

Evidence of Bharata Natyam Dance Tradition in the Polonnaruwa Period Sculpture

(With reference to a few selected Polonnaruwa period images)

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'හරත නාට්‍යම්' යනු දකුණු ඉන්දියානු ප්‍රදේශයන්හි විකාශය වූත් ශිව දෙවියන්ට කැපවූ දේවාලයන්හි ප්‍රදර්ශ කරන ලද නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදායකි. ඒ අනුව මෑතකවන තුරු ම මෙම නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදායේ නිපුණයන් වූවාහු දෙවියන් උදෙසා නර්තනයේ යෙදුණු දේවදාසීහු හෙවත් දේවාල ස්ත්‍රීහු ය. එබැවින් හරත නාට්‍යම් නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදාය ඉතා පැරණි ඉතිහාසයකට හිමිකම්කී යනු ලබන, එහෙත් එහි පැරණි ලක්ෂණ බොහෝ දුරට අද දක්වාත් රැක ගැනීමට සමත්වූ නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදායක් වශයෙන් පෙන්වා දියහැකි ය. වර්තමානයේ ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ ඉතා ජනප්‍රිය විදේශීය නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදායක් වශයෙන් පෙන්වා දියහැකි මෙම හරත නාට්‍යම් පොලොන්නරු යුගයේ දී පවා මෙරට ප්‍රචලිත ව පැවති බව පෙන්වා දෙමින් එකල එම නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදායේ ස්වභාවය පිළිබඳ විශ්ලේෂණය කිරීම මෙම පර්යේෂණයේ අරමුණ වේ. පොලොන්නරු යුගයේ ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට එල්ල වූ දකුණු ඉන්දියානු බලපෑම හේතුවෙන් හරත නාට්‍යම් නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදායේ ආගමනය සිදුවූ බවට පැහැදිලි සාධක හමුවේ. මෙම සාධක අතර මූර්තිවලට විශේෂ වැදගත්කමක් හිමිවේ. එම මූර්ති අතරදැදිගම කොටුවෙහෙරෙන් හමුවූ ඇත්පහනේ දම්වැලට සම්බන්ධ ව ඇති නළඟනකගේ සහවාදක යුවලකගේ මූර්තින් පොලොන්නරුවෙන් හමුවූ නළඟනකගේ කුඩා මූර්තියත් සුවිශේෂ ගණයේ ලා සැලකිය හැකි බැවින් මෙම පර්යේෂණය සඳහා එම මූර්ති පදනම්කර ගනු ලැබී ය.

ඒ අනුව මෙම පර්යේෂණය මගින් උක්ත මූර්ති ඇසුරු කොට ගනිමින් පොලොන්නරු යුගයේ මෙරට ප්‍රචලිත ව පැවති හරත නාට්‍යම් නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදායේ ස්වභාවය (රංග විනයාසය, රංග වස්ත්‍රාභරණ, වාද්‍යභාණ්ඩ ආදී) පිළිබඳ ප්‍රමාණවත් විශ්ලේෂණයක් කිරීමට හැකියාව ලැබී ඇත. එසේ ම වර්තමාන හරත නාට්‍යම් නර්තන සම්ප්‍රදායේ මූලික ලක්ෂණයන්ට සහ එහි සැකැස්මට බෙහෙවින් සාමාන්‍යත්වයක් දක්වන හරත නැටුම් සම්ප්‍රදායක් පොලොන්නරු යුගයේ මෙරට ප්‍රචලිත ව පැවති බව මෙම පර්යේෂණයෙන් පැහැදිලිවේ.

ප්‍රමුඛපද: හරත නාට්‍යම්, දේවදාසීන්, දේවාල, පොලොන්නරු යුගය, ලෝකඩ මූර්ති

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Introduction

Bharata Natyam dance tradition can be introduced as a dance tradition which is mainly spread in Tamilnadu, Andra and Karnataka states in South Indian region. It is one of the four main dance traditions which are popular in present India and inherits an ancient history that runs as far as 1000 BC (Valli et al.,2011). Till the middle of the 3rd decade of 20th century

this dance tradition was called 'Dāsiattam¹' or 'Sadirattam²' (Narayan,2007:20). The duty of the women, who were often occupied in fanes and were named as 'Devadasis', was to serve in for the relevant fane. Among their duties, fanning the statues of Gods, carrying the sacred lamp 'Kumbarti' and singing and dancing in front of the Gods

were prominent. This alone caused it to be named as Dāsiattam'. As the name indicates it was a women's dance tradition (ibid: 21). With the Indian colonization under British regime, Bharata Natyam which had been since then practiced in fanes and king's palace was greatly withdrawn. It was due to the ban imposed by British government against serving as Devadasis claiming that Devadasis practice prostitution in fanes. But it was reborn thanks to the measures taken by Madras Music Academy in 1931 in order to stabilize the existence of this Dāsiattam' dance tradition (ibid:23). Accordingly, the name 'Dāsiattam' was transformed as 'Bharata Natyam' following the name of Bharata Muni, the author of the classic 'Natya Shastra'³ (Valli et al., 2011). As the evidences are found to prove that Bharata Natyam, which can be indicated as a very popular foreign dance tradition even in present Sri Lanka, had been popular in ancient Sri Lanka as well, the need for a study of it is created.

