

ART OF NĀTYA AND THE SCIENCE OF TANTRA

- A Correlative Study

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DEDICATED TO

Satkathapravachanamani 'SRI. K.K.RĀJAN' ,

fondly remembered as CHĀKYAR RĀJAN among art lovers and

RĀJAPPA to friends and relatives, a scholar, an orator,

friend -philosopher -guide to many .

One of the most highly acclaimed exponents of the ancient mono- act theater art

form of Kerala, Chākyar Koothu. He suggested that this study be

undertaken

..... MY FATHER



Declaration

I hereby declare that the entire work embodied in this thesis has been carried out under the guidance of Dr.V.N.Seshagiri Rao, Professor and Chairman, Department of Philosophy, University of Mysore, Manasa Gangotri, Mysore. Information from existing literature has been acknowledged appropriately. The work is original and has not been in part or in full for any diploma or degree in this or any other University.

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ABSTRACT

The term Tantra has a wide connotation. Originally, it must have stood for knowledge which is spread – ‘Tantrayate vistāryate jñānam anena’ ie-by which knowledge is spread or developed.

Tantra is deeply rooted in and is the ultimate manifestation of the principles of ‘Vedānta’. ‘Nat’ means to act. 12. As per the Tantras,

Śiva - He saw, he thought - May I be many. From the Brahman with Śakti issued Nāda (sound) and from Nāda appeared Bindu. The tantras also speak of 3 Bindus - Siva māya, Śakti māya and Śiva-Śakti māya.

Siva promulgates his teaching in the world below in the tantrās which exist in the form of dialogues between Devatā and his Śakti, the Devi in her form as Parvati. Śiva and Uma are again attributed with creation of Nātya at the behest of Brahma who appealed on behalf of the Gods. Tantrā and Nātya are common to all castes, creed and both sexes. Nātya veda was evolved as common to all varnas (castes), social or religious barriers.

Tantra is deeply rooted in and the ultimate manifestation of the principles of Vedānta. **Bija**, Mantra, Mudrā, Bhutashuddi, Yantra, Kundalini Yoga, Caryā or religious and social rituals, construction and consecration of temples and images or Kriyā, meditation, Dhyāna, Dharma or contemplation, Guru and Diksha, Maya yoga or practical magic and Sadhana or devout hardwork. The consecration of the Sanskrit drama playhouse too followed the ritualistic consecration before construction of temples or places of worship, propitiation to the natural elements and respective deities to ward off obstacles and calamities and the offering of obeisance to the Guru, the Nātyācārya by the Shishyās, the Pātrā, the teacher and the taught.

The Guru-Sishya [preceptor – disciple] relationship is an indispensable part of any Vedic and Tāntrik school of practice. Though theory can often be gathered from books, a living preceptor, who has already trodden the path successfully is

essential for all practice. It is based on the obvious recognition that disciples who are without practical experience of real spiritual life must receive competent instruction from a qualified person. There is also the dynamic magic of initiation to be considered. The Diksha rite, in which the Guru transmits something of himself to the Sishyā often increases or manifests his awareness. This Guru-Sishyā relationship is a very intimate one and needs to be so for the Sishyā's success. Actually it is a two-way process, for the Guru, in turn, is enabled to have a more intimate and deeper understanding of the disciple, and thereby is better able to guide and direct the course of progress. To become a Tāntrik Sādhu, or a Hindu Sannyāsin, ie - one who has renounced, one must first receive the Sadhu initiation (Diksha) from one who is already initiated as a Sannyāsin. This is the initiation of World Renunciation, where the disciple repeats the Praisha Mantra after the Guru. Once this Mantra has been spoken, the Sādhu must never again return to household life in this birth. Usually, a householder, following the path of Tantrā, takes Guru Diksha from any Tāntrik Guru, whether Sannyasin or householder.

A Nātya exponent represents histrionically, various characters, situations, stories, emotions, events, legends, epics, heroes, heroines and so on. The presentation is an 'acting' combined with dance and music. 'Mantrā' the terminology means to spread (knowledge - religious) and save (spirituality). Prose, poetry, literature used in Nātya are substituted by Māntric incantations, rendered sometimes in a normal manner, sometimes as a solemn recitation and at other times, within the mind in order to emphasize physical silence to raise the spiritual contemplation. The many Tantras written by great sages, seem as a direct reproduction of the words of the Gods and Goddesses (namely of Śiva and Śakti). But most of the performed dance and lyrics are popular notes of saint poets of later times like the Bhakti cult era. Sanskrit plays of ancient origin, devotional songs and Nātya repertoire songs composed by eminent classical musicians are rampantly used for dance and drama performances. Other than these are the same dance-drama presentations of extradited and adapted

passages or chapters from Śāstras, Vedas and āgamas. The great epics and few Upanishads have found their place in dance and drama presentations. The Nāṭya Śāstra is the most ancient known treatise on drama and has the unique position of being the authoritative text for Nāṭya and its various sub-terms like Nrīttā, Abhinaya, Nrītyā. The entire Śāstra is extremely definitive but yet provides ample scope for elaboration, picturization, improvisation and versatility to the artistes who have to float with the tidal changes in culture, society and environment. Tradition and history are the roots but the outlook is amazingly modern and this reflects the broad-mindedness and practical character of Bharata who had himself gathered the eternal truth and wisdom of Nāṭya from the Cosmic dancing divine couple - Śiva and Pārvatī.

The relation of rituals too to Nāṭya can be observed through the commonality of devotional songs called Bhajans (written primarily from the 14th-17th centuries), Keertanams (devotional songs), and Aarti that are sometimes sung in conjunction with the performance of the pūjā. The human body is certainly one piece of CLASSIC ENGINEERING DESIGNED to enable positive physical and mental and above all spiritual enhancement. It is well upon the individual to understand, utilize and then usher in great sense of fulfillment. The Lord Supreme has gifted us this wonderful YANTRAM -our body and we have to neither pamper nor neglect it but to generate, nurture and promote it's well-being. This key factor is noticed both in the practice of Tantra and Nāṭya. The connection between the two-Tantra and Nāṭya -the latter employs the body and the various qualifying and embellishing costumes, ornaments and accessories like stage -crafts, sets, properties, make-up instead of the former's Yantras. Devotional songs and melodious -rhythmic chants are rendered in the latter while JAPAS, HOMAS, MANTRAS are essential feature of the former. The shackles and barriers of the physical and material are destroyed and the Sādhaka transcends to a divine realm and with him also the closely empathizing groups of people like the SAHRUDAYA PREKSHAKĀS. The RASĀ is realized only when the life forces and dramatic stories are first

appropriated within and then transmitted across to the world around -the Rasikās, Bhaktās and others, in creative, ecstatic and emancipatory ways. But as in any other field, a lot depends ultimately on the dedicated 'Sādhana' and devotional temperament whether Tantra or Nātya. 'Prose, poetry, literature used in Nātya are substituted by Māntric incantations, rendered several times in a normal audible manner, sometimes as a solemn recitation and at other times, within the mind in order to emphasize physical silence and raise the spiritual contemplation. The consecration of the Sanskrit drama playhouse too followed the ritualistic consecration before construction of temples or places of worship, propitiation to the natural elements and respective deities to ward off obstacles and calamities. Offering obeisance to the Nātyacārya by the Śishyas is also traditional and obligatory, as in Tantra practice where the Guru's Pāda pūja and Archana is conducted. Teacher-student lineage is indispensable and this 'cycle' is maintained with devotion and passed on [student becoming fit to assume the role of 'preceptor'] for all beneficial purposes which ensures the continuity for such divine traditions. Thus Tantra shares many similarities with Nātya Yoga.

Analyzing the practised form of tantric worship, a kind of meditative dance can be already discovered on close examination. Traces of subtle 'Abhinaya' and very mild 'Nritya' with geometric body movements can be spotted here or there. But the methods presented are far more demanding in terms of repeated intense oblations, worship and ritualistic practices. Nātya worship on the other hand is varied physically with Vyāyāmās, Angashuddi steps and differs based on the Ashtakarana lakshanās or characteristics for a good Nartaki, Nartaka and Sādhaka. Tantra mudrās are few - Nātya Hastās are varied. The practical uses or 'Viniyogās' are many. The healing potential of hands in both cases is developed. Tantra seen in this perspective and within the Indian background has been mostly confined and restricted to temple premises and priests, religious rituals, spiritual practitioners esoteric and occult believers. It rarely can be accepted and divorced totally from divinity, both within man and the Vedāntic

spirit. The relationship between man and nature, man and god, and man and man (god as man here) are borne in mind. As a result, Nāṭya has penetrated the modern society, breaking social, religious, regional and language barriers and has appealed to people from all national origin. But of course dance or drama weaves an already written story often.

A Tantra Śāstra paradigm (Nāṭya can also be called as one such paradigm) exemplifies conception of supreme personality of God the dual aspect when the God himself becomes the Universe beyond Puruṣa and Prakṛiti - the complete, WHOLE, an undivided 'one'. The dancer thus would become the dance or the danced. This 'Advaitic' concept keeping as the base, one has to indeed enlighten others for which the path of Bhakti or if we may call - Viśiṣṭ Advaita or even Dvaita at times have to be experienced and extrapolated.

Yet another important common aspect is the broadbased spectra generously giving sanction to all castes - varies and creed and both the sexes to practice these Śāstrās provided they have the required potential and dedication. This is unlike other vedic practices only open to Brāhmaṇa castes. According to Nāṭya Śāstra, Nāṭya Yoga was initially practised by Narada and Gandharvas, especially by Apsaras. The birth of Bhakti Yoga greatly modified the Nāṭya Yoga techniques. In the medieval times, Nāṭya Yoga was practised by the devadasi's and some temple Brahmins.

Nāṭya Śāstra with its practical application has been uttered by the self born lord Brahma. It is conducive to auspiciousness. It is gracefully regulated. It is meritorious, sacred and destructive of sins. He who listens to this, he who performs this and witnesses it with attention shall attain that goal which is reputed to be the goal of the Vedic scholars, that goals of those who perform Yajnas and the goal of those who make gifts beautifully. Of all charitable and pious rites this has been mentioned as the producer of great benefits. Indeed the gift of a visual art is praised more than all other gifts. When worshipped with scents, unguents and garlands gods do not get as much pleasure as with the

performance of dramas. The man who perfectly looks after the arts of music and dance attains the meritorious goal along with Brahmanical sages. Natya exemplifies another right-hand –Dakshinacharya Tantra. The Puja materials symbolically represented are those used in temple rituals. The sages who are the Rishis of Dakshina marg are the ones who are included in Natya Sastra as those who received initiation on Natya in the early stages of it's origin from Natya Veda. The relation between Natya and Tantra is similar to Sakti and Siva. The Consciousness and energy play with each other, both are interdependant .

In the thesis, chapter one deals with Antiquity and Meaning of Nāṭya and Tantra while chapter two describes the Process, Practices and Methods followed in the two fields. Starting from Tantra origin, traditions, relation between Tantra and Vedas, History of tantra, Hinduism, Tāntric Guru Dattātreya, we move on to Natya origin and traditions, ancient and medieval history, the uprising and then compare the two traditions with historical parallels and correlate the two traditions, focusing on the common Vedic origin. Tantra practices include mantras, yantras commonly used and their significance and the meditational aspects of the Tanmātras, the Cakrās, the Guru-Śishya parampara and Natya practices cover explanation on technique, styles, music, terminologies used in the Śāstra like Abhinaya and introduction to Rasa.

Chapter three highlights the Place of Symbolism and it's relevance to Tantra Sāstra and Nāṭya Śāstra. We have topics on SriYantra, Yoginis, Nādis, Marmās, Breath, Sound, symbols of Hinduism, Tāntric Yoga and Mudrās, Tāntric Buddhism, Nāṭya Hastābhinaya, the symbol of Sanskrit theatre. Chapter four is on the Schools and Branches of Tantra and Nāṭya. topics covered herein are Śaivism, Śāktism, details on Vajrāyana Buddhism, highlight on Malabar school, the rationale behind the distinct dance styles. the traditional repertoire of Bharatanāṭyam, the style of music, Kundalini Śakti, types of Gurus, the corelation between the beejaksharas of cakras worship and the syllables of dance. The next chapter is discussing the philosophy of Advaita and Viśiṣṭ Advaita in relation to Tantra and Nāṭya. And finally the conclusions.

PREFACE

Why this topic?

The journey as a dancer at a tender age begins. The student is learning the basics, moves on to stories and gathers varied aspects of a dance form within it's repertoire. The student starts performing and covering a wide spectrum, beginning to explore dimensions, experiments with different styles of music, also with styles having contemporary significance. As experience develops, one feels like plunging into something beyond. The question comes - What is that element, that essence or that principle that connects ONE to the dance, connects dance to LIFE, connects one to audiences, crossing all barriers.? Is it the body owning a spirit, that is wanting to express something or is it the spirit that has manifested into this form in order to express?

One realizes through this journey that although one may not believe in the Gods which are unique to the various religions, one cannot disagree with what is believed to be the good, positive energy and the presence of consciousness, all these being 'universals. How has the dance started, the history of the dance, it's infinite quality, it's correlation with Indian philosophy, the Tāntrik and Vedic aspects, the symbolic representation of rituals and worship? Tantra is acquired, passed on and practiced by only the chosen few and everybody cannot be considered worthy of being accepted by it like any other rampant science or art. Although considered non-Vedic by many, it's roots have to be Vedic just as any other branch of study with both knowledge and wisdom and several Vedic scholars have been adding on to them and giving commentaries. Tantras are considered as the direct words of Śiva to Śakti, imbued by the Rishis and other Gods and then gradually these paths and traditions that became varied in practice but remained the same in principle, reached the world of men. This last stage happened in the post-Vedic period and scattered to all irrespective of their caste or creed. Which among these ie- the deity, the belief, the method, the

procedure gets attached to which human, would depend on the Law of birth and re-birth and these decisions seem to be the master plan of a higher authority already determining our routes. Sometimes we succeed and at other times, we falter but again it is to be seen as to how we are able to work out our Karmā. As the dictates of Tantra [the plan, process method], Mantra [the corresponding chants, offerings], Yantra [the diagrammatical representations of the deities] are well charted and chartered, it is better to involve only when ready. In common parlance, dance art is similar to a tonic, a common multi-vitamin dose while Tantra acts like an injected vaccine, a booster. It is better to know, either beforehand or after some time [it may become difficult to know unless one tries] and only a great Guru can judge whether the voltage capacity of the conductor, here the Sādhaka, is low or medium or high. Else we may have the case of a fuse that detonated a wild explosion..... not rare to find at all.

The process of art experience for a performing artiste

The following writings are based on self experience as a performing artiste practising Nāṭya and interactions to understand the perceptions of other artistes and those who regularly attend concerts and programmes to form an important segment of today's audiences ,who are also expected to be among the enlightened.

Art experiences or aesthetics ,as understood by various schools gives one an insight into the goal of drama but how is this process achieved ie -the technical growth and transition of emotional states and transitory moods. What are the essential pre- requisites for this becomes an incessant quest for an artiste.

Several books on Tantra have been written which interestingly expand the scope of the subject and obliterate unwanted premonitions. Every letter of such books makes us want to devour the vast wealth of our knowledge and hungry for more. There is a sort of an unquenchable thirst to know and know again.....WHAT IS 'THAT' WHICH IS KNOWN BY THE MYSTIC ? The brain

does her job of assimilating in this manner, laying the academic platform, doing the tough analysis of subjects and drawing impressions. But CAN THE BRAIN ALONE LEAD ONE FINALLY TO THAT ? Not really,..... no,it cannot as it **just does not** have that acumen.

Could self – realization be reduced to purely a biological enterprise? A function of the glands, parts of the brain, the neocortex? A Sādhaka seems to fail everytime she/he tries to derive or know ‘THAT’ through the biological manager. Just by putting the books to rest for sometime and instead putting on the dancing bells, the Ghungroos or Selangai, the attempt to know starts. The music starts, the movement begin, accelerates, gathers momentum and despite all gnawing desires to know, one cannot hold on to any desire any further when one merges with the music which becomes a beautiful wave. The feet act instinctively and spontaneously, the tinkling bells on them ring loud into the ears like a reminder that they are now on a divine journey. Are they like the bells at the altar?.

The biological heart no longer belongs to the dancer as she became someone else, felt him or her inside and moved around in this new character’s role to perform a myriad emotions, fleeting across the entire being as she swung her arms, turned, pirouetted, slid, swirled, stretched and stamped her feet swiftly according to the rhythm, the moods, the stories.

While portraying so many varying moods, the dancer indeed feels being flushed out of all pent up emotions. Finally, SOMETHING lands into her being while she continued to dance in the world of stars and played in the astral realm. She simply feels it filling her whole being and becomes the Sānta Rasā, a feeling of nothingness, emptiness, zero. This zero happens within, it is a complete zero and it remains the only truth.

The infinite seemed to encircle all the finite contained in the drama danced.

When the body consciousness disappeared, The highest truth of the BEING that IS was KNOWN. This then BECOMES the many. Is it the entity - the dancer who gets transformed in the form of the many roles? But the physical form was long forgotten by her when the dance took over. Then how is it that she still can recount and recollect HER experience?

Who is this NEW 'I' now? This 'I' which raised its head to see the DANCER and show her at the same time that the drama enacted was after all, unreal.....and the only true real that ever could be, is and will be is this 'I'. The world seen by the biological eyes disappears and is absorbed into the frame itself. The natural elements seem to vibrate from within, the sky made the dancer agile, the water made her buoyant, the air made her light, the earth made her firm, the fire made her sparkle.....

Is THIS something that 'I' had already known, perhaps forgotten due to 'Māyā', the drama of the changing world, sustaining myself as a false i, given a so-and so name. THIS had become THAT and distant due to 'Māyā'. The formless took a form indeed and regained connection with it only when the latter could tune itself through dance. With the dancing came the discovery of THE 'I' and i reunited with 'I'.....Brahman..... I AM ! Is it what is known in ritual dancing, trance dancing, including dances like Bharatanāṭyam which originated as a ritual itself? Similarly, The Tantri [the temple worshipper using Tantra as integral part of worship] unifies with the innate spirit of the diety worshipped.

Hence, the thesis to co-relate the two wonderful streams .It is important to convey the wealth of our land and culture.

The underlying truths are getting eclipsed by the jet age culture.

Students turn away from the art, calling it a mere museum piece at a nascent stage. Lack of prodigious prerequisites is another cause. They hop on to a mystery tour mastery over the news organs makes on remain sangfroid and

became sapient as a savant. The popular dances today meander around a canter, a flexion bespeaking a gallivanting culture the pivot being how the body can be catapulted with celerity. They are also pretty candid about this trend. Whatever it is, it is important to have the involvement of the spirit, ascribing relative definitions of it though together with mind and body in order to realize the true meaning of dance. From the world perspective, some of the essential aspects of western singing in bringing the refrain to a crescendo, the passage from monotone, all voices with same movement in unison to polyphony, a combined yet individual melody with harmonizing effects has been deduced from the primordial unity of the ONE ABSOLUTE principle and hence loyally follows one of the loftiest philosophies. Oscillatory movements, whirls and swirls have in dance have prehistoric antiquity, intrinsic in man and nature expressing myriad emotions which is why dance, which is as spontaneous and natural as breathing became the mother of all arts [according to Curt Sachs, World History of Dance]. Later, the classical, vintage period of refinement made the dimension of drama as a “catch-all” creating terms like exponents and expositors to practise and audience, readers and spectators to eulogise.

Dr.V.N ,Seshagiri Rao ,Chairman ,Dept. of Philosophy ,Mysore University ,has guided with meticulous precision ,punctuated with memorable words on Advaita .In the process of trying to learn from scientists about physics and spirituality, Dr.Venkatachalam, University of Michigan, gave an insight into theory of relativity in his own words. Although brief, it gave an idea about the philosophical basis of this theory of which we all are always awed .It was an endeavour to identify the unvariant as against the variable. Clearly a study to discover the unchanging absolute while analyzing the changing relative. Dr.Sudha Gopinath ,fellow ,ICPR ,gave a valuable insight into the distinct aspects of Indian philosophy. Dr.K.K.Balachander ,Retd;Mumbai Univ.has shared his views and discussed several topics related to this thesis .I am grateful

to all of them and to my close family members ,dance students and friends.

An academician or an historian would not be satisfied with a priori conclusion and would want to avidly collect observations from a posteriori experience. An artist who is privy to the intricate and integral nuances of the art form evidently au fait with it, can recount and recapture the truest experience of the heart, after a recital. Nevertheless it cannot be the exactly an equal feeling, as very often the artiste would land on a writer's block, posed with an inexplicable experience, close to the mystical kind.....

Chapter - 1

Antiquity and Meaning of Nāṭya and Tantra.

1. Tantra Origin and Traditions

Although Tantras are not considered part of the orthodox Vedic scriptures, they actually go to the same source. It is believed that Lord Śiva's philosophy is promulgated in the world through the many Tantras which exist in the form of dialogues between Himself and his Śakti.. Legend also ascribes the origin of Tantrā to Dattatreya, a yogic deity to whom is attributed the Jivanmukta Gita ("Song of the liberated soul"). Śiva & Śakti - Says - He saw, he thought - May I be many. From the Brahman with Śakti issued Nāda (sound) and from Nāda appeared Bindu. It seems appropriate to assess that Nāṭya Śāstra is itself a kind of Tantra (the science). The texts and lineages of both the Śāstras follow Vedic pattern. Tantra, meaning literally 'Looms' weaves, spins, spreads, represents the fabric that connects all of creation itself. Modern references date back to numerous scriptures of esoteric traditions, written between the 10th and 14th centuries CE. Generally, Tantra includes a variety of mystical, occult and also medical and scientific works. Occult and clairvoyant practices have attracted man unequivocally from times immemorial and the ambience of a sylvan and idyllic vicinity invigorates the inventive and intuitive mystique in the personae of oracles, augmenting hope and faith. Prophetic auspices and auguries become the keystone for certain traditions, ratified by provenance. Having to manoeuvre out of a the vortex of mundane difficulties, man seeks a plausible panacea from the mythical, the mystical, the philosopher's stone. Deeper the quagmire, higher the desire to enter the outlandish domain of the palliative and beatific other-worldly.....

The Tantras, Āgamās, and the Vedās, (they are called Nigamās) represent the same tradition. In the beginning the Vedās themselves were called Āgama. Later as the specialization started, they gave the name of Nigama for the Vedās and

reserved the term, Āgama for the study and practice of the development of consciousness in the mode of the Tantra.

The authorship of later Tāntric works is assumed to many others as well, eg- Matsyendranath is credited with Kaulajñāna-nirnaya, a ninth-century tantra dealing with mystical and magical subjects, and occupying an important position in both the Hindu tāntric lineage, as well as Tibetan Vajrāyana Buddhism . Buddhist and Hindu Tantras, though appearing similar, do have some distinctions. Tantra has roots in the first millennium CE, and incorporates much more of a theistic basis. Almost entirely founded on Śiva and Śakti worship, Hindu tantra visualizes the ultimate Brahman as Param Śiva, manifested through Śiva (the passive, masculine force of Lord Śiva) and Śakti (the active, creative feminine force of his consort, variously known as Mā Kālī, Durgā, Śakti, Pārvati and others). It focuses on the kundalini, a three and a half-coiled 'snake' of spiritual energy at the base of the spine that rises through the cakras until union between Śiva and Śakti (also known as samādhi) is achieved.

Tantrā seeks to ritually appropriate and channel the macrocosmic energy, within the human microcosm, A family of voluntary rituals modeled on those of the Vedās. These practices are usually said to require permission from a qualified teacher or Guru who belongs to a legitimate guruparampara or teacher-student lineage. Thus Tantrā shares some similarities with yoga. Most Tantrā were written between the 10th and 14th centuries CE. Tantra include a variety of mystical, occult, medical and scientific works. Buddhist and Hindu Tantra, though having many similarities from the outside, do have some clear distinctions. Scholars are unable to determine whether the Hindu or the Buddhist version of Tantra appeared first in history. Buddhist Tantra is always part of the Mahāyana school of Buddhism. Buddhist Tantrā spread out from (North) India, chiefly to Tibet, where it became known as the Vajrāyana school of Buddhism. It also had some influence on Chinese and Japanese Buddhism (notably Shingon). Eg.- Śivambu Kalpa Vidhi of the Damar Tantra.

Tantra practices that have been promulgated include necrophilia, necromancy, sorcery, exorsion, witchcraft, wizardry. The positive aspects of austerity, sobriety and sublimity remain recondite. Essentially, Tantra is that belief and practice which is based on the Vedāntic principle that the universe we experience is the material, conspicuous and tangible manifestation of the divine energy itself. Tantra seeks to, within a discipline, apply worship, rituals and actions that can contact, imbue, channelise and imbibe that 'macrocosmic' energy, within the human microcosm. These rituals are akin to those in Vedic times.

2. Tantra and the Vedas

An ethnological study of India opens a melting pot, syncoetic, ethnic, indigenous and soul-searching in character.

The Vedas are the most ancient books in the World and the Foundation of Hinduism. Veda means knowledge with no beginning or end. The ancient seers who wrote these accepted that knowledge of reality of the Universe could never be completely accomodated in a treatise and there would be new things to discover.

The Vedas are believed to be compiled by the great sage Krishna Dwipayana during the Dwāpara Yuga. Based on the teachings passed on, he compiled them into four the Rig, Yajur, Sāma. He became known then as "Veda Vyāsa" which means "Compiler of the Vedas". Paila arranged the hymns of the Rig Veda. Those that were chanted during religious and social ceremonies were compiled by Vaishampayana under the title Yajus mantra Samhita. Jaimini is said to have collected hymns that were set to music and melody - "Sāman". The fourth collection of hymns and chants known as the Atharva Samhita was by Sumanta.

The Rigveda, the oldest, consists of 1028 hymns. The Sāmaveda is more of a rearrangement of the Rigvedain a musical way. The Yajurveda contains sacrificial prayers and the Atharvaveda gives charms, incantations and magical guidelines.

The next category of texts are the Brāhmanās. These are ritual texts that describe the sacrifices in which the Mantrās are to be used, with meanings.

The Aranyakās and Upaniṣads are philosophical or spiritual interpretations of the Vedas, and are considered their essence. Thus known as Vedānta, "the end of the Vedas". Hindu tradition regards the Vedas as uncreated, eternal and being revealed to sages (Rishis).

The Vedas are considered as 'Śruti', or revealed texts. They were not given by a prophet, but heard by many different sages or Rishis during deep meditation. These were combined and written in the Vedas as verses in poetic form. The word "veda" means "knowledge", and is derived from the root "vid-", Sanskrit for "know". The fundamental belief is that the Vedas are 'sanātan' or eternal and 'apaurusheya' or not composed by human entity.]

The Vedas are neither polytheistic nor pantheistic. While there is evidence that everyone was equally allowed to study the Vedas and many Vedic "authors" were women, the later Dharmaśāstrās [Sutra age], held that the lower caste-Śudrās and women were neither required nor allowed to study the Veda. The study of the Vedas became a religious duty of the three upper Varnās (Brāhmins, Kshatriyās and Vaishyās).

The 'Upavedas' are derived from the Vedas and are specific applications of the teachings of the Vedas. The main Upavedas are:

1. Medical system of Ayurveda -Living with nature instead of fighting it, preventive instead of corrective medicine using herbs for cure.
2. Martial arts , archery , defensive arts called Dhanur Veda-
These utilize and enhance Prāna (Life Force/ Energy).
3. Architecture, sculpture and geomancy [for Temple design] -Stahapatya Veda
4. Gandharva Veda- Music, poetry and dance [Nāṭya Veda]
5. Jyotish Śāstra (Indian Astrology),
6. Tantrā (derived from the Purānas which are in turn based on Vedas),
- 7 . Grammar and pronunciation or Śiksha and Vyākaraṇa are also based on the

Vedas. 'Smriti', "that which is remembered" refers to a specific body of scriptures. Their categories are-

1. Dharmaśāstras or the laws. This is represented by 18 books. Each book corresponds to an age of time.
2. Itihāsas or the histories. This is represented by 4 books. It includes the Mahakāvyas or Epics like Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana.
3. Purānās or the writings. This is represented by 18 books. They are secondary scriptures that mainly focus on Viṣṇu, or Śiva as Supreme.
4. Sutrās or proverbs. This is represented by 6 categories of documents: the Śiksha, Vyākaraṇa, Chandas, Nirukta, Jyotisha and Kalpa.
5. Āgamās or the doctrines. This is represented by 3 divisions: the Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta. Mantra, Tantra, and Yantra is another way to group them.
6. Darshana or philosophies. This is represented by 6 schools of thought: Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pūrva Mimāṃsa and Vedānta [Dvaita, Viśiṣhta Advaita and Advaita].

Hindu Tantrā is sometimes conceived as being antithetical to views in the Vedas. This is not so at all. In fact, a famous proverb calls Tantra and Veda as the two human eyes that are together contributing to vision. The ascribing of esoteric meaning and symbolism to the vedas is commonplace in the Tāntric tradition. Tāntric concepts are said to be reflected in myths, secretly hidden to the uninitiated. The esoteric (tāntric) interpretation often takes the form of meditational instruction where the body and its processes have a microcosmic correspondence with the macrocosm.

Tripura Rahasya, one of the central texts of Śākta Tantra, says "This text has been created by summarising the teachings of the Vedas, Purānas and other Scriptures".

Sri Aurobindo saw hidden meanings in the Vedas. These essays have been

condensed as a book form in “The Secret of the Vedas”. He said that the Rig Veda inspires people to move towards God in a hidden language.

So Indra is the God of Indriya, or the senses. Varun means air, but in esoteric sense means Prāna, or the Life force. So when the Rig Vedas says “Call Indra and Varun to drink Soma Rasā” they mean use the Mind senses and Pran to receive divine bliss (Soma means Divine Bliss - as in Right handed Tantra).

Agni, or God of Fire, is the hidden Divine Spark in us which has to grow in our whole body. The sacrifice of the Vedas means surrendering the ego to this spark.

The renowned David Frawley interprets similarly: Indra the King of Indriya is said to symbolize the senses. Varun which means Air, also stands for Prāna or life force. Agni refers to Kundalini. Soma, the feeling that makes one drunk with happiness occurs when kundalini is raised. The person who has controlled his senses and his prāna can raise the Kundalini and feel the Divine Bliss.

3. History of Tantra

Tantras contain descriptions of ritual practices, sacred formulae (mantrās). Mystical diagrams (yantrās), gestures (mudrās), postures (āsanās), initiations (dikśa), yoga or mystic practices.

Many tantras offer mythical explanations for their origins, often it is the voice of either Śiva or His consort -Devi. Scholarly depictions of their origins are often as varied, ascribing tantras to Indus Valley civilizations or the then tribal and ethnic groups. But we have to note that there are several variations. Tantra , which in its earliest written form was a distinctly esoteric practice, evolved into a number of respected exoteric traditions. Two popular categories are: left-handed and right-handed. Left-handed tantras (vāma mārg) incorporate five sacraments (pancamakārapuja). Right-handed tantras (dakṣin mārg), on the other hand, advocate the meditative visualization of these practices.

4. Hinduism today

Hinduism now divided into major divisions like Vaiṣṇavism, Kaumāram, Ganapatyam, Śaivism, Śaktism, and another sect – Smārtha, believes that all religions are the same, Śiva or Viṣṇu, mean the same. The primary differences are between the sects of Vaiṣṇavism, which conceives God as Viṣṇu, and Śaivism, which conceives God as Śiva. Śaktism worships a female divinity or goddess, *Devī*, sometimes as the power of Śiva personified, in which case we could classify the approach as belonging to a subsect of Śaivism. The study of the external meaning of the hymns, their utility in the rituals came to be known as the movement which culminated in the Brahmanas. That part of the movement which concerned itself with recovering the ritual aspect of the Vedic past, developed into Purva-Mimamsa, or the school of Brahmanas. The offshoot of all these developments, which preferred to focus its attention on the knowledge and spiritual-experience aspects, concentrated on the inner meaning of the Vedic hymns and this came to be known as the Uttara-Mimamsa or the Upaniṣads.

Upaniṣads, a compatible, integrative and relevant philosophy today embraces transcendent and yet multiple immanent forces, subjectively realized by each individual. Some see these forces as an identification of unity in diversity. The Vedas are full of mysticism and allegories. Unlike the *Vedas*, which are more esoteric and intricate, the *Gītā* is a summary of the Vedic, Yogic, Vedāntic and Tāntric branches of philosophy. The Bhagavad *Gītā* is described as the essence of the Vedas. Tantra, in practice and popularity bears a distinct stamp of the 'MOTHER', Feminine ENERGY, etc. *Devī Mahātmya*, an ode to *Devī*, and the *Yoga Sūtrās*, a key meditative yoga text of Shri Patanjali are important works in this respect. Also commanding respect are a number of revered Hindu Tantras like Mahanirvāṇa Tantra, Tirumantiram and Śiva Sūtrās, the Manusmṛiti, and various Sūtrās.

5. Tāntric Guru Dattatreya

Dattatreya is a Hindu God who is an incarnation of the Divine Trinity Brahma, Visnu and Śiva. The word Datta means "Given," Datta is called so because the divine trinity have "given" themselves in the form of a son to the sage couple Atri and Anasuya. He is the son of Atri, hence the name "Ātreya."

Dattatreya was at first a "Lord of Yoga" with Tāntric characteristics.

The Tripura Rahasya [the secret of the Goddess Tripura] is believed to be an abbreviated version of the original Datta Samhita or Dakshināmurthi Samhita of Dattatreya. This book has three parts - The first part is concerned with the origin, mantra and yantra of the Goddess Tripura, also known as Lalita Tripurasundari. The second section on knowledge elaborates on the themes of consciousness, manifestation, and liberation. Unfortunately, the last part on conduct has been lost or even perhaps destroyed.

Another work, the Avadhuta Gita –Song of the Free is a compilation of the highest thought. Ideas in this Gita are common to both Śaiva and Buddhist Tantras.

Dattatreya who is considered the creator of Tantra is visualized as the Unity of the Trinity - Brahma, Viṣṇū, Śivā, surrounded by four dogs representing the Vedas and his female coherent principle, Sakti is behind him. In the Nāth tradition, Dattatreya is recognized as an Avatār or incarnation of the Lord Śivā and as the Ādi-Guru (First Teacher) of the Ādināth Sampradāya of the Nāthas. Although Dattatreya was at first a "Lord of Yoga" exhibiting distinctly Tāntric traits, he was adapted and assimilated into the more devotional tradition and propitiated as a benevolent God than as a teacher of the highest essence of Indian thought.

The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa reports that Dattatreya, to free himself of all attachments, lived in a lake for many years. Later, he emerged from the water naked in the company of a beautiful woman. The text relates that he engaged in

union with his consort, drank liquor, and enjoyed singing and music. In spite of this, the Munis did not abandon him, and Dattatraya, accompanied by his Śakti, continued to engage in these practices and was meditated on by those longing for Mokṣa.

In the Bhagavata Purāṇa, Dattatreya enumerates a list of his twenty-four Gurus—earth, air, ether or sky, water, fire, sun, moon, python, pigeons, sea, moth, bee, bull elephant, bear, deer, fish, osprey, a child, a maiden, a courtesan, a blacksmith, serpent, spider, and wasp. The image of the Nātha ranged from that of a siddha living in the woods with animals, to that of a frightening, even demoniac, being. The above interprets the belief that Tantra means reflection of godliness in every aspect and being of the universe.

6. Nāṭya Origin and Traditions-

There is no better formula for appraising a magnum opus like Natya Shastra within a coeval framework of its commentaries than run the gamut as a practitioner. The multitudinous facets of the format of dance incorporates a strong foothold to explore the plenitudes of time and space. Study of scientific laws of kinetics, kinematics, calisthenics and iconography give a periscopic perception. The structural training and methodology being the hallmarks of tradition are interpolated within a panoramic perspective. All these would elicit better finesse. The archetype of a performance brings a picture perfect of a mosaic or a montage of a euphonic narrative, a kaleidoscopic *modus operandi* evincing a protracted vation. A propitious response to these plaudits, especially from erudite pundits gets juxtaposed with the approbation from the unanimous *vox populi*.

Constructs in performing arts have been contemporaneous despite chasms both in the orient and the occident. While obituaries were laid to some civilizations obliterating their wealth of culture, the few fortunate lands continued as beatific havens and oases of cultural legacies, albeit being bereft of optimal circumstances. From the world view, Performing arts during the Gothic period maintained a strict segregation between sacred

and profane. All artistic means are at the disposal of the sacred including even the grotesque and bizarre. This shows the similarity with the esoteric Indian system. All the same, any art that served merely as entertainment was looked down upon. The timeless character of liturgy, scenically evoked through the medium of and art form suggests the glorification of the divine and involuntarily kindles our conduits towards the primordial silence. Dance is a divine play !

Nāṭya Śāstra is the earliest known treatise on dramaturgy and dance. Written by the scholarly sage Bharata Muni, it's legend is the belief that the divine dancing duo -Śiva and Pārvatī themselves showed their cosmic DANCE containing the dynamic -Tāṇḍava and graceful-Lāsyā aspects to the author. The Gods approached Brahma to create another fifth Veda that is a composite version of all other Vedas. Absorbing poetry and verses, musical elements, expressions and aesthetic flavours respectively from the Rīg, Samā, Yajur and Atharva Vedās, Bharata presented his Nāṭya Veda, incomparable and superior to all, that can elevate mankind to divine glory and bliss. Nāṭya vedā was evolved as common to all varṇās (castes), social or religious barriers.

“There is a mention of a Bhāṣya and Vartika beside a Nāṭya Sūtra. This system of assigning Sūtrās, Bhāṣyas and Vārtikas is common to all systems of Indian Philosophy”. [1]

“The work available now under the name of Nāṭya Śāstra of Bharata Muni contains about five thousand six hundred verses”. [2]

“Bhavabhūti the dramatist is probably the first to mention Bharata Muni as the author and he calls him Tauryātrikāsūtrakāra.” [3]

Bharata Nāṭyam, it is said, is the embodiment of music in visual form, a sacred ceremony, and an act of devotion. Dance and music are inseparable forms; only with Geetam and Vādyam, vocal and instrumental music can dance be performed with fulfillment. The parlance associated with Bharathanāṭyam covers manifold

terms, the foremost being nāṭya, nṛitā and abhinayā. Abhinava Gupta has expatiated the Nāṭyaśāstra felicitously, albeit with brevity, bereft of expendable statements. Even if the commentaries refer to a precise period of a history of Nāṭyaśāstra in general, not without certain anachronisms considering the subject matter, they all rather seem to ratify that the Vedas form the fountainhead of Nāṭyaśāstra and that nāṭya refers etymologically to drama.

“Dance is inseparable from drama.” [4]

Bharatanāṭyam, which is the cultural heritage of Southern India, especially of Tamil Nadu, is said to have derived this name from Bharata Muni himself. Secondly, ‘Bharatā’ itself means dance. Yet another school of thought propagated by Vedānta Desikar declares that the word ‘Bharatā’ is actually an acrostic comprised of the syllables ‘bha’ ‘ra’ and ‘ta’ which respectively stand for ‘bhāva’ (facial expression), ‘rāga’ (musical note) and ‘tāla’ (rhythm); these three certainly form the essential aspects of Bharatanāṭyam and are indisputably important.

The word Bharata, interpreted as the dance form created by sage Bharata, has within it -BHA for Bhāvā or abhinaya or expression, RA for Rāgā or melody, and TA for Tālā or rhythm. Bharatanāṭyam is the manifestation of the Indian idea of the celebration of the eternal universe through the celebration of the beauty of the material body.

Bharatanāṭyam is considered to be a fire-dance - the mystic manifestation of the metaphysical element of fire in the human body. It is one of the five major styles (one for each element) Eg: Odissi (element of water), and Mohiniattam (element of air). The movements of an authentic Bharatanāṭyam dancer resemble the movements of a dancing flame. A professional danseuse (pātra), according to Abhinayadarpanam (one of the two most authoritative texts on Bharatanāṭyam), must possess the following qualities. She has to be youthful, slender, beautiful, with large eyes, self-confident, witty, pleasing, well aware of when to dance and when to stop, able to follow the flow of songs and music, and to dance to the time (tālam), with splendid costumes, and of a happy disposition.

“The necessity of learning the different sciences has been stressed in the Nāṭya Śāstra. Readiness to work always, alertness, absence of indolence, affectionate feelings, forbearance, modesty, impartiality, training in polity, good manners and customs etc. Knowledge of psychology is essential for the successful portrayal of various emotions, Rasās, Bhāvās etc. Enjoyment of the dramatic performances presupposes the peculiar reaction which the playwright’s skill and the actors’ adroitness can evoke in the spectators of diverse kinds of capacities and tastes. Dogmatism and domineering attitude should be eschewed and the views of the common man should be taken into consideration.” [5]

Bhāvam, Rāgam, Tālam meaning expression, music and rhythm are essential components that give a complete, holistic [Yogic] stature to Nāṭya. Nāṭya Veda was Bharata’s gift to mankind that could now both entertain and enlighten with this unique practice of dance. However, there are references to Rishi Agastya teaching his disciples a different form of sacred dance than the one taught by Bharata Muni. In fact, it is the celestial dancers, Apsarās, who are depicted in many scriptures as dancing in heaven, what is known on earth as Bharatanāṭyam. Dance originated and became a part of the temple because its aim was to attain spiritual identification with the eternal. It is vital to observe that the essence of all arts in India is Loving devotion -Prema Bhakti that alone can show the pathway to salvation.

As civilizations developed, dance forms became more and more stylized and suited to lifestyle changes. Many of the ancient sculptures in Hindu temples are based on Bharata Nāṭyam dance postures. The sculptural forms gained impetus from temples, verses of poetic saints became adapted to performing arts. Epics and great mythological texts were performed.. All along, yet another parallelly connected system of Devadāsīs grew.

Some of the royal patrons created a hedonistic hegemony in the society and opened a Pandoras box of sorts. The Devadāsis, stigmatized by the amorous pseudo-impresarios, were awakened from a state of fool's paradise when the time of nemesis finally dawned. After the resurrection, the manipulations of power mongers over the artistes became neutralized. Although sundered by foreign invasions, it was indeed the inherent the resilience in the art itself that it rose to its zenith from the nadir. The exceptionally stupendous efforts of few altruistic minds heralded this renaissance.

“In 36/68 Nāṭya Śāstra, it is mentioned that Kohala would mention apparent omissions herein in his Uttara Tantrā (Later Compendium).” [6]

An account of the Lingapurāna shows that Nandideśvara, the attendant of Śiva was originally a mortal – the son of a blind woman named Silāda who prayed to gods for a ‘immortal’ son and was given by Śiva a son named Nandi. This Nandi came afterwards to be known as Nandikeśvara and was immortalized by Śiva as the chief of his ganās. The Silappadikaram, 5th Century B.C to 4th century A.D., is a complete treatise on dance, drama and music. The first performance of the dancer, Mādhavi, described in picturesque detail with codes for dancer, teacher and accompanist. A ceremony of presenting the dancer with a stick, Talaikkol at the Arangetram, debut, is explained

“It is not easy to say anything with certainty about the life and times of Nandikesvara, the reputed author of the AD. This name has been found not only in connection with abhinaya, but also in relation to works on various stages, such as, Tālā, Rasā, Yoga, Tantra, Kāma Śāstra, Purva -Mimāmsa and Lingāyet Śaivism.” [7]

7. Ancient and medieval history

History of the present day dance form [Sadir or solo format] can be traced to the Devadāsi Systems in our country. Devadāsi (servant of god) is a religious practice

still found in some communities, especially in south India, whereby young girls are married to a deity of a temple. The institution of devadasis are also known by various other local terms in India. Several examples from different regions and languages are:

- 1 Dogams and Sanis in Andhra Pradesh
- 2 Bhāvinis in Goa and Western regions.
- 3 Jogatis and Basavis in Karnataka
4. Ārādhinis, Jogitis in Maharashtra (other than the coastal area):
5. Bhagtānis in Marwar.
6. Dāsis or Devaradiar in Tamilnadu.
7. Kudikkars in Travancore district.

Women who belonged to the Isai Vellayar (also known as 'Isai Vellaalar') caste would often become Devadāsis at the age of three.

Devadāsis were not treated as untouchables. The doors of every temple was open to them. They have, in fact, been honored in the public in the past, and even offered seats alongside the figures of royalty. Devadāsis confined their cultural activities to the boundaries of temples (especially great traditional temples. The so-called 'traditional devadasi system' disappeared along with the kingdoms and royal patronages. In the later stages (modern times), Jogins/Basavis adopted the name Devadāsi. The term 'Devadāsi(s)' was used hereinafter to denote all local variants . Devadāsi has a long history, and, like many Hindu practices has evolved into a number of forms.

Sadly, the first Devadāsis were celibate temple dancers, who eventually lost the great lineage and some were forced into not so pure 'trades'. Reference to dancing girls in temples is found in Kalidāsa's "Meghadhoot". It is said that dancing girls were present at the time of worship in the Mahākāl temple at Ujjain. Some scholars are of the opinion that probably the custom of dedicating girls to temples

became quite common in the 6th century A.D., as most of the Purānās containing reference to it have been written during this period. Several Purānās encouraged the services of singing girls at the time of worship at temples. By the end of 10th century, the total number of devadasis in many temples was in direct proportion to the prosperity of the temple. During the medieval period, they were regarded as a part of temples, occupying a rank next only to the priests.

