

Dance Photography : Study with reference to Aesthetics

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Abstract

The photograph has been valued for its ability to produce authentic and realistic representations of the world. Early in the history of photography, attempts were made to record movement through the still photograph. Initially employed in studying locomotion in animals, photography technique was soon used to capture the human body in movement. With the evolution of camera technology, what once required multiple cameras to capture motion sequences, now requires only a single camera. With these advances, using photography to record dance and other performing arts slowly gained popularity. Initially appearing in print media such as newspapers, magazines and books, photographs of dance now seem to be ubiquitous with the advent of internet and social media. Dance photographs not only seek to capture the movement of the physical body, but also the emotion pervading the motion. While there are many works on dance photography in the western context, there are very limited studies in this area, specific to the Indian context. The present study aims at understanding dance photography in the context of Indian classical dance. Capturing Indian classical dance through the camera implies that the photograph must convey the Abhinaya (Caturvidha Abhinaya aspects as theorised by Bharata) of the dancer. Hence, the current study aims at understanding the way in which a photograph can capture the Āṅgika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya of the dancer. In order to achieve this, the study analyses few dance photographs captured in performances, on two levels: i) aesthetics of the dance captured by the photograph and ii) the aesthetics of the photograph itself. Given that this research is interdisciplinary in nature it could be useful in understanding the inter-relationships between art forms.

Keywords: dance, photography, caturvidha abhinaya, bharatanāṭyam, visual arts, aesthetics

Introduction

Dance photographs not only seek to capture the movement of the physical body, but also the emotion pervading the motion. The challenge of photographing dance is evident as Leela Venkataraman identifies “Dance is movement, photography is absolute stillness; but both these disciplines work with an inherent contradiction... In dance - through movement - you’re trying to capture stillness. In photography - through stillness - you’re trying to suggest energy and movement” (Venkataraman, 2013). The difficulty lies in the attempt to capture the fleeting moment - framing, focusing, adjusting the settings to the ambient light and pressing the shutter - in order to capture the beauty of motion and emotion in dance, both of which are in constant flux.

The present study aims at understanding dance photography in the context of Indian classical dance. Although there are eight established Indian classical dances, the work of dancer and researcher Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam has shown that their origin can be traced back to the Nāṭyaśāstra. Authored by Sage Bharata in the 2nd century C. E., the Nāṭyaśāstra explains four aspects of the technique of communication/expression (Caturvidha Abhinaya) which are: Āṅgika Abhinaya (expression through the body), Vācika Abhinaya (musical and literary elements), Āhārya Abhinaya (adornment of the self and the stage) and Sātvika Abhinaya (emotion).

Thus, capturing Indian classical dance through the camera implies that the photograph must convey the Abhinaya of the dancer. Being a static visual medium, photograph cannot convey the rhythm or music (Vācika) of the dance; similarly, the extent to which physical movement (Āṅgika) of the dancer can be exactly reproduced in a two-dimensional frame is also limited. Hence, the current study aims at understanding the way in which a photograph can capture the Āṅgika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya of the dancer.

Objective of the Study

To understand how the still photograph can aesthetically capture Nṛtya.

Research Question

How does the still photograph capture the aesthetics of Sātvika Abhinaya, Āṅgika Abhinaya and Āhārya Abhinaya?

Scope and Limitation

- The study focused on dance photography in one Indian Classical dance form i.e., Bharatanāṭyam.
- Photographs from live Bharatanāṭyam solo and group recitals were included in the purview of this study; studio photography of dance was not considered.
- Unavailability of literature on dance photography specific to the Indian context.
- The researcher is not a professional dance photographer.

Significance of the Study

As this study deals with the discipline of aesthetics, it will be important to practitioners or theoreticians in the field of dance and photography as well in other mediums that seek to capture dance. The study reveals the holistic nature of the Indian tradition of visual arts, the principles of which can be applied even in the present day. Given that this study is interdisciplinary in nature - which is gaining prominence in the current time - this research could be useful in understanding the inter-relationships between art forms and analyzing how principles governing one medium can be adapted to another.

Literature Review

Caturvidha Abhinaya and Dance

Authored by Sage Bharata in the 2nd century C. E., the Nāṭyaśāstra is the most ancient treatise on dramaturgy (Nāṭya). Originally written in Sanskrit, the work contains 36 chapters with around 6000 verses. It is a scientific documentation of the various aspects of art that were in practice in the Jambudvīpa region (present day Eurasia). The text deals with both the theoretical principles and practical implementation of the arts. Nāṭya as described in the Nāṭyaśāstra is a form of holistic theatre that is an amalgamation of many art forms such as dance, music, painting, literature, sculpture etc. This treatise was used as the primary basis for understanding the four aspects of the technique of communication/expression (Caturvidha Abhinaya) which are explained across various chapters.