Polonnaruwa period in Sri Lanka parallels the golden phase of Chola empire in South India. Because of that Polonnaruwa period can be shown as an era which has undergone the extreme impact of South India (Solī). Under this Impact of South India evidences are found to prove that Bharata Natyam has been popular in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, without a doubt, it has been cleared out that it was Bharata Natyam which was practiced in royal palace and fanes with the royal sponsorship (Makulloluwa, n.d:2).

Bharata Natyam tradition which was popular in Polonnaruwa Period

Many literary as well as archeological evidences are found about the art of dance practiced since the beginning of Anuradhapura period. It has been clarified that the dance tradition had chronologically evolved and by Polonnaruwa period it had been organized

under high artistic methods to be a complicated art. Moreover an important trend regarding the art of dance in Sri Lanka in Polonnaruwa period is that evidences are found to confirm that South Indian Bharata Natyam has been popular in Sri Lanka. Under the constant South Indian impact in Polonnaruwa period, this trend must have been caused by the establishment of fanes for the South Indian Tamil people, who were pious followers of God Siva, to fulfill their religious duties (Mudiyanse, 1997:31). Evidences are found to prove that, in the process of establishing fanes, the concept of Devadasi has been spread over the country. As the best example for it, the slab inscription of Pālamottei which belongs to Polonnaruwa period can be presented. In 1933 it has been found by S. Paravithana out of the remains of a fane of God Siva in the place called Pālamottei near Kantalāi or present Kantale in Trincomalee district in Eastern province. The slab inscription discloses that about an offer made by a lady of Brahman named Nāgaichchāni, to the God Siva in memorial of her husband, in a fane called 46 Ten Kailāsam (the Southern Kailāsa) in Kantalāi (EZ, vol: IV, 1943:191-192). Accordingly, it is mentioned in it as, "...having placed fore-head marks on seven females (dedicating them) as dancing girls of the god, 23 kācu were deposited as an endowment, so that the interest may be secured permanently for their benefit" (ibid:193-196). According to this slab inscription, it is clear that Devadasis were introduced as 'the dancers of the God'. In India among the assigned duties of Devadasis in fanes, singing and dancing in front of the God comes prominent. For the duty they were paid a particular wage as well (Mehta, 1972:41). Out of the inscription of the donation of 23 coins which produces a constant interest for the use of these women, it is understandable that the same tradition has been well-kept in the country in Polonnaruwa period. It

can also be declared without a doubt that the dance tradition of them who served as dancers in fanes of God Siva was Bharata Natyam tradition which was practiced in South Indian fanes of God Siva.

The chronicle of Mahāvamsa also details about the Tamil dancers in Polonnaruwa Period. Thus during the adolescence of King Parākramabāhu (1153-1186 A.D.), with an effort to create a professionalism for the Tamils who worked regarding the dancing, can be perceived (Mahāvamsa, chap.66, v.133)⁴. Since this Tamil community was an ethnic group who took a great effort to preserve their religion and culture in a foreign country by observing the religious rituals and sponsoring the fanes of God Siva, the dance tradition which they were talented of cannot be a local dance tradition. In this way, it is clear that it has been in Bharata Natyam dance tradition that they attempted to achieve a high skill by practicing it in their religious places and exhibiting a high competency in it.

Among the evidences to prove that there was a Tamil dance tradition in addition to the local dance tradition in Sri Lanka during Polonnaruwa period South Indian Tamil poetry possesses an important place as well. Among them, facts can be obtained from the text 'Cilappadikaram'. Although it does not directly prove that a Tamil dance tradition has existed in Sri Lanka it provides evidence to support that two dance traditions as a local dance tradition and a Tamil dance tradition have existed contemporarily at a high level in both countries. Being a South Indian epic which belongs to 2nd century B.C., it details about two dance traditions named 'Sinhala' and 'Dési'. According to the information provided by this epic two sections of dance could be identified (Raghavan, 1967:14). The two sections were called Sāntyam and Vinōdam'. Sāntyam is divided into two again. Those are 'Cokkam' and 'Mei Cokkam'⁵. These

two are sacred dances. They are formulated according to the 108 Karanas of Bharata Muni. 'Mei' is a huge group that consists of three dance traditions called 'Dési', 'Vadugu' (Present 'Telugu') and 'Sinhala'. All these three traditions are viewed as regionally originated. 'Dési' is definitely the local dance tradition. That is Tamil dance tradition. While 'Vadugu' is the dance tradition of Andra, 'Sinhala' refers to the dance tradition of Sri Lanka (ibid). Accordingly, this information confirms two main facts. That is since around 2nd century AD two dance traditions named 'Dési' and 'Sinhala' have been practiced in Sri Lanka and regions of South India and this pair of dance traditions have been more or less popular in both the countries depending on the intercultural relationships. If the South Indians were well aware of the local Sri Lankan dance tradition, it is not surprising that, during Polonnaruwa period which underwent a heavy impact of South India, Sri Lankans were aware of South Indian dance tradition. Likewise, the fact that, Bharata Natyam which is in accordance with the analysis of the dance tradition of BharataMuni was a dance tradition that Sri Lankans enjoyed, can be confirmed.

