeeya is of 2 types. There is only one type of Samanya Nayika. Again all these are further divided into 3 types. Again all of them are divided into 3 types Uttama, Madhyama and Adhama. Thus there are 334 types of Nayikas.

Now we shall examine them.

The Nayikas are classified into different catagories on various principles* i.e. according to their (i) Dharma (ii) Avastha or Paristhiti anusar (according to the relations with their lover) and (iii) Prakruti anusar (according to their upbringing and culture).

According to Dharma the Nayikas are divided into three main categories. They are:

- (i) Swakeeya : one's own wife
- (ii) Parakeeya : another's wife
- (iii) Samanya : a harlot

The real definition of Swakeeya is that she is the model of chastity and wifely devotion.

The Swakeeya Nayika is further sub-divided, she is either:

- (1) Mugdha : is the very inception of youth.
- (ii) Madhya : is full of youth and love.
- (iii) Pragalbha : is blind with love and youthfulness.

Madhyama is divided into three. They are:

- (1) Dheera : When the lover is at fault, she is very sarcastic in her speech and makes him unhappy.
- (ii) Adhira : When the lover is at fault, she uses very harsh words.
- (iii) Dheeradhira : When the lover is at fault, she cries and at the same time she scolds him.

Madhyama is sub-divided into two. This classification is made in the order of marriage.

- (1) Jyeshta : she is the eldest wife.
- (ii) Kanishta : the youngest wife and probably the favourite.

Now the third one Pragalbha is also classified as Dheera, Adhira and Dheeradhira; and then again as Jyeshta and Kanishta.

Thus Swakeeya Nayika alone is of 13 kinds. But some writers have further classified and elaborated her into many types.*

Parakeeya Nayika is of two types. They are:

- (1) Udha : married
- (ii) Anudha : unmarried

(Note: Anudha is in the category of Parakeeya, because according to Hindu Society she is under the care of her parents till she gets married)

Again some writers have further sub-divided Parakeeya - Udha.* But this particular Nayika according to writers on dramaturgy cannot be treated as a Nayika in the main sentiments. On the basis of ethics; this may appear sound. But there are some verses in Sanskrit literature where in the love of Parakeeya Udha Nayika is described. These are only stray verses; strictly keeping to the bounds of moralities. The Sanskrit Dramatists have never brought this kind of Nayika into an important role.

Now we take up the third type Samanya or a harlot. There are no classifications for this Nayika; she is of only one type. This completes the main classification of Nayikas according to Dharma.

Now we classify them further according to their relations with their lovers (Avastha or Paristhiti Anusar). They are of 8 types.

- (i) Swadhinpatika : she is always assured of the love and service of her lover.
- (ii) Vasakasajja : she sets about to prepare for her lover's reception.
- (iii) Virahotkanthita : she is distressed by his involuntary absence.
- (iv) Abdhisarika * : who goes to meet her lover; or makes him come to her.
- (v) Vipralabdha : who is deceived by her lover who fails to meet her at the appointed place.
- (vi) Khandita : a Nayika who is enraged at discovering the guilt of her lover.
- (vii) Kalahantarita : who repents after quarreling with her lover.
- (viii) Proshitpatika = : whose lover is absent abroad.

The first two types are gay and bright. Whilst the others are dejected, moaning, sighing.

All these 123 are further classified according to their culture and upbringing (Prakrutianusar). They are three:

- (1) Uttama : she returns good for evil, and is always happy in her husband's happiness.
- (11) Madhyama : if the lover is angry; she will be angry, if he is good she will be good to him.
- (111) Adhama : she is a characterless woman, who is always angry, quarrelsome and jealous.

It is generally accepted that there are 394 Nayikas. But the tendency of later writers is to increase even this number by further sub-divisions. In this way we may have endless types, but I have confined myself to the traditional classification of 394.

This detailed classification is not a mere elaboration characteristics of Hindu writers. It has particular use in any portrayals. For instance if an actor or actress is acting the role of Shakuntala; Sita or Rama, he or she must thoroughly know the person whom they are imitating in all aspects. Then only they can bring out the sentiments feelings and expressions etc. of the hero or heroin. The faithful and effective display of emotions and sentiments by the actors is not only expressed by the extraordinary ability in acting but they must also have deep insight into the character and feelings of the persons, whom he or she is representing. They must dive deep into the heart of the character and enact his sentiments. Any short coming in this respect would be totally destroying the spirit of the drama. Writers on dramaturgy made this detailed analysis which some people have sarcastically described it as hair-splitting in order to make a thorough psychological study of the person and crystallise him in all aspect in the mind of an actor.

The Nayikas have a universal appeal. The human emotions are the same throughout the ages everywhere and only vary a little

according to the time, environment and the culture of each place.

