

## **SPIRITUALITY, HAPPINESS AND CLASSICAL DANCE- THEIR LINKAGE AS PORTRAYED IN THE TIRUMURAI**

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### **Abstract**

Nataraja, the dancing Lord who is dwelling in Chidambaram is believed to perform his cosmic dance in the same place. He performs his dances in happiness and delight and fascinates everything into Himself. The peculiarities of Lord Shiva, particularly his apparel, activities- specifically the midnight dance at the incineration grounds bounded by different strange beings, have engrossed the loving and religious attention from his various devotees. This has led to the expression of their adoration for their Idol in the form of *Tirumurais*. Thevaram, which was composed by Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar- popularly referred to as Tevaram-trio. The Trio rapture over Lord Siva with their songs at holy places and shrines that they visit, which popularly now is represented as Thevaram. This study presents a review on the portrayal of Lord Nataraja in Thevaram. The dance of Nataraja, which is referred to as the cosmic dance, is representative of the metrical movements of the cosmos. The Thevaram refers to the first seven volumes of Tirumurai, compilation of Śaiva devotional poetry. The poems of Thevaram are remained as a traditional practice in various Lord Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu. The image of the Hindu Idol Shiva dancing within a gigantic ring of fire is amongst the most adored and breathtaking signs of the Hindu formation of the nature of the cosmos. Indeed, this can be beautifully portrayed in The Tevaram-trio associates some of the signs of Siva-Nataraja with cosmic dance. This research discusses in detail how Lord Nataraja through his dance forms represent an Embodiment of Happiness and Spirituality and how the Thirumurais convey it in their hymns.

**Keyword:** Happiness, Dance, Spirituality, Lord Nataraja, Thirumurai

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The appearance of the Hindu Idol Shiva dancing within a gigantic ring of fire is amongst the most dearly loved and remarkable signs of the Hindu concept of the nature of the universe. In fact, central to this influential sacred image, it can be found a representative refining of the spirit of Hindu spiritual awareness. In the induction to his powerful text on modern Hinduism, titled *Dancing with Lord Siva*, Satguru Subramuniaswami notices that "the Cosmic Dance refers to the Hindu perspective of subsistence," and that for Hindu religion "Dancing with Lord Shiva is everything they do, everything they do, believe and feel, from their seeming birth to last breath of their life. It is God and human forever connected in sanctified movement. As the abovementioned incantation to Shiva as well delightfully teaches everyone, Shiva's Dance as well acts as a convincing and influential symbol for the energy integral to the method of religious and divine transformation (Kanagasuntheram, 2003).

The Language Tamil had one of the most exceptional, fundamentally secular, poetic backgrounds in Sangam poems (c. third century BCE-AD). This mass differentiates between the akam genre, related to the inner space of closeness and devotion, and the melancholic and bardic puram type of the cosmos of spirit, combat and martyrdom. Simultaneously, an alluring artistic tension was created by the relationship of akam and puram, of internal and external space as pointed out in the haunting versions of A.K. Ramanujan (1980:108-9) (Srinivasan, 2007).

When always were trying intensely to prop up Vaishnavism and Murugan, trio- Gnanasambandar, Appar and Sundarar, the so-

called Saiva Nayanmars composed their first seven Thirumurais (Perumal, 1961). Songs by Gnanasambandar Tevaram were essentially categorized into first three Thirumurais. The Tevaram songs of Appar were considered as fourth, fifth and sixth category of Thirumurais. First Pandian kingdom and cholas were a drive for the endorsement of Saivism. At this point it should be considered that Nayanmars used a number of techniques to improve the prominence of Siva (Kanagambal, 2002). One amongst them was portraying Lord Shiva as the godfather of Murugan as follows:

Gnanasambandar greeted Shiva in his Thevaram as:

- Mayileravan Tada
- Maya Sur aTiraruthavan Tada
- Mayilurdi Tada
- Kumaran Tada
- Kumaravel Tada (Gnannasambandar Devaram).

