

The Significance, Influence and Application of *Natyasastra* to the Kerala performing Arts

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Natyasastra which is termed as the fifth Veda is the foundation for all Indian classical art forms. The art lovers and many among the scholars of present day do not have enough knowledge about the importance of Natyasastra and its application in the art forms. There are a few who endorse that the art forms of Kerala are in accordance with the principles of Natyasastra and many who disapprove this. This is an in depth study and analysis done in a scientific manner to find out the above.

In the first chapter of this a brief explanation about the origin and development of Natyasastra and a brief of the text are given.

In the second chapter, a detailed explanation of Kutiyattam with examples and quotes from Natyasastra the relationship with this is in every respect is established. Kutiyattam is believed to be the first Sanskrit drama form originated in Kerala, perhaps in India itself. Scholar's opinion that this form is at least 2000 years old. UNESCO has endorsed this dance form as oldest classical art form. It can be assumed that this art form is almost as old as Natyasastra. Hence the association of this art form with Natyasastra are many. On analyzing Kutiyattam exhaustively, the use of Caturvidha abhinaya – ie, Angika, Vachika, Swatwika and Aharya - in this art form could be identified.

Krishananattam and Ramanattam which originated in Kerala after Kutiyattam are explained in the next two chapters. The difference in Vachika abhinaya and the Aharya – ie the costumes – and the vadya-s are the only difference these have with Kutiyattam. Both these art forms have a close bondage with Natyasastra like the pioneer art form Kutiyattam. As the acting techniques used in these are similar to the ones used in Kutiyattam, detailing of these are not given here for fear of repetition. Krishananattam is now performed only in the Guruvayoor temple as a ritual. Ramanattam is an art form that is facing

extinction. This may die off if nothing is done to preserve. Krishnanattam is based on the stories from Srimat Bhagavatham and Ramanattam on Ramayanam. Both take seven days to present one story in full. Chaturvidhaabhinaya followed in both are similar.

The fourth chapter deals with the universally famous art form Kathakali. This art form also uses the techniques explained in Natyasastra as in mentioned about the earlier forms. Both Kutiyattam and Kathakali use the Mudra-s described in the Hastalaksana Diipika. But all these are described in Natyasastra and Hastalaksana Diipika are similar. Only difference is that there are some minor changes while mentioning certain objects. Chari-s or gati-s used in Katakali are the ones mentioned in Natyasastra. The main specialty of this art form is the use of music. The Vacika used in this is strictly according to the description of music in Natyasastra. In short, Katakali is an art form that uses Natyasastra in the comprehensive manner.

Mohiniyattam is a dance form derived out of the inspiration from Katakali. All the art forms in Kerala have been derived from Natyasastra of Bharata Muni.

There is no other person who has so well observed and understood human gestures, emotions and self appraisal other than Bharata Muni. Natyasastra is a work that will retain its freshness even after centuries because of the richness of the authorship. In Kerala all art forms from Kutiyattam which claims the age of Natyasatra to Keralanatanam conceived in the twentieth century have been built on the concrete base of Natyasastra. If this is the situation in Kerala, there is no need to say anything about the situation in India. A good building can be built only on a strong foundation. Natyasastra is an ideal foundation for brilliant artists to formulate beautiful works like an ideal rock given to a sculptur. Any art form that comes out any time, even after ages, will only be a follower of Bharatha muni's work as the same would have it's base on Natyasastra. Let this work provide an answer to the question 'What is the relevance of Natyasastra in modern art forms?' raised by less informed and be a hand book to the art lovers to understand this great work.