Among the evidences about Bharata Natyam which was well-known in Polonnaruwa period, the bronze sculpture is also at a prominent level. It is not a mistake to introduce this sculpture as the best evidences to study about Bharata Natyam in that era. Among these explored sculptures which are directly linked to Bharata Natyam, three sculptures attached to the Elephant Lamp found in Kotavehera in Dedigamaand the small figure of a female dancer found in Polonnaruwa can be prioritized. Those sculptures are clear examples of the nature of the contemporary Bharata Natyam dance tradition.

On the bronze Elephant Lamp which was explored in the excavation of Kotavehera

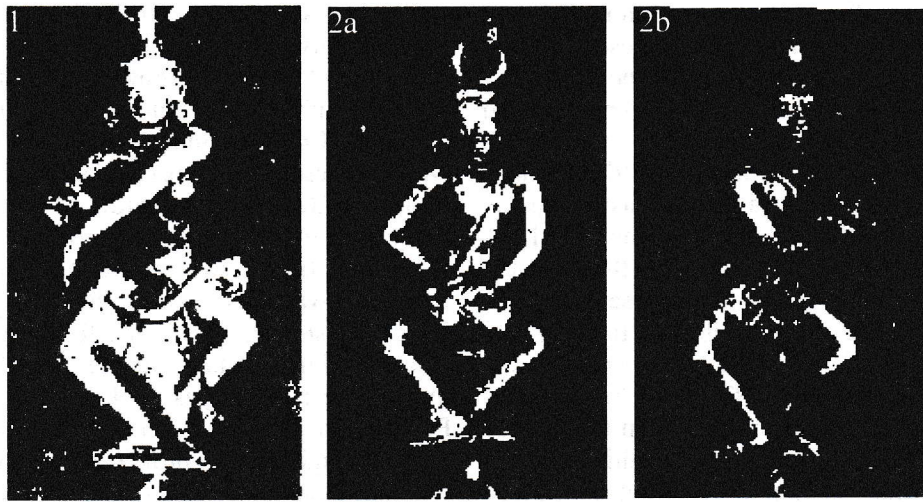


Figure 1. A female dancer from Dedigama Kotavehera Dedigama Kotavehera Figure 2a & 2b. Players from Dedigama Kotavehera Dedigama Kotavehera (Source: Godakumbura, 1969: Plate VII and VI)

in Dedigama, three small bronze figurines, which present a dancing event of Bharata Natyam, can be seen. Since it was found in Dedigama it is predictable that the lamp belongs to the 12th century or an era before that (Godakumbure, 1970:6). Among the figures there is a female dancer, a male playing Cymbal and a drummer (Figures 1 & 2). It is definite that this female dancer is performing Bharata Natyam which was popular in South India (Raghavan, 1967:30).

The bronze figurine of a female dancer found in Polonnaruwa (location is unknown) which belongs to the 12th century is another clear evidence of the practice of Bharata Natyam during the so-called period (Figure 3). Being 0.093m in height it had also been once attached to a lamp (Schroeder, 1990:396). According to the dancing style it is definite that the dancer is performing Bharata Natyam.

In addition to this, among the sculptures which are important regarding Bharata Natyam during Polonnaruwa period, the images of SivaNatarājā are also

important. A number of images of Natarājā which are very much equal to the images of Natarājā in South India have been found in Polonnaruwa (Smith, 2006:15). God Siva, who is accepted to be the first dancer, is called 'Natarājā' in the sense of 'the lord or the ruler of Dancing'. While "Nata" means the dancing 'rāja' refers to 'the lord or the ruler' (Gopal & Dadachanji, 1953:13, 14). Among these sculptures of Natarājā as the lord of dancing, the most popular representation is a unique posture of a dancing God Siva which is represented



Figure 3. A female dancer from Polonnaruwa (Source: Schroeder, 1990:396)

on many statues found in Polonnaruwa. Hence, there is a small drum (Damaru) in his upper right hand representing 'the rhythm of the creation of the universe', the Patāka mudra⁶ in his lower right hand representing 'do not fear', fire in his upper left hand representing 'destruction' and sign of Dola (Dola Hastha) in his lower left hand representing 'for I am here'. While standing with the right leg on an Asura (demon) representing 'evil overcome', he is exhibiting 'the power of salvation' lifting the right leg (ibid: 14; Coomaraswami, 1924:58). The examples for the relationship between the statues of Natarājā represented in this way and Bharata Natyam were found in Tanjore in South India. A well-known and incomparable image of 4 feet representing Natarājā can be seen in great Siva temple in Tanjore (Ambrose, 1950:20). The need for such a great image is clarified in the South Indian inscriptions. According to those inscriptions, in 11th century AD in the great Siva temple in Tanjore there had been nearly 400 female dancers (Mehta, 1972:41). These female dancers seem to be Devadasis who served dancing in front of the God.

