

Nataraja Rama Krishna's Contribution; Perini Siva Tandavam

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

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 IIT, and left the job for attaining PhD in dance from the Central University. He qualified in UGC NET and presently pursuing his PhD in 'Origin and Evolution of Perini dance form' under the guidance of Prof. M.S.Siva Raju, Department of Dance, University of Hyderabad.

Abstract:

Perini Siva Tandavam is a recent dance form. It was reinvented by late Prof. Nataraja Ramakrishna. It gained its popularity by Vira Saiva cult at the time of Kakatiyas' reign. It is an oldest art form especially concern to Desi tradition and highly developed in the Deccan part of our country from centuries ago. The form which dedicates the whole performance to lord Shiva as adoration in the sanctum sanctorum and after Kakatiyas, it had been vanished. Today it is exist due to late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna's revival.

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Vakkala Rama Krishna*

Ramakrishna was the first person who speaks fluently about dance and its terminology, tradition, repertoire etc. He is the doyen of Āndhra Natyam. He is known for his work in the areas of dance Andhra Natyam, Kuchipudi, Perini Siva Tandavam and temple traditions. He wrote many books on temple dances, dances forms and its traditions. His devotion towards Lord Shiva and

Shaivagama traditions influenced and made him to innovate and revoke new dance traditions. And the way of investigation to find out the vanished art forms shows his dedication towards dance. He spent his whole life in digging out these traditions and giving high esteem to the art forms.

Suddha, Desi, Prerana, Prenkhana, Dandika, Kundali and Kalasa are the special for seven types of Siva Tandavas. Especially on these 7 types of dances Nataraja Rama Krishna had done his research and he started practical work choreography on Perini Siva Tandava with the help of Nrittaratnavali treatise and the sculptures of Ramappa temple. He learnt Saivagama related forms at Sri Kalahasti temple from his guru Smt. Naidupeta Rajamma. His belief that the figurines of Ramappa temple resembles powerful and vigorous masculine dance style 'Rudra-Prerana' that was performed to inspire and invigorate warriors before going to the battle field.

This pure dance incorporates "Veera", "Raudra" rasas of Lord Shiva whose spirit is invoked by the dancers. This dance involves worship of the five elements (Prithvi, Jala, Teja, Vaayu, and Aakasha) and celebrating the mystic "Om". An interesting aspect about this form is its Music. Use of Conch, Drums, Bells and Rhythmic Syllables change the atmosphere enabling dancers to reach a point of frenzy.

What is Perini?

Perini Nritya had been extensively practiced under Desi form of dance in the medieval period. The dancer who performs this dance called '*Peranin*'. Perinin smears ash all over his body and head is to be clean shorn except for a small tuft of hair. He should have a good command of tala and laya elements of dancing besides a melodious singer. He should tie bells around shanks and performs. He is well versed in the five elements of **Gharghara, Vishama, Bhavashraya, Kavicharaka** and **Gita** which constitute the main substance of this dance. Its main rasa is Hasya Rasa. The Five parts (panchangas) are:-

1. **Ghargharam**-it is a foot work and it has 6 varieties namely- Paripaata, Chaapdap, siripitti, Alagpaata, Chirihira and Khuluhula.
2. **Vishamam**- performs leaps/jumps before execution of Karana.
3. **Bhavasrayam** - imitate in an awkward or abnormal way to create a comic effect.
4. **Kavicharakam** - describing high qualities of King (Uttama Nayaka).
5. **Gitam** – sing salaga Suda songs.

