

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE NRTYA VINODA OF MĀNASOLLĀSASYNOPSIS

Indian literature abounds in a vast number of ancient and mediaeval works, some of which provide interesting insights into the history and development of the fundamentals and techniques of Indian dance. This is only expected considering that Indian dance, had achieved a high degree of stylization in technique, subtlety and beauty long ago and also, because it was an important art form inextricably woven into the social and religious life of the people. It was during the suzerainty of the Muslims and the British and the consequent political and social upheavels in the late mediaeval period, that these valuable literary works were pushed into the background. Once India's independence was restored, the urge to revive the rich heritage stored in these works came to the fore and it is as a result of this upsurge of interest that attempts were made to trace the various manuscripts and bring them to light. So far, nearly five hundred manuscripts on dance, have been traced, according to the information provided in the Sanskrit Manuscripts catalogue. Of these, few have been published which are indeed very useful to scholars. It provides them with an easy access to their contents for purposes of

undertaking research.

In the present thesis an attempt is made to critically examine and interpret the portion relating to dance in one of the works of mediaeval India, that has been published in the Gaekwad Oriental Series. This work called the Mānasollāsa is an encyclopaedic text in Sanskrit, which was composed by the Western Cālukyan King Bhūlokamalla Someśvara III in 1131 A.D. The Mānasollāsa comprises of a hundred topics divided equally into five sections called Vimsātis and it is in the fourth Vimsāti, wherein one chapter called the Nṛtya Vinoda is devoted to the subject of dance. This is an important chapter so far as dancers are concerned. Yet, it has not received adequate attention as commensurate with its importance which^{is} probably because it has been confined to a small place in a large book.

So far, no independent research has been carried out on the Nṛtya Vinoda of Mānasollāsa. Scholars have concentrated till now on large, independent and more significant works, such as the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata, Būratārṇava and Abhinayadarpaṇa attributed to Nandikeśvara and the Saṅgītaratnākāra of Śārṅga-deva. These have indeed been of great use for reconstructing the ancient dance techniques and also as a reference material for the large amount of features, that have remained unaltered since the early times. They have also helped in creating an awareness amongst those in the field, for bringing out critical and analytical studies on similar works, such as the one

taken up for this thesis.

The importance of the Nṛtya Vinoda of Mānasollāsa had been recognized by eminent scholars like Sri Ramakrishna Kavi and Dr. V. Raghavan, even before it was published. Both of them have done a valuable task of collecting information on various manuscripts including those relating to dance. In his book called the Bharatakośa, Sri Ramakrishnakavi has prepared an index of terms relating to dance, drama, vocal and instrumental music and prosody with the definitions given by various authors and it is significant to note here that for about one hundred terms, the definitions given by Someśvara in the Nṛtya Vinoda are the ones that he has used. Dr. V. Raghavan in his edition of the Nṛttaratnāvalī has also highlighted on the significance and distinctiveness of the Nṛtyavinoda.

After the publication of the Nṛtya portion of the Mānasollāsa, in 1961, many scholars have availed of it for purposes of interpretation and reference, such as Āchārya Brhaspati who has acknowledged its utility for his edition of Parśvadeva's Sangītasamayāsāra. The chapter on dance has been touched upon even by Sri Sivsekhar Misra in his doctoral work 'Mānasollāsa, a Sanskritik Study'. However, he has given very scant and inadequate information on this chapter, so much so, that it does not serve any practical purpose for the dancers. But perhaps his biggest folly is in the fact that he has not included this chapter in his book 'Fine Arts and Technical Sciences in Ancient

India with special reference to Someśvara's *Mānasollāsa*. This lapse will now be remedied in this thesis which is devoted to the analysis of *Nṛtya Vinoda* alone.

The *Nṛtya Vinoda* of *Mānasollāsa* occupies a significant place in the sizeable body of dance literature. It happens to be the earliest extant work, which has laid emphasis on the Deśī aspect for which later writers on this subject are indebted. This Deśī tradition constitutes a parallel and complementary stream to the Mārgī system that was laid down by Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Thus, in the *Nṛtya Vinoda* one finds significant points of departure from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The importance and authority of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* for matters on Mārgī is undoubted, but for matters on Deśī, the *Nṛtya Vinoda* of *Mānasollāsa* is an acknowledged authority. Mediaeval writers like Śārṅgadeva, Pārsvadeva, Jāya Senāpati, and Hammīra who have dealt with Deśī in their works, have acknowledged the usefulness of the *Nṛtya Vinoda*. Besides its contribution to Deśī, there are other distinctive features in the *Nṛtya Vinoda* which reflect a slightly different view and approach that is also worth considering. Another important issue is that the reconstruction of the dance style prevalent in mediaeval India would necessitate a study of the texts beginning from the *Nṛtya Vinoda*, since it is the earliest. Thus, in the light of these facts, it was felt that a translation and critical survey of the *Nṛtya Vinoda* based on its publication in the

Gaekwad Oriental Series should be the next step in the fitness and sequence of events.

The thesis will consist of the following chapters :

Introduction : In the 'Introduction', the scope of the work, the method of approach to the subject, literature consulted, and the purpose of the work are the aspects described.