Along these lines, Gnanasambandar by portraying Shiva as the father of the Tamil deity Murugan pointed up on adoration and mercy of Shiva (Rajalakshmi, n.d.).

The primary viewpoint of Lord Shiva's cosmogenic dances presented for a variety of purposes has wondered the thoughts of his most prominent followers and the common people of India and across the world. Different dances epitomize the different aspects of Lord Siva's characteristics: creation, protection, and demolition. The saivites as well ascribe two more roles: concealing- two outlooks, good and bad; and arulal (presenting elegance) to his other dances. The five aspects are integrated in the sanctified five lettered mantra in Tamil: *namasivaya*. The different images of these sacred and representational activities

are carried out in different sacred places and carved in thorough detail by the epic sculpture Lakshmikanthan, (2010).

The dance of Lord Shiva has a cosmic attraction. To billions of disciples the dance of ecstasy (Ananda Tandavam) of the emperor of dance (Nataraja) is in the consciousness stage (Chidambaram). The tale that entwines strongly with Nataraja is the Skanda Purana. In this story, the guru of the Deodar Forest carries out rites and begins to consider themselves as idols. To debase these arrogant gurus, Shiva takes the appearance of Bhikshatana – a delightful young beggar-man – and Vishnu takes form of Mohini, his wife. Whilst the gurus are smitten by Mohini, the women riotously run after Shiva. When the gurus get back to their senses, they play a black magic sacrifice that creates a reptile, a lion, a tiger and a dwarf (Muyalaka), all which assault Shiva, who makes them ineffective. It was then Lord Shiva dances on the Muyalaka and the form of Nataraja takes place, the Dancer



Figure 1: Nataraja- Siva performing his Anandathandavam

Sundaramurthi Nayanar praises Lord Siva with his songs at every holy places and shrines that he visited, which is later popularly referred to as Thevaram. These verses have been compiled as a book-form. The song of praise performed by Sundarar, Appar and Tirujnana Sambandar are known as Thevaram. When Sivapada Hridayar and his wife went to temple, their child was adamant for accompanying him with them. They denied and left him on the lake and went in to bathe. The kid looked at the temple tower and started to cry in search of his parents. This superficially seems to be a sheer infantile action, but the Lord recognizes its intimate sense. Lord Thoniappar wished to sanctify the child. Accordingly, he come into view with Parvathy and requested her to provide for the kid with the milk of divine knowledge. To get his blessing and divine wisdom, the kindness of the Mother is considered essential; Goddess Parvathy touched the kid and feed him with the Milk of Knowledge. From that second he was recognized as Aludaiya Pillayar or one who takes pleasure in the protection of the Idol Shiva and as well as Tiru Gnana Sambandar since he reached divine wisdom by means of the blessing of Lord Siva and Parvathy. From the second he glugged down the Milk of Wisdom, he started to sing heart-stirring and emotional songs in eulogize of Lord Shiva. The collections of these hymns are referred to as Thevaram (DLSHQ, 1999).

More than other spirituality of Hindu's trinity, the representation of Shiva, who considered as a destroyer, spans an assortment of ironic understanding: from the erotic to the frugal, the terrible to the inspirational and an individual to the cosmic. Nataraja, stands

(Sivaraman, 2006). As pointed out by Seshadri, (2014), the same tale is reiterated again in the Tamil Kovil Puranam, Teveram and Kandha Puranam with certain variances.

The peculiarities of Lord Shiva, particularly His attire, activities - specifically the midnight dance at the cremation grounds enclosed by different strange beings, and adoration towards strange pets including snakes and fawn, have engrossed the loving and fervent interest from His huge number of adiyargal (devotees). This has led to the expression of their love for their Idol in the figure of Thevaram, Appar, Karaikal Ammaiyar, and Manickavachakar. The prominent blissful-dance at Chidambaram is referred to as the anandathandavam. It is comprised of the different aspects of the Lord and broadly explored in Thevaram Somasundaram and Murthy (2017).

