CHAPTER V

The last phase of royal patronage to Sadir at Tanjore

Sivaji-II, the only son of King Serfoji-II, was the last Maratha ruler of Thanjavur who ruled from 1832 to 1855 A.D. In the words of Bishop Heber*, 'Sivaji' was a pale and sickly lad and was not noted for his physical or mental attainments(1). As ill-luck would have it, Sivaji-II died in the year 1855 leaving behind not a single male issue inspite of his repeated marriages numbering to twenty of which his marriage with 17 brides(from Kolhapur, Satārā, Konkan etc.), on the same day and at the same time is quite baffling to note. Historians are forced to believe that all the attempts made by Sivaji to beget a son, turning in vain and in the absence of an heir-apparent, the ruler did not work with prudence in going for adoption and even the earlier experiences of the adoption of his father by King Tulaja-II and the annexation of Nagpur and other principalities in India lapsing to the East India Company in the absence of an heir, seem to have had no impact on him and at the cost of his obsession to have a child of his own, the kingdom of Tanjore was subjected to the doctrine of lapse and declared by the British as vacant jurisdiction in 1855 A.D.

As a consequence even the titular dignity of the Tanjore Raj was lost to the extent that the private property of the royal family was seized by the East India Company. But such a decision was lateron altered by the British who released a total pension of Rs.45,535 as dues for nearly 5000 members of the ex-royal family.

* One of the British admirers of Serfoji-II who visited Tanjore court during 1826

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Indeed, it is quite convincing that such an atmosphere of political instability could not have given the art, its old privileges, and a high profile, on the other hand circumscribed its growth. The illustrious Tanjore Quartette also did not seem to have enjoyed a privileged position towards the end of the Tanjore Raj. A worthy indicator to this point is the letter addressed to King Sivaji-II by Sivanandam, one of the Tanjore Quartette. The letter written in modi script dated 10th October 1844,(1) states that Sivanandam was issued orders by King Sivaji-II that all the four brothers (Tanjore Quartette) should teach the Hindustani dance and Karnataka natya to all the devadasis dwelling in Tanjore. Abiding by the orders of the Sarcar, all the four brothers were said to have trained these devadasis, day and night despite their personal sufferings and without caring for food and drinks. But the Devastāna madhyasthas or mediators had issued orders denying royal audience to these brothers who were also forbidden to present the dance performance in the royal presence. The letter further states that, Sivanandam since two years had been appealing to madhyasthas to seek the royal permission to revoke the orders, but the madhyasthas were said to have remained indifferent to his request. As a result Sivanandam made a request to King Sivaji-II to be merciful enough to sanction orders to resume their tradition of conducting the dance performance at the court as before.

Nevertheless, there are references in the modi manuscripts to certain kuravanji natakas to have been written during Sivāji-II's reign. The authorship of Marathi drama 'Natesāvilāsa Nataka' has been ascribed to King Sivaji-II.

(1) Modi Manuscript -12 - 262 (No.2859) Cf. K.M. Venkatarāmāyya - Administration and social life under the Maratha Rulers of Thanjavur, published by Tamil University, Tanjore. 1984, PP.237, 540 & 541, this letter in the modi script has been given in Appendix.
It is learnt from the contemporary records of the period, that Lavani, a folk musical form of Maharashtra was highly encouraged by Sivaji-II who had patronised many lavani composers, prominent among them was Lavani Venkata Rao, who is said to have composed many lavanis eulogising his patron. It is further inferred from the records that Western and Hindustani dances gained popularity and encouragement at the hands of King Sivaji who seems to have had a leaning to these dances. With the demise of Raja Sivaji-II, the Tanjore Raj under the rule of Marathas came to an end and the decline of royal patronage to art, had a devastating effect on the art and its practitioners. The wages for the devadasis recruited to the temples maintained by the royalty, was stopped; for instance, four daughters of dasi Varalaksimi attached to the Cidambaresvara temple in the Sarabhendra raja pattnam, were said to have received emoluments of 5 panams and 2 kalams of paddy each but after Sivaji-II’s death, it is learnt that they were only given meagre pension(1).

