ISSN 0041-3135 RNI No. 25269/57

TRIVENI

(Estd: 1927)

INDIA'S LITERARY AND CULTURAL QUARTERLY

VOL: 93 JAN. - MAR. 2026 No.1 Rs. 100/-

Kathakali, Kerala

TRIVENI

INDIA'S LITERARY & CULTURAL QUARTERLY

VOLUME: 93 JAN.-MAR. 2026 NUMBER: 1

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Printer:
DRUSHYA PUBLICATIONS
30-1596/2, CHANDRAGIRI
COLONY, NEREDMET,
SECUNDERABAD 500056
Cell : 9182036871

Publishers:
Triveni Foundation
4-1-104/1, Street No 3,
Bhavani Nagar, Nacharam
Hyderabad, Telangana 500076
Email: trivenijournal@yahoo.com
Website: trivenijournal.org

Website Developed and Maintained by : Kalyanteja
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From the Editors' Desk

The Rhythms of Tradition and the Melody of Devotion

In this quarter's edition of the *Triveni Journal*, we present a curated journey through the diverse landscape of India's classical performing arts. Each contribution serves as a window into the history, technique, and spiritual essence of traditions that have survived and flourished through centuries of cultural change.

The Order of Exploration

1. **Sattriya Dances of Assam:** The Living Legacy of Devotion and Dance ***By Veda Chowdhury*** *(Editor: Autreyee Ozah)*. We begin our journey in the Vaishnavite monasteries (*sattras*) of Assam. Veda Chowdhury explores how **Sattriya** remained a living practice for centuries, rooted in the 15th-century Bhakti movement led by Srimanta Sankardev. This article highlights the transition of the art from a ritualistic monastic tool for social transformation to a recognized classical form on the global stage.

2. **Embodied Theatre of Kerala: Kathakali *By Anju Aravind.*** A.P Focusing deeper into Kerala, Anju Aravind examines **Kathakali** as a unique synthesis of dance, drama, and music. This piece delves into the "visual grandeur" of the art form, specifically its elaborate *Aharya Abhinaya* (costume and makeup) and the rigorous physical discipline required to transform the actor's body into a canvas of mythic representation.

3. **The Enchanting Legacy of Mohiniyattam *By Anandhu Murali & Sita*** As a lyrical counterpoint, we explore **Mohiniyattam**, the "dance of the enchantress". Anandhu Murali details its essence of *Lasya*—the feminine principle of grace and compassion. The article traces its journey from sacred temple ritual through colonial decline to its modern revival, noting its deep connection to Kerala's natural landscape and *Sopana Sangeetham* music. Anandhu Murali & Sita

4. **Odissi:** When Stone Began to Move ***By Purusottam Sahoo, Ph.D.*** Turning back to the East, Dr. Sahoo offers a personal and scholarly reflection on **Odissi**. He describes the dance as "animate sculpture," drawing direct links between the *tribhangi* (three-bend) postures seen on the stage and the ancient stone carvings of the Konark Sun Temple. This article captures the endurance of embodied knowledge from ancient Sanskrit texts to the modern global stage.

5. ***Role of Music in Kuchipudi Dance By Mruduravali Darbha*** *(Research Guide: Dr. K Saraswathi Vasudev)* Finally, we ground

these explorations in the essential element that binds them all: music. Focusing on **Kuchipudi**, Mruduravali Darbha explains how music provides the rhythmic and melodic framework necessary for *nritta*, *nritya*, and *natya*. This piece highlights the vital coordination between the dancer and the orchestra, reminding us that music is the very essence that makes movement resonate.

6. **Dance Traditions of South India** ***by K. V. Ramachandran, B.A.*** These article earlier published in Triveni in the year 1935 provide a historical perspective of a broad survey of indigenous dance and drama. Ramachandran connects the "dynamic attitudes" of **Kathakali**, the "curves and contours" of **Kuchipudi**, and the beauty of **Yaksha Gana**. His analysis emphasizes the shared identity in basic techniques across these diverse systems, illustrating how they derive from a common classical heritage.

As editors, we hope this collection inspires a deeper appreciation for the meticulous discipline and spiritual devotion that define our classical heritage.

Shvia Krishna Swaroop & **Tripti Sanwal**
Guest Editors,

Triveni Journal
Jan.-Mar. 2026
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SATTRIYA DANCES OF ASSAM: THE LIVING LEGACY OF DEVOTION AND DANCE

Veda Chowdhury*
Editor: Autreyee Ozah

Among India's classical dance traditions, Sattriya occupies a distinctive place — not because it emerged from obscurity, but because it never did. Long before it found its way to the proscenium stage and cultural festivals, Sattriya existed as a living, disciplined practice within the Vaishnavite monasteries of Assam. Its evolution from ritual expression to recognized classical form is a story shaped by faith, institutional change, and sustained artistic negotiation.

Origins: The Birth of a Devotional Art

Sattriya traces its beginnings to the 15th-16th century Bhakti (devotion) movement in Assam, led by saint-reformer Srimanta Sankardev. Sankardev's vision extended beyond theology; he sought to make spiritual teachings accessible to all. He believed art could serve as a vehicle for spiritual and social transformation and turned to performing arts as a medium of instruction and inspiration. Through his *Ankiya Nats,* or one-act devotional plays, he weave together poetry, music, drama, and dance to narrate episodes from the life of Lord Krishna to communicate the Bhakti philosophy to the common folk.

Within the *sattras,* or Vaishnavite monasteries, that he established, dance

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evolved as an integral component of worship. The very term *Sattriya* derived from *sattra,* reflects this origin, signifying the monastic institutions that preserved and nurtured the art form as a core expressive medium for worship and storytelling.

Dance and music were an act of devotion; a pedagogic tool used by the *Bhokot,* or monks, who performed rhythmic sequences, expressive narratives, and mythological enactments that silently taught spiritual and moral ideals. For more than five hundred years, the dance remained embedded in monastic rituals performed

exclusively by male monks as a part of religious observance. Codified movement patterns, rhythmic cycles and expressive modes were preserved through practice rather than documentation, ensuring continuity without formal dissemination.

From Monastery to Proscenium Stage

For most of its existence, Sattriya remained confined within *sattras*, enmeshed in strict ritual, gender conventions, and devotional purpose. This insular tradition persisted till the late 19th and early 20th centuries, delaying its recognition beyond Assam's spiritual communities.

A significant evolution occurred in the 20th century. Sattriya began journeying out of the *sattras* into public performance spaces. This transposition from sacred to secular did not erase its lineage, but rather broadened its audience and reshaped its presentation without detaching it from spiritual inspiration. By the latter half of the century, the dance began to flourish on the metropolitan stages across India and internationally, performed by both men and women alike.

On November 15, 2000, the recognition of Sattriya as a classical dance form by the Sangeet Natak Akademi marked as a historic moment. The recognition was a formal acknowledgement of the form's antiquity, theoretical grounding, codified

repertoire, and sustained lineage — criteria central to classical status in India.

Movement, Music and Aesthetic Language

At its heart, Sattriya is a composite art balancing restraint and expressiveness. It embodies *nritta* (pure dance), *nritya* (expressive dance), and *natya* (dramatic narrative) aligning with broader Indian classical aesthetics while preserving distinctive regional idioms. Its movement vocabulary balances fluid grace with sculptural precision, often reflecting motifs drawn from nature and Vaishnavite iconography. Its repertoire includes ritualistic sequences such as *Gayan-Bayanar Nach* and *Kharmanar Nach* as well as *Chali, Jhumura, Rajaghoria Chali* and *Nadubhangi*. Each piece blends rhythm, narrative, and expressive nuance.

Training begins with on introduction to *Mati Akharas* (ground exercises) consisting of movement patterns used in performances and pure exercises practiced for flexibility and fitness. There are a total of sixty-four *Mati Akharas.* The dance movements are categorized into Purusar Nach, or Tandava (masculine movement), and Prakritir Nach, or Laasya (feminine movement). Sattriya has its own principles of *Anga-Pratyanga* (body movements), *Dhrishtibhed* (eye movements), and *Gribabhed* (neck movements). In addition to traditional principles passed down through generations of celibate monks, Sattriya encompasses principles from *Natya Shastra, Abhinaya Darpana*, *Srihastamuktavali* and *Sangita Ratnakara*.

Music plays a vital role in shaping Sattriya's emotional and rhythmic framework. Traditional performances rely heavily on *Borgeet*, the devotional compositions of Srimanta Sankardev and his disciple Sri Sri Madhavdev. These songs, set to classical ragas, are accompanied by the resonant *Khol* drum, whose distinctive tonal quality anchors Sattriya's rhythmic structure. Additionally, *Taal* (cymbals), flute, and vocal accompaniment complete the ensemble. In contemporary presentations, instruments such as violin and harmonium are used, expanding the sonic range while respecting the classical sensibilities.

Costume forms another layer of aesthetic expression and is made from As-

sam's *pat* silk. Dancers wear traditional ensembles, *dhoti* and *sador* for men and *ghuri* (skirt) and *sador* for women, accentuated with Assamese jewelry. The visual economy of Sattriya reinforces its inward focus, directing attention to *Bhakti* rather than embellishments.

Exponents and Contributions

The evolution of Sattriya from monasteries to the proscenium and then being recognized as a classical dance form owes much to the dedication of exponents like Guru Rasheswar Saikia Barbayan, Nrityacharya Jatin Goswami, Bayanacharya Ghankanta Bora Muktiyar, and Guru Sri Pradip Chaliha to name a few. Their lifelong commitment to teaching, systematizing training methods, expanding performance contexts, choreography, and institutional advocacy played a crucial role in shaping modern Sattriya pedagogy. In later decades, revered artists like Guru Indira P.P. Bora brought Sattriya into national and international performance circuits, combining rigorous training with artistic innovation. Alongside dancers, musicians, particularly Khol players, have been indispensable in preserving the form's rhythmic and musical integrity. Their contributions underscore the collaborative nature of Sattriya as a living tradition.

Debates Around Identity and Adaptation

With classical recognition and visibility, debates have emerged around the authenticity, adaptation, and the very notion of "classicism." Scholars and practitioners continue to examine how Sattriya should negotiate the tension between purity and performative adaptation. *Does the shift from monastery to stage risk diluting its spiritual essence, or does it ensure survival in a changing cultural landscape? How much innovation is permissible within a*

form so deeply anchored in living religious practice? These discussions probe how cultural identity, performance practice, and heritage preservation intersect in a rapidly modernizing context.

Rather than signaling a crisis, these debates reflect Sattriya's vitality. They reveal a form actively engaging with its own history, negotiating continuity and change with deliberation and care.

A Tradition Still Unfolding

Sattriya's story is not one of revival from extinction, but of endurance, transformation, and artistic resilience. It has survived because it remained meaningful – first as devotion, then as art, and now as cultural heritage while charting new directions in performance and pedagogy. As prestigious national and international stages embrace its elegance today, Sattriya's pulse still echoes in Assam's monasteries, where dance remains a form of prayer.

In tracing Sattriya's journey, one encounters not just a classical dance form, but a philosophy that sees art as a pathway to faith, community, and to continuity across time. Sattriya is not merely performed; it is lived.

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About the Author

Veda Chowdhury (Vedajyoti) is a dance artist and choreographer trained in the classical traditions of Sattriya and Bharatnatyam. An empanelled artiste of Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), she has performed at mainstream venues and festivals across India, Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States. She conceptualized the "Sattriya Heritage Project", an initiative that revived and foregrounded traditional and lesser-known instruments such as Sarinda and Assamese Mridanga, through collaborations with leading musicians in the field, enriching the music repertoire. Veda received extensive training in Sattriya from Padma Bhushan Nritacharya Jatin Goswami, Padmasri Guru Indira P.P. Bora (Sattriya and Bharatanatyam), and Guru Bhuban Bora. She also studied Bharatanatyam under Sangeet Natak Akademi Award recipients Guru M. V. Narasimhachari and M. Vasanthalakshmi.

Triveni Journal
Jan.-Mar. 2026
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EMBODIED THEATRE OF KERALA: AN OVER VIEW OF KATHAKALI'S HISTORY, TECHNIQUE, AND ABHINAYA PRACTICE.

Anju Aravind*

Introduction

Kathakali, one of the principal classical dance traditions of India, originated in the southern state of Kerala and represents a unique synthesis of dance, drama, and music. As a highly stylized theatrical form, it is renowned for its elaborate Aharya Abhinaya (expressive use of costume and makeup), which contributes to the creation of a larger-than-life visual spectacle. This aspect of visual grandeur, combined with the precise coordination of movement, gesture, and expression, establishes Kathakali as one of the most visually striking performance traditions in the Indian classical canon.

A distinguishing feature of Kathakali lies in its meticulous use of color, makeup, and costume design to demarcate diverse character types, moral codes, and emotional states. Each color and costume element carries symbolic significance, thereby transforming the actor's body into a dynamic canvas of dramatic representation. Two major stylistic traditions prevail within Kathakali practice today: the *Kalluvazhi* style, known for its disciplined structure and refinement, and the *Kaplingadan* style, characterized by its vigor and spontaneity. These styles not only reflect regional pedagogical lineages but also signify philosophical approaches to performance and interpretation.

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The training of a Kathakali performer is rooted in the physical discipline of Kalaripayattu[1], the traditional martial art of Kerala, which lays the foundation for bodily control, flexibility, and endurance. This preparatory phase is essential for mastering the rigorous physical vocabulary intrinsic to the form. The narrative content of Kathakali is communicated through a complex system of codified gestures and facial expressions, forming an embodied language of Natyadharmi expression. The performer's ability to integrate these gestures with internal emotional states—defined as Satvika Abhinaya—demonstrates the synthesis of body and mind central to the aesthetics of Kathakali.

Historical references

Krishnanattam and *Ramanattam* served as direct precursors to Kathakali- the initial references that is developed during the 17th century. A Sanskrit dance-drama Krishnanattam was created by Zamorin of Calicut, Manaveda. He created Krishna Geeti, the literature for the performance elaborating the story of Lord Krishna's life episodes. In response to the socio- political circumstances, the Krishnanattam team was settled in Guruvayoor temple and performed only in the temple premises.

The refusal of the Zamorin of Calicut to send his troupe to perform in the court of Veera Kerala Varma, the Kottarakkara Thampuran, ignited an urge in him to create a similar way of storytelling. He composed a new series of plays inspired by the Hindu epic Ramayana, and rendered them in *Manipravalam*, a highly Sanskritized form of Malayalam. These plays, collectively titled Ramanattam, quickly became popular among Malayalam-speaking audiences. It was performed not just within the sacred confines of temples but also in the courtyards of the Tharavadu-s, marking a significant departure from court- and temple-bound traditions to a more publicly accessible performance culture.

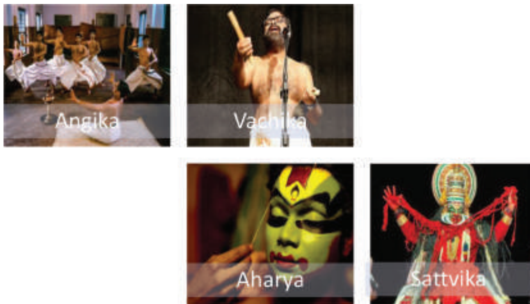
Kathakali Institutions

The earlier centre for Kathakali teaching is Kerala Kalamandalam, situated in Cheruthuruthi, Kerala. In 1930, Vallathol Narayana Menon established this institute to save this artform from extinction during the early 20th century, the period of Renaissance in India. Vallathol, with the support of Mukunda Raja envisioned the institute. It began in the traditional gurukula system. Later it was taken over

1 *It is a martial artform of Kerala, Uzhichil (the massage) of the entire body tend to be the initial stage to make the body supple and strong.*

by the political powers and implemented the institution- oriented syllabus system.

During the inception of this institute, various teachers associated are Pattikkanthodi Ravunni Menon, Kunju Kurup, Kavalappara Narayanan Nair to train the actors, Samikutty Bhagavatar and Venkatakrishna Bhagavatar in the lessons of singing, Moothamana Namboodiri for Chenda and Venkichhen and Madhava Warrier for Maddalam. Other institutions came into existence in the late 1930s to propagate this tradition are P. S. V. Natysangham in Kottakkal (1939), Unnayi Varier Smaraka Kalanilayam in Irinjalakuda (1955), International centre for Kathakali (1975).