unique from other representation of dancing Shiva in his pose with the left leg put across at hip level referred to as bhujangatrasita karana. Kumaraswamy (1924) present a lyrical explanation obtained from Tamil Saiva Siddhantic literature created around Chidambaram including the Tirumantiram and Unmaivilakam. He figured out the idol as Shiva's anandatandavam or cosmic dance for both creation and destruction, which is as well the dance of ecstasy once exterminating the ego. In this context, the four-armed Nataraja shows signs of holy five primeval actions or panchakritya: creation represented by the drum in the right-hand whereas protection by the right arm, driving out of ego by stamping on the fiend muyalagan (Tamil) or dwarf with his right foot, conceding of support by the crossed left arm, demolition by the flames in the rear left arm, whilst the loop of fire represents everlasting cosmic cycles (Nagaswamy 1983: 62). Shivakami as wife encourages this cosmic activity (Srinivasan, 2004).

The only one is He; the second is His Sweet Grace (Sakti); He stood in the three (i.e. creation, preservation and dissolution)

He uttered the four (Dharmas); He conquered the five (Senses); He spread Himself out as the six (Adharas) He stood transcendent as the seventh, knowing the eighth.

-Rathnasabhpathy (1982:45).

Besides, it reminds someone of how, in the Indian custom, the systematic, arithmetical or 'scientific' elements could as well coexist with the illogical, the intuitive/spiritual, or the supernatural. The art sculpture of processional bronzes evolved

in the Tamil Nadu, between the periods of sixth to twelfth centuries, in search of the inspired stimulation of devotion when the saint-poets written zealous songs or mantras praising their beloved Lords. In this context, hymns of Tevaram emerge, the term also represented in Saivite setting in various places.

kuniththa puruvamum kovvaich chevvaayuR kumin chirippum paniththa chataiyum pavaLam pOl meniyl paal veNNIRum iniththa mutaiya etutththa poRpaathamum kaanap peRRaal maniththa piRaviyum veNtuvathe in-tha maa n-ilaththE-Thirunavukarasar Thevaram

The above verse denoted that "being emerged as a human in the world is essential only for the reason that Lord Siva emerges as Siva-Nataraja".

- choRRuNai vEthiyam chOthi vaanavan poRRunai thirun-thati porun-thak kaithozha kaRRuNai pUttiyOr kataliR paaychchinum n-aRRuNai aavathu n-amachivaayavE
- Thirunavukarasar Thevaram

The above verse from Tevaram explained that "When one intends to worship god wholeheartedly, the remarkable happiness and sparkle no matter what troubles and problems in life, he/she will sweep it away".

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The current chapter presents about Lord Nataraja and his spiritual dance. The cosmic dance of Nataraja is generally recognized as Anandatandava, the cosmic series of creation and destruction. In addition to these two, preservation, salvation, and illusion are other three actions involved in the cosmic cycle.

#### Portrayal of Nataraja- Tevaram

As stated by Senrayan, (2014) Siva as Nataraja is a prominent theme in Indian sculpture. The dancing karanas are defined in early medieval art such as caturam, anandatandavam, vrsika, or urdhavatandavan. The texts of the so called Nataraja shrine at Chidamparam seem not to cite the name, Nataraja. It begins to exist only in a Pandian inscription during 13th century. The symbolic representation of dancing Shiva is recounted in the agamas. Nevertheless, the King of Dancers (Nataraja) is a popular subject in the songs of the Tevaram - trio. It relates some of the signs and appearances of Shiva with dance. These include Bhiksatana, Ardhanarisvara, Kalari and even Dakshinamurti. The Tevaram-trio brilliantly represents the scene for dance performance. Lord Shiva performs his dances in a forest, which prominently looks contrary to the scene of Visnu's dance that is the Brindavanam on the Yamuna River, the place of elixir and perpetuity.

Mohan and Ravichandhran (2016) studied about Lord Shiva and his cosmic dance. The conception of Lord Shiva as the Divine Dancer is represented by the name Nataraja that refers to "the King of Dancers" and thus Shiva is related with many names such as Natesa, natyapriya, etc. The other names expressed for this blissful-dance are: 'sadatandava' (generally referred to the dance of eternal cosmic process), and 'Gauritandava' (which had been witnessed by GauriSivakami) of all the names employed, the name "anandatandava" ('blissful dance) is in common dialect.

