



## Ajapa Natanam of Thiruvarur – A Micro Cosmic Dance

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### Abstract

It is an Interdisciplinary research article linking Baratanatyama and Astrophysics. Dance has been integral part of the temple worship services in Tamilnadu. Thirumandiram a very early text speaks about Ajapa. Thiruvarur temple is famous for Ajapa natanam where the deity Tyagaraja himself execute this movement of dance. This meditative silence of unuttered prayer (Ajapa) accompanied by the graceful movements in both vertical and horizontal plane of the Tyagaraja image in synchronization with the vishnu's meditative breath is considered to be the root of this mystical Ajapa natanam. Ajapa is voice less silent Japa represented by inhalation and exhalation of breath. so Ajapa is a rhythmic dance movement which is a gentle, pleasant, fine breathing movement of air. It is quite opposite to the cosmic dance of Nataraja, which is a dance of Universe. So, the movement of Ajapa can be considered as a Microcosmic dance where the rhythmic movement of this Ajapa dance is the up and down movement of the heart with a perfect rhythm. This conscious and controlled breathing of Vishnu is explained as Ajapa natanam. Inhalation and exhalation are the only up and down movements this Ajapa natanam. The cosmic Dance of Nataraja is similar to the cosmic dance of subatomic particle which is observed and analyzed by CERN Scientists. This movement of sub-atomic particle can also be considered as microcosmic dance. Structural Analytical method and comparative method are used.

**Keywords:** Ajapa natanam, microcosmic dance, Thirumandiram, Mantra, Japa, meditation, pranayama.

## INTRODUCTION

Thiruvarur temple is one of the largest temples of India covers an area of 30 Acres. This temple said to have been built between 7th and 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. It was a cultural centre for Chola Kings. Rajaraja Chola - 1 was a royal patron who did a lot for this temple. A large number of dancers were associated with this temple during the reign of Cholas as seen from the temple Inscriptions. Dance has been integral part of the temple worship services. The temple is famous for Ajapa natanam where the deity Tyagaraja himself execute this movement of dance.

### Research Methodology

Critical Analytic method and structural analytic method are used for analyzing the Thirumandiram songs and Muthuswami dikshitar Krities. comparative method for cosmic dance of nataraja.

### Need for the study

This paper aims to understand in depth the special Ajapa Dance of Tyagarajar in Thiruvarur.

**Ajapa:** A + Japa = Ajapa. It is antonym of Japa. Japa is continuously repeating single mantra (a phonetic form of syllable) without any break which is a openly uttered sound. It is also called Chanting, which is uttering a word or phrase many times in a monotonous repetitive tone. The chanting of sacred sound vibrations is known as Japa or Mantra yoga or Mantra meditation. This ancient practice is one of the most powerful ways of meditation. It is considered to be a divine revelation of saints in Ancient India which was called Vedic Chanting. Gregorian Chant is the central tradition of western

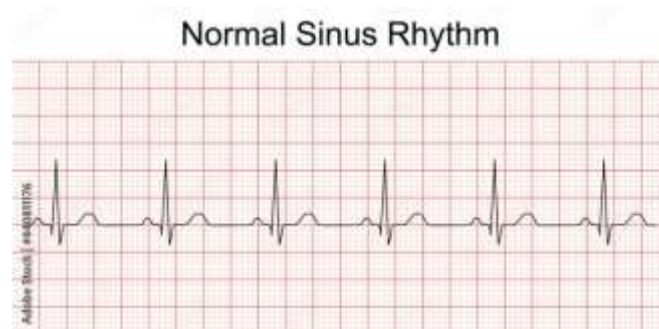
plain chant, which is a form of Monophonic. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity use chanting. When the mantra sound was not produced outside and meditating inside with simple breathing is called Ajapa. This method of mantra recitation has been in persistent since from the early times. There are four types of Japas. 1. Vaikhari (loud and audible) 2. Upamshu (whispering) 3. Manasika (mental and meditative) 4. Lakhita (written) Out of these Manasika japa is recited in the mind. It is experienced by concentrating upon the meaning of the word along with meditating on mantra with full conception without moving tongue and lips or making sound. Manasika japa is Ajapa which is the most powerful chanting than the Upamshu and Vikhari.

**Mantra:** Mantra means a sound, a certain utterance of a syllable. A mantra is a motivating chant. A mantra is visually any repeated word or phrase in meditation. Chanting meditation involves speaking certain saying over and over again. This saying is Mantra. Today the modern science seen the whole existence as reverberation of energy. Where there is a vibration there is a sound that means the whole existence is a kind of sound, a complex, amalgamation of multiple mantras.