Chapter I : Nṛtya in Relation to Vinoda. The terms Kalā, Vidyā, Sādhanā, Yoga, Yajñā are often associated with Nṛtya. Bharata has enunciated it as a Veda, whereas Someśvara refers to it as a Vinoda. How far this relation between Nṛtya and Vinoda had been acceptable in the traditional Indian Society where it was customary to associate divinity to all artistic activity and artistic creation has been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter II : A Sketch on Someśvara and His Mānasollāsa. The Western Cālukyan King Bhūlokamalla Someśvara III was the recipient of the title Sarvagnācakravartī, the Omniscient Emperor. Bestowing such a praise would probably tantamount to blasphemy, but it appears from his literary contributions, that Someśvara was more than ordinarily blessed by the Goddess of learning. The Mānasollāsa which was written by him is a colossal venture comprising of a hundred varied topics. The vastness of the book and diversity of the subjects dealt in it, would make one doubt,

whether it could have been written by one person and that too by a King, who has his duty to his Kingdom. It is to repudiate such comments against Someśvara's authorship to Mānasollāsa that many facts relating to Someśvara's scholarship have been presented in this chapter. A brief summary of the contents of the Mānasollāsa has also been set forth for the general appreciation of the work and its author.

Chapter III : Nṛtya Vinoda in Relation to Other Dance Texts :

Nṛtya Vinoda, because of its concern with a subject which is a dynamic art form, consists of an assimilation of knowledge that must be attributed to previous generations and the new developments that occurred out of the creative genius of the subsequent contemporary period. As a result of this factor, there are certain matters in the Nṛtya Vinoda which is a recast of what has been mentioned in earlier texts and at the same time it comprises of certain matters on the basis of which later writers have written their works. So far the proper interpretation, understanding and assessment of the Nṛtya Vinoda, it is necessary to resort to these related texts that were written earlier to, as well as after the Nṛtya Vinoda. Thus the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata with the commentary of Abhinavagupta on the one hand and the Sangitāratnakara of Śārṅgadeva, Sangītasamayasāra of Parśvadeva, Nṛttaratnāvalī of Jāya Senāpati and Sivatatvaratnākara of Basvabhūpala on the other, have been singled out for

comparative study because of their close relationship with the Nṛtya Vinoda as a derivative on one side and a source on the other. All these works have been published, and based upon them, a study into the relation between these texts and the Nṛtya Vinoda has been undertaken.

Chapter IV : Nṛtya Vinoda in Relation to Āṅgika Abhinaya.

The discussion of Āṅgika Abhinaya occupies a considerable portion of the Nṛtya Vinoda and most of this matter is found to confirm with the Mārgī tradition, as laid down in the Nāṭyaśāstra. In this fourth chapter, therefore the Sanskrit text of the Nṛtya Vinoda, relating to Āṅgika Abhinaya alone has been rendered with translations. Besides, notes have also been provided at the end of the chapter, to show concordances between the Āṅgika Abhinaya discussed in the Nṛtya Vinoda and the Nāṭyaśāstra. For those few matters of Āṅgika Abhinaya which are not found in the Nāṭyaśāstra, references from other related texts have been indicated in the Notes.

Chapter V : Nṛtya Vinoda in Relation to Deśī Sthānakas, Cāris and Karaṇas. In this chapter, the Sanskrit text of the Nṛtya Vinoda relating to Deśī tradition has been presented with translation and notes. The Sthānakas, Cāris and Utpluti Karaṇas come within its purview. The Notes at the end of the chapter are provided to show concordance of the Deśī material discussed in the Nṛtya Vinoda and post Someśvara texts belonging to the Karnāṭaka region.

Chapter VI : Conclusion : Many interesting features were noticed in the presentation of the text of the 'Nṛtya Vinoda of the Mānasollāsa' with translation and notes and also in its comparison with other related works on dance, that has been rendered in the previous chapters. It is with the intention of drawing attention to them and facilitating an easy appreciation of these features that a critical analysis of the Nṛtya Vinoda is rendered.

Statement I : The thesis is based primarily on the 'Mānasollāsa' edited by Śri. Śrigonḍekar and published in the Gaekwad Oriental Series (G.O.S.) in three volumes. The first volume containing the first two Vimsātis is G.O.S. No.28, the second volume consisting of the third Vimsāti and fifteen chapters of the fourth Vimsāti is G.O.S. No.84 and the third and the last volume comprising of five chapters of the fourth Vimsāti and all chapters of the fifth Vimsāti is G.O.S. No.138. The Nṛtya Vinoda is the third chapter in the third volume of the Mānasollāsa and it is based upon this chapter that the present thesis is undertaken. The other sources utilized for this study, are Sanskrit texts related to dance of the Karnāṭaka region from the period of Nāṭyaśāstra to the eighteenth century A.D.

Statement II : The Main Contribution through this study :

The Nṛtya Vinoda of the Mānasollāsa is for the first time presented with an English translation and critical notes,

so that the views and ideas contained in the text can be easily gauged even by those not familiar with Sanskrit. The translation is made in simple and readable English and is presented together with the Sanskrit text. The corrupt readings in the text have been corrected by consulting other related works. The correct readings have been indicated in the footnotes and in the detailed notes provided after the Sanskrit text. A study of the Nṛtya Vinoda with the Nāṭyaśāstra on the one side and with the Saṅgītaratnākara, Saṅgītasamayāsāra, Nṛttaratnāvalī and Śiva-tattva Ratnākara on the other is included, to project the importance of the Nṛtya Vinoda. An inquiry is made into the contribution rendered by the Kalyāṇi Cālukyas to dance and the level of dance activity during their reign. The Sthānakas, Cāris and Karaṇas, have been described and analysed with corresponding material in other texts. The Sthānakas have been illustrated, with photographs to give a clear visual picture of the poses. An index of alternate names or Synonymous names of terms found in the texts under consideration has been prepared to avoid any confusion to the readers. To sum up, the thesis throws light on the Nṛtya Vinoda of the Mānasollāsa which is an important work on dance and it is an attempt to reconstruct the dance technique as described by its author Someśvara.
