

CULTURAL THOUGHT AND PHILOSOPHICAL ELEMENTS OF SINGING AND DANCING IN INDIAN FILMS

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Abstract: Art is the embodiment of national culture and spirit. Singing and dancing are one of the earliest and richest forms of human art. It is not only the product of experience and emotional experience but also the transcendence of vulgar daily life. As the most distinctive feature of modern Indian films, the art of singing and dancing inherits the traditional Indian aesthetic ideas and religious philosophy in the modern audio-visual environment can be found. It maintains a distinctive national impression in the tide of internationalization. This kind of art form is of great significance to the exploration of the nationality of Chinese singing and dancing art.

Keywords: Indian film. Singing and dancing. Classical aesthetics. Religious philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Different nationalities have different social forms and traditional habits, and their ideology and culture must have unique characteristics. Film art also has a national character. The national expression of films, such as national songs and dances, and national customs, reflects the aesthetic thought and cultural psychological construction of the nation. An analysis from a philosophical perspective can reveal the internal structure of these nations (KARABULUT, 2018, p. 84-94). Indian song and dance film is a wonderful

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work in the history of modern film. In the tide of cultural globalization, it has achieved the harmonious unity of nationalization and internationalization, which is very difficult. The song and dance scenes interspersed in the film plot left a deep impression on audiences around the world. It can be said that singing and dancing are symbols of Indian films.

Peoplehood is the most distinctive feature of Indian films, which is mainly reflected in the song and dance fragments in the films. Singing and dancing can be said to be the symbol and soul of Indian films. Even though other countries also have films with song and dance elements, when it comes to song and dance films, the first thing that international audiences think of is Indian films. An overview of thousands of films of India every year shows all of which have elements of singing and dancing. Indian song and dance have become the Indian people's cultural tradition, and they are also an emotional symbol that unifies the country with diverse cultures and local languages. From ancient temples and shrines to today's streets, Indian songs and dances have become popular. They are famous for their mysterious and popular, seductive but not vulgar aesthetic style.

When it comes to Indian movies, Indian people's passionate dance moves appear in people's minds, bringing a sense of joy. Some scholars have studied Indian song and dance films, such as Gehlawat, Dudrah and others, on the historical analysis of the evolution of song and dance in Indian films. Kumar and Kishore have digitally classified dance movements in films (GEHLAWAT, 2017, p. 103-108; KUMAR, 2017, p. 22; KISHORE, 2018, p. 1-10). There are many art evaluations from the perspective of film art creation, but few investigations from the perspective of philosophy (NERESON, 2021, p. 49-66). The song and dance scenes in the film contain profound cultural and ideological connotations. From the Indian people's songs and dances, their lives can be observed.

1 THE AESTHETIC CONTENT OF SONG AND DANCE IN MODERN INDIAN FILMS

1.1 THE BEAUTY OF HARMONIOUS FORM

Modern Indian film has inherited and transformed the tradition of singing and dancing, which makes it meet the international trend to the maximum extent on the basis of retaining the tradition. The content of songs and dances in traditional Indian films usually accounts for a large proportion.

A large number of songs and dances make the duration of the film often as long as three hours. Even the most beautiful songs and dances may kill the patience of the audience. For example, the duration of *Caravan* in 1971 was 170 minutes, in which a large section of untimely song and dance clips diluted the original tense plot nodes (KILIÇ, 2022, p. 264-270; EVREN, 2019, p. 121-125). It makes the song and dance no longer closely linked with the plot. The audience's patience and expectation of the plot are inevitably weakened. The continuous story is cut off by cheerful singing and dancing, which is not consistent with the taste of international audiences in other cultural backgrounds.

The possible reason for the appearance of such “dancing for dancing” plot is, on the one hand, Indian people's love for dance art; on the other hand, in the early stage of the development of Indian film, the film industry is still immature, so film producers tend to increase the time of singing and dancing to shoot relatively simple singing and dancing scenes to reduce film production costs and increase profits.

