

## As per Śāstras Concerned; Pēriṇi

Author : Vakkala Rama Krishna  
 Designation : PhD Dance Scholar  
 Department : Dance  
 School : SN School of Arts and Communications  
 University : University of Hyderabad  
 Contact : +91 9704866232 / 9989917967  
 Email : [ramakrishna.warangal@gmail.com](mailto:ramakrishna.warangal@gmail.com)

Brief note on Author : Mr. V. Ramakrishna is a freelance Kuchipudi performer, teacher and choreographer with 15 years of great experience in the field of Dance. Besides, he had acquired his master's degree in dance from the Department of Dance, Central University of Hyderabad and came out with distinction and prestigious University Gold Medal "Nataraja Ramakrishna's Sarada Devi medal". Later he appointed as Asst. Professor at IIIT, and left the job for attaining PhD in dance from the same University. He qualified UGC NET and presently pursuing his PhD on 'Origin and Evolution of Perini dance form' under the guidance of Prof. M.S.Siva Raju, Department of Dance, University of Hyderabad.

Vakkala Rama Krishna

Pēriṇi is such an oldest dance form emerged from centuries ago in the Indian dance history in the name of Dēśi tradition. From Bharata's Nāṭya Śāstra period to 10th century AD - only Mārga style evolved. After 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD the word 'Dēśi' was newly introduced to the Telugu land and it was highly popularized and in most of the Telugu literature the writers remembered Pēriṇi in their works. From 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries this Pēriṇi Art form was performed by Women as Kēḷika in the Kings courts. This is an art form in the beginning it was highly developed in the Śaiva's cult and transformed into Keḷika (Court dance). It is an extensively practiced Deśi dance form in the medieval centuries.

After Bharata the following treatises like *Bharatārṇava* (3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> cen.AD), *Sangīta-Samaya-Sāra* (12<sup>th</sup> Cen. AD), *Sangītaratnākara* (13<sup>th</sup> cen. AD) and *Nṛttaratnāvali* (13<sup>th</sup> Cen. AD) the four authors were discussed about Pēriṇi Art form in their treatises.

The first who introduced the word Pēriṇi was Nandikeshwara in his treatise "Bharatārṇava". In this text he mentioned Pēriṇi as one of the sapta 'Lāśya' but not as 'Tāṇḍava'. As I already discussed in the chapter two.

### **Bharatārṇava**

According to Bharatārṇava, The five angas of Prēraṇi are 1.Garghara (six types, Namely- i.Paripaata, ii.Chaapdap, iii.Siripiti, iv.Alagapaata, v.Chirihira and vi.Khuluhula) 2.Vishama, 3.Bhavasraya, 4.Kavicharaka and 5.Gītam.

In 5 parts of Prēruṇi - in the first and second part i.e. *Garghara* and *Vishama* he stressed on practice of footwork a preparation to dance. He said the dancer has to do these six types of foot works in garghara part. In Vishama he had not given a specific name to Karana or utpluti/leap to perform, just he mentioned the dancer should perform leaps/jumps before execution of Karana. Not mentioning any specific name to utpluthi and Karana. Did he give any scope to elaborate performance? Or execute in various types in it? Absolutely Yes! He had given scope to extend or elaborate the performance in several ways.

And in the third part, *Bhāvāsraya* - he stated Abhinaya in a different manner that the dancer should follow or imitate in an awkward or abnormal way to create a comic effect. Just he said Vikṛta+artha+anusāra which mean that the dancer should perform ludicrous things. But he did not mention whether the dancer has to follow the imitation of human beings or animals. Again he had given scope to Bhāvāsraya too. In this part he had given a wide scope to the dancer to create a comic pleasure therefore the spectators can relax with this effect.

In the fourth part, *Kavicāra* – in kavichara he mentioned that the dancer has to praise the good qualities of king but he did not mention about the time period of kings, so in this part he had given an extensive scope to perform the dance because so many kings ruled many centuries therefore the dance has a scope to perform various ‘kavicharas’ and also it is similar to today’s “*Śabdham*” which is being used in Kuchipudi and Bharatanāṭyam repertoire but this ‘*Śabdham*’ is in praise of deity or king. Which is somewhat similar to Pēriṇi kavichara but in kavichara nandikeshwara has defined clearly that it has to praise only King’s good qualities but he did not mentioned about deities’.