Indian Classical Dance (Vatsyayan, 2015) is an extensive work that covers the Caturvidha Abhinaya aspects of all the eight Indian classical dance forms. However, the sections dealing with the Caturvidha Abhinaya of Bharatanāṭyam are of specific relevance to the current study. The work elucidates a brief history of Bharatanāṭyam as a solo dance form, which developed from Sadir Āṭṭam that was practised by the devadāsīs. It also explains the mārgam format of a Bharatanāṭyam presentation as prescribed by the Tanjore Quartet. The technique of Āṅgika of Bharatanāṭyam is also described in detail.

Photography Technique

With development of technology, there are a wide range of cameras available today; however, the basic concepts remain common. Three universal concepts of photography are shutter speed, aperture and ISO. These form the exposure triangle, which determines the amount of light that reaches the sensor in the camera.

Aperture

Aperture is the opening in the lens through which light rays pass and reach the sensor inside the camera. The size of this opening can be controlled to adjust the amount of light let inside. Making the aperture wide leads to increased amount of light entering the camera resulting in a bright photograph, whereas narrowing down the aperture decreases the amount of light entering the camera and results in a darker photograph. Aperture is measured in fractions and the range of apertures that can be controlled depends on the specific camera; for instance, f/1.4 denotes a wider aperture than f/16. The aperture also determines the depth of field, which is defined as the distance between the nearest and farthest plane that are in sharp focus in a photograph. Wider aperture results in shallow depth of field where the foreground is in focus and the background is blur. As the aperture is narrowed down, the planes that are in sharp focus increase (deep depth of field). Depth of Field is also influenced by the lens magnification (zoom) of the lens. While zooming in makes the depth of field shallow, zooming out results in a deeper depth of field.

Shutter Speed

It is the amount of time that the shutter is open to allow the light to reach the sensor. It is measured in fractions - 1/60th of a second is low shutter speed compared to 1/250th of a second. Low shutter speed allows more light in while increasing the shutter speed reduces the amount of light coming into the camera.

Shutter speed also influences the focus in a photograph. When shooting moving objects, the shutter speed must be increased in order to get sharp photographs. If moving objects are shot at relatively low shutter speed, then subject in the photograph appears blur as the camera captures the entire movement that takes place during the entire time that the shutter is open.

ISO

ISO is the sensitivity of the camera sensor to the light. ISO is denoted by numbers like 100, 200, 400 etc. - the range of which depends on the camera. Greater the number, higher the ISO and brighter is the photograph. However, as the ISO is increased, the amount of noise in the photograph also increases.

The Act of Photographing

In his book *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Roland Barthes, 1982), the French theoretician observes that photography is the result of three practices: to do, to undergo, to look. These three practices correspond to the Operator (photographer), the Spectrum (the subject being photographed) and the Spectator (the viewer of the photograph) respectively.

The author also attempts to identify why some photographs are more memorable than the others. He describes that, photographs comprise of two elements: the studium and the punctum. The studium is the cultural knowledge that determines the Spectator's understanding of what is captured by the photograph. Punctum is that poignant detail in the photograph that moves and touches the Spectator. According to him photographs without punctum may interest the spectator but will not be remembered or recalled.

A collection of essays, *On Photography* (Sontag, 2005), analyses the act of photographing in a world that is proliferated by photographs. The author also analyses the act of photographic seeing which seeks to find beauty in ordinary events. The author identifies how

photographing is an act motivated by the need to capture beauty - the photograph freezes a moment in time and space and confers immortality to that event.

Capturing Dance through Photography

There is no existing research available on dance photography in the Indian context. However, research on dance photography and the ability of the still photograph to capture movement has been conducted in the West.

In a book (Reason, 2006), the author discusses the relationship between the live performance, which is fundamentally ephemeral and the documentation of it through photographs that seek to eternalise moments from the live performance. Despite the inherent tension between the two mediums, he says that dance - an ephemeral event - depends on the photograph to sustain its life beyond the duration of the performance. He begins with the idea that live performance gains unique value due to its disappearance i.e., “Performance ceases to be at the same moment as it becomes” (Reason, 2006, p. 1). Hence, the only way in which it is possible to gain a glimpse of a performance that has already transpired is through studying the traces the performance leaves in the documentation of it.