Therefore, the later Indian films reduced the length of singing and dancing and improved the quality, and also deleted the meaningless singing and dancing content of “dancing for the sake of dancing” that was separated from the film plot. The song and dance are inserted into the appropriate story node to make it cooperate with the story content, so that the song and dance can perform the inheritance, transformation and narration while showing the personal character and emotional changes of the role. This form of film singing and dancing is in line with the viewing habits of international audiences without losing cultural identity.

The visual presentation of songs and dances has also undergone a process of transformation. The Indian people's adherence to local music is beyond the understanding of other countries that pursue western world pop music crazily. Among them, the fanatical religious emotion is the most important factor. The lyrics of the music of Indian song and dance movies are still mainly in Hindi or other local languages, and the tune is generally still the formation of local music, without breaking away from the traditional framework. However, pop music elements that conform to the international aesthetic psychology and the orientation of the emerging domestic class are also included, so that the local national music will have a new vitality on the world screen. Its unique musical appeal and aesthetic value have brought a full aural feast to audiences all over the world (DANDEKAR, 2021, p. 5579-5590; EDOHO-EKET, 2019, p.

340-360). In this way, even if the length of song and dance in Indian film is reduced, the artistry is improved. The international soundtrack provides more sympathetic elements for audiences with different cultural backgrounds. This balance of nationality and internationality can also be seen in the dance choreography.

The interpretation method of modern dance is just right in the integration of Indian film singing and dancing scenes. The design of dance movements, while retaining the national flavor, also takes into account the way of film shots conversion and post editing so that they can cooperate with each other. In the movie *3 Idiots*, when the hero and heroine get back together, they immediately dance happily. The slightly funny dance action is obviously to echo the absurd and humorous emotional tone of the film. The constantly changing dance background presented by the editing technology shows the hero and the heroine's joyful psychology and the illusion of a better life in the future. These song and dance balance the aesthetic feeling and narrative function as much as possible.

It can be seen that the answer to the question of nationalization or internationalization is to keep the balance between the two in order to achieve a harmony between national identity and world aesthetic psychology. The universal value and emotional experience in the local society are presented on the screen in a relatively international way of expression. Even audiences with different cultural backgrounds can feel the simple national emotion through the story expression method with low threshold, so as to widely produce aesthetic identity across the barriers of space and culture. This way of taking the national culture as the basis and modernization and internationalization as the means has made Indian films form a special artistic charm and a new aesthetic paradigm, which has been recognized worldwide.

1.2 CLASSICAL AESTHETICS IN MODERN AUDIOVISUAL CONTEXT

Indian classical aesthetics pursues “taste”, namely, the so-called “emotional taste” and “rhythmic taste”, which is a harmonious aesthetic feeling (KUMARI, 2019, p. 39-43). Indians believe that pain and happiness are integrated in the immersion of beauty, and enjoy equal pleasure in self-control and kindness. Love is full of the gap between existence and nonexistence, and things are eternal in every moment. The beauty of harmony and perfection

is an Indian people's important aesthetic principle, which reflects a kind of aesthetic and romantic sentiment in the song and dance movies.

India has been discussing the beauty of singing and dancing for a long time, with a large number of aesthetic works. One of the most famous works is *Natya Astra*, which is said to be written by the Brahta Immortals. It contains the interpretation of Indian dance, and also covers many art categories, including music, grammar, painting, rhetoric, performance and other art forms. It is a comprehensive literary theory book on Indian art (ASSCHE, 2022, p. 92-111; CHUA, 2018, p. 354-377, HARRIS, 2022, p. 70-91). Its main aesthetic thoughts are "taste" and "emotion". It believes that dance is composed of eight tastes (emotions), namely, eroticism, terror, comic, violent, compassionate, heroic, disgusted and strange. Taste comes from feeling, and feeling produces taste. The two are interdependent: one is perception, the other is narration. It can be seen that Indian dance is not a simple dance. It is not even a thin and simple body movement. It has a strong life emotion behind it. Therefore, when Indian directors combine film with song and dance elements, they pay great attention to whether the combination among characters, song and dance is harmonious. They combined the characters' "passion" with singing and dancing in the film. For example, the film *Ashoka the Great* deals with Ashoka's love fantasy, which implies Ashoka's lust and desire for a princess through passionate dance and ambiguous physical contact. Combined with exquisite pictures, it presents a good show for the audience in an atmosphere of implicit, bold, warm, pure and erotic. This way of combining the characters' desire with singing and dancing also gives consideration to narrative and aesthetic feeling, and visually describes the characters' hidden psychology through beautiful dance.