From time immemorial, the institution of devadasi was prevalent all over India as early as the 3rd century B.C., in places where the temples were in abundance. The devadasis also referred to as ganikā as they were considered as the most learned women and adept in the art of music and dance, became an indispensable part of these magnificent structures, so assiduously built by the ruling monarchs.

Apart from their economic status, they were said to have enjoyed high social status and were respected as the ever auspicious women (Nityasumaṅgalis) who possessed the power to ward of evil effects.

(1) Modi manuscripts - S.M.M.T. - 7 - 690 - 696 - T.M.S.S.M. Library.
The decline of royal patronage and colonial rule in Tanjore in the later half of 19th century, turned the entire situation topsy-turvy. Most of the temples were virtually impoverished and its inhabitants especially devadasis were deprived of their privileges and as recourse they looked towards the patricians and alien rulers for their livelihood and sustenance of their art. The norms and stipulations abiding dancers, which were strictly enforced both at the temple and court were no longer prevalent, resulting in lack of discipline and tardy deterioration in the standards of the art of some of the devadasis. We are given to the understanding that certain sections of the devadasi community, by force of circumstances, started leading immoral lives and this resulted in an inglorious effect on the art practised by them which gradually lost its prestige and dignity. With the passage of time, many social reformers, realising the seriousness of the consequences of such immoral practices that crept in some groups of the devadasis, condemned the notorious custom of dedicating young women to the temples which according to them was the crux of the problem and served as license to promiscuity. Since the artistic accomplishments such as music and dance were best utilised by some of the devadasis with an ulterior motive to promote the evil trade, the social reformers under the leadership of Dr. Mrs. Muthulaksmi Reddi, a doctor by profession, who herself belonged to devadasi community, stood on their heels to abolish the devadasi system and discourage the art so as to champion the cause of women belonging to devadasi families. In order to redress and cicatrise their lives, the leader passed a resolution in the Madras legislative council to abrogate and abolish the heinous system and discourage the art termed as ‘nautch’ associated with them. This was the sole aim of the Anti-Nautch Movement, which was launched
way back in the later half of the 19th century by the social benefactors as a means to put an end to the ill-effects of the devadasi system and the art practised by them*. But the movement is said to have gained impetus only in the first half of the 20th century, with good number of social reformers belonging to elite sections of the society extending their support to the anti-nautch movement spearheaded by Dr. Muthulaksmi Reddi, who cropped up the issue in the press, criticising the cultivation of the art of dancing and discouraging the dance performances by the devadasis. As a result of this movement several great dance masters (nattuvanars) most of them quite old and their worthy acclaimed disciples (devadasis), who were true to the divine art of Sadir, started leading neglected, suppressed and impoverished lives in remote villages which were once considered as renowned seats of art.

Many votaries of art expected a disastrous effect of the anti-nautch movement on the art of Sadir - the priceless heritage of Indian culture, so precautiously preserved, developed and garrisoned by the artists and the Kings of Tanjore. They further anticipated that the art may be endangered to the extent of its extinction. Sensing this threat, they felt it was high time to save the valuable art, from its perilous and hazardous state. The votaries firmly resolved to "spare the bad elements and save the art" from falling into desuetude. It was at this troubled times that E. Krsna Ayyar, an advocate by profession, secretary to the newly emerged Music Academy, Madras and equally accomplished in the art of music and dance, appeared on the dance scenario - as the saviour

* Owing to the stigma attached to the art and better awareness created by the anti-nautch movement, some of the educated descendants of the temple dancers like Smt. Tilakam Prof. of Music (Retd.), Tanjore (grand daughter of Late Smt. Kalam, the renowned temple dancer in the shrine of Lord Tyagaraja of Tiruvannamalai) strongly revolted and refused to get dedicated to the temple - Information elicited from Interview with Smt. Tilakam on 27-4-94 at Thanjavur.
of Sadir to preserve, protect and promote the cherished art. Though E.Krsna Ayyar opposed the degeneration of the art as a result of immoralities of life creeping into its divine nature, yet he was surely antagonistic to the ideas of anti-nautch leaders to annihilate the art just because certain stock of devadasis were leading promiscuous lives.