Bhartarnavam	Sangitharatnakara	Sangitha-samaya-sara	Nrittaratnavali
1.Ghargharam (6-k)	1.Ghargharam (6-kinds)	3.Ghargharam	3.Gharghara (7-kinds)
a) Paripat	a) padivata	(No mentioned)	a) cavada
b) Chapdap	b) Apadapa		b) padivada
c) Siripitti	c) siripata		c) rundha
d) Alagpat	d) Alagpata		d) siribhira
e) Chirihira	e) Sirihira		e) khaluhula
f) Khuluhula	f) Khaluhula		f) lagnapata & g) siripiti
2.Vishamam	2.Vishamam	1. Nrittam	1. Nrittam

3.Bhavasrayam	3.Bhavasrayam	4. Vaagadam	4. Vikatam or vagadam
4.Kavicharakam	4.KavichAram	2. Kaivaram	2. Kaivaram
5.Gitam	5.Gitam	5. Gitam	5. Gitam

About Perini in other old texts like:-

Why late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna chose Perini? What made him to choose this art form?

According to late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna - The dance performed by women is called *Komala Lasyam*. The dance performed by men is *Uddata Tandavam*. But surprisingly men always were interested towards Lasya tradition of the dance and valor sentiment (*vira rasa*) was given fewer importances compared to *sringara rasa*. He done research on this part and he tried to understand if there was any scope for the male dancers to show more of *vira rasa* and then the other sentiments are in partial.

Then he found that there was an art form exclusively for men. He then started his research based on treatises like *Natya sastra*, and *Bharatarnava*, etc and the *Tala patterns, jati variations* and learnt the *shaivagama art forms*. He then chose Perini to choreograph into Perini Siva Tandavam.

I was told that the present Perini was reconstructed late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna with the help of Rāmappa temple sculptures, Does Rāmappa temple sculpture resemble Perini dance? The dance sculptures of Rāmappa temple are women performers carved in the temple shrine. According to Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna in the Kakatiyas time this dance was used to be done in front of the soldiers to get ferocious state. And the Rāmappa temple had built in the Kakatiya's time and the dancers were men those who perform Perini! Then how it could possible that this temple sculptures resembles Present Perini?

Then why the people say that late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna has visited frequently to Rāmappa temple to recreate Perini? Yes late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna had visited many times to Ramappa to find out the music for Perini dance with the help of *mardangika's* the drummers sculptures fingers point carved in front of the main door panel of main deity. So that he can assume the tempo of the drums by observing and through examination. Then he found the percussion *drupabani* (ancient Bani) and created music for it. In this way Rāmappa temple sculpture was helped late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna's to compose and construct jati patterns in the revival of Perini. So he visited many times to Rāmappa temple for the purpose of creating the music for Perini.

Most of the contexts late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna and his disciples were mentioned that this art form was used to "perform in front of the soldiers before going to the battle field"- is it a valid statement? I think while choreographing the Perini he was so inspired with the treatise *Nrittaratnavali* and the writer Jayapa. Jayapa was an elephant commander. He elucidates Perini in his text in the 7th chapter dedicated the whole chapter to desi art forms flourished in jayapa's time.

So Nataraja Ramakrishna was inspired by treatise and the writer jayapa. As Jayapa belongs to kakatiya kingdom where the Kākatiyas were śaivaits related to pashupati sāmprāya. The King Ganapati deva appointed him as elephant commander for his kingdom. He has to train the elephants and the soldiers before going to the battle field. So Jaya knew about this art form and

he might conduct Perini dance in front of the soldiers before going to the battle field and the word Perini it derives its name from *Prerana* which means inspiration.

Late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna knew about these art forms and also he knew about siva-cult and he learnt saivagama dance, from his guru Smt. Naidupeta Rajamma. This might be the reason for saying this statement. But this statement was not there in *Nrittaratnavali* and even in Kakatiya history.

Jayapa he did not mentioned that he is a dancer and guided or conducted Perini performance in front of the worriers before leaving to the battle field. It was an assumption of late Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna.

In the 7th chapter he described all the art forms which were highly prevalent, evolved and flourished in Kakatiyas time. In those, art forms he mentioned about Perini and its practical work means what type of ornamentation has to be used, what type of footwork have to be done, how the dancers has to enter on to the stage and what type of items has to perform. In this way he elaborated the form. He just focused on Desi forms which were more prevalent in those days he merged them in chapter seven.