Accordingly, it is clear that, in the fanes where these Devadasis danced, the images of SivaNatarājā who was considered to be the God of dancing. Even in the present, at the dances of Bharata Natyam, it is often seen to place the statues of SivaNatarājā on the stage in order to receive blessing and to respect. However, it can be assumed that, though there were not fanes in Sri Lanka as big as the ones in South India during Polonnaruwa period, the performances of Bharata Natyam in these fanes were presented near the statues of Natarājā.

Among the sculptures that represent different postures of God Siva, images of Siva Sandya Nritya Murti and Ardhanāri Natésvara, in addition to the images of Natarājā, exhibit the dancing postures. But it is difficult to have a clear view of

Bharata Natyam out of them. But among the other statues of Gods found in Polonnaruwa period, the figure of Krishna⁷ which represents a dancing posture is important (Figure 4). Currently placed in Colombo museum this image which represents dancing on a Padmāsana (Lotus pedestal) is considered to be belonging to 12-13th century AD. It is found in the Siva temple No.1 in Polonnaruwa. It is definite that in this image Krishna is clearly performing a Bharata Natyam dancing step. In the image, the right leg is on kept on the Padmāsana and left leg is half raised. Since the right hand is broken at the wrist its mudra cannot be identified. The left hand is stretched representing a basic hand posture of in Bharata Natyam. In that way also one can understand about the contemporary Bharata Natyam.

Likewise, out of the evidences of Polonnaruwa period, a clear awareness of Bharata Natyam, which was well-known in that period, can be obtained. Especially in association with the sculpture representing the dancing postures, the nature of dancing style, costumes and musical instruments of contemporary Bharata Natyam can be analyzed.



Figure 4. Dancing Krishna from Polonnaruwa (Source: Prematilleke, 1986: No 41)

Dance Configuration

Under the dance configuration, what is indicated by the sculptures such as the postures, motion, mudras would be analyzed. Since any dance tradition owns its unique dance configuration, through a study of the dance configuration in the sculptures of Polonnaruwa period, the state of contemporary Bharata Natyam dance tradition can be clearly understood.

By studying the two figures of female dancers found in Kotavehera in Dedigama and in Polonnaruwa, the unique features of Bharata Natyam dance tradition can be identified. In both these sculptures the basic posture of Bharata Natyam called 'Aramandiya' is clearly represented. In this posture, the dancer keeps the two ankles together turning the feet to both the sides and goes low bending the knees as much as possible (Figure 5). She/he keeps the body straight.

The Polonnaruwa figure of female dancer, without a doubt, keeps the legs in this posture. But the Dedigama dancer seems to be engaged in a different dancing step of 'Adav' while being in 'Aramandiya'. Her right foot is clearly kept in 'Aramandiya'. Even in the statues of 'Natarajā' as well as the Polonnaruwa figure of dancing Krishna the right foot

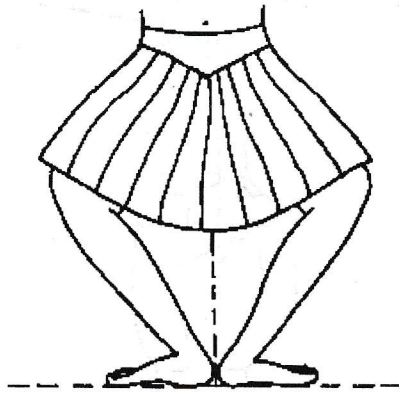


Figure 5. Aramandiya - The basic foot posture of Bharata Natyam (Drawn by Author)

is thus kept in 'Aramandiya'. Also in all these sculptures it is visible that the postures differ from each other. Accordingly, it is understandable that by this time, Bharata Natyam has been organized in a complicated and systematic manner. Not only that, but the player of Cymbal and the drummer in the Dedigama Elephant Lamp also keep their feet in 'Aramandiya'. Both of them while being in 'Aramandiya' they keep left ankle raised and the toes touching the ground. It is clear then that though they are instrument players they have been actively participating in the dance.

In any dance tradition, motion comes prominent. Motion refers to the rhythmic movements of the body parts. Out of the 4 main gestures used in dancing and drama this belongs to the physical gesture (Āngika Abhinaya). That is the message denoted by the parts of the body (Rasadari, n.d:36). Since the motion is really a movement, it is difficult to be understood by an immobile source such as sculpture. Because of that it is only through an analysis of the postures of these sculptures that we can have a glimpse of it.