Local kings often invited temple dancers to dance in their courts, and created a new category of dancers, Rajadāsis and modified the technique and themes of the recitals. A devadāsi had to satisfy her own soul while she danced unwatched and offered herself (surrendered) to the lord, but the rajadāsi's dance was meant to be an entertainment. Plays were written, Sanskrit theatre grew in dimensions and Kings patronized these arts and appointed court artistes.

The rise- fall in the status of Devadāsis can be seen to be running parallel to the rise -fall of temples. The destruction of temples by invaders started from the northwestern borders of the country and spread to the whole of the country. Thereafter the status of the temples fell very quickly in North India and slowly in South India. Likewise, was the status of Devadāsis in India. As the temples became poorer and lost their patron kings (and in some cases temples were destroyed), the Devadāsis were forced into a life of poverty and prostitution.

8. The Uprising

Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a spurt of social movements in India. Nationalism led to social movements relating to Devadāsis. These movements can be classified into two heads: Reformers and Revivers. Reformers, under the influence of the European Christian missionaries, conceived the Devadāsi practice as a social evil. The revivers tried to emphasize the idealistic view of this institution. They pointed out that the ancient temple dancers are pure and chaste women, as they were originally. They even stressed that the dance of

devadāsi was a form of 'Nāṭya Yoga' that is above the physical realm and is highly spiritual. Some modifications again were introduced into the content of the dance. Since the revivers mostly belonged to Brāhmin dominated Theosophical circles, many Brāhmin girls started to learn from Devadāsis. Due credit has to be given to Devadāsi women who kept classical arts like Bharatnāṭyam, alive for centuries. Mr. Shankara Menon strongly appreciates that Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale raised Bharatanatyam to a puritan art form, divorced from its controversial past by "removing objectionable elements" like the expressive Tāntric Sringāra[Love] elements from some original styles of Sadir such as Pandanallur, Tanjavur, Vazhuvoor, Mysore, Melattur, Kancheepuram etc. Hence Sringāra is presented in a delicate and delectable manner nowadays.

9. The Two Traditions of Tantrā and Nāṭya.

That there was Tantra known during the origin of Nāṭya is obvious. The sages like Silalin who gave the Nāṭya Sutrās were devout and austere as well that made them codify their knowledge into an added dimension of dance and drama. Referring to what is scientifically analyzed in the Vijnānabhairava tantra, "Although the Tantras were written and discussed later on, even after Nāṭya was popularized, it seems that the basic knowledge of tantra was always there. Vijnānabhairava is a part of the ancient Tantras. It is held in high esteem in Śaivāgama. Abhinavagupta, also called Nrisimhagupta, a Tantra practitioner of Kashmir Śaivism who gave the celebrated commentary on Nāṭya Śāstra, the Abhinavabharati, calls it Śiva-vijnānaupaniṣad. The text of Vijnānabhairava claims to be the quintessence of Rudrayamāla Tantra which means union of Rudra with his Śakti (Spiritual energy)." [8] .

The terms used in Nāṭya like "bha" and "ra" have tremendous meaning and significance in the Tantras. "Bha, ra, and va; bha indicates bharaṇa or maintenance of the universe; ra indicates rāvaṇa or withdrawal of the universe; va indicates vāmaṇa or projection i.e., manifestation of the universe." [9] Tala has

the deeper meaning of dissolution.

“Nāda. It is a mystical resonance and extends from the summit of the head and expands through the susumna i.e. the central channel. It is anāhata i.e. spontaneous sound, not produced by percussion and is inarticulate. It never sets i.e. it always goes on sounding in all living creatures. The subtlety of its vibration consists in 1/16 of a mātra.” [10]

Nādanta – This is an aspect of energy beyond nada. It is extremely subtle and resides in brahmarandhra which is a little above the top of the head. The subtlety of its vibration consists in 1/32 of a mātra.

“Nāda-bindu: The first creative pulsation and its compact mass; the creative sound and light: Śakti and Śiva. Bindu : Written also as Vindu – a point, a metaphysical point; concentration of luminous energy; compact mass of Śakti gathered into an undifferentiated point ready to create; parah pramata – the highest experient; the anusvara or nasal sound indicated by a dot on a letter indicating the fact that Śiva in spite of the manifestation of the universe is undivided ; symbol of Śiva ; a Śakti of pranavā.” These tantric works add testimony to the terminologies rampantly spoken about in Natya shastra. [11]

10. Common Vedic origin of Tantrā and Nātya and a glimpse into other religious dances of ancient eastern civilizations

The drama teaches the path of virtue to those who carry on their duty; the modes of love to those eager to get it fulfilled; it admonishes the uncivilized and the ill natured ones; encourages self control of those who are amenable to discipline; makes the coward bold; the heroic ones are given more incentives, the men of poor intellect are enlightened and the wisdom of the learned is enhanced. The play entertains kinds and affluent ones, sorrowing can receive solace therefrom; those who want to acquire wealth can understand ways and means thereof; and

men who become agitated can derive composure and comfort from it. Imitation of the conduct of the people full of emotional fervour while depicting different situations is the main item in the type of drama evolved by me, says Bharata. Accord encouragement, amusement and pleasure along with sound advice to everyone. It is an agent for educating people through the Bhāvās and Kriyās .All the branches of learning find a place in the drama, different arts and actions converge therein. Because imitation of everything taking place in the world of seven continents is an invariable feature of the Dramatic art.

“As early as the Vedas, it was laid down, for instance, that in connection with the great Aswamedha and other sacrifices or Yajnas performed for the good of the country, there should be enacted some specified sacred dance. The Yajurveda and the Brāhmanas, as a matter of fact, speak of the Mahā -Vrata dance and a special and elaborate performance in connection with the Stotra after the Rājasuya and other Yajnas. Such is the beginning of the art. The religious dance was not peculiar to India. Egypt had it; Assyria had it; Palestine had it. The old testament speaks of flute and tabor and drum, and of the maidens dancing before Samuel and Saul. King Solomon has referred oftentimes to the practice of this art. China and Japan have developed the art mainly on the secular side, with great minuteness and artistic skill, and the play of the fan has been well known accompaniment. Throughout the ages, therefore, the dance has had a great part of play. But so far as India is concerned, manifestations are well-known and familiar. The dance of Natarāja, the dance of Ganeśa, the dance of Subrahmanya (after the conquest of Sura Padmāsura), the dance of Krishna in two aspects – the Kāliyamardana and the Rasamandala, the fierce and delicate – the dance of Kālī, the great Uddhata dance which heralds the final cataclysm and the end of the world, all these parts of Indian heritage of culture . Bharata, for instance, divides Nartana, the great art of dance, into what he terms the sacred and the secular aspects. The sacred aspect is demonstrated by the Tāndava dance and the Lāsya dance, the Allegro and the Pianissimo to borrow terms from another art.” [12]

Bharata's chapter on the construction of the playhouse theatre and replicating the stage as a vedika, and then offerings as in a pūja reveals the coexistence of Tāntric, Āgamic Pūja with Nāṭya ;a harmonizing ,spectacular synthesizer ! Bharata was aware of and acquainted with the elaborate procedures of rituals of Vedic yajna, the necessity of consecrating the space through Pūja. Through the holding of a Pūja with homa and japa, offerings of water, food and flowers, this space would be enlivened, given breath and soul. It would acquire the same potency as an image through the ceremony of prāna pratistha.

Theatre was a model of the cosmos; each deity had a specific place in the cardinal directions that were demarked and the centre of brahma-mandala established on stage itself. Even today, the Rangapūja is done at the onset with rangākramana movements in Bharatanāṭyam.

“The chanting of the sacred mantras in the Rig Vedic period, 1200 B.C., was the earliest known music in India. There are many references to musical instruments, especially various drums, and stringed instruments which included the veena. The Sāma Veda was chanted in a particular style and it is said by scholars that the South Indian rāga Kharaharapriya resembles the Sāman scale, the first chant of man .After Bharata many indeed were the authors and commentators of music and dance. Matanga Muni, who wrote the Brihaddeshi (5th to 7th century A.D) gave the first clear exposition of raga. This is further developed in Nārada's Sangeeta Makaranda (about 14th century A.D) and Somanath's Rāgavibodha (1609 A.D) which also mentions the Nāyika, and Nāyakās, the heroines and heroes of dance and drama.”[13]

By the tenth century, we encounter the towering figures of Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. The categories are not insulated because when we peruse a work like Bhoja's Sringāra Prakāsa, it encompasses a vast field. Matanga gives the description of the articulation of sound from different centres of the body.

Bharata mentioned the three locations (sthānās) of sound from the chest, throat and palate. Sārangadeva gives physiological and Tāntric explanations. The concept of the five natural / primary elements (the Panchabhūtās) is implied in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

Abhinavagupta opines that the origin of the art cannot be traced; it is without a beginning. One can only renew and adorn it and it is not a new creation but a new discovery, just as the Vedas were discovered and not invented. Vedas is beginningless and endless and hence, immortal. The creative powers of the intellectual and aesthetic minds result in accurate perception and absorption.

“The earliest extant literature on the subject of Indian Dance is Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra. There seems to have been some Nāṭya Sutrās even before this Śāstra was penned. But they have either been lost or got dissolved into the present Nāṭyaśāstra.” [14]

Like the Hindu religion which is itself a fusion of the Āryans’ Vedic yagna and the non - Āryans Āgamic Pūja, the Hindu theatre also took the form of a homogenous presentation of dance and drama. Dance seems to have been a favourite sport of the non - Āryans, while drama, with its literary beauty was the Āryan’s love. The art of dance developed as drama through its getting mingled with the Āryan culture. Nāṭya was the term which indicated this composite whole. The term Sangita was always referred to in its triple aspects viz./, Gita (song), Vādyā (instrumental music) and Nritya (dance).

“Are the categories of vāstu, silpa, citra, sangita, nāṭya, sāhitya, kāvya insulated, autonomous, inclusive and exclusive? If not, then, what is the internal interdisciplinary or interpenetrating system? How do these texts, and the Nāṭya Śāstra as the earliest of them all, approach the question of the autonomy and specificity of each art-form and its intrinsically inter-related character.” [15]

There were texts on poetics, on dramaturgy, dance as separate category, architecture, sculpture and painting, together and separate, and special sections of

the Puranas devoted to the arts. All were indebted in part or whole to the Nāṭyasāstra. The āgāmas, difficult to date, have relevance to the Nāṭyasāstra tradition or parampara. A close reading of these verses also convinces one of the intrinsic relationship of the Ayurveda system of medicine and the arts of music and dance

The Gandharva Upaveda belongs to the Sāma Veda.

Abhinavagupta, attaches highest importance to the actual practice of the art. He points out that the rhythm and action, to become charmingly graceful, cannot be comprehended unless one is an adept in the field. Those who know the form can in the true sense, absorb the linking of movements through the use of the head, eyes, neck, etc.

“The fact that there was a flourishing tradition of poetry, dance and music, even of architecture, sculpture and painting, is evident from innumerable references in the Vedās and epics. Patanjali’s Mahābhāṣya and Arthaśāstra, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata provide interesting details of theatre halls, recitals, social status and training. [16]

“The Origin of Drama-

“Atreya and other noblesouled sages with great control over their sense organs approached the righteous Bharata, the master of Science of drama and dance

O Brahman, verily you had propounded it.

Manvantara of Svayambhuva passed by the Kritayuga of Vaivasvata Manu too passed. When the Tretayuga arrived people became victims of lust and covetousness, and were engaged in Rustic rites and activities, overwhelmed by jealousy and deluded by wrath. The Vedic discussion and practice cannot be proclaimed among those born of the Śūdra caste. Hence evolve another Veda common to all the Varnās (castes). It shall be conducive to righteousness,

production of wealth and diffusion of fame; it will have succinct collection of didactic material. Richly endowed with the topics dealt with in all the scriptural texts. Fully recalling to his mind all the Vedās after this resolution ,Pathyam (recitals) from the Rigveda, Gitam (music) from the Sāmans; Abhinayas (histrionic and gestural representation) from the Yajurveda and the Rasās (sentiments) from the Atharvaveda. Its origin and connection with the Vedas and Upavedās was evolved by the noble soul, Brahma .Devās are incapable of receiving, retaining, comprehending and putting it into practice. These are the sages conversant with the esoteric mystery of the Vedās and perfect in the observance of holy vows. The moon god will protect the main building, the wind gods the four corners, Varuna, Mitra, the fire god, the clouds, the four Varnās, the Rudrās, the Aidtyas, the Yaksinis,

Yama. The trident shall be placed at the top. Niyati and Mrtyu were assigned the post of door keepers. The powerful Bhutas, Yaksās, Pisācās and the Guhayakas were assigned the responsibility of guarding the pillars of the Mattavārani. This Nātya Vedā has been evolved to portray both the good and the bad things that befall all whether gods or Daityās. Being the representation of the states of all the worlds. In it there is reference to Dharma (piety), Artha (wealth), peace, laughter, fighting”. [17]

In the playhouse you must have adoration with offerings, performances of Homās with Mantrās and Japās and Naivedyās (food offerings) should consist of all types of foodstuffs hard and soft .This is on par with Vedic Yajna. Ranga Puja is an essential item in a society that meticulously follows the noble ideals of the vedic seers of Mantrās and philosophers irrespective of the schools of Darsanā they may be specially interested in. Types of playhouses viz. Vikrsta (Rectangular) Caturasra (square) and Tryasra (triangular). The soil should be plain, firm hard and black or white for the purpose of erecting the playhouse. On a day with the Pusya star the builder spreads a piece of white string of cotton, wool, Munja grass or the bark of a tree. Brahmins should be propitiated and the Punyaha Mantra should be recited. At the outset white garlands and unguents and a piece of gold

from an ear ornament are thrown at the foot of Brahmin pillar. Nāṭyacārya offers ghee purified with Mantra and he is also fed with Krsara and salt. The playhouse should resemble a mountain cave. Nāṭyacārya has to consecrate the play house. He has to be initiated for the purpose. He will be wearing new clothes. Previously he should have observed fast for three days and have kept his senses under full control. Afterwards he shall be sprinkle his limbs with Mantra inspired water. The stage is lit brightly and the Acārya with bodily purity and mental concentration performs the Pūjā after due initiation.

In connection with this ceremony a Yantra -mystic diagram is to be drawn in accordance with the injunctions at the due places. The overall dimension of the mystic diagram/yantra is sixteen Hastās square (here Hastā = half of cubit = 22.5 cm). It has doors on all four sides. In the middle horizontal and vertical lines are drawn to the sides. In the squares made by them different deities are installed for the purpose of adoration. In the middle, Brahma is to be installed seated in a lotus. Then, at the outset, Lord Śiva is to be installed in the east. In accordance with these rules of procedure all the deities are to be installed in their conventional form and colour in their respective positions. After the performance of the adoration of the Jarjara in this manner and having offered all the oblations, the Nāṭyacārya shall perform Homā in the fire with ghee duly uttering the requisite Mantrās. After brightening the dancing girls and the king along with the musical instruments he shall sprinkle them with water inspired with Mantrās. After the due performance of the Homā through Mantra inspired Havis (i.e clarified butter) the Nāṭyacārya shall scrupulously perform the rite of Kumbhabhedana (breaking the pot). When the pot is broken the Acārya can be without fear; he shall take up the lighted lamp and illuminate the entire dramatic hall. With the production of sounds from Śāṅkhās and Dundubhis as well as Mrudangās and Panavā drums and blowing all the other musical instruments he shall cause some fights in the stage. Wounds like bruises cuts and lacerations, spilling blood is considered an omen of success. A bright wound inflicted is an omen for the success in the play.

Well consecrated hall and stage shall bring about splendid results to the lord, to the region and to the city including the old and the young. This adoration of the deities of the stage is on a par with a Yajna (holy sacrifice). No one shall produce a play without the worship of the stage.

11. Some Vedic Sciences/Tāntric treatises and their relevance to modern Thought

“We have observed that in the movement of revival of the Vedic heritage, that form which concerned itself with reestablishment of ritualism came to be known as the Brahamanas while that which concerned itself with resuscitating the knowledge-content became the Upaniṣads; and what is more important, the line that reclaimed, developed and continued in an enlarging transformation the esoteric practice and the way of inner communion with the Gods came to be known as Yoga and the Tantra”. [18]

ANUKARANA ŚABDA ŚASTRAM

Rishi Kandhika has written the above treatise on nature of sounds, their reelection, and the fundamental principles of resonance and echoes. It is a sound document on sound.

CHITRA KARMA

Rishi Bhima has prepared a treatise named as above on the fine art of painting and photography. It indicates that Indians knew photography thousands of years ago.

GERANDA SAMHITA

This is a treatise on Hata Yoga. Hata Yoga is one of the most important forms of Yoga in which attempt is made to attain Samādhi by purification of the body and by the Āsanās. This kept is in the form of a dialogue between sage Geranda and his disciple Chanda Kapāli.

VIGNYAN BHAIKAVA

It is an ancient work on Yoga. It describes 108 types of Yogāsanās, and studiously avoids, mechanical worship, external rites and ceremonies, and goes directly to the heart of the problem of the union of human consciousness with the Divine. It is in form of a dialogue and has 163 verses.

ŚAKTI TANTRAM

Rishi Agastya, has written a great work on energy. According to his work, there are 32 varieties of energy or power (Śakti) and he explains how to utilize them for the welfare of mankind.

ŚIVA SWARODAYAM

It is a rare work on breath analysis. It explains how to distinguish the overall winds (Vāyus) circulating in our body, how they affect the mental and psychological processes, leading to a predetermination of behavioral patterns, and their outcome. This work has 372 meaningful verses.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi said, 'The Veda, from the clear vision of a modern physicist, has the characteristics of a super particle the ultimate basis of all creation in the theory of super gravity. It should be studied in the light of quantum electrodynamics, quantum chromo dynamics, and geometro - dynamics.'

Taittiriya aranyaka, p.7.a.17, Sun's energy influence everything in the universe and consists of three division such as "paka" the creative energy,"rasā" the sustaining energy "veerya" the energy conducive to growth. All these occur due to the chemical inter mixture of light and heat in different proportions.

Agni Purana states that,"our body contains millions of nerves and blood vessels: There are seventy two thousand nerves just around the navel, however ten of these are integral and life -supporting. Similarly our system has ten types of winds in it. They are 'prāna' which activates lungs and causes respiration,'Apāna' which follows food and water through alimentary canal and helps expelling excretion, 'Samāna' which enters blood and bile and helps to maintain an equilibrium, 'Udāna' which activates the nerves in the mouth and face, 'Vyāna' creates 'Hiccup' indicating lack of liquid in the system. 'Nāga' produces flatulence. Kurma activates the eyelids, 'Girikara' helps digestive system in the stomach, 'Devadntta' produces yawn, and 'Dhahanjaya' prevents shrinkage and helps to keep the body in full bloom. Only this wind remains in the body even after death, to retain its shape and prevent distortion". [19]

In the NATYA ŚASTRA, it is said that -

The ideal theatrical troupe consists of the following - Bharata (Main Actor), the Viduśaka, Tauripa (Songs), the Nata Sutradhāra, Nātyakara, Mutukāraka (Maker of crowns), ābharonākrt (goldsmith, maker of ornaments), Mālakarā (gardener) the Rājakā (washerman, dyer), Citrakāra (Painter) Kāru (craftsman), Śilpi (expert in fine arts), Kuśilavās (Musicians) and others as well.

Dramatic art has originated from the Vedas, their ancillaries or angās and their further subdivisions. It has been evolved and set in practice with great difficulty. It should not be ruined. Actually it has a great basis and is highly meritorious.

Nature draws out the best to improvise and extemporize with intricacies

exquisitely. The expertise in a virtuoso's oeuvre proves the reflexivity to divinity placing him or her at the anvil to get moulded by the fountainhead of all superlatives. Often the quicksilver temperament in creative minds is a result of the quivering of nature's refulgent rhapsody and dissolves in a palliative piece of music, the resonance and equilibrium being pervasive and phenomenal. Ethereal joy isn't fleeting like the evanescent bubbles of ephemeral pleasures.

To preserve the arts ,the demystification of dance forms like Bharatanātyam to some extent through communicative language is important to give it apolitical value and reach beyond regional and religious barriers with wide appeal. Simultaneously, one has to guard against fallacies in comprehending the Sanskrit mantrās and other lyrics used in dance. Rhythm, seen heard, is felt in every muscle. Working knowledge of music is considered as collateral by every dancer, which undoubtedly would add on a vantage point .It is important to know the practices and processes of dance in detail to co-relate them with the mystical Tantra.

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Chapter - II

Process, Practices, Methods followed.

1. Tantra Practices-

Tantra has to incorporate Mantra and Yantra and create the three-dimensional medium to propitiate the Gods.

The symbolic and mystical geometrically shaped Yantra is charged with powerful Mantras in the forms of chantings, decantations, incantations and offerings. The whole ritual, prayer and worship suffuses with energy as the correct plan of Tantra is executed .

A popular Yantra-



Meaning

‘Swastika’ with the four dots symbolizes Peace and Harmony. Lord Ganesh has it on his right hand.

Mantras have to be interpreted in a philosophical and metaphorical way to explain the "hidden" concepts of God (Eshwara), the Supreme Being (Brahman) and the soul or the self (Ātman). The very sound of the Vedic mantras is purifying for the environment and the human mind.

A mantra, typically in Sanskrit language is a hymn, a poem, a verse rendered either as repeated chanting or melodious singing with religious and philosophical significance. They are primarily used as spiritual conduits, words or vibrations that infuse single-pointed and mindful concentration. They are intended to deliver the mind from illusions or delusions.

Other purposes are in ceremonies to foster wealth, health or tackle enemical forces. Their origin was in Vedic Hinduism that were later adopted by other religions and forms of spiritual practices.

The Sanskrit word Mantra's literal meaning-The root 'man', to think", also manas, "mind" and the suffix -tra meaning, tool, hence it means an instrument of thought. Mantras are interpreted to be effective as sound vibrations, to the effect that great emphasis is put on correct pronunciation.

Mantra has an important part in Tantrā for focusing the mind. The mantrās are used to invoke the GODS. A puja involves concentrating on a Yantra or Mandala associated with a deity and with constant recitations or singing.

“This sound when unlettered is known as dhvani or dhvanyātmaka-sabda and when lettered is known as varnātmaka – sabda. The mind that thinks of itself as the object of cognition in the form of a deity, is transformed ultimately into the likeness of that deity. This is a fundamental principle of Tāntric sādhana”. [1]

These deities may be worshipped externally with flowers, incense, and other offerings; but, more importantly, are used as objects of meditation, the practitioners either visualizing themselves as the deity or experiencing the vision of the deity appearing. This process is called identification with deities. Yet another advanced process is the consecration of the body itself as a temple and the heart as it's altar.

“In the theory of mantra, nāda appears in the first stage as a developing, though not yet completely expressed Śakti and in the second stage as bindu and thirdly bija, the essential preconditions for the complete manifestation of Śakti. These three, nāda, bindu and bija are the three angles forming the triangle of the female generative organ”. [2]

In the Tāntric scheme, the Śiva-tattva and Śakti-tattva are really one. The former is static and the latter the dynamic aspect of the ultimate reality. Neither does Nāda mean sound nor does Bindu mean a drop. Nāda denotes the thrill of the first impulse towards creation and Bindu symbolizes the infinite potentialities of

the universe .Tantra affirms that the creative force of the universe resided in all letters of the alphabet [Sanskrit] and their totality is the Mother .The mantra thus becomes a subtle form of the deity .Lalitasahasranāmaḥ has been written with these ideas of Śākta philosophy .This is the symbolism of Tantra Sādhana.

A is a religious syllable or poem, typically from the Sanskrit language. Their use varies according to the school and philosophy mantra, as already said, associated with the mantra. Mantrās originated in India with Vedic Hinduism and were later adopted by Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains, now popular in various modern forms of spiritual practice which are loosely based on practices of these Eastern religions. The mantras used often invoke deities. Similarly, puja often involves concentrating on a yantra or mandala associated with a deity as well.

In Buddhist tantra, the process of identification is known as deity yoga. In Tibet , many Buddhists carve mantrās into rocks as a form of devotion.

2. The Meditational aspects

In the Vedic and Tāntric system, the human being is regarded as composed of three bodies which function as vehicles for the inner Self . Each body has a vibratory field which encloses the underlying consciousness. However, they are not all bodies in the physical sense. The innermost, the causal body, is composed entirely of thought.

The Gross or Physical Body (Sthula Śarīra) is what we regard as the physical body. It has the-

1. Five sense organs: ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose
2. Five organs of action: the vocal organ, hand, feet, the organ of elimination, and reproductive organ.
3. Five elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth
4. The mind, which coordinates as the sixth organ.

The Subtle or Astral Body (Sukshma Śarīra) is the energetic basis of the physical

body. The subtle body is also composed of five sense organs, the five organs of action, the five elements, and the mind, but on a subtle level.

Within the subtle body is a yet more subtle body called the causal body (Kāraṇa Śarīra) as it is the cause or creative force behind the other two. The causal body is not actually a body but a higher mind.

The five Tanmātras are

1. Smell, Gandha
2. Taste, Rasā
3. Sight, Rupa
4. Touch, Sparsa
5. Sound, Śabda And The Two Components of the Causal Mind
6. Ego, Ahaṁkāra
7. Intelligence, Buddhi.

The Tanmātras are the causal elements, the root materials from which the subtle and gross sense organs, organs of actions and the elements all evolve, and the common factor which causes interconnection. Through the Tanmātras the causal body creates the experiences of the other two bodies.

Tāntrikas generally see the body as a microcosm; thus in the Kaulajñāna-nirṇaya, for example, the practitioner meditates on the head as the moon, the heart as the sun and the genitals as fire. As in the yoga tradition, a series of energy centres (cakrās - "wheels") may be used as concentration points, and may be associated with elements, planets or occult powers (siddhi). Kundalini is an important part of Hindu Tantrā. According to Tantra, the Universe was created when The Supreme Consciousness, Śiva, felt a desire to multiply. A part of him was separated off and became his Śakti (Power). Śakti then began the creation of the universe, including the Heavens, Hell and the Earth. She reached a point where she could go no further. At the request of Śakti, Śiva enters her to infuse the

worlds with consciousness. This embrace of Śiva and Śakti created the Universe.

“The attempt to identify Śakti with women is an error. Śiva is said to be the Male principle and the Śakti is the Female Principle. As a matter of fact, they are neither male nor female, nor are they neuter”. [3]

The whole Universe is a part of Śiva, and any part of it contains the entire universe. In our body, Śakti, resides in the Mulādhara, at the base of the spine. Due to Tamogun, she is asleep, and must be awakened. There are seven cakrās (or energy centers in the body), which correspond to the Worlds Śakti created. As the person meditates, Kundalini rises through the higher chakras, ever subtler and virtuous states are realised. Kārmic impurities create blocks preventing Kundalini from rising.

3. The Tāntric Cakrās

SAHASRĀRA

ĀJNA

VISHUDDHA

ANĀHATA

MANIPURA

SWĀDHIŚTHANA

MULĀDHĀRA

Each Chakrā has its vibratory field and corresponds to points on our spine that have potent energy.

Eg.

The heart center is a medley of deep emotions like desire, love, joy, lust, and anger. Called anāhatam, “unstruck”, this cakrā or psycho-energy center is the seat of extra-sensory perception, higher intuitive perception and intelligence. We need to enter and discover it.

Life is a phenomenon of energy. The body, with its solar and lunar energies, five

elements, senses and the mind becomes the perfect temple for this inner worship.

The practitioners have to put in sustained, devoted and intense Sādhana.

The word 'Sādhana' implies that to attain a thing is to know it in it's ultimate sense by BEING that thing and this necessitates substantial exertion – Sādh in Sanskrit is to exert. The Tantri unifies with the innate spirit of the deity worshipped.

Hence, Tantra, the terminology means to spread (knowledge - religious) and save (spirituality). Tantra seen from the above perspective and within the Indian background has been mostly confined and restricted to temple premises and priests, religious rituals, spiritual practitioners, esoteric and occult believers. It rarely can be accepted as divorced totally from the 'divinity', both within man and the Vedāntic One Spirit. The relationship between man and nature, man and God, Gods and THE God (the many and the one) and lastly man and man (seeing the God in man) are expatiated. Tantra is deeply rooted in and is the ultimate manifestation of the principles of 'Vedānta'. Tantra is Yoga and Bhoga.

The many Tantrās written by great Sages, seems a direct reproduction of the words of the Gods and Goddesses (namely Siva and Sakti). It is relevant to note the significance of these practices in the construction, consecration and maintenance of temples which need to be sanctified, being places of worship.

Hindu temples have their principal shrine facing the rising sun and their entrance facing east. An important aspect of the temple design is that it is intended to lead from the temporal world to the eternal one. They are usually dedicated to a primary deity, called the presiding deity, and other subordinate deities associated with the main deity. However, some are dedicated to multiple deities. Most major temples are constructed as per the Āgama Śāstrās. The divinity is invoked in conjunction with rituals and oblations, offerings and sacrifices integrating the forces of nature, the singing or chanting of meditational mantras. This system of

devotion attempts to aid the individual in connecting with God through symbolic communion. These rituals involve the visualization of a deity, offerings (real or visualized), and the chanting of the appropriate mantrās. Temple festivals include an adhoc performance of dance and music. The cultural programmes, many a time, are a fundamental reason to enjoy a languid weekend of delight. Dance programmes held at temples have special vibrations, felt by artistes and spectators.

“Describing the rite of consecration, the worshipper or he who installs the image, first invokes the presence in himself; joins it to his own life-force, and then communicates it to the Murti. By various nyāsas, ‘placings’ of the elements an universal entities on different parts of himself, he cosmicises himself and recreates himself in principle; therefore he repeats the process on the limbs of the Murti. It is only then that it is ready to receive and hold the presence.

This process of call, āvāhana, is described graphically: “Figuratively, we could say that when the celebrant invokes God in one of the his aspects and asks Him to become present in the murti, he attunes himself on the wavelength of the Divinity, catches its vibrations and infuses them in the murti. The instrument which enables him to catch the vibrations of one certain Divinity among many other divine vibrations is its name or its particular mantra, which, as its essence is indivisible from the Divinity itself”. [4]

Summing up, the common practices of Tantra are Bija, Mantra, Mudrā, Bhutashuddi, Yantra, Kundalini Yoga, Caryā or religious and social rituals, construction and consecration of temples and images or Kriya, meditation, Dhyāna, Dharma or contemplation, Guru and Diksha, Māya yoga or practical magic and Sādhana or devout hardwork, etc.

4. Guru and Śiṣya

The word Guru here is a spiritual guide and teacher, reckoned greater than the Gurus who instruct in music and dancing. In India the word Gurudev is generally used to mean the Sadguru, Spiritual Guru or Divine Preceptor.

The Guru-Śiṣya relationship is an indispensable part of Vedic and Tāntrik Practice. Though theory can often be gathered from books, a living Preceptor, who has already trodden the path successfully is essential for all practice. It is based on the obvious recognition that disciples who are without practical experience of real spiritual life must receive competent instruction from a qualified person. There is also the dynamic magic of initiation to be considered. The Dikshā rite, in which the Guru transmits something of himself to the Śiṣyā, often increases or manifests his awareness. This Guru-Śiṣyā relationship is a very intimate one and needs to be so for the Śiṣyā's success. Actually it is a two-way process, for the Guru, in turn, is enabled to have a more intimate and deeper understanding of the disciple, and thereby is better able to guide and direct the course of progress. To become a Tāntrik Sādhu, or Hindu Sannyāsin, one must first receive the Sādhu initiation (Sannyāsa Dikshā) from one who is already initiated as a Sannyāsin. This is the initiation of World Renunciation for the Sannyasin, where the disciple repeats the "Praisha Mantra" after the Guru. Once this Mantra has been spoken, the Sādhu must never again return to household life in this birth. A householder, following the path of Tantra, takes Guru Dikshā from any Tāntrik Guru, whether Sannyāsin or householder.

Tantra differs from Vedic Hinduism in so much as the wife must take Dikshā also under the same Guru. Because of the nature of Tāntrik initiation they usually take this Dikshā at different times. In the Vedic tradition only the man is required to take initiation under a Guru. In Sannyāsa sects, even in Tāntrik mode, the initiation is sometimes a very complicated procedure subdivided into several stages. A householder who wants to take up this path can easily be taken on his face value, but for those who think they are prepared to renounce the world permanently, careful consideration and observation is required. When a Guru

accepts a disciple, he also accepts a serious responsibility. Even if the Siṣyā cannot obtain Liberation (Mokṣā) in the present life, he must live in such a way that he secures a favourable rebirth in the next life, of such a kind that will contribute to his spiritual progress. If the rituals in Tantra taught by the Guru with techniques are not practiced properly, practitioners may harm themselves physically and mentally. In order to avoid these dangers, these practices are kept "secret" outside the teacher/student relationship. Secrecy and the commitment of the student to Guru are aspects of the THE DIVINE BOND that protects both the practitioner and the integrity of the teachings. Certain parts have to be communicated only from mouth to mouth in the line of Parampara, lineage.

5. Bharatanāṭyam & 6. Technique & style details

Bharatanāṭyam form of dance necessitates that the torso is held upright and all the dorsal, lumbar and anterior-posterior exercises strengthen the positions. It is quite obvious that 'Dance', if and when considered as a medium of divine pursuit bears a lot of resemblance or is rather derived from the same grounds as Tantra. Art expresses the dynamism and the rhythm of space – time, creating harmony by respecting the laws of numbers, obtaining balance and unity in diversity. The rhythm forges ahead into time and space and oversteps the limitations to savour eternity in absolute cadence. Nimble feet and buoyant attributes of the performer escalate the cadence and elicit ovation. It is divine in essence and aesthetic by nature. Rasānubhāva means the joyful outcome of dramatic enterprise. They are eight as enumerated in the Śāstras. The primordial place is occupied by Bhakti - bhāva Rasā. This with the emotional fervour of self-surrender makes the Nāṭya Sādhaka transport himself and others to the ecstatic reign of the supreme Self. In the presentation, there is imitation, mimicry, representation and also the expression of pure joy which is geometrically, visually, aesthetically appealing to and touching both the gross and subtle mind, senses and emotional states and finally as the dance develops, permeating throughout the spiritual realm.

“According to Bharata there are eight rasas and this was accepted till Udbhata the

first commentator on the Nāṭya Śāstra began to speak of rasas as nine in number. Bharata named the eight rasas as Śringara (erotic) Rasa, Hasya (humourous) Rasa, Bhayānaka (fearful) Rasa, Bibhatsa (odious) Rasa and adbhuta (wondrous) Rasa. Nandikeshvara mentions Śānta (peaceful) as the ninth rasa and today dancers accept nine rasas, which are known as Nava Rasas". [5]

The technique of Bharatanāṭyam includes

- 1 Abhinayā - dramatic art of story-telling in Bharatanāṭyam.
- 2 Nrityā- pure dance movements reflecting different rhythms of the universe.
- 3 Nrityā- combination of Abhinayā and Nrityā ,Expressional dancing.
- 4 Elements-

Bharata Nāṭyam also has three distinct elements to it: Nrityā (rhythmic movements of pure aesthetic value), Nrityā (movements in which abhinaya or expression is emphasized), and Nāṭya (dance with a dramatic aspect)

"Bharata's Nāṭya Śāstra describes in great detail the movements of the body. There are a hundred and eight Karanās, which are fundamental dance poses, upon which are based all the techniques of movement. Bharata says that the movements of the hand and foot should accord with those of the waist, the sides, the chest, the back and the abdomen. A Karanā is composed of the movement of the legs and the hands, which means naturally the body as a whole. Movements are either cāri (dynamic) or sthānaka (static)" [6]

Although most of the contemporary Bharatanāṭyam ballets are popularly viewed as a form of entertainment, the Nāṭya Śāstra-based dance styles were sacred Hindu ceremonies originally conceived in order to spiritually elevate the spectators. The symbolism of the dance of Śiva (in the form of Natarāja) is represented by "ānanda tāṇḍavam"-the joyful, ecstatic, blissful dance of the COSMOS.

Śiva's arms: One holds the "damaru", symbol of creation through the primordial

sound, one hand makes a blessing and protective gesture. In one, he holds the purifying fire, a symbol of transformation; with the other, he holds the serpent showing that He is the MASTER OF YOGA. While the sun and moon are His right and left eyes, His third eye – the Inner eye begets the fire of birth and dissolution. His left foot, lifted up, evokes liberation and salvation, while his right foot crushes the demon of ignorance and evil.

While this is the dynamic dancing Śiva, the meditative south-facing form of the eternal Guru-Dakshinamurthy delivers knowledge and wisdom and the Sātvik emotions of goodness and purity and above all this, He rises to finally bestow Moksha or salvation. This form again has the left foot rested on the right knee and the right foot crushes the demon.

While much of the discussion of music in the Nāṭya Śāstra focuses on musical instruments, it also emphasizes several theoretical aspects that remained fundamental to Indian music:

1. Śādja as the first, defining note of the scale. The word Śādja means 'giving birth to six', and refers to the fact that once this note (often referred to as "sa" and notated S) is fixed, the place of other notes in the scale get determined.

2. Principle of Consonance:

- a. The first principle states that there exists a fundamental note in the musical scale which is Avinashi and Avilopi that is, the note is ever-present and unchanging.

- b. The second principle states that there exists a natural consonance between notes; between Śādja and Tar Śādja, and between Śādja and Pancham.

3. The Nāṭya Śāstra also suggests the concepts of musical modes or jatis which are the origin of the notion of the melodic structures or rāgas. Their role in invoking emotions are emphasized; thus compositions emphasizing the notes gāndhāra

and rishabha notes are said to be related to tragedy (karunārasā) and evoking heroism (vīrarasā) respectively. The opening numbers take up rāgas like Hamsadwani, Nāttai, Saurāshtram, Telang etc. while the concluding ones are with rāgas such as Madhyamāvatī, Revatī etc.

Other elements - There are rāgas for various times of the day, the various seasons in Bharatanāṭyam, rāgas are chosen that can invoke rains, feed the hungry and so on. Music is usually Carnatic music of the south, but is nowadays common to use other styles, depending on the poems chosen ie- Hindustani based Ragas or tunes are taken for compositions of Northern saints like Mirabai, Tulsidas, Kabir, Surdas, Keshavdas, Namdev etc. and this only shows the versatility of this great dance form. There are several aspects of music, particularly its application to vocal, instrumental and orchestral compositions and how it deals with the rasās and bhāvās to be evoked.

Ensemble - Instruments for Bharatanāṭyam are more often found in the south than in the north. These include, the Mridangam flute, violin, veena, Ghatam and in some cases instruments like Tabla and Sitar are occasionally used these days.

Many commentaries have expanded the scope of the Nāṭya Śāstra; most importantly we may include Matanga's Brihaddesi, Abhinavagupta's Abhinavabharati and Sharngadeva's Sangita Ratnakara.. The structures of music outlined in the Nāṭya Śāstra retain their influence even today. The Nāṭya Śāstra mentions many musical concepts (including swara and tāla continue to be relevant to Carnatic music today. Carnatic music seems to be based largely on music concepts mentioned in Bharata's Nāṭya. Śāstra.

Highlighting the spiritual dimensions of music,

The Yajñavalkya Smṛiti mentions "Veena vadhana tathvangna sruti, jathi, visartha talanjaaprayasena moksha margam niyachathi", meaning that the one who is well versed in veena, one who has the knowledge of srutis and one who is skilled in tāla, attains salvation without doubt.

Costume – It is evident from ancient texts and sculptures that the original costumes were like heavenly dancing Apsarās. The medieval times, with the puritanistic drive resulted in the Devadāsīs wearing a heavy saree. But this often restricted free dance movements. The modern costumes are an asset to the performer, embellishing her style and personality and enhancing lyrical body movements.

The Dancers-A professional Bharatanāṭyam dancer must demonstrate a number of qualities. The true dance is connected to the beauty of the body, therefore any other dance is simply a parody. Bharata mentions of even the function of joints and articulation of movement. He is a master of the scientific principles of mass, speed, velocity, weight and above all energy which is what dance is all about. He has adhered to the notion of the five elements (bhūtas) and the Ayurvedic system of medicine and his analysis of characters and moods follows the division of human bodies as Pittā, Kaphā, Vāyu etc. These characteristics of the total human being will constitute the finesse of his art.

Nāṭya synthesizes the Vedas, upaniṣads, early speculative thought, the disciplines of Ayurveda, early Jyotiṣa and Ganita and the later developments in mythology, as evidenced in the Puranas. It predates all specific works in the arts of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance, and of course, poetry. The mention of Buddhist and Jaina monks makes it clear that the text is post-Bauddha and Jaina Tirthankaras (Mahavira).

“Exercises from head to foot are prescribed for each limb, based highly on kinetic principles. The students are expected to master these individual exercises and proceed to practicing combinations of movements of various limbs. These exercises are to be meaningfully utilized to convey ideas and more importantly, feelings. Physical expression is a part of human nature. The connection between the psyche and the physic is so intrinsic, that even the minutest vibration of the mind gets easily reflected through the body in daily life itself. For instance, nodding the head is part of human behaviour while reacting. The force, speed

and space of our pacing also reflect the inner composure and conflicts. The art of physical expression is hence beautifully conceived, classified and codified by Bharata, to artistically suit a dramatic representation” [7]

Nandikeswara’s Abhinayadarpanam describes Pātra Prāna Dasha Smrutaha - the ten essentials of the dancer: Javaha (Agility), Sthiratvam (Steadiness), Rechaka (graceful lines), Bhramari(balance in pirouettes), Drishtir (glance), Śramaha (hard work), Medha (intelligence), Śradda (devotion), Vacho (good speech), and Geetam (singing ability).

It is worth noticing that most of the contemporary Bharatanāṭyam dancers do not fully satisfy the criteria for a danseuse as stated in the scriptures.

At present, Bharatanāṭyam recitals are usually not performed inside the temple shrine but outside it, and even outside the temple compounds at various festivals.

7. Definition. Of Abhinaya

To understand properly the meaning of word Abhinaya, it is necessary to have clear notion about the nature and spirit of ancient Indian plays which are often called dramas. An ancient Indian play which is called in Sanskrit drasya or preksya – kāvya. Though it has some superficial resemblance to drama, there is a difference between Western drama and Sanskrit Nāṭya. The very word Drasya-Kāvya means a poem which is to be seen i.e a political composition capable of being enjoyed by its stage representation.

The word ‘Nāṭya’ which is derived from the root ‘Nat’ meaning to dance is indicating the nature of ancient Indian play in which rhythm and lyrical elements predominate. Realism in the ordinary sense had no place in ancient Indian plays and therefore, there was a lot of demand of spectators’ imagination.

The Sanskrit word ‘Abhinaya’ is made up of Abhi -towards and naya - to carry.

It means representing a play towards the spectators. It discloses to spectators the play by means of words, gestures, costumes and Sattva. Abhinaya is of four kinds:

1. Āngika : Body movement and gesture
2. Vācika : spoken words, songs and music
3. Āhārya : costumes and makeup
4. Sattvika : innermost emotional traits

- 1) Āngika – It denotes studied movement of the angas – heads, hand, waist, feet
- 2) Pratyangās – Shoulders, thighs, arms, neck, back, shanks and chest.
- 3) Upangās – eyes, eye brows, eyelid, eye balls, cheeks, nose, lips, tongue and chin.

Abhinaya means also suggesting the spectator the full aesthetic meaning of play by suitably reproducing along with its speech or song appropriate gestures codified for the purpose. Movement of hand should be in manner of that of the feet. The left hand should accompany the movement of left foot. Abhinaya and Nritya [pure dance] Hastās complement one another. Nritya Hastās are also enumerated in Nāṭya Śāstra.

Āhārya Abhinaya is denoted by costume and make up and it not of such a great importance in Nritya [expressional dancing] as in Nāṭya [drama]. This is because of the nature of classical Indian dances and drama. Each dance form has a specific costume different from that worn in daily life. Costumes are meant to give a realistic effect of representation. Bharata also refers the painting of limbs called Angaracana as type of costume and makeup.

This system of make up is still relevant to Kathakali. Here different characters have different colours and costumes depending upon colour psychology. In such cases, the make up and costume are symbolic rather than being realistic and is

meant to indicate nature and character. In Bharatanāṭyam, it is not symbolic and yet it has certain symbolism based on religious, symbolic aesthetics of dance style. The solo dancer is a nāyika finding her way for union with the nāyaka who is only a puruṣa or paramapuruṣa. Hence the dancer is a bride to God and hence she is always dressed so.

The Vāchika Abhinaya of nāṭya is where actors themselves use speech which is replaced by music which accompanies dance. In the nrittā portion, the accompaniments utilize tālās, interpreted through movements. In the abhinaya portion musical accompaniment consist mostly of poetry which is set to music and rhythm, which is interpreted by the dancer. The use of song and music instead of typical dialogues of nāṭya lead to dance a lyrical and poetic effect altered by speed or tempo. Dancer and singer cannot act independently of one another because the singer has to sing words relevant to the dance.

Sāttvika abhinaya is where the mind is the main actor. Any activity is united by mind. Sattva is something originating from mind and it is caused by concentration of mind. It's nature which includes horripilation (tears), loss of colour and light cannot be performed by an absent minded man. The sattva is desired in a play because of its imitative nature . The situation of happiness as well as misery should appear realistic.