The author explains that all the different mediums of documentation, by the nature of virtues and limitations, inevitably transform the performance. The author writes, “The choice of what to record, in the manner of how to record and indeed in what can be recorded, the act of representation defines its subject” (Reason, 2006, p. 4). Thus, the documentation becomes a representation of a performance, not a reproduction of it.

In an article (Greenfield, 2013), eminent American dance photographer Lois Greenfield describes her unique approach in capturing movement. Instead of photographing live dance performances, she invites dancers/choreographers to improvise in the presence of the lens, specifically in her studio. She employs the camera in order to capture moments at high speeds like that of 1/2000th of a second. The dance photographs thus created are not from a live performance but the performance exists only in the photograph. As the author writes “they exist only as isolated instants: they are uniquely photographic events...My inspiration has always been photography’s ability to stop time and reveal what the naked eye cannot see.” (Greenfield, 2013, p. 39). Thus, her approach to dance photography is mainly based in capturing a moment in the

movement by freezing time and space at a speed beyond which what can be perceived by the human eye.

A different article (Bieszczad-Roley, 2011) explores the relationship between the photographer and the dancer through first-hand projects of photographing Butoh, a Japanese dance form. The researcher observes that “a photographer is an active participant rather than just an observer” (Bieszczad-Roley, 2011, p.1). The author reflects that the photographer occupies a position in-between the dancer and the audience since the perception of the photographer is mediated by the camera. Although the photographer does not perform the dance, the researcher explains that the photographer and dancer are affected by each other’s presence and intervene each other’s spaces to finally arrive at a shared creative and artistic space.

Theorising the Dance Photograph

Due to the stillness of the photograph and its two-dimensional nature, it cannot exactly reproduce dynamic three-dimensional movement. Some articles (Reason, 2003 & 2008) analyses the relationship and tension between photography and dance. As the author states, “The characteristic of dance is movement; the specificity of still photography is stillness” (Reason, 2008, p. 45). According to him, dance photographs can be divided into two categories:

- Revelatory photographs
- Representational photographs (which may be posed or involve post-processing)

The author identifies that the immediate appeal of a dance photograph lies in the authenticity and actuality of capturing movement - this is the revelatory power of a dance photograph to show us what had been. However, he argues that merely freezing dance in photographs can lead to completely losing all sense movement. He explains that the dance photograph must not only mechanically freeze the dancer’s movement in time and space but also contain elements suggesting motion that evoke - in the viewer’s mind - movement beyond what is depicted in the two-dimensional photograph. This, the author describes as the representational power of a dance photograph. He observes that representational photographs are “accurate representations of the emotions and experiences of dance” (Reason, 2003, p. 63). He argues that

the representational power of the photograph, rather than revelatory, is important to capture the physicality and emotional experience of dance.

Analysing the role of photograph in the mediatization of a performance, another researcher (Philip, 2006) proposes two categories of performance documentation: the documentary and the theatrical. Using examples, he classifies photographs of actual performance - staged for immediately present audience - as documentary; and places photographs of performances staged solely for the camera as theatrical. The theatrical category also includes composite photographs in which performance has taken place only in the photograph. He also identifies that in some cases the boundaries between the documentary and the theatrical may be blur, and argues that the knowledge of whether a performance photograph is documentary or theatrical does not affect the pleasure of viewing the performance photograph.

Dance Photography in the Indian Context

The camera reached in India during the 1850s through the British colonial rule. However, it was only towards the 20th century that it gained prominence. Most of the Indian photography was in the area of documentary photography, photojournalism and genres like portrait, fashion, product, wildlife photography etc. have only recently gained attention, with dance photography being an even more recent phenomenon, with pioneers like Avinash Pasricha.

Capturing Dance in other Visual Media

Even though capturing dance through photography is a recent development, capturing the dynamism of dance through other static visual mediums like sculpture and painting has been historically practiced throughout India for many centuries. This is evident from the innumerable cave paintings and also from sculptures in temple architecture which depict dance in great detail.

Dance in Indian Painting (Vatsyayan, 1982) deals with the portrayal of Indian dance in other visual arts: painting and sculpture. The author explains the aesthetic principles of sculpture and painting that are employed in the process of arresting movement through a static medium. Sculpture and painting come under the term Citra which means visual arts, the aesthetics of which is guided by six principles called the Śaḍāṅgas: Pramāṇa, Varṇikābhaṅga, Bhāva, Rūpabheda, Lāvaṇya and Sādrśya (explained in the next section).

