

Dance and Music

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It has become common at the present day to find girls of every age and size taking to Bharata Natyya. Natural for them with good spirits and health to consider dancing as quite easy to learn. No doubt with an initial intelligence to grasp the elements of the technique of the art, they become competent to show some skill in performing the ADAVUS, JATIS, HASTAS SANCHARIS without any slip or confusion. No sooner they have a sense of Tala and the beats with the feet, they imagine the art of Bharata Natya consists only in the display of NRITTA with efficiency and forget there is much more to learn if mastery is needed.

The Nattuvanars generally try to satisfy the parents when within the course of a few years, they would like their daughters ready for their Arangetral (debut). The parents, particularly the mothers, feel anxious about the showy costumes and decor etc for the occasion. Some of the parents get a fever for publicity in the press for their daughters and approach the eager magazine critics for a favourable write-up or review of the performance. The picture is complete for the girl's feeling equipped sufficiently in the art. She has only to look forward for invitations for more and more performances to the public.

Every one, even sometimes the Nattuvanars never seriously consider that knowledge of music to the dancer is essential. A few of them try to learn music also but for lack of insistence on music, the musical choir to aid the dancer is expected to do the rest of essentials for a perfect rendering of the art. Snatches of singing, especially during the Abhinaya is felt enough to turn out to be a good artist. The most important of all needs for a Bharata Natya student is a very good capacity of rendering songs as well as a general basic concept of what makes the art of dancing an integrated skill and experience both to the dancer and the Rasika.

Dance, especially Bharata Natya, depends upon the dancer's own knowledge apart from the music which the Natvngam group by her side is able to provide. The late Smt. Balasaraswati excelled in the art because of her

musical capacities, not to speak of her imaginative mind for divining a variety of Bhavas.

As a matter of fact when teaching girls of her school she chose those with some instincts for learning music and never allowed them to start dancing without a grounding in music. Music must be of such intense type in order to make the dancer move her body according to an inner sense of Laya which with the external assistance from the musical choir, would endow the performer to inform her *Angikaabinaya* with more of natural grace and precision. The bodily rhythm which a self-knowledge of music would inculcate and improve with every movement in accordance with the outer rendering by the Natvngam, cannot but enhance the entire beauty of the art.

First it must be clear to every student that rhythm itself is composed of two elements, restraint and release. Therefore the rhythmic movements have to be a source of enjoyment to the dancer herself before it is communicated to the audience. A verse in the MUKA PANCHASATI describes how the dancer's knowledge of music should be. Let me only give here for the purpose of this article the first two lines: (*Pandavind Satakam Verse 90*) (On the stage of the mind, the dancer *inextricably united* with the music, transforms the art to move with expressive grace on the dancer's Sancharis). The expression SARAGA VYASANGAM is significant in its emphasis on the *excessive attachment* of the music to the dance. The dance otherwise will fail to be of an experience to the Sahridaya.

Before more dancers enter the field on this exacting art let them endeavour to comprehend why the poet mentions of the *excessive attachment* of music to dance. The secret of it was exemplified when Smt. Balasaraswati enraptured hearts in front of the stage with an enduring experience of a world of consummate art which defied both description and definition. The need of the hour is a good training in music for the dancer of Bharata Natya entering the wider field of Nritta and Abhinaya. ●