The eight Sattvika states are:

1. Paralysis – called Stambhana
2. Perspiration (Sved)
3. Horripilation (romānca)
4. Change of voice (swarasāga)
5. Trembling (Vepathu)
6. Change of colour (vaivarnya)
7. Weeping (asru)
8. Fainting (pralaya)

Abhinaya does not mean the movement of the face or hand alone but pertains to the entire entity. Abhinaya is visible, bhava is invisible. Bharata says in Nāṭya Śāstra that these states are “sāttvi ka bhava”. Sāttva is invisible but it gives support to psychological states and sentiment. Motion produces emotion. The way in which you move influences emotion and it is involvement in the character and the story’s memory that influences right action on stage.

8. What is that entity called Rasā ?

It is Rasā because it is worthy of being tested (relished). How is Rasā worthy of being relished. How do these Rasās get their Rasatva ? It is said that it is impossible to reach the entire limit of the art of dance and drama. Since the lores are many and the arts and crafts are infinite , even one branch of the vast ocean of knowledge cannot be completed.

Rasās are eight in number – Śringāra (the erotic), Hāsya (Humorous), Karuna (Pathos), Raudra (Impetuous anger), Vira (heroic), Bhayanaka (terrible), Bibhatsa (the odious) and Adbhuta (the mysterious). These eight Rasās have been recounted by Brahma. Bhāvās (emotional fervour and State) are Sthāyi (permanently dominant), Sāncāri (moving or transitory) and Sattvaja (originating from the mind temperamental)

No meaning has any function without any relish thereof. The combination of Vibhāvas (Determinants) and Anubhāvās (consequents) together with Vyabhicāri Bhāvās (Transitory states) produce Rasā . Just as there is the production of good taste through the juice produced when different spices, herbs and other articles are pressed together so also Rasā (sentiment) is produced when various Bhāvās get together. Just as through molasses and other articles, spices and herbs, six kinds of tastes are produced so also the Sthāyi Bhāvās in combination with different Bhāvās attain the state of Rasā. The conception of Vibhāvās, Anubhāvās, Vyabhicari Bhāvās and the Sthāyi Bhāvās is extremely unique and

such deep study by Bharata Muni involves a lot of psychological experiments and analysis.

Audience and spectators relish the Bhāvās indicated by the gesticulation through verbal, physical, and temperamental activities and become delighted. Is the production and relish thereof of the Bhāvās from the Rāsās or that of the Rāsās from the Bhāvās? The Nāṭya Śāstra avers that relish of the Rāsās is from the Bhāvās and not of the Bhāvās from the Rāsās.

Dramatic experts call emotional fervour as Bhavas because they bring about the outcome of Rāsās by means of the impact of different Abhinayās. So the Bhāvās produce Rāsās in combination with Abhinayās. Bhāvās and Rāsās contribute to the mutual development.

Hāsyā (Humourous) Rasa originates from Śringāra, Karuna (Pathetic) from Raudra (Furious), Adbhuta (Marvellous) from Vira (Heroic) and Bhayanaka (Terrible) from Bibhatsa (Odious). The imitation of Śringāra is termed Hāsyā. The result of the activity of Raudra should be known as Karuna Rasa, the result of the activity of Vira is glorified as Adbhuta; The sight of the odious (Bibhatsa) transforms into Bhayanaka (terrible). The personal judgement of the actor derived with study of Hastalakshanas, is the main guiding factor in the selection of the hand gestures while acting.

Bharata also gives a critical judgement, valuable to dancers, ie -There is scanty movement of the hand gestures in the superior Abhinaya, medium sort of movement in the middling Abhinaya whereas there are profuse movements of these gestures in the ordinary Abhinaya. But, the artistes are at liberty to employ the hand gestures as appropriately or contrarily, in rare circumstances not use at all.

Rasā is a sentiment created by works of art. The purpose of art is to create a rāsa

which is not natural, ie-is stylized and, also not unnatural, ie- commonly felt; eg – Anger and Pathos. Art projects the humanity as divine and divinity as human.

The predominant emotion is the Sthāyi Bhāva or the durable psychological states which cause the experience of Rasā from a combination (samyoga) of determinance (vibhāva) and consequence (anubhāva) and various psychological states. (Vyabhichāri bhāvas).

The Bhāvas -

The Nāṭyasāstra identifies the first eight rasās with eight corresponding bhāvas.

- Ratī (Love)
- Hāsyā (Mirth)
- Sokā (Sorrow)
- Krodhā (Anger)
- Utsāhā (Energy)
- Bhayā (Terror)
- Jugupsā (Disgust)
- Vismayā (Astonishment)

Śṛṅgāram Rasā proceeds from the sthayi bhāva of rati. It has two types ie- union and separation. Sambhoga **Śṛṅgāram** arises from Vibhāvas such as enjoyment of a beautiful garden, company of a beloved person, seeing the beloved one, hearing his/her words or playing with him or her. It is expected to be represented on stage by anubhāvas such as intricate movement of eyes, eyebrows, delicate movement of hands, lips, sweet words and similar things. The Vyabhicāribhāvas exclude fear, cruelty, indolence and disgust. Vipralambā, **Śṛṅgāram** should be represented on stage by bhāvas such as fear, anger, jealous, fatigue, anxiety, drowsiness, sleep, dreaming, awakening, illness and fainting.

In the love songs, the protagonist is the nayika, usually demure and rarely unabashed.

It is said that taste (Rasā) results from a combination of various bhāvas with the durable psychological states. The Sthāyi bhava comes together with various other psychological states. The bhāvas alongwith different kinds of histrionic representation causes Rasā. Actually, there can be no rasā prior to bhāva and no

bhava without rasā ensuing from it. We can take the simile of a tree which grows from a seed and flowers and fruit from a tree. Hence , bhāvas exist as the source of rasā. The six types of Hāsyā Rasā are Smitā, Hasitā, Vihasitā, Upahasitā, Apahasitā, Atihasitā.

The Nāṭya Śāstra associates Rasās with deities with colours to be followed during choice of attire of the dancer or actor . It signifies the typical moods of these deities when represented either in sculpture or in performance.

Gods	Rasās	Colours
1. Viśnu	Śṛṅgāram	Syāma (lightgreen)
2. Pramathas (or) Ganesha	Hāsyam	White
3. Yamā	Karuṇam	Grey
4. Rudrā	Raudram	Red
5. Brahmā	Adbhutam	Yellowish
6. Kāla	Bhayānakam	Black
7. Bahakāla	Bībhatsam	Blue
8. Indrā	Vīram	Yellow

9. The inter-relation in the branches of both streams

Analyzing the practices in Tantrā and Nāṭya it is clear that they are closely related. In Songs like Melaprāpti, invocatory rites done with materials used in worship are symbolically represented during dance like concrete and abstract pictures of the same.

“The brain (medha) is called the reservoir of Brahman, the human body is the citadel of man. Because Brahman resides in this citadel of the human body, it is called purusa (man)’ (AV X.2). Yoga is the yoking and joining of these levels in an ascending order – a movement from the physical to the metaphysical. The

Natyasastra implies, although it does not explicitly state, a theory of aesthetics. Explicitly, Bharata speaks of artistic expression and communication. The concept of rasa cannot be understood fully without taking into account the larger background of the speculative thought of the Upanisads. Without explicitly stating it, Bharata makes it clear that what he has set out to do is to present a universe of name and form (nama and rupa) of the physical, the mortal, of the body, senses and speech (vak), which will match speculation and meditation, ritual and sacrifice. “ [8]

In tantra, one delves deeply into the macrocosm and into the micro orbits of forces. Even if we insist on being rational, divine experience is not going to change according to our logic; rather our logic must interpret this to understand true existence .

In Bharatanatyam ,the body is trained and dance is practiced only to be forgotten about and to dance as if no one is watching you. **The meaning of ‘tāla’ is dissolution and this is significant indeed .** How can dance experience be thus a communication with the eternal, beyond or beneath the ephemeral, truly mystical in nature? It is best answered by dancers themselves because unless one tastes the sugar, how would one know its sweetness? When the Ahārya is donned, there is pan- avatarhood – a descent from the top into the body and psyche of the dramatist /dancer, especially the legendary characters and the actor gets transformed in appearance and his consciousness expands. Simultaneously, the audience is on an ascent towards the same realm and gradually both actor and audience meet ‘there’. That is why, we need not be of any particular religion alone to understand Bharatanātyam or to enjoy Sufi music or any dance -drama. The meeting ground of the performer and the spectator or the listener is a world of its own a pure realm of the spiritual, bereft of caste, creed, religion or even language at times. The flow between the two entities is the energy of Rasā and the union is Ananda. For this state of uninterrupted and untainted Rasā, the foreground certainly would have to be a Sahrudaya Prekshaka, who has an open

heart to receive without bias, prejudice or mis-conception and an enlightening, competent, intense and soulful actor, dancer or musician.

“Bharata’s knowledge and competence of practical details and consciousness of team-work are impressive. He has, indeed, created a s̄astra of prayoga, a framework of principles of ‘praxis’ or practice. The names of sages include Atreya, Vasistha, Angiras, Agastya, Manu, Visvāmitra, Jamadagni, Markandeya, Bharadvaja, Vālmiki, Kanva and many others. They are all creators of many branches of knowledge. Bharata goes further here and equates the sound of the nandi to the exposition of the Vedic mantrās, the music to a holy bath and repetitive recitation (japā)”. [9]

The relation of rituals to Nāṭya can be observed through the commonality of devotional songs called Bhajans (written primarily from the 14th-17th centuries), Kirtanams (devotional songs), and Aarti that are sometimes sung in conjunction with the performance of the pūjā. The human body is certainly one piece of classic engineering designed to enable positive physical and mental and above all spiritual enhancement. It is well upon the individual to understand, utilize and then usher in great sense of fulfillment. The Lord Supreme has gifted us this wonderful yantra -our body and we have to neither pamper nor neglect it but to generate, nurture and promote it’s well-being. This key factor is noticed both in the practice of Tantra and Nāṭya. The connection between the two-Tantra and Nāṭya -the latter employs the body and the various qualifying and embellishing costumes, ornaments and accessories like stage - crafts, sets, properties, make-up instead of the former’s Yantras. Devotional songs and melodious - rhythmic chants are rendered in the latter while Japās, Homās, Mantrās are an essential feature of the former. The shackles and barriers of the physical and material are destroyed and the Sādhaka transcends to a divine realm and with him also the closely empathizing groups of people like the sahrudaya prekshakas.

Rasa, the aesthetic enjoyment is realized when the life forces and dramatic stories are first appropriated within and then transmitted across to the world around -the

Rasikās, Bhaktās as and others, in creative, ecstatic and emancipatory ways. But as in any other field, a lot depends ultimately on the dedicated ‘Sadhana’ and devotional temperament whether Tantra or Nātya. ‘Prose, poetry, literature used in Nātya are substituted by Māntric incantations, rendered several times in a normal audible manner, sometimes as a solemn recitation and at other times, within the mind in order to emphasize physical silence and raise the spiritual contemplation. The consecration of the Sanskrit drama playhouse too followed the ritualistic consecration before construction of temples or places of worship, propitiation to the natural elements and respective deities to ward off obstacles and calamities. Offering obeisance to the Nātyacārya by the Śishyas is also traditional and obligatory, as in Tantra practice where the Guru’s Pāda pooja and Archana is conducted.

Teacher-student lineage is indispensable and this traditional cycle is maintained with devotion and passed on [student becoming fit to assume the role of ‘preceptor’] for all beneficial purposes which ensures the continuity for such divine traditions. Thus Tantra shares many similarities with Nātya Yoga.

Analyzing the practised form of Tāntric worship, a kind of meditative dance can be already discovered on close examination. Traces of subtle ‘Abhinaya’ and very mild ‘Nritya’ with geometric body movements can be noticed. But the methods are far more demanding in terms of repeated intense oblations, worship and ritualistic practices. Nātya worship is varied with Vyāyāmas, Adavus, Karanas and follows the Ashtakarana lakshanās or characteristics for a good Nartaki, Nātaka and Sādhaka. Tantras mudras are few - Nātya Hastās are varied. ‘Viniyogās’, the practical uses of both mudrās and hastās are many. The healing potential of hands in both cases is developed.

A Tantra paradigm, Nātya also treated here as one such paradigm, exemplifies conception of supreme personality of God, the dual aspect when the God himself becomes the Universe beyond Purusha and Prakriti - the complete, WHOLE, an undivided ‘one’. The dancer, ultimately, would become the dance or the danced.

Though 'Advaita' is the base, dance has to indeed enlighten others for which the path of Bhakti has to be experienced and extrapolated.

Yet another important common aspect is the broadbased spectra generously giving sanction to all castes - varies and creed and both the sexes to practice these Śāstrās provided they have the required potential and dedication. This is unlike other vedic practices which are only open to Brāhmaṇa castes.

In Tibetan Buddhism, a branch of Mahayāna Buddhism is vajrayana or tantrayana. Transgression like consumption of meat or alcohol and ritualized sex with a consort is a part of Sādhana. Dattatreya who is considered by some as the creator of Tantra is visualized as the Unity of the Trinity - Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva, surrounded by four dogs, representing the Vedas and his female coherent principle. Śakti is behind him with whom he is free to enjoy coition. Here, we notice that the portrayal of a deity as a common man (to make it easy for identification with devotees) is a feature in both Tantra and Nāṭya. The latter in the form of Bharatanatyam has several dance songs which treat the Lord as a loving husband or even as one who has committed breach of faith etc.

It would be refreshing to closely watch the audience reacting to a play and understand what transpires in their 'being' there. This exercise can convince one and all about the power in the medium of theatre encouraging music, dance, drama with all the elements of the enterprise. One can deny or dislike each others' Gods, each other's nature or any issue in the world but the case in question is -Can one ever deny the existence of one's own self?.

"By side with the practical meaning, but one must not forget that, while the mystical experience is perfect fullness, in which the knots of "I" and "mine" are already completely undone, in the aesthetic experience the process of undoing has only just begun. Often a man, says Kalidasa in a stanza quoted by Abhinavagupta, "in the act of admiring in happiness beautiful shapes or listening

to sweet sounds, feels in himself a keen disquiet. Does he, perhaps, recall, in his soul, affections of past lives, deep within his spirit without his knowledge?" The disquiet to which Kalidasa alludes, is, observes Abhinavagupta, an unobjectified desire; it corresponds to what is, metaphysically, the desire which induces consciousness to deny its original fullness and to crumble in time and space. The religious and the aesthetic experience spring from the same source. A Kashmiri like his forerunners, Abhinavagupta unified the scattered voices of earlier philosophers into a masterful synthesis, embracing philosophical speculation and mysticism as well as aesthetics". [10]

Despite the differences in practice and pathways, all religions unite on the fundamentals of ethics, moral values and conduct. It is because man cannot deny that he is in essence tilted towards the good, the aesthetic, the appealing, the cause of love and happiness. It is the contradiction between the and practice which results in chaos , sorrow and hatred. This point helps us to even relate the ninth added on Rasā of Śānta to Śringāra or Love, the first in the Navarasās. We begin with love and go to other emotional states and dissolve into peace. This peace is also akin to love, but not narrow in the sense of being just loving your beloved ones but penetrating all over, embracing the whole as a Buddha or a Christ or a Krisna would do in the entirety. It is not an a exaggeration to suggest that be it dance or music, the shoot off to the astral world is a plunge into the axis of eternity itself, impossible to fathom its depth, width or even identity.

"Traditional western science practices what Skolimowski calls a "yoga of objectivity" in which scientists are trained for many years to view the world in an objective, analytical, and detached way. In contrast to this yoga of objectivity, in which the scientist separates himself from what is being observed, the yoga of participation would have a scientist learn by identifying with what he observes". [11]

Tantra is widely recognized to be a system rejecting the orthodoxy of brahmanism and the hierachy of the caste system. It has to be noted that phenomenon normally considered impure and immoral are accepted and even utilised in

transgressional practises, to further spiritual evolution.

“Well, says A.G.here, this theory is also true if it is interpreted in the light of the vijñānavāda, the idealistic Buddhism, according to which everything that exists is pure consciousness or perception”. [12]

Hence we can gather that the physical entity, the body form is never negated but it rather used as a Vāhana - a vehicle that promotes to spiritual awakening. The embellishment of the body as an Apsara, the use of Āharya and Āṅgika (with its ancillaries and auxiliaries) Abhinaya at the relevant places are all integral part of Nāṭya. In Tantra, gratification of senses and material needs without arousing limits of perversity have a definite purpose and meaning too.

The origin of Nāṭya being one of religious spirit and the fact that Indian dance forms started from temples makes it natural for this to consist of religious and spiritual allegorical presentations primarily. Although it's significance according to the Nāṭya Śāstra is linked to life representation encompassing nature, beauty and various characters; it's 'sine qua non' is the sublime unification of individual and Universal spirit. The common coining of Nāṭya Yoga as synonymous with dance forms such as Bharatanāṭyam is since ages , not without sufficient ground. The dance experiment leads to an incomparable experience. 'Nat' means to act. A Nāṭya exponent represents histrionically, various characters, situations, stories, emotions, events, legends, epics, heroes, heroines and so on. The presentation is an 'acting' combined with dance & music. The objective is to spread knowledge, educate and enlighten the people with added attraction of melody, rhythm, dance and drama. Most of the performed dance lyrics are popular verses of saint poets of later times like the Bhakti cult era. Sanskrit plays of ancient origin, devotional songs and Nāṭya repertoire songs composed by eminent classical musicians are rampantly used for dance and drama performances. Other than these are dance-drama presentations of adapted passages or chapters from Śāstras, Vedās and Āgamās. The great epics and few Upanishads have also found their place in dance and drama presentations. There is also an inherent principle in dance or drama which weaves an already written or a newly created story. The sutradhar

in sanskrit plays would render the rhetoric at the prologue like a minstrel, exhibiting his interlocutory talents with intonation. The sets and properties of the stage work as catalysts. The purvaranga dance involves movements bordering the peripheral space with centrifugal and centripetal actions inter alia.

The scientific procedure in Phalaprap̥ti [results attained] are that the Nāyaka exerts himself in this endeavour with Ārambha (beginning) Prayatna, (endeavour), Prāptisambhāvana (possibility of attainment), Niyatāpti (certainty of the achievement) and Phalaprap̥ti (Actual realization of the purpose). These five stages have five corresponding Arthaprakritis (elements of the plot). They are (a) Bija (seed) (b) Bindu (prominent point) (c) Patāka (the episode) (d) Prakāri (episodial incident) and the Kārya (denouncement).

Tradition and history tracing back to the offering of Nātya by Śiva and Pārvatya themselves to the sage Bharata as the fifth Veda [having been designed by Brahma] are the origin but yet the outlook is amazingly modern. This reflects the broad-mindedness and practical character of Bharata who had himself gathered the eternal truth and wisdom of Nātya from the Cosmic dancing divine couple - Śiva and Pārvathy.

Dramatic performances in India can trace their origin to religious rites and festivals. The early beginnings were dances and songs of eulogy by way of honouring Siva and other deities. In course of time the range of subject matter got extended beyond the exploits of the deities concerned and the legends centering around those deities. The occasion for the dramatic performance was usually some religious festival, the coronation of a king, celebration of his victory over enemies or some such important event in the life of the people. Nātya Gruhās and Mandirās were in vogue. These were open halls in front of the temples. The many images and statues found in Hindu temples are fashioned and worshiped according to the rules prescribed in Tāntric texts.

The Nāṭya Śāstra is the most authoritative text for Nāṭya and its various terminologies like Nrīta, Abhinaya, Nrītya and types of Abhinaya, Vrīttis, Dharmis, Nadai -Jāti, etc. proves that the entire Śāstra is extremely definitive but yet provides ample scope for elaboration, picturization, improvisation and versatility to the artistes who have to flow with tidal changes in culture, society and environment.

The essence of Tantra, which means a fabric, is connectivity of inner self to the vastness of the Universe and the subtleties prevalent in the cosmic energies. It requires tuning in the range of one's vibration alongside the higher levels of the cosmos. Indian art, including painting, sculpture and architecture, has a basis in Hindu mythology which Tantrā shares. The essence of natya is -.

“Nartanam nrītam gātrānam āṅgopāṅgam, vīṣṇo na tu kenacit kartavyam. The dance of Śiva is the natural expression of his complete and perfect bliss, free of all obstacles (nirvāṇa=nirvighna) : saṅkarasya bhagavataḥ paripurnānandānirbharaḥ bhūtadehocaladantarānirvarasandarakarasya”. [13]

Tantra is allied with all forms of art in India. Stories of Śiva and Devī, popular in Tāntric teachings, are the basis of Indian music and dance. Śiva, known as Natarāja, the Lord of the Dance performs tāṇḍava. The Goddess has her own special gentle dance called the lāsya.

Tantra is a kind of science, a way of knowledge both for understanding the outer world and the inner psyche. Tantra is based on and closely allied with the various traditional sciences of India and Nāṭya is implicitly referred to as Nāṭya tantra as well as Nāṭya Upaniṣad by commentators who have understood the intrinsic value and meaning of Nāṭya. Indian philosophical thinking reached its highest peak in the writings of Abhinavagupta. Resounding with music and dance and surrounded by bands of Yoginis and Siddhas, is the image of Abhinavagupta as a Tāntrika and Yogi, teacher and artist. “The notions of Śabda, Nāda and Nāṭya,

dhvani and Rasā acquire in Abhinavagupta a characteristic depth on account of their suggestive reverberations within the grand philosophical universe he helped to systematize and elaborate.”[14]

Like Veda, the study of Nāṭya has three sections. This mirrors the growth and development of the dancer in the spiritual realm. The first section of the study contains expressions of wonder, joy, ecstasy at the visions of beauty in exuberance of dance. The nature of Nāṭya girdled with the gorgeous Alankaras makes hearts dance in an extravagant expression of pure joy. Once the grassroots take the shape of a sapling, then the plant possesses majesty, dynamism, harmony and now a mission has been added. In the second section of the course of study, the ritualistic aspects, background of Nāṭya, theoretical proofs for everything is learnt and the intensified practice develops one into a Sādhaka with enough mastery. Later, he begins to share this tool and expertise with efficacy through performances and imparting training.

Towards the close of the second phase and the start of the last phase, true understanding of Nāṭya ensues as a potential to completely blossom into another fruit-bearing tree, representing an ethos, a tradition, a culture, worthy of being called as Guru. The one who had first sat at the feet of a Guru has now become another Guru who carries an illustrious task ahead. The scriptures will be read, re-read, understood, passed on others with knowledge and wisdom alike. The glory that is dance, the celebration that is dance, the essence that is dance can be lead by example by one who has realized through self-experience. The graph moves from learning, to performing, to assimilating, to achieving, to GIVING another ray of light. All these activity cycles signify a holistic atmosphere and augment aesthetic insight and even telepathic experiences. The brain waves of ordinary people during insight experiences, and of psychics when their information is accurate are unique as they are in special states .

“ Like a true Yogi, who has a unified control of body and mind, he is able to

analyze and make us appreciate the aesthetic value of the kinetics of the human physique as well as its relationship with the psyche. Abhinavagupta's was obviously a period which cared for truth and beauty and where it came from had no relevance, for the basic realization was that the whole earth is itself a manifestation of Lord Śiva as seen in the third introductory verse of Abhinavabhāratī. [15]

Indeed, Nāṭya practice is a kind of Tantra practice. Analyzing the processes and practices, it is certain that the underlying principles of unity in diversity and harmonious balance are maintained. A scholarly summary of the treatise on dramaturgy has been given herein-

“.....Is a pointer towards the primary and fundamental requirement of the eschewing of personal 'ego' and pride of the artist. This is the message of the curse on Urvashi to descend to earth when she said 'Pururavas' instead of 'Purushottama' in a performance at Indra's court. But all said and done, the creative act is a mystery and there are many aspects which are secret. (chapter XXVI, 9, 10, 11, etc). To briefly sum up, the sequential movement of the text is along the circumference of a circle with an unseen but real centre and point. Chapters I, II, III, IV and V are one group, where spatial and temporal relations are outlined. Chapters VI and VII are a second group, where life is abstracted into a spectrum of rasa, bhava and their variations. Chapters VIII, IX, X, XI, XII and XIII deal with all aspects of body-language. Chapter XIII comes as a pause to concretize the methodology of transforming space to place on the stage. Chapters XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII and XIX deal with all aspects of the verbal, sound and speech (vacika). Another major pausation occurs with chapters XX and XXI which deal with the structure of drama, types of plays and multilayered movement of the plot. Time is the concern. Chapters XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV and XXVI constitute another group which deals with matters to the other two instrumentalities of expression, costuming and décor (XXIII) and sattvika (XXIV). Matters which are of a general nature are considered in chapter XXII, on styles (vrttis), pervasive matters in the second half of chapter XXIV, on samanyabhinaya

and citrabhinaya (mixed or pictorial, XXVI) and gender-relationships (XXVII). There is another pause to consider dramatic success and achievements. Chapters XXVIII, XXIX., XXX, XXXI, XXXII and XXXIII are devoted to music. These are followed by two chapters on distribution of roles and organization (XXXIV and XXXV), and in the chapter XXXVI the circle is completed by returning to the origin of drama and its descent from the heavens.” [16]

Today, Nāṭya has penetrated the modern society, breaking social, religious, regional and language barriers and has appealed to people from all nations. We need to recreate a more dharma-oriented artistic tradition and use the image as a way of sacred art. Tāntric art can show us how to do this. Tantra provides a structured, systematic and orderly conception of art based upon an understanding of the occult and spiritual laws of the universe, represented by various symbols. In the third chapter, we shall study the place of **symbolism** in THE SUGGESTIVE, yet EXPRESSIVE Nāṭya and THE MYSTERIOUS, yet PALPABLE Tantra.

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Chapter - III

Place of Symbolism and it's relevance

1. Place of Symbolism and it's relevance

The term - Symbol signifies a Mudrā, a Seal or a Mark with certain meaning. In the term “Mudrā” lies concealed, an expression or idea through a suggestive pose or posture of the body or a limb, depicting an ocean of wisdom underlying the same. Shri Śāṅkaracharya held the “Bhadra Mudra”, [tip of the forefinger on the thumb] before disciples to clear their doubts and reveal the ultimate Truth. He was silent during eloquent speech !

“A mass of ideas are composed into one mark or symbol, and the history of a nation or the legend of a life, can be read through it. The raising of a forefinger in anger against another creates fear in his mind, and he attempts to run away to save his life, unless he is capable of effectively retaliating, in which case the former would have thought twice before raising his finger against him. A man makes himself better understood by signs and symbols and, if language fails to prove his case or cause, he establishes the same through movements of his limbs or to supplement or emphasize his arguments. This science has developed into Tantra Śāstra, and the Tāntrics are adepts in this art and achieve their ends through the practice of Mudrās. In Kerala there is a highly developed folk-dance called Kathakali, wherein the different characters effectively play their parts and communicate with each other, only through Mudrās or Symbols and not through words”[1].

Śāṅkaracharya was a great devotee of Parāśakti-Rajarājeswari- the Mother of Literature, Fine Arts and Spiritual Wisdom. In his “Soundarya Lahiri” he invokes

the mother in her various powers and faculties through praises and adulations. The first sixtyfour verses of Soundarya Lahiri- which means intoxication by beauty and personal charm –are to be represented by the sixty-four “Cakrās” starting from “Swastipadma”. The greatest of them is the “Sri Cakrā” in the centre of which resides Rājarājeswari, the bestower of spiritual light and wisdom. Lalitā is one of the forms of Durgā represented by the intersection of innumerable triangles both upright and inverted, and in the middle of which is the “Bindu”, is her seat of creative power and propagation. Each “Cakrā” is symbolic of the forms of gods and goddesses and the centre of each crossing triangle is symbolic of the seat of emanation of light and wisdom. This “Tantra Śāstra”, has to be learnt from the traditional scholars. The Science of Forms and Figures known as “Yantra Śāstra”, depicts the forms as geometrical figures, each one with its intense implications and meanings capable of deeper interpretations. While physical sciences are with reference to known realities, Mantra, Tantra, and Yantra Śāstras are dealing with unmanifest realities and the immense potentialities of Nature. According to Nāṭya Śāstra principles, The human body is the noumenon of the Cosmos and the various powers of nature can be developed within this body through the help of, Asanās and Upāsanās based on, the Mantra, Tantra and Yantra Śāstras. It is said that the concentration of the mind at a single point is nuclear in its effect and powers can be developed and invoked either for constructive purposes or even destructive as is seen sometimes. Kerala, Karnataka and Bengal have made tremendous studies and progress in these branches of science. The Chinmudra which Lord Dakshinamurthy holds in his hand teaches us that our ego which is concentrated on the index finger must bend and that our individuality must end as represented by the symbol ‘Zero’ which the index finger produces when it bends and touches the middle of the thumb in the Mudra.

2. Lalitā Tripurasundari, the Red Goddess

Vidya means knowledge, specifically female knowledge, or the goddess, and in

this context relates to her aspect called Śrī, Lalitā or Tripurasundari whose magical diagram is called the Śrī Yantra. She is a red flower, so her diagram is a flower too.

The t̃āntrik tradition views its symbols as having a gross aspect, a subtle aspect, and a supreme aspect. In terms of Lalitā, the gross form is the image of the goddess with her four arms, the subtle form is the yantra, and the supreme form is her mantra, all three being the goddess in different aspects. The colourful symbolism indicates deep wisdom coupled with practical methods for realizing Lalitā who loves pujā. There can be various pujās including daily rites, those performed at the four twilights, rites done for specific objects, optional rites done on festival days, auspicious days rites in assemblies, and rites accomplished with a partner.

Lalitā means She Who Plays. All creation, manifestation and dissolution is considered to be a play of Devi or the goddess. Mahātripurasundari is her name as transcendent beauty of the three cities, a description of the goddess as conqueror of the three cities of the demons. Every aspect of Devi has her own mantra and yantra. The yantra of Devi Lalitā is Śrī Yantra. The divinity of the yantra always occupies the centre position or apex.

The different parts or petals and lines of the yantra are usually arranged in concentric circles (mandalās) and contain the rays of the goddess. The Shri Yantra has nine of these mandals, each filled with various aspects of the Devi which are totally 111. The Śrī Yantra is said to be a geometric form of the human body, which implies the goddess as Macrocosm being one with human being as Microcosm.

3. Formation of the Śrī Yantra

The creation of the Śrī Yantra is described in the Yogini Hridaya (Heart of the Yogini Tantra). This is said to be the second part of the Vāmakeshvara Tantrā.

Prayer-

“Dear One, Tripura is the ultimate, primordial Śakti, the light of manifestation. She, the pile of letters of the alphabet, gave birth to the three worlds. At dissolution, She is the abode of all tattvās, still remaining Herself - Vāmakeshvaratantra .” [2]

“ From the fivefold akti comes creation and from the fourfold Fire dissolution. The sexual union of five Śaktis and four Fires causes the chakrā to evolve. O Sinless One! I speak to you of the origin of the chakrā.” [2 a]

"When she, the ultimate Śakti, of her own will (svecchaya) assumed the form of the universe, then the creation of the chakrā revealed itself as a pulsating essence. From the void-like vowels with the visarga emerged the bindu, quivering and fully conscious. From this pulsating stream of supreme light emanated the ocean of the cosmos, the very self of the three mothers.....

The baindava of the chakrā has a triple form, dharmā, adharmā and ātma, and mātri, meya and pramā. The chakrā of nine yonis is the great mass of consciousness bliss and is the ninefold chakrā and the nine divisions of the mantra.....

The baindava is placed on a dense flowery mass and is the Chitkala. Similarly, the ambika form of eight lines is the circle of the vowels. The nine triangles quiver forth the effulgent form of 10 lines. The Śakti, together with her surrounding nine blossomed forth the 10 trikonās. The second quivering form of 10 lines has Krodhisha as first of the 10. These four chakrās, of the nature of light, create the 14-fold form, the essence of perception.” [2 b]

Unless the yantra be decorated with the appropriate bija mantra and other mantras, it is worthless. It is also dead unless it is installed with life and the individual doing the puja is initiated into the tradition.

“4. The Mandalās of the Śhri Yantra

The Earth Square or Bhupura

This mandalā represents the walls that enclose the practitioner. The three lines



of the bhupura of Śri Yantra each has a set of sub-limbs of the goddess. On the outer line are the eight world protectors (lokapālas), the guardian spirits of the directions and intermediate directions.

On the middle line are eight Siddhi Śaktis identified with the senses. On the inner line are eight Śaktis ruling Desire, Anger, Envy, Delusion, Greed, Jealousy, Virtue and Vice. They are the eight Mātrikās. These saktis are collectively known as the 'Percieved' ' (Prakata Yoginis)'. A form of the Devi known as Tripura rules all these shaktis in this mandala of the yantra known as 'The Cakrā Ruling the Three Worlds'. She has four arms, is the colour of crystal, is adorned with pearls and holds a book, a pot, and a beautiful lotus. her Vidyā is 'Am Am Sauh'.

Outer line has Indra (East) wears yellow, rides an elephant; Agni (South East) wears red, rides a ram; Yama (South) wears black, rides a buffalo; Nirriti (South West) wears dark green; Varuna (West) wears blue, and his vehicle is a crocodile; Vāyu (North East) wears pale clothes; Soma (North) wears pure white; Ishāna

(North East) is a form of Mahādeva Śiva, rides a bull.

Middle Line contains the Siddhi Śaktis who are smeared with vermilion, wear red garlands, carry noose and goad, and are as bright and beautiful as red lotuses.

Inner Line has the nine Narayanayees. Brahmāni wears yellow, has four arms, is beautiful. One hand dispels fear, one grants boons, and carries a jewelled jar for purification. The three eyed Māhesvari wears white, holds trident, skull, axe, and a vessel of curds. Kaumāri wears yellow, holds shakti-the weapon, Javelin, and makes the gestures of dispelling fear and granting boons. Vaishnavi is dark in colour, holds conch, discus, lotus and grants boons. Vārāhi wears many ornaments and gems. She has the head of a wild boar, holding plough, mace, sword and shield. Aindrani is black and brilliant with a thousand eyed crown of lightning, carrying a bright blue lotus. Shivadooti is terrifying in form. Cāmunda is black, holds trident and damaru (the drum), holds axe, and skulls as garland.

The gem is topaz. The time is 24 minutes (360 breaths). The Mudrā is the 'All Agitating'.

5. Mandala of Sixteen Petals

The Śaktis in this circle are 'Hidden'.

The whole mandala of 16 petals is called 'Fulfiller of Desire'. The presiding form of the Lalitā is Tripureshi. Her 'vidya' is 'Aim Klim Sauh'. She is described as ornamented with all gems, carrying a book and a rosary. The 16 yoginis in this mandala are associated with the attainment of desires by the cultivation or strengthening of power over mind, ego, sound, touch, sight, taste, smell, intellect, and other invigorating qualities. They are described as the 'Nitya Kālās'. They hold a noose, a goad, nectar, and gestures of giving. They are bright red in colour. The gem of the mandalā is sapphire. The time is three hours (2700 breaths). The Mudrā is the 'Wetting' Mudrā.

6. Mandala of Eight Petals

The Śaktis in this mandalā are called the 'Secretive'. The whole circle of eight petals is called the

'All Exciting Chakrā'. Presiding deity is Tripura Sundari. Her 'vidyā' is 'Hrim Klim Sauh'. She is described as love intoxicated and her eyes are full of bliss.

She smiles and shows the mudrās dispelling fears and granting boons – Abhaya and Varada Mudrās.

The eight saktis in each of the eight petals of the mandalā potent with Speech, Holding, Walking, Excreting, Pleasure, Abandoning, Concentration and Detachment. They are described as sapphire blue, and holding blue lotus. Their names (Ananga Madana etc) all convey terms of love and sexuality.

The gem is cat's eye. The time is day and night (21600 breaths).

7. Mandala of Fourteen Triangles

This mandalā is called 'The Chakrā Bestowing All Good Fortune'. The Yoginis are called 'Concealed by Tradition'. The presiding form of the devi is Tripura Vāsini. Her 'vidyā' is 'Haim Hklim Hsauh'.

She is red and beautiful. Fourteen Śaktis of the triangles are associated with the chief 'nadis' or currents of bioenergy. They are the 'Akarshanis' or Attractors.

The gem is coral. The time is weekday. The Mudrā is called 'All Subjugating'.

8. Outer 10 Triangles

This mandalā is called 'The Chakrā Bestowing All Objects'. The Śaktis are called the 'Kula Kaulas'.

The presiding deity is Tripura Śrī. Here, the goddess is as effulgent as 1000 rising Suns, adorned with celestial ornaments and holding book.

The 10 Śaktis in the triangles are described as having joyful faces, holding noose

and goad and adorned with various crystal and heavenly gems.

These are the Yoginis of the 10 vital breaths. The gem is pearl. The time is Lunar Day (tithi).

The Mudrā is called the 'All Intoxicating with Love'. Inner 10 Triangles

The mandalā is called 'The Chakrā Protecting All'. The Yoginis are called

- 'Without Origin'. The presiding aspect of Lalitā is Tripura Mālini. Her vidya is 'Hrim Klim Blem'.

She holds noose and goad, dispels fear, and holds a skull. She is like vermilion in brightness.

Her Śaktis are the colour of 1000 rising suns, adorned with pearls and gems, holding noose, chisel, and showing the gestures of knowledge. They are the saktis of the 10 Vital Fires. The gem is emerald. The time is Lunar Fortnight. The Mudrā is the 'Great Goad'.

9. Eight Triangles

This mandala is called 'The Chakra Destroying all Disease'. The yoginis are known as the 'Secret' or 'Rahasya'. The presiding aspect of the Red Goddess is Tripura Siddha.

Her vidya mantra is 'Hrim Shrim Sauh'. She is described as the Destroyer of Poison.

Her yoginis are the colour of pomegranate flowers, wearing red clothes, smeared with red scent, each carrying five arrows and a bow. These saktis are the rulers of Cold, Heat, Happiness, Sorrow, Desire, and the three gunas Sattvas, Rajas, Tamas. They are also called the eight Vāsinis and rule the eight Sanskrit letter groups. The gem in this mandala is diamond (Vajra). The time is month. The Mudrā is Khecari Mudrā.

10. The Four Weapons

In between the mandalās of eight triangles and the central triangles are the four weapons of the Red Goddess -- flowery bow, flowery arrows, noose and goad.

Central Triangle

This mandalā is called 'The Chakrā Giving All Success'. The Yoginis are called 'Very Secret'. Lalita dwells here as Tripura Ambā, her Vidyā being 'Hsraim Hsrklm Hrsauh'.

She is also known as 'Sampatprada Bhairavi, coppery effulgent, like 1000 suns, with three eyes, a face like the moon, adorned with white gems, with a beautiful figure, rising swelling breasts, intoxicated, wanton, young, proud, holding book, dispelling fear, holding a rosary and granting boons.'

Her three Śaktis are called Kāmeshvari, Vajreshi and Bhāgamalini. Kāmeshvari is called the Rudra Śakti, Vajreshi is the Viṣṇu Śakti, Bhagamalini is the Brahma Śakti.

The gem of the mandala is 'Gomaya.' The time is season (two months). The Mudrā is the 'Bija' 'Mudrā. Bindu Mandala

This mandalā is called 'Purely Blissful'. The Yogini in this mandalā is the



Queen of Queens, Rājarājeshvari, the Very Red One, her Transcendent Majesty 'Lalita Māheshvari Mahātripurasundari'.

Her vidya (Kāmarāja vidyā) is 'ka e i la hrim ha sa ka ha la hrim sa ka la hrim', and another secret 16th syllable. Her description is that given in 'Vāmakeshvara Tantra'.

Surrounding her are the Fifteen Nityās. The gem is ruby. The time is year. The mudrā is Yoni Mudrā.

11. Yantra Mantra Tantra of Lalitā

Lalitā, as primordial devi, rays out her attendants and shaktis as modifications of moon, sun and fire. In this Śiva has no place, no qualities, is without the ability to act. Only when united with devi may 'he' act. Without the 'e' denoting Śakti, Śiva is only a Śave – a corpse.

This is based on the subtle and practical idea of Śiva as pure consciousness, witness of the triple manifestation of his Śakti. This Śakti, the very essence of the three gunas of Sattvas, Rajas, and Tamas, is the cause of all manifestation in the universe and as a human being. The three shaktis, by blending and reblending, create all things.

Śakti is triple as sun, moon and fire – She is everything – all of the sidereal constellations and planets, and therefore of Time itself. She is triple as Will (Iccha), Knowledge (Jñāna) and Action (Kriya). She is threefold as intellect, feelings, physical sensation.

Śakti is triple as wake-dream-deep sleep. She is Omkara Rupini, Anandadayini, Akāra, Ukāra, Makāra Rupini. What is called the Fourth is the witness, Śiva, who is said to pervade the whole cosmos just as heat pervades a red hot iron.

The physical body, according to the precepts of Ayurveda, is triple as the 'humours' Vata, Pitta and Sleshma. The varying combinations of these three Śaktis make up the physical body.

Śakti is also fivefold as aether, air, fire, water and earth. The combination of the

five elements and three gunas produce Lalitā 's Eternities (Nityās) -- 15 in number, each identified with a lunar day of the bright fortnight. The moon, symbolising Śakti, is the mirror or reflection holding together all creation.

A close examination of the details relating to the nine mandalās of Śrī Yantra reveals that the shaktis of the whole circle represent the human being, who, in potential, is Śakti-Śiva united. The aim is for a person to realise that all powers, energies and manifestation are shaktis of consciousness, pure awareness.

The yantra may be examined in two ways, either as manifestation or dissolution. Maintenance is an intermediate state between the two polarities. When she is worshipped as creator, the order is from centre to perimeter. As dissolver, the puja is from perimeter to centre.

The Triple Goddess, from her own will to manifest, extends herself in a ninefold way, as modifications of moon, sun and fire. Various mandalās shows the type of energy represented.

The island of jewels is the gross human body with its 9 alchemical bases or dhatus. Each is figuratively described as a gem -- diamond, emerald, sapphire, ruby &c. The sea of nectar (semen/ova) is the base for the arising of the human body

There are many prayogās (ritual uses) related to Śrī Yantra. Some rites depend on auspicious times, such as Full moon days or nights in specific solar months. Devi also manifests as the five elements of aether, fire, air, water and earth. The saktis are purple (air), white (water), red (fire), yellow (earth), blue (ether).

It is important to remember that Śrī Vidyā was primarily oral, and are incomplete unless initiated by a 'Guru', so it is necessary to know a host of things before a rite can be started.

Devi Lalitā may be installed in a disciple, a yantra, or an image. All the methods essentially follow a similar form, but the right time must be selected. A disciple

must have the necessary qualifications and potential.

After initiation, she or he is to perform an operation to endue the vidya with energy or life. This involves the recitation of the root vidya a specified large number of times, although other valid methods exist for preparation.

There are said to be fifteen lines of mantra, each perceived by a different Rishi (Seer). The most widespread seems to be that called 'Kadi' (beginning with 'Ka'), which itself has three sections. The other main division is 'Hadi', although it is said that the Kulārnavā Tantrā incorporates both in a division called 'Kahadi'. The subtle difference being that devotees of the Kadi line worship the Śrī Yantra from the perimeter to the centre, while Hadi devotees worship it from the centre to the perimeter.

Bharata Muni, in the Nāṭya Śāstra gives his clear insight into various types of feminine energies with his description of the 'Ashtanāyikās'. He had received tremendous vision from the Goddess herself to be blessed to write so clearly on aspects of 'Śaktis' and the application of this knowledge in stagecraft.

12. Lalitā as the Whole Universe

Tāntrik rites often include 'nyāsas', the placing of some principles in a certain sequence 'on one's own body'. The idea is that this process purifies and divinises. Lalitā's Śodha (sixfold) Nyāsa is a highly complex rite in which a practitioner places on the body the 51 letters of the alphabet, the planets, the 27 nakṣatrās or lunar mansions, the 12 sidereal constellations, and the 51 sacred sites (pithās) of all India.

Placing these different things on the body the practitioner comes to realise oneness with the whole cosmos. This ritual also illustrates some important concepts. The Tantrarāja states that there is no difference between the circle of the letters of the alphabet and the sidereal Zodiac. She is the very essence of sun and moon. As letters of the alphabet, Lalita is Mātrika Śakti, who deludes by her Māya – illusory power.

13. Sixty four Tantrās

These tantras are enumerated in Vāmakeshvara and Kulachudamani Tantrās, and in other places. A proponent of the orthodox school, Lakshmidhāra, wrote a commentary on the famous Śrī Vidyā hymn, the Saudaryalahari. Unfortunately, most of the 64 tantras are lost. But their contents may be gauged from Lakshmidhāra's commentary.

- 1) “Mahāmaya Sambhāra. Deluding of intellect and senses.
- 2) Yogini Jala Sambhāra. Involving the agency of Yoginis.
- 3) Tattva Sambhāra. Causing elements to appear and transform.
- 4-11) Eight Bhairava Tantrās. The commentator says that these are objectionable as they belong to the Kapalikas or skull wearers such as Nāths, Aghoris, and so forth.
- 12-19) The Bahurupa Astaka. Importance attached to the eight shaktis or Mātrikās.
- 20-27) The Eight Yamalās. Of these, only Rudra Yamalā seems to have survived, although it is doubtful that the text which exists is the same as the original. Other of the yamalas do exist in part as quotations in later tantras. The commentator says these relate to Siddhi.
- 28) Candra Jnāna. Expounds the 16 Nityās, but condemned as 'it smacks of Kapalika tenets'.
- 29) Malini Vidyā. Enabling one to cross great oceans. This could be the Mālīni Vijaya Tantrā, a work of the Kashmir Śāivites which includes magical operations based on the 36 tattvās.
- 30) Mahā Sammohana. Hypnosis.
- 31-33) Vāmajusta, Mahādeva and Vatula. These are condemned as they deal with Vāmachara.
- 34-35) Vatula Uttara and Kāmika. The latter is still extant, and belongs to the Kashmir group of Āgamās. The chief guru of this school is the famous Abhinavagupta.
- 36) Hridbheda Tantra. Condemned through Vāmachāra.