Extensive research on such sculptures and paintings by scholars such as Kapila Vatsyayan, Padma Subrahmanyam and others reveal that sculptors and painters had deep knowledge of the dance forms and its nuances. For instance, Padma Subrahmanyam's research has revealed that the sculptures of Karaṇas in several Indian temples do not depict just a static pose, they actually depict movement. Each of the sculptures has been sculpted with multiple hands which are indicative of the movement traced by the limbs. Using these references along with Nāṭyaśāstra, Padma Subrahmanyam was able to reconstruct several dance movements which were practiced at that time. Through the research of many such examples, it can be understood that such sculptures and paintings have been able to capture the dynamism of dance i.e., movement can be visualised by the spectator.

Research Gap

There are no existing studies carried out on the dance photography specific to the Indian context. While most of the studies explained above focus on dance photography within the studio, where the photographer has control of technical and aesthetic elements such as lighting, backdrop etc, and movements can be repeated; there are hardly any studies available on dance photography of a live dance performance during which the photographer has little to no control over the aforementioned elements and most importantly, movements of the dancer cannot be repeated.

Materials and Methods

The research methodology adopted in this study is Qualitative and Analytical. The information gained from the interviews and from existing literature on photography, the concepts of Caturvidha abhinaya from Nṛtya and Ṣaḍāṅgas in Citra was analysed along with dance photographs to illustrate how a still photograph captures the Āṅgika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya of Indian classical dance.

Data Collection

Dance Photographs

Photographs are secondary data as they are not captured by the researcher. Photographs from live Bharatanāṭyam solo and group recitals were included in the purview of this study; studio photography of dance was not considered. Photographs were sourced from official social media profiles of these dance photographers (with permission); around 20 photographs were analysed in the study.

Expert Interviews

The primary data for the study was collected through interviews of expert photographers. The interviews were aimed at gaining insights into the nature of dance photography. Photographers to be interviewed was determined by their extensive experience in photographing Indian classical dance forms as well as availability/accessibility. The photographers who were contacted (for interviews and photographs) in the course of the study are: Avinash Pasricha, Dr. Hareesh N Nampoothiri, Shalini Jain, Jayasimha Reddy, Prasad Siddhanthi and Innee Singh.

Data Analysis

The photograph being analysed was provided along with the details such as the photographer and the dancer. The photographs were analysed under two main sections; the first deals with how the aesthetics of Āṅgika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya are captured in the photograph.

The second section deals with analysing the aesthetics of the photographs based on the Ṣaḍāṅgas (six limbs) of Citra (painting and sculpture). Although the six principles are theorised in the context of painting and sculpture, the analysis reveals how these parameters have equivalent concepts in photography, and can be applied to analyse photographs as well. The definitions of Ṣaḍāṅgas (Vatsyayan, 1982) are listed (refer Table 1) along with how they are applied in the visual art of photography. Following this, are the sample analyses of few dance photographs.

Table 1

Definitions of the Ṣaḍāṅgas and their parallels in photography.

Ṣaḍāṅgas	Definition in Citra	Application in Photography
Pramāṇa	Spatial relationships. Correct proportion of measure, structure and proportions leading to balance and harmony.	Composition Angle or Perspective Focal length (zoom) Depth of Field
Bhāva	Evocation of feelings and emotive states	Same as in Citra
Varṇikābhāṅga	Methods of using brush and colour; light and shade	Exposure Colour Light and Shadows
Rūpabheda	Knowledge of visible form Differentiation of multiple forms	Differentiation between the different elements in a frame
Lāvanya	Infusion of grace	Why does the photograph look aesthetic to viewer?
Sādrśya	Verisimilitude	Photographs are representations of reality and closely resemble reality, atleast in the case of dance photography.

Photo Analysis – 1-



(Figure 1 -Photographer: Shri. Avinash Pasricha; Dancer: Smt. Chitra Visweswaran)

The Aesthetics of Āṅgika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya captured by the Photograph

Āṅgika Abhinaya. The nature of the Āṅgika seems Sukumāra: In the standing posture, the position of the alapadma hastas appears as if the dancer is portraying a character overflowing with bhāva of love. In the seated posture, the bending of the torso downward appears as if the character is sad and tired.

