

Nanati Baduku

By Vidhya Subramanian

Some days I go through hope and joy, other days, despair. Some days I cry at the ugly brutality of humanity, and others, I smile at its beauty. Some days it feels like it's all going to end soon and on other days, never. On one such day during lockdown, I questioned purpose. People are dying, and the word lockdown conjures up the notion of war. It is a kind of war, isn't it? What am I, a Bharatanatyam artist doing, practicing my work as if nothing has changed? What purpose does it serve in the throes of this horrid virus? Why does art exist and what is its place in a crisis of life or death? Is this onslaught nature telling us to reassess our values, our indifferent treatment of this earth we live on and its inhabitants, our misaligned priorities? Do I have to create and choreograph during this luxury of time when I could be helping others? When the questions overwhelm, sometimes the dance stops but sometimes it is the only answer. So that morning when the questions threatened to consume, I got up and danced, and as has become a new habit, I practiced adavus to music that fits my mood of the day.

Sarukkall adavu was the choice of the day and the music was Nanati Baduku, the Annamacharya composition sung poignantly by T.M.Krishna. The body moved at first in straight lines and angles as the adavu requires. Slowly the movements became more circular, continuous of their own will, with the gradation in speeds adding to the drama. When I finished I was compelled to take a closer look at the lyrics and meaning - a revelation. Without completely knowing the meaning why did my body respond and move the way it did? Once again, I put on the music and moved to it, now armed with a slightly better understanding of the poem. It evolved into what you see in the video which I quickly recorded before the composition crystallized into that word I often doubt, choreography. NANATI baduku nATakamu gAnaka gannadi kaivalyam - this day to day life is a drama, what is not seen clearly is liberation. We take ourselves too seriously but aren't we all just specks caught up in this constant, unending cycle? And aren't we always searching for that purpose? PuTTuDayu nijamu pOvuDayu nijamu naTTa naTimipani nATakamu - to be born is truth, to die is truth. All work in between is a drama. eTTaeduTa kaladl prapancamu kaTTa kaTapaDitl kaivalyam - that which is right in front is the world, that which is the ultimate last is liberation. Birth and death are indeed the only certainties. Reality is the life we choose to lead, the career path we choose, the space we live in, the relationships we engage in, but as one nears the final truth, purpose is revealed, the purpose we've been fulfilling all along and yet searching for. Tegadu pApamu tIradu puNyamu nagi nagi kAlamu nATakamu - there is no break to sin, there is never completion to good. EguvanE shrI venkatEshvaruDElika kanakamu mIdidi kaivalyam - above it all there is only one Venkateshvara, that which is even beyond the sky is liberation. There is this energy, call it God, universal power or by any name you wish, but beyond that is this liberation of purpose. That day's exercise just left me with more questions. Did I create a piece, I don't think so. It worked itself through me and the question of whether I will be able to dance it again is another question that remains unanswered. I don't know if I'm recreating my cultural identity or if it will remain the exact same at the end of all this. All I know is I want to take it one day at a time, sit with what arises, and wait to see how it affects my art and this world.

nAnATi baduku. rAgA: rEvati. Adi tALA.

nAnATi baduku nATakamu gAnaka gannadi kaivalyamu
This day to day life is a drama, what is not seen clearly is liberation
puTTuDayu nijamu pOvuDayu nijamu naTTa naTImi pani nATakamu
To be born is truth, to die is truth. All work in between is a drama
eTTa eduTa kaladl prapancamu kaTTa kaTapaDitl kaivalyamu
That which is right in front is the world, that which is the ultimate last is liberation
tegadu pApamu tlradu puNyamu nagi nagi kAlamu nATakamu
There is no break to sin, there is never completion to good
eguvanE shrl venkatEshvaruDElika kanakamu mldidi kaivalyamu
Above it all there is only one Venkateshvara, that which is even beyond the sky is liberation.

P:This day to day (nAnATi) life (batuku) is a drama (nATakamu)
What is to not seen clearly (kAnaka kannadi) is liberation/salvation (kaivalyamu)

C1:To be born (puTTuTayu) is truth (nijamu), to die (pOvuTayu literal meaning is to go; to leave)
is truth. All the work (pani) in between these two (naTTanaDimi) is a drama. That which is right
in front (yeTTa neduTagaladl) is the world (prapaNcamu). That which is the ultimate last
(kaTTakaDapaTidi) is liberation.

C2:There is no break (tegadu) to sin (pApamu). There is never completion (tlradu) to good/
holiness (puNyamu). All this laughing and laughable (nagi nagi) time (kAlamu) is a drama.
Above (yeguvane literally means at a higher place) there is only ONE VenkaTEShvara. That
which is even beyond (mldidi) the sky (gaganamu) is liberation.

Sakhi He

Mohamaginen

Kuru Yadu

Nirgami