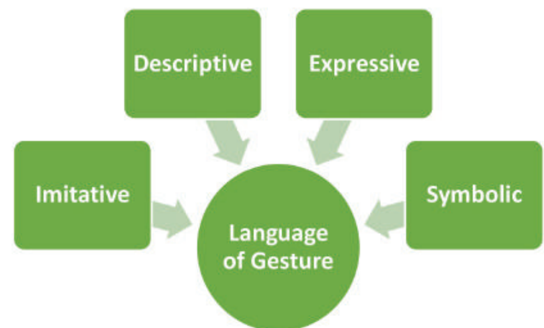


Techniques and Training

Kathakali techniques can be understood through the four- fold abhinaya system explained in Natya Shastra. That are Angika, Vachika, Aharya and Sattvika abhinaya-s.

Angika abhinaya

Angika abhinaya pertains to the entire body and its practices. It includes the actor's adavukal[2], facial expressions, gestural language and the postures. The early training methods of Kathakali were shaped by the influence of Kalaripayattu, as many of the first practitioners of Kathakali came from this martial art tradition. They adapted and modified Kalaripayattu techniques for use in Kathakali dance drama. The gestural vocabulary of Kathakali draws largely from the Hasthalakshana Deepika, which details twenty-four foundational hand gestures essential to its storytelling. M. K. K. Nair has contributed important studies classifying the 'language of gesture' that has evolved through Kathakali's practice, providing insight into its nuanced physical expression.



He says, "Imitative- where the actor imitates what he describes namely, elephant, lion, deer, snake, flower etc; Descrip-

2 The fundamental movements of the body.

tive- where fire, river, mountain, city, or house etc. are described to the audience in such a way that they can also see all of them through the actor's eyes; Expressive- where different moods embodying courtesy, arrogance, anger, impatience, contempt, mirth etc. are expressed; and Symbolic- where symbolic gestures are employed to convey God, Destiny, Heaven, Hell, Salvation, Sin, Ecstasy, etc (5-6)".

Kathakali is particularly renowned for 'Netrabhinaya,' a sophisticated storytelling technique achieved solely through the expressive movements of the eyes. Kannu Sadhakam- a specialized training in Netrabhinaya forms a fundamental part of Kathakali pedagogy. Through this training the students learn to move their eyes independently and with precision, mastering a broad spectrum of emotions and dramatic nuances.

Control and flexibility in eye movement are cultivated through rigorous exercises, enabling performers to communicate complex narratives and emotional states with remarkable clarity, even without words. The origins of Kannu Sadhakam can be traced to Koodiyattam training methods. Many experts emphasize that such training not only hones the physical technique, but also enhances mental discipline and concentration, allowing actors to convey stories to connoisseurs solely through the subtle language of the eyes.

Vachika Abhinaya

The accompanying artists in Kathakali, known as Ponnani[3] and Shankidi[4] provide essential vocal support for the performance. Both the singers use hand-held instruments like the Chengila[5] and the Ilathalam[6] which punctuate and maintain the rhythm throughout the enactment.

Kathakali sangeetham is a music tradition grounded in Kerala's indigenous musical system and temple art heritage. characterized by its emotive, slow-paced singing and use of specific ragas. The narrative texts known as Attakatha, are performed by musicians in the form of Slokams (verses) and Padams (lyrical sections) during the play. The style is primarily influenced by Sopana Sangeetham - a slow, devotional genre rooted in temple singing. The contemporary Kathakali music incorporates the elements Karnataka Sangeetham reflecting its recent stylistic blending and innovation.

Aharya Abhinaya

The aharya tradition of Kathakali draws significant inspiration from the ritual-

3 The lead singer

4 An assistant singer

5 A bell-metal disc or gong

6 Small cymbal

istic performance art of Kerala known as Theyyam, incorporating elements of its vivid visual style and dramatic ornamentation. In Kathakali, characters are grouped and distinguished by distinct colors such as green, red, black, white, that symbolize the moral qualities and intrinsic nature of each role in the narrative, providing the audience with visual cues to a character's identity. For example, the names of the various characters are Paccha, Minukk, Kari, Katti, and Thadi. The classification of these characters is given below which provides an insight into the nature of them.

The aesthetics of Kathakali is rooted in the Kerala tradition, that translates in the words of Leela Venkataraman is “Of the five cosmic elements, Kathakali is pre-eminently evolved with two- the totally empty stage symbolising akasha or

Character	Make up	Representation	Example
Paccha	Green	Symbolises virtue and nobility of the characters	Krishna, Rama Bhimay, Arjuna Indra, Karna
Minukk	Shining	The female characters symbolise the gentleness and hight spiritual qualities.	Damayanthi, Mohini, Sita, Rishi, Narada Vyasa
Kari	Black	The female demoness characters.	Hidimbi, Nakratundi, Simhika
Katti	Knife	Represents arrogant and evil nature.	Duryodhana, Kamsa, Narakasura
Tadi	Beard	The great monkey chiefs of Ramayana. • Chuvanna thadi (red beard). • Karutha thadi (black beard). • Velutha thadi (white beard).	Hanuman, Bali, Sugriva

space, the void from which resonates all sound or 'shabda' provided by the music and drums. The other is agni (fire), which is the burning lamp that is of vital importance on the Kathakali stage" (Venkatraman, 101). Kathakali performances have traditionally been illuminated by a single lamp, known as the Vilakku, which is placed at the front center of the stage. The entire presentation unfolds in the soft, focused glow of this lamp, providing both the only light source for the performance and a sacred atmosphere that deepens the dramatic effect.

Sattvika abhinaya

Sattvika abhinaya forms an integral part of Kathakali, signifying the deep psychological and emotional states evoked by the actors during performance. In Katha-

kali, this aspect is so pronounced that the performers are able to communicate powerful inner emotions, creating an authentic psychological atmosphere on stage. The highest level of sattvika abhinaya is achieved when the actor's internal concentration manifests externally through involuntary physical reactions called the Sattvika bhavas such as trembling, tears, or changes in voice—thus offering audiences a convincing and immersive experience.

The key components contribute to this mode of expression:

Cholliyattam marks the actor's first formal stage performance after initial training. In this sequence, the actor repeats the exact padams and verses sung by the vocalists (Ponnani and Shankidi). *Cholliyattam* provides a space for the actors to showcase their creative interpretation and expressive skill that imbibed from their earlier lessons. Ilakiyattam is an abhinaya segment where the character communicates using the hand gestures, performing without any musical accompaniment and relying entirely on the expressiveness of movement to convey meaning. Pakarnattam is a *Prakaya pravesha*, which can be translated as "entering another's skin" by the actor. This segment involves the actor portraying multiple characters in the narrative, seamlessly transitioning from one role to another such as Narakasura vadham *aattakatha and Shoorpanakangam*. In *Ajakarakapalitham aattkatha*,

the actor enacts multiple characters like Bhimasena, elephant, snake and lion. Therefore, *Pakarnattam* gives space for the Kathakali artists to tap into the various intricacies of abhinaya techniques.

8 types of ritual observed in Kathakali

Musical instruments hold a pivotal role in Kathakali training and performance, functioning as both accompaniment and integral components of dramatic presentation. On stage, a typical Kathakali ensemble features the Chenda[7] the Maddalam[8], Ilathalam[9], Shankh[10], and Idakka[11]

7 A cylindrical drum

8 Barrel-shaped drum

9 Metal cymbals

10 Conch

11 A traditional hour- glass instrument.

During the foundational training sessions known as Sadhakam which take place in the Kalari (practice space), a wooden stick called the "Mutti" is utilized to tap a wooden block, helping students maintain rhythm as they develop their technique. Such early practice with rhythmic tools supports and enhances the actors' abilities from the beginning of their education.

Prior to the main dance-drama, the artist may give an instrumental prelude showcasing mastery over these instruments and their role in setting the mood for the performance. As K. K. Beena observes, this tradition of instrumental accompaniment not only enriches the overall presentation but also acts as a complementary force aiding the actor's expression and storytelling. The eight types of ritual in Kathakali are,

Ritual	Description
Kelikottu	• Its a performance of musical instruments. Announcement of the place and time of performance.
Arannukeli	• The very first performance of the instruments the after the lightening of the ceremonial lamp.
Totayam	• It is a prayer song sung behind the curtain.
Vandana Slokam	• It is a song in praise of gods.
Purappadu	• This song provides the characteristics of the characters on the stage.
Melapadam	• Ashtapadi presentation of the actors with the accompaniment of the instruments.
Kadhabhinayam	• The actual presentation of the story by the Kathakali actors.
Dhanasi	• A dance performed at th end of Kathakali.

Conclusion

Taken together, Kathakali masterfully blends all four aspects of abhinaya- Angika, Vachika, Aharya, and Sattvika. It exemplifies an intricate interplay between visual splendour, performative technique, and spiritual discipline. Its capacity to evoke deep emotional resonance through a codified yet expressive structure underscores its enduring significance within India's performative heritage.

Kathakali has not only preserved its traditional narratives and methods, but also adapted to modern contexts, allowing each generation of artists to expand the range and subtlety of its expressive possibilities.

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Triveni Journal
Jan.-Mar. 2026
Pg. 23-35

THE ENCHANTING LEGACY OF MOHINIYATTAM: FROM TEMPLE RITUAL TO GLOBAL STAGE

Anandhu Murali* and Sita

Introduction

Mohiniyattam, the graceful classical dance style of Kerala, occupies a unique and esteemed position within the rich tapestry of India's cultural and artistic legacy. Frequently referred to as the "dance of the enchantress," it captures the aesthetic and philosophical essence of Lasya, the feminine aspect representing beauty, compassion, and expressive refinement. Emerging from the temple traditions of Kerala, Mohiniyattam was historically perceived not just as a form of entertainment, but as a sacred act of devotion and spirituality. Through its elaborate movements and expressive storytelling, it acted as a bridge connecting humanity and the divine. The fundamental principles of this art form can be traced back to the Natya Shastra, the ancient Sanskrit text on performing arts, which views dance as a transcendent medium that elevates both the performer and the audience beyond the physical realm.

Over time, Mohiniyattam transformed by incorporating the indigenous cultural elements of Kerala, its temple practices, poetic literature, and musical traditions, especially Sopana Sangeetham. This blending created a unique aesthetic language marked by gentle movements, flowing gestures, and expressive eyes that communicate emotions with extraordinary finesse. The dance reflects the tranquil beauty of Kerala's environment, the rhythmic swaying of palm trees, the peaceful flow of rivers, and the gentle wave of backwaters, turning these natural elements into visual poetry.

Nonetheless, during the colonial era, the art form faced decline as Western moral values misunderstood its spiritual and devotional significance. The cultural

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revival of the 20th century, led by reformers like Vallathol Narayana Menon and Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma, restored Mohiniyattam to its rightful prominence as a symbol of Kerala's artistic resilience and cultural pride. In contemporary times, Mohiniyattam goes beyond its identification as a traditional dance style to embody a living philosophy, one that seamlessly combines tradition and modernity, intellect and emotion, individuality and universality. It continues to enchant audiences globally, standing as a lasting emblem of grace and as a mirror of Kerala's cultural essence.

Historical Background

The historical development of Mohiniyattam parallels the wider cultural evolution of Kerala. Originating in the spiritual and artistic traditions of temple worship, this dance form evolved into an act of devotion that seamlessly blended movement, music, and mysticism. Early visual and literary documentation of performances resembling Mohiniyattam can be traced back to the medieval era. Temple carvings at locations like Thrikodithanam, Kidangoor, and Tripunithura illustrate elegant female figures in dynamic yet graceful poses, indicating the sacred and artistic elements of dance in ritualistic practices. These depictions not only highlight artistic sophistication but also symbolise a deep integration of dance into the essence of divine worship.

By the sixteenth century, writings such as Vyavaharamala highlighted the presence of female dancers who enjoyed the support of royalty, signifying that Mohiniyattam had gained recognition as both a temple and courtly art form. The dance reached its peak during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under the progressive patronage of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma of Travancore. A noted composer, poet, and arts patron, Swathi Thirunal expanded the Mohiniyattam repertoire by creating numerous padams and varnams in Manipravalam, a literary style merging Sanskrit and Malayalam. His court became a lively cultural

hub where sacred dance evolved into a polished artistic experience, harmonising devotion with artistic elegance.

However, the onset of British colonial rule brought forth new social and moral contexts that led to the sidelining of various traditional performing arts. The enforcement of Victorian values misconstrued the sacred nature of temple dances, labelling them as socially and morally dubious. This resulted in the withdrawal of support and the slow decline of temple-centred performance traditions. Despite these challenges, Mohiniyattam persisted in the private domains of a few practitioners and within Kerala's shared cultural heritage. Its survival through such periods of adversity demonstrates not only the resilience of the art form but also the region's lasting dedication to maintaining its spiritual and artistic identity.

Etymology and Conceptual Foundation

The designation Mohiniyattam is derived from two terms in Malayalam: Mohini, signifying "the enchantress" or "divine temptress," and Attam, which translates to "dance" or "rhythmic movement." Taken literally, it means "the dance of the enchantress," a phrase that encapsulates the alluring charm and ethereal elegance of feminine grace. In Hindu mythology, Mohini serves as the sole female incarnation of Lord Vishnu, whose divine beauty and wisdom were utilised to restore cosmic balance. This mythological element resonates profoundly within the philosophical underpinnings of Mohiniyattam, framing the dancer as a representation of divine energy (Shakti), a power that enchants, transforms, and uplifts the spirit.

Philosophically, Mohiniyattam is grounded in the Lasya tradition described in the Natya Shastra. Lasya embodies the soft, graceful, and expressive aspects of dance, standing in contrast to Tandava, the intense and masculine counterpart associated with Lord Shiva. Within this context, Mohiniyattam symbolises the victory of grace over strength and sentiment over skill, rendering it a spiritual metaphor for equilibrium and harmony. Each performance manifests inner serenity, where physical movement and emotional expression converge to reflect the divine feminine essence.

An essential aspect of Mohiniyattam's conceptual framework is its inherent connection to music and poetry. The dance is accompanied by Sopana Sangeetham, a traditional musical system native to Kerala, whose slow, rising notes mimic

the gradual ascent of temple steps (sopanam), symbolising spiritual elevation. The lyrical compositions, often crafted in Manipravalam, a blend of Sanskrit and Malayalam, enhance the performance's poetic and emotional facets. Consequently, Mohiniyattam transcends its role as a simple dance form to become a comprehensive philosophical experience that harmonises rhythm, movement, melody, and spirituality. Each gesture and expression unfolds like a stanza of visual poetry, encapsulating Kerala's deep aesthetic sensitivity and cultural consciousness.

The Colonial Period and Decline

The establishment of British colonial rule in the nineteenth century initiated a significant upheaval for India's classical art forms, particularly Mohiniyattam. Colonial officials and Christian missionaries, influenced by the stringent moral standards of Victorian society, misinterpreted performing arts rooted in temples as immoral and debauched. They linked these practices to the devadasi system and regarded them as vestiges of "pagan" culture that were not worthy of inclusion in the modern colonial framework.

This misunderstanding was further solidified through contemporary publications such as The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood (1901), which depicted temple dancers as symbols of societal and moral degradation. As a result, initiatives like the British-led "Anti-Nautch" campaign aimed to eliminate temple dancing. While there was no explicit legislation targeting Mohiniyattam, the collective impact of colonial moral supervision and widespread social rejection brought the tradition dangerously close to extinction.

During this time, performers experienced a loss of both social standing and traditional support, leading many to forsake their art. Nevertheless, despite such intense suppression, the dance did not completely disappear. A small number of women, especially from the Nair community, continued to practice Mohiniyattam privately, thereby ensuring that its core elements and techniques remained in memory. This era, although characterised by decline, inadvertently set the stage for cultural reflection and reform. The adversities posed by colonialism would eventually fuel a renewed interest in the early twentieth century, transforming Mohiniyattam from a sidelined practice into a rejuvenated emblem of Kerala's cultural identity.

The Modern Revival and Transformation

The early years of the twentieth century signalled a notable revival in Kerala's

cultural scene, initiating a new era in the development of Mohiniyattam. As the Indian nationalist movement gained momentum, thinkers and artists began to reclaim native traditions that had been sidelined during colonial rule. This era saw a deliberate attempt to restore the respect and authenticity of classical Indian arts, framing them as essential reflections of cultural identity and spiritual heritage. In this milieu, Mohiniyattam underwent a significant renaissance that reinterpreted its role in contemporary cultural consciousness.

Vallathol Narayana Menon

Kerala Kalamandalam

An essential figure in this renaissance was Vallathol Narayana Menon, a distinguished poet and nationalist intellectual who established Kerala Kalamandalam in 1930. This institution became the leading centre for the preservation and promotion of Kerala's classical performing arts, especially Kathakali and Mohiniyattam. Under Vallathol's insightful guidance, Mohiniyattam was redefined as an esteemed art form, cleansed of colonial biases and reintegrated into India's cherished aesthetic traditions. His initiatives transformed the dance from a previously marginalised practice into a representation of Kerala's artistic fortitude and cultural pride.