Āhārya Abhinaya. One can observe the saree style of costume that used to be worn often earlier but less in vogue in the current times. A different

type of embellishment in the design of the waist belt can also be seen.

Sātvika Abhinaya. In both the positions, the eyes of the dancer are completely closed; however, in the standing position there is a slight smile suggesting a sense of happiness whereas in the seated position, the slight Kuncita of the bhrū (bringing the eyebrows down together) as well as the complete lack of smile indicates vyabhicāri bhāvas (transient emotions) of Glāni (weakness), Śrama (weariness), Dainya (depression) and Nirveda (despondency). It appears as if the dancer is portraying Rati bhāva - and the shades of Vipralambha Śṛṅgāra (love in separation) can be observed.

Aesthetics of the Photograph

Pramāṇa. Including the full length of the dancer adds to the meaning as the Āṅika is enhancing the bhāva.

Varṇikābhaṅga. The light which is not too bright which suitably complements the soft mood of the photograph.

Bhāva. The photograph evokes Rati bhāva.

Rūpabheda. The multiple exposure technique employed by the photographer allows the photograph to capture multiple moments portraying the difference in the dancer's position and feeling. There is optimal distance between the two positions captured; the slight overlapping between them indicates that they are two states of a single character. If the two positions were separated by more distance/space between them, the two might seem like different characters.

Figure 2 *Photographer: Shri. Hareesh N Nampoothiri Dancers: Sridevi Nrithyalaya*



Lāvaṇya. The beauty of the photograph is that it captures the different experiences that arise from Śṛṅgāra - in love, there are moments of boundless ecstasy, at the same time there are phases of sinking into the depths despair.

Photo Analysis - 2

The Aesthetics of Āṅgika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya captured by the Photograph

Āṅgika Abhinaya. The dancers are seated in the Muzhumaṇḍi sthānaka in a diagonal and both the hands are held in the Tripatāka hasta; the position in which they are held indicates that the dancers are showing the feet (pāda) of the deity Śiva.

Āhārya Abhinaya. The costume worn by the dancers is not the usual Bharatanāṭyam pajama costume; the upper half of the costume resembles the costumes depicted in some sculptures. One can also see the small crown worn on the head that is not often used in performances. Lamps and flowers are used for subtly decorating the stage floor (bottom edge of the photograph).

Sātvika Abhinaya. The hastas and the facial expression indicates Bhakti bhāva. It is interesting to note the shades in Bhakti bhāva portrayed by the dancer - the first and third dancer (from left to right) seem to be in Vismaya (wonder) bhāva at seeing Lord Śiva, whereas the second and fourth dancer seem to be in the bhāva of completely surrendering to the deity, marked with a tinge of Śoka (pathos).

Aesthetics of the Photograph

Pramāṇa. The photograph has been captured from the front and the wide angle in such a way that the dancers are staggered; this suitably covers the full side profiles of all the four dancers as well as the facial expression. Deep depth of field is employed so that all dancers are in focus.

Varṇikābhāṅga. Since the photograph is in black and white, it brings special attention to the aspects of light and shadow; especially the shadows in the background. If the photograph was in color mode, then the attention of the viewers would be drawn to aspects such as the costume etc and the shadow would not have been as stark as it is in black and white. It is due to this

shadow that the viewers can identify that the Bhakti bhāva is being directed to Lord Śiva (the shadow depicts Lord Śiva holding agni in one hand and the ḍamaru in the other).

Bhāva. The photograph communicates Bhakti bhāva, the surrendering of oneself to at the feet of God.



Figure 3 *Photographer: Shri. Innee Singh; Dancer: Smt. Rama Vaidyanathan*

Rūpabheda. The double shadows give a sense of the otherworldly and it seems to convey the idea of the formless being concretised as a specific form.

Lāvanya. The interesting aspect of the photograph is the shadow which adds a new dimension to the meaning and bhāva conveyed by the photograph. It symbolises the form and the formless (the dancers with a form and the relatively formless shadow), the cycle of Śṛṣṭi and Laya (creation and dissolution - the former symbolised by the dancers and the ḍamaru and the latter symbolised by the shadow and the agni).

