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Sculptures of the Karanas uses in Indian Classical Dance

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Abstract

This study investigates how to develop dance poses and techniques, particularly in Odissi Dance, by focusing on three Karana namely Udbruta, Sakatasya, and Bishnukrant among the 108-Karana sculptures. Dance is prevalent in Indian temples, as evidenced by the abundance of dance sculptures, the construction of dance pavilions, and the employment of dancers. On the other hand, dance sculptures are regarded as merely decorative additions to a temple. This work investigates and interprets the function and meaning of the Classical dance Karana from the 108-Karana, as well as how they can be used in the future development of Odissi dance poses and techniques.

This research can be expanded to include other Indian classical forms such as Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, and Kathak, in order to incorporate the three Karana sculptures, Udbruta, Sakatasya, and Bishnukrant. In doing so, Indian classical dance will become more beautiful and wonderful as a result.

Keywords: Sculptures, Karanas, Natya Shastra, Nritta, Lord Shiva

Introduction

Karana means 'action' and in the context of dance it indicates a coordinated action of the body, the hands and the feet. 108 such karana or units of dance are named and defined in the Natya Shastra, the most ancient text on the performing arts composed by Bharata Muni. This text is dated to a period of around 2000 years ago, within a margin of 500 years and has been the most influential in defining and shaping Indian performing arts. Karana, a Sanskrit word which meaning 'doing' is basically transitions in the classical Indian dances. It is described in the Natyashastra as "hastapaada samaayogaah nritta karanam bhavet". It is a combination of three elements, namely nritta hasta (dance movement of the hands), sthaana (a dance posture for the body) and a chaari (a dance movement of the leg). Each karana was practised as a movement and not as a more posture, as often misunderstood. The karanas are said to be numerous, however 108 have been codified in the Natyashastra. Nritta can be broadly divided into Chari, Karana, Angahara and Mandala and defined in Natya Shastra as: [1-5]

- One-leg movement is called Chari.
- Two-leg movements are Karana.
- 3 Karanas make a Khanda.
- 3 to 4 Khandas make a Mandala.
- 4 to 9 Karanas make a Angahara.
- 4 to 5 Angaharas also make a Mandala.

108 Karanas and 32 Angaharas are defined in Natya Shastra and are the intrinsic element of the margi style. They are found depicted in the stone carvings on the passage walls in the purams of the Nataraj temples of Chidambaram, as Lord Shiva is said to be the originator of the Karanas. They have found to have influenced all the classical dance of India. The 108 Karanas are as follows [6-8]

Talapusaputam, Vartitam, Valitorukam, Apavidham, Samanakham, Linam, Swastikarechitam, Mandalaswastikam, Nikuttakam, Ardhanikuttakam, Katichinnam, Ardharechitakam, Vaksahswastikam, Unmattam, Swastikam, Prsthaswastikam, Dikswastikam, Alaatakam, Katisamam,

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Aksiptarecitam, Viksiptaksiptakam, Ardhaswastika, Anchitam, Bhujangatrasitam, Urdhvajanu, Nirkuncitam, Mattalli, Ardhamattalli, Recitanikuttitam, Padapavi ddhakam, Valitam, Ghurnitam, Lalitam etc [9-11]

Orgin and History

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India has always been intertwined with sculpture, architecture, ritual and doctrine. The karanas 108 dance movements from their description in the Natya Shastra, we also have sculptural illustrations of them in ritually significant locations in temples in South India. Five temples are well known for the depiction of the karanas in their sculptural program. They are the Rajarajeshvara temple in Tanjore, the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram, the Sarangapani temple in Kumbakonam, the Arunachaleshvara temple in Thiruvannamalai and the Vriddhagirishvara temple in Vriddachalam.

The Rajarajeshvara temple in Tanjore Built by Rajaraja Chola around the year 1000 CE, this temple features an incomplete karana frieze found in a circumambulatory passage around the grabhagriha. A four-armed Shiva is shown dancing the first 81 karanas in a horizontally placed relief which is on one's right-hand side as the passage is followed in the clock-wise direction. The series has been left incomplete. The place where it is found was never intended for public viewing.

In Chidambaram the passages through all four gopurams have been decorated with complete representation of all 108 karanas. We are sure of this because in the east and west gopuram the panels are accompanied by the relevant verse from the Natya Shastra. Here a female dancer accompanied by two musicians performs the movements.

The east, south and west gopuram have been dated to the 12th and 13th century, the north gopuram somewhat later. The series are largely identical in all four gopuram's.

In the east gopuram of the Sarangapani temple in Kumbakonam a more or less complete series is depicted as danced by a male dancer. The panels are positioned in a horizontal band around the outside of the gopuram. Here many of the panels are captioned with inscriptions written in grantha script. Again, this is the main reason it is sure the reliefs are intended as representations of Bharata's karanas. In this temple Vishnu is the presiding deity and it has been suggested these dance reliefs may have originally belonged to a Shiva temple and for some reason moved here. Among the karanas we find a relief of Shiva dancing the Urdhva Tandava and also goddess Kali dancing, possibly referring to the myth of the dance-contest between them

. In Vriddhachalam temples the karanas are found in the gopuram passages. The Vriddhagirishvara temple depictions of the karanas are found in all four gopurams, but are incomplete. 101 karanas are represented and in a strikingly unusual ordering. The construction date of the gopuram is not exactly known on the basis of architecture, sculptural style and costume a date in the 14th century is likely, which would place this gopuram after the construction of the Chidambaram gopuram and before the gopuram of Thiruvannamalai.

In Thiruvannamalai all the karanas are systematically arranged in the east gopuram passage. Besides the 108, possibly copied from Chidambaram, there are many more dance movements depicted, besides panels depicting deities, Depictions are found on 20 pilasters with 9 panels arranged vertically, making 180 panels in all, of which 108 constitute the karanas as defined in the Natya Shastra. This Raja Gopuram of the Arunachaleshvara temple in Thiruvannamalai was constructed in the 16th century. [12-13]

Karanas uses in Indian Classical Dance

Lalatatilakam Karanas



VishnuKanta Karanas



Conclusion

108 dance panels could represent the karanas as described and defined by Bharata Muni in the Natya Shastra as practiced at the time of the Nayaka dynasty. They thus represent a valuable document of a living and evolving

dance tradition which the sculptor shaped on the basis of dancers performing for him. The 108 karanas reliefs have agency in the temple. The 108 karanas reliefs have agency in the temple. They facilitate communication both physical and symbolic enriching the scope of temple express. They

are imbued with profound ritual and yogic meaning that constitute central concepts in the Hindu worship, As

fundamental movement that generates energy, they reveal agency in meditational practice.



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