Does it have any proper repertoire like other classical art forms of India? If we think like this then definitely the answer will be no it does not have a proper repertoire why because Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna has taken only the first part that is gharghara¹ to reconstruct and he made a separate dance items Melaprapiti, pushpanjali, yati nartanam, pancabhuta nartanam and samikaranam like this he made the repertoire for Perini with the help of songs laid down in the songs of Shiva stotra ganalu.

In revival of Perini late Prof. Nataraja Ramakrishna had chosen only men why not women! Means he might thought that the costumes mentioned in the treatises are not suitable for women and the way of dance said in the old treatises might be the reason to choose men and also he said often times that this dance they used to perform in the Kakatiya's time in front of the soldiers to get ferocious state by invoking divine powers of Lord Shiva to defeat the enemies. So the dance has to be done in Roudra or Vira rasa why because to inspire the soldiers. For these rasas the delicate movements of women looks feminine or Komala or Lasya and they are unable to produce what actually Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna wants to see. In his view men are capable to produce such inspirations and so it might be the reason for choosing only men to produce Vira, Roudra sentiments. The Kakatiyas were Shaivaites so it might be the reason for dedicating the whole performance to Shiva deity that might be the reason for present Perini looks like devotion of Lord Shiva.

What might be the reason for mentioning women Perini performance in the literature? Especially, in Telugu literature most of the writers remember women performing Perini in the name of Kelika in the king's court. Whenever art form has transformed from men to women then it may get more respect from the people and it develops its identity in the society. That might be the reason for many poets and writers were remember Perini in their literature comparing Perini performance done by women in many aspects.

¹ Interviewed Kala Krishna on 31st July 2014.

So this is the last stage to decline the performance by women Perini performers in the patronage of kings. By this way the literature gives us an idea how Perini emerged with male performers and existed some centuries and transformed to women performers and then declined. It had been performed in Lasya tradition and then it transformed into Tandava tradition. But it is an oldest art form which was highly developed especially in the Deccan part of India.

Conclusion;

He wanted to see Perini as men oriented Pure Tandava tradition which has to produce only Vira and Roudra rasas. According to Ramakrishna, Perini is a virile form predominates' Vira and roudra rasa but this statement was purely unsubstantiated. Perini was a Desi art form which produces Comic sentiment. But there is no evidence for the statement was true given by Ramakrishna. He assumed while reconstructing Perini with the help of Jayana's Nrittaratnavali text. Why because Jāyana he himself was a Chief Elephant Commandant at Gaṇapati Deva's kingdom. So his duty to train the soldiers before going to the battle field as he wrote a text called Nrittaratnavali. In that text he elaborated Desi dance forms. So he assumed that this Perini would be in a ferocious state and produce Vira and roudra rasas.

But actually the Perini is not a valor dance form. According to the Sastras it is a pure Nṛtta oriented dance form. The dancer himself was a good singer and musician. He has to command the music and tala. Besides this he has to imitate ludicrous thing to create comic sentiment for the spectators in overall performance.

What Ramakrishna had thought about Perini was contrary confined to the Sastras. Why he does like this? Means the influence of dance practice from his childhood and immense devotion on lord Shiva, his scholarship, mastery in knowledge and skills towards dance and also influence of Kākatīya kingdom's sculpture and history made him to revive Perini in Vira and roudra sentiment.

From his childhood he loved to dance and dance related subjects. For many years he searched for male oriented dance forms. He already knew all the Lasya traditions from his guru Nāyudupēta Rājamma. And he met many dance scholars who worked on Lasya traditions he learnt and studied. And also he noticed that the male dancers are always interested to perform in the Lasya tradition performances and Vira rasa had given a little importance compared to Śṛṅgāra rasa that he did not like actually.

In Ramakrishna's view the men dancers should perform only men oriented dances and women, women dances, i.e. Tandava and Lasya traditions. So he wanted to see pure male oriented dance form which should dominates only Vira and roudra. Once he heard about men orient dance form Perini for the very first time from his guru Nayudupeta Rajamma. Then he decided to work on it. But he did not know how that Perini was? How they perform? What type of tradition it was? Who has to perform? What type of items will be there?