Building on this groundwork, Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma significantly contributed to the modern framework of Mohiniyattam. Universally recognised as the "Mother of Mohiniyattam," she established standardised techniques, formalised its teaching methods, and enhanced its expressive language.

Through her careful research and instruction at Kerala Kalamandalam, she highlighted the lyrical, emotive, and spiritual aspects that characterise the Lasya tradition. Her students, including Mukundraja, Appiradeh Krishna Panicker, and Thankamony, further developed the art form, broadening its appeal to both national and international audiences.

In present times, Mohiniyattam embodies a seamless blend of tradition and innovation. While it remains firmly anchored in its devotional roots, the art form has evolved to resonate with contemporary audiences through varied themes and choreographic creativity. It continues to serve as both a classical discipline and a cultural philosophy reflecting Kerala's lasting spirit of artistic excellence and its capacity to adapt while maintaining its traditions.

Repertoire and Aesthetic Grammar

The repertoire of Mohiniyattam follows a classical framework akin to Bharatanatyam, yet it sets itself apart through its soft rhythm, lyrical articulation, and reflective nature. In contrast to other Indian classical dance forms that focus on vigorous technique and theatrical energy, Mohiniyattam is renowned for its meditative elegance and profound emotional resonance. Each performance unfolds as a poetic and spiritual odyssey, progressively moving from invocation to expressive climax while merging rhythm (tala), melody (raga), and narrative (abhinaya) into a cohesive artistic experience.

The traditional performance sequence commences with Cholkettu, an invocatory piece dedicated to Goddess Bhagavati, the divine manifestation of feminine power. This introductory work establishes the devotional atmosphere of the performance, intertwining rhythmic syllables (jathis), precise hand gestures (mudras), and synchronised movements that align the dancer's body with the rhythmic accompaniment.

Next, Jatiswaram offers a purely technical examination of rhythm and motion. In this segment, the dancer showcases control, symmetry, and precision through intricate rhythmic sequences and graceful transitions without narrative components.

The centrepiece of the performance is the Varnam, recognised as the most detailed and emotionally intense part of the repertoire. It merges nritta (pure dance) and abhinaya (expressive portrayal) to articulate themes of devotion, affection, and spiritual longing. The Varnam acts as both a measure of endurance and a medium for storytelling, reflecting the danc-

er's technical skill and emotional depth.

Following this, the Padam delivers a lyrical and introspective portrayal of emotion (bhava), frequently depicting devotional or romantic feelings through subtle gestures and delicate facial expressions. This segment exemplifies the essence of Lasya's gentleness, fluidity, and emotional nuance. The performance generally concludes with the Tillana, an upbeat and rhythmically complex composition celebrating artistic accomplishment and joy. The swift yet graceful motions of this final piece evoke a sense of closure and spiritual release. Additional items such as Shlokam and Saptam, which consist of hymnic verses in homage to deities, enrich the devotional atmosphere and reinforce the sacred nature of the performance.

The aesthetic allure of Mohiniyattam resides in its inherent fluidity and restraint. The dancer adopts a softly rounded posture, with feet turned outward, slightly bent knees, and a torso that moves in smooth, circular motions. These movements, often likened to the gentle swaying of palm leaves or the flowing waters of Kerala's backwaters, symbolise tranquillity and natural rhythm. Every gesture, be it of the eyes, hands, or body, embodies elegance and moderation, elevating Mohiniyattam into a visual meditation on beauty, devotion, and emotional peace.

Costume and Expressive Aesthetics

Kerala's refined elegance and cultural simplicity are reflected in Mohiniyattam's costumes and aesthetics. The traditional clothing perfectly complements the lyrical and spiritual nature of the dance by embodying purity, restraint, and sophistication. In keeping with Kerala's rich fashion history, dancers typically don an ivory or off-white sari with a wide golden Kasavu border. A matching blouse and a golden belt that highlights the torso's rhythmic movements complete the look. During movement, a pleated fan fastened to the front of the sari opens elegantly, extending the fluidity of the dance visually.

Jewellery in Mohiniyattam is characterised by a subtle yet sophisticated design, usually featuring gold pieces that embellish the neck, ears, and wrists. These decorations elevate the dancer's grace without overshadowing the expressiveness of her movements or facial expressions. Traditionally, hair is styled into a bun on one side of the head, embellished with fresh jasmine flowers, which symbolise purity and feminine elegance.

The makeup is simple and natural, fo-

cusing on the eyes with kohl to accentuate the nuances of abhinaya (expression). In contrast to more ornate classical styles like Kathakali, Mohiniyattam consciously steers clear of elaborate masks, heavy embellishments, or vibrant colours. Its aesthetic core centres on subtlety, tranquillity, and emotional richness. The dancer's capacity to express deep feelings through soft movements and subtle expressions, instead of grandiosity or spectacle, highlights the art form's philosophical focus on inner beauty and elegance.

The resurgence and ongoing significance of Mohiniyattam can be attributed significantly to a group of visionary artists whose commitment transformed the form from a declining ritual into a globally acknowledged artistic tradition. Each of these trailblazers made distinct contributions to the safeguarding, pedagogy, and advancement of Mohiniyattam, securing its transmission through generations as both an artistic and spiritual practice.

Torchbearers of Mohiniyattam: Guardians of Grace and Revival

Thottasseri Chinnammu Amma is recognised as one of the first modern practitioners of Mohiniyattam. As a faculty member at Kerala Kalamandalam, she dedicated several decades to the instruction and enhancement of the dance. Her efforts were formally acknowledged when she became the inaugural recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Mohiniyattam, highlighting her substantial role in establishing the art form's legitimacy in post-independence India.

Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma, honoured as the "Mother of Mohiniyattam," had an unparalleled influence on the contemporary identity of the dance. As a dancer, educator, and scholar, she systematised its techniques, organised its repertoire, and redefined its theoretical foundations. Through her teaching at Kerala Kalamandalam, she rejuvenated Mohiniyattam, restoring it as a dignified and intellectually esteemed art form. Her legacy endures through her students and the aesthetic principles she established, which continue to be essential to current practice.

Dr Kanak Rele, a notable performer, theorist, and academic, advanced Mohiniyattam to a recognised institutional and scholarly status. As the founder of the Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya in Mumbai, she developed a theoretical framework based on Lasya and Natya Shastra, providing the form with academic credibility and pedagogical structure. Her research and choreographic innovations significantly broadened Mohiniyattam's possible interpretations and secured its acknowledgement in both national and international dance scholarship.

Bharati Shivaji, the Founder-Director of the Centre for Mohiniyattam in New Delhi, has been vital in promoting the art form outside Kerala. Through her performances, research, and innovative choreographies, she has maintained classical integrity while integrating modern themes, thus expanding the aesthetic and expressive scope of the tradition.

Sunanda Nair, a distinguished disciple of Dr Kanak Rele, was the first individual in India to obtain a master's degree in Mohiniyattam. Well-known for her elegant technique and emotional expressiveness, she serves as a bridge between the classical heritage of Mohiniyattam and its contemporary academic exploration, motivating a new cohort of performers and scholars.

Dr Methil Devika, a modern dancer and scholar, has made significant inroads through her experimental choreography and academic writings. Her work delves into topics such as womanhood, ecology, and spirituality, all while rooted in the dance's traditional aesthetics, thus enhancing its cultural and intellectual significance.

Gopika Varma, renowned for her exquisite abhinaya and compositional sensitivity, has gained international acclaim for her performances. Her artistic expression reflects a deep spiritual connection and illustrates the global appeal of Mohiniyattam's lyrical essence.

Jayaprabha Menon is another prominent practitioner celebrated for her expertise in rhythm and expression. Through her teaching and performances, she has been essential in passing on the tradition to younger generations and in sustaining its artistic vitality.

Dr Neena Prasad, the first to receive the Nritya Kalanidhi award for Mohiniyattam from the Madras Music Academy, has contributed to the contemporary interpretation of the dance by blending classicism with innovation in her performances and scholarship.

Kalamandalam Kshemavathy, an esteemed performer and educator, is recognised for her profound abhinaya and her commitment to guiding numerous disciples. Her unwavering dedication to preserving the spiritual essence of Mohiniyattam has earned her great respect within the Indian classical dance community.

Together, these illustrious figures represent the living lineage of Mohiniyattam. Their artistry, scholarship, and commitment have ensured that the "dance of the enchantress" continues to progress while remaining true to its philosophical foundation of grace, spirituality, and aesthetic harmony.

Male Mohiniyattam Artists

- RLV Ramakrishnan
- Dr. Abu
- Thomas Vo Van Tao

Institutes that Offer Mohiniyattam Degree Courses

College of Music and Fine Arts, Ernakulam.Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit (SSUS), Kalady Kerala Kalamandalam (Deemed to be University for Art and Culture), Vallathol Nagar, Thrissur District.

The Sopanam Style and Kavalam Narayana Panicker's Contribution

The transformation of Mohiniyattam into a unique classical art form in Kerala is significantly attributed to the imaginative foresight and intellectual contributions of Kavalam Narayana Panicker. His influence reshaped the aesthetic and musical characteristics of the dance, solidifying its place within the cultural and spiritual milieu of Kerala. Panicker acknowledged the profound connection between the movement vocabulary of Mohiniyattam and the traditional musical style of Sopana Sangeetham, which is a temple-oriented melodic system vital to Kerala's devotional practices.

In contrast to other classical Indian dances that primarily rely on the structured elements of Carnatic music, Sopana Sangeetham presents a more natural and fluid musicality, defined by its gradual elevation, lyrical depth, and spiritual resonance. Panicker articulated this integration through the concept of Thouryathrikam, representing the convergence of Geetha (music), Vadya (instrumental rhythm), and Nritta (dance movement). He posited that this triadic synergy constitutes the aesthetic and spiritual foundation of Kerala's performing arts.

During a period when Mohiniyattam was frequently regarded outside Kerala as merely an offshoot of Bharatanatyam,

Panicker made it his mission to restore its regional integrity. He noted that much of the repertoire taught in institutions such as Kerala Kalamandalam had integrated Carnatic pieces and rhythmic patterns sourced from Bharatanatyam, leading to a gradual loss of Mohiniyattam's intrinsic character. Through his extensive research and experimentation, Panicker reinstated Sopana Sangeetham as the underlying musical basis of the form, thereby revitalising its local rhythm and emotional depth.

Utilising Kerala's traditional percussion instruments, particularly the Edakka, noted for its delicate tonal variations, Panicker highlighted the natural relationship between sound and movement. His compositions conjured a musicality that reflected the gentle flow of Kerala's landscape, fostering an instinctive connection among the performer, music, and audience.

Drawing from the region's oral traditions, ritual theatre, and temple music, Panicker broadened the expressive range of Mohiniyattam while maintaining its devotional essence. His reinterpretation elevated the dance from one influenced by external sources to a genuine representation of Kerala's cultural identity. In this way, he reaffirmed Mohiniyattam's status as an art form rooted in local aesthetics, where movement, rhythm, and melody converge to embody the spiritual spirit of the land.

Cultural Significance in the Contemporary World

In the twenty-first century, Mohiniyattam has moved beyond its traditional regional and ritualistic roots to become a vibrant cultural symbol of both Kerala and India. Originating from temple practices, it has transformed into a refined artistic form that showcases both preservation and evolution. Contemporary artists and researchers have broadened the thematic elements of Mohiniyattam to tack-

le current issues such as environmental sustainability, gender equality, and spiritual awareness, thereby facilitating a significant dialogue between the historical and the present.

Organisations like Kerala Kalamandalam and Natana Kairali have been instrumental in maintaining the art form's vitality by providing structured training, research opportunities, and performance platforms. Their cultural and educational initiatives cultivate new generations of dancers who respect traditional practices while engaging with fresh interpretative approaches. These institutional efforts have guaranteed that Mohiniyattam persists as a living tradition, one that honours its sacred origins while also adapting to contemporary aesthetics and social issues.

The dance's expressive grace has further allowed for successful intercultural collaborations, where artists incorporate global influences while maintaining its classical essence. Through these exchanges, Mohiniyattam has developed into a significant method of cultural diplomacy, showcasing India's intangible heritage on global stages. Its international acclaim highlights its universality as an art form that conveys emotion, spirituality, and beauty across linguistic and cultural divides.

Currently, Mohiniyattam is perceived not only as a classical art form but also as a dynamic cultural narrative that embodies inclusivity, identity, and artistic liberty. It functions as a living continuum of Kerala's aesthetic ideals, one that honours the balance between body and spirit, tradition and innovation, as well as the local and the global.

Conclusion

Mohiniyattam, the enchanting and elegant dance form originating from Kerala, serves today as both a reflection and a symbol of the region's cultural identity. Its historical progression from sacred rituals in temples to stages around the world illustrates not just the evolution of an art form but also the persistent vitality of a civilisation's artistic and spiritual awareness. Grounded in the Lasya tradition, which embodies emotional nuance and feminine elegance, Mohiniyattam goes beyond mere performance to become a significant medium of devotion, identity, and personal expression.

Over its extensive history, the dance has mirrored the rhythm of Kerala's spiritual, social, and artistic milieu. Beginning with its sacred roots in temple spaces, navigating through colonial upheavals that nearly silenced it, and reach-

ing a renaissance in the twentieth century spearheaded by visionaries like Vallathol Narayana Menon and Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma, Mohiniyattam has persistently evolved while retaining its essence. The efforts of later practitioners, such as Dr Kanak Rele, Bharati Shivaji, Methil Devika, and others, have maintained its relevance by fusing rigorous tradition with creative interpretation.

Equally significant was the incorporation of Sopana Sangeetham by Kavalam Narayana Panicker, which reestablished Mohiniyattam's ties to its local musical and spiritual heritage. His innovative approach enriched the art form with a distinctly regional essence, reaffirming its authenticity among the wide array of classical dance traditions in India.

In modern times, Mohiniyattam surpasses its local and cultural boundaries to express universal themes of elegance, femininity, and inner peace. Its movements reflect the poetry of the natural world, while its expressions convey an intimate connection between the soul and the divine. As a dynamic art form, Mohiniyattam continues to embody Kerala's enduring rhythm of beauty, spirituality, and resilience, maintaining the delicate balance between tradition and evolution that characterises the heart of Indian classical dance.

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Triveni Journal
Jan.-Mar. 2026
Pg. 36-49

ODISSI - When Stone Began to Move

From a Boy in 1970 to a Dance That Conquered the World

Dr. Purusottam Sahoo, Ph.D.*

SECTION I

Kharagpur, 1970

Some performances linger in our memories for a long time. But then, there are those rare moments that fundamentally change the way we think about memory itself.

In January 1970, the Indian Science Congress was held at IIT Kharagpur, transforming the campus into an energetic hub of intellect, national pride, and cultural festivity. I was just a middle schooler then—too young to fully appreciate the brilliance of the attending scientists and too innocent to grasp the beauty of classical dance.

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But on that specific evening, none of that really mattered. As the audience buzzed with excitement over the country's intellectual achievements, a graceful figure made her way onto the stage. Her name was **Sanjukta Panigrahi**.

At that moment, I had no idea that she was on the path to becoming one of the foremost exponents of Odissi, a dance tradition with roots deep in Indian history. I didn't understand that her mentor, **Kelucharan Mohapatra**, was key to reviving this ancient art form from near extinction. Concepts like "*tribhangi*" were foreign to me, as well as the rhythmic sounds sounding in the auditorium, which came from a *mardala*—a term I hadn't yet learned.

What I did feel was the change in the atmosphere; it was perceptible. The audience became silent when she stepped onto the stage. Her foot struck the floor

perfectly in sync with the mardala, her torso bent gracefully, and her chin raised just so—one hip shifting in an effortlessly fluid yet meticulous movement.

She felt like more than merely a dancer; she seemed like an animate sculpture. She then began to move. The contradiction in her form—the stillness combined with motion—has lingered in my mind all these years, a memory etched in my memory. Even as a young boy, I couldn't explain why I was so captivated. There were simply no words that could adequately describe what I witnessed.

But something in the way she carried herself—the pauses, the tension and release—appeared timeless, as if I were watching not just a dance, but time itself bending and shaping before me.

Years later, while I stood before the magnificent stone walls of Konark, I would recognize the iconic forms that originally captivated me back in that auditorium. But in 1970, I was just a boy, sitting wide-eyed in the darkness, where a trace of appreciation for art and culture had been sown deep in me.