In this noble endeavour of the resuscitation of the art, the yeoman services of the Music Academy, Madras and its band of dedicated members, can be marked with golden letters in the annals of the history of Sadir. The role of the Music Academy, Madras, in saving, reviving, refurbishing and restoring the art of Sadir from falling into oblivion and abeyance is notable and significant. The proceedings of its conferences were fruitful as it succeeded in clearing the nebulosity that beclouded the art. Among its conferences, the sixth annual conference held in the month of December 1932, proved to be quite eventful and epoch making, as the art of Sadir was rechristened "Bharatanatyam". The renaming of Sadir as Bharatanatyam was mainly intended to dispel and eliminate the acrimonious afflictions that got attached to the term Sadir and the new name would re-equip the art with its pristine glory, which it was enjoying since innumerable centuries. According to E. Krsna Ayyar 'Pandits had always called Sadir attam as Bharatam and the fact that the art was found to conform closely to the principles and technique stated in Bharata’s Natya Sastra encouraged those who worked hard for its renaissance to popularise it, justifiably, under the generic name of Bharatanatyam'.

The Music Academy, Madras, with an avowed purpose to establish and convince the educated public, regarding the richness of the art, encouraged the public performances of devadasis by arranging the venue, for

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(1) *Sruiti* - Indian classical music and dance magazine, Madras, issue No.27/28 - December 1986/January 1987-P.31
staging the dance performances within its precincts even during the period when the anti-nautch movement virtually engulfed and obfuscated the entire artistic world.

The first of its performances, was by the great natyacarya, Sri Meenaksisundaram pillai’s disciples - Râjalakṣmî and Jivaratnam popularly known as Kalyâni daughters of Tanjore. In the ensuing years many noted dancers, participated, among whom Mylapore Gouri Ammâl, Balasarasvati, PandanallurSaharanjitam and Kalanidhi (Ganapathy) Nârâyaṇan are only to mention a few.

As a result, E. Krsna Ayyar, along with his esteemed co-members of the academy, spurred of the renaissance movement which worked in defensive to counter the effects of the anti-nautch movement and in the proceedings of the sixth annual conference of the Music Academy, Madras, he also passed few resolutions regarding the encouragement of the art of Bharatanatyam and also to create an awareness among the public that anti-nautch movement over the years could only damage the art with no improvement in reforming the lives of the devadâsis which was the main objective with which the movement was launched. He enthused people to appreciate the art, which had nothing innately bad in it and hence sought the public support for the art. It is learnt that E. Krsna Ayyar's interest in the art drove him to personally learn the art of dancing form the eminent guru Sri Natesa Ayyar. As a part of his campaigning struggle for the revival of the art of Bharatanatyam, Krsna Ayyar adorned in female attire, gave benefit dance performances and also presented lecture demonstrations, which were well received by the public and thus elevated the art-consciousness and genuine interest among them. A perusal of the proceedings of the Music Academy
conference held on 28th December 1932 and the resolutions moved at
the conference with regard to the encouragement of the art of Bharatanatyarn
are worthy of note and hence mentioned below:-

The chairman of the conference Sri Tiger Varadachariar, in opening the
proceedings for the day, read the letter addressed to him by
Mr. G.A. Johnson, the Assistant Editor of the 'Madras Mail', who had
been invited to attend the conference. The letter expressed his inability
to attend the proceedings of the conference. The relevant portions of
the letter that are significant to the encouragement of the art are quoted
below:-

"There is a point which has occurred to me in connection with
these discussions which I submit might usefully be raised. This refers
to the public performances of the nautch, which I understand many
reformers wish to discourage. It is reasonable to suppose:-

(1) That if it is intended to reform the Devadasis they must be
given an alternative profession. Public performances of the
dance should provide them with a lucrative opportunity to
display their talents.

(2) If the dance is to be freed from its less respectable, associa-
tions, the encouragement of public-displays appears to be the
best way to do it. Private parties tend to encourage the notion
of lack of respectability. Public, on the other hand, show the
dance for what it is. Lack of respectability might best be
removed by attendance at these public functions of respectable
people(1)."

The chairman then put forth the notice of the resolutions received by him from E. Krsna Ayyar on the subject of the encouragement of the art of Bharatanatyam, that were to be moved at the conference that day. The resolutions stated that:

1. "This conference is of opinion, that Bharatanatyam, as a great and ancient art, is unexceptionable and worthy of public support.