Because Indian films are inevitably subject to the censorship of the government during their development, filmmakers have to find a new way to express the characters' lust. As one of the eight tastes, lust is Vishnu's embodiment and symbol in Hinduism, and dance is Shiva's creation. People have a simple worship and love for dance and lust. Believers in society are in the contradiction between human desire instinct and devotion to gods. On the one hand, they regard lust as Vishnu God's blessing to mankind, and on the other hand, they have to suppress their desire under the control of the government. Releasing and expressing desire in appropriate ways are exactly what the art represented by singing and dancing can do. Therefore, Indian film directors skillfully express the characters' desire through song and

dance scenes, so the song and dance in the film are particularly emotional and tasteful, and human desire and divinity are unified in the dance.

India, with a long history of ancient civilization, has a deep foundation of classical art and profound aesthetic concepts. The Indian people have a deep-rooted aesthetic psychology in poetry, painting, music, dance and sculpture. Influenced by this, the modern Indian song and dance film has a distinctive classical artistic charm. Through the integration of dance, music, scene art and other art forms, the film narrative has a unique aesthetic sense. Indian song and dance films focus on classical aesthetic feelings, and can keep pace with the times, using modern audio-visual language to narrate and convey feelings. That is to say, through the integration of multiple elements, such as camera movement, picture, sound, editing technology and lens language, film creation is carried out with the core of showing stories, shaping characters and expressing ideas. The new expression of classical aesthetic ideas is carried out in the modern audio-visual context.

2 INDIAN SONG AND DANCE WITH GODS

Film dance is a commercial dance of one of the four major Indian dances. The other three ones are classical dance, folk dance and modern dance. Under its popular and modern surface, its internal thought is still like its other sisters, bathed in Shiva's divine light. In other words, Indian dance is not only a reflection of the Indian people's way of existence, but it is also a "ritual" of worship.

2.1 DEVIATION FROM AND ADHERENCE TO RELIGION

The essence of dance from the aesthetic perspective is purely formal. Watching a song and dance show can bring spiritual satisfaction but not physical satiety. As a form of dance, it not only represents Indian culture, but also takes worship of God as its spiritual core. The original dance was an activity of offering sacrifices to the gods. The dancers served gods, and they inspired the gods by dancing. Dancing in God's name is the fundamental attribute of Indian dance, which also marks the maturity of its internal system, so that it is difficult to be fully assimilated by foreign literature and art (LAI, 2021, p. 114-115). Although in order to maintain the sanctity of pure dance, the government stipulated that film singing and dancing should not be

in God's name. This attempt to eliminate religious elements in commercial dance is a deviation from religion. But in fact, film singing and dancing, as a cultural form, are difficult to completely remove their intertwined religious elements. Because religious life has become a part of the Indian people's life. Dance, as an art, is a reflection of people's way of existence.

India has been a religious country since ancient times. During its most prosperous historical period, there were several mature religions with sophisticated doctrines, such as Vedas, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. Foreign Christianity and Islam also took root here. Religion has become an important part of the Indian people's life, and the worship of religion has become a tradition. It has been integrated into the local people's blood, so that Indian culture has always been shrouded in the glory of religion, with theological color (FELDHAUS, 2019, p. 465-468). Hinduism dominates in India, which embodies Indian culture and influences the Indian people's aesthetic thoughts. The Indian people regard religion as the experience of the heart and soul. The emotional experience of a religion is not a fantasy, nor can it be defined by reason, but a spiritual force and belief in life. For them, religion is not only about the theory of God, but also about the perception of reality and life. In Hinduism, God is all inclusive and has infinite transcendental existence. Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu's worship and the worship of nature are deep-rooted group beliefs of India. The legends about gods, customs and activities of offering sacrifices to gods are still an important part of people's lives, and have greatly affected the aesthetic orientation of Indian films.