SECTION II

Before Odissi Had a Name

Long before I saw it shown beneath stage lights, the dance I witnessed had lived many lives. Indian classical dance does not begin with applause; it begins with an invocation.

Over two thousand years ago, around 200 BCE, the Natya Shastra, attributed to Bharata Muni, codified the grammar of performance, including gesture, rhythm, expression, and stagecraft. It portrayed dance not merely as entertainment but as a sacred form of communication. The text called it the "Fifth Veda," emphasizing its accessibility to everyone.

Dance in ancient India served several purposes:

- It was a ceremony.
- It provided moral education.
- It embodied mythology.
- It expressed an emotional philosophy.
- It served as a bridge between the mortal and the divine.

Temple walls across the subcontinent, dating from the 2nd century onward,

depict dancers in recognizable postures that are still used today. Odissi, a classical dance form, would emerge from this vast river of tradition, with its character shaped particularly by the region of Odisha.

The Language of Odissi

Tribhangi — Three bends: head, torso, hip

Chauka — Square stance symbolizing stability

Abhinaya — Expressive storytelling

Mudra — Codified hand gesture

Mardala — Percussion instrument central to Odissi rhythm

SECTION III

Where Temples Taught the Body

The history of Odissi is closely linked to temple worship. Its earliest references appear in ancient Sanskrit texts, such as the *Natya Shastra*, and its visual legacy is evident in the stone carvings of the temples of Konark and Puri. As temple traditions declined during colonial rule and amid changing social structures, young boys known as Gotipuas took on the responsibility of preserving this art form, often performing in costumes traditionally worn by female dancers.

The lineage of Odissi endured because it held spiritual significance, rather than just social importance. Years after an evening at IIT Kharagpur, I stood in front of the very carvings at Konark.

There it was:

- The same curved spine,
- The same tilted hip,
- The same poised peace before motion.

The temple walls were not merely decorative; they were choreographic manuscripts. The tribhangi — the three-bend posture of the head, torso, and hip — appears in stone centuries before it appears under stage lights, as illustrated in the carvings of the Konark Sun Temple.

This connection to ancient sculpture can evoke both awe and interest in Odissi's timeless legacy.

The chauka, which is square and grounded, symbolizes Lord Jagannath. The sculptors were not merely artisans; they were preservers of cultural memory.

SECTION IV

The Poetry That Entered the Body: Expression Through Abhinaya

At the heart of Odissi is abhinaya, the art of emotional expression. Through subtle eye movements, facial expressions, and hand gestures (mudras), dancers convey stories from mythology, poetry, and devotional literature.

Common themes in Odissi include:

- The love of Radha and Krishna
- Devotion to Lord Jagannath
- Philosophical reflections on the soul and the divine
- Human emotions such as longing, joy, and surrender

This expressive storytelling allows audiences to connect deeply with the dancer's inner world.

Music and Costume

Odissi is traditionally accompanied by Odissi music, which features instruments such as:

- Mardala (percussion)
- Flute
- Violin
- Manjira (cymbals)

The costume is equally distinctive. Dancers wear:

- Handwoven silk garments with temple patterns
- Silver filigree jewelry from Odisha
- A headpiece resembling a temple spire
- A red-and-white forehead design made of sandalwood paste

Together, the music and attire enhance the performance's sacred and aesthetic qualities.

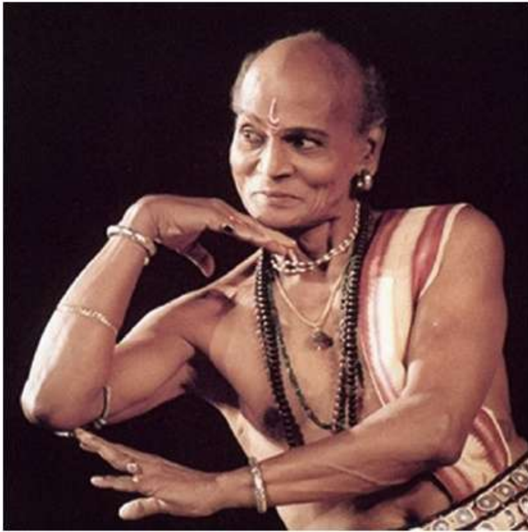
Royal Courts and Patronage

Alongside temples, royal courts played an important role in shaping classical dance. Kings and nobles supported art-

Odissi's Structural Constants

- *Curvilinear body axis*
- *Rhythmic centrality of mardala*
- *Expressive subtlety over theatrical exaggeration*
- *Devotional origin embedded in repertoire*
- *Sequential performance format*

These constants prevent dissolution into generic contemporary dance.



ists by:

- Funding training institutions
- Hosting performances
- Commissioning compositions
- Protecting traditions

Court patronage encouraged technical complexity and artistic experimentation. Dancers refined their skills and developed elaborate repertoires. This dual support—from temples and palaces—helped classical dance thrive for centuries.

Core Features Shared by All Classical Dances

Despite regional differences, Indian classical dances share common foundations:

- Codified technique based on old manuscripts
- Abhinaya (emotional expression)
- Mudras (symbolic hand gestures)
- Rhythmic footwork
- Connection to music and poetry
- Spiritual or philosophical themes

These shared elements link today's performances directly to ancient traditions

SECTION V
Collapse and Reconstruction

By the late 19th century, temple patronage had declined, and British colonial morality had stigmatized dance traditions. As a result, many dance forms across India, including Odissi, faced extinction.

However, in the early 20th century, something exceptional happened. Artists and scholars launched a revival. They studied:

- Temple sculptures Surviving Maharis
- Gotipua techniques
- Manuscripts
- Oral traditions

At the base of this revival was Kelucharan Mohapatra, whose devotion and vision earned admiration. Alongside him was Sanjukta Panigrahi, whose artistry embodied the spirit of this revival

Pillars of Modern Odissi

Exponent	Primary Role	Contribution
Kelucharan Mohapatra	Guru & Reformer	Built modern Odissi
Sanjukta Panigrahi	Performer	Took Odissi global
Sonal Mansingh	Leader & Advocate	Institutionalized Odissi
Madhavi Mudgal	Traditionalist	Preserved classical purity

Together, they shaped Odissi's journey from near-obscurity to global recognition.

Rising Star: Ratikant Mohapatra
Performer • Choreographer • Teacher

Trained under legendary guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, Ratikant Mohapatra is a leading contemporary voice in Odissi. Known for his technical mastery and thoughtful innovation, he bridges classical tradition with modern expression. Through performance, teaching, and institutional leadership, he continues to shape the future of the art form.

and earned respect for their contributions. Recognizing their efforts can inspire pride and appreciation for cultural conservation.

Kelucharan Mohapatra did not invent Odissi; rather, he ensured its survival. His choreography restored structure, his pedagogy reinstated rigor, and his disciples brought the dance form visibility. One of those disciples was the dancer I saw in 1970: Sanjukta Panigrahi.

The girl on stage in Kharagpur wasn't merely performing; she was the living embodiment of centuries of disruption and reclamation. She represented revival in motion. Furthermore, her voyage—much like the dance itself—would not remain confined to India. It inspired pride and interest in Odissi's growing global presence and cultural influence.

SECTION VI

Codifying the Sacred: The Natya Shastra and the Classical Ideal

To truly appreciate Odissi, we need to look beyond its regional roots and consider the broader Indian context that shaped it. More than two thousand years ago, the

Natya Shastra—an ancient Sanskrit treatise attributed to Bharata Muni—laid the foundations of Indian performing arts. It unified dance, music, and drama into a single, interconnected tradition guided by philosophy, ethics, and artistic discipline.

Crucially, the Natya Shastra positioned performance as a didactic and spiritual endeavor rather than merely a form of entertainment. Its objectives were twofold:

- ❖ The transmission of rasa — the aesthetic and emotional experience.
- ❖ The establishment of moral and cosmic order — aligning human emotions with the universal rhythm.

Odissi draws directly on these ancient ideas. Its emphasis on expressive storytelling, precise rhythms, and meaningful gestures all stem from the Natya Shastra's blueprint. What makes Odissi special isn't that it changed the classical rules but that it brings them to life through the distinct lens of Odisha's culture and history.

SECTION VII

Odisha as an Aesthetic Crucible

While many regions absorbed canonical theories, Odisha adapted them. The region's temple culture, especially between the 7th and 13th centuries, produced an architectural doctrine in which sculpture, ritual, and movement formed a continuous aesthetic system. Unlike court traditions elsewhere, Odisha's dance grammar remained centered on temples.

The Konark Sun Temple, built in the 13th century, represents the pinnacle of this synthesis. Its walls do not merely depict dancers; they encode a kinesthetic logic.

The sculptural bodies display multiple key features:

- ➢ Lateral weight shifts
- ➢ Counter-balanced torso articulation

The Eight Rasas in Odissi

- **Śṛṅgāra** (Love) — dominant in Odissi
- **Karuṇā** (Compassion)
- **Vīra** (Heroism)
- **Raudra** (Fury)
- **Hāsya** (Joy)
- **Bhayānaka** (Fear)
- **Bībhatsa** (Disgust)
- **Adbhuta** (Wonder)

Odissi's repertoire privileges *śṛṅgāra* not as erotic display, but as metaphysical longing.

- An emphasis on curved rather than linear axes

These constituents are intentional because they correspond directly to the defining postures of Odissi dance:

- *Tribhaṅgī* — characterized by three opposing bends that create dynamic equilibrium
- *Chauka* — a square, grounded stance symbolizing cosmic order

From a scholarly perspective, the sculptures at Konark function as pre-textual choreography, serving as a visual archive that predates written notation.

SECTION VIII

Maharis and the Ritual Body

Odissi's earliest performers were known as *Maharis*, women ritually dedicated to temple service, particularly at the Jagannath Temple in Puri. Their role was not to perform publicly but to participate in liturgical enactments. Dance occurred in the following contexts:

- Within temple precincts
- During daily worship cycles
- At seasonal festivals

Mahari dance was defined by:

- A slow tempo
- Minimal foot percussion
- A strong emphasis on *abhinaya* (expressive gesture)
- An exclusive use of devotional poetry

Importantly, Mahari dance rejected the notion of spectacle, with its primary audience being divine. This inward focus continues to shape Odissi's aesthetic restraint, even in contemporary stage performances.

SECTION IX

The Gotipua Interregnum: Preservation Through Adaptation

From the 16th to the 19th centuries, as temple institutions weakened under political and colonial pressures, Odissi dance endured through the Gotipua tradition. Gotipuas—boys trained to dance in female attire—performed in village spaces and at royal courts. Their style introduced several key features, including:

- Greater physical virtuosity
- Acrobatic elements
- Strong rhythmic articulation

While some may view the Gotipua practice as a deviation, it served a key archival function. It preserved vital aspects of Odissi, including:

- Core movement vocabulary

- Musical structures
- Pedagogical lineage

From an academic perspective, Gotipua dance served as a conservatory, preserving Odissi dance traditions during a period when institutional support was limited.

SECTION X

Music as Structural Intelligence

Odissi music is a distinct classical system closely aligned with, yet not fully encompassed by, the Hindustani or Carnatic traditions. Its defining features are:

- Mardala percussion as the metrical backbone
- Unique Odissi ragas
- Complex tala cycles
- A strong connection between lyrics and gestures

In Odissi, the mardala does not merely accompany the dance; it governs it. The mardala's syllabic structure dictates the dancer's footwork and torso accents. Unlike faster classical forms, Odissi often employs a more restrained tempo, allowing subtle facial movements to carry significant narrative weight.

Section XI:

The Twentieth-Century Reconstruction

By the early 1900s, Odissi had fragmented. Its modern reconstruction involved neither invention nor revivalism; rather, it was rooted in forensic scholarship. Artists such as Kelucharan Mohapatra collaborated with musicologists, Sanskrit scholars, and surviving practitioners to undertake:

- Comparative studies of sculpture
- Analysis of poetic meters
- Reconstruction of rhythmic cycles
- Systematization of pedagogy

This detailed process transformed Odissi into a classical stage form while preserving its ritual essence. From an academic perspective, Odissi is notable for being one of the few traditions where archaeology, philology, and embodied practice converge. The Odissi that emerged in the mid-20th century was no longer confined to Odisha; it was poised for broader technical and artistic scrutiny.

SECTION XII

The Architecture of Revival: Institutions, Lineages, and Legitimacy

By the mid-20th century, Odissi had evolved from an endangered tradition into a classical form. However, mere survival does not guarantee permanence. What solidified Odissi's status within In-

dia's classical canon was its institutionalization.

Unlike the traditional temple-based transmission, modern Odissi required various crucial elements:

- Codified pedagogy
- Recognized repertoire
- National cultural validation
- State patronage
- Archival documentation

The post-independence period in India (after 1947) proved pivotal. A newly sovereign nation sought to define its cultural identity, and classical dance emerged as both an aesthetic heritage and a diplomatic tool.

In this context, Odissi gained formal recognition alongside Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam, and later Sattriya. The revival unfolded through three interrelated channels:

- Guru–shishya lineage (traditional transmission)
- Cultural academies and universities
- Government-supported cultural diplomacy

This triad transformed Odissi from a regional ritual into a nationally sanctioned art form.

SECTION XIII

Cultural Diplomacy and the Touring Circuit (1960s–1980s)

Beginning in the 1960s, India increasingly used classical arts as a means of diplomatic outreach. Odissi entered global circulation through:

- Government-sponsored cultural delegations
- Festival of India programs
- Embassy-organized performances
- UNESCO-linked heritage events
- International arts festivals

Artists like Sanjukta Panigrahi became cultural ambassadors, their performances abroad serving as:

- Aesthetic presentations
- National representations
- Instruments of soft power diplomacy

Odissi's sculptural restraint resonated strongly on the international stage. Unlike theatrical forms that rely heavily on linguistic comprehension, Odissi's expressive subtlety transcended language barriers, allowing audiences abroad to appreciate it fully.

SECTION XIV

Odissi Around the Globe — A Flourishing Tradition in Japan

From the temple courtyards of Odisha to international theaters, Odissi has evolved into a truly global art form. Over the past five decades, it has established itself in Europe, North America, and Southeast Asia, and notably in Japan, where it has earned a devoted international audience.

Early International Expansion

In the 1960s and 1970s, as Indian classical dance gained global recognition, leading artists such as Sanjukta Panigrahi and Kelucharan Mohapatra toured extensively abroad, introducing audiences to Odissi's sculptural grace and emotional richness. Cultural diplomacy also played a significant role, with Indian embassies, arts festivals, and academic institutions inviting Odissi dancers to perform, lecture, and conduct workshops. This initial touring evolved into structured teaching centers.

Today, Odissi is taught in cities including London, New York, Singapore, Sydney, and notably, Tokyo and Kyoto.

Why Japan Embraced Odissi

Japan's connection to Odissi is equally aesthetic and philosophical. Several factors have contributed to its popularity:

- A common appreciation for discipline and carefulness
- A respect for classical tradition and lineage
- A deep cultural sensitivity to gesture and minimalism
- An interest in spiritual and meditative arts

Japanese spectators often resonate with Odissi's refined control, sculptural stillness, and emotional restraint—qualities that align with Japan's classical arts traditions, including Noh and Kabuki.

Institutional Growth in Japan

In recent decades, Odissi has evolved from occasional tours to a sustained institutional presence in Japan. Prominent figures, including Madhavi Mudgal and other senior gurus, have led workshops and lecture-demonstrations, cultivating a serious student base. Several Japanese dancers have trained in India for extended periods before returning home to teach. Annual recitals, cultural exchange festivals, and Indo-Japanese collaborations regularly feature Odissi.

Japanese Odissi practitioners often approach the dance with scholarly rigor, studying Sanskrit texts, learning Odia to improve pronunciation, and adhering strictly to the traditional repertoire. At the same time, cross-cultural collaborations

have emerged, including:

- Odissi performances alongside Japanese classical instruments
- Dance presentations situated within Buddhist philosophy
- Cultural fairs celebrating India–Japan friendship

These exchanges deepen—not dilute—the classical tradition.

A Global Art with a Sacred Core

Despite its international reach, Odissi has retained its devotional foundation. Whether performed in Bhubaneswar, Berlin, or Tokyo, the dance remains centered on poetry, rhythm, and spiritual expression. Odissi's journey from stone temples to global stages reflects not only adaptability but also universality. Its language of gesture, rhythm, and emotion transcends geographical boundaries, communicating quietly yet powerfully across cultures.

Can Odissi evolve without losing its sculptural grammar? So far, the evidence suggests it can!