- 37-38) Tantrabheda and Guhyatantrā. Condemned because of retaliatory magic.
- 39) Kālavada. Digits of the moon, induction of chandrakālas, which are the 108 parts of the moon found in a horoscope.
- 40) Kālasara. The rules of colour. There is no reason given for its exclusion.
- 41) Kundika Māta. Attainment of siddhi through elixirs and drugs.
- 42) Mata Uttara. Deals with 'quicksilver'. See the Mātrikabheda Tantrā.
- 43) Vinakhya. Power over Yakshinis.
- 44) Trotala. Magical practices of medicine and clairvoyance.
- 45) Trotala Uttara. Bringing the 64 crores of yoginis face to face.
- 46) Pancāmrita. Nectar from the body. The five nectars are mentioned in the Kaula Jnāna Nirnaya.
- 47) Rupabheda.
- 48) Bhuta Uddamara.
- 49) Kulasāra.
- 50) Kullaoddisha.
- 51) Kulacudāmani. 48, 50 and 51 are still available. The commentator says these tantras are not sanctioned by Veda.
- 52-56) Sarvajna Tantra, Mahākālī Māta, Arunesi, Modinisa, Vikunthesvara. They are all declared reprehensible as they belong to the digambaras (naked sadhus).
- 57-64) East, West, South, North, Uttara Kaulas, Vimalā, Vimalotta, Devi Māta. One of these lines still exists."

14. Planets

The tāntriks knew the seven traditional planets of western astrology, and also had a greater number of shadowy planets, of which Rāhu and Ketu -- the nodes of the moon -- are the best known. These constellations were thought of as beyond the 12 sidereal constellations, so remote they were almost beyond time itself. These 27 are employed in Śrī Vidyā to determine suitability of partners, constructing Vajrā Yantrās, and so forth.

15 . Yoginis

The Yoginis of the bodily centres (dhātus) reveal that as they are associated with the well known but much misunderstood cakras. These Yoginis are really images of the ayurvedic or alchemic bases in the body.

They can only be understood in relation to such an alchemy. Kundalini is the body sakti, the great deluder, the trickster, the cause of sleep. To raise her means to become conscious of her manifestation. Śakti in the body has her various forms as Prana (Breath) Sakti, fire Śakti and so forth. When Prāna Śakti becomes agitated, she zigzags up the body. At this time one starts to experience dissolution. Various things may be seen and felt.

Dākini, Rākini and others preside over the alchemical physical bases of skin, blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow. The last of these yoginis presides over the highest dhatu, highest as it forms the physical basis for new life -- ova/semen. In this form she is truly limitless, as she manifests as the Aeon Tree (Kalpadruma). The Dākinis and Rākinis and others are pictured as terrifying Twelve Rāshis (Constellations) .

16. The Nādis and the Marmās

Nādi means river, and is extended to include other currents and courses, such as those of the bioenergy and the pulse. There are said to be seventy two thousand nādis in the human organism. This number indicates a large but not infinite number of channels of bioenergy. They are the pathways of Prāna Śakti.

The chief pathways are Suśumna, extending from a point between the anus and genitals to the top of the head; ida and pingala, which are the solar and lunar pathways coiled around the central channel. This Suśumna is Śiva and Śakti in sexual union. The human body is conceived of as a tree -- the root is at the top of

the head, and it ramifies downwards.

Marmas are 108 in number, well documented points of the human organism which, if pierced, usually cause death. Many are recognised by western medicine. On the Śrī Yantra, marmas are represented by the confluence of three or more lines. These are joints in the human frame, knee joint, elbow joint &c. The body is the temple of the devi. On the Śrī Yantra sandhis are represented by the junction of two lines.

17. Breath is Time

The Nāṭya Sādhaka attains command over the nerves with the help of the Mudrās. The breath control, observed in practice, also portrays a command over time, yet another attribute of 'Śakti' dominant in the Sādhaka.

Breath is Time is a fundamental postulate of Śrī Vidyā and much of the symbolism is based on it. The letters of Sanskrit said to represent the embodiment of Lalitā as mantra are 52 in number: 16 vowels and 36 consonants. These, multiplied together, total 576. This number, divided by nine yields 64. The Śrī Yantra is said to have 64,000,000 yoginis in the nine sub-mandalas.

Each mandalā has a unit of Time associated with it. The basic unit is a breath. One nāḍika is equal to 24 minutes or 1440 seconds, and each breath is one 360th of this, or four seconds. A human being breathes 21600 times each 24 hours.

A Kali Yuga is 432,000 years of 360 days. A Dvāpara Yuga is 864,000 years. A Treta Yuga is 1,296,000 years. A Satya Yuga is 1,728,000 years. The circle of the sidereal zodiac has 12 constellations, each of which has nine parts (navamshas). These 108 (12 x 9) are called Chandrakālas. **(this name to be noted as it has been adapted to a name of a hasta as well).**

Each Chandrakala is, itself, a micro-constellation. The number of degrees in the

sidereal cakrā is 360. The number of minutes is 21600. A conjunction is 21600', a square 5400', an opposition 10800'. Each eternity (Nityā) of the root mantra has 1440 breaths. This implies that Lalitā is 21600, as she is the collectivity of the 15 Nityās.

Lalitā's cakrā is the grand synthesis of Time, Space, and humankind. Her 36 tattvas are the whole cosmos

18. Sound

The letters of the vidya are 'Nāda', or sound, when charged with consciousness of these mere letters become mantra. The 16th syllable of the vidya also represents 'Kāmakāla'. Beyond it is the Ultimate Absolute, beyond any sort of description.



“19. Chakras and the 64 Yoginis

There are many systems of cakrās in the tāntrik tradition .

"The letter ksa is in the Brahmarāndhra, la in the forehead, ha between the eyes, sa in the mouth, sa in the throat, sha in the heart, va in the navel, and ha in the genitals." The origin of these sounds are meditated upon by musicians and dancers for perfect rendition.

Dear One, listen to the collective meditation in these cakrā places.

"The first of the eight is a celestial eight petal lotus of pure crystal effulgence, a heavenly fire or flame, completely without stain, free from all duality, from the fires of cruelty, devoid even of nothingness. One should avoid perturbation and practise equipoise (Samā) consciousness. One may see even beyond the future, one

with the endless circle of time, having knowledge of what is spoken at a distance, able to both grant boons and to paralyse, with the ability to seize and subjugate pashus, or to destroy or to kill them, mortal, always truthful, and in equipoise, becoming eloquent, a Siddhā, and able to do anything.

"One should meditate on the second as having eight petals, as bright as a beautiful pure flame. One conquers death and becomes the cause of great excitement. Meditating one-pointedly on this multi-fold form one becomes an emperor amongst kings, doing whatsoever one wills, and may destroy all in the three worlds, whether animate or inanimate - like Kruddha, the cause of both creation and dissolution, always engaged in love.

"The third great chakra is the deliverer from the nine tattvas. After meditating on the Guru in that chakra for six months, one may achieve whatever is wished for, destroy old age, be able to see at a distance, able to obstruct, even if one hundred yojanas distant. In a lonely place one should meditate on that multi-fold form.

"The fourth chakra is the cause of peace, increasing happiness and pleasure. By always meditating on it, afterwards one becomes immortal, eloquent, victorious over death and disease. Practising it daily, one causes death to flee. By continual practice for a period of sixteen seasons on this great chakrā, one becomes able to destroy in a day and a night.

"O Surasundari, the fifth great lotus has eight petals. One should always meditate on it as being of a smoky colour, then one may shake the three worlds. It causes eloquence and avoidance of untimely death, and allows one to both enslave and paralyse.

"If one should meditate devotedly on the sixth royal chakrā, fiery, with a pericarp of eight petals, as bright as liquid gold, the cause of Iccha Siddhi, it enables one to see into the future, giving Animā and the other seven siddhis - of this there is no doubt.

"Dear Mahādevi, the seventh is as bright as the full moon, auspicious, within the body, bestowing both enjoyment and liberation, destroying fever and death, enabling one to enter into another's body. what may not be done? One becomes

the best within a circle of people. "Pretty-Eyed One, the eighth great cakrā, adorned with eight petals, gives Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksha." [3]

20. Important themes and symbols in Hinduism

“Geetedi, Gāyatredi, Gangedi, Gorupini, Govindedi, mahānāmo, Gagāra panchaka mahat.....The 5 G's that are a inherent feature of Hindu tradition and worship.

They are Bhagvad 'Geetā', 'Gāyatri' Mantra, River 'Gangā', The Holy Cow 'Go'and the Lord 'Govindā". [4]

The symbolic representations have specific significance in the temple priest ,or the Tantri's worship as well as the dancer's make-up and attire.

Tilakā is a mark worn on the forehead and other parts of the body for spiritual reasons.

The shape of the tilaka often represents devotion to a certain deity: a 'U' shape for Lord Viṣṇu, three horizontal lines for Lord Śiva.

Aum (or Om) is the sacred symbol that represents God (Brahman). It is prefixed and sometimes suffixed to all Vedic mantras and prayers. It is often said to represent God in the three aspects of Viṣṇu, (A), Śiva (U) and Brahmā (M). As the divine primordial vibration, it represents the one ultimate reality, underlying and encompassing all of nature and all of existence.

Swastika is an Ārya, or noble and auspicious, symbol. It is a symbol of the action of the Principle of Manifestation. It also stands for purity of soul, satya, truth, and stability within the power of Brahmā or, alternatively, of Suryā, the sun. Its rotation in four directions has been used to represent many ideas, but primarily describes the four directions, the four Vedās and their harmonious whole.



The symbol of dancing posture of Śiva, known as the Natarāja, is the supreme statement in dance, the form of cosmos. Natarāja dances the union of Śakti and Śiva.

Worship of God is often represented symbolically through the aid of icons (mūrti) which are conduits.

The Bharatanatyam dancers interestingly use the red 'Alta' or colour on the feet and hands too in auspicious shapes and symbols.

"Every name and form in which the lord is worshipped has a special symbolic significance of its own. The inner meaning of these symbols is often very grand and poetic, and to enter into and understand it, will certainly be a privilege to those who are striving to realize for themselves the truths of philosophy; for these symbols were devised simply as aids to imagination and many men have employed them with advantage. The meanings of these symbols differ of course according to the standpoint adopted, and the highest, viz., the Vedāntic will be the one from which we shall study them". [5]

21. Our Festive images, Pujās and their significance

In a Hindu Temple, the divine spirit/energy is commonly invoked into the Murtis at the time of their consecration.

In India from the month of August starts a continuous period of festive celebrations throughout the country in every village, town, city, every nook and corner. Temples host celebrations of the holy months according to the almanac and corresponding to vedic rites .Special functions ,events of dance ,drama and music are hosted at the premises like Natyasabhās ,Sabhānganas ,Nātya Mantapās. Chidambaram temple is saturated with people thronging to see the festivities .Temples like sun -temple Konark ,Kahjuraho ,Brihadeeshwara ,cave temple like Ellora-Ajanta are chosen venues for porgrammes of this kind to mark the festivals. Tāntric rituals are specially held as per the Vedic calendar ,the Gregorian months being July-August [Bhagwatya Puja] and September-October [Dassera Puja] which are important for Devi worship .

During Kriṣṇa Janmāshtami, some rock the adorable baby Kriṣṇa in cradles, sing lullabies and songs in His praise, some imitate his pranks [the Leelas] as the butter thief and climb atop one another to break pots of buter milk while some simply find ecstasy in singing and dancing His Bhajans with devotion. Lord Ganesh is brought home amidst pomp and splendour. Every year, the sculptors kindle their creative spirits and bring out such amazingly lovely images of this most benevolent Lord.

When he gets immersed, the form ,sometimes even gigantic ,reduces and merges . This gives a story of how an elegant and revered deity comes to this state. It is the legend of Ganesh who took to form from dust and is significant of so many truths of life, even his exit after the festival. This is only a reflection of life cycle, birth to death, disease and decay being a part of reality. The festival ritual of bringing home this Murti, embellishing him, preparing his prasada, loving and worshipping him brings life into the deity just as a temple priest would do. Immersion is symbolic of man's coming into existence and going back to dust/soil. Our form is only one of the manifestations of the formless.

Dolls play an important role in our lives. Be it during childhood, be it during adolescence or be it during our later part of life. We have all been making, collecting and using dolls to keep amused at play, to adorn homes with puppets or curios, to tell stories and more than anything, to offer our prayers symbolically as we do to our deities. The variety of dolls assembled aesthetically at Navrātri includes not only the deities but also men and women engaged in some activities or other like music, dancing, household chores or playing games. The various themes significantly represent the divinity in man and spread the message of love and unity, brotherhood and community development.

The nine days of Navarātri signify worship for three days each for the three major Goddesses, Lakshmi Devi, Pārvaty Devi and Saraswaty Devi ,being bestowers of happiness ,prosperity and learning. ThisIt symbolizes the importance given to the Goddess in our Purānas. The Energy – Prakriti that is embodied in the universal forms unites with the Spirit-Puruṣa which remains as the universal Self.

This great truth is represented when we place a newly wedded couple, in the centre of the dolls-display. That we are ourselves comprised of the five elements is represented by the “Kalasha”,the copper /wooden pot ,containing water, mango leaves, fruits, etc and lit brightly by a lamp .

Our prayers, our rituals, our customs, our symbols, our arts and cultural heritage do have meaning, beauty, significance and positive energy and effects, but as long as they are followed, practiced and rendered with devotion and faith.

22. Tantra Mudrās

The age- old Mantra –Karāgre vasate Lakshmi ,Kara madhye Saraswaty, Karamoole Stitha Gowri, Prabhāte Kara Darshanam points out not only to the

symbolic location of the Goddesses in one's palm but also indicates the possibility of one's possessing the entire cosmic energy of the combined Goddesses within the miniscule and infinitesimal palm, (perhaps the same principle is followed by Reiki practitioners).

Hence, in temple worship, the various Mudrās or hand gestures and in arts like Bharatanāṭyam, the Hastās bear divine semblance and significance other than just the beautiful appeal. Simple yet highly figurative and meaningful adornment and embellishment like the red colour application on hands and feet and other paraphernalia usually associated with the dancer's attire all add up to the totality of experience.

Accompanied by a supplication through music and dance, involving movement of face, limbs and other parts of the body, these gestures can bring one face to face with an image or idea worshipped. A degree of purity of oneself if maintained, can be helpful to overcome diversions and distractions. Unless saturated with devotion, any Sādhana cannot kindle divine essence and spark with a mere automated, impersonal, soulless or perfunctory movement. Tapping and tuning in with the spirit and force would help channelise it just as one would get connected to a radio station with necessary tuning. Call him mystical, celestial or seraphic in nature, a true artiste becomes 'hallowed' due to devoted practice .

"In all forms of Art, Music, Poetry, Painting, Sculpture, we have a vision- an experience -and a symbol- an expression. Art is predominantly a sharing in the experience. Religion is essentially an awakening in the experience; When the man of vision, the mystic, or the artist has undergone experience, he does not absorb it all to himself or by himself. He must burst forth into forms of expression. He does so spontaneously in response to an inner necessity. The excellence of Art is mainly in the spontaneity of expression. Expression flows from the plenitude of experience, and in turn kindles experience in kindred souls. The expression

acquires the status of a symbol, and serves as perennial source of meaning. To the symbol belongs the meaning. The substance is beyond expression. Controversies in religion have only a symbolic relevance. “Essentially religious” as an inward experience reaching down to the depths of one’s own being. In so as any Art falls short to this, and serves merely as an expression of material quality or a mental mode, without revealing the spirit that animates and sustain it from within, it fails to satisfy finally and fully. The superior forms of Indian Art, through the ages, were ultimately expressions of spiritual experience.”[6]

It’s real purpose is to induce an experience similar to that which inspired it. Having lit the spark, it must recede, for, if it persists, it would distort.

In this limited sense Art has its own “revelations” even as the essence of religious experience is believed to be “revealed”.

Mudrās are sacred ritual gestures or hand positions. When used in religious dance they become an elaborate hand language. The Sanskrit word Mudrā means seal. In the most antiquated times mudrā was used with mantra and sealed the pattern of energy. The earliest mudrā was the Sanskrit symbol. Mudrā is a patterned movement mainly of the fingers that carries an idea or emotion. Mudrās are a gesture language capable of expressing ideas and suggesting symbols. Mudrās create an energy field and can be used in healing. The ultimate goal of mudra is a higher state of consciousness.

23. Tāntric Yoga and Mudrā

In yoga these sacred hand positions relate to the energy flow of a particular meditation. They enhance the āsana (posture) and sound current (mantra). Mudrās in yoga are symbolic of mantras and send signals to the glands and to a specific part of the brain depending on the purpose of the meditation . According to the science of yoga, the human body is made up of five basic elements - the

Pancha Tatvās

The five fingers of the hand are regarded as representative symbols of these vital elements in the body. Any disturbance, disorder or deficiency in these elements or the consequent disease or imbalance could be rectified and cured by appropriate practice of suitable mudras. The thumb corresponds to the source of balancing the flow of agni tatva. The vāyu tatva is controlled by the fourth (or the index) finger. The role of the middle finger in the mudras is for regulating the akasha tatva in the body. The keys of regulating the prithvi and the jala tatvās lie in the ring finger and the little finger respectively.

Naturopathy, Panchakarma, Ayurvedic medication by and Herbal medicines, Reiki, Prānic Healing, Aroma Therapy, Magnetotherapy, Yagyopathy, Allopathy, Homeopathy, Biochemistry, etc are all manifestations of this spiritual scientific acumen of human psyche. The methods of treatment under each of these systems of healthcare indirectly attempt in correcting the deficiencies or disorders of the five vital elements, because an imbalance in their natural harmony is the root cause of bodily and mental ills. The science of healthcare by mudrās is a branch of “Hathayoga”.

- (1) **Prāna Mudrā:** This is recommended for overall good health. As the name suggests, this mudra helps optimal flow of the prāna (vital energy) in the body. Practising this mudrā energizes and activates every cell of the body and thus helps in regulating the biochemical and physiological processes and induces youthfulness and alacrity. This mudrā enhances vitality and immune system of the body. This mudrā is formed by joining the thumb, the little and the ring fingers so that these three would gently and constantly touch each other while the middle and the fourth fingers are kept apart in a stretched position. The hands could be kept in vertical or horizontal position as per convenience. Instant effect of the prāna mudrā is felt in the form of energetic vibrations in the closed eyes, while keeping one or both the hands in this posture.

(2) **Jñāna Mudrā:** This mudrā is useful for enhancing mental capabilities. Its regular practice over a substantial stretch of time helps in sharpening the memory, mental concentration and thinking process and in increasing the grasping/learning capacities. Several types of mental disorders are prevented and cured by consistent practice of this mudrā. It is beneficial for those suffering from insomnia. Short-tempered and impatient people can also get soothing improvement in their nature by practicing this mudrā. The Sanskrit word “jñāna means pure knowledge. Lord Buddha’s idols and pictures often depict his hands in this mudrā.

Only two fingers are used in this mudrā; namely, the tip of the index finger and the top of the thumb are mutually touched. The other three fingers are kept apart in a straight position.

(3) **Dhyāna Mudrā:** This mudra, as the word indicates, is helpful in conditioning the mind for meditation. Keeping the hands stable in this mudrā for sometime generates a state of peace in the mind. Regular and consistent practice for increasing the duration gradually releases the tensions, stresses and confusions that keep the mind in perpetual turmoil. Quietude and relaxation of the mind are essential for meditation. This mudrā should be practiced while sitting, preferably in sukhāsana (i.e. sitting with erect spinal cord with legs rolled round). For this, both the hands are kept on the lap - palm of the right hand is kept open above of the left. This mudra harmonizes the flow of the panca tatvas.

(4) **Varuna Mudrā:** This mudrā is quite useful as a remedy for several disorders of the liver. It is also found effective in removing blood related problems. Varuna implies the jala tatva. All the health problems caused by the deficiency of water are controlled and removed by regular practice of this mudra. Water constitutes about eighty-five percent of our body. Reduction in this level disturbs the body functions. Stiffness in the body or disorder in blood properties often occur when there is a deficiency of water (jala tatvā) or an imbalance in its proportion with agni tatva. Such ailments, including those of the excess of agni tatva, are

gradually cured by the practice of varuna mudrā. The top ends of the thumb and the little finger are to be touched while keeping the other three fingers straight. A balance of agni and jala tatvas is achieved by practicing this mudrā.

(5) **Ling Mudrā:** Weakness of chest and associated diseases are cured by the the palm practice of this mudrā over an extended period of time. Keeping the hands folded in this posture generates an energy current, which warms up the body. Regular practice of this mudra is an excellent antidote against diseases caused by cough or other chest ailments. According to the theory of the ancient Indian system of medicine, the excess of jala tatva or reduction in agni tatvā as compared to its balanced proportion with jala results in cold, cough, running nose, chest congestion etc. Balancing the two in natural order is the best cure for such disorders; it also prevents further complications - e.g. asthma. Both the hands are used here. First the palms are touched face-to-face then the four fingers of one are interlocked with those of the other to form a firm support around the palms in such a way that the thumb of both the hands stand straight and touch each other completely. This pressure triggers a flow of agni tatvā to establish the desired balance with the jala tatva; the positioning of the other fingers maintains the necessary consistency of this process.

(6) **Surya Mudrā:** Practice of this mudra removes lethargy and dullness and, instead, induces alacrity and activity. The sun (surya) symbolizes brilliance and energy. In its absence there is night when every creature feels tired, fatigued and sleepy. Sunrise infuses new life, energy and alertness in everyone; tiny insect, birds and humans, every one becomes active in their daily routines. The rise and setting of the sun, in a way control the sleep and the awakening of the entire world. It eliminates all fatigue, heaviness and laziness in few minutes. The experts of the science of mudras claim that regular and long-term practice of this mudrā awakens supernormal powers hidden in the human psyche. The ring finger and the thumb are used in this mudrā. The ring finger is folded down to touch the root of the thumb and the top portion of the thumb is made to touch its middle

portion. The other fingers are kept in a comfortably straight position. The agni and the prithvi tatvas are mutually harmonized in this mudrā.

(7) **Vāyu Mudrā:** Disorders caused by gases or air pressures in and around the veins, arteries etc like joint pain, arthritis, rheumatism, etc are common examples of such disorders. The vayu mudrā helps control and cure the vata ailments. The optimum time of practicing it at a stretch and the overall duration would depend upon the stage and type of the ailments. It is also efficacious in recovery from paralysis attacks. Best results are obtained if this mudrā and the prana mudra are practiced together, one after the other. This is similar to the surya mudrā except that the index finger is used in place of the ring finger in this mudrā. The index finger is folded to touch and gently press the root of the thumb and then the top portion of the thumb is made to touch the middle part of the finger in such a way that it also puts some pressure on the latter. This mudrā regulates the mutual proportion and combination of agni and vayu tatvās.

(8) **Prithvi Mudrā:** Deficiency of minerals and vitamins causes weakness in the body. The practice of this mudrā removes the fatigue and strengthens the weak or tired organs of the body. The body begins to feel energized from inside. Narrow-mindedness and prejudices are significantly reduced by the practice of this mudrā. The tip of the ring finger is kept perpendicularly on the tip of the thumb in this mudrā to induce gentle pressure. It restores mutual balance of the agni and the prithvi tatvās.

24. Tāntric Buddhism and Mudrās

In Buddhist iconography every Buddha is depicted with a characteristic gesture of the hands that correspond to natural gestures of teaching or protecting and also to certain aspects of the Buddhist teaching of the particular Buddha depicted. Within the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism yoga likewise holds a central place. An example would be "guru yoga," the union with the mind of the spiritual teacher

which must be done at the beginning of the spiritual path and regularly throughout.

Here mudrās accompany the performance of rituals and the recitation of mantras. They also help to actualize certain inner states and assist in bringing about a connection between the practitioner and the buddha visualized .

The most important mudras are:

- 1) Dhyāni Mudrā.....(gesture of meditation)
- 2) Vitarka Mudrā.....(teaching gesture)
- 3) Dharmachakra Mudrā.....(gesture of turning the wheel of the teaching)
- 4) Bhumisparsha Mudrā.....(gesture of touching the earth)
- 5) Abhaya Mudrā.....(gesture of fearlessness and granting protection)
- 6) Varada Mudrā.....(gesture of granting wishes)
- 7) Uttarabodhi Mudrā.....(gesture of supreme enlightenment)
- 8) Mudrā..... (of Supreme Wisdom)
- 9) Anjali Mudrā.....(gesture of greeting and veneration)
- 10) Vajrapradama Mudrā.....(gesture of unshakable confidence)

1)Dhyāni
Mudrā.....
.....



The back of the right hand rests on the palm of the other in such a way that the tips of the thumbs lightly touch one another. The hands rest in the lap. The right hand, resting on top, symbolizes the state of enlightenment; the other hand, resting below, the world of appearance. This gesture expresses overcoming the world of appearance through enlightenment, as well as the enlightened state of mind for which samsara and nirvana are one. In a special form of this mudra, the middle, ring, and little fingers of both hands lie on top one another and the thumbs and index finger of each hand, touching each other, form a circle, which here also

symbolizes the world of appearance and the true nature of reality.

2) Vitarka
Mudrā



The right hand points upward, the left downward; both palms are turned outward. The thumb and index finger of each hand form a circle. The right hand is at shoulder level, the left at the level of the hips. In a variant of this teaching gesture, the left hand rests palm upward in the lap, and the right hand is raised to shoulder level with its thumb and index finger forming a circle. In a further form of this mudra, the index finger and little fingers of both hands are fully extended, the middle and ring fingers somewhat curved inward. The left hand points upward, the right downward.

3) Dharmacakra
Mudrā



The left palm is turned inward (toward the body), the right outward, and the circles formed by the thumbs and index fingers of each hand touch one another.

4) Bhūmisparśha
Mudrā



The left hand rests palm upward in the lap; the right hand, hanging over the knee, palm inward, points to the earth. Sometimes the left hand holds a begging bowl. This is the gesture with which the Buddha summoned the Earth as witness to his realization of buddhahood. It is considered a gesture of unshakability; thus Akshobhya (the Unshakable) is usually depicted with this mudra.

5) Abhaya
Mudrā



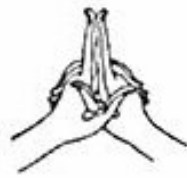
Here the right hand is raised to shoulder height with fingers extended and palm turned outward. This is the gesture of the Buddha Shakyamuni immediately after attaining enlightenment.

6)Varada
Mudrā



The right hand, palm facing out, is directed downward. When Shakyamuni is depicted, it symbolizes summoning Heaven as witness to his buddhahood. This is also seen in representations of Ratnasambhava. The thumb and index finger of the downward extended hand touch one another. Frequently the abhaya and varada mudrās are combined: the right hand makes the gesture of fearlessness, the left that of wish granting.

7)Uttarabodhi
Mudrā



Both hands are held at the level of the chest, the two raised index fingers touch one another, the remaining fingers are crossed and folded down; the thumbs touch each other at the tips or are also crossed and folded. This is frequently seen in images of Vairochana.

8)Mudrā of
Supreme
Wisdom



The right index finger is grasped by the five fingers of the left hand. This characteristic of Vairochana, is the subject of many interpretations in esoteric Buddhism, most which have to do with the relationship between the empirical world of manifoldness and the principle that is its basis-the unified world principle, the realization of unity in the manifold as embodied in Buddha.

9) Anjali
Mudrā



The palms are held together at the level of the chest. This is the customary gesture of greeting in India. Used as a mudrā, it expresses "suchness" (tathata).

10)Vajrapradama
Mudrā



The fingertips of the hands are crossed. This is gesture of unshakable confidence.

With the onset of Buddhism, many mudrā practices were absorbed into the

culture. Common hand gestures are to be seen in both Hindu and Buddhist iconography.



Abhaya Mudrā

The Abhaya "No-fear" Mudrā represents protection, peace, benevolence, and dispelling of fear. In the Theravāda it is usually made with the right hand raised to the shoulder's height, the arm bent and the palm facing outward with the fingers upright and joined and the left hand hanging down on the right side of the body while standing. The mudrā was probably used before the onset of Buddhism as a symbol of good intentions proposing friendship when approaching strangers. The gesture was used by the Buddha when attacked by an elephant, subduing it as shown in several frescoes and scripts. In Mahāyāna the northern schools deities often used it with another mudrā paired with the other hand.



Bhūmisparśa Mudrā

The Bhūmisparśa "Earth-touching" Mudrā literally represents the Buddha as taking the earth as witness. It represents the moment when Buddha took the earth as testimony when he had resolved the problem of cessation of suffering while he was under the papal tree at Bodh-Gaya. The right hand touches the ground with the fingertips near the right knee extended or with only the index pointing down touching the ground with the left hand commonly resting on the lap with the palm facing up.



Dharmacakra Mudrā

The Dharmacakra Mudrā represents a central moment in the life of Buddha when he preached his first sermon after his Enlightenment, in Deer Park in Sarnath. Gautama Buddha is generally only shown making this Mudrā, save Maitreya as the dispenser of the Law. This Mudrā position represents the turning of the wheel of the Dharma. Dharmacakra Mudrā is formed when two hands close together in front of the chest in Vitarka having the right palm forward and the left palm upward, sometimes facing the chest.

Dhyāna Mudrā



Hands of Amitābha statue at Kotokuin

The Dhyāna Mudrā is the gesture of meditation, of the concentration of the Good Law and the Sangha. The two hands are placed on the lap, right hand on left with fingers fully stretched and the palms facing upwards, forming a triangle, symbolic of the spiritual fire or the Triratna, the three jewels. This Mudrā is used in representations of the Buddha Śākyamuni and the Buddha Amitābha. This mudrā was used long before the Buddha as yogins have used it during their concentration, healing, and meditation exercises. It is heavily used in Southeast Asia in Therāvāda Buddhism with the thumbs placed against the palms.



Varada Mudrā

The Varada Mudrā signifies offering, welcome, charity, giving, compassion and

sincerity. It is nearly always used with the left hand for those whom devote oneself to human salvation. It can be made with the arm crooked, the palm offered slightly turned up or in the case of the arm facing down the palm presented with the fingers upright or slightly bent. The Varada Mudrā is rarely seen without using another mudra used by the right hand, typically with the Abhaya Mudrā. It is often confused with the Vitarka Mudrā, which it closely resembles. In India the mudrā is used in images of Avalokitesvara from the Gupta Period of the 4th and 5th centuries. The Varada mudrā is extensively used in the statues of Southeast Asia.

Vajra Mudrā



The Vajra Mudrā is the gesture of knowledge. It is made making a fist with the right hand, index extending upward, and the left hand also making a fist and enclosing the index.

Vitarka Mudrā



The Vitarka Mudrā is the gesture of discussion and transmission of Buddhist teaching. It is done by joining the tips of the thumb and the index together, and keeping the other fingers straight very much like Abhaya and Varada Mudrās but with the thumbs touching the index fingers. This mudrā has a great number of

variants in Mahāyāna Buddhism in East Asia. In Tibet it is the mystic gesture of Tārās and Bodhisattvās .

The vital core of Buddhism, it is said is contained in the Dhyāna Mudrā. Even as early as Buddha himself, communication by sign language had become an accepted practice for the wise and was included in the 64 arts [Kālās]. It can be averred that in everyday living too, one can observe several eloquent gestures in our country of India. The orthodox Brahmins were habituated to only use sign language while engaged in religious practice. The Nambudiris of Kerala had 16 gestures to denote the vedic texts. These Mudrās are especially subtle and sensitive as they follow also a musical notation or sound -Śabda Nāda. The really educated in ancient India were accomplished in the 64 Kālās.

The Mudrās even gave special natural powers as they were coherent with Mantra, the magical formula. The deep inward consciousness gets manifested, pupils once learnt Vedas, only to the accompaniment of Mudrās.

25. Tāntric YONI MUDRA



It is used during esoteric worship of the Goddess. Ādi Śakti, the Primal Power Mudrā. This is the mudra from which we all emerged. It connects us to the mother.

26. Nātya Yoga and Nātya Hastābhinaya (Hand Gestures)

The first full description of the principles and goals of yoga are found in the Upanisads, thought to have been composed between the eighth and fourth centuries BC. The Upanisads are also called Vedānta since they constitute the end or conclusion of the Vedas. The word "yoga" derives from the Sanskrit root yuj ("to yoke"); which is cognate to modern English "yoke" meaning "to join" or "

unite".

It is generally translated as "union of the individual ātma with Paramātmā, the universal soul." This may be understood as union with the Divine by integration of body, mind, and spirit.

The earliest written accounts of yoga appear in the Rig Veda, which began to be codified between 1500 and 1200 BCE.

Yoga means union and is generally interpreted as union with the Divine, or integration of body, mind, and spirit.

Yoga may include love and devotion (as in Bhakti Yoga), selfless work (as in Karma Yoga), knowledge and discernment (as in Jñāna Yoga), or an eight-limbed system of disciplines emphasizing meditation (as in Rāja Yoga).

Going by the definition of Yoga, Nāṭya easily falls into a category of Yoga.

The guide to Nāṭya (Dance) Yoga the Nāṭya Śāstra, was written by Bharata Muni. Sage Nārada along with Gandharvas were the first to practise Nāṭya Yoga, which comprise all the four main yogas.

Hastās were derived from the Mudrās. The 1st Hastā-patāka was supposed to have been used when Lord Brahma hailed Parabrahma with the cry of victory. Mushti hastā was used by Lord Mahavisnu to destroy the demon Madhu. The Ardha-chandra originated when Śiva embellished himself with the half moon. Hence the mystic language of gods became that of the learned. Hand gestures are used for a variety of reasons, they may be used to mime the meaning of the song, or they may be simple aesthetic ornamentation. Some have very limited meanings, and some are used as catch-alls for miming a variety of ideas. While in the delineation of Nṛtta or pure dance, firm and absolutely neatly held hāstās are a must in Bharathanāṭyam, in Abhinaya or expression, the hastās cannot be rigid and have to be smoothly flexible too. Besides the Sampradāya or traditional hastās, many others have been developed, whose histories are harder to trace eg: Gajamukha Hastā, Vrishbha Hastā, etc. In the cases where an idea is being

conveyed, it is more important to communicate clearly with hand gestures - adapting them if necessary - than it is to perform them with rigid correctness. A rhythmic use of hand gestures help in creation of aesthetic joy in spectators. It is sometimes felt that what is intimately felt, implied and conceived cannot at all times be justifiably represented or expressed by the word alone, totally bereft of gesticulations.

Gestures, both natural and conventional were studied and elaborated later for dance. Some of these employed in daily life are often used on stage but by incorporating rhythm, stylized meaning, suggestive import and significant correlation to presentation. Hence other than the Sampradaya Hastās, several others have been added from time to time to enhance appropriateness to the dance, interpret the expressive elements and uplift the aesthetic experience of the spectators

The Nrtyavinoda of Mānasollasa was composed in - Karnataka. It is a section of a medieval encyclopedic text called the Mānasollasa or Abhilasitarthacintāmani, ascribed to King Somesvara III. The treatise has been dated to 1131 AD. It covers all aspects of dance - dance movements, poses, and expressive gestures (abhinaya) of the hand, face and head. It's particularly interesting in the fact that the movements noted here are significantly different from the Natya Śāstra, although the abhinaya information shows a great similarity.

27. Difference between:

Hastās

1. Dance and drama gestures are called Hastās.

Mudrās

Mudrās performed only in rituals are called Mudras. (religious, vedic and t̃āntric)

2. To communicate the story to the rasikās	To communicate with Gods
3. Have many meanings	Have limited meaning
4. Requires corresponding facial expression	No expression is necessary
6. It can be to convey pure joy eg- Nritya Hastās.	It always has specific meaning
7. Hastās are exotic	Mudrās are esoteric

28. Symbolism of Deities represented in dance

The Adi Devta, the first Lord to be propitiated is Ganesha, the remover of obstacles. Elephant -faced, he is the Lord of the Mooladhara chakra and has symbolically, tied a serpent around himself.

Ranganātha and Natarāja mean the very same thing, differently expressed. Natarāja is the lord of the stage, so also Ranganātha (Ranga means stage). The stage is the stage of the world, of the cosmos, or better still of the body and the senses. There is a verse in Śivānanda Lahari describing this dance of bliss. In that verse, Neelkanta is used for Śiva. Neelkanta is Sanskrit also means a peacock. Peacock, as we know, is a dancing bird. This allegory is employed both in Sāhitya Ratnākara and in Śivānanda Lahari. In the former, the dance of the peacock is described with reference to Śiva, and in the latter, the dance of Śiva is described with a reference to the peacock. Symbolically, the peacock is a dancer. A dancer controls the serpent element here also may mean the power over the Kundalini Śakti through dance. Each art has its own vocabulary and parlance able to convey the most intimate vibrations of the human soul .

“Subrahmanya or Kārthikeya -This suggestion lies in the peacock clutching serpent with its claws. The peacock is the greatest enemy of the serpent. It can destroy the serpent if it wishes to, but the serpent is held here in captivity without being destroyed. The serpent represents the ego, the fleshy, carnal personality of man which tempts him to use his material equipments for seeking the fleeting pleasures of the pluralistic world. Like the serpent, the ego crawls in darkness created by man’s ignorance of the Supreme light. The serpent carries poison in its

fangs but it is interesting to observe that the poison is for its own protection. Similarly, the ego carries with it the poisonous mind, which, when focused on one's material vestures, assumes the vanity of 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'. The same mind can be intelligently used for evolving oneself by changing its focus of concentration from body, mind and intellect to the Supreme self. By this process one unfolds and recognises one's Real Nature. It is important, therefore to note that the ego is not destroyed. The same ego which lures man to the enchantments of the pluralistic world can be channelised to discover the Supreme Self. This idea is symbolized in the serpent being held firmly by the peacock". [7]

Kriṣṇa , the favourite of many poet saints is one Lord with whom every person could easily identify with.

Every aspect of Kriṣṇa and His deeds is replete with highest mystical symbolism, indicating the highest Truth. The incarnation of Kriṣṇa represents the descent of the Infinite Brahman to the material world.

Although there is no mention of him in the Nāṭya Śāstrā, he is another charming dancer while he is involved in Rāsleela and becomes a forceful subjugator of Kāliya during the Kāliya Mardhanam. Point to be noted is that serpent could mean senses and Krishna overpowers them. In Kundalini Yoga, the serpent rises to the head, Śiva and Śakti unite in the thousand petalled Lotus and Lord Kriṣṇa, Himself a Parabrahmaswaroopa, places himself comfortably atop the serpent. There cannot be a better symbolic representation of a supreme Yogi. His flute resonates eternally and penetrates the innermost recesses of hearts of maidens. His various Leelās are a poet's delight and words flow and tears well up in the eyes when devotees talk of his omniscience, revealed in the Bhagavadgeeta, his magnum opus and the Gospel of the Hindus. Kriṣṇa offers solutions to improve the way of life ,for everyone ,using this practical guide.The relationship between Radha and Kriṣṇa is that of Jeevātma and paramātma.

"One must have the subtle-sensitivity of a poet, the ruthless intellect of a scientist, and soft heart of the beloved in order to enter into enchanted realm of mysticism". [8]

When we see the eyes of Natarāja we are reminded of the Śambhavi Mudra of Yoga in which the eyes are open but the vision is turned inward.

Natarāja means the Lord of the Stage. The idea is that the world is a stage, a puppet-show which presents the vision of life and activity through the power of the all-pervading Ātman or God, the unseen Lord of the Stage. Who will not dance when he is caused to dance, and who will not sing when he is caused to sing by divine energy. But for the inner Ātman all the world is Jadā (inert).

The Ātman or Self being the real teacher of the human mind, Natarāja is meant to represent the Teacher or Guru. There are two kinds of Gurus—the apparent and the real, the seen and the unseen. The former is the teacher who instructs the disciple and takes him along the path—this is what we usually mean by the word Guru; but all teaching really comes from inside, not merely in the sense that the outward apparent teacher is but the instrument employed by Ātman or God, but also in the sense that all growth is from within. The plant, for example, grows from within; the manure, water, etc., are simply aids to its growth. In the same way, the mind grows only from within, assimilating of course the teachings from outside. Natarāja, then, is the real Guru, concretely represented. One of the functions of the Guru, perhaps the most important, is to **be** what he teaches to enforce his teachings by example. It is this idea that is the keynote to the Natarāja symbol.

The little drum in one of the right hands is meant to express the idea that God or Guru holds the cause of all the world, i.e., sound (Śabda Nishtam Jagad –through sound the world stands) in his hand. In other words, all the world is in His hand, to be folded or unfolded at His own will. To the Jnāni or wise man the world exists only if he chooses and not otherwise. The deer on one side is the mind because the latter leaps and jumps from one thing to another as wildly as that animal. The Ātman is far beyond the reach of the deer-like mind; and so the deer in the picture is placed near the legs. Natarāja wears the skin of a tiger which He Himself slew. Ahankara or the skin of egoism is that tiger; it is beastly and ferocious and fiercely fights when attacked, but it has to be killed and Natarāja or

Guru alone can kill it. On His head He wears the Ganges, i.e., Chit Śakti or wisdom which is most cool refreshing and the moon which represents the ethereal light and bliss-fulness of the Ātman. One foot is planted over and crushes the giant Mayalaka, i.e., Mahā Māya, the endless illusion which is the cause of birth and death, while the other foot is raised upward and represents the “Turiya” state, which is beyond and above the three states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep, and leaves behind, the mind, Māya and the world. The second right hand representing the idea of peace indicates the blessed calmness, which is the glorious privilege of wisdom. In one of the left hands, is held Agni (fire), i.e., the Guru brings in the Jyotis of the Ātman itself to attest the truth of His teaching. The idea is that the truth of the Guru’s teaching can only be fully understood on practical realization in experience (Anubhāva). The place of the dance, the theatre, is Thillaivanam, i.e., the body (of the individual as well as of the Cosmos) spoken of as vanam or forest on account of the multitude of its components. The platform in that theatre is the cremation ground, i.e., the place where all passions and the names and forms that constitute the vision of the world have been burnt away; pure consciousness devoid of attachment to anything outside and devoid of illusion.

“Another conception of Śiva is that of ‘Ardhanāreeswara’-half male and half female. The latest researches in psychology reveal that every man has a woman in his mind and each woman has a man inherent in her constitution. This is known as the principle of Animus and Anima.

To speak in the language of the ancient symbolism each individual is Brahma i.e. Prajāpati or the creator unto himself and creates for himself a mind-born daughter who functions as his energy for all creativity. She typifies the principles of intelligence (Buddhi) by which the individual obtains his extension that may be termed as the “Mandalā” of his life. This female energy or the principle of intelligence and intellection is the element that makes up the Ardhanāreeswara form of each individual”. [9]

29. Non-combined and Combined gestures of Nāṭya

Hastās are divided into two categories:

- 1) Asumyuta and
- 2) Samyuta

Asumyuta hastās are shown by single hand.

Samyuta are those in which both hands are used jointly in depicting an idea. The same classification is also applicable to mudrā. An idea is expressed either by single hands or both hands. The communication by hastās has resulted in the dictionary of hastas. Hastās are further classified as Nrīta and Nrītyā according to function and meaning. Nrīta hastās are purely decorative and can have no specific meaning, whereas Nrītya hastās narrate and interpret text of drama and poetry for depiction of moods. Some of the hastās have three functions e.g. the patāka hastā is held in a particular way to symbolize and analyze i.e the Kartā (subject), the Karmā (activity) , kriyā (subsequent movements).

Hastās differ according to persons, movement, expression and nature of movement or guṇa. Each hastā stands for manifold concepts. The accompanying movements of the body and face also differ according to the meanings.

In āṅgika abhinaya the hand movement is called Sākha ,like the branches of the tree, the hand spreads out in every direction. The fingers move like tender leaves or open out like petals. The hastās are the most characteristic feature of āṅgika abhinaya. With the emergence of dance and dance drama, everything had to be represented in terms of gestures. The Nāṭya Śāstra allows new hastās to be incorporated to convey emotions.

The Nāṭya Śāstra lists the following hastas, along with their meanings
Asamyuta = "non-combined", single hand gestures

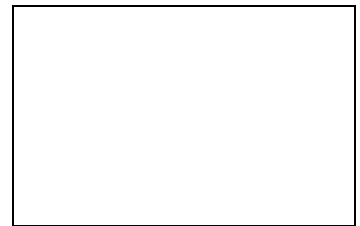
These are single hand gestures as they can be used by one hand independently from the other.