Different from Christians who seek to enter heaven after death through the atonement of gods, Indians believe that they can obtain knowledge about God through rational forces such as spirit rather than logical thinking. From this point of view, religion is the spiritual experience of looking up to God, so they believe that the method of spiritual perception based on feeling is better than rational logical argument. The rational logic under scientism will be replaced with the evolution of scientific theory, and the value of wisdom obtained through spiritual intuition is eternal. Therefore, nearly all kinds of religious in India show a kind of emphasis on spirit, intuition and spiritual power.

This emphasis on the transcendental spirit of Hinduism also shows that they are more pursuing the truth connotation hidden under the realistic appearance than the superficial things. This means that, as long as a religion has the similarity of the ideological core, it may be included and absorbed

by Hinduism, which makes Hinduism have some characteristics of other religions. Hinduism believes that the reason why religions differ from each other in essence is not the religious purpose, but the ideological core and religious pursuit. As long as one has the specific expression of the content of eternal truth, Hinduism will embrace it.

Therefore, the teachings of Hinduism are diverse, but the spiritual efforts and religious belief in God in the teachings are unified. This unity is not invariable, but changes according to the change of believers' belief needs in different historical periods, and reflects the constant spiritual pursuit in the development and change. This spirit of inclusiveness makes Hinduism have a certain universality, which is an important reason why Hinduism has never been lost and has become the mainstream religion in India. This divine and inclusive religious spirit is many Indian people's source of spiritual strength and the main atmosphere of cultural activities in India. People not only revere temples and other religious places, but also feel joy and comfort from those places.

During the religious festival, people gather to relax in the solemn and joyful atmosphere and the divine magnetic atmosphere. They rejoice in removing the dust from their hearts. For film art, the creators discuss religious topics and reflect religious experience. Even the films like *Peekay*, which seem to deviate from religion and criticize radical religious behaviors, do not completely deny religion, but hope to inspire people's thinking about the correct way of believing in God. The religious culture and spirit permeate Indian people's life and spirit and are an important source of their spiritual strength. The attempt at harmony and unity of Hinduism in different historical periods and its inclusive spirit in dynamic evolution play a guiding role in Indian film and dance art.

2.2 THE OUTLOOK ON LIFE OF “THE UNITY OF BRAHMAN AND HUMAN, THE UNITY OF SOUL AND FLESH”

Influenced by the religious atmosphere, the Indian people's mode of thinking has a certain religious character. This religious nature, as a deep-rooted group belief, has an invisible impact on people's outlook on life, as well as their aesthetic orientation and film creation based on it. In addition to worshipping the deities that represent the basic spirit, Hindus also believe that natural things also have divine nature and spiritual light, thus giving birth to

their worship. This pantheistic thought that all things are animistic gives birth to the view that all things are sentient. “Emotion” is the human beings’ life cycle and emotional experience. This view of life integration of human and nature is shown as “emotional synchronization” in aesthetic psychology, that is, people and nature have the same emotion and can achieve mutual connection and communication in emotion. Therefore, man and nature should live in harmony. In other words, the eternal truth represented by God is contained in all things in the world. It also involves “eternity”, that is, it believes that what dominates the nature is an eternal spiritual entity, which is the “Brahman” in Upanishads. It is considered to be the noumenon of the universe and the source of life, and concepts such as “nihility”, “phenomenon” and “essence” are governed by “Brahman”. “Brahma” appears in all things in the world, so all things in the world have Brahma nature (GERMEIN, 2019, p. 1-12).