Photo Analysis - 3

The Aesthetics of Āṅgika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya captured by the Photograph

Āṅgika Abhinaya. This photograph captures the Aramaṇḍi that is the characteristic sthānaka of Bharatanāṭyam. The photograph immediately reveals that the dancer is performing Kuditta Meṭṭaḍavu - which is executed using Alapadma, Kaṭakāmukha hasta and Agratala pāda (on the toes). The practice of performing the steps on both the sides alternately is reflected by the photograph. The photograph also captures an important principle that is followed while executing nṛtta in Bharatanāṭyam : yato hasta tathā dr̥ṣṭi - the eyes follow the movement of the hands - this also directs the viewers attention to the hastas.

Āhārya Abhinaya. The symbiotic relationship between the Āṅgika and Āhārya of Bharatanāṭyam is revealed in this photograph as the sthānaka (Aramaṇḍi) and the aḍavu (Kuditta Meṭṭaḍavu) results in the fan of costume opening up beautifully.

Sātvika Abhinaya. The photograph depicts nṛtta which is highly abstract and stylised; as Bharatanāṭyam nṛtta is non referential, it cannot communicate any theme. However it is not devoid of bhāva; by looking at the dancer in the photograph, the viewer feels a sense of awe (Vismaya bhāva).

Aesthetics of the Photograph

Pramāṇa. The straight lines formed by the hands are characteristic of Bharatanāṭyam Āṅgika which focuses on linearity rather than the curvilinear. This photograph reveals the perfect symmetry of execution of nṛtta.

Varṇikābhāṇa. Making the photograph Black and White helps to bring special focus on to the symmetry of the Āṅgika - instead of Āhārya, background etc.

Bhāva. The photo captures the exact split second when the feet are in Agratala position and both the hands are in perfect position. In addition to this, one can see the perfection of the dancer in executing the moment - both these factors evoke a feeling of wonder of Vismaya bhāva in the viewer which may lead to Adbhuta rasa.

Lāvanya. Beauty of Āhārya - the opening of the fan is captured. The beauty of Angasuddha/ Sauśtava can be seen in the photograph. The photograph freezes the motion; capturing the particular moment when both pādas are in Agratala position - the technical characteristic and beauty of the Kuditta Metṭaḍavu are captured.

Photo Analysis - 4

The Aesthetics of Āṅgika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya captured by the Photograph

Āṅgika Abhinaya. Both the hands in the Mṛgaśīrśa hastas and the position that they held in symbolises that the dancer is portraying a mother holding her child. The Natam of the pārśva (bending the torso to the side), and Sāci of the eyes (sideward glance) making eye contact with the child also adds to the bhāva being expressed. The Muzhumaṇḍi which is one of the important sthānakas used in Bharatanāṭyam can be observed in the photograph.

Āhārya Abhinaya. The symbiotic relationship between the Āṅgika and Āhārya of Bharatanāṭyam is observed in this photograph as the sthānaka (Muzhumaṇḍi) results in the fan of costume opening up beautifully and revealing the detailing in the pleats and the designs in the zari.

Sātvika Abhinaya. The mother carrying her baby in her arms and lovingly looking at her child can be seen in the facial expression (eyes and smile), communicating Vātsalya rasa.



Figure 4

Photographer: Shri. Jayasimha Reddy

Dancer: Smt. Smt. Anuradha Vikranth

Aesthetics of the Photograph

Pramāṇa. Frontal angle gives a clear picture of the dancer and the facial expression of the dancer. Composing the frame in such a way that the dancer is towards one side - rather than in the center - brings attention both to the dancer and the shadow behind. The enlarged shadow may also be interpreted as the creator of this universe, who is the divine mother of all beings looking after his/her children and the worldly mother is a representation of that creator.

Varṇikābhaṅga. The blue and red color of the costume is well complemented by the blue and yellow lighting as seen on the dancer's face, the stage floor and the background. The shadow behind adds an interesting dimension to the photograph. The shadow may symbolise the mother looking at her child and remembering her own mother, evoking a feeling of nostalgia and the idea of a mother-daughter relationship.

Bhāva. The photograph communicates the warmth of motherly love leading to Vātsalya rasa.

Rūpabheda. The lighting helps to create three layers - the dancer, the shadow (with a subtle glow around its edges) and the background and this adds a meaningful dimension as discussed above.

Lāvanya. Beauty is infused by capturing the sublime feeling of being a mother and the unparalleled bond between the mother and her child.