**Ajapa and Thirumandiram:** In Thirumandiram one of the early texts of Tamil Literature, the first Chapter of fourth Thandra is Asabai (Ajapa). This Chapter consists of 30 hymns (884 to 913 in Thirumandiram) It generally covers areas like Mantra, Japa and dance of Shiva Nataraja. In Mantra it speaks about Monophonic syllable to poly phonic syllables. Mantric syllables start from single syllable to 7000 syllables and so on. (Thirumandiram 898, 899, 900) Thirumandiram explains Akāram, Ukāram as mantra syllables in the Hymns 889,891,899,901,910, 911,912. It speaks about Sreem, Hreem in the hymn 903 Am hreem, am ksham Am in 910 and Sivāya nama masivā, Sivāyanama, Sivayanama, Namasivāya in 912. Japa is mentioned in the hymns -884, 904, 905, 907, 908, 909. **Dance of Shiva Nataraja:** The place mentioned is Chidambaram -886, Chittrambalam - 886, Mandru - 913, Thiru Ambalam - 903, Ponnambalam- 887. **Dance:** Shiva nataraja dance is mentioned as koothu, thāndavam, Nattam. koothu: 1. Thirukoothu-997, 891,894,908. 2. Thatthuva koothu - 889. 3. Ananda koothu - 892.4. Tharpara koothan – 897. 5. Reengāra thatthuva koothu -901. 6. Mānikka koothu - 913. 7. Koothu - 902, 911, 912. Nadam - 902. **Thāndavam:** In Thirumandiram in the hymn 887 four types of Thāndavam are mentioned Ananda Thāndavam, Anavarada Thāndavam, Pralaya Thāndavam and Sangāra Thāndavam. According to Thirumandiram Ajapa is Mantra Japā considered to be Koothu or Thāndavam of Shiva Nataraja.

**Ajapa Natanam of Thiruvapur:** It is believed that Vishnu wore an image of Tyagaraja on his chest and meditated upon it in silence. This meditative silence of unuttered prayer (A + japa) accompanied by the graceful movements in both vertical and horizontal plane of the Tyagaraja image in synchronization with the vishnu's meditative breath is considered to be the root of this mystical Ajapa natanam. Ajapa is voiceless silent Japa represented by inhalation and exhalation of breath. so Ajapa is a rhythmic dance movement which is a gentle, pleasant, fine breathing movement of air. It is a minute and simple up and down movement of air from the heart. The Ajapa dance is a miniature one. It can be visualized only by perfect concentration or deep observation. It is quite opposite to the cosmic dance of Nataraja, which is a dance of Universe. The rhythmic movement of this cosmic dance is the movement of planet earth. So, the movement of Ajapa can be considered as aMicrocosmic dance where the rhythmic movement of this Ajapa dance is the up and down movement of the heart with a perfect rhythm. As it is mentioned as natanam it is mild, elegant, graceful movement of dance restricted to few centimeters can be shown in graph. It is not a fearful thāndavam with jumping and rotating movements.

**Ajapa movement and Pranayama:** In Yoga Pranayama refers to the conscious and controlled breathing that matches the rhythm of yoga posture. According to Yoga two main functions of proper breathing is to bring more oxygen to the blood and thus to brain and the second control of prāna or vital energy led to the control of the mind. Conscious breathing has a biological effect on our mental, emotional and physical state. This conscious breathing of Vishnu is explained as Ajapa natanam. Here the minute up and down movement of heart of Vishnu is the perfect rhythmic movement of Tyagaraja's Ajapa Natanam. Ajapa natanam seems to be a fine, sensitive, graceful movement of air. Inhalation and exhalation are the only up and down movements this Ajapa natanam.



ECG showing the graph of perfect rhythmic up and down movement of air through breathing (Pranayama)

**Ajapa movement and Sub-atomic movement:** The basic building blocks of Atoms are protons, neutrons and electrons and fermions which is made up of bosons. In Particle Physics a boson is a subatomic particle whose spin quantum number has an integer value (0,1,2 ...) Sub atomic means smaller than an atom. The proton, neutron and electron are tiny kinds of particles called subatomic particles. Proton and Neutron make up the center of the atom called Nucleus and the electrons fly around the above nucleus in a small cloud.