Most of us can identify ourselves, with the Nayikas that I have described. At some period of our lives, we are sure to go through such phases and we may ourselves have been a Vasaksajja or Vipralabdha or Khandita.

Each one of us may feel differently about things according to the varied aspects of our natures, but still the fundamental emotions remain the same and that is why even today in the twentieth century - we find the same basic emotions of Nayikas like Radha-Urvashi - Shakuntala common among us.

Now we shall demonstrate a few Nayikas.

We shall take a song from Geet Govinda of Jayadeva.

It is:

The translation is this:

He Madhava, she is miserable - parted from you

He Madhava, being afraid of the arrows of the Love
God - in deep contemplation - she has
merged with you.

She despises sandal-paste, and feels extremely sad
in the moonlight.

And she considers the cool breeze as poison, on
account of its contact with the sandal trees
entwined by the cobras (or the Malayan breezes
act like poison upon her).

Now let us analyse this Nayika.

The context of this song is that there is a spring moon-light. Lord Krishna is dallying with other Gopis ignoring Radha. Radha sulks and goes away to a bower and suffers the pangs of separation. Her friend goes to Krishna and narrates the miserable state of Radha.

(i) According to her relation with her lover (Avastha Anusar) She is Virahotkanthita - separated from her lover.

(ii) According to Dharma she is Parakeeya Anudha.

(iii) According to her nature (Prakritianusar) she is Madhyama. Because as we saw in the introduction, when she sees Krishna dallying with other Gopis - she becomes jealous and goes away to the bower and sulks.

So here the Nayika is Virahotkanthita - Parakeeya Anudha Madhyama.

This detailed examination helps us to develop and bring out the innermost emotions of the Nayika. Whilst interpreting the song, the artist has to keep in mind these particular characteristics of the Nayika concerned and mould her Abhinaya accordingly.

Pasing myself upon the original words of the poet, I have elaborated the theme to describe as fully as possible the innermost sentiment and bhava implied by the poet. In that way I have analysed and developed each line according to the inner bhava suggested by the poet.

According to Sanskrita Shloka:

The meaning is this:

When the inner idea of the playwright (kavi) is made to pervade in the mind of the spectators by means of Words, Gestures, colour of the face and the Representation of the Temperament they are called bhavas (States).

Now I shall enact my own interpretation of the above

song that I read to you.

I DEMONSTRATION:

Explanation of Demonstration No: 1.

Radha, the Mayika is suffering the separation of Krishna intensely. Her sakhi is very much moved by seeing this condition of her friend Radha, and goes to Krishna and tells him thus:--

'He Madhava, she is suffering from your separation'*

Being afraid of the arrows of the God of Love, with depth of heart and mind, she has merged herself into you.

Those red-lotus flowered arrows (of Kamadeva) she could not bear;

And these mangoe-flowered arrows pierce her tender heart;

Even the Ashoka and Jasmine flowered arrws - how they pierce her body !

He Bansidhari, she is frightened of Blue-lotus arrows which also afflict her heart - and so has merged into you.

She suffers intensely from separation Madhava - She wastes away !

(Note: Now sakhi is telling Krishna the nature of Radha's agony)

Sakhi says further:

She (Radha) despises chandan-paste; and the rays of the moon makes her extremely sad.

The very coolness of chandan-paste burns her limbs and body,

And the cool moon-light to her is like the intense heat of the summer sun.

The cool malaya-breeze acts like poison upon her.

She feels this 'Triguna - malaya-breeze like the vicious bites of serpents !

He Madhava, how she suffers the pangs of love !

She wastes away !

The Sakhi says further:

With great longing, Radha looks for you on all sides with her lotus eyes, and when she does not see you she is perplexed and filled with all kinds of worries. In her languor she thinks only of you! And she moans, muttering Hari Hari and speaks of your merits - she is most distressed and how she laments! She feels insane, sometimes she laughs and sometimes she cries - she is most restless and she feels sick - then she falls into stupor.

He Madhava I beg you with folded hands - please go to her quickly -- please Madhava.

(Note: according to Bharata of Natya Shastra there are ten stages, of Virahini Avastha - here I have made use of them in the above portrayal.

Now we shall take another song.

This song is also from Geet Govinda of Jayadeva. Lord Krishna has already fixed an appointment with Radha through the sakhi to meet him at a certain place. Radha goes there but is deceived - as Krishna does not turn up.

In this song Radha laments. She says thus:--

He fails to come to the wood at the time appointed Alas!
My spotless beauty of youth without blemish - all
has gone useless!

O, to whom shall I go? Deceived by the words of
my friends!

Alas, this spring moon light makes me wretched
A fortunate woman now lies, perhaps, in Hari's enjoyment
O, to whom Shall I go? Deceived by the words of my
friends!