In the fifth part, *Gītam* – he mentioned the sālagas (songs) which are used in Kuṇḍali vidhi they have to be used for Gītam. But the Kuṇḍali vidhi what type of song are used in it? The description of Kuṇḍali natyam is missing in Bharatārṇava treatise. So it is a big question how it was? And what type of gītas had been used for Pēriṇi in those days? That had been unfortunately we are missing. It is unavailable. At the time of Nandikeshwara these Sapta Lāsya might be highly prevalent in those days therefore he discussed in his treatise. If the Text Bharatārṇava Lakshna would found, it would be the great advantage for the dancers to recreate pure Sapta Lāsya and it might be developed into a separate genre of Indian dance forms.

Nandikeshwara had given a scope to develop these Sapta Lāsya. But it is unfortunate to lose many of these original leafs of Bharatārṇava treatise. Therefore this text looks incomplete and unfinished.

### **Sangītaratnākara**

Coming to Sārṅgadēva’s Sangita Ratnakar (1210-1245 AD)

This is the most exclusive available work on dancing written after the “Abhinava Bhārati” the great commentary of Abhinava Gupta on Bharata’s “Nāṭya Śāstra” which dates from the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It has total eight chapters. Except seventh chapter the remaining seven chapter deals with Indian music and the Seventh chapter is totally dealt with the dance.

He mentioned a new thing regarding Perani is Perani mode (Paddhathi) in the last section of practice procedure. He had given a scope how they were performed in those days and its performance order. In the Pēriṇi definition which is similar to Nandikeshwara Bharatārṇava but he did not mention his (Nandikeshwara) name or treatise (Bharatārṇava) but the five elements of Pēriṇi (Garghara, Vishama, Bhavasraya, Kavacharaka and Gita) are similar to Bharatārṇava text. He did not mentioned Pēriṇin which is one of the Sapta Lāsya and Sapta Lāsya like Suddha, Dēśi, Pēriṇi, Prenkhana, Kuṇḍali, Dandika and Kalash but he directly went into Gundali vidhi and Perani.

The learned says (assumes) the Bharatārṇava treatise was composed in between 2<sup>nd</sup> cen. AD to 4<sup>th</sup> cen. AD. At that time that Pēriṇi had developed as Sapta Lāsya. After a long gap, again the word Pēriṇi had appeared in Sangītaratnākara in 13<sup>th</sup> cen. AD. Nearly 10 centuries of gap had

been made. We don't know what happened to this art form during the period (gap). It had been totally vanished. We don't have any information regarding Pēriṇi.

I think, in Sārṅgadēva period this art form might be developed into Dēśi form so, that might be the reason for not discussing about the treatise Bharatārṇava or Sapta Lāsya in his Sangītaratnākara.

### **Nṛttaratnāvali**

Nṛttaratnāvali of Jayapa consists of eight chapters which can be classified into two sections. The former four chapters as one, dealing with Marga dances on the lines of Bharata and other later four deals with the Dēśi traditions.

He was the first person who elucidated Mārga and Dēśi types of definitions and also given a clear clarification about Bharata's Nāṭya Śāstra which are in elusive state. He gave a clear statement of Dēśi in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, 4<sup>th</sup> verse which is, -

*bhavanti dharaṇīpālāh prāyeṇābhinaya priyāh  
ata statprītaye dyāpi yadyadutpādyate navam  
Nṛttam tatah smṛtam **deśī tattaddeśānusāratah***

*'According to the taste of kings, they introduced new Dance forms (Nṛtta) which are favorite to them, therefore the new art forms which evolve according to their provincial status that type of art forms can be noted as Dēśi'.*

In the seventh chapter he explained about all Dēśi art forms which were highly prevalent in those days. Coming to Pēriṇi, he explained about Pēriṇi Lakshanam, Pēriṇi Naipadhyam, and its five parts. One interesting thing I came to know that is in Pēriṇi quality he told this art form they used to perform in single or double or in group. And four, six or eight dancers are to have in same dress and one by one they have to entre on the stage means it is not a solo art form and it is related to men and in Tāṇḍava mode of dance (Paddhathi). Compare to Sārṅgadēva Sangītaratnākara he explained all the Pēriṇi and Pēriṇi pancāngas which are similar to Bharatārṇava text without stating Bharatārṇava or Sapta Lāsya. Coming to Nṛttaratnāvali in this text Jāyana also explained these things same as done by Sārṅgadēva.

The Sangītaratnākara (probably 1208-1247 AD) and Nṛttaratnāvali (1253-1254 AD) both texts are written in 13<sup>th</sup> Cen. AD. The text Nṛttaratnāvali written subsequent to the sangītaratnākara and these two authors have written about Pēriṇi in their treatises but Jāya does not mentioned Sārṅgadēva's name or his work. There might be a strong reason provided by the political relations which prevailed between the Kākatīya's and the Yādavas.