In Dedigama figure of a dancer, a very beautiful dancing posture is represented. While keeping the right foot in 'Aramandiya', she keeps the left ankle raised with the toes touching the ground following the leg posture of 'Swastika'. It is very much equal to 'Thaki...ta' in 'Chari Adav' called 'Nadai' in Bharata Natyam (Sanjeewa, 2006:52, 53). Accordingly it is visible that the parts of the foot named ankle, toes and sole are moving. Especially according to this posture, stepping aloud which is a unique feature of Bharata Natyam can be clearly identified.

Her hands are also kept in a way depicting the artistic expertise. That is to keep the right hand bent to the front at the elbow so as to touch the left hand presenting the

'Katakāmukha' mudra while the left hand represents the 'Dola Hastha'. The way the left hand is kept is very much equal to the way God Siva keeps his left hand in a figure of SivaNatarājā which represents its unique posture (Figure 6).

In Polonnaruwa figure of dancer, any leg movement cannot be seen. It represents the features of an immobile posture. The dancer symbolizes the 'Patāka' mudra bending the right hand at the elbow a little. Her left hand is stretched out with the fingers tightened together not to show a gap between them (Figure 7). This hand gesture is one of the basic features of BharataNatyam. There the fingers are tightened together bending the upper part of the thumb (Figure 8 & 9). The hand is bent at the elbow a little and is stretched at the shoulder level. By being this feature which is unique to Bharata Natyam visible in this figure, it is evident that, in Polonnaruwa period there had been a dance tradition which is very much equal to present Bharata Natyam. It can be depicted that the posture of this figurine



Figure 6. Dancing posture of the Dedigama dancing figure (Drawn by Author)

is simple and clear as well. A likeness in some features can be seen between this figure and the figure of Krishna found in the Siva temple No.1 in Polonnaruwa. Especially, there is equality in the unique feature of stretching the hand in present Bharata Natyam and in the way the hand is kept following the mudra bending the hand at the elbow. Since the sculptures are found depicting clearly the features of Bharata Natyam dance postures seen in the statues of Gods created under the impact of South India.

In a study of Bharata Natyam, although the facial gesture (Sātvika

Abhinaya) which refers to the expression of feelings through the face is an equally important area to be studied, it is difficult to gain an awareness of it due to the vagueness of these sculptures. But a pleasant mood expressing the pleasure can be clearly identified.



Figure 7. Dancing posture of the Polonnaruwa dancing figure (Drawn by Author)

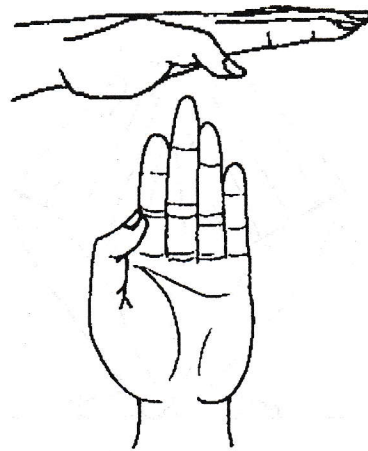


Figure 8, 9. Basic hand gesture of Bharata Natyam (Drawn by Author)

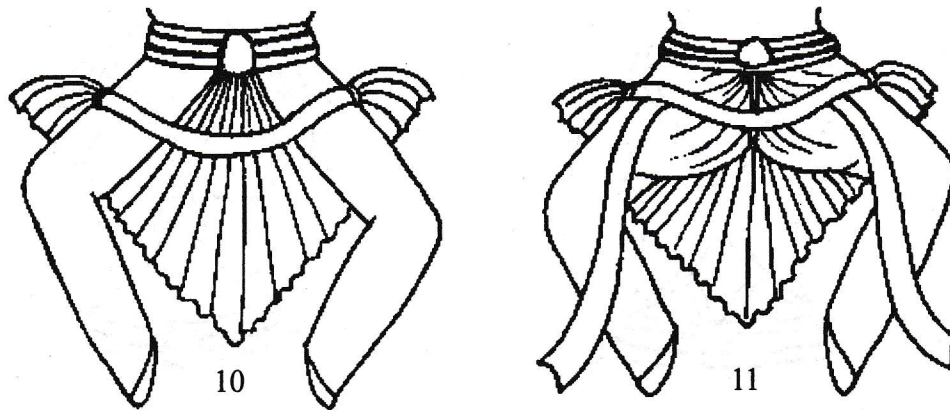


Figure 10. Dhoti of Dedigama dancing figure(Front)

Figure 11. Dhoti of Dedigama dancing figure(Back)

(Drawn by Author)

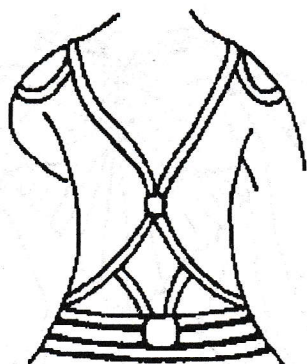
Dance Costume

In a discussion of the costumes of images of Polonnaruwa period which indicate the Bharata Natyam dancing postures, mainly two types can be identified. One type is seen in the figure of a female dancer found in Dedigama while the other type is seen in the figure of a female dancer found in Polonnaruwa.