Here Radha, the Nayika is Vipralabdha, Uttama, Parakeeya
Anudha.

I shall now give you my interpretation of the above
words of the poet and enact them.

NO: II DEMONSTRATION:

Explanation of Demonstration No: 2

Radha most wretched in anguish - began to lament:

O to whom shall I go? Deceived by the words of my friends! *

She asks Nature - "What shall I do? Where shall I go?"

At the thought of being deceived she clasps her hands and sobs.

"O where shall I go now?" she thinks with frightened eyes.

"I have nowhere to go! Sakhis words have deceived me".

She laments further - she says:--

Alas! He fails to come to the wood at the appointed time!

So atleast ah that Krishna never came at this tryst.

At the promised time of my sakhi, my lover that Kalyamardan has failed to come to the trysting place, at the bank of the Jamuna where there is a bower of beautiful creepers.

My spotless beauty of youth without blemish is all useless.

These bangles of mine and the rest of my jewels seem faulty - after all what's the use of them now? I will throw them away.

And these flowers in the hair - let me remove them too - they are all useless to me now!

Then her eyes fall upon the garland of lovers that she had made for Krishna - she picks it up and looking at it, in distress, she throws that away also.

Getting more impatient she again asks:

O where - where shall I go? Sakhi's words have completely deceived me. My sakshi herself told me that "Krishna is in the tryst you go there quickly". And here I am! (she sighs).

And she also told me that "Krishna is waiting for you on the bank of Jamuna where the Trividh Samiram is blowing gently". I came here and am deceived!

Where shall I go - where?

She looks at the moon-light and sighs. She says:

Alas this beautiful moon-light night makes me wretched.

The very coolness of the moon-light burns me like heat of the summer sun.

And how my heart like 'chatak pakshi' quivers for one drop of love from him!

This breeze acts like the vicious bites of the serpents. And the sweet rumbling of the river sounds like harsh drums.

In the midst of all these agonies - suddenly she imagines Krishna dallying with another Gopi. She says:--

A fortunate woman now lies, perhaps, in Hari's enjoyment.

And her imagination goes further.

That girl must be embracing Hari, and then both of them go out rowing and then swimming. On the island in Jamuna, he fondles her and then decorates her by combing her hair, and makes a plait. Then he makes a 'veni' of the flowers and decorates her hair. And in his mischivious way, he draws that girl near him and kisses her!

In her imagination Radha feels most perturbed and she says:

After all my spotless beauty of youth has really gone wasted!

Radha gets worked by her emotions and with madness in her eyes she again asks:

O, where shall I go? To whom should I go?

She rushes to the tree, and asks it, please you tell me what can I do? And she asks the breeze - cannot you lead me anywhere?

Then suddenly she sees the river, and says 'shall I drown myself in this river? Or shall I throw myself into fire? Shall I go to the refuge of Yama Raj? (God of Death)

She feels most wretched and breaks down in sobs.

NO: III DEMONSTRATION:

Explanation of Demonstration No: 3

Then having somehow passed the night, and withered away under the arrows of love, she reproachfully says to her lover who comes to her at dawn:

The meaning is this:

Alas! Alas! Go Madhava, go Keshava! Desist from uttering these deceitful words!

Follow her, you lotus eyed, she who can dispel your trouble, go to her!

Made by her tooth, the bruise, an imprint, on your lip I see, which pains me; gives anguish to my mind;

Even now how can your body express oneness with mine?

The Navika here is Khandita.

The following is again my own interpretation of the above song which I shall enact now.

Krishna is imploring Radha with soothing words. But Radha is not yet reconciled. She is in a sarcastic mood. She says:

Please go Madhava - go Keshava - do not speak deceitful words

O for heaven's sake, Go!

Go away - you unsteady hearted - go to that woman of black hair - That's all - no more words now - (with great sarcasm she says) What I am after all?

Now she is mingled with sarcasm - jealousy and anger. She says: Follow her, you lotus eyed one! Follow that (sun-faced) surya-mukhi girl - you the lotus eyed one! why don't you go now? What is it here? After all, she will dispel all your troubles. What can I do? That girl like lotus - you like a butterfly - both

of you make a fine pair! Also she will kill all your worries - myself is full of sorrow - how can I help you?

Go away go away Madhava - do not utter these deceitful words. and she turns away in contempt. At this Krishna comes and touches her shoulders. At once she brushes aside his touch and says:

Go away - I have enough of your words.

Still Krishna persists - she says - I beg you to go away please - Oh no - I won't hear any more - I went and she puts her hands on both her ears.

Then suddenly she sees the marks of love - play on his body she is distressed - she says:

made by her tooth the bruise, an imprint, on your lip

I see, gives anguish to my mind.