2. This conference views with concern the rapid decline of Bharatanatyam and appeals to the public and art associations to give it the necessary encouragement.

3. This conference requests the Music Academy, Madras to take steps to disseminate correct ideas regarding the art and to help the public to a proper appreciation thereof.

4. This conference is of opinion that in as much as women are the appropriate exponents of the art, it is desirable that to start with, women's organisations do take immediate steps to give proper training in the art by instituting a course of instruction for the same.

5. This conference is of opinion that, in order to make dancing respectable it is necessary to encourage public performances thereof before respectable gatherings".

At the request of the chairman, scholars, exponents in field of music and other notable persons who participated in the conference expressed their views on the subject of the resolutions.

The excerpts of the views aired by some of them are as follows:-

1. "Gayaka Sikhāmani Muthiah Bhagavatar spoke in Tamil to the following effect:-

(2) Ibid, Pp.113 - 123
We all know by experience that the primary basis on which music itself rests is '_bhavam'; and that art of dancing is undoubtedly the best and most natural exponent of that bhavam which is the fundamental element of music.........No raga will be complete without bhavam and the only art that brings out this bhavam to perfection is dancing......It has been said that in the practice of the art, certain objectionable features creep in. I would meet that criticism by saying that simply because a particular individual develops a particular defect or does not impress the audience in any particular respect, it is not proper to condemn the art itself. I am strongly of opinion that not only females but males should practice the art, if they want to attain perfection in music itself........I am sure it will not be a very difficult affair for males to practice this art of dancing side by side with the greater art of music."

2. Mr. C.R. Srinivasa Ayyangar said " The art of music may be divided into three main branches, gitam, vadyam and nrtyam. Music will not be complete without a combination of these three factors......It is a great pity that by force of circumstances, the art of dancing has come to occupy a low level at present. Everybody knows that there are two ways of relieving a patient - either by giving him medicine or by killing him outright. If the art of dancing is to be killed, we need not assemble here at all. Moreover it is an art which cannot be killed, being naturally present in every thing we do. So the only course now open to us is to mend it and bring it to a level which it ought legitimately occupy. A high level of efficiency in this art of Abhinayam can be reached only
if we teach it to our children while they are young. . . . what I want to emphasise in connection with this resolution is that if you find anything distasteful in this art, you can eschew it. . . . . but this science of bhavam has existed in this country for ages, and it is up to us to improve it and bring it to a high level”.

3. Mr. V. Varaha Narasimha Chari said “until a very few years ago, this art was practised by females in temples as an expression of bhakti; but it gradually degenerated. That is however no reason why the art itself should be condemned. If there is any defect in the morals of these persons, steps should be taken to remedy that defect; but to destroy the art itself on that ground is neither an effective remedy nor a wise step. Even in that profession, there are people who are leading good lives. It is a pity that these are gradually giving up the profession as it is not paying nowadays”.

4. Dr. S. Krisnaswami Ayyangar expressed that "whether the art is worth preserving is perhaps of the essence of the question; but why should that question arise with respect to one art alone which is so much appreciated as a necessary branch of the art of music. . . . . the arts of music and natyam are connected with each other and go together. If you destroy one, you may perchance, without meaning it, destroy the other as well. The greater the degree of cultivation of the fine arts by society, the greater is measure of its culture. . . . . It is freely said that the practitioners or some of them at any rate are leading lives which fall very much below what a moral life ought to be. . . . . the art might go as well as the immorality with it. It is just
like saying that because I am in the habit of getting frequent
colds, I must cut off my head. . . . Dancing, like so many other
arts, comes as a rare accomplishment and . . . if practised as
a profession, I am quite sure it will give just sufficient amount
for living a decent life; but if you want to carry this art to
perfection, to the highest degree possible as regards technique,
etc., then you do require a certain number of people who can
devote themselves entirely to this art. In such a case, naturally,
such people will come from all kinds and conditions of life,
because you cannot know where genius exists, whatever be
the character of such people for the nonce, you must encourage
it and see that the art is made an honourable one. I do not
believe that those people themselves would wish that they
should lead a bad life".