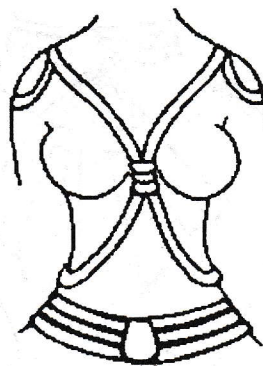
The costume of Dedigama figure of female dancer is seen to be very special and beautiful. It bears a great similarity to the costume of present Bharata Natyam. In the costume of present Bharata Natyam a cloth called Dhoti is worn by both males and females to cover the bottom of the body. It is often prepared out of brocaded shimmering silk or satin. It is a cloth which covers well the leg from bottom to the top and which is pleated from the ankle upwards. A beautiful well-pleated frill is hung from waist up to the knee over the Dhoti and in the middle of it. The male dancers keep the top naked and wear necklaces only while the female dancers wear tight-fitting Choli or bodice. It is prepared out of the same cloth of Dhoti in the same color (Gopal & Dadachanji, 1953:67). Dedigama dancer wears a costume which is very much

similar to this costume of Bharata Natyam. There is a Dhoti on her bottom and it is long up to a little above her ankle (calf muscle). Above the Dhoti in the middle there is pleated frill. This pleated frill is attached to the costume to open and be visible when the two legs are open and kept in Aramandiya. The costume of present Bharata Natyam is also included with this pleated frill and in the same way today also it opens with the legs to add to the beauty. This frill is attached above to the waist of the costume. It is attached to the thigh of the leg in the costume on sides. So when the legs are open it also opens to be seen beautifully.

Another special feature of this costume is the set of frills worn for the beauty. Accordingly, two small frills a little below the waist on the two sides of the costume. Those two frills are attached with a little bit thick code which is worn above the Dhoti and the front frills (Figure 10). In front it is seen as a code and runs to the sides becoming two small frills and loosening. It can be assumed that it is made by tangling a cloth. On the sides of the costume the tangle is loosened and the cloth is gathered to be allowed to fall. Also this code is seen at the back of the body as well. It seems to be prepared in



12

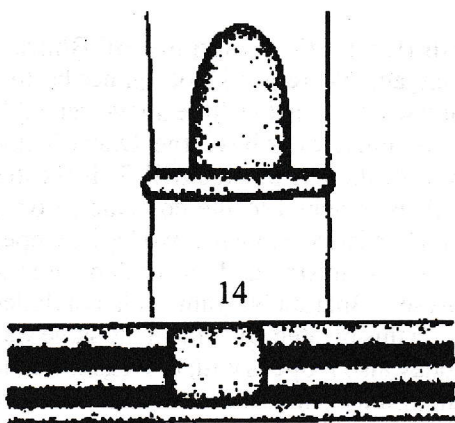


13

Figure 12. The accessory on the top(Back)

Figure 13. The accessory on the top (Front)

(Drawn by Author)



14



15

Figure 14. An armlet

Figure 15. A cummerbund

(Drawn by Author)

the same way. In that sense the ends of the code in front and at the back must have been loosened and gathered on the sides as frills. In addition to that two frills similar to a long strap are worn at the back of the body (Figure 11). They are also attached to the above mentioned back code. This is also special feature of this costume.

It is difficult to understand whether this dancer had worn a bodice for the top. The reason for this is the less clarity of the figurine of this kind of subtle features. However through a study of her top two

conclusions can be made. That is either her top was naked or she had been wearing a bodice made exactly to the size of her top and due to the difficulty of carving the sculptor did not represent it on the figurine.

But a beautiful accessory that she was wearing on the top can be seen. The back of it is beautifully designed (Figure 12). Although the front view cannot be clearly understood, according to the features found in the studies of the costumes of ancient women, it can be assumed that the design has been created to run between the breasts (Figure 13). The figures of women wearing this accessory can be seen in different artistic works of Anuradhapura period to Kandy period.