“Brahman” has something in common with the “Qi” in China, which flows between heaven and earth. They are invisible, colorless and unpredictable. As the “rules” of world operation, they determine the world and exist in all things. “Brahman” is an infinite and eternal existence, but everything has a limited existence, and life and death are normal. The infinite Brahman appears in the finite universe. This combination of infinity and finity constitutes the ontology of Indian philosophy and the epistemology based on it, which transcends representation and reaches to essence. The phenomena of things, including forms and appearances, are limited and constantly changing, but their internal “Brahma” stipulates their unchanging nature. Through this form, one can perceive and realize the eternal nature of the inner, reach infinity through finiteness, and discover the eternal truth contained therein. In this process, one needs to act on things with pure mind and intuition, and realize the existence of “Brahman”. One should understand the eternal truth of the universe with their own individual spirit, and reach the realm of the unity of “Brahman” and “human”.

The concept of “the unity of soul and flesh” in Indian philosophy of life is derived from the infinite “Brahman” in the finite and the thought of pursuing the “unity of Brahman and human” in the finite. The unity of soul and flesh is based on the dualistic separation of soul and flesh, that is, all things are the dualistic unity of material and spirit. Human beings are governed by the dualism of body and spirit. The philosophy of “the unity of soul and flesh” means that, on the basis of emphasizing real life, one should pay more

attention to the spiritual pursuit of secular transcendence. Spiritual satiety is a better ideal of life.

It can be seen that Indian society should not be regarded as a society of gods only, nor as a society of pure carnal desire. The Indians' life is a process of achieving an ideal life through the perception and awareness of real social life. Indian culture is a culture that pursues both material life and spiritual life. Under the guidance of this "spiritual and physical dualism" philosophy of life, Indians, while experiencing real life and enjoying themselves through the real world, try to transcend the mediocrity of daily life and gain peace and relief from their spiritual and perception of the world. This outlook on life has an impact not only on the Indians' real life, but also on their artistic aesthetics and artistic creation. The pursuit of the dual beauty of soul and flesh in singing and dancing film is embodied in the pursuit of approaching "infinity" through the beauty of finite, understanding its internal "Brahman" through the beauty of reality, and obtaining eternal joy through temporary happiness. So, the scene of singing and dancing films is always beautiful, with romantic fantasy and aestheticism tendency. People perceive God's knowledge in dance.

3 SEEKING "SELF": REFLECTIONS ON THE PEOPLEHOOD OF SINGING AND DANCING IN MODERN INDIAN FILMS

Singing and dancing are an integral part of Indian life, showing their attitude towards life and becoming an external symbol of their national character and culture. Therefore, Indian film has established the necessary status of singing and dancing from the beginning. Although the film song and dance are a modern dance, and the characters in the film do not always dance Indian classical dance. The profound influence of classical dance is undeniable. In the film *Devdas*, Chandramukhi is still one of the most popular performances of the audience, who wears a large number of beautiful necklaces, bracelets and nose rings and dances classical dance steps. Even though Indian film has made international transformation of film art through learning from the western world and has been recognized internationally, its internal peoplehood is still shining and has not been obliterated.

The transformation path of Indian film song and dance, which combines internationalization and nationalization, has enlightening significance for the modern development of Chinese dance art. While achieving modernization

and internationalization in form and lowering the threshold of appreciation, it is necessary to firmly maintain the inherent national nature of dance art. Chinese dance needs to understand that the expression of aesthetic thoughts and philosophy of life are the eternal essence of the ever-changing form of dance art.

There are only two essential problems in the art of singing and dancing: “What to express?” And “How to express?” The former is the connotation of dance, while the latter is the form of dance. The key that Indian songs and dances can still have such a deep national character under the impact of global culture is that they have made clear what they want to “express” through their undifferentiated adherence to religious culture. For example, the six classical dance schools in India, such as Borado and Katakali, and various modern folk dance schools, have flourished together, but they are all under the influence of religious culture. For Indians, the world was born in the Brahma’s dance steps and died in Shiva’s “tandav”, and the world unfolded in the God’s dance. Therefore, whether it is a temple or a modern square, whether it is a theater stage or a village street, people dance under the God’s gaze.