SECTION XVI

Odissi did not survive because it was protected.
It survived because it adapted without forgetting

The Camera as Institution: Odissi in Cinema and Archival Media

Institutional permanence requires documentation. Beginning in the 1970s, Doordarshan broadcasts brought Odissi into Indian homes. Unlike live performances, televised recitals were designed for:

- Repeat viewership
- Wider geographic access
- Use as pedagogical reference material

Documentary films and government cultural archives recorded master performances, preserving stylistic nuances for future generations. In cinema, Odissi appeared less frequently than other classical forms, finding a stronger footing in:

- Odia regional films
- Cultural documentaries
- Festival recordings

Its inward-looking nature resists commercial exaggeration, yet its visual elegance translates powerfully into close camera framing. Thus, film became a modern temple wall.

SECTION XVII

Odissi in the Twenty-First Century - Continuity Amid Acceleration

No classical tradition survives unchanged.

What distinguishes enduring forms from obsolete ones is not resistance to time but calibrated adaptation.

In the twenty-first century, Odissi occupies a paradoxical position:

- It is ancient yet digitally mediated.
- It is devotional yet globally staged.
- It is regionally rooted yet internationally institutionalized.

The pressures acting upon Odissi today include:

- Global mobility—teachers and students traverse continents.
- Digital dissemination—choreography circulates online.
- Funding structures—grants shape thematic direction.
- Audience diversification—viewers are often unfamiliar with Indian mythology.

Yet, despite these pressures, Odissi retains three structural anchors:

- Sculptural grammar (tribhangi, chauka)
- Literary canon (Jayadeva and Odia devotional poets)
- Pedagogical lineage (guru–shishya transmission)

These anchors serve as guiding principles. While innovation may manifest in theme, staging, or collaboration, the internal architecture of Odissi remains intact.

SECTION XVIII

A Return to Konark: Stone as Scholarly Text

A scholar standing before the Konark temple observes that the sculptors understood weight distribution, muscular articulation, and balance in ways that precisely align with the Odissi dance technique.

The temple wall becomes:

- A choreographic manual
- A kinesthetic archive
- A pedagogical fossil

The dance does not merely imitate the sculpture; it fulfills it.

A Living Legacy

Odissi endures today as a testament to resilience and grace. From temple courtyards to global stages, it has withstood centuries of transformation without losing its essence.

Whether performed in a grand auditorium or an intimate recital, Odissi continues to mesmerize—not merely through spectacle, but through sincerity, depth, and everlasting beauty. In every curved posture and lingering gaze, the dancer embodies an inheritance that reminds us:

some traditions do not fade over time; they deepen.

EPILOGUE

Kharagpur, Konark, and the Long Arc of Memory

More than five decades have passed since that evening at IIT Kharagpur. The boy in the audience did not understand raga or tala. He was unaware of the Maharis' lineage or of the reconstruction work carried out by twentieth-century gurus.

But he sensed something beyond explanation. Years later, standing before the walls of the Konark temple, camera in hand, he recognized the same shapes in stone that he had first seen in motion.

The curved hip.

The poised stillness.

The restrained power.

Time collapsed. The dancer on stage in 1970 wasn't merely performing choreography; she was animating a lineage carved centuries earlier. The stone had already moved and still moves.

Odissi's journey—from sacred codification to global institutionalization—represents not only the triumph of preservation but also the endurance of embodied knowledge.

In every tribhangi held in Tokyo,

In every mardala rhythm sounded in London,

In every televised recital archived for future scholars,

Konark breathes again.

And somewhere in the deep recesses of a long-dormant memory of a middle-school boy from decades past,

a dancer lifts her chin,

pauses,

and moves.

Triveni Journal
Jan.-Mar. 2026
Pp. 50-54

Role of Music in Kuchipudi Dance

Mruduravali Darbha* and Dr.K Saraswathi Vasudev**

Many times in dance classes and practices a question is often heard ‘Are you listening to music ?’ Music is not just a beat or song but it actually resonates in movement and makes it appealing once you immerse yourself in music and dance.Music is very important for any dance form as it provides essence for the movement. Be it a single note or phrases or even silence also.

In Kuchipudi , music plays a central role because the dance form combines nritta (pure dance), nritya (expressive dance), and natya (dramatic storytelling). For Classical dance traditions like Kuchipudi , the Orchestra team plays an important role in enhancing the overall performance and includes Singer, Nattuvanar, Percussionist, Instruments like veena,violin ,flute. The dancers must work closely with the orchestra team for maintaining harmony in the performance.Some of important qualities a dance musician should possess are as follows :

Clear pronounciation : Sahitya Suddham is most essential quality which emotional content of the composition is depicted very well to the audience.

Tala Gnanam: The singer should have strong understanding of tala and rhythmic cycles because the dancer foot work and movements follow the exact tala. Coordination with percussion instrument i.e Mridangam is very essential .

Understanding of Bhāva and Raga :

Bhavam refers to the emotional expression conveyed by the performer through voice, facial expressions, gestures, and movements. The singer must render the rāga with the appropriate emotional ex-

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** Research Guide:
Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati.

pression so that the intended mood or rasa of the dance piece is effectively conveyed.

Flexibility in Tempo:

A choreography might have different tempo's and change of nadai which the singer ,nattuvanar and percussionist should be aware of and give a smooth transition to maintain the flow of performance.

Sensitivity to Dancers movements:

A good dance musician observes the dancer carefully and adjusts the musical delivery to match the dancer's pace, expression, and dramatic pauses.

Understanding of Character (patra swabhavam):

Patra svabhavam refers to nature, personality and emotional traits of the character .When this is clearly understood by the singer their voice modulation ,expression are appropriate for the Abhinaya of Dancers.

Coordination with the Dance Ensemble:
The singer must work closely with the dancer, the nattuvanar, and instrumentalists such as the Violin and Flute to maintain harmony in the performance.

Several musicians and composers have contributed to the development and performance tradition of Kuchipudi. They helped in shaping the musical dimension of Kuchipudi by composing suitable songs, adapting ragas, and supporting dance dramas.The compositions include both traditional pieces as well as newer works created by modern choreographers. The compositions include Daruvu, Tillana ,Kīrtana ,Sabdham,padam ,Jāvali,Ashtapdi,Tarangam.

Daruvu:

A high energy dance piece which features drama , rhythmic music to introduce or convey emotion of a particular character. They are musically intense , rhythmic and intricate patterns in foot work are incorporated. Some Daruvu's of Kuchipudi repertoire are 'Satyabhama Pravesha Daruvu- Bhamane satya Bhamane' in Bhairavi rāga set to mishrachapu tāla. 'Rukmini Pravesha Daruvu- Taruni Rukmini' in Kalyani rāga set to mishrachapu tāla. 'Usha pravesa Daruvu – Vedale bhānuni Varasuta' in kedaragowla raga set to Ādi tāla.

Shabdam:

It is a narrative dance piece character-

ised with rhythmic syllables (jathis) and lyrics that depict specific theme. Usually a fast paced and traditional piece in recitals .Some examples are Dasāvathara Shabdam , Krishna Shabdam,Mandooka Shabdam etc.

Kīrtana:

Usually kīrtana is performed as interpretative dance piece which gives scope for Abhinaya through lyrics.Story telling is incorporated many times in the charanams which depicts the ability of dancer to blend it with technical skill. Annamacharya and Ramadasu sankīrtanas are part of the dance repertoire.

Ashtapadi:

They are known for graceful, lyrical movements combined with intense, emotional, and dramatic expressions which depicts the love and longing of Radha-Krishna written by Jayadeva.It is usually a beautiful piece in the repertoire of Kuchipudi that gives scope in performance for both dancer as well as orchestra team. They are usually Ragamalika compositions.Some famous Ashtapadi's are 'Radhika Krishna' , 'Sancharadhara' choreographed by Guru Dr.Vempati Chinnasatyam.

Tarangam:

It is a signature piece of Kuchipudi repertoire and deemed to be a high in technicality as well as Abhinaya. Often features stories from ' Krishna Leela Tarangini of Narayana Theertha'. It is while performing tarangam the dancer stands on the rim of the brass plate and performs complex footwork, spins, poses which demonstrate extreme agility and balance.

Some famous tarangams performed in Kuchipudi repertoire are ' Neela megha sareera' in Mohana rāga and rāgamālika , 'Jaya Jaya Durge', 'Govardhana Giridhara', 'Alokaye Sri Balakrishnam'.

Padam and Jāvali :

Both padam and jāvali require skill and sensitivity to perform as they are Abhinaya centric pieces. The lyrics often depict the characteristics of 'Ashtavidha Nayikas' and demand high ability in showing the depiction well through expressions. While padams are slow paced and written by Ksetrayya.Jāvali are a bit fast paced and some of them written by Dharmapuri Subbarayar,Tanjore quartet etc. ' Apaduruku' in khamas rāga , 'Parulanna māta Nammavaddu' in Kāpi rāga, 'Vani pondu' in kānada rāga are some famous jāvalis.

Tillana:

Energetic, fast paced conclusion item in Kuchipudi performances.It is blend of solkattu jathis and swaras along with lyrics in charanam. Pallavi and anupallavi include fast movements and complex foot work in tillana. Tillanas in Hamsanandi ,Hindola rāgas are choreographed by Guru Dr.Vempati Chinnasatyam. Tillanas of Swati tirunal and Dr.Mangalampalli Balamurali Krishna are also part of Kuchipudi repertoire.

The musical compositions presented in Kuchipudi are well appreciated by rasikas and audiences, as they enable them to recognize and understand various rāgas and tālas. Some ragas in which we find Kuchipudi repertoire are Mohana,Bhairavi,Hindola,Kalyani,Bilahari-,Suddhasaveri,Natai,khambhoji Athana Mayamalawagowla, Abheri ,pantuvarali ,Purvikalyani,sourashtara etc .Extensive usage of these ragas can be observed in solo items as well as Ballets. Some of rare ragas are Pahādi , Chakravakam, Varāli, Patadeep,Mānd,jōgīya.In several dance ballets of Kuchipudi ,upto 60 ragās without repetition were incorporated into dance ballets which shows the prowess of composers ,musicians .Their ability to establish the character and emotion in live ,shows their high musical proficiency .Such varied use and singing of rāgas elevated the musical dimension of the ballet, making the act of singing for a dance production comparable to presenting a full-fledged classical concert.

The Tālas used for Kuchipudi include Ādi tāla ,Rūpaka tāla, Chāpu tālas with different nadais (Tishram,Khandam,Mishra ,Sankeerna) and gathi bedhas being incorporated in footwork patterns which adds complexity and dynamism. Some rare tālas like Jhampa tāla usage is seen in ‘Āmani vachi vāli’ in ‘Haravilāsam’ dance ballet.

Many eminent gurus who belonged to the traditional Kuchipudi families came from hereditary lineages of the Kuchipudi village in Andhra Pradesh. These families preserved and transmitted the dance–drama tradition for generations. Some well-known Guru’s of these traditional Kuchipudi families are Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry,Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma,Chinta Krishnamurthy,Chinta Venkataramayya,Bhagavatula Ramayya, Pasumarthy Krishnamurthy,Pasumarthy Venugopala Krishna Sarma, Vedantam Raghavaiah, Vedantam Raghavayya ,Chinta Ramamurthy,PVG Krishna sharma ,Vedantam

Prahlada sharma, Vedantam Veera Raghavayya ,Vempati Chinnasatyam, mahankali Sriramulu,pasumarthy rathaiya sharma ,DSV Sastry .These gurus were not only dancers but also skilled in singing, nattuvangam, composing, and writing dance-drama texts, which helped in sustainment of the rich artistic tradition of Kuchipudi.

Some composers who did not belong to the traditional families of Kuchipudi have nevertheless made significant contributions to its musical repertoire.

Dr.Balantrapu Rajanikantha Rao

A noted musicologist and composer who composed several master pieces and dance ballets including Dance ballet of Padmabhushan Dr.Vempati Chinnasatyam's 'Ksheerasagaramadhanam'.

Patrāyani Sangeetha Rao

He composed many dance ballets including 'Rukmini Kalyanam',Arthanareeswaram.He was known for his deep knowledge of rāga, tāla, and sahitya .

K.Mallik

He was noted and graded composer of AIR who made a remarkable contributions to the field of Dance as well. He set to tune many Annamacharya sankīrtanas which were choreographed by many eminent dancers. Also famous dance ballet 'Chandalika' is composed by him.

NCH krishnamachary,Kuccherlakota Suryaprakasa Rao,NCH Bucchayacharyulu ,Anantha lakshmi , Bokka kumaraswamy are some of the composers who composed solo items in Kuchipudi. Their compositions, musical direction, and scholarly work, enriched the musical dimension of Kuchipudi dance dramas and stage productions.

Conclusion:

Music forms an essential and inseparable component of Kuchipudi. It provides the rhythmic structure, melodic framework, and emotional depth for effective dance presentation. Through the use of various rāgas, tālas, and expressive compositions, music supports both the technical and expressive aspects of the dance. The co-ordination between the dancer, vocalist, and accompanying instrumentalists enhances the overall aesthetic experience.

Triveni Journal
Jan.-Mar. 2026
Pp. 55-80

Golden Article

Dance Traditions of South India

K. V. Ramachandran, B.A.

Something of the beauty of the early Hindu art survives in the indigenous dance and drama,–in the 'Terukoothu' of the Tamils, the 'Veethi Nataka' of the Andhras, the 'Bayalatta' of the Kannadigas, in the dynamic attitudes of 'Kathakali,' in the refined idiom of the nautch, in the curves and contours of the 'Kuchipudi' dance. Transplanted in by-gone ages in Siam, Cambodia and Java, these very arts continue to 'astonish, enrapture, elevate' not only the peoples of those far-off countries, but also many European lovers of beauty, thanks to whom the dances of these countries are known to us far better than those of our own. It is not any casual resemblance that these arts have in common, but an identity in their basic technique of gesture sequences and floor contacts, and those vital attitudes that sum up a series of fleeting attitudes in one expressive movement–an identity so close and continuous that to derive these diverse systems from the classic dance of India, is to prove the obvious. A brief review of some of the salient features of the South Indian traditions indicating the points of contact with one another and with the classical dance is all that is attempted in the following pages.

Reprinted from January-February 1935 (Vol. VII, No. 4, Pp 308-319 and March-July Vol. VII, No. 6, Pp 519-534)

(1)

The Yaksha Gana players of the Karnataka represent an authentic school of Indian dance that deserves to be preserved at all costs. Through a word and a step and a beat of the drum, these artists create portraits of epic heroism and raise visions of battles made beautiful through art. The gorgeous costume, the towering 'kirita' that accentuates the toss head, the mammoth girdle that suggests mountainous strength, the rhythmic movements, steps and gyrations in which anger incarnates itself, the sophisticated attack, counter-attack and defence, in dance language–the 'yuddha charis,' 'nyayas' and 'pravicharas' of Bharata–to the accompaniment of fierce challenges, disdainful admonitions–the powerful 'vachi-kabhinaya' in which the modulations of voice enrich and galvanise words, intertwined

with the thrilling cadences of the drum–every little detail helps to recapture the beauty of heroism and courage. The lure of the battle exercises an unique fascination over these artists and they revert to it again and again, even creating situations for it where the original stories do not warrant them. Next to these dance pictures of war, a feature shared by the 'Terukoothu' which has a specific terminology for these, 'vachikabhinaya' is the most noteworthy feature of this school, *viz.,* 'abhinaya' that resides not only in the speech but in the nuances of voice that render it–the crescendo of the challenge, the thunderous cry that announces the Rakshasa's ferocious wakefulness and the many other significant modulations and silences. No wonder that this powerful 'vachikabhinaya' has relegated 'angikabhinaya' to the background and confined it to certain characters and situations. The most beautiful feature of this art is its use of pure dance,–a feature characteristic of 'Terukoothu' as well–as a prelude to speech and an accompaniment to song, very much like a motif of flower and foliage twining in and out of human and divine figures, a kind of dance analogue of the decorative architectural designs that encase and set off sculpture. The feminine dances of this school belong to a far lower plane of expression and are comparatively feeble and unconvincing. A reference to the Karnataka dancers would be incomplete if homage is not paid to Ganapati Prabhu of Sri Perudur, an artist of high rank whose movements in general and neck-movement ('griva rechaka') in particular are marked by natural grace and restraint.