According to Coomaraswamy, (n.d) Chola bronzes denote an extremely visual customs of the activities of Idols; of considering and being caught sight of as they were performed in procession, subsequently suppression in the sanctum. In point of fact, Tamil saints have written fervently of their exquisiteness and attraction. One among them is undoubtedly Tevaram, which is particularly dedicated to Lord Shiva Nataraja and his various actions. Equally remarkable was the craftsman's potential to live through the illustration level and making a bronze statue of Nataraja. The idea they obtained from the rich poetic custom is put forward, for instance, by the relationship between an eight-

armed Lord Shiva as Bhairavar from Tiruvengadu and a Tamil hymn by popular saint Tirumular. Saiva Siddhanta rites related with Chola temple reverence itself swung between the close association with the pillar-like statue lingam denoting the so-called Siva within the holy place, and the public processional devotion of metal divinities such as Nataraja (cosmic-dance) outside the shrine at the time of festivals. Inspiring from Saiva Siddanta Tamil texts for example Unmaivilakam, lyrically portrayed the Nataraja as signifying the anandatandava, or the celestial dance of processes such as creation and destruction.

#### METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm adapted in this study is Interpretivism. This research has adapted a qualitative approach. The research makes use of secondary data alone. The hymns from the Thirumarai's of Thevaram have been analyzed in this research by the researcher. The hymns portraying the relationship between Happiness and Dance; Spirituality and Dance have been respectively analyzed in this research through a content analysis approach and inferences have been drawn.

#### DISCUSSION

The current chapter discussed about portrayal of Nataraja's dance and the spirituality it holds. Various songs of Tevaram have been discussed, particularly the happiness he obtained from the dance. Nataraja denotes the mystery of superiority of that pleasant shape with the dancing posture. Among the 108 identified ways of dancing, each dance is associated with Shiva as the originator. Though, of the admired nine forms, the characteristic of Nataraja is considered the best, which is also beautifully portrayed in Thevaram. Although the form of Nataraja is an inert sculpture, it epitomizes the extreme activity, a polarity of tranquility and motion. The inclusive character of the figure is ironic, combining the inner tranquility and external movement of Shiva, a more elegant and dynamic portrayal of a dancing figure of Shiva.

#### Thevaram and Dancing Nataraja

Of the panniru thirumuRai, Thevaram is considered as one of the most significant part. Thevaram represents the songs (pamalai) specifically created for praising Lord Shiva. It comprises of the first nine thirumuraikal crooned by 12 saint-poets in total. These devotional hymns are structured by songs (panmuRai) or abodes (thalamurai). Many devotional hymns in praise of Lord have been written in the Tamil language. Of these, Thirumurai is considered as one of the primary works in Saivism, one division of the Hindu religion. Among the supreme of the representations of Lord Shiva is Nataraja, King of Dancers. The world is his theatre, there are lots of steps in his repository, and he himself is considered as an artist and spectator. Even without dependence upon mythical references, the understanding of this cosmic-dance might not be too difficult to understand. Some of the eccentricities of the Nataraja images, certainly, belong to the concept of Shiva by and large, and not particularly to the dance in particular. Even the drum Nataraja is a general power of Shiva, representing his character of Yogi, although in the cosmic dance, it has a special importance. Besides, the dance, refers to his five acts (Pancakritya), viz.: Shrishti (creation), Sthiti (preservation), Samharam (destruction), Tirobhava (illusion), Anugraha (grace). These, individually regarded, are the acts of the Idols Brahma, Vishnu and Sadashiva. This cosmic action is the fundamental theme of the dance. The place wherein the ego is being demolished represents the condition where delusion and actions are burnt away: i.e. the morgue, the burning-ground where Nataraja dances, and when he is generally called as Sudalaiyadi, dancer of the burning-ground.