He got an opportunity from Sangeet natak academy to work on Nrittaratnavali text in relating to Rāmappa temple sculptures. At the same time he was already in his research on Perini. That work made him to find out the links of Perini.

The Kākatīya dynasty made his thoughts into a different level. He mesmerized to the sculptures of Rāmappa temple. With an inquisitiveness to know more about Rāmappa temple sculptures and its uniqueness Rama Krishna made several visits to the temple and had 5 years in his research.

And the way of analyzing the sculptures made him to compose the music with the help of its base, so he started thinking like every raga; the seven notes (Saptaswaras) are the source of origination (base). Similarly ---“*ta, thit, tom, ṇam*” are the basic Mṛidhanga Syllables (Sabdas) based on which all the talas have been created. In the same way, all the Charis, Karaṇas, Angaharas, etc, have originated from 8 Primary Sthanas.

In this way he studied each and every sculpture and poses and even tips of the fingers too meticulously. He tried to analyze the sound with the help of the hastas placing on the mridangam. About 16 number each of these figurines very slightly from the other and can be seen holding the mridangam on either side and found elaborate detail sculptures on the carved panels slanting the doorway to the sanctum Santorum. Ramappa temple sculpture helped him to compose music for Perini with the help of all female figurines carved on the main door panel but not male figures.

First he took Mridhanga syllables from Bharatarnava treatise and with the help of Surya lingam (mridangam accompaniment) made Jathis. In this connection he used ‘Bhugata Gopannas’ “Nandishwara Bharatam” which is famous for Jathi syllables to construct Jathis, Yathis, Gatis mridhanga syllables.

He got inspired by the Jayapa and his work. Besides this he already knew how to study the sculptures and the mudras of the figurines and meditation from his childhood at mylapore temple and Ramakrishna mutt. All these things made him to revive Perini according to his view.

Kakatiyas were Vira Shaivas, pashupati tradition. He assumed Perini might be done in front of the soldiers before leaving to the battle. So he thought to revive Perini in Tandava and reconstructed as Perini Shiva Tandava. And he did not go for Vishnu prēraṇa why because, there is no specific karanas, angahāras and charis for lord Vishnu and he does not want to go for Lasya already it is exists in all the traditions so he did not touched. Actually he likes men oriented dance form related to pure Tandavaas I already said.

With the help of Natya Sastra and other dance treatises in relation to the Shiva Tandava he acquired all the karaṇas, angahāras, Chari’s, recaka’s, hasta, pāda, bhramari, utpluti’s, etc. to produce ferocious expression and creates Tandava atmosphere and he choreographed only Shiva Tandava. Now it is popularly known as “Perini Shiva Tandavam”.

He already knew Shivagama tradition from his guru Nayudupeta Rajamma. And Kuchipudi from Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastri, bharatanatyam pandanallur Minakshi sundaram pillai, kathak Sundarji, and Devadasi traditions from his guru nayudupeta Rajamma and worked with some of eminent Devadasis like Balasaraswati, etc. With all these scholarships he wanted to recreate a new art form which might not be similar to already existing and he knew.

So he searched for new one and finally he found and shaped. So these were the things to decide Perini as “Shiva Tandavam”. He wanted to show Perini in a valor and ferocious state. Perini is an art form which related to the Desi. Ramakrishna was inspired by Jāyana and his work and

contributions to art. But actually Jāyana just mentioned all the Desi forms which have been highly existed in his time. He did not give much importance to the Perini dance as Ramakrishna thinks. But Jāyana elucidates all the Desi art forms with equal importances which are flourished in his period. Ramakrishna exaggerated to Jāyana and his work especially to Perini and Pashupati sampradaya (Dana Vira, Daya Vira and Yuddha Vira) and of course his interest towards men oriented Tandava tradition attracted him and dragged him to reconstruct Perini as Shiva Tandavam.

His contribution towards Perini revival was incomparable. From his childhood he associated with dance and dance traditions and immense interest on dance made him to do a new era to Perini.

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