The miniature of the cosmic dance of Universe is Atom and its movement. The atomic research center at CERN believes that the dance of Nataraja symbolizes the life force and that's why they have kept the cosmic Dancer at the Entrance of CERN. The cosmic Dance of Nataraja is similar to the cosmic dance of subatomic particle which is observed and analyzed by CERN Scientists. This movement of subatomic particle can also be considered as microcosmic dance where the movement cannot be seen outside. The movement of subatomic particle can be compared to the microcosmic dance of Ajapa for both are miniature of cosmic dance. Subatomic movement and the up and down breathing movement of air are Natural, fine, minute perfectly rhythmic movements. Without this movements there is no life force.

**Ajapa natanam and Thevaram:** In the Thevaram of Trinities Thirugnana sambandar, Thirunavukkarasar and Sundara there is no mentioning of Ajapa natanam. Thirunavukkarasar speaks about the meditating Vishnu's heart. In one of his Thiruvaram thevaram he says "Paia sudarvidu nagapalli kolvan ullatthānum "(4 - 4 - 10) Here nagapalli kolvan - Vishnu, ullatthān - in the heart.

In many thevaram he says Thiruvaram Tyagarajar is in the heart of everybody.

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|--|--------------|
| 1. Veedaranga nirpanam                                     | - 4 - 4 - 9  |
| 2. En ullam koyilākki                                      | - 4 - 5 - 2  |
| 3. En ullathil irundu angu urudhi kātti                    | - 3 - 5 - 6  |
| 4. Mandhiratthai manatthulle vaitthār polum                | - 6 - 28 - 8 |
| 5. Nāl vāyūm patthar manathu ullānai                       | - 6 - 29 - 7 |
| 6. Ullamāi ullatthe ninrāi potri                           | - 6 - 32 - 8 |
| 7. Uyirāvanam irundu uttru nokki ullakkizhiyin uru ezhudhi | - 6 - 25 - 1 |

**Ajapa Natanam and Muthuswami Dikshitar:** One of the Music Trinities Muthuswami Dikshitar speaks about Ajapa dance of Thiruvaram Tyagarajar. He praises Tyagaraja as an expert of knowing fine intricacies of dance even the dance masters unable to understand. In one of the Thiruvaram Panchalinga kriti "Hadakesvara" in the ragam Bilahari as "Māruthi Nandhi Arjunādhi Barathāchāryaira vedhita Nardhana spoorthē. "In another kriti "Sri Tyagarajasya Baktho" in the raga Rudhrapriya he was delighted with different varieties of dance of Rudhrakanikas. "Rudhra kanikas nardana vinodha beda moharasya"

#### Ajapanatanam:

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|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ajapa nardanam        | -Tyagaraja mahotsava       | - SriRagam.       |
| 2. Ajapanadanaranga      | -Tyagaraja pālaya          | - Gowlai          |
| 3. Ajapa nadana prabhava | - Veera vasantha tyagaraja | - Vira vassantham |

Dikshitar gives another name for **Ajapa as Hamsa lāsya**.

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|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. Adilalithahamsalāsyo     | -Tyagarajo   | - Atana.          |
| 2. Hamsollāsānanda natanena | - Sadāsivena | - Sindiramakriya. |

## CONCLUSION

Thirumandiram a very early Tamil text which speaks about Ajapa in fourth Thantra in which it explains Ajapa is a Mantra Japā considered to be Koothu or Thāndavam of Shiva Nataraja. This meditative silence of unuttered prayer (Ajapa) accompanied by the graceful movements in both vertical and horizontal plane of the Tyagaraja image in synchronization with the vishnu's meditative breath is considered to be the root of this mystical Ajapa natanam. Ajapa is voice less silent Japa represented by inhalation and exhalation of breath. So Ajapa is a rhythmic dance movement which is a gentle, pleasant, fine breathing movement of air. It is quite opposite to the cosmic dance of Nataraja. Which is a dance of Universe. So, the movement of Ajapa can be considered as a Microcosmic Dance. The cosmic Dance of Nataraja is similar to the cosmic dance of subatomic particle which is observed and analyzed by CERN Scientists. This movement of sub-atomic particle can also be considered as microcosmic dance. So Ajapa natanam and the movement of sub-atomic particles are Microcosmic dances which are miniature of cosmic dance of Nataraja. Critical Analytic method and structural analytic method are used for analyzing the Thirumandiram songs and Muthuswami dikshitar Krities. Comparative method for cosmic dance of nataraja.

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### CITATION

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