(2)

If the feminine dances of the Yaksha Gana fail to convince by their feebleness, those of the Kuchipudi school are exceptionally vigorous and energetic, though perhaps they are hardly what one would call feminine. It would be rash for the present writer to formulate judgment on the Kuchipudi artists from a single much-abridged performance of 'Usha Parinaya' rendered in, incongruously modern attire, but that they triumphed over all handicaps is due to the dance whose essential beauty nothing could suppress. 'Vachikabinaya' of a very distinct kind there is in this art, along with an elaborate and sometimes over-elaborate 'angikabhinaya,' but one missed the delicacy and daintiness of the nautch, especially the co-ordination of the intricacies of facial expression, the play of mood and countermood and the 'hastabhinaya'; one missed too the continuous syllabification by the feet that accompanies significant gestures in certain compositions of the nautch–a sacrifice perhaps rendered necessary by the dramatic end in view. But of strength and

power there was an abundance, in place of the refinements of the nautch, which inhere partly in the dance itself and partly in the feminine medium that expounds it. It is not known whether the Andhra repertoire includes evolutionary compositions similar to those of the nautch, with parts organically related, though the materials for building up these are present as well as repetitive sequences called 'muddayis' similar to the Tamil 'tirmanas.' The chief merit of the Kuchipudi school is that it preserves a balance among the several modes of 'abhinaya' of which 'natya' is the coincidence, more than the Karnataka or South Canara school where 'vachikabhinaya' has overshadowed 'angabhinaya' and the Kathakali wherein 'angabhinaya' has elminated the 'abhinaya' of speech. As in the other systems, pure dance constitutes the glory of the Kuchipudi school,–especially its series of specific 'nritta hastas,' floor contacts and attitudes, some of which are to be found in the nautch, but which other traditions appear to have forgotten. In this respect the Kuchipudi system has closer affinity to the nautch than to any other school: the 'nritta hastas' (patterned movements of the hands), as in the nautch, have maintained a precision and clarity, in comparison with which those of Kathakali appear uncertain and, indefinite. The repertoire of the Kuchipudi artists includes a number of rare cadences absent from most of the parallel traditions, for instance, the cadence 'thom dhimi' in which the torso along with the arms executes a very graceful forward and backward flexion. To the dance of the future, the Kuchipudi system has undoubtedly many precious gifts to offer. Vedantam Raghaviah claims the honours as the best exponent of this school by his amazing record in speedy execution; but the homage that is due to knowledge belongs really to his Guru, Chinta Venkataramiah, who trained him. This ancient is a master of the art,–the last among a line of 'Natyacharyas' and one of the few living authorities on the subject.

(3)

The following notes on the Kathakali are based chiefly on the recitals of Gopinath, the talented partner of Ragini Devi, and to a small extent on the rehearsals of Vallathol's troupe at Madras on its way home. To the courtesy of Ragini Devi are due the accompanying illustrations of herself and of Gopinath; the prints from sculpture are the writer's own, gathered many years ago[1] for the purpose of study more than that of reproduction,–a circumstance that explains their indifferent quality as photos.

The first noteworthy feature of the Kathakali is its rejection of 'vachikabhi-

naya' for the purpose of intensifying 'angikabhinaya'; that by such sacrifice 'angabhinaya' has gained volume as well as power, needs no proof. The technique of 'hastabhinaya' is similar to that of the nautch, but while the 'abhinaya' of the nautch is passionate and lyrical and, in its higher manifestations, interpretative and creative, that of the Kathakali is, in accord with the text of the play, often descriptive and sometimes transcriptive, but dynamic always and dramatic. More than the play, the skill and imagination of the artists who interpret it determine the character of 'abhinaya' in the Kathakali; how profound and moving the 'abhinaya' could be and to what heights of persuasive eloquence it could soar was witnessed in the duet between

Krishna and Arjuna, especially the iterations of Krishna in the transcendental symbology of gesture. Here was a language which, more than Sanskrit, was the speech of the gods; and who would distract its ceremonious beauty and infinite suggestiveness with a painted Curtain or other mechanical aid when it needed none? At its highest, the Kathakali is an all-comprehensive art.

At ordinary levels, however, the Kathakali reveals a distinct realistic bias and prefers to serve the actual in place of the imaginative visions of the actual,–an instance of the concession that Art had to make to Life in the interests of intelligibility. How could uncultivated audiences follow the 'abhinaya' narrative, by itself sufficiently unintelligible, made doubly obscure by the omission of speech? Realism provided an easy way out of the difficulty. That the Kathakali made use of it is no wonder, because other traditions have reacted like-wise under similar circumstances,–the serious Terukoothu, for instance, that exhausted itself in a debauch of low Comedy. Lovers of the art who call the Kathakali 'primitive' and on the strength of that adjective claim a pre-Aryan antiquity for it, have no more basis for their theory than the abrupt realism of the Kathakali which, from Bharata's point of view, was a shortcoming inevitable in the ages when his ideals were forgotten. And those among us who bestow a distant and formal patronage on the Kathakali on account of its origin in a period of general decadence are apt to exaggerate its lapses and overlook its essential beauty and its very genuine claims to represent the 'Natya' of Bharata. The Kathakali is no isolated curiosity from Kerala, but one of the many parallel traditions that Bharata's' teachings have inspired.

The gesture materials employed by the Kathakali in fact are as old as Bharata; whether its immediate source was the aristocratic Cakkiar Koothu or the Krishnan Attam, its ultimate source was the

very system on which the Cakkiar Koothu and the Krishnan Attam had based themselves, *viz* the classical Dance Art of ancient India of which Bharata was the theoretical exponent. What matters it if, like Ekalavya, the Kathakali obtained its gift of knowledge indirectly? On the basis of the dance vocabulary of the Kathakali which is far anterior to the 17th century, the legend that assigns the Kathakali to this age, instead of being understood literally, should be interpreted to signify some phase in the vernacularization of the Sanskrit Drama, when the Kathakali broke away from the parent system, either because of its aggressive realism or because it discarded some essentials of that system. Legends do not constitute history, though sometimes they embody valuable historical truths.

'Cakha' was the name of a system of 'abhinaya' that employed beautiful and variegated movements of the entire arm, called 'vartanas.' Each of the 'abhinaya hastas' had a corresponding propelling movement, and the form of 'angikabhinaya' accompanied by these whole-arm movements was known as 'Cakhabhinaya.' Our knowledge of the 'vartanas' is derived from a passage from Kohala abstracted by Kallinatha in his commentary on the 'Sangita Ratnakara.' To what extent the dance of the Cakkiars is based on 'Cakhabhinaya' and whether the classical 'vartanas' have found their way into the Kathakali through that source, are questions that await detailed investigation at the hands of scholars. The reference in 'Cilappadikaram' is unmistakably to the expert in Cakha.

The linear decorations of the face, especially the extensions of the line of the eyebrow and eye for the purpose of accentuating the 'abhinaya' of the face ('upanga abhinaya'), the painted approximations of the mask which render the character impersonal and simultaneously limit the 'abhinaya' to one dominant emotion, the costume and make-up generally, are features that the Kathakali shares with the Tamil, Telugu and Karnataka traditions of the open-air drama, and the advantage of artistic merit in some respects is in favour of the latter. So also the technique of 'angikabhinaya,' is one that is familiar to the nautch and the Kuchipudi Bhagavatars. But the Kathakali's right to recognition as a classical art is based on its memory, at least in outline, of some of the ancient dance cadences,–the 'karanas'–and its use of these supremely expressive forms in 'abhinaya.' Some of the more graceful and seductive of these cadences occur in the nautch and to some extent in the Kuchipudi system as well, as pure dance, but neither the nautch nor the Kuchipudi school employs them as media of 'abhinaya' as the Kathakali unmistakably does.

What is a 'karana'? 'Karana' is the cadence of the body in dance that resolves itself into a patterned movement of the hands ('nritta hasta') and a corresponding beautiful movement of the feet ('chari'), preceded and followed by a rhythmic and harmonious attitude of the body ('sthana'). The 'vaishnava sthana' for instance–that attitude in which the Buddha is represented at Ajanta–was one in which the chest was thrown slightly forward, body flexed graciously and relaxed, and the feet a little parted, with hands to correspond; when such an attitude was co-ordinated in a continuous and exquisite movement, the cadence was known. as a 'karana.' A sequence of these 'karanas' in a predetermined order and within the limits of 'tala,' formed the classical 'angaharas'–the theme of Siva's dance. It is worth remembering that this is an imaginative dance that rejects the burden of the human spirit and interprets neither 'pada' nor 'vakya' and accepts no theme or programme other than itself,–a thing of beauty like the 'raga' in which the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression. Later, when the classical playwright sought to make his poem visible on the stage, he readily seized these cadences of dance and music ('karana' and 'raga') as his media of visible and audible expression. Thus the karana [2] 'leenum' was employed in situations where the heroine was beseeching her lord; 'apaviddham' in anger; 'valitorukam' in the coy love of the 'mugdha'; 'swastika rechitam' in joy; 'nikuttanam' in self-importance; 'katichhinnam' in wonder; 'vakshaswastikam' in sympathy; 'unmattakam' in pride born of beauty-consiousness; 'mattalli' in love etc. A less exalted office was sometimes assigned to some of the 'karanas,' for instance, 'samanakham' announced the commencement of the dance; 'dikswastikam' indicated the change of music; and 'akshiptam' denoted the clown. According as these cadences were intended for men or women, they divided themselves into two classes,–the 'uddhata' or forceful, energetic kind which embraced such 'karanas' as 'garudaplutakam,' 'dandakarechitam,' etc., and the 'sukumara,' the graceful and dainty, some of which have already been mentioned as having found employment in crucial situations of the play. The great Abhinavagupta has, in his invaluable commentary on the 'Natya Sastra,' given us a good number of passages from ancient Prakrit dramas for the appropriate introduction of the 'karanas,' a study of which is indispensable for the student of Indian dance. If some of the daintier cadences have been appropriated by the nautch, the Kathakali has retained in outline some of the 'uddhata' movements.

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It is not claimed that the Kathakali artists render these movements by employing the very 'nritta hastas' and 'charis' enjoined by Bharata. In fact, the dances have undergone a twofold change: in many instances, what were originally cadences have congealed into attitudes that neither begin nor end the movement, but occur in the middle of it; in other instances, what were originally immobile attitudes have developed a swaying movement in dance and 'abhinaya.' However confused the memory and displaced the attitude, the memory is unquestionably there; and the Kathakali remains one of our principal sources for reconstructing the classical dance.

Every movement of dance begins with a basic attitude–'sthana'–and the classic attitudes are many, and of these the nautch prefers some, while Kathakali prefers others. Sculpture print (1) illustrates the beautiful disposition of the body at the commencement of the dance in 'mandala sthana'–the 'lata hastas' reaching down to the knee creeper-wise, hip lowered, thighs and legs bent and turned gracefully, the feet looking towards either side with an interval of one 'tala'[3] between them. The ‹mandala sthana,' but with the hands arranged differently, is a very common attitude in nautch and the 'karanas' carved at Chidambaram from a girl model, with very few exceptions, have all been rendered from this basic attitude. A predominantly masculine art that Kathakali is, the 'vaicakha sthana' with an interval of three and a half 'talas' between the feet, is the natural and most common Kathakali attitude. Gopinath's poses: (Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5) illustrate the disposition of the legs in this posture.

Sculpture (2) is the end of a cadence called 'ardha-mattalli' expressive of the intoxication of youth, rendered from the 'mandala sthana.' This 'ardha mattalli' is an eternal favourite with the South Indian sculptor who has given endless reproductions of it at Chidambaram, Kumbakonam, Darasuram, Tanjore and Madura. This occurs in the Kathakali on a basic 'vaisakha sthana' instead of the 'mandala' (fig. 4 of Gopinath) as an attitude of ease from which the hero surveys his beloved and takes in every detail of her form before describing her perfections. In the classical dance, this is a movement, whereas in Kathakali it is just an immobile but rhythmic attitude.

The 'karana' was the co-ordination of the beautiful movements of hands and feet. The 'nritta hastas' were the patterns of beautiful movements of hands; the 'charis' were the corresponding beautiful movements of feet. These 'charis' were of two kinds,–the 'bhoumya' and the 'akasa' charis; in the former the feet never lost contact with the ground; in the latter the

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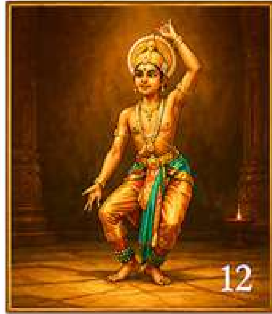
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foot was lifted away from the ground, The movement which lifted the left foot of the Nataraja and sent it athwart the right leg is an example of an 'akasa chari.' Though the nautch and Kathakali are familiar with both these classes of movements, the nautch finds more frequent employment for the 'bhouma charis;' while Kathakali prefers the 'akasa charis' more often. 'Sculpture (4) gives a, vivid idea of the 'oordhvajanu' foot movement in co-ordination with the hand movement 'karihasta.' Figure 8 of Gopinath gives the Kathakali equivalent of the 'oordhvajanu chari' along with an upward movement of the hands. This attitude occurs in the middle of a forward movement in the 'kalasam' of 8 'matras' beginning 'takrukruta'–a vigorous movement employed in heroic situations. Sculpture (3) from Belur, the 12th century capital of the Hoysalas, is a sculptor's version of a similar movement from an entirely different part of India, the northern extremity of Mysore. Another print in the writer's possession tallying more closely with that of Gopinath could not be included because the hands were out of focus, The reason for matching this 12th century carving with Gopinath's dance is to indicate the common source of both; *viz.,* the classical dance of India. A preliminary movement called 'chuvadu' employs the same foot movement, (Fig. 9)

The 'swastika' movement in which the feet cross each other, occurs in a 'misra gati kalasam' of the formula 'tai–dhi tai–dhi ti tai–dhi ti ti tai' in which the dancer moves sideways to the right and left in accord with the syllables. This furnishes another contact with ancient dance. Figure 7 is the end of the first movement, and the entire movement may he any one of those cadences in which the feet keep crossing each other,–possibly the 'uromandalam.' With a touch or two Gopinath's semi-seated posture at the beginning of his 'garuda' dance: may well approximate to the classical 'gridhravalinakam.' Figure 5 which looks like the end of the 'karana vartitam' in 'vaisakha sthana' is frequently employed in the Kathakali to denote grief. The Kathakali has a dance portrait of the elephant, and at the end of it occurs the Kathakali equivalent of the arm-movement 'karihasta' together with an upraised knee (fig 6). Figure 1 is the usual attitude of rest in the Kathakali and has been included for being compared with a similar posture in the nautch. Figure (2) represents something similar to the karana 'takapushpaputam' on a basic 'vaisakha sthana,' but the movements of which bear no resemblance to those of the classical cadence. Figure 11 is a combination pose,–the pose of hands of one ' kalasam' having been fitted on to the semi-seated posture of another; in effect

the picture appears as if the karana 'unmattaka' had been rendered in an 'upavishta sthana.' And that terrible attitude (fig. 10) in which anger has taken bodily shape,–one leg thrust forward in a pointed stride and the head and torso tilted backward to produce a vibrant line, may well represent the Kathakali recollection of the Bharata cadence 'soochi'; an Aswatthama may very appropriately enter the stage in such a manner in quest of his father's murderer.

Fig. 3 is from a 'kalasam' called 'rettivattam' in which the body is flexed now to one side and now to the other with a semi-circular movement, the hands forming alternately a 'sandamsa' and 'alapallava.' This 'sandamsa-alapallava' alternation, corresponding to the 'hamsasya-alapallava' combination of the nautch, is the most frequent hand accompaniment to floor contacts in the Kathakali. These very 'hastas,' but with an upward direction, occur in the fine picture of Ragini Devi (fig. 12) which illustrates not only the beautiful flexions of a typically feminine attitude, but also the artiste's easy familiarity with the Kathakali technique.

No description of the Kathakali could ignore the significance of the drum in this wonderful pantomime. Those who have seen Gopinath's little masterpiece–the hunter's dance–would recollect what an integral part of the movement the drum cadences were. Indeed the drum furnishes an intimate and unique kind of commentary on every turn of the head and hand, every glance of the eye, every movement of the eyebrow in 'abhinaya' and dance,–refinements that by themselves deserve a whole chapter.