Results and Discussions

The analysis has shown that one can identify the Caturvidha Abhinaya aspects of the dance from the photograph. Even though Vācika abhinaya is not captured by the photograph in a concrete identifiable manner, the interviews with photographers have revealed that the rhythm of the song, lyrics (sāhitya) and its meaning aid the photographer to understand the dance and capture the moment at the right time. This role of Vācika is reflected by a photographer in the interview: “Whatever music is being played evokes the dancer’s emotion and all I can think of doing is capturing the dancer’s emotions to its best. This is the only way the musical element can contribute to the photograph. I think the dancer is a bridge between these two components” (Shalini Jain).

In some cases where no specific hasta denoting the character is present in the photograph, the specific character or the storyline being portrayed may not be identified. However, the photograph is able to capture the emotion or the Bhāva (Sātvika abhinaya) that is being conveyed at the moment. According to the Nāṭyaśāstra, Sātvika abhinaya is the most crucial as it is the underlying current of Āṅgika, Āhārya and Vācika abhinaya; and photographs are able to capture this essence or sattva. Even if one cannot identify the character or the technical aspects such as the hastas, aḍavus etc. the dance photograph is able to convey a particular emotion to the viewers - both dancers and non-dancers. Beyond a point, it is not necessary to be able to identify the specificities of the character or the storyline as they are just vehicles to carry forward the emotion.

The fact that the Śaḍāṅga principle - that is originally theorised in the context of painting and sculpture - can be adapted to dance photography shows how the principle is not too form/technique specific; it is at the level of content/ tattva (essence) and hence more holistic. The Śaḍāṅga principle seems to be universally applicable to the visual arts. The analysis was done at

two levels - concept of Caturvidha Abhinaya and Śaḍāṅga - which can be applied even in photography of dance forms other than Bharatanāṭyam.

This becomes crucial because there is no universal framework theorised to analyse photographs. Thus, this Śaḍāṅga framework can be useful to both dance photographers as well as dancers to assess the aesthetics of dance photographs, especially since digital photographs are currently the most widely used means of documentation and promotion of dance forms. Since photographs are the primary means of documentation of the dance forms for the future, understanding their aesthetics is essential to uphold the quality of dance photographs.

This study is significant for dancers as well because photographs have now become the face of the artist in the digital world. The analysis revealed the importance of lighting in the mood of the photograph and this suggests that the dancer must try to collaborate with the lighting technician and the photographer not only to enhance the quality of a live performance but also the photographs.

Since the photographers may not be aware of the technical details of the dance form, they may benefit from the framework of aesthetics provided to analyze their work; this understanding of the theory of aesthetics, combined with their skill of photography can help to create impactful photographs. This is especially important while capturing a live performance because the photographer does not have the option of a re-take. In an auditorium, the lighting is usually low, which is appealing to human eye-sight, but the camera/lens does not see the stage exactly as the eyes do. Hence, a lot of care and observation is required while capturing the photograph, as well as during post-processing to enhance the image.

The analysis reveals that the efforts of all the three roles - the dancer, the lighting technician and the photographer - contribute to a photograph. However, it is the photographer who has control over settings such as exposure, aperture, shutter speed etc., which have a direct influence on the lighting in the photograph and the elements that are in focus, which in turn affect the meaning and emotion that the photograph evokes. Observing the various elements on the stage, and the decision to include or exclude them in the frame by analysing how they impact the final image, lies with the photographer; and in the case of a live performance, this needs to be done within a few seconds, which implies that the expertise of the photographer plays a crucial role in the creation of an aesthetic dance photograph. The dancer/choreographer/director may

have worked with the lighting technician to create an impactful performance, but without the photographer's vision and expertise, an aesthetic photograph cannot be created, even though the live recital may have been aesthetic.

This study may also be relevant for theoreticians/aestheticians: Just as the principle of Caturvidha Abhinaya is used to understand many art forms like Nāṭya, Nṛtya and even film in the current days, the fact that the ancient Śaḍāṅga principle is applicable to photography once again reiterates the holistic nature of Indian aesthetic theory.

While the discourses on photography are rife with the debate as to whether photography itself can be considered as an art, the fact that dance photography lends itself to the principles governing other visual arts such as sculpture and painting confirms its position as an art, even though it is hardly recognised even amongst the genres of photography.

Findings and Suggestions

One aspect that is revealed through the analysis is that one may not be able to exactly determine the sthāyi bhāva, vibhāvas, vyabhicāri bhāvas of the particular dance piece from which the photograph is shot. However, if the intention is to communicate the exact gist of the dance piece to the viewer, then it must be accompanied by caption or description. Looking at the photograph independently from the performance, the photograph by itself has a sthāyi bhāva; the vibhāvas and the vyabhicāri bhāvas may be suggested in the frame of the photograph and/or they may also be imagined by the viewer. Hence, the photograph must be suggestive and have scope for the viewer's imagination.