Name		Picture		
Patāka . This is common basic position, arms are often held to the side in patāka. When finger are upheld in patāka while depicting gods, they represent protecting gestures of (Abhaya) and when held downwards, the same patāka would mean granting of boons (Varadha)	Flag, Striking, driving, joy, pride, etc. rain, shower of flowers, beginning of dance, cloud, forest, forbidding things, bosom, night, river, world of the gods, horse, cutting, wind, reclining, walking,		prowess, graciousness, moonlight, strong sunlight, knocking, meaning of the seven cases, wave, entering a street, equality, applying sandal paste, one's self, taking an oath, silence,	benediction, a good king, palmyra leaf, slap, touching, saying "such and such", the sea, the way of good deeds, addressing (a person some distance away), going in front, the form of a sword, month year, season, day, sprinkling water
Tripatāka	King's Crown, beckoning, sending away, saluting on forehead - or touching auspicious objects wiping tears crossed over chest - saluting elders		three parts of a flag crown, tree, the bearer of the vajra (Indra), screw-pine flower, light, rising flames, cheek, patterns	drawn on the face or body, turning round, union of woman and man

Ardhapatāka	half-flag tender shoots, panel for writing or drawing, bank of a river, dagger, knife, flag, saying "Both"			
Kartarimukha	mountain summit, arrow shaft face, the forefinger and little finger are out spread,		opposition or overturning, stealing, the corner of the eye, death, forgetting, vomiting, disagreement, lightning, sleeping alone, weeper	
Mayura	peacock the peacock's beak bird of omen, vomiting,		stroking the hair, forehead, brow-spot,	

Ardhachandra	crescent moon, small trees, pot, woman's girdle or waist ,half moon the moon on the eighth day of the dark fortnight, a hand seizing the throat, a spear, consecrating an image, a platter, waist, anxiety,		one's self, meditation, prayer, touching the limbs, greeting common people sweeping, clasping the waist, elephant's ears	
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Arāla - dignity of men and self-admiration by women, drinking



poison,
holding an umbrella or a goad,

blessing, describing,

Śukatunda-

lover's anger, jealousy, parrot's beak shooting an arrow,
throwing a spear, mystery, expressing contempt and rebuking



Muṣṭi	holding of weapon, striking fist steadiness, grasping the hair, wrestling thumb on top of fingers - running, beating		, holding a sword or things fingers on top of thumb - wrestling, beating the sides	
Śikhara-	who is it - questioning , pointing lips and legs, spire of the God of Love, bow, pillar, silence, husband, tooth, recollection		, intimate suggestion, untying the girdle, embrace, lover, sound of a bell, ringing of bells, pressing or rubbing the body, throwing a spike or a javelin,	

			holding a rope	
Kapittha	suggests weapons elephant apple Lakshmi, body, Sarasvati, winding, holding cymbals, milking cows, collyrium, holding flowers at the time of dalliance, grasping the end of the robe, veiling the head,		offering incense or lights, etc. affirmation, releasing a disc (wheel), discharging weapons after meditating (by placing on forehead), some birds and their flight.	

Katakāmukha



- pulling reins, wearing garments, holding the hem of garments, threading a pearl necklace, picking flowers, a garland of flowers, drawing a bow slowly, distributing folded betel leaves, applying such things as musk or scent, glancing, holding an umbrella, grasping the hair and the noose

Sūchi	turned around - suggests (Chakra) or a crowd, one, Parabrahma, one hundred, sun, city, world, saying "This" or "What?", "He", threatening, the body, astonishment, braid of hair, umbrella,		circle, explanation, evening - using weapons, forbidding directing, threatening earring, turning of a wheel, good words, and swinging	
Chandrakalā	Used above Shiva and Ganesha's head		to indicate the crescent moon	
Padmakoes	worship of a god, showering of flowers, some fruits and a woman's breasts lotus bud fruit, wood-apple, curve, ball		the shape of a bell, the hole of a snake, a water-lily, an egg ,taking the kapittha or bilva fruit, a downcast face	

	of flowers, mango, rain of flowers, cluster of flowers, the japa flower,			
Sarpasirśa	movement of snake's head, snake head sandal-paste, slowness, sprinkling, cherishing, etc., giving water to gods and sages,		pouring, drinking or offering of holy water facing downwards - waving movement, dwarves facingupwards -	

Mrigasirśa	the concepts of "here", "now", wiping perspiration, deer head, women, cheek, traditional manners, fear, discussion, costume of an actor, place of residence, tete-a- tete, drawing three lines on the		brow, patterns on the ground, massage of the feet, (combining the hands) house, placing the feet, calling the beloved, roaming facing downwards - wiping off sweat, beckoning, shading eyes from the sun facing upwards - colouring the face, throwing the dice	
Simhamukha	lion face, coral, pearl, fragrance, stroking the hair, a drop of water, salvation when placed on the heart, homa,		hare, elephant, kusa grass, lotus garland, testing the preparation of medicine	

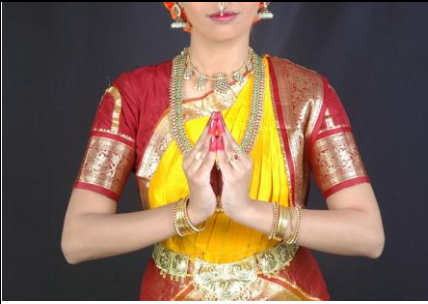
Kāngula	sense of little, or child's face held up by chin, tail, breast of a young girl, white water-lily, areca-nut,		different types of fruits, small quantities, and	
Ālapadma	prohibiting or asking 'who are you?' ,full-blown lotus, elephant-apple, turning, breast, yearning for the beloved, mirror, full-moon, apraising oneself, maintain		enquirin 'who are you?', beautiful vessel, hair-knot, moon-pavilion, town, village, height, anger, lake, car, murmuring sound, praise	
Chatura	grace, hope, affection, youth musk, a little gold, copper etc., wet, sorrow, aesthetic emotion, eyes, difference of caste, oath, playful converse, slow-stepping		, breaking to peices, seat, oil or ghi, etc. chanting prayers, a small quantity, doubt, Vedic discourse	

Bhramara	picking flowers, removing thorns bee , parrot, crane, cuckoo, u		holding flowers with long stalks, palm leaves,	
Hamsāśya- tying the marriage thread, initiation, certainty, horripilation, painting, drop of water, raising the wick of a lamp, examining, drawing lines, carrying garlands, singifying "That am I", accomplishment of a task, Hands of deities meditation (Dhyanam)	small, little, delicate swan-face smoothness, softness kept steady - act of smelling flowers			
Hamsapaksha-	offering water to the dead, feeding of Brahmins in suggest sorrow, holding the chin the number six, constructing a		bridge, making marks with the nails, arranging' applying color to the face, tying up the hair, accepting, friend (Sakhi)	

Sandamsa	taking out a thorn or picking delicate flowers brushing collyrium to the eyes when pearls are pierced, powdering things like camphor, taking betel leaf painting, drawing the eyebrows, stringing beads, decorating the eyelashes	 in movement [open and close]	grasping generosity, sacrificial offerings, tumour, insect, apprehension, worship, the number five	removing thorns, plucking small flowers, rebuking rudely, rubbing sacred thread,
Mukūla	worship to gods, kissing lovers, touching breasts, bud, water-lily, eating, the God of Love, holding a seal, navel, plantain flower		obliquely and facing upwards, counting gold coins facing downwards -	

Palli and Vyāgraha	Weapons of Gods, the vehicle of goddess - lion and tiger claws			.
Tāmarachuda	to beckon children, rebuke, etc. red-crest, cock, crane, camel, calf, writing or drawing		inspiring confidence in children, in war, yawning and kings	
Triśula and Ardhasūchi				trident , bilva, leaf, three together and a little bit of something

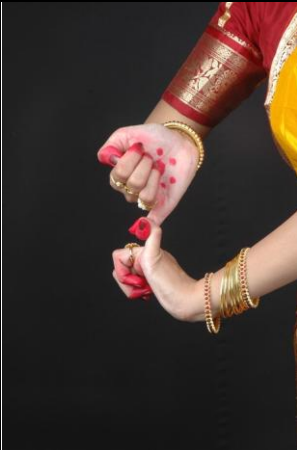
Samyuta = "combined", double hand gestures

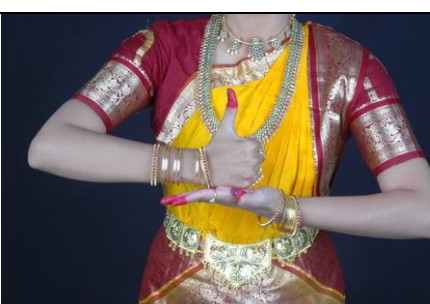
Name		Picture	
Anjali	used to greet friends - held in front of the chest used to receive presents - held near the face used to make obeisance to deities held on the head		salutation saluting Deities, Elders (gurus) or Brahmans - hands held on the head for Deities, before the face for Elders, and on the chest for Brahmans
Kapota	ferocious approach with inimical intention, bowing down and talking to a venerable man, held on breast by women to represent cold and fear -		indicates having ideas, expressing possibilities, or showing anxiety dove, taking oath, conversation with elders, humble acquiescence
Karkata	Bee's wax, massaging the limbs, yawning after getting up from sleep, a huge body, supporting the chin, holding arm of friend or		crab , hands may be turned inwards or outwards group, stoutness, blowing the conch, stretching the limbs, bending the bough of a tree

	consort		
Svastika	"Svastika literally, means crossed, many hand-positions represents directions of clouds, the firmament, jungles, oceans, the earth and other vast things as well.		crocodile, timid speech, dispute, praising
Katakāvardhamana	kataka name of single hand mudra is crossed here with both hands holding katakamukha, wooing a lady, or bowing down to a venerable person, coronation, ritual, marriage blessing		
Kartarisvastika	arrow-shafts trees, the boughs of tress,		

	the summit of a hill		
Utsanga Both hands held mriga sirsa and crossed	feeling of touch also for anything with excessive effort, acts of anger and indignation, women's envious acts and squeezing of something.		embrace, modesty, armlet, education of children , enslaved, servant
Dola Both hands hang on sides holding patakas	haste, sadness, loss of sense, swooning, drunkenness, excitement, illness, and weapon- inflicted wounds, walking gait of lady		swing , beginning an expressive dance-story, describes the position as "hands in pataka on thighs"
Puṣpapūta In sarpasiras join the side of the palms	Usually used as an offering, indicates receiving, carrying, etc. holding rice,		flower-casket offering lights, twilight water-offering, flower-spells, children receiving fruits, etc.

	fruits, flowers, different kinds of foodstuffs as well as water		
Śakata			Held near mouth to indicate frightful teeth of the gestures of the Raksasas (demons)
Śankha			conch . The gesture is described as the thumb of the left hand held by right in Shikara and joined with the right thumb closing in on middle finger of the left.
Chakra	Ardhachandra hands one above another (vertical & horizontal)		discus
Samputa	Clasp hands with		casket concealing things,

	ardhachandras		
Pāśa	Index fingers clasped		noose enmity, noose, manacles, battle, Yama's (God of Death) hands
Kilaka			bond , affection, the conversation of lovers
Matsya	shark, fish, and flesh eating animals.		
Kurma	One hand (palm down) on the other (palm upward)		tortoise
Varāha	One hand on another (both palms down)		boar
Garuda	Ardachandra Swastika hands, thumbs clasped means to show		Garuda is an eagle, Vishnu's mount -

	flight of birds		
Nāgabhandā	carrying of bride and groom, excessive weight, clasp ing a pillar and the extermination of a hill or a boulder		serpent-tie, pairs of snakes, bower, Atharva Veda spells
Khatvā	Touching tips of ring and middle fingers held in Gajamukha hastas		bed
Berunda	Kapittas in swastika		pair of Birds, lovebirds
Śivalinga	Right hand shikara hasta on left hand in pataka		Śiva's formless phallic symbol

30. Nritya hastās :

The nritya hastās are used only for decorative purpose and are not intended to represent either in emotion or character or situation. In Nritya item either these hastās are moved in different directions, upward, downward, to the right, to the

left, in front etc

"Name of the Mudrā	Deity	Caste	Colour
1. Patāka	The Supreme	Brāhmin	White
2. Tripatāka	Śiva	Ksatriya	Red
3. Kartarimukha	Visnu wielding discuss	Ksatriya	Copper
4. Ardachandra	Mahādeva	Vaisya	Smoky
5. Ārāla	Vāsudeva	Mixed	Red
6. Śukatunda	Mārici	Brahmin	Red
7. Muṣṭi	Moon	Śudra	Blue
8. Śikhāra	Kāmadeva	Gandharva	Dusty
9. Kapittha	Padma Garbha Visnu	Sage	White
10. Katakāmukha	Raghurāma	Deva	Copper
11. Suchi	Visvakarman	Deva	White
12. Padmakosa	Bhārgava	Yaksakinnara	White
13. Sarpa Sirśa	Śiva	Deva	Yellow

14. Mriga Sirśa	Mahesvara Śiva	Rsi	White
15. Kāngula	Padma	Siddha	Golden
16. Alapadma	Sun	Gandharva	Dusty
17. Chatura	Sun	Mixed	Dusty
18. Bhramara	Garuda	Mixed	Cloudy black
19. Hamsāsya	Brahma	Mixed	White
20. Hamsapaksa	Kāmadeva	Apsaras	Blue
21. Sandamsa	Valmiki	Vidyādhara	White
22. Mukula	Candra	Sankirna	White
23. Urnanābha	Indra	Deva	White
24. Tāmara Chuda	Incarnation as tortoise" [10]	Ksatriya	Red

The following purānas and anecdotes indicate the practical use of mudrās and we can understand evolution of the hastās from them.

1. Patāka -Brahma made use of this Mudrā while making obeisance to Visnu. Patāka has reference to flags and banners.
2. Tripatāka – While holding the thunderbolt, Indra kept three fingers separate.

3. Kartari Mukha- Śivā is the sponsor of this Mudrā before slaying Andhakāśura.
4. Ardha Candra - Śivā in the form of Natarāja embellished his matted hair with Crescent moon.
5. Arāla - Sage Agastya made use of this Mudrā before drinking up the ocean
6. Śukatunda - Gauri was in the state of feigned anger with Śiva. She made use of this Mudrā
7. Muṣṭi - Lord Visnu was in the state of feigned anger with Śiva. She made use of this Mudrā at the time of slaying Madhu.
8. Śikhara - At the time of churning of the milk ocean the moon-crested Lord wanted to uproot Sumeru mountain when he made use of this Mudrā.
9. Kapittha - At the time of churning of the mild ocean Lord Visnu pulled out the celestial tree Mandāra and made use of this Mudrā.
10. Katakāmukha- While learning the science of archery from Lord Sivā, Kārtikeya made use of this Mudrā.
11. Suchimukha - Brahma made use of this hand gesture in order to reveal the principle “Ekoham” (I am one)
12. Padmakosa - In order to receive the discuss Sudarsana from Lord Śiva, Lord Vishnu made use of this Mudrā instead of floral offering.
13. Sarpa Sirśā - When the demon king Bālu was found the divine incarnation Vamana assuaged the grief of the Devas by using this hand gesture.

14. Mriga Sirsā- Pārvati performed penance to gain the hand of Lord Śiva. She applied sandal paste over her forehead making use of this Mudrā.
15. Kāngula - Before swallowing the Kalakuta poison Lord Śiva made use of this Mudrā.
16. Alapallava - While stealing butter from the huts of the cowherdresses Lord Krishna made use of this Mudra.
17. Chatura - When Garuda went in search of Amrta Sage Kasyapa gave him guidance making use of this Mudrā.
18. Bhramara - Sage Kasyapa made use of this Mudrā when he wanted to make the earrings for Aditi.
19. Hamsāśya - Lord Śiva in Dakṣiṇāmurti form was instructing the sages in the principles of Absolute Philosophy beneath the Vatā tree. Then he made use of this Mudrā.
20. Hamsapakṣa - Tāṇḍu who expounded the dance form Tāṇḍava made use of this Mudrā.
21. Sandamsa - This is also known as Jnana Mudrā. At the outset this was made use of by the goodness of speech and musicology goddess Sarasvati.
22. Mukula - The monkey god Hanuman attempted to gulp the rising sun. He made use of this Mudrā.
23. Urnanabha - The divine incarnation of man-lion made use of this Mudrā before slaying Hiranyakasipu.
24. Tāmara Chuda - The three Vedas after being spelt out by Brahma made use of this Mudrā in making obeisance to him.

In Bharatanāṭyam and Kathakali, the Hasta Mudrās are more definite and firm while in forms as Kathak and Manipuri, the Hasta Mudrās are held softly and lightly.

With reference to the special practices in Bengal,

“**Mudrās** which are the sources of Hastas please the Devatas and destroy burdens of sins. The popular hand poses during Puja are Ankusha , Avagunthana , Avahanyadi pancha mudras(Samsthapani, Sannidhapani, Sannirodhani, Sammukheekarani), Kurma, Galine, Goyoni, Grasa, Cakrā, Jvālīni, Tatva, Dhenu, Nāracha, Parameekarana, Prānādi pancha mudra(Prāna, Apāna, Vyāna, Udāna and Samāna), Matsya, Mriga, Yoni, Lelihana and Samhāra mudrā”. [11]

31. The Supreme dancer Śiva:

“How many various dances of Śiva are known to His worshippers I cannot say. No doubt the root idea behind all these dances is more or less one and the same, the manifestation of primal rhythmic energy. Śiva is the Eros Protogonos of Lucian, when he wrote:

“It would seem that dancing came into being at the beginning of all things, and was brought to light together with Eros, that ancient one, for we see this primeval dancing clearly set forth in the choral dance of the constellations, and in the planets and fixed stars, their interweaving and interchange and orderly harmony”.

The second well-known dance of Śiva is called Tāndava and belongs to His tamasic aspect as Bhairava or Virabhadra.

Thirdly, we have the Nādanta dance of Natarāja before the assembly (sabha) in the golden hall of Chidambaram or Tillai.

Then ādi-Seshan worshipped Śiva, and prayed above all things for the boon, once more to behold this mystic dance; Śiva promised that he should behold the dance again in sacred Tillai, the center of the Universe”. [12]

The dance, in fact, represents His five activities (Panchakritya), viz: Sriṣṭi (overlooking, creation, evolution), Sthiti (preservation, support), Samhāra (destruction, evolution), Tirobhāva (veiling, embodiment, illusion and also giving rest), Anugraha (release, salvation, grace). These, separately considered, are the activities of the deities Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshwara and Sadā Śiva.

Creation arises from the hand clap .IT all started with sound drum: protection proceeds from the hand of hope, (abhaya) from fire comes destruction: the foot held aloft gives release from bondage. It will be observed that the fourth hand points to this lifted foot, the refuge of the soul. I shall protect you and so remain steadfast in devotion to the sef. I shall show **your** self in **me** if you surrender your ego – Nāṭya proclaims.

32. The Sanskrit theatre form

The Chaturashrikarana or square or was a basic structure of the Indian temple, as in the theatre. Identifying the Yajurveda as the source of ritual and body-language with gestures., Vedic yajna as a performance act is considered as a base.

Brahma is constantly referred to as the principle of the central (focus) dimensions in the concepts of brahmamandala (on the stage), brahmasthana, brahmasutra, etc. on stage. So also is the case of Viṣṇu where he is considered as the principle of the triangle in vaisnavasthana, vaisnavakarana, etc. on stage.

The shape of the four sides is especially chosen because....

“Whereas the earth, as the surface of this world which supports the movements and weight of our bodies, is found, the earth held in the embrace of the sky and subject to its laws, is represented as fixed fourfold”. [13]

33. The relevance of these Symbolizing art forms

Nandikeshwara describes the dance of Śiva as being depicted in seven forms called the Tāṇḍavas which are the vigorous, masculine, eternal dance which

depicts the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe. In this background, It can be observed that the artistes rarely gave their signature or copyrights as they were simple enough to admit the divine hand in the works of art including poetry, music, dance, sculptures, temples, architecture, painting etc. Folk tradition on one hand continuously portrayed the linguistic and ethnic specialties, costumes with themes as nature and festivals and dance movements akin to trade occupations. On the other hand, the classical era saw the emergence of various styles, Bāni, Gharānas, schools and the wonderful Guru-Śiṣya paramparas or lineage. One has to keep in mind one basic difference between the ancient approach of the east and the modern outlook of west in the world in the sense that the common perception of the orient, is that man is a soul clothed by the body as against the body with a soul, being the occident. Hence, we notice that corporeality, spatial movements, gymnastics, geography, aerobatic skills, kinematics are terms more common in western dances while although we have terms as spiritualize, geometry in movement and kinetics the predominant principle is treating the body itself as the yogic macaroon with the five elements the various koshas, doshas etc. The entire universe itself is within the nucleus of man himself. Of course, these days inter-cultural movement has brought about a rare path and a massive change in this scenario. The celebration of life through music and dance is an example of achieving the goals of life –Dharma, Artha, Kāma, Moksha – the 4 puruṣārthas. It can be also compared to the festivities when people commemorate important legendary events with new clothes, preparing and exchanging special dishes, sweetmeats, propitiating the Gods and Goddess or the saints and giving alms to the needy .

Loftiest philosophies get translated through the media of both our arts and festivals into simple ,comprehensive and enjoyable experiences. Man rises above narrow dogma and prejudice and unite in a spirit of brotherhood. Every little symbol attached to dance programme venues and during festivals like Rangoli designs, painting on the courtyard, lamps lit, lanterns hung, flags hoisted, the paraphernalia adorning the stagehouse all signify the message of life filled with

love and joy. There is a metamorphosis of monism and dualism.

Siva dancing as Natarāja is a symbolic representation of his creative Movement; this universe is a product of his **tāṇḍava** of which are seven varieties: Ananda Tāṇḍava (blissful); Sandhya (evening dance); Uma (dance with Uma); Gouri (dance with Gouri); Kālīka (dance with Kālī); Tripura (dance of the destruction of three cities); Samhara (dance of destruction). Drawing attention to the close correspondence between the postures of the various limbs of Natarāja and the authentic movements in yoga, he writes: “The left leg has been raised in a graceful dancing posture. It is the effect of the upward movement of the Apāna which is its master impulse. The Apāna has moved towards the Muladhara Chakra and has passed beyond it. The very fact that the left leg is in a state of poise indicates the emergence of the Mulabandha in the Diet. That is followed by the next Bandha, namely the Udyana Bandha above the Manipura at the navel, indicated by the flowing hand. The effect of both the Bandhas is to keep the Apāna in its upward course and prevent it from coming down. Consequently Apāna has moved towards the namely prana the unification of Prāna and Apana is indicative of the emergence of the state of yoga. It is a thing that takes place in the yogi’s heart and when it does, it brings about the complete cessation of all the activities of the mind. Natarāja indicates silently the mystery of transcendence of that harmonious state by the left arm which passes in front of his heart in a most graceful dancing posture”. [14]

Drawing examples from the world over ,during the middle ages, the science of numbers were considered the common denominator binding artistic practices in an organic and unchanging manner.

Spatial proportions of geometry, latitudes and longitudes of forerunners with utopian creativity combined with laterally thinking minds surpassed the realm of

physical sight and sound. Semiotics utilized in musical writings also communicated a sense of fullness and concordance with laws of nature and the very same proportions ruled the repository of many a repertoire. This gave rise to the concept of mathematical metaphysics, synchronous and symmetrical. The arena of arts became so replete with effulgence that the acme remained boundless. The harmony in the orbital movement of heavenly bodies and spheres, the felicitous luminescence of the sun's rays, potent during its pinnacle and as it plummets on our earth, the succession of the seasons are a simulacrum of dance and music and all integral interdisciplinary marvels. The cyclic movement of time as manifested in the twelve zodiac signs is a common symbol in painting and dance.

The science of tantrā serves spiritual elevation of mankind. It offers a yardstick to spiritually grasp and measure the properties of cosmos. As one collates the texts and manuscripts available on tantrā, one is awestruck by an inevitable web, neatly interwoven with varied components. This also includes bizarre elements. The grotesque images like skulls are not only associated with Tantrayāna or Vajrayāna Buddhism, but also western music and painting. The art of music had to contribute to the intersection of life and death.

“Often the identification of music with death takes the shape of a skeleton playing violin, in Peter Bruegel's – the elder's triumph of death. According to the symbolism of alchemy, however, the skeleton does not imply a static death”. [15]

A related study into the schools and branches of Tantra and Natya would reveal how the science and the art are embedded within the streams.

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Chapter - IV

Schools and Branches of Tantra and Nāṭya

1. Hindu Tantra

The term Hindu is heterogeneous, as Hinduism consists of several schools of philosophies or Darśanās . It encompasses many religious rituals that commonly possess the common goal of attaining the divine benediction but yet vary in practice. The Hindu faiths, practices and philosophies have evolved from the Vedic tradition. It has many diverse sects and subsects. In this century ,Hinduism is widely and popularly influenced by Advaita philosophy that believes God to be infinite and incorporeal. Hinduism is ultimately monistic, which considers the One Reality, the Universal and non-dual Brahman, behind all forms.

Hindus venerate an array of deities, considering them manifestations of the one supreme monistic Cosmic Spirit, Brahman. Some Hindus focus on a singular concept of Brahman (God) with one Godly form as in Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śaktism. Īśvara, who is one and only one, is full of innumerable auspicious qualities; He is omniscient, omnipotent, perfect, just, merciful, glorious, mysterious, and yet full of love. He is the Creator, the Ruler and the Destroyer of this universe.

It is said that the term Hindu is derived from Sindhu i.e. the Indus River in particular. The religion literally flows like any river would do. In the Rig Veda, the Indo-Aryans mention their land as Sapta Sindhu. Another perspective on these (i.e. dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa) is that artha [material wealth, prosperity etc.]and kāma [affinity to family, sensual pleasure etc.] are to be pursued like a river which is bounded by dharma [rightful conduct, righteousness, etc] and mokṣa [desire to get liberated from the cycle of birth, and death through single pointed contemplation to God and self-surrender] on the two sides.

Sanātana Dharma- Eternal Dharma, a traditional name of Hinduism, alludes to the idea of spiritual principles, transcending the mundane and material, representing a realm of pure consciousness. Hinduism teaches tolerance of other

religions, as expressed in the Rig Veda verse:

ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti

Truth is One, but sages call it by many names

Rig Veda 1:164:46.

Advaita philosophy holds that in order to worship the formless Īshvara, the devotee conceives a physical form of God in his mind for the sake of worshipping Him with love (bhakti). Among the six darshanās, Sāṅkhya is the four runner for Tantra. Purely academic and scientific, Sāṅkhya holds consciousness and matter as the dual entities. Tantra replaces the terms Puruṣa and Prakṛiti with Śiva and Śakti but with the core difference that these two become one finally. Tantra has more practical value as well and is monistic in essence although several myriad rituals and processes that have evolved, prevail.

Other important scriptures are the Hindu Āgamās, which are texts related to rituals and worship dedicated to Viṣṇu, Śiva and Devī sects.

Hindu Tantras exist in Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and primarily the Śakta forms, among others. Āgamās, Viṣṇuism, Bhakti movements, Pancharātra, Śaivite Āgamās, Nāthas, Pasupatās, Dattatreya bhaktās, Stotrās all form part of the literature. Hindu tāntrik literature include tantrās of the Śri Kula, the Kālī Kula, mantra Śāstra, Vaiṣṇava tantrās and tantrās ascribed to other sects, including magic.

Sir John Woodroffe, who under the pen name Arthur Avalon seems to have learnt from a number of Bengali tāntriks and pandits. Woodroffe who translated several tāntrik texts and wrote other books on the subject in the early 20th century, gives another classification, the divyās (divine), vīrās (heroes) and paśhūs (the herd). It is only in vīrasādhana, he observes, that latā sādhana has a place or work ie - sādhana in the heroic mode may include sexuality. All the same, some tantrās, such as the Brihad Nila Tantra, advocate a type of worship called Mahāchinachāra, which appears to have no rules whatever.

The traditions in different parts of the large sub-continent may vary widely. Many modern commentators define tāntrik practice as well. Hindu tāntrik practices are broadly classified as Right Hand (dakṣināchāra) and Left Hand (vāmachāra)

according to the rites that are performed. Right Handed Schools are said to use either ritual substitutes or to avoid esoteric and magical practices completely. Schools of the latter involve rites such as the panchamakāra.

Cults of Śivā, Śakti, Ganapati, Viṣṇu and Sūrya are popular. Many of the texts describe themselves as dialogues between Śivā and Śakti. The Hindu tāntrik divisions have one common primary factor ie- the importance of the Guru for the disciple or Śishya. Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism all share common philosophical and spiritual traits with Hinduism in varying degrees.

Taking a broad outline,

"At one end of the Tāntric spectrum we have highly unorthodox practices such as black magic that go against the moral grain of Hindu society (and that of most societies). At the other end we have Tāntric masters who decry all doctrines and all rituals and instead applaud the ideal of perfect spontaneity (sahajā). Most schools fall between these two poles; they are typically highly ritualistic but infused with the recognition that liberation springs from wisdom, which is innate and therefore cannot be produced by any external means." [1]

2. Concepts and practises associated with Hindu Tantra

The whole Universe is a creation of a Divine Consciousness (Śivā) and his active willpower (Śakti). Māya, the illusory nature of the universe is conceptualised as Māya Śakti - the divine mother who causes humans to identify with illusory forms, preventing them from seeing the fundamental reality of their inseparability of the divine. Māya Śakti is held in considerable regard in Tantrā and the attaining of ultimate realisation takes place in active concert with her.

The primary assumption is that everything is a manifestation of the divine. What is normally considered impure and immoral are thus accepted and even utilised in transgressional practises, to further spiritual evolution. This results in embracing of opposites. Tantrā is widely recognized to be a system rejecting the orthodoxy of brahmanism and the hierarchy of the caste system. It believes in non-

acceptance of the caste system, class or gender. The Guru occupies an indispensably divine position in Tantra and the presence of a Guru is an essential condition for Tāntric practise. Tāntric practise is said to be a difficult route to enlightenment but can be simplified by an enlightened navigator ,an experienced master who will initiate the aspirant and guide him in his spiritual journey. Yet another distinct feature is that the Dikṣā /special training or revelation of Mantra etc .has to be maintained in secrecy .The oral transmission of the tradition by the Guru to a worthy pupil is a course demanding devotion ,diligence ,meticulousness and sincerity.

Tantra is, yet mouldable. It changes with each moment and environment. It especially depends on the nature of the practitioner.

In traditional pockets of Tāntric practice in India, such as in Assam , West Bengal, in Siddhanta temples of South India and in Kashmiri Śiva temples up north, Tantra has retained its true form. Its variance in practice is seen where many tāntrics are known to frequent cremation grounds in attempts to transcend their worldly attachment to life, while others perform more acceptable acts. The difference between right – hand and left – hand Tantras is that the former propitiates the fundamental principle of the universal self employing symbolic acts of worship and ritual while the latter endorses the direct involvement in several acts, also of forbidden nature, the difference between the right hand and left hand tantras. But what is common to them all is the intense secrecy in which their rituals are kept and the almost godlike reverence paid to the Guru, who is seen as the pinnacle of mastery in Tantra . More wide-spread practices to which all religious people commit themselves are pooja and worship through devotion .At the same time, more occult yogic practices involving sacred rites continue. Tantra openly rejects many aspects of the caste system and patriarchy. Despite this, Tantra was accepted by some high-caste Hindus, eg- Rajput princes.

3. Features of Śaivism

Śaivism is a branch of Hinduism that worships Śiva as the Supreme God

(Brahman.) Followers of Śaivism are called Śaivites, Śaivas and so on. The belief is that the entire creation is synonymous with the creator, both actually meaning that Śiva is both immanent and transcendent. This concept contrasts with the religious traditions in which God is seen as fundamentally different from the creation and above the creation. Śaivism acknowledges the existence of many other deities but these are all manifestations of the Supreme One. This type of spiritual view is called Monistic Theism. Śaivites believe in the formless and hence, the devotees often worship Śiva in the form of a lingam, symbolizing the entire universe. The anthropomorphic manifestation is Natarāja, the Divine Dancer who dances with dynamism throughout boundless time and space to create, sustain and destroy the universe. Yet another benevolent, eloquent and meditative form is that of the south-facing Dakṣinamurti, the silent teacher. The Dhyāna Mudra where the tips of the thumb and index finger touch each other, the mounds of GURU and ŚUKRA are joined, again symbolic of unity of male and female principles resulting in perfect balance and control over senses. There is also Hari-Harā, half-Śiva and half-Visnu; and Bhairava, who wields the trishula, the trident symbolizing desire, action and wisdom. Śiva can create the Universe by His Sankalpa -penance. From the fifty-two sounds of Śiva's Damaru [the hour-glass shaped instrument that He plays] were created the original sounds or bija-mantras which created the Universe. The entire Universe is Natarāja's school and playground of dance. He is the dancer as well as the 'spectator'. When the dance begins, its sound accelerates the world's activity and when it stops, the world gets absorbed and HE remains in ATMANAND.

It is relevant to note that the twelve Jyotirlingas' shrines in our country are among the most important for Śaivites. Major theological schools of Śaivism include Kashmir Śaivism, Śaiva Siddhanta and Viraśaivism. It is believed that the greatest author on the Śaiva religion writing in Sanskrit was Abhinavagupta, from Srinagar, Kashmir, c. 1000 CE who is acclaimed for his equally brilliant contributions to study of Nāṭya Śāstra.

“Resounding with music and dance and surrounded by bands of Yoginis and

Siddhas. This pen-picture highlights the image of Abhinavagupta as a Tantrika and Yogi, teacher and artist. The notions of Śabda, Nāda and Nāṭya, Dhvani and Rasā acquire in Abhinavagupta a characteristic depth on account of their suggestive reverberations within the grand philosophical universe he helped to systematize and elaborate. In fact, it could be said without exaggeration that Indian philosophical thinking reached its highest peak in the writings of Abhinava. His practical and theoretical interest in the arts led him to lay down the abiding foundations of a truly Indian aesthetic." [2]

Saiva Siddhanta-

The Tirumandiram of Sri. Tirumular contains certain chapters which describe the Dance of Shiva in such powerful, devotional and beautiful verses that we can well establish Natarāja –the King of Dance as THE Causal Spirit WHO [giving a ‘personal’ touch to the ‘impersonal’] creates, controls, protects, sustains and dissolves/destroys to complete several three dimensional cycles. This yogi gave the famous dictum ‘Anbe’ Sivam, God is love. The religious and spiritual path of thirumular came to be known as Saiva Siddhantam. Nurtured by the Nayanmars, it has played an important role in the development of Tamil culture and the dance form of the Bharatnatyam that evolved from the temples of Tamil Nadu. Central to this philosophy is the triangle of Pati, God, Pasu, individual soul and Pasa, the bondage. The difference between the three entities is real in existence, but they are inseparable from supreme Reality in Tantra to, verses 411 to 420 say that Nandi support everything in the world and verses 431 to 430 say that the Lord is the creator of mysteries Tantra Nine seems to present a picture of the divine vision which is the ultimate aim. Verses 2649 to 2721 describe the super subtle sound manifestation in the five syllable panchakshara mantras and that darshan of the dancing posture of the Lord is the highest bliss. The dances are of many kinds and lead to jnanodayam (2813 to 2824), and sat-chit-ananda(2825 to 2834) . Saiva Siddantha practices are highly systematized and deeply mystic. It seems the objective of Tirumoolar and all saints of the same order to be able to see this dance of the Lord through deep penance, concentration and yogic postures and

breathing, hand gestures and subtle communication with divinity. The height at which this dance is placed calls for purest devotion and a fine degree of practice indeed. Tirumandiram is an authoritative Sutrā and Shāstra and has to be read, re-read and understood by dancers of this divine art of Bharatanāṭyam. This saint who is believed to have travelled actually from the north and then settled in the south before giving such a text is another example of a yogic scholar just like Abhinavagupta, practicing Tantrā and simultaneously well aware of Nāṭya.

4. The rituals

According to Śaivas, Śiva is experienced in the Nirbij Samādhi state as the attributeless form, nirgunarupa ie-Parameśwara Himself. Śiva is the supreme God among the trinity - Brahma, Vishnu and Śiva. His consort Pārvati, his sons Ganapati and Murugan are also worshipped in the temples. One of the most famous hymns to Śiva in the Vedās is the Sri Rudram. The foremost Śaivite Vedic Mantra is the five-syllabled “Aum Namah Śivāya.” The sacred syllable Om is used during the worship profusely. The five syllabled word Na-ma-si-vā-ya is considered holy and devotees consider it their duty to repeat it several times. Certain portions of the Vedās such as Rudram and Chamakam are adulatory to Śiva. The sacred ash, Bhasma, forms an important part of worship. Śiva is bathed in it. This is distributed to the devotees who wear it on their forehead and other parts of the body with reverence. The Tripundra refers to the three horizontal stripes of holy ash symbolic of knowledge, purity, penance and also the three eyes of Śiva which are the sun, moon and fire. Wearing the Rudrāksha during meditation is another prominent feature in this school of belief. There are many temples dedicated to Śiva. Their architecture, lay-out, the location of various idols, methods of worship, are all strictly prescribed by books called Āgamās and the Śaivāgmās formed the roots of the treatise on dramaturgy.

5. Śaktism

It is only when Śiva becomes endowed with energy, Śakti, that He becomes active. The concept of Advaita or non-duality as per the āgamās accepts māya, illusion as the energy of the supreme Consciousness.

Śaktism is a denomination of Tāntric Hinduism that worships Śakti or Devi while not negating the importance of masculine and neuter divinity (which are however deemed to be inactive in the absence of the Śakti). In pure Śaktism, the Great Goddess, or Mahādevi, is worshiped as nothing less than the highest divinity, Supreme Brahman Itself, the "one without a second," with all other forms of Divinity, female or male, considered to be merely her diverse manifestations.

The Śaktas conceive their Great Goddess as the personification of primordial energy and the source of all divine and cosmic evolution. She is identified with the Supreme Being, conceived as the Source and the Spring. She is the 'Controller' of all the forces and potentialities of Nature. This female-orientation is marvelous and unique.

It was during development of Śaktism that the many religious Tantras, were written. In the Tāntric view, one could simultaneously consider oneself a Śaktā (a devotee of Śakti), a Śaiva (a devotee of Śiva), and a Vaiṣṇava (a devotee of Viṣṇu). Tantra is strongly associated with Vedānta and Sāṃkhya philosophies and is ultimately monist, though there is a rich tradition of Bhakti yoga growing all along. The feminine energy (Śakti) is considered to be the motive force behind all action and existence in the phenomenal cosmos in Hinduism. The cosmos itself is Brahman, the concept of the unchanging, infinite, immanent and transcendent Masculine potentiality, Puruṣa is actualized by feminine dynamism, Prakṛiti, embodied in the Goddesses who are ultimately the ONE.

Devi Māhātmyam is the chief text which combines Vedic, Upaniṣadic philosophies and develops the Tāntric worship in a laudatory form of Śakti religion. The immanent Mother, Devi, is focused on with intensity, love, and self-dissolving concentration in an effort to focus on the true reality underlying time, space and causation. Ego and desire of the Samsāra [world] entwine the soul in maya (illusion) and it is Maya Śakti, alone who can free the bonded individual, thus freeing one from the karmic cycles of birth, death and re-birth. Soundarya

Lahiri and the Lalita sahasranāma are other Śākta texts. These ancient hymns with their powerful suggestions, invoke the possibilities of our divine depths. When repeated, they activate our spiritual potentials and bestow benign effects.

Kālī, Durgā Parameśwari, Bhagawaty, Uma and Pārvati are the famous forms in which the Goddess is personified in the temples. Durgā is an epithet of Mahādevi, or the "Great Goddess," the combined power of Parvaty with the other popular, wealth and wisdom bestowing Goddesses, Sri Lakshmi and Sri Saraswaty. Durgā is celebrated in the Devi Māhātmya. Kālī is the goddess of destruction and transformation, as well as the devourer of time, as her name implies (kāla means "time," and also means "black").

6. Śāktā worship

This is heavily influenced by the specific science of proper action, the Tantra. Śakti is worshipped in several ways in the course of a puja (worship ceremony), including offerings of sweets and flowers, chanting mantras, using mudras, and typically offering some sacrifice. Devi is most powerfully worshipped by chanting her core [bija] mantra, different for each goddess. The Daśa MahāVidyas [ten wisdom Goddesses] is itself an intensive study. The ten Mahāvidyās are popular in Bengal, Assam, Kerala and some other parts of India. In the Kashmir tradition, while Kālīka may be hailed as the Ādya Śakti, her forms in works such as the Tantrāloka of Abhinavagupta and the Chidgaganachandrika, entirely differ in name and image from Daksina Kālīka, the Kāmākālī Kālīka, and other of her forms encountered in many Bengali texts.

Animal sacrifice is performed in some places in India, including such major temple sites as Kālighat in Calcutta, West Bengal, in Kāmākhyā, Assam. In addition, according to various traditions, the animal is said to achieve a higher level of rebirth. The head is offered to the goddess, the blood is used to bless icons and worshippers, and the meat cooked and served to the worshippers and poor as

prasad. Those who are against animal sacrifice use a pumpkin or melon instead, which has become a popular and acceptable substitute. Śaktism is also fused with local beliefs in villages throughout India. In the South, she [Mother] is known as 'Amma' and in parts of rural Bengal, she is known as 'Tushu'.

"When she, the ultimate Śakti, of her own will assumed the form of the universe, then the creation of the cakrā revealed itself as a pulsating essence.

From the void-like vowels with the visarga emerged the bindu, quivering and fully conscious. From this pulsating stream of supreme light emanated the ocean of the Cosmos, the very self of the three mothers".[3]

The most important material that accurately presents the traditional Indian Śakta worship and the position - of the Kundalini available today is Sir John Woodroffe's (pseudonym Arthur Avalon) **The Serpent Power**, first published in 1919 and reprinted a number of times since then. This is actually the translation of two important Indian texts and their commentaries, the Sat-Cakra-Nirupana, written in 1577, and the Padaka-Pancaka, containing descriptions of the centers and related practices, and Gorakshashatakam, which gives instructions for meditating on the chakras.

"Chapter XVII of the treatise says that it is only when KuNdalini is awakened that Mantra practice is successful. KuNdalini abides in the Mūlādhāra making a soft indistinct sound. By constantly leading her up to the Brahmarāndhra and back again the mind itself becomes dissolved (Manolayā). It is by doing YoNi Mudrā that Kundalini can be awakened and led up.

All defects in the Mantra are cured by the doing of Yoni Mudrā. Different directions are given as to how the defects in a Mantra can be cured. At verse 50 directions are given as to how the Sādhaka should pray for the boon for which he has been doing Sādhana. Verse 70 gives the Mantra of Mahishamardini. Verse 100 says that a good Śakta is she whose conduct in life is in accord with the teachings of Advaita. She should be devoted to the Guru, firm in her resolve and always be ready to do good. Her devotion (Bhakti) should be prompted by Sattva Guna. She

should be free from malice, be guileless and kind to all, skillful, dignified and helpful to the Sādhaka; she should be beautiful and young, noble with faith deeply rooted. A graceful woman like this adorned with fine clothes and ornaments and the like is alone competent to be a Duti. It is considered only right that the Sādhaka should employ, a beautiful and young woman to mediate between himself and his Ishta Devatā as a Duti or emissary. Verses 118/24 give the Mantra of Bhāgamālini” [4]

Common variations in practices of the Śāktās include visualizing the deity in the act of sexual union with a consort; visualizing oneself as the deity; and/or "transgressive" acts such as token consumption of meat or alcohol. Occasionally , ritualized sex may be undertaken. This accounts for tantra's negative reputation in some quarters, and its association in the Western world primarily as a collection of sexual practices. Tantra had originally been looked down upon by orthodox people as antisocial and immoral. But positively, many today see it as a celebration of social equity and feminism. The ancient symbolic sense of the words dakṣina and vāma was based on the distinction between the way of knowledge and the way of ānanda. The Lord of Yoga is usually, the Puruṣa, the conscious Soul who knows, observes, attracts, governs. But in Tantrā it is rather Prakṛiti, the Nature-soul, the Energy who is the powerful executive in the universe. The Tāntric Yogin pursued the aims of his discipline, - mastery, perfection, liberation, beatitude through mastery of this energy with a specific form of worship. Instead of withdrawing, he confronts, seizes and conquers.

In the Kaula and Vāmācāra schools of tantra the panca makāra, or five Ms, is a ritual sacrament in which several Hindu taboos ritually broken in order to free the practitioner from a conditioned mind created by convention. The five substances involved are:

- 1 madya (wine)
- 2 māmsa (meat)
- 3 matsya (fish)
- 4 mudrā (parched grain)

5 maithuna (intercourse)

But over a period, as is the tendency with Prakriti, Tāntric Yoga largely lost its principles and became a thing of formulae and occult mechanism.

“There are doctrinal as well as ritual differences between the two divisions of Śakti worshippers :-

1. The followers of Dakṣinacara believe in the absolute equality of Śiva and Śakti and hence their faith is called Samaya mata. During creation and maintenance of the world, Śakti element predominates and after Pralaya till creation starts again, Śiva element predominates. The followers of Vamacara believe that Śakti is always predominant and they do not recognize a separate Śiva-tattva, represented symbolically by the figure of Śiva lying under the feet of Śakti.
2. The Samayins believe that in the Kundalini-yoga, sahasrara is the goal and worship the Devi internally, whereas those who worship in the two centers called Kaulas [Muladhara is called Kula] believe that after reaching Sahasrāra, the Kunalini returns to Muladhara and sleeps there.
3. Samayins follow the Samhitas of Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatkumara, Suka and Vasista, called Subhagama Panchaka while Kaulas' texts are Parasurāma Sutrās and sixty-four Tantras.
4. The Rishi of former is Dakṣinamoorty and their Devatas are Kameśwara and Kameśwari while Rishi of latter is Bhairava and Devatas being Ānandabhairava and Ānandabhairavi.
5. The worship is according to Kalpa-Sutras of Vedic tradition and milk and fruits are offered. Kaulas have independent Tantric rites and offer Pancha-makāras. In many cases, harmless substitutes for panca-makāras like honey, ginger, coconut are used. In extreme sects, Uttara Kaulas, those abominations which have brought Śaktism into disrepute are associated.” [5]

7. Yogini Cult

Tantric manuscripts dealing with the worship of extraordinary goddesses called Yoginis contained worship in circles and directions to the royal patrons to promote this cult.