What is a 'kalasam'? According to Sarangadeva, 'kalasam' was an instrumental finale in which the drums and cymbals took part; when the 'kalasam' was played, the danseuse was directed to remain still and motionless as in a painted picture. But the 'kalasams' of the Kathakali are dance sequences corresponding to the 'tirmanas' of nautch. It is a common phenomenon in the history of dance for a drum sequence to get converted into a dance sequence; for instance, the 'malapanga' and 'malapa' drum sequences survive as the dances 'chinna malappu' and 'periya malappu' in the nautch,–sequences of pure dance (nritta) performed in front of the processional deity at the four cardinal points. It is the 'kalasams' that embody the greater part of the 'tandava' attitudes and are therefore a vital part of the Kathakali. 'Kalasams' are many and varied and known by such names as 'eduthu kalasam,' 'vattamittu kalasam' etc; sometimes these names denote more than one 'kalasam.' Gopinath mentions an 'ashta kalasam' corresponding to the 'tillana' of

the nautch. In our quest after the forgotten dances of ancient India, the Kathakali technique in general and the 'kalasams' in particular hold the key to an important part of the materials that elude us elsewhere.

Why these beautiful 'kalasams' were omitted from the programme of Vallathol's troupe, and why the inevitable stool replaced the wonderful 'upavishta sthanas' of dance, are questions I have never been able to answer. Among the first to discern the beauty of the Kathakali and the first also to spread its message in other provinces, Ragini Devi, it must be owned, has made liberal and excellent use of the pure dances of the Kathakali in her recitals.

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The unit of the classical dance was the cadence known as 'karanas'; a sequence of the 'karanas,' was the 'angahara,' and a tableaux based on these, in which one or more than one danseuse took part, was the 'pindibandha.' These cadences divided themselves into two types–the energetic masculine and the dainty feminine, named 'tandava' and 'lasya' and ascribed to Siva and Parvati respectively–cadences of pure dance that embellished and variegated the 'purvaranga' (prelude) of the ancient drama which, prior to their introduction, was plain and bare. The 'karanas' constituted an invocation and offering to the Gods, as well as a pictorial treat to the audience. Though originally requisitioned to enrich and beautify the preliminaries of the play, as the play grew and developed, these 'karanas' worked themselves into the body of the play, not only as decorative units but also as the basis and resource of the complex expression called 'abhinaya.' The assimilation, by the text of the play, of these cadences as pure dance and as media of 'abhinaya' perhaps led to the eventual elimination of the 'purvaranga.' The advent of the 'karanas' and their reactions on the drama and dramatists at a vital period of their evolution, is a chapter that deserves the closest study. The love situations of the drama, when interpreted by these dainty 'lasya' cadences, led to the extension of the meaning of the term 'lasya' to include not only the dance cadences and 'abhinaya' through them, but also the love situations so interpreted, the songs that embodied these, the music that was specially appropriate for them, as Abhinavagupta says, and, we may add, even the delicate cadences of the drum. Thus, what was originally the feminine analogue of the 'tandava,' at a later stage denoted a whole group of arts that had gathered round it when it interpreted the love themes and programmes of poets. Ten such essential love-themes were the 'lasyangas' of the

later chapters of the *Natya Sastra,* designed to be rendered by a single danseuse. It is not easy to surmise whether the compositions comprised under the term 'lasyangas' represented 'nritya-prabandhas' that developed independently of the drama, but later got incorporated into it in some form, or whether it was the drama that gave them birth; nor is it possible to visualise each of these 'angas' in perfect detail. In one of them it is a dream that is the starting point of a delicious reverie; in another it is the image of the beloved that inspires a train of tender recollections; every note of Love is represented in these 'lasyangas,' petulance, reproof, reluctance and graciousness, and every phase of distress that separation provokes. Eight similar themes are enumerated by the *Silappadikaram* under the general name 'vari.' 'Lasya' compositions formed an important section of dance-poems in Tamil, illustrations of which are to be found, among others, in the anthologies *Kalithokai* and the *Divyaprabandham.* And in the art of the Arayars, the temple dancers of Tamil India, the 'abhinaya' exposition of the sacred 'pasurams' lives even today at Srirangam and Alwar- Tirunagari. And the learned commentators of the *Divyaprabandham* have left us authentic records of the occasions when the great Ramanuja, a master of 'abhinaya' himself, corrected the renderings of the Arayars when they went astray.

The term 'lasyanga' had still another meaning when it referred to those essential delicacies of poise and turn, of curve and glance that were present in and accompanied certain 'desi' (provincial) applications of the 'lasya' cadences. The essentials were not 'desi,' but their nomenclature was,–the reason why Sarangadeva calls them 'desi lasyangas.'

The nautch as practised by the Devadasis in South India today embodies all these varieties of 'lasya.' The 'alarippu' is a dance invocation made up of *some* of those dainty cadences with which the ancient artists adored the deities at the commencement of the drama. The 'varna,' 'pada,' 'javali' and other compositions based upon various phases and situations of Love–the entire dance-anthology that makes up the current 'abhinaya' performance–bears more than a family resemblance to the 'lasyangas' of *Natya Sastra* and is in all probability descended from them. The 'tillana' of the Nautch, the 'modi' of the 'Therukkoothu' and the 'kirijin' of the Oothukkadu-Soolamangalam Bhagavatas, among others, make purposive use of some of those 'desi lasyangas' that Sarangadeva has recorded. The Tamil equivalent for 'lasya,' according to a quotation abstracted by Adiyarkunallar, is 'mey'; and it is curious that a form of

feminine dance called 'mey' is in vogue at Soolamangalam and is rendered ably by my friend Mr. Swaminatha Iyer, playing the role of a Woman.

The foregoing would explain the bias of the *Devadasi* art for predominantly erotic themes and its essentially *feminine* character. Indeed Love is the Supreme preoccupation of the Nautch; its programmes are lit with Love. It is not suggested that vigorous and forceful elements are absent from this art,–in fact the 'nritta' passages abound in powerful attitudes and movements, for instance, figure (4) which illustrates the middle of a Nautch cadence which could very appropriately introduce a Bhima, also those 'abhinaya' situations where man is portrayed. But on the whole the character of the Nautch is feminine, such femininity revealing itself not only in the 'abhinaya' themes like the 'javali' and the 'pada,' but also in the impersonal dances, especially those patterned sequences that make up the 'tillana': this 'tillana' may be defined as the portrait of Woman, the incarnation of all earthly Beauty and eternal theme of Art by a lovely young woman, through the dainty feminine dance 'lasya.' What a profound knowledge of the character and significance of the Nautch do modern reformers reveal when they want to expunge it of 'sringara' or replace it with 'raudra' and 'bhibhatsa' rasas! They would have the Nautch, like music, as a handmaid of loyalty, health and sanitation! It is fortunate that notwithstanding these reformers and decades of anti-nautch activities, the art continues to live and has produced several great artists–Ammalu of Pudukkottah and Gnanam of *Tiruvalur,* to mention only two,–in the past. Srimati Gouri of Mylapore is by far the ablest exponent of 'abhinaya' among the seniors of today; it would be invidious to single out individual artists from the younger generation, but an exception must be made in the case of Varalakshmi of Kumbakonam whose dances are marvels of precise and beautiful Co-ordination.

The pedigree of this art could be traced as far back as the *Silappadikaram* to the 'ariyakkoothu' and 'akamargam' which in a later age came under the loving care and protection of the great-souled Chola emperors, and was presumably taught by Brahmins– 'Bhagavata-melas' as their guilds were known (the 'natya-kutapa' of Bharata's terminology) whose descendants are practising a dramatic variety of it in certain villages of Tamil Nad and Andhradesa. From internal evidence, one is led to suspect that Gopalakrishna Bharati who chose the 'nrittamurti' himself as the theme of his immortal music-drama, the Nandan Charitram, was a Bhagavata–that is a dancer himself; his is therefore the tribute of a professional

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to the Master of Dance. A vital part of Krishna Bhagavatar's art was his dance and the dance tradition persisted till very recently in our 'katha kalakshepams.' The 'harikatha bhagavatars' of the present day have a confused art-lineage and some of them none at all.

A considerable section of Nautch Music is traceable to these early 'bhagavatas.' At some stage in its history, the art passed on to the 'natuva melas' –the guilds of non-brahmin teachers of dance–and the secrets of the art are jealously guarded by these people today. This community of dance masters has also produced several great men in the past, especially the brothers Sivanandam, Ponnayya and Vadivelu at whose hands, about, a hundred years ago, the performances appear to have unndergone some editing and assumed their present form condensed into the 'single day's programme' made up of select items of dance and 'abhinaya' in the choice of which the taste of the last kings of Tanjore was perhaps in some measure reflected. Redactions presuppose the omission of forms due to exigencies of various kinds and it is probable that the preparation of this dance anthology involved many omissions; it would therefore be wrong to look upon the present day survival as representing the entire art, because contemporary literature gives us a richer picture of forms, in comparison with which the Nantch repertoire looks impoverished somewhat. Out of this limited repertoire the 'mey' is rendered by a single Brahmin artist today at Soolamangalam; the 'modi' has almost vanished, and the 'daru' survives in the dramatic traditions only; while the 'swarajati' and 'ragamalika' are remembered, they are not in evidence at performances; and as the first sign of the progressive administration of temples, dance service is discarded, the beautiful cadences of 'malappu' are being fast unlearned.

Nautch music (to distinguish it from the musician's music) untouched by modern influences, remains a purer, more beautiful and refined form of the art. The music forms are common to both, but the music is different and distinctive,–a fact that people are slow to recognise on account of the inefficiency of the Nautch musicians of the present generation. The beautiful 'varna' in 'Bhairavi' by Adiyappayya and the equally beautiful ones of Govindaswamy are dance 'varnas.' If the great Tyagaraja had written plays, he might have fashioned such music as awaits us in the dramas of Soolamangalam and Oothukkadu. Were one given the choice, one would unerringly specify the 'padas' of Kshetragna as our highest musical creations,–slow, expansive, architectural–and these 'padas' constitute a

rich heritage from the Nautch. It is unfortunate that specialists in these 'padas' are so few and their number is fast dwindling.

While the art remained faithful to the precepts which ensured its preservation, its terminology has to some extent been vernacularised in Tamil India,–a phenomenon common to all localised forms of art. Thus the name 'adavu' designates, in the Tamil districts, a cadence–of the hands, of the feet, of the neck and of the hip individually also a co-ordination of these and identified by a syllabic label that furnished at the same time a rhythmic basis for the movements concerned. A sequence made up of a specific floor-contact and a patterned movement of the hands is an 'adavu' and recognised by a syllabic label; but this label comprises several similar and dissimilar sequences–whole groups of them in fact—and these are among the first things that the beginner has to learn to execute with fidelity, and consequently with grace. However gifted a person, a thorough discipline in these is an inescapable part of dance education just as alphabets and words are predetermined and inexorable essentials of a literary, and 'swara' and 'tala' of a musical, education. No sensible person would ever want to discard these basic essentials or furnish his own equivalents for them or reform them before he has understood them. The 'thattadavu' which comprises a homogeneous group of floor-contacts was familiar to the grammarians as the 'samapadakuttanam.' In the same way the 'nattithattadavu' in its three varieties was termed 'purakshepakuttanam' (fig. 3) 'paschatkshepakuttanam' and 'parsvakshepakuttanam' (fig. 4) according as the foot was planted in front, behind, or at side. This 'adavu' label comprises a cadence involving a jump and semi-circular steps to the accompaniment of opening and closing 'alapallava' and 'sandamsa' *hastas;* this was the 'utpluti-uttanam.' The 'dhi ti tai' which is the invariable finale of most dance sequences, really a variety of the 'nattadavu' in quick time accompanied by various kinds of patterned movements of the hands, was the 'padaparsvakuttanam.' An even movement of the feet with a simultaneous circular movement of the hands had the syllabic label 'digi digi.' The 'thattimettadavu,' a floor-contact involving the balls of the feet (fig. 16), was the 'santadyaparshnikuttanam.'

The 'anukkuradavu' was the, 'mridusparsanam;' a few of the ancient 'bhramaris' too one meets with in the disguise of 'adavus.' This list of 'adavus' is capable of endless multiplication. My purpose in referring to them here is to show that the intricacies of the Nautch have been minutely studied, labelled and classified by

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artist-scholars in the past and it is no fault of theirs if some today, who are neither scholars nor artists, misjudge the art and its resources.

The 'karana' was the rhythmic co–ordination of the patterned movement of hands and feet from a basic attitude. The cadence illustrated in figure (1) begins with the 'mandala-sthana' and a pair of 'sikhara-hastas' held opposite the breast are gracefully spread out as 'patakas' as the foot is established in front; the second movement involving a tap and a jump restores the original attitude with which the cadence started. This is an 'adavu' familiar to the artists of the Nautch as 'ta tai tam.' In the 'nattithattadavu' (fig. 3) the first movement takes the foot forward, the next carries, that foot behind the other swastika-wise, with an appropriate movement of the hands; the third movement plants the foot forward once again and the fourth restores it to the original position. The Nautch cadence 'tai tai tatha' (fig. 4) involves a lateral tilt of the body with hands to correspond on either side, completed by an energetic forward movement. All these three cadences could well be termed 'karanas,' because they fulfill all the essentials of a 'karana.' But the Nautch has forgotten quite as much as it remembers and it is in recovering the forgotten essentials that the extensive Natya literature, the intimate Natya sculpture and the authentic traditions of the art, render signal aid; even with all these aids our problem is not easy of solution because what is sough to be recovered is not the shape of this 'hasta' or that flexion, but the career of the movements in their entirety and the specific curves and contours of which they are composed.

Retaining the very floor-contacts described in the last para but substituting another movement of the hands, we derive two entirely different cadences, glimpses of which have been seized, in figures (2 & 5). Not only do they bear no resemblance to the previous 'adavus' in spite of identical floor-contacts, the two differ from each other employing identical hand movements in different directions. Likewise could we derive more cadences by varying the hand-movements and by combining them with other movements of the feet. Provisionally naming thsee two 'karanas' (figs. 2 & 5) 'atikranta' and 'parsvakranta,' let us endeavour to build up a section of an imaginary 'nritta' composition and begin it with the 'tribhangi-sthana' (fig. 6) and render some beautiful 'rechakas' of the neck ('addiyams' as Tamil India knows them) and pass on to the 'parsvakranta karana' (fig. 5) rendered by either hands and feet, then to the 'ardhamattalli' (see sculpture 2 of last section on 'Dante Traditions)[2] with a

few steps to the right and left, then to the 'atikranta karana' (fig. 2) on to the 'karana-unmattaka' (resembling fig. 11 of Gopinath in the last article but in a standing posture) with both the hands spread out instead of one and take some paces forward in terms of a standard floor-contact; at this point the dancer if capable could attempt the 'mayuravalitam' (peacock cadence) with its difficult involution of the leg behind in imitation of the curl of the scorpion's tail and graceful turns to the left and right; a single 'nattadvu' and a gyrating 'bhramari' leading the dancer back to the 'tribhangi-sthana' would conclude this imaginary dance-fugue in which an identical cadence of the hands is iterated through a series of ever-changing floor-contacts and supported by a beautiful attitude at either end. A 'nritta' passage such as this would represent an attempt at reconstructing the classical dance, especially the 'karanas.' If after have visualised the 'karanas' in precise and perfect detail, we attempt those sequences called 'angaharas and the simple and composite 'pindibandhas' and the group dances, the 'rasaka' and 'hallisaka,' all based on the 'karanas,' this would represent a somewhat ambitious attempt at reconstructing the classical dance of India. But all these belong to the realm of research and are tardy and difficult of realisation even with the best aids and efforts. But the authentic traditions derived from the classical system offer no such problems and are the ultimate refuge of the artist. If, as demonstrated, a few changes could convert a Nautch cadence into a classical cadence and *vice versa,* it is not unreasonable to infer that tradition, far from retarding creative effort, actually helps it. By laying the foundation and imparting a knowledge of the fundamentals of the art, tradition equips the artist to tackle the mysteries of higher dance. It therefore remains the primary means of reconstructing the classical art.