#### Portrayal of dance in Thevaram Hymns- Appar Thevaram

Nataraja, known to be the Lord of Dance performs the Ananda [Tandava](#) which refers to creation, maintenance, and destruction. And this has been beautifully portrayed in different chapters of Thevaram, which is as follows:

- *viriththapal kathirkol chulam*
- *vetipatu thamaru kankai thariththathor kola kalap*
- *payirava naki vezam*

If Lord Shiva is the cosmic dancer, the Thevaram through its hymns give lots of stories of Him about dance. The Panniru Tirumurai includes various enlightening stories of Nataraja. As per legends, Shiva was the primogenitor for dance. The abovementioned Thevaram lines referred to that the Lord who is sitting at Thirucherai is smiling and dancing.

#### Portrayal of Nataraja's dance- Sambandhar

Consciousness is the partaker in the performance of Lord Shiva's dance, but it is forgotten that one's actual character on account of the mask of Maya, (ignorance). Lord Shiva's power of destruction and reformation are consistently used to demolish the deceptions and imperfections of this earth for the assistance of mankind. This is depicted in Thevaram, which is as follows:

- *kaviyang kanmada*
- *valodung kaattidaith*
- *theyyaga lendhinin*
- *raaduthir thenmalar*
- *meviya thanpozhil*
- *velladai meviya*
- *aavinil aindhukon 6 (thirukurukaavur velladai)*

The above lines depict that Nataraja is beautifully dancing and represents those flawless physical qualities as he is deeply immersed in the moment of his dance inside the circle of fire which is the concurrent and continuous creation and devastation of the world. The principle of the dance in general is to separate men from deception of the idea of the "self" and as well of the physical world.

#### Dance of God and goddess- Sambandhar

While Shiva's dance denotes as Tandava- i.e. a vigorous dance, Parvati's dance is denoted as Lasya, i.e. a dance with graceful movements. Lord Shiva dances through spirit and physical, his goddess dances through life itself, forth into different attributes and labels.

- *manimalgu maalvaraimel*
- *maadhinodu magizhinthirundheer*
- *thunimalgu kovanaththeer*
- *sudugaattil aattugandheer*
- *panimalgu maraiyoargal*
- *parindhiraicha venupurath*
- *thanimalgu koyile*
- *Koyilaaga amarndheere 6 (boodhathin padaiyinir)*

The above Thevaram lines denoted that Lord Shiva is dancing with his goddess; while Shiva's dance denotes the Tandava, which is a dynamic and spirited dance, Parvati's dance represents the Lasya, an elegant and sensual dance. Also, it refers to that, be it shrine place or graveyard, the Lord Shiva is known to dance with all his efforts and happiness.

Nataraja, epitomizes "the relationship between religious conviction and the arts", in addition, it signifies Shiva as the lord of dance, encircling all "creation, annihilation and all such things in between. The Nataraja iconography integrates contrary attributes, an intrepid carnival of the joys of dance whilst being encircled by fire, unconcerned by forces of unawareness and malevolence, symptomatic of a mysticism that goes above all duality.

- *iravidai yolleri yaadinaa*
- *nummimai yorthozach*
- *seruvidai muppurandh theeyerith*
- *thasiva loganum*
- *poruvidai yondrukanth therina*
- *numbuga linnagar*
- *aravidai maadhodum veettrirundh*
- *thaazha kananre 6*

The abovementioned lines specified that "Lord Shiva is performing his dance even in cemeteries". He is generally called as Sudalaiyadi, which denoted that dancer of the graveyard-ground. This typically refers to the historical link between Lord Shiva's elegant dance as Nataraja, and his outrageous dance as the evil spirit of the cemetery.

#### Mystical dancing Shiva as Nataraja- Sundarar

In this cosmos, one could evidently view the incessant dance of Lord Shiva who is actually in everything and everywhere. There is no tiny part where he is not seen dancing in this world everlastingly. His dance is a constant form involving between creation and destruction; the base of all survival and of all ecological phenomena. Nataraja's dance is said to give rhythm to the whole universe, he dances in graveyard and in holy place; he is the one who forms and destroys; every creature in the world is involved in this dance.