Among her other accessories, earrings, necklaces, bangles, armlets and cummerbunds can be clearly identified. Earring is a bit bigger and round. Necklaces are worn but their designs are not clear. Among the bangles, some small bangles are worn near the wrist and armlets are seen on the arms. Those armlets consist of a square part of which the top is round and which is attached to an ordinary round bangle (Figure 14). A broad cummerbund is worn on the waist. Consisting of a design with three edges which are embossed, it is added with a

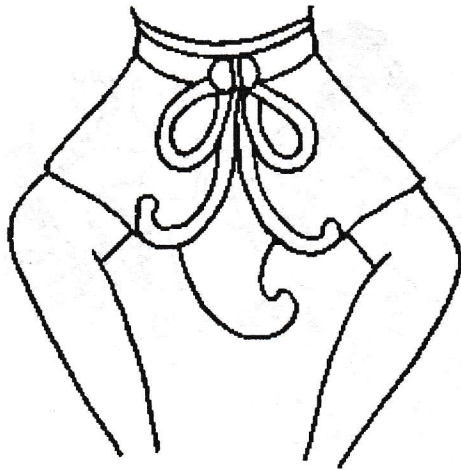


Figure 16. Costume of the players
(Drawn by Author)

square to the back (Figure 15). The dancer's hair is gathered at the back and tied in a braid. Although an accessory containing thin straps is seen to be worn but it is not clear. There is no clarity of any other accessory worn on the head in addition them. Another special feature seen on this figure of dancer is that there is no bangle or anklet on the foot. Accordingly it can be assumed that during this period wearing tinkling anklets may not have been compulsory.

In an analysis of the costume of the Dedigama figure of a dancer, the costume of the instrument players must also be considered. Accordingly they wear a short Dhoti on the bottom. In front of the Dhoti, there is a beautiful frill (Figure 16). They wear a cummerbund with a design containing three edges which are embossed. It is seen that a part of the Dhoti is taken between the two legs and frilled above the cummerbund. In that sense, to wear the Dhoti the cummerbund has been helped. The player of Cymbal is wearing a beautiful necklace up to the navel. But the drummer does not wear that necklace. Likewise it is visible that there has not been a standard way of wearing the accessories and one bangle worn near

the wrist and one necklace around the neck can be seen in general. Both the instrument players wear their hair in a knot at the back of the heads. It is evident in that way that the instrument players of the dancers also had long hair.

The costume of the Polonnaruwa figure of a dancer differs to this. Accordingly her top is naked. Bottom is covered with tight fitting short Dhoti. It is worn a little above the knee. Similarly to the Dedigama figure of a dancer, two frills are seen on two sides. It is also made by wearing as a code above the Dhoti. The dancer seems to have been wearing heavy accessories. Among them necklaces, armlets and bangles can be clearly identified. As a specialty of her costume, a necklace which is up to the navel and which contains a special design can be

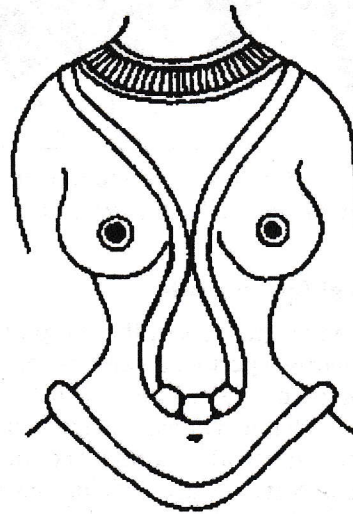


Figure 17. The heavy necklace of the Polonnaruwa dancer
(Drawn by Author)

indicted. Dedigama player of Cymbal is also wearing such a necklace. Also, a bit broad necklace can be seen as well (Figure 17). On her forehead an accessory in the shape of a band can also be seen. The hair is loosened and just let to be spread on the back. It is noteworthy that she is wearing bangles on the foot.



Figure 18. A painting from Brihadisvaram temple at Tanjore - 9-13 A.D
(Source: Ambrose, 1950:30)



Figure 19. Orchestra in line in front of the pedestal of Nataraja image
(Source: Prematilleke, 1995:50)

Musical Instruments

Through an analysis of the sculptures of Polonnaruwa period, awareness can also be obtained of the musical instrument used for Bharata Natyam dance tradition. The main musical instruments of present Bharata Natyam are 'Mridangam' (a drum) and a pair of Cymbal. For the fractional measures the broad beats of Mridangam, Cymbal provides the timing. Hence the dancer follows both Mridangam and Cymbal (Gopal & Dadachanji, 1953:66).

The two figures of instrument players of Dedigama Elephant Lamp are important here. One of them is playing a Cymbal while the other seems to be playing a drum. Cymbal is small in size. It is attached with a little bit thick and long

code. In the way the player keeps the pair of Cymbal together, he is seen to be playing a fast beat with a fine readiness. The drummer is playing an 'Udakki'. He has hung it over his left shoulder, keeps it closer to the body and while holding it with the left hand near the up-turned eye of the drum plays with the right hand. Usage of Cymbal and Udakki for Bharata Natyam in this way can be identified in the South Indian frescos that belong to this period of time (Figure 18).