5. Diwan Bahadur N. Pattabhirama Rao Pantulu said "To take
a common illustration, it is an admitted fact that ghee is a
necessary article of diet for our nutrition. Simply because it
gets spoiled by being stored in a brass or copper vessel, we
do not think of giving up the use of ghee altogether, but we
try to secure its purity by taking care to see that it is stored
in a better vessel". Hence he opined that "we should not
neglect this treasure of art that has been coming down to us
since hallowed memory. It is our duty to make every effort
possible to revive it in all its glory".

6. Mr. C.N. Muṭṭuranga Mudaliar, said "In my younger days I
remember there was an anti-nautch party formed. The object
with which it was formed was, that prostitution, which
generally prevailed among the class which practised the art,
should be eradicated. But I am afraid the result has been, that nautch has undoubtedly gone to a great extent, but that prostitution still persists. This clearly shows that prostitution has nothing to do at all with the practice of dancing, as an art. Bharata Natyam has existed in this country from very ancient times, I therefore consider that it is our primary duty to revive this ancient art and improve it in all possible ways, eschewing vice wherever it exists”.

7. Mr. P.G. Sundaresa Sastriar stated "One speaker before me said that ghee would be spoiled if kept in a brass or copper vessel. True but there is a remedy for it; that is; you can give a lead coating to that vessel. Similarly, if we teach self-respect to the people who are already practicing this art, there can be no fear of an immorality creeping in, so also it is most unfair that just because somebody wrote something in the papers about dancing, we should let the art die once for all. It is therefore upto this conference, gentlemen, to see that this art of dancing thrives more and more and is taught in our schools and colleges”.

Mr.E.Krsna Ayyar, then read the following message from Mahamahopadhyaya S. Kuppusvami Sastriar, Professor of Sanskrit, the Presidency College, Madras :-

"I am glad, and it is but proper that the appeal for the encouragement of Bharatanatyam should go forth with the imprimatur of the Music Academy. Bharatanatyam is an art that has been handled by great men and women in the past. If it has fallen accidentally into evil hands, it is no fault of
the art. . . . . . The immediate task of art lovers should be to encourage the fine arts particularly among the reclaimed members of the Devadasi class, especially as their heredity in the art will be valuable. . . . . . The Devadasis might be induced to have regular married life and make an honourable living by the art. As for the question of family ladies taking to the art, it is enough if, for the present, they are induced to cultivate a sympathetic and appreciative attitude towards it. Time will work out the rest."

Likewise many eminent persons namely Mr. Venkata Rao, Dr. Srinivasa Raghava Ayyangar; Mr. M.S. Ramasvami Ayyar, Mr. T.S. Rajagopalan Ayyar, Mrs. M.R. Rāmasvāmiśivan and Mr. T.V. Subba Rao strongly supported the resolutions moved at the conference.

Towards the end, the chairman observing that the resolutions have been very well discussed, once again read the text of the resolutions with the necessary verbal amendments and put to vote which was carried unanimously by its members and other dignitaries present at the conference.

In addition to the change in the nomenclature of the art, the participants of Music Academy Conferences, Madras, also suggested certain significant changes with regard to the aspects concerning the presentation of the dance such as -

1. changes in the costume:

   Heavy costume and ornaments which affected the free execution of movements by the dancer, thereby reducing the grace and charm of the dance, should be dispensed with.
2. Change in the instruments:

Using vīnā and tambūra in place of clarionet probably intended to cautiously dispel the influence of the then existing nautch and more so to bring about the melodic beauties of the native band of instruments was suggested.

With the passage of time, the renaissance movement and the efforts of those who struggled for the revival of the art of Bharatanatyam, bore fruits as the art survived and took a new lease of life. This can be best evidenced from the complimentary message received by E.Krsna Ayyar, in connection with his 61st birthday celebration. The message was sent by none other than "the erstwhile leader of the anti-nautch movement and in this capacity his one time opponent Dr. Mrs. Muthulaksmi Reddi, who said that E.Krsna Ayyar had been devoted to a worthy cause and had done a great service to the South Indian art of Bharatanatyam by regenerating and restoring it to its original purity and dignity. She noted that it had become a popular art not only in every household but also in all educational institutions".