- *karumanin uriyataich chenychataimel*
- *venmathiyak kanni yanai urumanna kurraththai uruntota*
- *uthaiththukan^ thulava in pam tharuvanaith tharumanar thamarchekkil*
- *itumpothu thatuththat kolvan perumanar puliyurchchir rampalaththem*
- *perumanaip perra manre. 5(madithadam adimaikan)*

The above hymns of Thevaram denoted that Lord Nataraja is someone who is giving happiness and dancing with all the happiness he has.

- *maadamaaligai gopurathodu*
- *mandabamvala rumvalarpozhil*
- *paadal vandaraikum*
- *pazhanath thiruppanaiyurth*
- *thodupeithoru kaadhinirkuzhai*
- *thoongathondargal thullipaadanin*
- *raadu maaruvallaar*
- *avare azhagiyare*

Whoever is dancing they are only referring to happiness and accordingly all devotees are rejoicing with happiness and with dancing, the Lord only meant for happiness to the whole world. The lines also depicted that when someone is happy they become beautiful and similarly when someone is happy they prefer dancing.

#### Padhinoram Thirumurai

- *neelkanaik kaalorpenpei*
- *thangi alari ularukaattil*
- *thaazhsadai ettuth thisaiyumveesi*
- *angang kulirndhanal aadumengal*
- *appan idandhiru aalangkaade*

Lord Nataraja is the one who is dancing in the same place where even Ghosts are dancing. No matter which the place is, the Lord Shiva knows only dancing and all he gets from dance is happiness.

#### Mootha thirupadhigam

- *maandhik kalitha manathavaai*
- *anangu kaattil analkai*

- *Yendhi azhagan aadume*

The above Thevaram lines pointed to that Lord Nataraja is dancing where even Ghosts are dancing. People are buried in the ground and Lord Shiva is dancing even in the place where it is surrounded by full of corpse. The last two lines are also referring to dancing and all he earned from dancing is happiness and delight.

- *kalangina maalkadal veezhndhana*
- *kaarvarai aazhndhana*
- *malangina naagam marundana*
- *palkanam vaanangaipoai*
- *ilangina minnodu neenda*
- *sadayimai yorviyandhaar*

Lord Nataraja's long hair, flows across the space within the radiance of fire which forms the universe. Nataraja is a symbol of destruction and creation and he is known to dance away the erroneous world of Maya and changing it into power and enlightenment. The entire world from creatures to gods are completely impressed and immersed by his dance.

### CONCLUSION

Nataraja, the King of Dance has been worshipped for ages with primary rational conceptions of cosmic progressions of creation, preservation and destruction. Thevaram and Thirumurai have many noteworthy mention of the dancing style of Lord Shiva. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the representation of Lord Shiva-Nataraja has become universalized across the world. But this prominence and reputation has gained long back ago when Thevaram had emerged. Lord Shiva is considered as creator, preserver and destroyer, the, supreme consciousness. Shiva is an ironic idol: "both can be considered as creator and the same time as destroyer, the great austere and the sign of sensuality, the kind herdsman of creatures and the furious avenger." When alvars were trying intensely to prop up Vaishnavism and Murugan, the so-called Saiva Nayanmars composed their first seven Thirumurais. The Chola Nataraja is frequently regarded as the greatest statement of Hindu art. The Tevaram-trio brilliantly defines the setting for Nataraja's dance performance. The Tevaram-trio relates many of the signs of Siva with dance. The Nataraja image signifies not only certain occurrence in the mythic life of a local divinity but a worldwide view wherein the drives of nature and the aims and restraint of man challenge each other and are combined all together. It can be concluded that "If one has to choose a single image to epitomize the extremely wealthy and complex ethnic heritage of India, the Shiva-Nataraja can be the most remunerative aspirant, which is also evident in Thevaram. This research has concluded that all the Thirumarais portray Lord Nataraja as a symbol of Happiness rejoicing and dancing with grace, blessing His devotee thereby establishing a connect between dance, spirituality and happiness.

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