“And Siva said : If a KING worships the Yoginis with total devotion, O Devi : His fame will reach the shores of the four oceans, Of that there is no doubt” [6]

The yoginis who are dressed and skilled as dancers, possess magical powers. Yogini cult flourished as an important manifestation of Śākta-tāntricism and the propitiators acquired magical and supernatural faculties [Ashta-mahā-siddhis] through damsels called yoginis with a view to the destruction of enemies. These consist of ANIMA [power to become ‘minute’ in size], MAHIMA [become gigantic], LAGHIMA [weightlessness], GARIMA [heaviness], PRAKAMYA [making others comply to one’s wishes], ÍITVA [body and mind control], VASITVA [control over natural elements, KĀMAVAŚAYITA [fulfillment of all desires]. Some of these Yoginis possessed forms with tiara of skulls and headdress of snakes. Through the process of transformation over the ages the yoginis [sixty-four mostly and sometimes eighty-one and forty-two] gained supremacy particularly in the eastern zone of India. Matsyendranath has expounded it in his famous work Kaulayananiya which has become the authoritative text of the cult.

“The different shape of Khajuraho temple was due to the narrowness of the ridge on which it was erected. Each of these temples has sixty-four niches assigned to sixty-four yoginis. At Bheraghat, the number of niches is greater indicating the association of the sakta deities other than the yoginis. The existence of sixty-four yoginis in all these temples prove that the number sixty-four was prescribed here as for the sixty-four Bhairavas, sixty-four art and sixty-four ratibandha (modes of sexual enjoyment)”. [7]

The process of royal patronage in ancient India was a three- cornered aspect with the king, temple and the artist who was the craftsman, sculptor, musician, painter, architect or dancer. On the one hand, artists choose to remain anonymous and on the other hand, their social position rarely allowed them this choice as they

worked in the background for the King. In the temples, it is observed that the dancing figures form protective circles (mandala) around the center where the deity, mostly Śiva is placed. Temples like Khajuraho followed Śaiva Siddhānta sect, the four fold way of jñāna, charya, kriya, yoga. The Ramappa temple has twelve bracket figures, a-genius class, dancers in trance with rhythmic concentration and seminal intensity. Another tāntric feature of Guru offering religious knowledge to disciples is an important motif in the temples complex and the iconography

8. Buddhism

Modern Tantra may be divided into practices based on Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddhism (also known as the Dharma or Buddha Dharma, meaning approximately: The Law or Law of the Awakened One) is a practical philosophy, focusing on the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni (Siddhārtha Gautama), dated mid-6th to the early 5th century BCE. Buddhism spread widely in India and propagated into Central, Southeast, and East Asia. Today, Buddhism is divided primarily into three traditions: Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna.

The spiritual discovery is called bodhi - literally, "Awakening" (more commonly called "Enlightenment"). Any person who has become awakened from the "sleep of ignorance" by directly realizing the true nature of reality is called a Buddha. Śākyamuni is said to have been only the latest of many of these; there were other Buddhas before him and there will be others in the future. At the age of 35, he attained Enlightenment and became a Buddha.

Buddha is generally considered to be a person who discovers the true nature of reality through years of spiritual cultivation, investigation of the various religious practices of his time, and meditation. According to the Buddha, any person can follow his example and become enlightened through the principles of righteousness or "Dharma" and putting them into practice with a virtuous life, and purifying the mind. The aim of Buddhist practice is to put an end to this mass of suffering we call existence.

"I teach one thing and one thing only: suffering and the end of suffering" (The Buddha). To achieve this state (Nirvāna), it is necessary to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Middle Way, eventually arriving at an understanding of the true nature of all things to put an end (nirodha) to all ignorance and unhappiness and attaining liberation, Nirvāna.

Buddha's doctrine of dependent origination is accepted by the various schools of Buddhism which states that any phenomenon 'exists' only because of the 'existence' of other phenomena in a complex web of cause and effect. It believes in Flux or change that is the constant permanent truth. Buddhist schools are usually divided into two main branches: Theravāda Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. Vajrayāna is sometimes named as a third, but is more commonly considered a form of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The Mahāyāna (Sanskrit: "Great Vehicle") branch emphasizes infinite, universal compassion (maha-karuna), or bodhicitta - the selfless, ultra-altruistic quest of the Bodhisattva to attain the "Awakened Mind" (bodhicitta) of Buddhahood so as to have the fullest possible knowledge of how to lead all beings into Nirvāna.

Emptiness (Śūnyata) concept can be understood either as the lack of a fixed nature of substance or phenomena and the inherent emptiness of all that is worldly, nescient and painful

9. The Noble Eightfold Path

Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering. Craving which is the origin of suffering leads to REBIRTH.

The way leading to the cessation of suffering which is The Noble Eightfold Path which consists of:

1. Right View

2. Right Intention
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

10. Emergence of the Vajrayāna /Tantrayāna/Tibetan Buddhism

There are differing views as to just when Vajrayāna and its t̃antric practice started. In the Tibetan tradition, it is claimed that Buddha taught tantra, but as these are esoteric teachings, they were written down long after the Buddha's other teachings. These practices, scriptures and theory were transmitted to China, Tibet, Indochina and Southeast Asia. The Mahāyana can also on occasion communicate a vision of the Buddha or Dharma which amounts to mysticism and can indeed give expression to a form of pantheism (God).

The Vajrayāna or "Diamond Vehicle" (also referred to as Mantrayāna, Tantrāyāna, T̃antric Buddhism, or esoteric Buddhism) shares the basic concepts of Mahāyāna, but also includes a vast array of spiritual techniques designed to enhance Buddhist practice. Vajrayāna practice harnesses psycho-physical energy as a means of developing powerful states of concentration and awareness. These profound states are in turn to be used as an efficient path to Buddhahood. Using these techniques, it is claimed that a practitioner can achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime, or even as little as in three years. In the T̃antric or Vajrayāna aspects of this system, by harnessing the energies of the body, emotions and mind, including, joy, wrath and sexual energy, one realizes not the end in itself but a potent means to the ultimate goal of realizing the true nature of reality, emptiness or Śūnyata. This is the path to attaining complete spiritual enlightenment and

relief from the endless suffering of life. It is unfortunate that modern age neo-Tantra ritualizes only sexual practice often misrepresenting Tantra while authentic Tantra literally sensualizes even a ritual.

In addition to the Theravāda and Mahāyāna scriptures, Vajrayāna Buddhists recognise a large body of texts that include the Buddhist Tantras.

Vajrayāna Buddhism exists today in the form of two major sub-schools: Tibetan Buddhism and Shingon Buddhism.

Vajrayāna is practiced today mainly in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia, Kalmykia, Siberia, areas of India, and - in the Shingon Schools - in China and Japan. Japan's Shingon sect, practices tantric veneration of the deity Vairocana.

“The original form of the stupa was a simple hemisphere with its convexity upwards and crowned by one or more umbrellas. Later they became more complex and elongated, especially in regard to their capitals. The details of many of the Lamaic Chaityās are capable of an elemental interpretation, symbolic of the five elements into which a body is resolved on death. Thus, vide figure in margin modified from Remusat, the lowest section, a solid rectangular block, typifies the solidity of the earth, above it water is represented by a globe, fire by a rectangular tongue, air by a crescent – the inverted vault of the sky, and ether by an acuminate circle. The Chaityās of Sikkim are mainly of two forms. Each “chhorten” consists of a solid hemisphere – the true relic holder – which stands on a plinth of several steps. The hemisphere is surmounted by a narrow neck bearing in a lotus-leaved basin a graded cone usually of 13 tiers, which are considered to represent umbrellas – the symbol of royalty; they are by others said to represent the 13 Bodhisattva heavens of Nepalese Buddhist cosmography”.

[8]

The Bodhisattva ideal of Mahāyāna Buddhism is represented historically and mythologically by Avaloketishvara, Tāra and others. The Dalai Lama and other Tibetan teachers use this power exclusively to help others.

Tibetan Lāmas ,the priests use bells,the drum ,a bowl of the skull and other things during ritualistic worship.

“Having wiped the ‘mandal’ tray with the right arm or sleeve, take a fistful of rice in either hand, and sprinkle some on the tray to lay the Foundation of the Universe of mighty Gold. Then set down the large ring, which is the Iron Girdle of the Universe. Then in the middle set down a dole or rice as Ri-rab (Mount Meru). Then in the order given in the attached diagram (Plate XI) are set down a few grains of rice representing the 38 component portions of the Universe, each of which is named at the time of depositing its representative rice. The ritual for all sects of lamas during this ceremony is practically the same. During this ceremony it is specially insisted on that the performer must mentally conceive that he is actually bestowing all this wealth of continents, gods, & c., & c., upon his lamaic deities, who themselves are quite outside the system of the Universe”. [9]

11. Tantric practices in temples of Kerala –Malabar School

The priests in Kerala include categories like Tantri and Sāntikas who undergo initiation to the pooja system by a qualified guru or a acharya. Such a Guru must be a sādḥaka with mental and physical capabilities, thorough knowledge on scriptures, mode of worship, including the intricacies of the tantrā. The priests have to follow the daily routine like yagna, vratha, mandala mantra japā, nyāsa, mudrā, dhyāna etc. The esoteric mudrās are incantations, positioning of the fingers in religious worship, possessing occult meanings and magical efficacy. Various āsanās of yoga are incorporated and step by step procedure is followed. Specially prevalent mudrās amidst the Kerala Tantris ,there are several unique gestures to invoke the deity. These are like Dehashudhḍhi (Brahmānjali mudrās), Ganapati vandana (Vandana mudrās), Dhyāna (Anjali mudrās), Dikbandhana, Naivedya, Anganyasa (Astra mudrās), Anganyāsa (Hridaya, Śiro, Śikha, Kavacha, Netra and Mriga mudrās). Manasa Puja is through Jala, Gandha, Dhupa, Pushpa, Deepa and Surabhi mudrās. Galini and Garuda mudrās are for Sankhapurna while Avāhana, Samsthapani and Sannirodhana mudrās are for Avahana.

Abhaya, Varada, Padma, Śankha, Parashu, Cakrā, Śula, Gadha, Kapāla, Sara, Chāpa, Vajrā, Śakthi, Kheta, Khalga, Jnāna, Yoni, Ankusha, Yoga, Navanitha, Murali, Vināyaka, Shivalinga and Oordhā mudrās are all used for Ayudha Nyāsa during Peetha Puja. Bhooshana Nyāsa uses the mudrās of Śri Kaustubha, Makuta, Kereeta, Śrivalsa, Makarakundala of two types. Lastly, during the Naivedya phase of Prānahuti are the Prāna, Apāna, Vyāna, Udāna and Samāna mudrās.

Even the three gunās of shruṣṭi, sthithi and samhāra are represented in the rites through various mudras. Palms are clapped at three points, the eight directions are propitiated, breathing exercises are practiced and parts of the body are assumed to be re-born , having the qualities of the deity. Concluding into the atmaradhana or the self-pooja ,this kind of worship enlightens us on the importance given to the body and the mind being an integrated instrument, fine-tuned towards self-liberation.

The Tāntric Śāstra, based on Vedās, epics and purānas is called Sādhana Śāstra of liberation. Literally, these words contain mystical formulae while āgama sticks to tradition propagating worship of Śiva and Śakti. Samhitas are specially devoted to Visnu. Tantras very often derive from these two classes of literature and it is the Śaktās who strictly practice Tantra. Tantras relating to Vedic class is the daksina mārga while non-vedic is the vāma-mārga. Among the three important Sampradāyās in the country the Kerala sampradāya is certainly more Vedic than Gowda (Bengal) and Kashmiri. Of all important Tāntric works in Kerala, Śankarācārya's Prapancha Sāra Tantra seems most popular. Yet another famous text is Tantra Samuchāya by Chennas Narayanan Namboodiripad. This basically deals with the rituals, temple architecture purification rights, meditation, festivals etc. Temples are constructed, sites are consecrated and the deities installed only in accordance with the rules prescribed in the Śāstrās. An important portion is the Valiambalam used for conducting Homās, Kalamezhuhuth Pātu (ritualistic dance) and for performing arts including Chākyār Koothu, Ottam thullal etc. The mystical geometric yantra of Śri Cakrā may be secretly preserved in the dark

chambers in many Bhagavathi devi temples and worship is done meticulously by those who have traditionally mastered Śrī Vidya deeksha. Kerala temples have the unique Koothambalam in the front and right side of the principal deity. Generally these are built on the basis of one of the Nāṭya gruhās in the Nāṭya Śāstra, the Vikrushta Madhya style. The interior darkness of the sanctum-sanctorum or the garbha-griha illuminated by air, dim burning of lights inside the parcel of space suggests beautifully the idea of mystery that envelopes the universe and the spirit that moves behind the veil of mystery, a purely tantric concept. Every space within the temple forms part of the body of the principal deity, both gross and subtle, sthoola and sookshma respectively. Coming to these sculptural images in these temples, it is interesting to note the aesthetic value given while specially carving the figurines of deities. For example, bow shaped eyebrows, lotus petal or fish like eyes, pupils like the full moon, ear like the conch, tooth as pearl, neck as a conch, shoulder as bamboo, arm as a sugarcane piece, foot as tortoise, knee as the crab, face shaped as a mongo or full moon etc are endless. Every details measured to perfection ensures the uniqueness in the deities. One cannot but appreciate the forms given to our gods. For example Ganesha sankalpa bears certain characteristics like his weapons which are the axe, chakra or the disc, club, trident, spade and in his hands are sweet meats, flowers and kalasās. Most deities possess abhaya or varada poses which offers blessings, protection, fearlessness and boons to the devotees.

Śakthi worship exemplifies the tantra mode to the maximum. The countless ramifications of Śakti is represented through the idol with the weapons, divine dress and ornaments and the manifestation and source of all energies of virtues as well as evil in nature. There are ten classifications of the goddess categorized under mahavidyās, vidyās and siddha vidyās.

From the above, we can inter-relate practices in dance, especially the hand gesture with a worshipful gesture of the priests of Kerala. In Kerala ,ritualistic temple arts like theyyam, thullal, koothu etc have all along borne religious influences and artistic perception at the same time. Similar to these are also the ritualistic dances

or the bhootas in Mangalore district. Many of them have, even today preserved their traditions of being very grounded and performed in the temples or during religious festivals alone. In these dances practiced in Kerala temples the procedure of tāla or rhythmic beat is based on the works of Bharatā's son, Kohlan. Tāla has three essential parts which are viz. kāla – time, kriya- action and mana-measure making it a rhythmic action in stipulated time sequence. Some take the view that Geeta or music is brahma and tāla is māya. It is relevant to observe that this Sopāna sangeetha of the Kerala temples follows some differences from the common Carnātic music in the mode of Rāga and Tāla paddhati or pattern.

12. Tāntric connotations in emergence of schools and branches of Nātya

Some of the earliest scriptures are the Śaiva Āgamās relating to the period before 6th Century B.C. and which seemed to have formed the basic philosophy for even the Nātya Śāstra. Although, the concept of the Tantrās were age-old, they actually became known much later only which is why Nātya Śāstra remains the earliest treatise on a kind of worship or pūja through the medium of Nātya or drama. In the delineation of the nātya, the dancer who portrays these Gods has to represent each and every characteristic of the form in adherence to these deities of the temples.

“The Tiruvilayādal Purānam explains the meaning of Bharata as a combination of Bhāva (expression), Rāga (musical mode) and Tāla (rhythm). It was usual in olden days to begin a Bharata Nātyam performance with a rhythmic recital, which was called melaprapti. The musicians and the nattuwanar conducted this introduction and certain special rāgas and tālas were prescribed for it. Beginning with drumming on the mridangam, the instruments would be played and then the nattuwanar would beat the time with the jalrai (cymbals) and recite the sollukattus (rhythmic syllables). In between, a song of invocation called the thodaya would be sung. This was followed by more sollukattus and a mangalam.

Then the four fundamental rhythmic syllabi tha, dhi, nom were recited in various time measures, which ended the preliminary ritual, before the dancer entered". [10]

Devi Bhāgavatham says that worship is of two kinds – External and Internal, External is itself divided as Vedic and Tāntric, but both streams being closely intermingled. Vedic Yajna and Tāntrik Pūja have the same aim, Vedic Philosophy and Tāntric rites complement each other on many occasions and we can observe in this context that a Nātya Pūja is derived from the Nātya Yajna. There seems no difference finally between the Vedic Brahman and the Tāntric Śakthi principles. Analyzing the divisions among Pujas we can categorize Nātya as one which is Sādhāra(with a basis), Naimittika (performed on special occasions), Sātvika as well as Rājasika (internally as well as externally based).

The spirit of worship of the Svābhāvika (natural) type, aimed at Brahman consciousness is expressed in Sri Śankarācārya's Soundarya Lahari – O Mother, May my prattle be a Japa, hand movements be the Mudrās, my body movement your circumambulation, my food your Prasad, my sleep your prostrations and every sense organ be filled with surrender and awareness of your consciousness. A complete Pūja should have both External and Internal worship and Nātya Sādhana necessitates the same if it has to fulfill the highest order and Truth. In Bharatanātyam, the Rasā is generously spread to connect with stories relating to several deities in most performances and only when a typical dance drama is performed, there is concentration upon one or two deities. In Tantrā, the Ishta Daivam, the favourite venerated deity is either Śiva or Śakti or both or other deities singularly or as couples. Though there are small chants invoking deities of directions and smaller deities, the chief one is one or two alone. The Sāyujya [Rasā here], the joy is internal, inconspicuous and can only be inferred by others. Sudden display of divine power, oracular predictions or convulsive dancing or trances etc cannot be considered as performances per se. The external tools of Abhinaya used in Nātya is not conspicuous. Āngika with the limbs, head, gestures [Angās are the major limbs of the body which include the head, chest,

sides, waist, hands and feet. Upangās are the minor limbs, which include the neck, elbows, knees, toes and heels. The upangās of the face include eyes, eyebrows, nose, lower lip and chin], Vachika with the vociferous songs, Āhārya with the characteristic attire, Sātvika with it's emotional states using the subtle mind, sensed to portray difficult emotions, all these are not displayed publicly in Tantrā but are present in subtle levels, are implicit and not explicit. Nāṭya Śāstra, the treatise has explicitly, categorically stated many aspects of dramatic experience but has also left ample room and scope for improvisation according to changes in times. There are many unsaid truths that are understood from certain passages .

“The verbal imagery provides the foundation and is the bedrock of the Abhinaya; the movements are the superstructure which a dancer creates. The capacity of the dancer to conjure up a whole world of similies and metaphors, distinguishes a competent dancer from a great dancer, because a great dancer is a poet in movement. Such is the power of the great artist of Abhinaya. Traditional Gurus have spoken about the art of Abhinaya as the art when the human body is capable of the smoothness of butter. The dancer's movement is that prism which facilitates the seeing of the spectrum of the colours but it is never complete unless both the dancer and the audience experience the luminosity of the one light ” [11]

The music of the unstruck mystic sound called **Anāhata** Dhvani heard by Yogis in meditation is the bell during worship equivalent to the ghunguru in dance. Yet the external symbol is only supposed to lead one into the resonance and reverberation of the unheard sound that is absorbed with the Anāhata Cakrā residing in the heart. To make any practice successful, it is absolutely necessary that the Sādhaka is deeply and fully aware of the meanings of the chants or the songs as well as the correct procedure of execution. One should become imbued with the spirit of the worship and the corresponding manifestation of experiences of rituals. The Tāntric rituals observed are akin to those performed during consecration of playhouse in the Nāṭyaśāstra. We notice that the portrayal of a

deity as a common man (to make it easy for identification with devotees) is a feature in both Nāṭya and Tantrā. The latter in the form of Bharatanāṭyam has several dance songs which treat the Lord as a loving husband or even consent otherwise i.e one who has committed breach of faith etc.

Hence we can gather that the physical entity, the body form is never negated but it rather used as a Vāhana - a vehicle that promotes spiritual awakening. The embellishment of the body as an Apsarā, the use of Abhayā and Āṅgikā (with its ancillaries and auxiliaries) Abhinayā at the relevant places are all integral part of Nāṭya. In Tantra, gratification of senses and material needs without arousing limits of perversity have a definite purpose and meaning too. The Tāntric system is in its aspiration one of the greatest attempts yet made to embrace the whole of God manifested and unmanifested in the adoration, self-discipline and knowledge of single human soul. Dance means movement externally and internally, cutting across dimensions, creating a feeling of spacelessness by using space aesthetically and to the best extent. Nāṭya has a lineage like Tantra, bearing Vedic . The pūja methods of the Āgamās too came of age around the same time and one cant help notice the similarities of Āgamic Pūja and the Nāṭya Pūrvarangās. The latter performed by priests, including the SUTRADAR emerged as an indispensable part of a programme and is just like a dramatised act taken out of the Vedic Yagna but without sacrifice or fire but instead ,with flowers, worship materials and symbolic offerings. The Jarjarā, the weapon of Lord Indra that is used for the success of the programme is like Yupa used in Vedic times and the Dhawaja of the Āgamic times. The Lords represented on it is also the trinities, followed by the serpents like Śeṣha and Vāsuki. Here again, the similarity is noticed between the Jarjarā and the Cakrās that were emphasized later in the Tantrās, especially the allusion to the serpents on the lower levels of the Jarjarā and Lord Śiva at the top .

Abhinavabharati, Mahesvara Abhinavaguptacarya's commentary, is a beacon light for the Nāṭya Śāstra because it has all the qualities of an ideal commentary.

Abhinava's study of Nāṭya Śāstra, aesthetics in particular is most outstanding and gives a Tāntric edge which we can trace to his other opus, Tantrāloka.

Religious devotion, observes Abhinava, implies a constant drive towards an end which is outside it and, as such, is the very antithesis of the aesthetic experience, which is perfect self-sufficiency

"The imitation theory is also clearly contradicted by certain arts – dancing, for example – which obviously do not imitate anything in real life. He [artiste] is immersed in the aesthetic experience to the exclusion of everything else; the task of generalization carried out by the poetic expression breaks the barrier of the limited "I" and eliminates in this way the interests, demands and aims associated with it. By side with the practical meaning, but one must not forget that, while the mystical experience is perfect fullness, in which the knots of "I" and "mine" are already completely undone, in the aesthetic experience the process of undoing has only just begun. Often a man, says Kālidasa in a stanza quoted by Abhinavagupta, "in the act of admiring in happiness beautiful shapes or listening to sweet sounds, feels in himself a keen disquiet. Does he, perhaps, recall, in his soul, affections of past lives, deep within his spirit without his knowledge?" The disquiet to which Kālidasa alludes, is, observes Abhinavagupta, an unobjectified desire; it corresponds to what is, metaphysically, the desire which induces consciousness to deny its original fullness and to crumble in time and space. The religious and the aesthetic experience spring from the same source. This is the tenor of two stanzas, almost certainly by Nāyaka, quoted by Mahimābhata, a rhetor of the 11th century. A Kashmiri like his forerunners, Abhinavagupta unified the scattered voices of earlier philosophers into a masterful synthesis, embracing philosophical speculation and mysticism as well as aesthetics" [12]

A clear insight into the Cakrās indicates how the syllables in our dance movements like recitation of nattuvangam for NRITTA originated. It is obvious that the beeja/seed Mantrās of each Cakrās according to tāntric Yoga were very well known and practiced by the sages of yore and were absorbed into dances.

“Just as a flower born of magic, has, as its essence, solely the present, it is correlated neither with what came before nor with what comes after..... Ordinary life also, is specially evident when we are assisting, [to a performance] or during certain religious ceremonies (the t̃āntric cakrās), which must be celebrated in common. In these assemblies, the distinction between one's own Self and the Self of other people, which is founded on the multiplicity of bodies, minds and so on, ceases for the moment to exist, and, beyond them, takes rise a psychological unity, correctly realized as a subject unique and more powerful than the preceding separated individualities. The consciousness, which, considered separately also, is innately made up of beatitude, attains, in these circumstances – during the execution of dancers, etc- a state of unity, and so enters into a state of beatitude which is full and perfect. In virtue of the absence of any cause for contraction, jealousy, envy, etc. the consciousness finds itself in these circumstances, in a state of expansion, free of obstacles, and pervaded by beatitude.

This is the reason why, during the celebration of the cakrā, etc., no individual must be allowed to enter who does not identify himself with the ceremonies and thus does not share the state of consciousness of the celebrants; this would cause, in fact, a contraction of the consciousness. The purpose of the yogin is to identify himself with this transcendental object”. [13]

13. Elements that broadly classify the schools –The ‘Rationale’ behind the distinct styles

A classical dance school is a symbol of purity and a place for worship as in a temple through the medium of dance. Any indisciplinary action in the vicinity of classical dance training sessions would be close to being sacrilegious to the puritan minded Gurus who could not easily condone such lapses in those years.

In modern Bharatanāṭyam parlance, it is common to ask a danseuse which school she belongs. Broadly called the Tānjore, Pandanallur, Vazhuvur, Mysore and so on. The basis of these classifications are as follows-

Elegance and grace are the hallmark of this style which originated in the village of Vazhuvoor. Poses are often introduced in the pieces especially in the tillana to add space in time. The jatis or nrittā units have more kārvais or gaps than usual to signify a sense of time being suspended and this gives the dance an exciting quality.

The body from the waist up is slanted slightly forward to give more dimension to the body. The adavus or dance units are done smoothly without too many jerky movements to give an impression of effortlessness and elegance and beautiful leaps mark every jati.

Abhinaya or narrative expression is subtle with more nāṭyadharmi or naturally stylized expressions and there is no obviousness in the presentation. The hands, eyes, and expressions are used in unison to express eloquently. Lāsya, or grace, is predominant in this style. Traditionally, a performance in the Vazhuvoor style begins with a Thodaya mangalam in praise of Lord Gnāna Sablesar of Vazhuvoor. It was made popular by Vazhuvoor Rāmiah Pillai who was the first from this tradition. In the Pandanallur style, abhinaya is more ritualistic and as per the Sāstra (i.e. in conformity with the rules as set by the ancient texts) than realistic, so the spectators are supposed to know the rules to appreciate it. The Pandanallur style of Bharatanāṭyam stresses on deep sitting positions, its lāsya (feminine dance style) of padams is rather slow and difficult to perform, it is performed on three levels: in deep sitting positions, on the ground, in standing positions and while moving or jumping. The distinctive characteristics of the Melattur style of Bharatanāṭyam are that the feet are not stamped hard against the floor, a complex variety of sounds are produced by anklets, the items that were dedicated to medieval kings or patrons are not performed, natural (spontaneous) and highly expressive abhinaya, wide amplitude of movements, emphasis on sringara bhakti, emphasis on crisp adavus, accuracy of jathis/gathis, fluid variations of patterned

korvais, dramatic elements (characterisation).

Tanjore style or Thanjavur style, the sine quo non of which is "aesthetic grace", is a homogeneous blend of vigorous dynamism and lyrical grace. During the period of the Tanjore Quartet and decades thereafter, Bharatanāṭyam dance was performed both in the temple and in the courts of kings, princes and landed gentry. Apart from being offered as *upacāra* or a ritual, the dance was performed in processions in order to tune in the minds of worshippers towards God. In the first half of the 19th century the dance tradition was revitalized and defined anew through the contributions of the four talented brothers (known today as the Tanjore Quartet), Chinniah, Sivanandam, Ponniah and Vadivelu. By coordinating their diverse talents, the four managed to organize all the basic dance movements of pure dance into a progressive series of units of motion called *Adavus*, in a systematic order. These blended with sequences in a musical composition. These were well integrated and aesthetically creative and progressive.

Temple ritualistic numbers that are performed at the beginning like the *Kavutvams* in praise of Ganesha, Subramanya, Natarāja, Kālī, etc are a distinct contribution of Tanjore school and the recitation of the *Nattuvāṅgam* syllables in these pieces are quite different from the *Sollkattus* in other Jatis of *Varnams*, etc. The rich cultural hub of Tanjore gave the Tanjore quartet and several great musicians and composers. Tanjore Quartet's concept of a Bharatanatyam programme's format is meant to resemble the structure of a Hindu temple: in *alarippu* the dancer passes through the *gopuram* (outer gate), then in *jatiswaram* crosses the *ardhamandapam* (midway hall), in *sabdam* passes through the

mandapam (great hall of worship), and finally enters the heart of the temple in the varnam. The traditional order of the Bharatanāṭyam recital is certainly the premeditated and correct sequence in the practice of this art as it unfolds the spirituality inherent gradually through accentuating the finer aspects in the corporeal . The renowned Sri Panchapakesa Nattuvanār who was the Samasthana Vidwan of Thanjavur and Ramanathapuram courts was also honoured by the royal houses of Baroda and Mysore. An adept in Abhinaya he is credited with compiling in Tamil the " Abhinaya Navaneetham ", a monumental treatise on Abhinaya, a practical guide specially on Hastābhinaya.

His only son Bharata Vidwan Kuppiyah Pillai was the prime architect of Sri Rājarājeswari Bharata Nāṭya Kalā Mandir, regarded today as an institution par excellence for Bharata Nāṭyam. His " Kamala Chakram", a lotus wheeled compendium depicting the matra -based complex 108 talas, besides the popular 35 ones, is invaluable to all students of music and dance.

The Kalakshetra style is a form based on Pandanallur and, to some extent, Tanjore styles and has been pioneered by Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale. Purely on the style of presentation of the technique [the scientific aspects] and the tools employed for expression based on the large spectrum of the dance style itself which, although has these styles, nevertheless, bears a stamp of the common title –Bharatanāṭyam. An Arangetram is a milestone, providing the structure and circumstantial thrust for the probability of a dance career as long as one does not rest on ones laurel.

“Upaniṣads propound -Devo Bhuta Deavm Yajet -Become a God in order to worship God The spoken word was the manner in which learning was perpetuated, for the teacher is the prior form; the pupil is the latter form, and knowledge is their junction. There were rajadāsis, who danced before the

dhvajasthambham (the sacred flag staff of the temple); alankāradāsi, who performed at social functions; devadāsi, who danced regularly in the temples and the swadāsi, who only performed on special religious occasions like the kumbhābhiṣekam (the rite of consecrating by sprinkling water from a pot usually when installing a image). They are also known as adukala mahal, natakamahal, and devar kanningayar and used to have sacred duties like fanning the image of God, lighting the kumbharati (sacred lights), in fact, many of the duties of the priest.

When the young dancer was first dedicated to the temple, a ceremony called bottukattal was performed. This implied the marriage of the girl to the deity, and a golden tāli, the symbol of marriage, was clasped around her neck". [14]

The evolved technique includes Nrittā - pure dance movements, Abhinaya or expression and Nrityā, a combination of abhinaya and nrittā which is expressional dancing. The Nāṭya Śāstra-based dance styles were sacred Hindu ceremonies originally conceived in order to spiritually elevate the spectators.

14 . The Tradition followed by the schools

Bharatanāṭyam is mostly a solo dance, with two aspects, lasya, the graceful feminine lines of Uma and movements, and tāṇḍava , the dynamic dance of Śiva , masculine aspect. The dancer has to concentrate on the character, situation and emotions and depicted with help of abhinaya and sātāvika bhāvas and then the rasās spread to spectator thereby enveloping him in emotion that expressed by dancer and enacted. The enjoyment of spectator in whom aesthetic joy or rasā is created is the goal. Actor is directly in contact with character while spectator is indirectly in contact with character.

Thus Sātāvika abhinaya, mental condition of dancer, as manifested as Sātāvika Bhāva is the root of the intense feeling that generates in dancer while enacting the various bhāvas which create corresponding rasā into hearts of spectator. Nrityā

dance without Sātvika abhinaya would be soulless . Just as various tastes like bitterness, sweetness when added to food causes its Swāda to be enjoyed by person whose is taking it, it is Sātvika Bhāva that creates enjoyment ultimately. The dancer has to use appropriate movements of angās, upangās and pratyanga [the various limbs] and modulation of the Vācika abhinaya [oral transmission]. The descriptive [artistic aspects]part of the dance schools' style may be similar as they are poetry based, yet the characteristic nuances and intricacies vary in the sense that some may be more Loka Dharmi [audience -friendly] than others that are more Nātya Dharmi [stylized] .

These Dharmis are based on stylization of movement.

1) Nātya dharmi – It is conventional. It has get gestures, formal principles – which they should follow. Kathakali is the famous example among classical dances. The Pandanallur and Kalakshetra styles follow this to a larger extent.

2) Loka dharmi – It is more realistic. Bharatanātyam uses both styles in varying degrees ,especially the Thanjavur style. Kathak has more realism as it narrates a story as if in common parlance.

The physical and visual manifestation varies from style to style according to content as well. Daily life and natural behaviour is contrasted with artistic excellence. The concept of theme is applicable to both Nātya and Loka to stylize a theme to make it super natural in form and content. The more you stylize a theme you get higher degree of Nātya and more you got to reality, closer is the degree of Loka. Purely temple arts, even Odissi are bound by bhakti bhava and hence the technique need not be stylized for after all they choose to depict the Premātma Bhakta [Love-filled devotee] longing to be one with ultimate and to merge with Him (Jivātma and Paramātma). The dance is therefore full of deep devotional feeling and dancer's body is merely a vehicle to perform this great Sādhana. The dancer in such cases is a disinterested narrator who possess a detached attitude to the actual narration taking place. In the Puri temple in

Orissa, the devadāsīs or maharis who trace their roots to the celestial nymphs Urvashi and Rambhā, use to have two years of training and were then married to the God of the temple.

In all such type of dances, there is a lesser degree of Nāṭya Dharmi while Kathakali inspite of being a religious art, forms a theatre of imagination, where actors dance in their otherworldly and fantastic costume. The gorgeous makeup through extreme stylization in movement is what transforms them into supernatural beings. Vishnudharmottara Purāṇa ascribes the Supreme Spirit with two states ; the nature of the world (prakṛiti) and its transformation as the apparent (vikṛiti). Prakṛiti is His invisible form and Vikṛiti is the aspect (ākara) in which He pervades the universe. . Today, Bharathanāṭyam has a preponderance of women among the dancers and all these compositions aptly suit them. None of the numbers in a margam repertoire could ever be non-descript or monotonous . Aharya abhinayā covers all paraphernalia that adorn the danseuse. In Nāṭya Dharmi styles there is panoply of elegant and appropriate costumes.

Today, Aṣṭanāyika (the eight heroines) is a favourite theme for depiction .One example is the Abhisārika, who boldly faces the ignominy of being chaffed as fickle minded. Her illicit liaisons provoke insinuations from public. The artist has tremendous scope to suggest the expressions more than openly declare. Laconic speech ,augmented by gestures ,employed with brevity postulates the benchmark of a genre of the stylized 'classic '.Ostentatious abhinayā is superfluous; hence it helps to refrain from excesses. Amongst the heroines the common feature is the element of adoration and love, leading to rancour, which however strong, makes her finally relent. Her obduracy in most of these songs would end in acquiescence. In the exposition of a khandita nāyika, i.e. a heroine who is furious, offended and hurt, the finer expressions would be glances of an unspoken reproach or a tacit condemnation of the capricious disposition of the lover. The expression of such anger should be incisive and not abrasive beyond the decorous parameters of the customary dance form.

The kings considered the propagation of arts as a panacea to their kingdoms. “The word Purvaranga, being a technical word connected with the production of a natya on the stage, shows that the art of abhinaya was quite in an advanced stage at the time of Hāla. The Avandānasataka, a Sanskrit Buddhist work describes the performance of a Buddhist nātaka. The description of the nātaka in this work is enough to show that the age which produced it witnessed considerable development of the art of abhinaya. The mention of the word ‘natācarya’ in the sense of master-nata or the professor who trained the natās (and was consequently the director of a party of natas) gives us good reason to assume that the art of a natā had by this time become important enough in the eyes of the people to accord to its teacher the venerable title of ācarya which was generally to be given to a teacher of sacred works like the Vedās and the Vedangās etc. The treatise on abhinaya which can be called the earliest is the Natasutrās of Silālin and Krsasva mentioned by Pānini (ca.600 BC”. [15]

. In Sauśtavam, the basic aesthetic posture of Bharatanāṭyam, the back is held erect, the torso is bent a little forward from the waist keeping the body taut, yet relaxed. Bharatanāṭyam has two aspects, Lāsya, the graceful feminine movements, and Tāndava, the forceful masculine aspect. Typically a regular repertoire would traditionally include:

1. **Ganapati Vandana** - A traditional opening prayer to Ganesh, who removes obstacles. An invocatory prayer to the Adi Devata to remove obstacles.
2. **Alārippu** - This is an invocation to the Gods to bless the performance and the God in the dancer’s self as well, which is what the movements denote. A presentation of the Tāla punctuated by simple syllables .
3. **Jatīśwaram** - An abstract dance where the percussion sets the beat. Here the dancer displays her versatility in elaborate footwork and graceful movements of the body. A joyful melodious dance, the dancer displays her command over footwork and graceful movements of the body.

4 - Śabdam - The dancing is accompanied by a poem or song with a devotional or love- theme. Mild expression now sets in as Abhinaya gets introduced. The dance, when it has a love theme, could be either Bhakti or Rati Sringāra [love for God or Consort]

5. Varnam - The center piece of the performance. It is the longest section of the dance punctuated with the most complex and difficult movements. Positions of the hands and body tell a story, usually of love and the longing for the lover. Varnam is the quintessence of Bharatanāṭyam. The piece-de-resistance, it shows the command of the danseuse in all the chief aspects and proves her mettle with elaborate movements and expressions. Usually, love themes are taken. Varnam, most important in a repertoire, musically has special features too. This is a special item which highlights everything important about a *rāga*; not just the scale, but also which notes to stress, how to approach a certain note, classical and characteristic phrases, etc. Though there are a few different types of varnams, in essence, they all have a pallavi, an anupallavi, muktāyi swaras, a charana, and chittaswaras. They are sung in multiple speeds. Danceable Varnams are Pada Varnams while those suitable only for concerts are Tāna Varnams. In concerts, varnams are often sung at the beginning as they are fast and grab the audience's attention.

6. Padam - Probably the most lyrical section where the dancer "speaks" of some aspect of love: devotion to the Supreme Being; or of love of mother for child; or the love of lovers separated and reunited.

7. Jāvali or Devarnāma – Love songs, [short and sweet separation and union with lovers and various moods], songs in praise of the Gods and their descriptions, feats, historical legendary episodes etc; usually the compositions of Haridasas and other saint composers.

8. Thillāna - The final section is an abstract dance when the virtuosity of the music is reflected in the complex footwork and captivating poses of the dancer. - The conclusion final section is a breezy grand finale with aplomb. Accentuation is given to the five Jātis of four beats -Chatuśram, three beats -Triśram, seven beats -

Miśram, five beats -Kantam and nine beats -Sankirnam and captivating poses of the dancer. The performance opens and concludes with the chanting of a few religious verses as a form of benediction. There are many type of compositions. Geethams and Swarajatis with their own peculiar composition structures as learning exercises and there are many other forms of compositions like Padam, Jāvali and Thillana and the Kriti which are Carnātic songs varied in structure and style, but generally consist of three units:

1. Pallavi. With opening one or two lines.
2. Anupallavi. The second verse ,generally also two lines.
3. Charanam. The last and longest verse that beautifully wraps up the song. There can be multiple charanas.

The performance concludes with the chanting of a few religious verses as a form of benediction. The poets have beautifully waxed lyrical about many parables associated with mythological, historical and legendary figures. Odes like Tirupugazh follow a set prosody while dramatic presentations of epics, include prosaic dialogues. The Sanchāris in Bhavas are akin to paraphrases that amplify the meanings with varying interpretations. The jugalbandhi in Tillāna builds up to a fever pitch. This item is performed with a jubilant panache and ardour as the permutations and combinations of well-aligned steps fall in tandem. It is analogous to the northern tarana. Varnam is of paramount value in the repertoire. The various Sanchāris or transitory moods are homogeneously based on the predominant Sthāyi Bhava. The kings are praised for their chivalry, being archetypal heroes. In direct contrast the heroes in some of the Jāvalis or love-songs could be a mere renegade or a turncoat. The hero, the nāyaka may be projected as callous and indifferent to the wanton and forlorn heroine who pines in separation and yearns to unite.

Two Aspects

Bharatanatyam has essentially remained ekāhārya, that is, a dancer in a single

costume portraying indirectly or directly more characters than one, regardless of their gender. It has two aspects to it, namely:

- ♦ Nrittā, or the purely rhythmic, which is confined to footwork and the movements of the body and the hands; and in which, absent emotion, there is no portrayal of sentiments, scenes or events; and
- ♦ Abhinaya or mime, which is conveyed through histrionics, body language and gestures and facial expressions, the suggestive language of creativity and imagination.

These two aspects are, however, not unique to this dance form alone.

15. Rhythmic Features of Nāṭya and the significance of music

Rhythm brings out the special charm of pure dance. The movements relax the dancer's body and the mind coordinates with her limbs. Rhythm induces the capacity to concentrate and become single-minded.

Added to this is the joy of melody which, even without word or syllable, has a special power to unite us with our being. Melody and movement come together as well as compositions with words and meanings. All put together will enable the expression of the myriad moods of Bharatanatyam.

Though Abhinavagupta was a great religious figure and a devotee of Śiva, his scientific temperament is seen in his explanation for the term tāṇḍava.

“The karanās are said to be units of dance performed by Śiva according to the Nāṭya Śāstra, when Bharata produced the drama Tripuradaha (“The Burning of the Three Cities”) at Kailasa before Śiva, this great God was reminded of his own dance which he performed in the evenings. He asked Bharata to include this in his production and made Tāṇḍu teach the art to Bharata. Bharata says that the dance art came to be called tandavam because Bharata’s teacher was Tāṇḍu. While

commenting on this, Abhinavagupta takes on a pragmatic approach. While there are some authorities who associate Tandu with Nandikesvara, Abhinavagupta says that the percussion instruments which produce sounds like “Bhan, Than” etc. are important for nritya. He reckons that the term tādava is derived from the sounds like “Tando” produced through the accompanying drums”. [16]

In the myths of antiquity, music stands out among the arts as one of the prime sources of ritual. At the outset, each instrument appears to have clear symbolic connotations, because music cannot be dissociated from life or religion. The strings were held to represent various levels of cosmos. The principles of materiality and spirituality tune in towards a euphoric vibration. Music symbolized birth, fertility, education, ceremonies and so on.

Even the Greek music-god Apollo imposed harmony between desires and reason, by channelising human drives through a heightening of consciousness and spirituality. The origin of the musical chord signifies blending melody with the breath and sometimes a soprano and a tenor aulos or double – tibia were paired in practice. Apollo’s seven-stringed lyre evokes the seven vowels of Greek alphabet. The tripartite Goddess reigning the air, earth and netherworld were shown through instruments. The lute and harp are both seen to play in heaven and hell, the two fold aspects. The ambivalent nature, of existence in both celestial and terrestrial led to the division in presentation, emphasizing the superiority of spirit over matter and knowledge over sensuality.

“In South India, there are many varieties of time measures which are called tālās, and tempo which is called layā. The three varied speeds are vilamba kāla (slow), madhyama kāla (medium) and druta kāla (fast). In order to make the rhythmic times measures clear, six angās (limbs) have been devised: Laghu, drutam, anudrutam, guru, plutam and kākapadam. The Laghu is performed by one beat of the hand (ghatam) and three (or more) counts of the fingers starting from the little finger towards the thumb. Its sign is I. The Drutam is performed by one beat of the hand and a wave of the hand in the air (visarjam). Its sign is O. The

anudrutam is performed by one beat. Its sign is U. The Guru is performed by a beat and a circling movement of the hand to the count of eight. Its sign is 8. The Plutam is performed by a beat, then a circling movement of the hand and a downward movement to the count of twelve. Its sign is 1/8. The Kākapadam is performed by a beat, a waving of the hand on all four sides to the count of 16. Its sign is +. The seven principal tālās are Druva, Matya, Rupaka, Jhampa, Triputa, Ata and Eka. In utilizing the different time measures the laghu, drutam, and anudrutam are used. Guru, plutam and kākapadam are used only in some rare compositions. The laghu is utilized in all the seven talas, changing according to the rhythmic measures or variety known as jāti, that is in Units of 3,4,5,7 and 9. These jātis are then called Tiśra laghu, Chaturaśra laghu, khanda laghu, Miśra laghu and Sankirna laghu, in each, a beat of the hand and finger counts according to the time measure". [17]

Three kinds of Layās (tempo) are adopted called Sthira, Madhya and Druta (slow, medium and rapid respectively) befitting the gait of the different characters.

Bharatanātyam is performed today on the westernized proscenium stage in art centers alongside the continuous cultural events in temples as in Chidambaram, Brihadeeswara, Khajuraho, Konark, cave temples etc.

Hence, the art has assumed both sacred & secular status.