To return to the Nautch. The most beautiful and captivating of the Nautch compositions is the 'alarippu'–the first item on the programme which, as stated earlier, is a dance invocation. Other than the 'trisra' and 'misra' varieties of this, two versions of the 'alarippu' have survived –one in the Devadasi tradition and the other at Soolamangalam with some difference between them. Whether or not this was the 'mukam' mentioned by *Silappadikaram* which embodied the three 'rechakas' of the neck, hip and feet, it certainly resembles the karana 'vaisakha rechitam' in the incorporation of these 'rechakas,' only they are rendered from a basic 'samapada–sthana' instead of the 'vaisakha.' Beginning with the 'samapada' attitude, the torso thrown slightly forward, shoulders relaxed and palms

meeting each other overhead as though the karana ‘leenum’ was employed in divine adoration (fig. 11) to the accompaniment of bewitching glances and smiles and movements of the brow–a ‘naivedya’ of feminine graces–followed by some elegant ‘addiyams’ of the neck in double quick time, the hands are brought gracefully down as outspread ‘patakas,’ shoulder, elbow and wrist on level; follows a duet between the neck and the hands, a crisp expressive movement of the hands responding to a caressing movement of the neck, emphasised by an appropriate turn of the hip; follows a movement of the neck and hands in unison, each hand reaching the neighbourhood of its shoulder, describing undulating patterns of petal-like symmetry and diverted back to their original position as outspread ‘patakas’ whence they return to the neighbourhood of the chest in pretty alternation, with a faint suggestion of the karana ‘vaksha-swastika’; the overhead ‘anjali’ is rendered once over and the hands are brought down as outspread ‘patakas’ and in a semi-seated posture called ‘motitam’ (fig. 12) all the previous cadences are iterated once again seriatim; follows what resembles the karana ‘swastika-rechitam’ in the course of two lateral movements (fig. 13); varieties of the ‘dhi ti tai’ cadence are now rendered along with a forward movement, accompanied by the beautiful action of both the hands in unison and alternation; then the ‘digi digi’ cadence to a backward movement along with a circular ‘vartana’ of both the hands; the ‘alarippu’ ends with a third overhead ‘anjali’ and the outspread ‘patakas’ elegantly brought down, shoulder, elbow and wrist on level. A prosaic description like the above cannot convey even a fraction of the charm of this entrancing sequence, which must be seen over and over again to be enjoyed. Among the renderings of ‘alarippu’ during the last three or four years at Madras, that of Varalakshmi stands out in the writer’s memory as the most exquisite. No wonder that the ‘alarippu,’ like the lotus and other choice gifts of the earth, was set apart as an offering to the Deity–a gift so irresistibly beautiful and so precious that only the gods were worthy of it!

The ‘jatiswara’ is a composition danced to a ‘swara sahitya’ in several sections; this ‘sahitya’ is just an incidental accompaniment and confined to the briefest compass, the real theme and essence being the dance. Beginning with a semi-seated posture, it passes on to the ‘samapada sthana’ from which a semi-circular movement of the ‘pataka’ hand is executed with the right foot planted forward (fig. 14) and is repeated by the left hand and foot with a dainty ‘addiyam’ in between; follow inward evolutions of either hand leading to

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the ‘nattithattadavu’ (fig. 3) with a rhythmic subtlety forked in; then the sculpturesque attitude of figure (15) with a neck movement and slight forward progress; follow two lateral movements simitar to that denoted by fig. 13 of the ‘alarippu’; then the cadence ‘tai tai thatha’ embodying a lateral tilt and foot planted on side (fig. 4) in either direction; a few ‘dhi ti tai’ cadences conclude the first section of the ‘jatiswara.’ The other sections enshrine other beautiful movements of the hands and floor-contacts like the ‘tattimettadavu’ (fig. 16). The ‘jatiswara’ is the one composition of the Nautch which a mere male could render without loss of beauty.

The ‘adavus’ are the basis of the dance of the nautch; and a unit of dance called ‘tirmana’ is made up of a series of these strung together in the ‘tala avartas.’ ‘Tirmana’ corresponds to a decorative device in architecture and like a refrain or a musical ‘sangathi’ is an ever-recurring unit of dance as a prelude, an interlude and finale. Thus the ‘tirmana’ preludes the ‘sabda,’ the next item on the programme which is really a duet of ‘nritta’ and ‘abhinaya’ or rather a piece of ‘abhinaya’ with a fringe of ‘nritta’ running all around it and in between. As many of the present day misconceptions of the art are founded upon a confusion of the relationship between ‘nritta’ and ‘abhinaya,’ we may take this opportunity of defining them. ‘Nritta’ is the origin–‘prakriti’; ‘abhinaya’ is ‘vikriti’ something derived from ‘nritta.’ The one like the ‘raga’ is the basic resource; the other like the ‘kirtana’ is a concrete application of it. The ‘kirtana’ therefore demands the preamble of the ‘raga’ and plenty of it in the form of improvisations, in between and at every pause, as a kind of frame-work and setting. As ‘abhinaya’ is the application of dance forms, it requires pure dance to sustain it not only from within, but also from without and all around and at every interstice. Yet there are some among us who adore ‘abhinaya’ but hate dance!

Its sustenance of rhythm too, ‘abhinaya’ derives from dance,–from the feet which keep up a continuous syllabification with which the significant gestures of the hand, movements of the eye and eyebrow have to coincide; to disown dance therefore is to disown rhythm. This very rhythm pervades those static attitudes,–the ‘mandala’ and ‘samapada’ *sthanas* of the Nautch and the ‘vaisakha–sthana’ of Kathakali which initiate and sustain dance and ‘abhinaya.’ These harmonies of line and balance, as we might term the ‘sthanas,’ and harmonies of line and movement, as we might call the ‘karanas’, supreme dance forms both, constitute also the supreme resources of ‘abhinaya’; to deny dance therefore is to deny ‘abhinaya.’ The Nautch does embody some of these as media of ‘abhinaya ‘–for instance fig.

27 which represents Krishna in the act of drinking milk which occurs in the 'sabda' and figure 17 which portrays the dignity and profundity of the hero and is frequently employed. Other examples of such protraits are to be found in the 'abhinaya of the gods. There are also the seated and recumbent 'sthanas' of dance for which the 'abhinaya' of the Nautch offers little scope but which the dramatic traditions have seized and utilised. If the Nautch had remembered all the classic attitudes and cadences and our dance masters and artists had been conversant with them all, the 'sthanas' and 'karanas' might have found more frequent employment in 'abinaya'; but as it is, we meet with just a few of them and far between. Conversely perfect 'abhinaya' is impossible without a knowledge and mastery of these essentials. Glimpses of a few of these forgotten essentials we have attempted to recover in figures 6,7,8, 9 and 10. The 'vaishnavasthana' occuring as a phase of the karana 'katisama' (fig. 7) and the 'tribhangisthana ' (fig. 6) could well denote the gods–especially Krishna, and by varying the 'mudras' we could depict his various 'lilas.' The karana 'vyamsita' (fig. 9) could find employment in the portraiture of Hanuman. The 'karihasta' cadence attempted in figure 8 could be a dance portrait of Dance. The 'alapallava-soochi' (fig.10) could be effectively employed in the 'abhihaya' of wonder. These very cadences, with others suitably strung together, would form a sequence of pure dance of the classical type. Let it not be forgften however that to enrich dance in the manner indicated, is one thing, and to reform it, quite another.

The next item 'varna' is the most elaborate composition of the Nautch. In structure it does not differ very much from the 'varna' of music, though the music, in common with other 'sahityas' of the Nautch, is superior. Here again is a preliminary 'tirmana' and 'tirmanas' between one section and another. The 'tirmanas' of the 'varna' are ampler and possess considerable elements of beauty, embodying as they do come of the most beautiful cadences of hands and feet (figs. 1, 16 & 19) The 'abhinaya' also is more minute and detailed, and the balance between 'nritta' and 'nritya' is perfectly maintained except in the 'charana' section where there is a release into 'nritta' phantasies embodying a great variety of foot-movements and rhythmic variations–a sudden flood of 'nritta' overwhelming the tide of 'abhinaya'– rather Dance which had been enchained to sense and given the lowly office of interpretation, breaking free of the bondage and setting the pace for Music, while Music is content to meekly follow from a distance. This 'nritta' crescendo for which the 'sahitya' passage is just an afterthought is the most beautiful part of the 'varna.' If the mod-

ern reformer would un-sex 'lasya' and make it accommodate themes he considers appropriate, here also he finds the 'nritta' superfluous and best lopped off. Did not the late Dr. Vincent Smith think the beautiful forearm–the 'karihasta'–of the Nataraja superfluous and recommend its amputation?

'Tillana' brings us to the end of the dance programme of the Nautch. Barring the 'alarippu,' this is the most captivating item of pure dance, not sensuous by any means, but infinitely aesthetic and one that should be awaited in pleasant anticipation. The early sections of it resemble the 'jatiswara' very much in the 'griva' and 'kati'–rechakas' and the sculpturesque forward movements (fig. 15); suddenly the structure changes and a few simple cadences epitomise all the queenly majesty of woman, all her airs and graces, glances and turns of head in a most vivid and intriguing manner; one moment she is gracious and smiling; suddenenly he turns away in exquisite caprice vouchsafing the vision of her barest profile to reappear under guise of an entirely different mood (fig. 22); and like a musical artist who alternately conceals and reveals the 'raga' in rendering the 'tana; she places the forefinger of a 'soochi ' hand on cheek roguishly in terms of the 'gandasoochi–karana' (fig. 25) and beats a slow retreat concealing and revealing her face as she moves along; in an access of playfulness she returns again and permits a vision of her half-averted face in a framework of uplifted and interlocked 'nritta-hastas' (fig. 23); in sheer delight she lifts one foot and darts a hand across in hasty recollection of the karana 'valitam' (fig. 26); now she plays a whimsical male role in executing the karana 'parsvajanu.' If the visible arts of painting and sculpture based themselves on Natya and drew their sustenance of true rhythm from its 'sthanas,' the 'tillana' provides an instance of Dance borrowing the 'sthanas' of Painting–the full, half and three-quarter views for its own ends. 'Kinjin' corresponds to the 'tillana' in the Southern dramatic tradition; and it is said of Sitarama Bhagavatar of Soolamangalam, an expert in feminine dance and a consummate master of the art of revelation in concealment that hundreds of professional dancing girls would hasten to witness his renderings to learn therefrom. And the story teller adds that this super-artist had the highest admiration for the art of Ammalu of Pudukkottah. What a marvel of marvels this Ammalu must have been.

The 'modi' introduces the woman character in Therukkoothu. Beginning with a courtesy to the audience in terms of the karana 'leenum' rendered in several directions, palms meeting each other opposite the breast, it passes on to the semi-seated posture 'motitam' from which it derives

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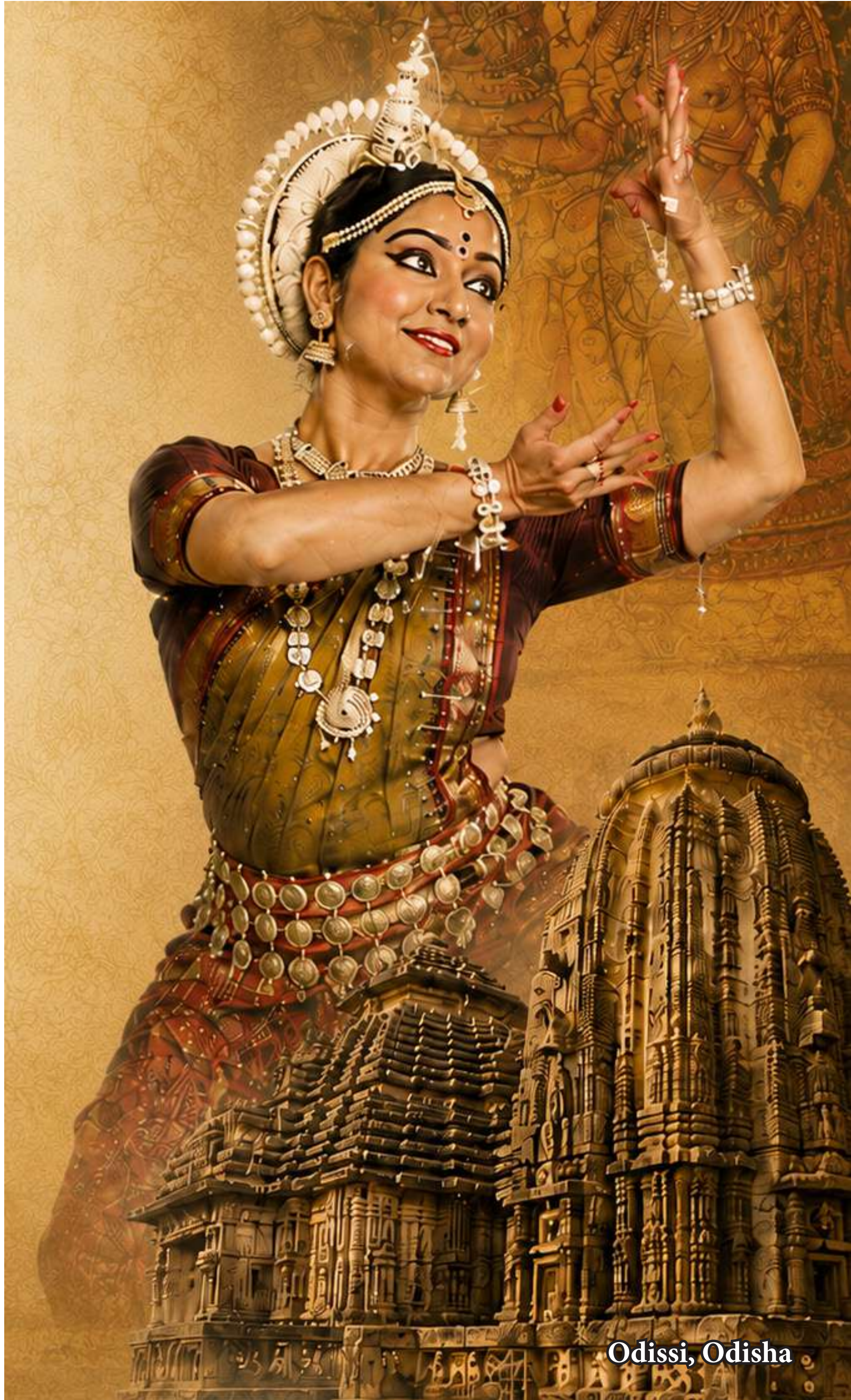
its name; a semi-acrobatic movement imposing considerable strain on the hip is now rendered with the hands interlocked overhead (fig. 18) passing on to two kinds of lateral movements with hands on hip (fig. 21 & 24); these movements occur in the 'tillana' from a standing posture and in the 'jatiswara' with a hand accompaniment (fig. 14). Then follow movements curiously reminiscent of the karanas 'kunchitam' and 'chakramandalam.' The dancer gets up now and iterates some of these movements from a standing posture; the 'modi' concludes with a variety of the 'parivritta karana' (fig. 23) and the 'gandasoochi' (fig. 25) and a 'tirmana' finale.

In 'abhinaya,' 'motitam' denoted the sweet reluctance of woman–one of the meanings of the Tamil word 'modi.' From the acrobatic bend the Tamil word 'modi' derived another sense. Tamil is indebted to dance for the word 'oyyarum' from the 'oyarakam' that denoted the oblique lowering of the head (fig. 20)–one of the 'desi-lasyangas' of Sarangadeva. These 'lasyangas' occur in other compositions of the Nautch, but principally in the 'tillana'; also in the 'kinjin' and 'modi' of the dramatic traditions. The karanas 'parivrittam' and 'gandasoochi' are shared by most South Indian systems.

The 'Therukkoothu' is responsible for the division of 'adavus' into masculine and feminine in realistaion of the truth that if Art could transform a simple rustic into a hero, it could likewise change him into a woman. The aim of art was not simple Truth, but complex Beauty; not imitative realism–'lokadharmi'–but imaginitive transfiguration— 'natyadharmi.' Similarly there is an art motive in the Nautch dress which is common to both the sexes–a feature shared by most South Indian traditions. By completely draping the female figure it excludes the remotest suggestion of the lewd; at the same time it impersonalises woman in some measure, so that a male artist could compete with her on terms of equality and even exel her as Sitarama Bhagavatar did in spite of his obvious natural disadvantages.

'All the more tragic it is, the very tragedy of irony, that this dance, the one really Indian art that remains, has been, by some curious perversion of reasoning, made the special object of attack.' So wrote an European admirer of the Nautch years ago when there was only the social reformer to reckon with. The variety of reformers we have to reckon with today is legion: reformers of the dance, reformers of 'abinaya,' reformers of music, reformers of dress and jewellery, reformers of the chorus, reformers of the stage and reformers who want to play colored light on the danseuse–every conceivable type of these has endeavoured to teach the art its needs. The writer ventures to express that, first and foremost, the art of

the Nautch needs to be understood; it certainly needs no defence or apology; the supreme need at present is to leave the art free to seek its fulfillment in Bharata undeterred by the importunities of Reform. And to those who feel that the Nautch consists of dead forms, the only answer is, in the words of a famous wit, that where lovers of Beauty catch an effect, there are others who catch a cold!


Odissi, Odisha

Sattriya
ASSAM

Kathakali
KERALA

Mohiniyattam
KERALA

Odissi
ODISHA

Kuchipudi
ANDHRA PRADESH

Where devotion becomes expression,
and tradition continues to inspire.