An Yādava inscription says that, Singhana's predecessor released Kākatīya Gaṇapati from prison and re-established him on his throne. Mahādeva, Gaṇapati's father, attacked Devagiri and died in action, and the son was captured by the Yādava's. This should have produced a feeling of

resentment in the Kākatīyas court against the Yādavas and naturally the work produced under Singhana is not mentioned by name in the work produced under Ganapati.

Sārṅgadēva from North and Jāyana from South had mentioned Pēriṇi in their works therefore this art form might have been highly prevalence in North and south India in those days. But in Sangītaratnākara he did not made any changes which are stated in Bharatārṇava treatise as it is he (Sārṅgadeva) mentioned in his treatise without mentioning or taking the name Nandikeshwara or Bharatārṇava treatise. I think in the North region of India, Pēriṇi might have not been changed at that time therefore that might be the reason for mentioning as it is in Bharatārṇava and one extra new thing which I found in Sangītaratnākara is, he explained about Pēriṇi performance as 'Pēriṇi paddhathi'. But in south India, there might been changes occurred.

In Nṛttaratnāvaḷi Jāyana has mentioned 5 parts which are known as Pēriṇi Pancāngas. But he made some changes in pancāngas compared to Bharatārṇava and Sangītaratnākara, they are as follows:-

According to Bharatārṇava and Sangītaratnākara treatises, the Pēriṇi Pancāngas: 1.Ghaghara (it contains 6 types of foot works Paripāt, Cāpdap, siripitti, Alagpāt, Ciriḥira and Khuluhula), 2.Vishama, 3.Bhāvāśraya, 4.Kavacāraka and 5.Gītam.

In Nṛttaratnāvaḷi, Pēriṇi 5 parts – 1.Nṛttam, 2.Kaivāram, 3.Garghara- 7types of footwork's (Cāvaḍa, Paḍivāḍa, Rundha, Siribhira, Khaluhula, Lagnapāṭa and Siripiti), 4.Vikaṭam or Vāgaḍa and 5.Gītam.

In Sangītasamayasāra, Pancāngas (5 parts) of Pēriṇi are; 1.Nṛtta, 2.Kaivāra, 3.Garghara, 4.Vāgaḍa and 5.Gīta.

Nṛttam and Vikaṭam are the new things which evolved in Jāyana's time and also kavicāraka in Bharatārṇava had been changed to Kaivaram. And coming to Garghara in Bharatārṇava he mentioned only six types of foot works but in Sangītasamayasāra of Pāśvadēva did not mentioned Garghara sub-parts and in Nṛttaratnāvaḷi Jāyapa mentioned total seven types of footwork's Padivada and Rundha are the new one and some names changed like; Chapadap to Chavada, chirihira to Siribhira, Alagnapata to Lagnapata and Siripitti to Siripiti have been changed.

But these two texts Sangītaratnākara and Nṛttaratnāvaḷi deals about Pēriṇi and its qualities and arrangements but these two authors had not mentioned this Pēriṇi is one of the Sapta Lāsyas which were mentioned in Bharatārṇava. They even not mentioned about Bharatārṇava text or Sapta Lāsyas. In Bharatārṇava Dēśi is one of the type of Sapta Lāsyas and it is performed by Pārvati but in Nṛttaratnāvaḷi the definition of Dēśi has completely changed and this Dēśi form of dances evolved according to the favorites of kings taste.

## **Sangīta-Samaya-Sāra**

Coming to this text it is a work on the theory of music by Pārśvadeva, a Jain writer, during 12th century. It has 10 adhikaras (chapters) with 1400 verses. The work establishes the importance of music and reveals the highly advanced system of musicology and musical traditions prevalent during his period. He is the first person who explained about the Dēśi Lāsyangas in his work.

In this text Pārśvadeva has explained in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter named “*Nṛtta-Lakshnamu*” only the Dēśi forms which were highly prevalent in his period namely Pēraṇi, Prekkhana, Gunḍali and Daṇḍarasaka and its sthānakas. In Pēriṇi, Pancāngas and the instruments which were used for performance had noted in the verses from 213 onwards in chapter 6.

According to Dr. V. Raghavan, Pārśva deva is former to Jāyana. He already knew the treatise Sangīta-Samaya-Sāra of Pārśva deva and also he (Raghavan) assumed that, While writing the Dēśi Lāsyangas in Nṛttaratnavi treatise Jaya might keep sangitasamaya sara treatise in front of him.