Ideology is the bottom composition of religious belief and the origin of pure spiritual art. Dance is not only a dynamic expression of human body, but also a spiritual activity to express aesthetic ideas and culture. The original dance art is the worship of nature and the reflection of human existence and life. The dance in the pure spiritual category is the embodiment of thought, representing the reflection of the people’s existence and life who are aware of it. Hegel said that art needs man’s conscious consciousness, that is, man is aware of what his own existence is, what makes him and what the world is. This demand for spiritual freedom is the essential origin of art. This metaphysical spiritual activity and conscious reflection of the existing way are the text resources of art.

As an ancient civilization, China has a vast number of text resources. Primitive worship and totem worship, Taoist mythology system, shaman wizard legend, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and folk Mazu culture are all traditional resources of Chinese art (MIGUEL, 2022, p. 93-107). They should be tireless in providing inspiration and spiritual connotation for music, dance and other arts, but the storm of the times and people’s frivolous mentality make them unable to be effectively used. The praying dances of mountain gods and the martial dances in *The Songs of Chu* eventually became legends in the history books, and no one reproduced them. Only the tradition

of using dance to promote virtue and kabuki survived (SWAMY, 2019, p. 719-738). But the new dance movement in the last century broke this tradition and made dance a serious art of realism. In the 1950s, the romantic fantasy that the classical dance was about to recover from the traditional resources came to an end after ten years of turbulence. After the reform and opening up, these traditional text resources are trying to flourish, but they have caught up with the world cultural shock and post-modernism wave under globalization (JRUBIÉS, 2021, p. 499-536).

Socrates said, “Know yourself.” To know oneself, one needs to know who he is? Where does he come from? Where is “he”? The dove of peace, in the dance drama “*Dove of Peace*, dances lightly, but where does it fly from and to? To Chile or Paris, France? When we don’t know who we are and where we come from, art has no “self” and no foundation. Therefore, it is necessary for us to review history, ask about the peoplehood that is covered by reason and utilitarianism, pick up the fragments of artistic texts and put them together to write a new chapter. This process is not only a reproduction of the classical form, but also a process of searching for oneself and the feelings and souls of the Chinese nation since ancient times.

CONCLUSION

National singing and dancing are the reason why Indian films are Indian films. Their singing and dancing performances in the modern audiovisual context of films have classical Indian aesthetic ideas and contain valuable Indian culture and philosophy. The analysis of Indian singing and dancing art is an insight into Indian national life. The song and dance fragments in the film reflect the beauty of harmonious form. Their emotion and taste convey the harmonious and perfect aesthetic concept and religious pursuit of Indian culture. The international transformation of singing and dancing in Indian films has not only retained national characteristics but also gained international aesthetic recognition, creating a new aesthetic style in the global scope. This is enlightening to the exploration of artistic nationality represented by dancing in China, that is, to understand and find the national spirit in the tracing of historical text resources.

YANG, Y.; ZHANG, E. Pensamiento cultural y elementos filosóficos del canto y la danza en las películas indias. *Trans/Form/Ação*, Marília, v. 46, n. 4, p. 315-328, Out./Dez., 2023.

Resumen: el arte es la encarnación de la cultura y el espíritu nacional. El canto y el baile son una de las formas más antiguas y ricas del arte humano. No es sólo el producto de la experiencia y la experiencia emocional, sino también la trascendencia de la vida cotidiana vulgar. Como la característica más distinta de las películas modernas de la India, el arte de cantar y bailar hereda las ideas estéticas tradicionales de la India y la filosofía religiosa en el entorno audiovisual moderno se puede encontrar. Mantiene una impresión nacional distintiva en la marea de la internacionalización. Este tipo de arte es de gran importancia para la exploración de la nacionalidad del arte chino de canto y danza.

Palabras clave: Cine de India; Cantar y bailar; La estética clásica; Filosofía religiosa.

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