Interestingly, it was after witnessing the dance performance of Pandanallur Sabhāraṅjitam, arranged by Music Academy, that Smt.Rukminidevi Arundale, was inspired and impressed by the beauty and legacy of the art of Bharatanatyam, that she decided to learn the art inspire of several constraints. As a result she learnt the art from stalwarts like Sri Meenaksi sundaram Pillai and Smt.Gouri ammāl. She was a pioneer in bringing about systematic and institutionalised training of Bharatanatyam by establishing the institution “Kalāksetra” which has become the temple of Bharatanatyam, and several eminent dancers, dance teachers-chore-

ographers of today can be traced to this Alma-mater - ‘Kalāksetra’. The credit of producing numerous captivating dance-dramas goes to Smt. Rukminidevi and the band of musicians, art lovers and other associates of Kalāksetra.

In the due course, innumerable Sabhas and Organisations sprung up to encourage the art of dance and its platform created good opportunities to as many dancers (who included the girls from respectable families also) to exhibit their talents and also in providing the richness and beauty of the divine art - Bharatanatyam.

Present day Scenario of Bharatanatyam:-

Today Bharatanatyam has become the greatest pride of cultural heritage of India. The art form so laboriously cultivated and meticulously preserved for centuries, had no doubt suffered emasculation and neglect, yet withstood the ravages of time and emerged unscathed and successful as a result of the dedicated and single minded efforts of the sensitive crusaders of the revivalist movement.

Presently there is an overabundance of dancers, dance teachers and institutions of dance and awards, titles in recognition of their merits are frequently bestowed. Not only in the National level, but the art has won international appeal and has exercised its strong influence on the west due to which many foreigners have become dedicated practitioners of the art of Bharatanatyam. Unlike the hey days, presently there is considerable increase in the number of male Bharatanatyam dancers which is indeed an encouraging feature. Today the art form is provided with ample support from official cultural agencies, Sabhas, Academies and fine arts enthusiasts, who have taken up the role of heyday patrons and promoters of this art form.
Since four decades, many literate people with artistically inclined minds, have entered the arena of this functional art and have preserved the classical idiom and valued traditions of the Bharatanatyam in its true form, through their many productions which are earmarked for its professionalism and creativity. In addition to the practical orientation of the art, the artists of today are provided with better awareness regarding the theoretical aspects relating to the art as very often, the two comprehensive terms Tradition and Innovation have become the subjects for discussion among scholarly exponents and connoisseurs of art in the recent times.

Truly speaking, 'Tradition' is the accumulated heritage of centuries of art, handed over to the posterity. Every new act in the art which may be a change in substance or spirit, if made meaningful, relevant and true to the inner laws of the art is referred to as 'Innovation'.

Changes and innovations are significant to the survival and sustenance of any art form and in this respect, Bharatanatyam is no exception to it. In the present day, the practitioners of the art of Bharatanatyam have adapted the form and content of the art, aesthetically to the changing needs and temperament of the present dynamic society. Any change upholding the valued traditions and aesthetic standards of the art are necessary, nay, inevitable to avoid cultural stagnation.

The role and adaptability of the art form in accordance with changing needs and in different contexts and places, over the periods in the history of Bharatanatyam are quite interesting to note. The art when practised within the precincts of temple was more in the nature of prayer and dedication, which had a vital role in the different modes of worship of the presiding deity of the temple. In the context of court dancing,
the form and content of the art(form) got modified and the artist was more a performer than a devotee and was no more conditioned by the rules set forth by the Agama sastras. The needs of the situation and place, demanded the performer to exhibit her artistic excellences to please the patron and the distinguished galaxy of artists, scholars and the like, adorning the court. The same art crossing the borders of its ritualistic connotations of the past and bereft of the stipulated regime of the court dancing, has now metamorphosed into an educative, informative and enlightened recreation in the present day.