In Sangīta-Samaya-Sāra the author explained about Pēriṇi-Pancāngas which are similar to Jāyana’s Nṛttaratnāvali except Garghara. In Garghara part he (Pārśvadeva) did not elaborated the footwork and the rest are similar to Nṛttaratnāvali treatise and coming to Vadhya paddhati Jāyana had not mentioned about the vadhya paddhati but Pārśvadeva has explained how the instruments are to be played and its order.

## **Sabhāraṇjani**

Pancāngas: Gargharamu, vishamamu, bhāvāśrayamu, Kavivāramu and gītamu. In this a new thing he explained that is ‘*Pushpānjali*’.

He just explained the Garghara part of foot work with the syllables. And he did not go for the rest of the Pancāngas. The new thing which he explained is Pushpanjali. In pushpanjali he showed the practical work that the dancer how he respects the Sabhapathi in the court. This is the new one and developed recently. The pushpanjali might have been developed after Nṛttaratnāvali time and it is added to the repertoire of Perini nearly 150 years ago (Yachandra’s 1949).

In Bharatārṇava the author has given brief information regarding Pēriṇi, like—“In Prerana/Peruni Abhinaya the dancer uses ash all over the body. The dancer leaves his hair up to the shoulder level and the ghunguroos named ‘Garghara’ ties to the knees. Keeps body in a gentle mode. The dancer has to have an idea of Pancāngas and the knowledge of the talas timings and rhythms. In this way the Pēriṇi dancer begins ‘Pēriṇi Abhinaya’ to entertain the spectators”. Then author followed Five parts (Pancāngas).

In Sangītaratnākara the author Sārṅgadēva has explained about the Pēriṇi Paddhati (the manner of dance), and what type of dance has to be performed (Utpluthi karanas), how the dancer has to

enter on to the stage, and what type of instruments (orchestra) have to be played. But he did not mention Pēriṇi one of the parts of Sapta Lāsya.

In Sangītasamayāsāra Pārśvadeva also discoursed about Pēriṇi in brief and he pointed out the order of instruments how they were used for the Pēriṇi but he did not elaborated the order. And in the sabhāranjani the author Yachandra Kumar has focused on the Garghara part. He points out one new typical part 'Pushpanjali' in Pēriṇi repertoire. But he did not clarify whether the dance has to perform by men or women. And he did not elaborate the complete form he just gave the syllables for the foot works in Garghara and he suggested to elaborate the performance by adding the syllables to the steps. And he did not touch the remaining parts.

### **Performance:**

The performance starts with Garghara part which is nothing but foot work followed by steps or producing the sound by bells tied to the shanks by shaking the legs in different movements said like six or seven types of foot works. But they did not mention hastābhinaya or hand gestures. It has been focused only on foot work and there is no song to follow in this part.

The second part is Vishama. In this part also there is no scope for abhinaya. In some other texts it has been named as Nṛtta and it can be performed in two divisions' one in lāsya and the other in tāṇḍava. The performers have to execute some karaṇas and cāris. In this part also there is no song to follow abhinaya it is totally an absence of having bhāva and Abhinaya.

Bhāvāśraya, it is an important part which consist abhinaya to imitate awkward things like monkey, goblins, devil, through a disfigured face, lips, eyes, stomach, shoulders, legs, etc. to create comic sentiment and it is also called vikaṭa. In this vikaṭa the performer should perform the above said manner and create comic plays in absence of tala. There is a scope for abhinaya to give comic effect without following certain tala. It is an important thing which we can see in this part. Bhāvāśraya or vikaṭa is also known as vāgaḍam that it is opined by a few, that it follows the movements of the bird *bhāṇḍikā* in some text. It does not contain songs and even tāḷa.

Kaivāra it is also known as Kavicāraka. In this part the performer has to praise or enlist the good qualities of kings. It is totally dedicated to kings. It has scope to perform abhinaya in this particular part. But they did not mention about Tala (laya) or song.

And the last part is gīta. In gīta they did not mention the songs that have to be sung by the performers. Just they mentioned that the performer has to sing the song in śuddha rāgas or sāḷaga rāgas with contains ālāpa they have to sing prabandhas is known as gīta. According to this part, in the Pēriṇi qualities they already mentioned that, the Pēriṇi performer have knowledge in instrumental music, good command on tāḷa and laya besides this being a melodious singer. In this way the performers has to be and perform.

On the whole I can say, with all these evidences, it is an incomplete art form confined to the Śāstrās. If we found the lost manuscripts then we may look/get the genuine Dēśi Pēriṇi. It had a lot of history but unfortunately it had been lost or unavailable. The found material regarding Pēriṇi and its performance is inadequate. We don't have any evidence for the practical performance or its repertoire items what they were actually used to perform in those days.

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