In addition to this musical instrument can be identified out of the images of Siva Nataraja as well. Among the bronze sculptures, the biggest image of Nataraja is the image found in Polonnaruwa which is 4 feet 7 ¼ inches in height. Considered to be belonging to the 11th century, it has

the figure of Natarājā on a lotus pedestal and an orchestra in line in front of the pedestal. There is, in it from right to left, a woman playing Cymbal, a blower of a conch, a flutist, a female drummer and another player of Cymbal (Figure 19). Consequently, it seems that among the musical instruments used for Bharata Natyam the instruments named cymbal, conch, flute and drum (Udakki) have been prioritized.

Conclusion

By the time of Polonnaruwa kingdom in Sri Lanka, the kingdom of Chola has been powered in South India. Consequently under the impact of Chola, evidences are found to prove that Bharata Natyam dance tradition has been practiced in Polonnaruwa period. Due to the establishment Fanes of Siva for the use of Chola armies and Devadasis who dwelled in them, Bharata Natyam seems to have spread. The establishment of Bharata Natyam or the dance tradition of Devadasis in the country seems to have caused by Devadasis who tended to practice their inherited dance tradition preserving their cultural tradition. In this way, Bharata Natyam which has journeyed to Sri Lanka seems to have practiced in fanes of Siva at the beginning and later out of the fanes with the royal sponsorship. Like this it must have joint to the Sri Lankan culture. How every sector including culture, economy, society and politics underwent Hindu impact during the Polonnaruwa period, in the same way Sri Lankan dance tradition must have undergone the impact of Bharata Natyam. This impact can be identified till Kandyan period. Moreover during the Polonnaruwa period it has spread into other areas outside the capital. The sources bear evidences to prove that Bharata Natyam which has been popular in this period has been methodically organized. Especially according to the features of sculptures which depict the

postures of Bharata Natyam, it is clear that the dance configuration including basic postures, movements and mudras has been theoretically well organized. Also according to the way of presenting the postures in sculptures it can also be concluded that there had been well practiced female dancers. Here it is mentioned as 'female dancers' because it seems only women were engaged in Bharata Natyam dance during this period of time. Since this was the dance tradition of Devadasis only women may have been engaged in dancing in the past. Males have helped in playing the musical instruments. These features have been kept in the same way in Polonnaruwa period as well.

In this period two types of costumes can be seen. One of them is the costume represented in the figure of a female dancer found in Kotavehera in Dedigama. It can be introduced as a costume which bears a great similarity to the costume of present dance tradition. The other one is the costume represented in the figure of a dancer found in Polonnaruwa. It has a similarity to the costume worn by the dancers in the carvings depicting the Bharata Natyam postures in India. This type of costumes is not used in present Bharata Natyam. The code worn in front of the bottom dress can be indicated as a common feature for both these types. But it is not used nowadays. It can be presumed that in this period the female dancers danced with bare tops. But it can be seen accessories have been worn for the top. Especially among these accessories necklaces and other accessories over the top have been prominent. Among them jewels created with special designs and necklaces of contemporary trends can be identified. In addition to this, accessories such as earrings, necklaces, bangles, armllets, cummerbunds have been worn. But it has not been compulsory to wear the tinkling anklets or the bangles. Wearing of them

Evidence of Bharata Natyam Dance Tradition in the Polonnaruwa Period Sculpture

must have been decided on one's favor and situation. Hair has been either worn in a braid or loosened and spread over the back.

Not only the dancers but the instrument players have also been dressed in special costumes. Although it seems that there was no standard of their costumes a short Dhoti for the bottom has been worn in common. The jewelry seems to have been worn depending on one's own will.

Among the musical instruments used in this period for Bharata Natyam, cymbals and drums of the type of Udakki seem to have been prominent. Cymbals are one

of the main instruments used in Bharata Natyam even in the present. Also before the arrival of Mridangam as the main drum, a drum of the type of Udakkiseems to have been in use for the music.

All these facts support to clarify that a Bharata dance tradition which bears a great similarity to the basic features and the structure of present Bharata Natyam dance tradition has existed during Polonnaruwa period. It can also be concluded that during that period Bharata Natyam has been a popular artistic device which had been methodically well-organized.

Endnotes

¹Used to mean the dance tradition of Devadasis who are the servants of God

²Means 'Dance of the Royal Palace'

³In addition to this, it is also said that the name 'Bharata Natyam' is created taking 'Bha' from 'Bhava', 'Ra' from 'Raga' and 'Tha' from 'Thala' which are included in the dance itself

⁴Damilādīsu nékésu - nachchagēthésu kovide Kāresi, chammarūpādi - kēlādassakasannibhe

⁵While 'Cokkam' means 'sacred', 'Mei' gives out the meanings 'accurate' and 'genuine'

⁶Some call it 'Abhaya mudra'

⁷It is the posture that depicts Krishna's suppression of Kaliya and it represents listening impatiently. The posture is staying with raised knees (Ganegoda, 2004:309).

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