Most of the practitioners of the art, without swerving from the essentials of the sampradāya or tradition are diligently catering to the needs and demands of the society in required measures and at appropriate stages. As a result of maintaining its pace with the march of time, the art form has witnessed several changes in recent times, with regard to the aspects of performance such as the duration of the programme; adopting new ideas and themes for presentation, orchestra, the dance music, stage-props-lighting(as a result of technological advancement), costume of the dancer and so on. Certain changes have indeed facilitated the artiste and the connoisseurs to a great measure. But, in the name of novelty, some changes in the art form are constantly under challenge. How far do these changes which may or may not adhere to classical traditions be termed as innovations is the question that is pondered and bandied about by the exponents and savants in the field of art.

The answer to this question is given by scholars and professional artists who can be categorized into three groups. The first group, opines that any change as a result of slight deviation from the tradition, would lead to aesthetic crisis. The second category believes in changes within
tradition as innovation and the third cross section of scholars and exponents views innovation as the changes in the art, that can even cut across the boundaries of tradition.

In tune with the existing trends in *Bharatanatyam* it can be inferred that every change cannot be an innovation and any change need not be construed as a dilution and dismantling of the older artistic structures, styles and forms. In a nutshell, a change if it is true innovation will be well received by the art lovers and often gets accepted and sheltered in the mainstream of the art of Bharatanatyam, otherwise it gets washed away by the back waters and is sure to sink into oblivion.

A best illustrative example of such an innovative change is the systematisation of the format by Tanjore Quartette and their arrangement of the fundamental exercises or dance units from simple to complex patterns, that is still alive today, of course with minor modifications but none could surpass the significance and utility of the format systematised by Tanjore Quartette. The Tanjore Quartette were well versed with the sastras and *sampradāya* or tradition. The framework of programme launched by them is not totally new, several sastras, predating their period and Serfoji-II's Nirupana format have indeed mentioned a recital programme which seems more or less akin to the format systematised by Tanjore Quartette, but the difference was that Tanjore Quartette, with amazing tenacity of purpose, and catering to the receptivity and appreciation of the connoisseurs of art, worked as lapidarists with utmost care and patience, in polishing, refining, the format and by removing the off-repeated items and adding new variegated dance numbers, yet making it concise. The change may not have been so much in substance as in its spirit and being firmly rooted in the past traditions, the format
meant to suit the changing times and represented its best elements which enabled the arrangement of sparkling gems, as a pattern of great beauty, each of which has an individuality but also a mutuality.

Hence, for the survival and sustenance of the art form like Bharatanatyam, such changes are felt necessary so that it is streamlined in order to be led by the currents of progress. As T.S. Eliot, the great American writer has rightly stated that 'Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves in the first place the historical sense which we may call nearly indispensable—and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence'.

'And we do not quite say that the new is more valuable because it fits in, but its fitting-in is a test of its value - a test, it is true. Art no doubt has been considered as a medium to express and challenge the regimental thinking but such a mode certainly cannot presume licentious freedom to project some thing that would debunk our cultural ideologies and heritage. With a clear use of cognitive approach, one must discern that a tradition bereft of intelligence is not worth preserving and one should exercise a discovery learning as to what is the best life for oneself placed in a particular period and time.

One should also have a thoughtful consideration as to what is to be preserved from the past, what can be rejected and under what circumstances, modifications can be effected that would facilitate the enrichment of the art and development of the society.

(2) Ibid - P.473
Indeed, changing needs of society have wielded a great influence on the dance dramas of Bharatanatyam. Many contemporary dilemmas, highlighting the issues of women’s rights, communal harmony and such other socially relevant issues, in addition to the already existing and ever inspiring themes culled from *purānic* lore are successfully attempted in the dance-dramas by the present-day artists and choreographers. Some of them have given undue importance to body language or Sarirabhinaya in the technique to portray such themes sidelinging the *sattvikābhinaya* while, others opposing to such a trend, emphasise that the *Angikabhinaya* (by means of sarīfa and *cestākṛta* abhinaya) have to supplement sattvikabhinaya but surely cannot supplant the latter. They hold the view that the entire gamut of feelings and emotions could be best-projected through sattvikabhinaya or psycho-physical representation, irrespective of the theme selected. It is quite convincing that if *sāttvika* abhinaya is not so very important, then the sāstras and *sampradāya* need not have enunciated the significance of it, which indeed has a better evocative power of rasanubhūti or aesthetic pleasure in the sahrudayas or aesthete. The rich vocabulary of Bharatanatyam has facilitated, the immense possibilities for the interpretation of varied themes ranging from religious to socially relevant ones. But much depends on the higher levels of cognitive capacities of the choreographer to develop it further and transform the contents into meaningful, purposeful and creative expressions without allowing it to loose its specific character in its endeavour. The efficacy of the power of imagination should transcend the routinisation of the art, so as to penetrate deep into the richness of the art and unearth that which is