In the recent history of this art, during the height of the anti-nautch crusade in 1925, a seven-year old named BALASARASWATI was presented for the first time at a temple in Kanchipuram. The cognescenti present there were awestruck with her mastery at that tender an age. In the years that followed, Balasaraswati became a role model for dancers as she easily was the greatest classical dancer of her time. Balasaraswathi, rated as a virtuoso par excellence by the cognoscenti used to dance extempore, enriching the audience through exquisite expressions.

"Balasaraswati made the public Bharatanātyam conscious, not by conscious efforts

as a torch-bearer or a reformer but by the beauty and eloquence of her dancing. It was left to others to fight prejudices and stupidity, do research, delve into the past. But Balasaraswati made us aware of the living miracle of Bharatanāṭyam to be seen and to be enraptured." [18]

Balasaraswati highlighted the importance of music and said that the Śāstrās have confirmed that an individual dedicated to dance must be equally dedicated to music and must receive thorough training in both the arts. In an interview, she has also disclosed that in demonstrating the art of Bharatanāṭyam abroad, she has made a special point of showing audiences how delicately linked is the realisation of movement to rāga expression in abhinaya, including the subtle expression of gamakā-s, intonation of sruti, and the unfolding of improvisation in niraval. In the same way that we look for perfect blending of rāga and tāla and of rāga and bhāva in abhinaya, so also it is essential that the rāga and the sāhitya be perfectly matched and in accordance with the necessities of expression in the dance.

16. The school of Tāntric worship of the Chakrās

Both the Kaulās and the Samayins follow the yoga of Chakrā worship with subtle differences.

"All religions and disciplines in India which use largely the psycho-physical method, depend more or less upon it for their practices. When one does Yoga, this force uncoils itself and rises upward to meet. It is by ascending through these in our consciousness and receiving a descent of their energies that it is possible ultimately to reach the Supermind. This is the method of Tantra". [19]

The subtle body is composed of seven cakrās or energy centres. Chakrā means "what revolves" and hence signifies a wheel. The cakrās are also called lotuses, as they are shaped like flowers and composed of different petals. Each petal of a cakrā relates to one of the prime letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. Each chakrā governs a certain element, sense organ, organ of action, prāna (life force), and function of the mind. Each has a physical counterpart through a physiological

system, nerve plexus and endocrine organ.

1. Muladhāra Chakrā

The Earth Chakrā has four petals consisting of the mantras vam, sam, sam, and sam. It is the seat of the earth element or solid state of matter, whose governing seed syllable (bija mantra) is Lam. The Nattuvangam cymbals have originated from such Beejakshara Mantras

2. Svādhīsthāna Chakrā

The Water Chakrā possesses six petals consisting of the mantras bam, bham, mam, yam, ram, and lam. It is the seat of the water element or liquid state of matter, whose governing seed syllable is vam.

3. Manipura Chakrā

The Fire Chakrā possesses ten petals consisting of the mantras dam, dham, nam, tham, dam, dham, nam, pam, and pham. It is the seat of the fire element or radiant state of matter, whose governing seed syllable is Ram.

4. Anāhata Chakrā

The Air Chakrā has twelve petals consisting of the mantras kam, kham, gam, gham, nam, cam, cham, jam, jham, nam, tam, and tham. It is the seat of the element of air or the gaseous state of matter, whose governing seed syllable is Yam.

5. Vishuddha Chakrā

The Ether Chakrā has sixteen petals consisting of the vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet: am, am, im, im, um, um, rm, rm, lrm, lrm, em, aim, om, aum, am, and ah. It is the seat of space, the element of ether or the etheric state of matter, whose governing seed syllable is Ham.

6. Ājna Chakrā

The third eye has two petals (by some accounts forty-eight), consisting of the mantras ham and khsham. It is the seat of the mind-space or mental ether (which underlies the elemental ether). Its seed syllable is ksham, meaning patience, peace and fortitude.

7. Sahasra Padma Chakrā

The Crown Chakrā has thousand petals and is the seat of the spirit (Atman or Purusha). Its seed syllable is Om. It is the seat of consciousness or consciousness-space that is the origin of the mental and material ethers.

17. The Kundalini Śakti

“Veda and Vedānta are one side of the One Truth; Tantrā with its emphasis on Śakti is another. The process of the Kundalini awakened rising through the centres as also the purification of the centres is a Tāntric knowledge. In our yoga there is no willed process of the purification and opening of the centres, no raising up of the Kundalini by a set process either. Therefore, there is a Tāntric knowledge behind the process of transformation in this Yoga. In the Tantrā the centres are opened and Kundalini is awakened by a special process, its action of ascent is felt through the spine. Here it is a pressure of the Force from the above that awakens it and opens the centres. There is ascension of the consciousness going up till it joins the higher consciousness above. This repeats itself (sometimes a descent also is felt until) until all the centres are open and the

consciousness rises above the body. At a later stage I remains above and widens out into the cosmic consciousness and the universal self. In our yoga there is no willed opening of the cakrās, they open of themselves by the descent of the Force. The ascension and descent of the Force in this yoga accomplishes itself in its own way without any necessary reproduction of the details laid down in the Tāntric books” . [20]

In Nāṭya too ,the power is similarly awakened spontaneously.

Kundalini, an important part of Hindu Tantrā is based on the principle that the embrace of Śiva and Śakti created the Universe. The whole Universe is a part of Śiva, and any part of it contains the entire universe. In our body, Śakti, resides in the Muladhāra, at the base of the spine. Due to Tamogun, she is asleep, and must be awakened. The seven cakrās(or energy centers in the body), correspond to the Worlds Śakti created. As the persons Kundalini rises through the higher cakrās, ever subtler and virtuous states are realised. Kārmic impurities create blocks preventing Kundalini from rising. Yogic āsanās are helpful just as Nāṭya Vinīyogās and prayogās are helpful in consciously or unconsciously raising the Kundalini Śakti. In fact, In Bharatanāṭyam, the basic posture, the Aṛaimandi shapes up the body as a yogic Mahā Kumbhā with all the Cakrās in perfect opened –up position, enhancing the flow of energy.

“the divine Energy is polarized into a static or potential form (called *kundalini*) and a dynamic form (called *prana*). The latter is responsible for maintaining all the life processes that make embodiment possible. The former is the infinite pool of Energy coiled into potentiality at the base of the central pathway, in the lowest psychoenergetic center. This *cakra* is the normally closed plug-hole to the infinite storehouse of Energy (and Consciousness)”[21].

The classical Indian music scale –the Saptaswaras can be used to locate the psychic centers. ‘SA’ Corresponds to Muladhara, ‘RE’ to Swadhishtana , ‘GA’ to Manipura , ‘MA’ to Anahata , ‘PA’ to Vishuddha , ‘DA’ to Ajna and ‘NI’ to Sahasrara.

"It is interesting to follow the author in his discussion of the relevant areas of the Tantra System. He lists seven chakras which are below the *muladhara* : *atala*, *vitala*, *bsutala*, *talatala*, *mahatala*, *patala*. "They represent evolution from basic structures to mineral life, then plant, lower animals and so on". He cites parallels to the conception of chakras in other traditions. He traces the correlation between the chakras and the *kyo shos* or pressure points in the Japanese *judo* (esoteric) as also in the acupuncture points in *shiatzu* (a therapy from Japan). So also he mentions how Kundalini is known to the Kungs in South Africa as "n/um". To the Chinese it was known as 'spiritual fire' and to the American Indians as 'hurakan'." He quotes, from A Mystic image by Joseph Campbell, the experience of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa: how the activity of Kudalini feels like the various movements of an ant, a fish, a monkey, a bird or a serpent. He adds a valuable chapter on the system of acupuncture and shows a close correspondence between their techniques and the operations of the bandhas, notably the moola bandha"[22]

The Tantric system is in its aspiration one of the greatest attempts yet made to embrace the whole of God manifested and unmanifested in the adoration, self-discipline and knowledge of single human soul.

"The ascent of the Goddess power in the body is associated with the progressive dissolution of the elements-a process that is called *laya-krama* ("process of dissolution") or *laya-yoga* ("discipline of dissolution"). In the present context, the technical term *laya* refers to the resorption of the elements into the pretemporal and prespatial ground of nature (*prakriti-pradhana*) In principle, *laya* is effected as the *kundalini* rises from center to center. Its arrival causes each center to vibrate intensely and to function fully, but as it goes to the next higher psychoenergetic center, the departure of the Goddess power leaves the previous center or centers as if void. The reason for this is that at each center, Shakti works the miracle of a profound purification of the elements (called *tattva*), rendering them extremely subtle. The final phase of dissolution occurs when the serpent power reaches the topmost psychoenergetic center, when the subtle matrix of nature is dissolved

into the *para-bindu*, which is the into the supreme point of origin of the individuated body-mind. Dissolution (*laya*) is fundamental to Tantra-Yoga. Hence we can read in the *Kula-Arnava-Tantra* (9.36):

Ten million rituals of worship equal one hymn; ten million hymns equal one recitation [of a *mantra*]; ten million recitations equal one meditation; ten million meditations equal a single [moment of] absorption (*laya*).”[23].

18. Guru

The bestower of Knowledge and Wisdom ,the tree bearing the branches.....the Guru.

A teacher instructs, a Guru inspires. The Guru sets an example to eulogise and since Nāṭya is a spiritual pursuit, the teachers are called Gurus after some years of experience and through their well trained disciples. Tantra Gurus are indispensable in order to tread the best and safest path. Both Tantra and Nāṭya open up a broadbased spectrum generous enough to accommodate all people irrespective of any caste, sex, or creed provided they have the required potectial and dedication. The disciples gain knowledge at the feet ,near the Guru literally and in the ancient Gurukula system , the disciples offered diligent and arduous service to their Gurus to receive blessings.This relation is unique and of hishest value in both Nāṭya and Tantra.

There are twelve types of Gurus according to Swami Narayananda.

1. “Dhatuvadi: One who leads the disciples through the practice of various kinds of sadhanas.
2. Chandana: Like a sandal tree, he transforms others by his sheer proximity.
3. Vichara : He refines the intellect and teaches the disciples to distinguish

the true from the false, the eternal from the transient.

4. Paarasa : Like the philosopher's stone he reaches the disciple to the goal by his mere touch.
5. Kachchapa : Like a tortoise he effects changes by his mere glance.
6. Chandra : He operates like the rays of the moon on the moon-stone
7. Darpana: His being reflects the Truth to the disciple
8. Chhayanidhi: Like the mythological precious stone of the name, his very voice turns the baser nature into the divine
9. Nadanidhi : Like the mythological precious stone of the name, his very voice turns the baser nature into the divine.
10. Krauchapakshi: This bird feeds its young ones by just thinking of them; the Guru of this type does likewise.
11. Suryakanta: Like the concentrated rays of sun focused on an object, his glance suffices to lift the disciple to his goal.”[24]

The Guru occupies a godlike position in Tantra and the presence of a Guru is an essential condition for Tāntric practice. An emphasis is placed on secrecy and the oral transmission of the tradition by the Guru to a worthy pupil .This profound word leads us to the luminaries who became immortalized as Gurus to show the light and pave the path for disciples. Almost all these gifted ,blessed ,illustrious votaries have treaded the path of Tantra and inculcated the spirit of love and devotion by INTEGRATING and aligning aritstic disciplines within their system. This was the best way to bring them close to solving problems of this world by communicating their thoughts to common mankind and elevating them .We can cite the recent example of Sri Ramakarishna Paramahamsa who had knowledge of the highest kind and translated his divine experience into poetry and danced it with great mirth. There are several saints in this century who enjoyed music and dance of the classical and divine kinds and perpetuated them , also in the institutions started under them ,if any . Shirdi Sri Sai

Baba was an expert in all yogic and t  ntric practices but nevertheless ,taught devotion with N  masankeertanam .

The Puran  s are depicted through N  t  ya and in them are contained ,a myriad feats and deeds of the Gods which are impossible and unfathomable unless the miraculous Siddhis are mastered by them .This underlines the inherent Tantra in the Universe which is absorbed by the ones on whom grace has been bestowed by that ONE SUPREME T  ntric magician ,called ISWARA , BRAHMAN or by any other name. Man, being a part of this whole ,can also become a master and Tantra is a design to understand the process ,to understand the Leelas ,their symbolic meanings and enjoy the world ,which is a divine play .

Today ,if man can produce gadgets to reach across miles , why is it tough to understand that gadgets are only material evidence and substances to make-believe ,whereas the Rishis ,Munis ,the Gurus and seers do not require any such material to reach across ,even to other galaxies ,worlds and witness as well as participate in the astral realms and the causal realm, simultaneous with earthly existence. Ordinary men have to shed layer after layer of earthly bondage in order to realize the divine potential and power ,hidden within them .In this sense ,N  t  ya ,which contains Tantra as it's nucleus ,has been designed in such a way that it's sincere practice, naturally cleanses both the practitioners and the surroundings ,as if clearing the mirror to make it easier to grasp the SELF in the reflection .

Tantra forms the innermost layer of the truth while N  t  ya fills up the truth and these Gurus epitomize **such** TRUTH .They are beyond but have taken human forms ,they are ON this world and FOR this world's elevation but are not IN this world . The way of Tantra and the way of N  t  ya lead to the same goal of supreme self-consciousness . An adept in either or both

streams has to however shed the ghost of his ego in order to scale the heights and realize the summit .Hence ,we discuss Tantra and Nāṭya in the background of the most important Darshanās known and followed in the present times.

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Chapter - V

Advaita and Viśishtādvaita Vedānta philosophies in relation to Tantra and Nāṭya.

1 .Advaita compared to Tantrā philosophies

Tantra exists in Vaiśnava, Śaiva, and Śākta forms, among others. The whole Universe is a creation of a Divine Consciousness (Sivā) and his active willpower (Śakti). Māya, the illusory nature of the universe is conceptualised as Māya Śakti - the divine mother who causes humans to identify with illusory forms, preventing them from seeing the fundamental reality of their inseparability of the divine.

A careful study of the Buddhist Śūnyata will show that it is in some ways metaphysically similar as Brahman. Whether Ādi Śaṅkara agrees with the Buddhists is not very clear from his commentaries on the Upaniṣads. His arguments against Buddhism in the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣyās are more a representation of Vedantic traditional debate with Buddhists than a true representation of his own individual belief.

“ The peculiar metaphysical position of the Tantra consists in the theory of Abhāsa, which is consistent with this position. It rejects the Vivartavada of Neo-Vedānta, because the world is not originally a false appearance due to Error. It is real in the same way as an image is real, but it has no existence apart from the medium in which it is manifested. Its existence is only the existence of the medium. To the Vedāntist the world appears as such to the ignorant owing to his ignorance and in the last analysis it is resolved into Māya which is not identical with Brahman and is material; but to a Tāntrist the world is real and is expression of the Chit Śakti or Free Will of the Lord and is really spiritual in essence like the Lord Himself. In the last resort it turns back into the Chit Śakti which is never

withdrawn, for the Will (svātantrya) remains, even after the world has disappeared. The Vedānta system has had to fall back on the doctrine of Vivarta, because it denies in a sense Svātantrya to Pure Chaitanya. The first stadium of creation is thus an Ābhāsa. The second stage which represents the subsequent condition shows how the Chit Śakti, already appearing (Ābhāsamāna) in the Pure Chaitanya, further progresses. Māya emerges on the scene now and the Vivarta is the logical outcome. The third stage marks how Māya becomes productive. This is the Parināma or Evolution which gets on till the bhutas spring into manifestation. The fourth stage which represents creation out of the bhutas is known as Arambha or physico-chemical process of genesis. From the supreme stand-point of Tantrā, however, the entire Creation is an Ābhāsa" [1]

The swan is an important motif in Advaita. It symbolises two things: first, the swan has a powerful quality of discrimination [seperating milk from water as is said] and repeating the name 'hamso' becomes so-aham, meaning, "I am That". Just as a swan lives in water but its feathers are not soiled by water. There is a similar reason for attaching the lotus symbol to another religion - lotus bloom is one of the unique charms of nature but it is flowering on a muddy and murky pool. A liberated Advaitin lives in this world full of illusion, māya .

2. Non duality: Advaita Vedanta

Advaita Vedānta philosophy had a tremendous impact on the Hindu system of Tantra and also served to bolster Yogic ideas of the ultimate Self, Brahman/Ātman, being One. The soul or the self (Ātman) is exactly equal to Brahman. Advaita literally means "not two"; being non-dualistic, Advaita Vedānta encompasses oneness and goes even beyond (oneness is an affirmation, and "advaita" is a negation; the negation of duality encompasses the affirmation of unity). Its consolidator was Ādi Śankara (788-820).

Ādi Śankara expounded his theories largely based on previous teachings of the Upanishads and his own guru Gaudapāda. In this philosophy, when a human

being tries to know the Cosmic Spirit (Brahman) through his mind, Brahman becomes the Supreme Lord (Īshvara), under the effect of an illusionary power of Brahman called Māyā. An analogy is given that when the reflection of Brahman falls upon the mirror of Māyā, its image is seen as Īshvara. The material universe and the appearance of the single Ātman to be seen as innumerable individual souls are also because of Māyā. God is still perfect and untouched, just as a magician is not surprised by his own magic.

True knowledge of the Brahman is the only way to liberation; when Māyā gets removed.

The key source texts for all schools of Vedānta are the Prasthānatrayi- the canonical texts consisting of the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sūtrās.

“Brahman is the only truth, the world is unreal, and there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and individual self”-
from Śankara 's commentary on Prasthānatrayi.

Advaita vedānta extolls the role of the Gurū.

Gurū in the Mūndaka Upaniṣad [1.2.12] is-

1. learned in the Vedic scriptures and sampradāya
2. established in Brahman; must have realized the oneness of Brahman in everything and in himself

The seeker must serve the Gurū and submit questions with all humility in order to remove all doubts (Bhagavad Gita 4.34).

3. Brahman

According to Adi Śankara , God, the Supreme Cosmic Spirit or Brahman is the One, the whole and the only reality. Brahman is infinite, omnipresent and omnipotent. It is the transcendent reality of all Being. It is the basis of the material world, which in turn is its illusionary transformation. Brahman is said to be the

purest knowledge itself and is ever – lustrous like a source of infinite light. There are stages in attaining this pinnacle. In the āgama, Bhakti precedes Jñāna, i.e., the Sādhaka acquires Jñāna by Bhakti, whereas in the Vedānta, Jñāna precedes Bhakti.

4. Māyā

Māyā is the most important contribution of Ādi Śankara. Māyā is that complex illusory power of Brahman, Āvarana, which causes the Brahman to be seen as the distinct material world. It is commonly said that it has two main functions - one is to "cover up" Brahman from the human minds, and the other is to present the material world in its stead. Māyā is also indescribable. It is neither completely real nor completely unreal -hence indescribable. Its shelter is Brahman, but Brahman itself is untouched by the profanity of Māyā, just like a magician is not tricked by his own magic. Māyā is temporary and is destroyed with "true knowledge". Even energy, Śakti, is Māyā, Śakti according to Śankara who has resolved the problem created by Sankhya which stated dual roles of Puruṣa and Prakriti, that they never join or unite but may come close to each other similar to many modern scientific theories. This way, one never found solutions to practical problems for which Advaita has the simple answer – that there IS just one Puruṣa, Consciousness , which is avarnaniya, anirvachaniya.

God : Īśvara is Brahman with Māyā, - the manifested form of Brahman. Ādi Śankara uses a metaphor that when the "reflection" of the Cosmic Spirit falls upon the mirror of Māyā, it appears as the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord is true only in the pragmatic level - his actual form in the transcendental level is the Cosmic Spirit. : Īśvara is Saguna Brahman or Brahman with innumerable auspicious qualities. He is both immanent and transcendent. He may be even regarded to have a personality. He is the subject of worship. He is the basis of morality and giver of the fruits of one's Karma. However, he himself is beyond sin and merit. He rules the world with his Māyā - his divine power. Īśvara can

also be visualized and worshipped in anthropomorphic form as deities such as Viṣṇu ,Devi , Śivā or any other from.

In the pragmatic level, whenever we talk about Brahman, we are in fact talking about God. God is the highest knowledge theoretically possible in that level. Devotion (Bhakti) will nullify the effects of bad Karma and will make a person closer to the true knowledge by purifying his mind. Gradually with fervent practice, the difference between the worshipper and the worshipped is also removed at the time of liberation.

4. Application of the Mahavākya - "the great sentences", a parallel study with Nāṭya

They are four in number and their variations are found in other Upaniṣads.

Sr. No.	Vākya	Meaning	Upaniṣad	Veda
1	Prajñānam brahma	Brahman is Consciousness	Aitareya	Rig Veda
2.	Aham Brahmāsmi	I am Brahman	Brihadāranyaka	Yajur Veda
3.	Tattvamasi	That thou art	chhāndogya	Sama Veda
4.	Ayamātmā brahma	This Atman is Brahman	māndukya	Atharva Veda

One could analyse the impact of these great sentences and their meanings on Nāṭya.

If the world of Nāma-Rūpa [names/characters and sculpture/forms], Gita-Vādyā [vocal singing and instruments], Bhāva-Tāla [Expressions and rhythmic movement] and Sāhitya – Kavita [Prose and poetry] that are all ingredients in Nāṭya are but a reflection of this philosophy ,then is Nāṭya also completely false or Nāṭya true?

Comparing the world of a dramatist with the world at large, considering Śankara's arguments that it is false -

- 1 Ādi Śankara says that whatever thing remains eternal is true, and whatever is non-eternal is untrue. Since the world is created and destroyed, it is not true. Nāṭya is not true as it reflects the worldly happenings.
- 2 Truth is the thing which is unchanging. Since the world is changing, it is not true. Same is the case with Nāṭya as it portrays this changing world.
- 3 Whatever is independent of space and time is true, and whatever has space and time in itself is untrue. The stage and duration of the performance restricts the independence and hence Nāṭya becomes untrue as well.
- 4 Just as one sees dreams in sleep, he sees a kind of super-dream when he is waking. The world is compared to this conscious dream. Nāṭya spins a magical dream .
- 5 The world is believed to be a superimposition of the Brahman. Superimposition cannot be true. Same is the case with Nāṭya

On the other hand, we have to also consider drama in the framework of Śankara's simultaneous claims that the world is not absolutely false -

- 1 If the world were false, then with the liberation of the first human being, the world would have been annihilated. However, the world continues to exist even if a human attains liberation. Nāṭya has stood through ages and hence there is some element of truth in it.

2 Ādi Śankara believes in Karma, or good actions. This is a feature of this world. So the world cannot be false . Nāṭya consolidates the position of good as supreme and so it is true

3 The Supreme Reality Brahman is the basis of this world. The world is like its reflection. Hence the world cannot be totally false. Considering that the elements of Nāṭya Veda were all derived and conglomerated from the four Vedas ,the coherent aspects of poetry ,music ,expression and aesthetic joy ,derived from the Vedas, infact endorse the respective principles stated in the four sentences of Vedānta ,because in the culmination of Nāṭya Sādhana, Ātman experiences Brahmānada.

Hence, Sri Ādi Śankara called it indescribable. Drama is like the world ; is false but yet cannot be absolutely false due to the truth in the dramatic experience created by it .Aesthetic joy or Rasānubhāva is like tasting divinity and though nine in number ,they are one in **consciousness**.

Rasānubhāva is Advaitic. For that matter, the ninth Shānta Rasā is due to this as Shanta is devoid of any emotional. It is consiousness, the truth the in “ being “ and the other eight Rasās are real in “ becoming”. Drama is real and dramatic experience is true.

6. Kashmir Śaivism

This is idealistic and realistic in essence, strongly advocating a pragmatic approach to life. **Like Advaitavedānta it is monistic, like Vaishnavism it is theistic, like yoga it is practical, like Nyāya it is logical and also appealing like Buddhism.**

“It is only the self-realized Śaiva who sees that the world is nothing but Śiva just as it is the self-realized Vedāntin who sees the world as Brahman. Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman. Ādi Śankara conceives it as ineffable transcendence, Śaivism conceives it as the manifestation of infinite appearances in the modes of space and time. " [2]

Modern physics explains matter as waves of differing lengths, without the presence of anything essentially solid, what can be called vibrations . The Trikāśāstra called it “spanda”. Tāntric Śaivism gives the complete matrix of energy, the physical reality being only one part. Spandā is the energy that permeates the Universe during its process of evolution from which all existence evolves. It is the dynamic aspect , the Śakti that pulsates , throbs with a myriad emotions and expressions.

Tantrās have been revealed by Lord Śiva through his five mouths namely Ishāna, Tatpurusha, Sadyojata, Vāmadeva, and Aghora. These very five mouths represent his five energies namely Chitsakti (consciousness), Anandasakti (Bliss), Ichhāsakti (will), Jnānasakti (knowledge) and Kriyāsakti (Action) respectively. When these aforesaid five energies of Lord Śiva unite with each other in such a way that each of these takes hold of the rest simultaneously, they reveal sixty four Bhairvatantrās which are monistic . This is called Kashmir Śaivism or Trikā philosophy.

“Metaphysically it is a voluntaristic idealistic system opposed to naturalistic realism or a one-sided spiritual transcendentalism. Its spirit is not ascetical but aesthetic. The ultimate principle is self-aware, this self-awareness is bliss and bliss is the matrix of creative desire which contains the universe within itself even as the seed contains the tree. The sculptor and architect follow the paradigmatic measures, drama re-enacts the sacred myths, dance presents divine and cosmic rhythms, sacred music seeks to relate itself to the radiant effulgence of the Sun and the outpourings of the nectar, Soma.” [3]

It is strange that Abhinavagupta ,the fountainhead of this philosophy, does not make any reference to Ādi Śāṅkara who shows his approval of the basics of Āgamic principles in his philosophy of Advaita Vedānta.

8. Advaita and science

According to some followers of Advaita, it may very well be a place where the scientific world intersects with the spiritual world. They point to the relationships between mass, frequency, and energy that 20th century physics has established and the Advaitic 'Unity of the Universe' as the common ground. They feel that these relationships, formalized as equations by Planck and Einstein, suggest that the whole mesh of the Universe blend into a One that exhibits itself as many (namely, mass, energy, wave etc), and that this follows Advaita's view that everything is but the manifestation of an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent "One". The scientific investigations show that a living body has an internal energy pattern of millions of sparkling lights and experiments suggest that the energy is neither electric nor electromagnetic. Some scientists thought that the energy was an emanation from nerve endings, but they were baffled to see that plants also possessed this energy pattern without any nervous system at all !

Max Planck, the eminent physicist, who revolutionized modern physics with his quantum theory observes that as a physicist, i.e., as a man who has devoted his life to the most **matter of fact** branch of science, namely the investigation of matter,he is surely free of any suspicion of fanaticism. After his research into the atom ,he says, there is no such as matter per se! All matter originated from and consists of a force which sets the atomic particles in oscillation and concentrates them into minute solar systems of the atom. But since he did not believe in an intelligence or an internal force in the universe ,he assumes a conscious intelligent spirit behind the force and calls this force , the basic principle of all matter. The

Rishis called this energy body as Prānamaya-kosa . By Prāna they did not mean ordinary energy or breath. Prāna is the vital energy associated with the Universal consciousness or it is the 'force' of a "conscious intelligent spirit." Therefore, they maintained that by the proper control and channelizing of the Prāna, man could expand his consciousness and evolve to higher states of being.

However, these physicists have not talked of an 'omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent "One"'. But notable scientists like Erwin Schrödinger and Robert Oppenheimer were also Vedantists. Fritjof Capra's book, *The Tao of Physics*, is one among several that pursue this viewpoint as it investigates the relationship between modern, particularly quantum physics and the core philosophies of various Eastern religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. He is enthralled by its beauty and its mystery. There is a close parallel between the dance of vibrations in the Quantum theory and the classical dance of Nataraja. In a nutshell, it is observed that while moving, particles of elements disappear in our vision because mass times the speed of light is being converted into ENERGY. It is the fundamental exercise for the body and mind in Yoga and any such Sādhana to harness the highest energy into oneself. It is the goal to unite and integrate with the supreme and to go beyond the realm of body consciousness. The levitation powers in Yoga achieved with great breathing techniques and contemplation are also an attempt to remove the shackles of our BODY MASS and transcend towards ENERGY. Dance makes one move in rhythm, there is speed, there is integration of mind with body and a kind of levitation, leaping away from gravity and appearing to glide through space even when landing on the platform. For that matter, it is interesting to note that usually, the spectator and the artiste are on two totally different levels. In some, the artiste is on a lower level while spectator is elevated and in some, it is the artiste on higher level, in a proscenium stage to perform the dramatic spectacle. Other than enhancing the vision and experience of watching the artiste in front, it may also be having a deeper symbolic meaning, ie- art transcends the mundane world, both into what is deeper than the ocean and towards what is higher than the sky. It is as if the

artiste is ready to take a plunge and a flight with other passengers.....

The meanings of terms such as space and time take different dimensions when physics comes out with new discoveries and theories such as what Albert Einstein proposed and hence one is taken to the sphere of spacelessness and timelessness, familiar terms in the vocabulary of dance .The western classical ballet emphasized on the body language, corporeality, shapes and contours in space, acrobatic skills and a degree of gymnastics, simple rhythmic combinations that exalt the body movements, popular folk or historical themes expressing love stories, humour, pathos, tragedy, etc. through symphonies and body expression but hardly any or the minimum facial expression and utilizing fewer gestures of the hands. Later ,a degree of abstractness, suspense and intriguing themes came up with modern dance forms and the diaspora scenario emerged. On the other hand, the eastern approach has all along been the strong belief in the existence of the soul, that man is a spirit that has a body and obviously, this will have its effects also on the art forms as well.

The modern scientist is aware that he is standing on some strange shores. Einstein remarked that the **most beautiful and the most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the most mystical. It is the source of all true art and science.**How well the nuclear physicist Werner Heisenberg amplifies this and suggests that we should revere those things beyond science which really matter and about which it is difficult to speak.

Einstein rewrote the Newtonian concepts and revolutionized science. This was the turning point towards a trend to resolve several differences between the two so – called loggerheads, science and spirituality.The length of a train while static and while in motion, the speed of a moving object as observed by us when we are standing unmoved and while moving ourselves, the time shown by wrist watches on people in a running train and clocks hanging on walls of the stations, the curves in space that cause magnetic attraction and gravitational fields and the

importance of light that steadily travels in space at an unimaginable speed. These scientific observations would baffle unless one accepts the spiritual stream flowing underneath. The intensive study on Electric energy, electromagnetism, radioactivity, particles, wave theories, quantum physics and so on have over the years led to an undeniable connection between the deepest truths and principles propounded in the sacred Vedas and Upaniṣads and scientific theories.

9. Qualified non-dualism: Viśiṣṭādvaita

Śrī Rāmānuja (1040 - 1137) propounded the concept of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa as the supreme Brahman. He taught that Ultimate Reality had three aspects : Īśvara (Viṣṇū), chit (soul) and achit (matter). Because of this qualification of Ultimate reality, Rāmānuja's system is known as qualified non-dualism. Karma along with Bhakti is the true path for liberation.

Viśiṣṭādvaita is a qualified monism in which God alone exists but admits plurality. By holding such beliefs, Viśiṣṭādvaita is said to be the midway between Advaita and Dvaita by few. The Absolute Supreme Reality referred to as Brahman, is a Transcendent Personality with infinite superlative qualities. He is Lord Viṣṇū, also known as Nārāyaṇa. He creates the other two members of the Trimūrti, namely, Creator Brahma and Śiva, the Lord of Deluge.

The Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita schools believe in an ultimately saguna Brahman. The relationship of God to the Soul and the Universe is like the relationship of the Soul of Man to the body of Man. Individual souls are only parts of Brahman. God, Soul and Universe together form an inseparable unity which is one and has no second. This is the non-duality part. Ultimate reality is Brahman with attributes. Sri Rāmānuja describes God as the most beautiful in the world, “ Bhuvana Sundara “.

Matter and Souls inhere in that Ultimate Reality as attributes to a substance. This is the qualification part of the non-duality. Creation is a real act of God. It is the expansion of intelligence. Matter is fundamental. The Soul is a higher mode than Matter, because it is conscious. It is also eternally real and eternally distinct. Final release, that comes, by the Lord's Grace, after the death of the body is a Communion with God. This philosophy believes in liberation through one's Karmās (actions) in accordance with the Vedas, the Varnā (caste or class) system and the four Āshramas (stages of life), along with intense devotion to Viṣṇu . Individual Souls retain their separate identities even after salvation. They live with God either serving Him or meditating on Him. The philosophy of this school is Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, a branch of Vaiṣṇavism.

Bhakti , meaning devotion and also the path of devotion , Bhakti-Yoga , are used exclusively to denote devotion to a particular deity or form of God. Within Vaiṣṇavism, Bhakti is only used in conjunction with Viṣṇu or one of his associated incarnations, it is likewise used towards Śivā by followers of Śaivism. Bhakti as a process of yoga is described as the ultimate form of religious expression. There is no exact information as to the early origins of Bhakti, some element of it was present in Vedic times when the Vedic Gods were propitiated . It appears to have started in the south and spread slowly northwards, eventually becoming an accepted doctrine within a number of paths . In the 12th to 17th centuries in India there was a strong growth in the Bhakti movement throughout the country wherein the Bhakti Movements increased in popularity and grew into their current identities.

Music saw renewed growth during the Vijayanagar Empire by the Haridāsa movement of Vyasaraja, Purandaradāsa, Kanakadāsa and others. Purandaradāsa who is known as the Sangeeta Pitamaha (the grandfather of Carnātic music) laid out the fundamental tenets and framework for teaching Carnātic music. Even though the earlier writers Matanga, Sarangadeva and others also were from

Karnataka, the music tradition was formally named Carnātic for the first time only when the Vijayanagara empire was founded. Instruments such as the veena, rudra veena, violin, tambura, ghata, flute, mridangam, nāgaswara, harmonium, sitār and jaltarang were played as also the mandolin, saxophone and piano with western origin.

The TEN Avatārs (DAŚAVATARAS) of Viṣṇu

Matsya, fish, appeared in the Satya Yuga. Kūrma, the tortoise, appeared in the Satya Yuga,. Varāha, the boar, appeared in the Satya Yug, Narasimha, the half Man-half Lion , appeared in the Satya Yuga, Vāmana, the Dwarf, appeared in the Treta Yuga,. Paraśurāma, Rama with the axe, appeared in the Treta Yuga, Rāma, the prince and king of Ayodhya, appeared in the Treta Yuga, Balarāma , the brother of Kriṣṇa appeared in the Dwapara Yuga, Kalki ,the destroyer of EVIL who is expected to appear at the end of Kali Yuga .Many consider Kriṣṇa to be the 8th avatār of Viṣṇu, and place Buddha, the enlightened one, as the 9th avatār .



10. Brahman, the Ultimate Person

The forces that cause creation, sustain and maintain that which has become created and eventually cause the destruction of that which was created - named

Brahman, by the Upaniṣads - permeates everything in the Creation. Brahman is the self creating force that is in all that has a name and form as well as that which remains formless and nameless.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa describes three different 'levels' of Brahman realisation. The first is an impersonal state of blissful consciousness, similar to nirvana where one is aware of the great universal Brahman effulgence permeating everything; the second is classified as Paramātmā realisation, wherein one is actually able to see the Form of Godhead alongside one's own soul (ātma); the third and ultimate realisation is described as Bhagavān, in this state one has a direct loving relationship with The Supreme Personality of Godhead himself, in one or more of His transcendental forms.

12. The traditional favourites in worship who are often the protagonists in performing arts

There are popular traditions following worshipful devotion to a particular deity, however it is normally the practice in dance performances to render pieces on either one or two or as many as possible Gods. Examples are -

Ganeśa, the elephant-faced deity who is said to remove obstacles on the path of success and devotion.

Maheśvara or Śivā,

Viṣṇu and his manifestations in the forms of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and other avatārs.

Devi, the Universal Goddess, in her three forms of Durga or Pārvati, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

Subrahmanya, the six-faced deity known also as Murugan or Kumāran.

Suryadev, the Sun-God and the other eight planetary Gods namely Chandra

,Mangala ,Budha ,Guru / Brihaspati ,Śukra ,Śaniswara ,Rāhu and Ketu.

The scripture known as the Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, believed to be spoken by the sage Nārada distinguishes eleven forms of bhakti based on the different relationship to God that the devotee can assume.

The devotee Prahlada, as explained in Srimad Bhāgavatam, enunciates nine Expressions of Bhakti which are Śravanam ,Keertanam ,Padasevanam ,Smaranam ,Archanam ,Vandanam ,Dasyam ,Sakhyam and Ātmanivedanam. Ādi Sankara, in verse 61 of his Sivānandalahari lists five analogies of Bhakti.

These verses and compositions offer tremendous scope for dancers to portray in their performances and retain interests of audiences.

12. Famous Bhakti saints whose contribution to music and dance is immense -

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Mirābai, Rāmdās, Tulsidās, Surdās, Purandaradāsa, Vādirāja, Kanakadāsa, Thyagarāja, Syāmāshāstry, Muthuswāmi Dikshitar, Gopālakrishna Bhārati, Pāpanāsam Sivam, Muttutāndavar, Ālwārs, Nayanārs, Appar, Tukārām ,Nāmdev, Kabir, Swāti Tirunal, Tukārām , Jñāneshwar , Vedānta Desikar, Āndal, Akkamahādevi, Basavannā, Tiruvalluvār, Ramanā, Rāmakrishna and so on are the most venerated saints who have written invaluable songs for the music and dance world.

The Devarnāmas of Purandaradāsa stand out as unique experiences while rendering either as songs or dances and the popular instances taken from the Puranas extolling the feats of the Lord Kriṣṇa, Lord Rāma, Lord Narasimhā, Lord Govindā and so on. The Haridāsās added the greatest impulse, variety and devotion in the scope for dance compositions. Vyāsarāya, the preceptor of the

King Krishnadevarāya gave Deeksha [initiation to Purandaradāsa] and the Vaiṣṇavite traditions were gaining prominence.

Rāmakrishna was initiated in Advaita Vedānta by a wandering monk named Totāpuri, in the city of Dakṣiṇeśwar. As a result of this, Rāmakrishna spent periods of his life practising his own understandings of Islam, Christianity and various other Yogic and Tāntric sects within Hinduism. While he asserted the supreme validity of Advaita Vedānta, he also proclaimed that he accepts both the Nityā (Eternal Substratum) and the Leelā (literally meaning play, indicating the dynamic Phenomenal Reality) as aspects of the Brahman. The idea of the descent of consciousness shows the influence of the Bhakti movement and certain sub-schools of Śaktism on Ramakrishna's thought. He adopted a name that is clearly Vaiṣṇavite (Rāma and Kriṣṇa are both incarnations of Viṣṇu), but was a devotee of Kālī, the mother Goddess.

13 . The role of Bhakti Bhāva and Prema Bhāva in dance - A dancer's Quest

Religious dances should however not become images of an idolatrous cult but yield a spiritual essence through the co-ordinated action of making visible, what is invisible and consistent, what is timeless. The intensity revealed bursts forth from the artist's initialized inspiration, which betrays a kind of solitude, at times. The luminosity of the dancers face and actions would create a striking contrast with the darkness in which the scenario is plunged. Indeed most virtuoso performers seek to protect their eyes from glaring stage bulbs and flashing cameras, lest they falter in concentration. The vivifying notes of music, incredibly nebulous and trajectory by nature seep into the hearts of audiences, producing osmosis of the audio-visual assimilations. According to the pre-eminent Goethe, while sounds appear, fade and become transient its only harmony that endures.

The role of Premā -love and Bhakti-devotion is pivotal in divine dance forms as Bharatanatyam. The combination of Nrītā [pure dance], Abhinayā [pure expression] and Nrityā [expressional dancing] when portrayed in a spirit of total ecstasy, rising above the physical realm and parameters of the body shall lead the dancer close to the limitless domain of the COSMIC SELF. Such Nātyopasana - devotional fervour in dance wherein the dance assumes worshipful nature, leads to Nātyabrahman-Realizing the Universal within the individual self, a dancer uses his/her own personality comprising of physical form and mental states as the primary vehicle in the first stage, then enters or takes up the personality of the various characters represented as the secondary vehicle in the second stage, unwinds shackles of personal traits as the dance level develops and deepens and then finally he/she gets elevated to the highest spiritual sphere.

In this relation, the relevant emotion and application of Bhakti and Prema Bhāvas comes forth. In the Śāstra, it is termed as Śṛṅgāra-Love; and is given the first place among Rasās -aesthetic flavours of Dance and drama. Śṛṅgāra is considered as the Rasa Rāja -it rules literally because in it's portrayal alone is the inherent scope to touch upon other Bhāvas too. Taking it's three basic delineations as Vātsalya [Motherly affection], Rati [Union of male and female principles]and Bhakti [self-surrender and devotion to Lord Almighty], Śṛṅgāra becomes delectable in any form whatsoever and offers the easiest path to be ONE with the ethereal world - Nātya Yoga . But how?

A dancer could be amply skilled and sincere too, but unless there is a sublimation of the ego, the dance cannot be effective in creating Rasānubhāva , the impact of splendour. The dancer merges into the spirit of dance, surrenders to the agnificence of dance and spontaneously expresses a divine energy and this is when the audiences are also transported to similar experiences. Inspiration and intuition through dance follows both in dancer and the onlooker and irrespective of language or religious barriers, audiences can feel the divine energy. It is through the emotion-packed songs and lyrics, their exposition with portrayal of

episodes, events, legends, historical characters and characteristics that the divine aura, ambience and vibrations are created for the audience to empathize totally and derive a fulfilling Rasā. “The goal of any Nāṭya is only to create Rasā. Rasā is the enjoyment of an aesthetic bliss derived through witnessing or reading a production. The process through which this is achieved is the sub-structure of the varied rules analytically laid down in the Nāṭyasāstra. The Bhāva, i.e. feeling, contained in a situation and the character involved has to be expressed by the actor or the writer, as the case may be, in such a way that it can be understood by the onlooker or reader. Unless the feelings and ideas are communicated, the audience cannot share those feelings, which ultimately is responsible for evoking Rasā .” [4]

The musicians and the dancers can thus become ‘transmitters’. Negating the egoistic tendencies and considering oneself only as an instrument to experience divinity should be the aim of the dancer’s quest. It is said that TRUE MOVEMENT CANNOT LIE. True joy would remain elusive if Bhakti or devotion and correspondingly, Prema or love to everyone and everything and everywhere is not felt and practised. However, this cannot be always taught but can perhaps be imbibed in the contact of eminent Gurus .

Looking at the above process and essence of Nāṭya, we can assess philosophical terms like Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita. The concept of a dancer becoming one with the danced dance through Nāṭya Yoga is principally and essentially holistic and Advaitic, WHILE on the other hand, the aesthetic representation and appreciation of manifestations of divinity incorporated in dance are examples of admitting to theosophies like Viśiṣṭādvaita. Again, the Bhakti-Mārg [the pathway to God] prescribed by magnanimous saints from all over the world is so much suffused with infectious love, humble devotion and self-surrender, that dancing to their innumerable compositions [Keertanam] has the potency to infuse spiritual well-being.

Creating, adding form [from Nirguna to Saguna]and Placing this Divinity on the Highest Pedestal become the right tools to communicate and a must for successful dramatic representation. Advaitam, True Śāntam, resting in Monism can be the 'end' indeed where there cannot be any mundane expression but Nāṭya in order to carry the dancer and spectators, has to be thoroughly expressive and appear world-related. It is multi-dimensional, physically externalizing through movement and emotions using eyes, parts of face, neck, limbs.....and also all along internalizing by co-relating the mind. Above all, witnessing all these ephemeral states is ' the mystical eye' that can make one see the divine reality in the dance. Hence, one can understand the dance as LIFE itself....as Cosmic movementas infinite cycle of creation, sustenance and destruction.—THE REAL DANCE OF ŚIVĀ !

The dancer loses himself completely to the dance! The dancer and the dance become one; there is unison, a harmony. Far -reaching into the oceanic depths of body, mind and soul. The truth is sought when the dance is spontaneous, unmanipulated, unpremeditated and done in surrender to the dance. This Advaitic philosophy is the substratum for both Nāṭya and Tantrā.

Through Tāntric myths, symbols and rituals of the timeless gods and goddesses, we can unravel truths of our real self in relation with who we are now at this particular time and place. We can discover so many personalities in ourselves and learn to identify with each one of them as our own expression. For this purpose, a balanced, scientific nurturing of body, mind and soul is required for the full blossoming of our true well-being. The yantra in dance, the body is our temple and must be revered in every way. Tantrā incorporated in Nāṭya is what trains us to believe that our body is a pulsating miracle, a beautiful gift from the higher Universe. The entire Universe is said to dwell in our bodies and Nāṭya Sādhana proves it.

14. Brahman in Tantra

Though experience of Brahman in the arts as in Tantrā is self-proved, we may propose some logical proofs:

- 1 Texts - the Śāstrās describe Brahman in almost exact manner as these.
- 2 Psychological - every person experiences his soul, or ātman. When the soul expands it reaches Brahman.
- 3 Teleological - the world as is seen as a drama played by Brahman consists of many other replicas of the world itself ie- mini or minor dramas played by mankind on stage and all these appear very well in order only due to the “conscious principle” of Brahman.
- 4 Essential - Brahman is the basis of this created world of the Chief Creator and the created Creators and hence all these creations would be again Brahman in essence without diminishing the totality.
- 5 Perceptible feeling - many people, when they achieve the Turīya state , claim that their soul has become one with everything else.