Many studies in the west have tried to understand whether or how the still photograph can capture the dynamism of dance. These studies specifically focus on the physical movement which is just one aspect of Āṅgika. However, the Indian understanding of aesthetics recognises that movement is not the primary aspect of nṛtya; the Caturvidha Abhinaya is led by the emotion (Sātvika), and this emotion can be captured by the photograph while the Āṅgika and Āhārya support and enhance the emotion. It is also important to note that the Indian aesthetics of nṛtya recognises that dynamism (Gati) is not the only feature of dance; the static (Sthiti) is just as important. This relationship between Sthiti and Gati can be understood in the statement “when sthiti is activated, it becomes gati; when gati is stopped or frozen, it becomes sthiti” (Shoba

Shashikumar). Being able to recognise the sthiti in the gati of dance can be seen in Indian sculptures and painting that portray dance; similarly, the photographs represent the sthiti in the gati of dance.

While capturing the dance, the photographer must be able to see the sthiti in the gati and should have an innate sense of Sauṣṭava in order to capture the right moment. The interviews of photographers have revealed that, with experience, the act of pressing the shutter button becomes intuitive - this is possible only when the photographer is completely involved in the dance i.e., the photographer is a Sahrdaya with an innate sense of appreciation of the dance form which enables her/him to capture the right moment.

As identified by Barthes (1982), photography consists of three primary roles: the photographer, the subject and the spectator. Capturing a good photograph also depends on good dancing, makeup, lighting etc. but usually one or more of the aforementioned factors are less than ideal and beyond the control of the photographer during a live performance; this is the point where the skill and intuition of the photographers becomes crucial as they need to be able to visualise and capture good photographs. As said by a photographer, “Some lightmen enjoy fiddling with the lights unnecessarily. Yet, ultimately, the ‘eye’, the ‘look’ of the photographer are the most important.... Poses are there, but they are secondary to my looking and the expression and eyes” (Interview of Avinash Pasricha by Shweta Arora).

Finally, the spectator of the photograph must also have the ability to appreciate the dance photograph. There is a difference between the way in which dancers and non-dancer look at a dance photograph as explained by a photographer: “Dancers know each mudra...when you see the particular moment of a gesture, you can imagine the start and the finish; but for somebody who isn't familiar with dance, they may not be able to imagine this. For them, the particular moment - the beauty of the dance, the posture, influence the viewer. It's about meeting a balance between the two - it should be appealing to the dancer and also be appealing to a common viewer” (Hareesh N Nampoothiri). The advancement of digital technology and social media has enabled everyone to be able to capture photos and the world is proliferated by innumerable images; the time viewers spend on a photograph may just be a few seconds. However, this negligible amount of time is not sufficient to be able to appreciate a photograph (or a dance photograph, in this case). Hence just as the photographer needs an eye to capture the dance, the

spectator (dancers and non-dancers) must have an eye to appreciate the photograph, visualise the dynamic in the static and experience the emotion conveyed by the photograph.

Conclusion

On the whole the study reveals the way in which photographs can capture the Āṅika, Āhārya and Sātvika Abhinaya of a dance form and do so in an aesthetic manner. Thus, it is necessary that the understanding of both - the aesthetics of Caturvidha abhinaya of a dance form, as well as the Ṣaḍāṅgas or the principles of visual arts - come together, along with the photographer's vision, in order to culminate in an aesthetic dance photograph. This interdisciplinary research that combined both the fields of dance and photography proved to be a challenge as it required to analyse the inter-relationship between the two and the principles of aesthetics of one art form (Ṣaḍāṅgas of Citra) to be adapted to another (photography).

The scope of the present study was restricted to the analysis of photographs from live Bharatanāṭyam performances only; studio photography can also be an area for research. Interviews with the photographers revealed that often during live performances, the lighting is not designed in a manner that is suitable to photography; research can be done in collaboration with dancers, photographers and light technicians to bring about an integrated system that is suitable to photography along with enhancing the visual and emotional appeal of the live performance. Photographs are also important methods of documentation; they extend the life of a performance which is otherwise transient, and this can be used as an advantage to preserve and bring awareness of diverse cultures and art forms. Closely related, is the use of videography and cinematography in dance; research can also be done on films (documentary or otherwise) on dance.

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