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According to Dr. Nataraja Rāmakrsna, eminent scholar in the field of dance, *Sāttvikā* abhinaya is defined as the expression of the soul.
latent and hidden inorder to broaden the art-understanding and expand the horizons. Not only in themes, but even in pure dance or Nṛtta of Bharatanatyam; the dancer without violating the basic principles of the art is free to draw on his or her perceptions of the art to create innovative adavu patterns that are marked for its arresting nature and aesthetic appeal.

The mushroom growth of numerous dance schools today has led to the phenomenal increase of dancers and the dance teachers alike. This proliferation in the art has yielded to both positive and negative effects. The discerning public in general and the connoisseurs of art, not the least, the dancers in particular are in a more advantageous position than ever before since many authentic books, journals on the art of Bharatanatyam known for its educative and informative value, some of the documentary films on the hey day practitioners of the art, the research oriented approach of several seminars, lecture-demonstrations and discussions among the scholars and exponents of the art, organised by cultural agencies and academies, have truly harnessed the growth of intellectual knowledge among dancers, which are not only theory based but have been made intensely practical also. Abundant new dance compositions marked for its expressive value enhancing the charm of dance as well as the song are constantly being added to the existing repertoire of Bharatanatyam. Marvellous compositions of the past, which are remarkable for its richness and variety are also being revived and presented by the professional dancers in their recitals, thus equipping the repertoire of Bharatanatyam with valuable additions which in turn have given the art, a widened scope for horizontal and vertical coverages. Nevertheless to the
to the appreciative standard of the art, there is a growing feeling among
savants, regarding the unsatisfactory nature of the average training in the
art received by some of the amateur practitioners, who have many
avocations in addition to dancing to be pursued and such frenetic activity,
naturally tells upon the standard of their art. The rich art of dancing
being a rare accomplishment demands a disciplined training from
deserving students who have a high achievement motivation to undergo
the rigours of professional training* and a ' will to achieve' to reach
the standard of excellence. It is also true that this mastery-proficiency
can be attained under the able guidance of knowledgeable guru who is
equally sincere and devoted to the art, as ought to be the student.

To day the ethos of commercialisation has permeated into the sphere
of Art, making the art and the artists as marketable products lacking
in creativity. Some of the artists with the sole aim of remaining in the
lime light are catering to certain demands of the uninitiated public
deficient in good taste. In this direction the role of the patrons and
connoisseurs of the art becomes equally important who have to develop
an uncanny shrewdness to discern good from bad and give a cultural

According to Smt. Tilakam, the practice session of the then dancers (as told by her grand
mother Smt Kamalam) in the Silambakūdam (practice hall) began early in the morning in the
nattuvanar's house. Starting with the body exercises, the dancers practised different adavu
groups rigorously in perfect araimandi Posture. This basic stance is said to have been given
much importance and in order to attain perfection in the art only a single item in the format was
taken up for day's practice. In addition to this, the dancers were also taught Sanskrit and
Telugu languages by the scholars in the Silambakūdam as the knowledge of these languages
was considered very essential for the understanding of the meaning of the lyrical text and better
comprehension of the character to be portrayed through vivid facial expressions, importantly
by means of Sattvikābhīnaya. Though Sattvikābhīnaya does not belong to the realm of ac-
quired learning much depends on the fulsome involvement of the artiste to become part &
parcel of the character in order to effectively communicate the precise shadings of the character
suggested by the text.
lead to discourage art devoid of its higher ideals, richness and its pristine glory. The wisdom gained from the anti-nautch movement, should remain afresh in the minds of the custodians (the artists, patrons and art lovers) of the art to carefully gauge and stem the unsavoury trends eroding this many splendoured art - Bharatanatyam in order to facilitate its onward march of progress.