Turīya is Brahmānubhāve. It is the state of consciousness where in there is unity of everything. This is known to us when we see Jivan Mukta's though one can actually reach that state only through experience.

A notable feature of the Theosophical Movement is the Freedom of thought, expression and organization given to its members. W Q Judge is one of the early leaders to have thus initiated his own unit. He writes “The trained man by the use of his will, mind and imagination can disintegrate an object, send it along currents definitely existing in space, transport the mass of atoms to a distant place, passing them through certain obstacles, and reintegrate the object at the given distant spot exactly with same visibility, limits and appearance as it had when first taken up for transport.

In a thought-provoking note on Imagination and Occult Phenomena, Mr. Judge

describes how a powerful imaginative faculty can be used to impose an image upon the mind of a collective assembly. He cites the case of an Indian Wonder worker who was asked what he did when he made a snake come and go before the audience. He replied: he had been taught from very early youth to see a snake before him and that it was so strong an image everyone there had to see it.

But how do you feel it from a real snake?_The man replied that he was able to see through it, so that for him it looked like the shadow of a snake, but that if he had not done it so often he might be frightened by it himself!

The writer warns, however, that if personal desire or fancy is allowed to get mixed up with such imaginative faculty, then its power decays. Imagination is a constructive power when used rightly but it turns wasteful when it is ill-used". [5]

This is why artistes are told to forget personnel shortcomings and rise above to merge into the imaginative world akin to an occult phenomenon. Dr.Sudha Gopinath,post-doctoral fellow of ICPR explains that while Sankhya Yoga is purely 'science' ,Advaita Vedanta goes a step further to take a massive leap beyond the reach of science even ,making it possible to answer every possible question about creation ,existence ,reality ,illusion and so on. Brahman is the **only truth that is there** and from that point ,everything else is mere illusion.

15. Unitariness with Nāṭya & 16. The Absolute – Vedānta & Tantra /Nāṭya

Yoga, with special reference to Patanjali's Yoga Sutrās, Tirumoolar's Tirumandiram, Abhinavagupta's Tantrasāra, Śankara's Soundaryalahiri amongst other texts, prescribes certain ways of meditating with guidance from a Gurū in order to rise to the state of the Parabrahman. All the great sages and seers have been exponents of yogic practices either throughout or at some time in their lives

and achieved the awakening of the Kundalini Śakti or Serpent power. The control of Prāna or breath, the Āsanās postures and Mudrās or gestures have been scientifically codified with a progressive teaching method as well so that the Sādhaka or exponent is prepared for higher stages that would finally lead to enlightening of the soul. Technically speaking, this is a method to unfold and activate the Cakrās or subtle energy points or plexuses. The Yogic exercises combined with deep meditation will help one to realize the innate consciousness and spirit when the Kuṇḍalini Śakti lying dormant like a coiled serpent at the root of the spine –Mulādhāra rises up slowly, passing through the other psychic nerve centres and unites with Śivā at the crown at the top of the head – Sahasrāra. Single-pointed contemplation and meditation leads to this, easier with the guidance of the self - realized Guru offering grace and channelising Universal energy from the Self.

Actually, in the path of devotion, one surrenders to the same spirit that one essentially IS in order to become united with One's own true SELF.

In the Sāṅkhya school of thought, Prakriti dances continuously to enchant Puruṣa who then binds to saṃsāra. The world is seen as empty when Puruṣa is alone and full when Prakriti comes close.

It may be Śivā finally or Śakti finally depending on the faith and cult. Supposing we consider them as the male and the female respectively, it is not the point as it hardly matters whether we attach any gender to THAT UNITARINESS. The fact is THAT remains and a Sādhaka would have tasted supreme joy by knowing this.

“The two complemented each other perfectly. She was gentle and divinely graceful; He was wild and forceful. Her subtle lasya tempered his energetic tandava and created perfect harmony. Together, the Divine cosmic couple captivated the vibrations of the Universe. Each of these deities is inseparable from

its respective counterpart, the feminine energy or shakti. In Tantra, every higher principle exists through the union of male and female forces". [6]

Although tantra speaks of rituals and esoteric practices that appear dualistic in approach to God, the main essence is Vedāntic in nature. That of absolute Cosmic universality of creation, that creation which is only a projection, extension, manifestation of either THE COSMIC MAN or THE ONE SPIRIT. Similarly, Nāṭya portrays so many shades but all along the Shanta Rasānubhāva [element of peace] continues as the underlying sheath below all the myriad actions and after all the dramatic experience .

"On the other hand, the dancer loses himself completely to the dance! The dancer and the dance become one; there is unison, a harmony, a reaching into the unfathomable depths of body, mind and soul. No correction based on forethought can be made. The reality of the dance is spontaneous and unpremeditated". [7]

Such is the passion of dance – a beautiful form of meditation, especially if one allows the body to pick up the strains of the rhythmic beat, allowing every drum to metamorphose our soul to the heart throb experienced in the mother's womb, bridging one's consciousness of the psyche with the soul. Many artistes feel that solo dancing is always more powerful, unless the whole group's or both the partner's energies are fully in tandem.

The first and highest strata of Hindu life, both as Vedānta or as Tantrā, must be given to the Absolute, the Cosmic Soul (Paramātmā). This can never be defined, explained or given characteristics. It is the Supreme Reality and the only real substance. But man, with his many limitations and imperfections, prefers to see THAT in manifestation and form. It is true that in the life of sages ,their aim was the Absolute, but there always existed that deep understanding that men, for the most part, could only see and think of the Divine in the form and qualities they

understood. In creation, or the process of manifestation, the actionless Absolute had to resort to action, and the non-dual gave rise to duality. Thus there came into existence the Puruṣa, or Cosmic Personality, and his Power or Śakti, the operative force of natural manifestation.

“Bharata internalizes, incorporates the Upaniṣadic world-view at the level of concepts and the ultimate goal of the artistic-experience and creates a structure which is an analogue to brahmanical ritual /yajna.

An experience of undifferentiation, of a state of (concentration) Samādhi, an acausal, intellectual state, intuitive and non-cognitive, alone, could be liberated from immediacy and boundaries. This could make it possible or probable for creation to take place. Whether stated in words or not, it is ‘rasa’ in the singular, the highly charged state of momentary freedom and emancipation which motivates, inspires creation. Distancing, tatastha, is consistently implied and is an underlying tenet of the Nāṭyaśāstra.”. [8]

The principle of Advaita Vedānta once realized, is a unique self experience, inexplicable, indescribable and if art is used as a medium, then it can be conveyed, communicated and shared through works of Dwaitic nature. For the spectators then, this sacred art can epitomize jñāna but be lead only through Bhakti. The keys of universal spiritual practices are pure devotion and surrender of ego. In Sufism, an offshoot of Islam, it is called FANA. The closeness to Vedāntic Hindu philosophy is seen prominently and the chants, music and dance, especially the whirling circles of the dervishes extol the importance of tuning in with the divine sounds. Coming to Buddhism, the offshoot Vajrayāna is elaborate, descriptive, expressive, even artistic, in all its rituals.

Because it covers that in the Āgama, Bhakti precedes Jñāna, i.e., the Sādhaka acquires Jñāna by Bhakti, whereas in the Vedānta, Jñāna precedes Bhakti. The sixth stage in Āgama is Unmani and in Vedānta it is Padārtharthabhāvinī and the seventh i.e., Kaula which in Vedānta is Turiya.

“Bharata reminds us that the entire act of creation and presentation is a sādhanā where impersonalization, depersonalization and detachment is primary. It is this inbuilt flexibility which has facilitated the twin phenomena of unbroken continuity at one level, and constant movement or change and flux, at the other”. [9]. In Nāṭya, the enumerated first emotion is eternal love and culminating emotion is emotion[less] peace, between the two are seven constantly changing emotions, a constant flux.

Dance held in temples has more vibrations due to the Tantrāgamās followed in temple architecture, sculpture and the deities. Dance demystifies the mystic, including the sphere of the Tantras and brings the truths closer to man. Dance experience is of a unique nature both for the dancer and the spectators. After comparison between various philosophies, we have to arrive at ONE common denominator, then what is **it**, **that** happens within the dancer and the spectator?

“On those very rare occasions when the holistic cognitive operator functions without the other five, you can experience complete unity. This powerful, altered state of consciousness in which all sense of the individual and all sense of duality disappears has been described by mystics for centuries and is the goal of Eastern meditation and rituals. Because it is non-verbal and subjective, it cannot be described in terms acceptable to the language of the other five cognitive operators”. [10]

“This intensive state of consciousness can be induced through meditation or religious ritual such as chanting or trance dancing. (Although both meditation and religious ritual can produce this peak spillover state, each approach works through a different nervous system. Meditation affects the trophotropic nervous system while religious ritual affects the ergotropic nervous system.)” [11]

It is energy that consents to go from word to word, from thought to thought. It is the first moment of will, the initial motion of the spirit, which is presupposed by any form of consciousness. Spandā is the movement, the inner rhythm of the

aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience is an inner perception like pleasure and pain .

"This, enjoyment, which is different from any other kind of perception as direct knowledge and memory consists of the states of fluidity, enlargement and expansion, is characterized by a resting by a lysis, in our own consciousness, constituted by sattva and intermixed with rajah and tamah, and is similar to the tasting of the supreme Brahman" [12]

There are many investigators who recognize the fact that the ancient Rishis might have possessed a basic knowledge of Spanda, this mysterious energy and that they might have absorbed, transmitted and thus utilized it with unbelievably astounding results .

What perplexes the modern investigators is the apparently peculiar behaviour of this energy. It seems to defy the well-known physical laws. Some investigators suggest that it is neither electrical nor electromagnetic, and that it appears to exhibit certain characteristics of consciousness. It is this consciousness that speaks to the mystics in deep meditation. "Scientists have taken the pattern of the DNA molecule as being the instrument that guides life along certain directions ,they have missed the underlying principle behind the DNA molecule itself ,ie-consciousness. The molecular structure is merely the executor of the will of the cell consciousness." [13]

Exactly as in poetry, music, dance and visual arts, the 'unsaid' silent is almost more important than the 'said' and 'sung'. Here it is the most important implicit level which is not explicated.....The two levels of the undifferentiated states of oneness, non-duality, and the differentiated states of diversity and multiplicity are connected.

"The Voice of Silence is a selection from the Book of Golden Precepts by

H.Blavatsky. It is again a daily handbook for every disciple. Referring to the mystic sounds that greet the seeker, the text says.

Before thou sett'st thy foot upon the ladder's upper rung, the ladder of the mystic sounds thou hast to hear the voice of thy inner God in seven manners

The first is like the nightingale's sweet voice chanting a song of parting to its mate.

The second comes as the sound of silver cymbal of the Dhvanis, awakening the twinkling stars.

The next is the plaint melodious song of the ocean-sprite imprisoned in its shell

And this is followed by the chant of Vina

The fifth like sound of bamboo-flute shrills in thine ear.

It changes next into a trumpet-blast

The last vibrates like the dull rumbling of a thundercloud. It is interesting to recollect what an Upaniṣad (Hamsa) has to say on the subject:

The sound is of ten kinds --

The first is chini; the second is chinchini; the third is the sound of bell; the fourth is the sound of conch; the fifth is the sound of lute; the sixth is the sound of cymbals; the seventh is the sound of flute; the eighth is the sound of mridanga; the ninth is the sound of kettle-drum; the tenth is the sound of thunder. [14].

Notes and references

- [1] The Philosophy of Tripura Tantra By Gopinath Kaviraj –article from the Sarasvati Bhavana Studies series, written by the eminent tantrik scholar Gopinath Kaviraj, which is out of copyright. Here, he deals with the Tripurarahasya, and more especially with the 36 tattvas of the Kaula Shri Vidya and Trika systems – www.shivashakti.com
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Chapter - VI

Conclusions

1. 'By those who know the nāṭya-tantra, it is used to denote female dance [lāsya]'. [1]

The above sentence clearly associates Nāṭya with tantra. Nāṭya Sāstra is itself a kind of Tantra Sastra. Other than Nandikeswara's statement as above, the epitomic personage Abhinavagupta calls Rasāyana [the science of art, of the rasās, or of vegetables juices, etc.) , more or less the Indian equivalent of alchemy, an esoteric science.

The dancer has to concentrate on the character, situation and emotions and depicted with help of abhinaya and sātṛvika bhāvas or the emotional states and then the rasās reach the spectator thereby enveloping him in the emotion that is expressed by and enacted by the dancer. The Sanskrit word abhinaya is made up of the prefix abhi 'towards' and the root ni 'to carry'. Thus it means representing (carrying) a play to (towards) the spectators. It is the doctrine of suggestion that lies at the basis of ancient Indian plays and indeed of all other arts of India. It is only when the actor or dancer has Sātṛvikābhinaya that he can guide the enjoyment of the spectator in whom sentiment or rasā is created directly through the bhāva expressed by the dancer and actor. Actor is directly in contact with character while spectator is indirectly in contact with character. To evoke rasā in the spectator is the aim and object of the ancient Indian playwright. The term rasā has been translated as 'flavour', 'sentiment' or 'poetic sentiment'. It is possible to make a statement of it, even with a static pose of sculpture, created with skill and in accordance with Silpa -Sastra. Rasā in dance has to be generated through a process, stage by stage. In dance drama, the speech, the action, the surroundings, everything builds up the final creation of Rasā.

The spectators who watch, absorbed, a performance of dancing, of singing feel that it is a real sea of nectar. It is for this reason that those who teach the true nature of performances say that, in these, a real state of identity of all knowing subjects takes place. This is the state generated, having a perception of a full and perfect *ānanda* or beatitude. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, we can see that stark realism is avoided by the ancient dramatists. They gave imagination and fancy utmost scope. Total absence of painted scenery from the stage is significant; but positive efforts to depict Rasā through suggestive use of colour in the costume etc. enhances the dearth, if any. It would be relevant here to observe the Rasās described in the 53rd Shloka of the Soundaryalahiri, the great work on Tantrā of Devi Upāsana by Śankara and the Sivānandalahiri. In both these works, the emotional states are described with episodic instances. The worshipper of Devi using this Tantra would have to meditate upon this form of Devi. The Devi experiences deep **love** for her Lord, yet, she gets filled with **anger** and **disgust** at the Ganges and the moon atop her beloved Lord, **fear** at the sight of the serpents, **compassion** at her devotees and **courage** while protecting them, **humour** with her companions while chiding one another and **wonder** on hearing her Lord's stories.

While the artistic flavour, taste or in Nāṭya sets within the palate of the dancer and seeps into the spectator and can give him similar experience by the flow of EMPATHY, the taste or Rasā in Tantra like what is mentioned in Tantra nine of the Tirumandiram [BLISSFUL beatitude while witnessing the Dance of Siva] remains purely exclusive to the Śādhaka, elusive to others who do not know of it and cannot be partaken and relished by others unless and until initiated fully, without which, any such attempt will not be a success.

Indian theorists on the subject believed that the highest aesthetic enjoyment is not possible without giving the greatest possible scope to imagination. No amount of making things appear as real to spectators, can be successful unless the latter would call imagination to their aid. In this connection, we may add Sylvain Levi's apt remark – "Indian genius produced a new art which the word *rasa* summarizes and symbolizes, and which condenses it in one brief formula : 'the poet does not express but he suggests'".

As spectators, we feel the thrill of pleasure which the most terrifying narration excites in us, a sense of horripilation, and we are all enjoying the sweetness of sad tales, after shedding tears ourselves.

Divine experience and aesthetic experience are one and the same experience, a flash, a glimpse and taste of ECSTASY. With self-surrender, the Nāṭya Sādhaka transports himself and others to the ecstatic reign of the supreme consciousness.

The spiritual, unifying practice of Nāṭya Yoga – Bharatanatyam dance, here in particular helps to cleanse the mind of its 'vasanas' or bonding emotions. The science in Bharatanatyam provides opportunity to break free of mundane bondage and unleash the spiritual FIRE. Its relation to gravity is seen in the prominent grounding in body movement which occasionally takes flight, directed both upwards and wide across cutting through space and keeping tune with rhythm all along; a rhythm that oscillates between slow and fast tempo but yet stays well-coagulated. A variety of artistically conglomerated expressions of emotions forms the major part of 'story - packages' in the dance. Feelings that encumber our otherwise peaceful living, constantly encountered by us are emoted and depicted in dance and it is here that the balancing act of Nāṭya yoga becomes 'panacea'. Drama represents true life itself providing a platform for release from attachments that cling, for recognizing the permanent as against the temporal and incorporating the rhythm and harmony of dance into life to attain bliss. There is imitation, mimicry, representation and also the expression of pure joy with movement that is geometrically appealing to both the gross and subtle mind and senses. A Tantrā paradigm (Nāṭya can also be called as one such paradigm)

exemplifies conception of supreme personality of God the dual aspect when the God himself becomes the Universe beyond Purusha and Prakriti - the complete, WHOLE, an undivided 'one'. This 'Advaitic' concept keeping as the base, one has to indeed enlighten others for which the path of Bhakti has to be experienced and extrapolated.

Nature of this Rasā in Tantra is different . ".....during the celebration of the cakra, etc., no individual must be allowed to enter who does not identify himself with the ceremonies and thus does not share the state of consciousness of the celebrants; this would cause, in fact, a contraction of the consciousness. The purpose of the yogin is to identify himself with this transcendental object. Religious devotion implies therefore a constant drive towards an end which is outside it and, as such, is the very antithesis of the aesthetic experience, which is perfect self-sufficiency. When the ears are filled with the sound of sweet song or the nostrils with the scent of sandal-wood, etc., the state of indifference (non-participation, impersonality, etc.) disappears and the heart is invaded by a state of vibration (spandamanata; for the significance of the term spanda, cf.p.60, n.1). Such a state is precisely the so-called power of beatitude, thanks to which man is "'gifted with heart"'. [2]

According to the Śāiva of Kashmir, heart is consciousness itself. The aesthetic and the mystical state of consciousness are not only characterized by a particular bliss or repose, they are also accompanied by a sense of wonder or surprise. The word expressing this wonder, i.e., *chamatkara* is frequently found in Indian literature.

V. Raghavan observes that originally the word *chamatkara* was an onomatopoeic word referring to the clicking sound we make with our tongue when we taste something snappy, and in the course of its semantic enlargements, *chamatkara* came to mean a sudden fillip relating to any feeling of a pleasurable type. The objects which arouse

this state may indifferently be a food, an alcoholic drink, a drug, a sexual contact, a song, a dance, and so on.

The importance to Yogic Consciousness and transmission of energy is given great emphasis by Abhinavagupta in the analysis of Rasā. Prajāpati descends on the artistic mind.

"Like the Creator", he says in the Abhinavabhāratī, 1,4, 'the poet creates for himself a world according to his wish. Indeed, he is amply endowed with the power of creating manifold, extraordinary things, originating thanks to the favour of the Deity, the Supreme Vocality. It has been said that no non-seer can be deservedly called a poet, and one is a seer only by virtue of his vision. This is the purpose of Bharata. Thus, as regards the dramatic performance, the poem or the mind of the spectator, the root is only this, viz., the Rasā which lies within the poet. This is, as it were, the seed. The poet is, indeed comparable to the spectator, for, as Anandavardhana said, "if the poet is pervaded by Rasā, etc(see above, p XLVIII). The poem, for its part, is, to say, the tree. The activity of the actor, that is, representation, etc., is, as it were, the flower, and the tasting of the spectators, the fruit. Therefore, all is pervaded by Rasā." Rasā fills the poet entirely with itself, and is spontaneously translated into poetic expression, like a liquid which overflows a vase – if a pot is not full, it cannot overflow – or like the natural manifestation of a state of mind (interjections, exclamations, etc). In other words, artistic creation is the direct or unconventional expression of a feeling or passion "generalized", that is, freed from all distinctions in time and space, and therefore from all individual relationships and practical interest by an inner force within the poet himself, the creative or artistic, *pratibhā*. **This state of consciousness** expressed in the poem, etc., is transferred to the actor or the reciter, and to the spectator. All three – poet, actor and spectator – in the serene contemplation of the work of art, form in reality a single knowing subject, merged together by the same sensations and the same purified joy". [3]

Bharatanāṭyam can induce such immense power in the practitioner that a sort of healing happens from within, due to the very movement involved in dance. This movement being stylized in the classical dances, there is enhanced channelizing of energy in a positive upward direction. The constant stamping of feet ,enhanced by involved expressions of the face ,limbs ,muscle and heart kindles the serpent power when individual ego has been reduced to ashes by the fire in the dance. This dance offers beatitude in a subtle, symbolic yet highly significant manner and there is a gentle transmission to audiences.

There is hardly the intention to derive this with any personal command at all as the higher command will drive forward every action making it sublime. Feeling of nothingness after a performance promises a new beginning and a fulfillment in eternity.

Healing through Chakrā – breathing exercises, transcendental meditation is commonly heard of these days. Dance is not just one such isolated unit but encompasses a whole lot of these exercises combined in a dynamic rhythmic style that is enjoyable and exhilarating other than the main purpose of being enlightening. Nāṭya is a fulfilling Tantra of the highest order. It is upāsana, sādhana, japa mantrā, yoga with āsana, prāṇayama, viniyoga, mudrā, all integrated .

Persons of great culture and education are of the superior order and they are responsible for the proper reaction to success or otherwise in regard to the deeper aspects of the Nāṭaka presented. Ordinary persons are more concerned with the superficial aspects. Perfection cannot be an end in itself and all products of human engineering and artistry are bound to alter with time. Thus in paintings, the notions of completion and fulfillment are made relative and uncertain. It is increasingly irrelevant to academically classify artistic disciplines into visual, spatial, acoustic, movement etc because the mutations and interrelations cannot be accounted for with a static approach. All categories would solicit co-existence

and co-operation of many “sensory organs”, gross as well as subtle. Schematic division becomes inoperative in such situations. The communion of all the arts contributes to cohesive transcendence as the most perfect vibration of the noumenon lies within the depths of a primordial silence of phenomena. A choreographer obeys his inner voice and composes from a locus within the outer boundaries, admitting to anarchy in music and dance. Rhythm is inherent in nature of which man is an important part. Viceversa, man is composed of nature as well, meaning that his Prāna, life force is activated by the five elements of fire, water, ether, earth, sky along with mind and consciousness. There is an element of dance in every human endeavour as Tāla is the root everywhere. Cosmos, the origin of which is traced to Dhvani or sound, vibrates with Tāla. Just as Śiva without the central vowel becomes Śava or Corpse, there is life only when Nāda unites with Bindu. Sound waves unite with energy and rhythm is thus tapped. When this rhythm is kept as the basic quality of an enterprise, one can imagine the extent to which it can expand and create endlessly. When the causal force itself has become an identity of an enterprise, one can again imagine as Bharata rightly said –the creator of drama on this stage is likened to Prajāpati Himself. When dance is mastered, the essence of this spirit is simultaneously intergrated into the body-mind system.

- The word **Tantra** is itself the be-all and end –all and its branches are varied ‘prescriptions’ to achieve this.

Nāṭya is one such powerful branch. Natya Tantra –Natya is the NAME with Tantra as the SURNAME.....One who is well versed in the scientific doctrine ,a specialist is a Tāntrik and one who is the wire ,the cord, the cable ,the tough sinew who strings man to the bow of eternity is the tantri .While the former is essentially scientific,the latter is essentially artistic .It is tough for one to be aware as well as proficient in all aspects of this Sastra at the same time and hence ,the role of TANTRI as a performer is more predominant [Natya also falling under the category of the Arts even if it is as good a science] and with some degree of working knowledge of all aspects , the presentations are made in collaboration

with similar TANTRIS who are experts in other allied aspects. Bharata Muni provided the base for Natya Tantra and was a great Tantrik as well as became a successful Tantri as he could perform his own doctrine. Participation in body, mind and spirit is thoroughly essential to even remotely know the experience of a Tantri or a Tāntrik. The former is the special title given to the priests of Kerala temples that are made on principles of Vāstu-Tantra and who utilize this discipline in propitiation of the deities and the latter is given to both 'discrete' and 'discreet' practitioners in either caves, forests, homes or any other place without ordinary onlookers, aiming to unite with the Supreme Spirit. Siddhis are attained ie- magical powers to create, manifest, benevolently attract good and destroy evil etc. but the term Tāntrik also covers malevolent seekers who cause harm and destroy peace. These days ,all Nātya practitioners may not look for spiritual joy but take it up as a medium to attract and derive fame, wealth and glory ,again constructive and not destructive.

Although Tantra is often mistaken to be non-Vedic, it is actually the essential principle of every branch of philosophical knowledge. It is the deeper 'meaning' found in Veda itself. The belief in Parabrahman, the Universal Self is the starting point of any branch of Tantra and all these Tantras teach how to become a spiritual master step by step in a scientific manner. Nātya Sāstra teaching the various aspects of performances, stage craft, gestures, etc is scientific in temperament. Being practical in application, this theory definitely provides scope for experimentation, room for improvisation so that one gets proof of its significance through practice. Tantra has to be practiced or none of the goals therein can be realized ,but it cannot be exhibited per se except when it is performed as a Nātya-Tantra. Tantra has to be practiced within a holy ambience , whether in a forest, a cave, a temple or even on a stage. That is why Bharata insists that totality of purpose and objectives can be achieved only when the consecratory rites are complied with and the artiste and spectators rise up to that occasion of maintaining the vibratory fields. Whatever be the scientific theory, it comes into relevance and importance if and only when it is practiced. Discipline is

but an indispensable characteristic as there is need for indoctrination and instruction, system and orderliness, training and control, rules and codes. An art is an expression of creative skill, aptitude, talent and expertise but necessitates the technique, the craftsmanship, the science behind it which codifies and provides the keys to this. Latent raw material in the human being is grouped in this manner. The art and the Science are hence co-existing and this is obvious when we observe arts as Bharatanāṭyam. Tantras that prescribe scientific plans of actions have been embellished over ages by the seers using their own aptitude, skills, intuition and beliefs or these Tantras would not have been this popular or practicable. Just as a scientist acts finally with readings coupled with his own intelligence, Tantra or Nāṭya speak volumes of this truth.

True knowledge of any subject can be acquired only when one realizes through discovery and intuition.....EUREKA!! I have known it !

The endeavour here has been to establish a correlation between Nāṭya and Tantra and it leads towards establishing the common goals of the two. Nāṭya gives the opportunity to perform a kind of magic, stories retold through ages, yet having aesthetic appeal, value and relevance to society and spreading social upliftment and a positive message. Nāṭya is co-related to Tantra in every aspect. Our artistic talent is harnessed scientifically towards presenting an artistic performance. Tantra comes from the Sanskrit verbal root tan, meaning 'to weave'. Nāṭya Śāstra is Nāṭya Tantra as every chapter is linked like a 'loom' wherein threads are woven diligently to create the canvas of drama. Tra comes from trayate, which means 'to liberate' from illusion or māya.

Both Tantra and Nāṭya are enabling us to do action in this world and at the same time, they have an enormous presence of the other-worldly with surrender to super-consciousness. This means that while one is on this world and of this world, one can still remain outside this world. It is the highest order -**belong to the world by dwelling but try not to get possessed by delving in it.**

Natya and Tantra are not about leaving life but about weaving the realities of life with truth. Once you remove all false notions and inhibitions, conditioning and education, then you have a raw human being, truly spiritual. When we carry too much baggage of definitions and conditions imposed by society, we cannot turn towards spirituality because we will limit ourselves within the lines of what has been taught to us. The person who begins following religion enjoys the beauty of rituals, but the essence is spiritual. When you begin to dissect you somehow do not genuinely enjoy.

Tantra is a way of life itself and Nāṭya reflects life itself. Both characterize a metamorphosis of dualism and monism. One has to be free in mind and spirit to attain supreme bliss of spirituality leaving aside dogma but again, with discipline which is the channel. We absorb Tantra so that it becomes part of us.

The technique of Tantra creates vibrations from nature / prakriti, but if we then use it for something that goes against nature, the negative consequences will backfire. The working pattern of nature using energy is at times altered but not changing it as this would mean interfering with the elements.

Bharatyanāṭyam is considered one of the most beautiful forms of dance in the world and a yoga in itself. Yoga in India from time immemorial is considered the best medicine for good health and the unique corrective for many physical and mental ailments. Bharatanāṭyam is an art wherein every part of the body is used—eyebrows, cheek muscles, toes and so on. As one reads through the pages of the Nāṭya Sāstra, one is wonderstruck at the variety of every possible movement of the body and limbs conceived of by man and so methodically systematised and codified by the sage. In fact, that when we view the various styles of dance in the world, most movements are recognized already in Bharatanatyam.

The various schools of Bharatanāṭyam may differ—but this difference is just superficial. Fundamentally they are all the same and along with all other forms of

our art pertain to and pertain towards one spirit—a spirit that can be called Divine; a spirit that is omnipotent and omniscient. Because of this universal and spiritual quality it appeals to one and all. The painter finds colour in it; the sculptor, beauty in the form; the religious, a spiritual appeal, and the philosopher, esoteric implications. It is thus a universal art. As long as man can feel, as long as he can pray and think, this divine art will continue to live and capture the hearts of millions. In Nāṭya, there is an unconscious vibration created, forces of attraction automatically embellish the dancer when she/he uses the various gestures and creates geometric shapes and forms like pyramids to draw energy. A dancer portrays emotions and expresses ideas through the vehicle of her art. Naturally the portrayal would carry no weight if devoid of facial expression. 'Tāla' or rhythm, lies at the very foundation of all dance-forms. Without a complete awareness of 'tāla', a dancer cannot perform well. Inspiration is necessary for the dancer and this comes through the medium of music. There is music in dance and dance in music.

The dance-artist must enter into the spirit of every movement and gesture and look and should not do so in a mechanized and mechanical manner. She must merge with the inner spirit or ātman of the human personality. Her look and gesture and rhythm indicate this. She cannot express the soul of a bird, animal or a human being by exhibiting merely external peculiarities. She cannot express the Divine Soul by merely indicating the weapons or the ornaments of a God. Hence, she must, when dancing in accordance with Kṛiti (musical piece) enter into the bhāva (the emotional urge) which is the soul of the song. The excellence of a dance consists in the perfect harmony of soul and heart and head with eyes and looks and gestures and bodily movements and rhythmic feet. The dancer must weave Mudras into the dance as a supreme poet weaves words into a lyric. Only then can her intuition vibrant. Perfect poise, self control, symmetry and harmony are needed. Traditional art cannot rest on any artificiality but has to be originally felt to be rendered in a spontaneous manner. In Bharatanatyam, the traditional forms from Alārippu to Tillāna have definite contours and cannot be meddled

with, though even within the traditional boundaries there is room for the display of originality and creative presentation. Just as there are grace-notes in music there are grace-gestures in dance and innovativeness can be displayed in them. In the realm of abhinaya there is no limit in elucidating the songs taken up for presentation and interpretation through dance or to the freedom of the artist to invent new gestures to portray new situations, incidents and ideas. It is wrong to suppose that Bharata has fixed finally and rigorously in Chapter IX of his work all the finger-gestures in a final and a literary manner. He has nowhere forbidden new symbols and gestures for new ideas. There is as much ample room for the exhibition of Manodharma (aesthetic individuality and creativeness) in the art of dance and in the art of music.

There can be no dance without music. Music is an integral part of dance. Music can be very soothing to the nerves. It is known that once when a great musician sang a particular melody, it brought rain and another singing a different melody, melted rocks. We have anecdotes from real life centering on the power of the saint-poets 'music'. If nature could be stirred with music, then surely the rational mind of man is bound to react instantaneously. We have melodies for the different times of the day, for the different seasons and so on, which touch the depths of the soul. "When you mention music in speaking of my temple it is because you have been visited by a divine analogy", says Eupalinos to Phaedrus, as related by Paul Valery. Plato, in the 'REPUBLIC' made music one of the fundamental disciplines of his educational programme inter alia, highlighting the moral values that it entails. The foremost elevation of mind could be facilitated. The symbiosis of various instrumental styles, like percussion and string, balanced the contemplative with the palpable. The sound of the ancient instruments of Egypt kept natural calamities away. The vigorous shaking of instruments conglomerated an array of magical powers, conjuring that movement should never cease. Creatures should arise from the state of torpor, recharged to recapture and radiate the rapturous sign of life. The joie de vivre or the lively

enjoyment of life became communicated in the common jargon of dance and muzak . Music and Dance carry this Tāntric flavour of tapping energy sources. Tansen could light lamps with his singing by creating a vibration in the lamp's wick and fire ensued. Tantra is mainly a play of such vibration. Tantra, it's connotations and practices and uses denote that a classical dancer is in fact practising a kind of symbolic and meditative Tantra too. The core discipline required, the directions suggested and assumed, the benediction at every stage, the concentration of musicians, dancers, actors, audience collectively enjoined by the spectacle and the end result of harmony lead to a high order of Consciousness. It is breathing, it is alive and also true . There is the hypnotic trance -like state and dynamic pulsating states in both Nāṭya and Tantra, thus giving an opportunity to enjoy the many while knowing tranquility in unity. Any fine art is an example of refinement in rendition . Art of superior quality touches upon both gross and subtle senses and gently vibrates the nuclei of artistes and awakens energy in the spectator. It's spiritual essence and content are directly proportionate to the possibilities of transcendence and peace accentuated all around. In a dance drama, there is an extremely colourful, life - like spectacle having an excitingly euphoric quality that is infectious.

To remember the famous story of a boy on the 100th floor, watching marbles being played by children on the ground way below and wondering why they were pulled to each other ; the boy descended to notice a curved pit that caused this attraction movement between the marbles. We all carry immense energy within us, but we are not aware of this. It has been accepted that a subtle energy body interpenetrates the physical body upon which principle, several medical practices like acupuncture are founded. Kirlean Photography of the 1970s captures images of the light energy emanating from living beings. In its higher phases, it creates the halo around saints. The subtle body has a spine through which energy flows out of nadis or nerve tubes. Chakrās are processing centers of this energy and are vibrant with vigour in physically healthy, mentally creative

and spiritually awakened people. Sanskrit is called the language of the Gods as it creates positive energy to which the power or Śakti responds. Śakti has categories of Parāśakthi, Jnānaśakthi, Ichchāśakthi, Kriyāśakthi and so on. “ When she, the ultimate Sakti, of her own will assumed the form of the universe, then the creation of the chakra revealed itself as a pulsating essence. From the void-like vowels with the visarga emerged the bindu, quivering and fully conscious. From this pulsating stream of supreme light emanated the ocean of the Cosmos, the very self of the three mothers”- **Yoginihridaya I, 6-11.** This is Sir John Woodroffe's (Arthur Avalon) introduction to a Sanskrit edition of the Kaulavalinirnaya in Sanskrit .

Some Tāntric texts prescribe ways to derive specific results, catering to material desires like prosperity, accomplishment of tasks, winning over enemies etc . Thus, there are several Tāntric Homās, Japās, rituals performed with such motives. Similarly, one finds that in the field of the arts, there is a great degree of commercial motive gained these days. Unlike the popular art forms that highlight corporeality, treating the body as one attractive force and using movement that express several themes or ideas basically with body language alone; in the traditional classical arts, the entire focus is on achieving spiritual satisfaction. It is the desire to reach out and enhance others that requires a microscopic analysis ensuing a macroscopic appeal and fulfillment.

Spiritualizing the practice of dance leads to this. Spiritualizing every aspect including the sensuous and erotic can also lead one toward enlightenment. Here lies the path to physical and emotional freedom but spiritual desire which would not actually bind in the narrow sense of the word . Universal Power of God can be experienced in many aspects of life. The principle of yoga [unity of jivātman with paramātman] is fundamental to achieve this state. Divine love can be experienced in the unconditional love of a mother for a child ,often a favourite them in dance presentations. This kind of love in this world has the quality of being eternal and perpetual as man and his progeny ,generations together ,will go

on as long as the cycle of life goes on. Unique experience of divine love with the consorts are found in Radha and Krisna ,another favourite theme in dance. The perfect love with the masters or Sadgurus in human forms is incomparable and elevates the lives from Prārabdha –Karmā .Again ,devotional poetry is a favourite theme .The above instances are three types of Sringara ,Vatsalya ,Rati and Bhakti.

It is good for mankind and the world at large when the arts reach higher goals on a positive scale, but when the practice is diluted , the whole theory of sublimity would become a farce .One cannot afford to forget how it all began .

While it may not be difficult for artistes to either experience this ecstatic state themselves or accept that it is possible to attain the high spiritual states through Sadhana or dedication, it may be also transmitted to sincere audiences who are intensely connected to artistes with an intangible cord, the livewire through which **Rasānubhāva** flows. Certainly one requires some degree of spiritual background or inclination to be drawn into the spiritual energy of creative contemplation .

Without anubhava or personal experience, one will sink into a quagmire of preachings and teachings. Accept guidance through the Guru,who is His instrument and experience the practice with a clear understanding. Realise that YOU ARE responsible for YOUR own growth and must experience every reality for YOURSELF in order to reach the Divine consciousness.

A CONTEMPLATIVE DISCIPLINE AND AN ART PROCESS ARE CONNECTED

The human body is certainly one piece of classic engineering designed to enable positive physical and mental and above all spiritual enhancement. It is well upon the individual to understand, utilize and then usher in great sense of fulfilment. The Lord Supreme has gifted us this wonderful Yantra -our body and we have to

neither pamper nor neglect it but to generate, nurture and promote it's well-being. This key factor is noticed both in the practice of Tantra and Nāṭya.

The renowned Guru of Bharatanatyam, Guru Kalyanasundaram gives the example of the Tirumandiram of Tirumoolar to identify Śiva's dance as a pure Tantra. Artistes of repute like Dr . Sonal Mansingh, Ms. Sashwaty Sen [foremost disciple of Pandit Birju Maharaj] , Dr. Padma Subramaniam share their views on this subject. They had the common opinion that Tantra which is the starting point of every religion is the underlying spirituality as also that meditational power that enforces Nāṭya.

According to the greatest doyens of Bharatanāṭyam, Balasaraswathi, "The greatest blessing of Bharatanāṭyam is its ability to control the mind. Most of us are incapable of single-minded contemplation even when actions are abandoned. On the other hand, in Bharatanatyam, actions are not avoided; there is much to do but it is the harmony of various actions that results in the concentration we seek. The burden of action is forgotten in the pleasant charm of the art. The feet keeping to time, hands expressing gesture, the eye following the hand, the ear listening to the master's music and the dancer's own singing - by harmonizing these five elements the mind achieves concentration and attains clarity in the very richness of participation. The inner feeling of the dancer is the sixth sense, which harmonizes these five mental and mechanical elements to create the experience and enjoyment of beauty. It is the spark, which gives the dancer her sense of spiritual freedom in the midst of the constraints and discipline of the dance. The yogi achieves serenity through concentration that comes from discipline. The dance brings together her feet, hands, eyes, ears and singing into fusion which transforms the serenity of the yogi into a torrent of beauty. The spectator, who is absorbed ,in intently watching this, has his mind freed of distractions and feels a great sense of clarity. In their shared involvement, the dancer and the spectator are both released from the weight of the worldly life and experience the divine joy of the art with a sense of total freedom." The dancer learns the intimate

connectivity between the movements of the physical, emotional or mental and the spiritual realms . Nāda Yoga, or the meditation on sound is to focus on certain sounds and move according to them in order to achieve a certain state of consciousness. Therefore, the musical instruments used for the meditative dance in Nātya Yoga are the ones that can produce the mystic sounds described in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

But as in any other field, a lot depends ultimately on the dedicated 'Sādhana' and devotional temperament whether Tantra or Nātya. The word 'Sādhana' implies that to attain a thing is to know it in it's ultimate sense by BEING that thing and this necessitates substantial exertion .Sādh in Sanskrit is to exert. The dancer thus would become the dance or the danced. The Tantri unifies with the innate spirit of the deity worshipped. A deity has a new value after the power-infusing rites. The saints are always in a spiritually vibrant level of existence. Some of our temples of great antiquity ever emanating spiritual power were established by the great Yogis of yore. The rites are meant to heighten the spiritual level of the performing Tantrists through certain prescribed disciplines and transfer the spiritual power to the vigraha and realize the inner energies of the deity. The idol is no more a mere stone or metal but a nuclear center of subtle spiritual power which activates the divine potentialities when one establishes communion with it through worship. The symbolic and mystical geometrically shaped Yantra is charged with powerful Mantrās in the forms of chantings, decantations, incantations and offerings. The whole ritual, prayer, worship suffuses with energy as the correct plan of Tantra is executed. Nātya consists of religious and spiritual allegorical presentations primarily. Although it's significance according to Nātya Śāstra of Bharata is linked to everyday life representation encompassing nature, beauty and various characters; it's 'sine qua non' is the sublime unification of individual and Universal spirit. The common coining of Nātya YOGA as synonymous with Bhāratnatyam is since ages, not without sufficient ground. The experiment leads to an incomparable experience. Nātya Yoga, popularly known as Dance Yoga, the all-inclusive spiritual path of action, is a combination

of mainly Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga with few elements of Hatha Yoga and many elements of Raja Yoga.

Those practising Nāṭya Yoga believe that the fastest way to realize all the intricate aspects of Bhakti is by enacting various 'Lilas' with devotional songs, which require one to master one's emotional states. One is expected to devote all one's actions to the Supreme as a sacrifice. The stage performances are an opportunity for the dancer to feel the pulse of the spectators so long as they are 'sumanasa' , which require a great deal of intuition and self-control.

The dancer strives to be guided in every smallest move by the various 'devas' that are supposed to be established in various chakras. The shackles and barriers of the physical and material are destroyed and the Sādhaka transcends to a divine realm and with him also the closely empathizing groups of people called the Sahrudaya Prekshakās. Those practising Nāṭya Yoga are expected to perform 108 karanas, in addition to standard asanas and pranayamas, as well as meditation practises that involve various visualizations that lead to the internalization of the dance. The number 108 is highly significant, again adapted from our worship ,the sacred chants totalling to 108 . Another number that is significant in Tantra is seven which is equally important in music ,dance and yoga.

Analyzing it's pure movement aspect ie- Nrityā, Bharatanatyam is a grand spectacle and has aesthetic appeal due to several factors. Though basically defined as art, there appears evidence of application of laws of science and mathematics even if not blatantly observed by many, with reference to movement, anatomical structure, callisthenics, kinetics or the relation between the body motion and forces acting on it ,geometrical shapes, forms and designs, calculations of various rhythmic beats with their logical permutaions and combinations. All these are required to be framed, composed, choreographed with scientific temper and carried out with artistic splendour and joy. Vedic and Tāntric incantation is a methodology of sound modulations. Nāṭya Śāstra exhibits a familiarity with the

notions of space measurement, sound intervals and metre and tempo of music. A lot of scientific study of the poetic works, meaning and interpretation, knowledge of languages such as Sanskrit, mythological epics and legends become a prerequisite for successful dramatic production. Bharata seems well acquainted with Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras and the Tantra practices enumerated in these Sūtras. Vedic mathematics, geometry, shapes and algebra were developed. Any dramatic enterprise becomes worth cherishing only when it permeates into every layer of our mind, creating a humanized atmosphere, vibrating and gathering momentum to ultimately surge into the realm of spirituality. It is but for sure that both technique and the sincerity and involvement together contribute to the excellence in the overall body language of the dancer. Rasā, corresponds with the motor and sensory systems equally. The psychical and the physical work in confluence, each leading to the other.

Call it art or call it science? One is imaginative, subjective, psychological, creative and the other is technical, objective, testing, observing, experimenting, material, evidential, logical. Eg- An artiste would describe a tree while the scientist would give it's dimensions. This application seems co-relative as one cannot do without the other. Reason as against faith or rather reason and faith. An invention, a creative design, plot, indigenous and original work pre-supposes the existence of other data, material, ideas, people, etc depending on the object. This means that a skill is employed in the process, an artwork. There cannot be invention of anything non-existing. Invention connotes a concoction while discovery connotes unexpected result of search. One who invents becomes a scientist while one who creates become an artiste, both truly meaning the same. The science and the art are employed together for success. Wherefrom springs great art? From the abode of feeling, HEART, capable of faith which actually speaks through art. Wherefrom springs the science? From the region of the rational brain capable of reason which actually speaks through science. **This topic can also be called as alternatively, the science of Nāṭya and the art of Tantra as a co-relative study.**

Indian art in particular having such deep overtones of religion and spirituality has to start with belief /vision and then arises the physical realm of 'seeing' and this is similar to the basic principle that any Yogi or seer would follow. Hence, it may take years to develop technique [steps, movements and Abhinaya using the limbs]as the body level of mastery has to be raised with practice while it actually takes just a few moments to get correctness in expression by the face when the mind co-relates with the enacted expression of the character of the play. The simplest feeling of surrender to the art and the divinity therein would evolve this process but it is seen that students these days aquire the skills of technique faster and take longer time for the expressive aspects due to restraint and lack of deep understanding of the stories or the element of devotion ,inherent in the compositions. The similes ,metaphors and alliterations that were created by the poets are even unimageneable for the students these days when everything is measured in terms of speed, tempo, grandeur and showcased for an audience challenged by time constraints themselves.

The Tāntric practice of **kundalini Tantra** Yoga attempts to unify Śiva and Śakti by raising the serpent power from the lowest Mūlādhāra to the highest Sahasrāra Chakras through special breathing and meditation. Classical dance forms originated with divine intervention and evolved from ages due to the introspection of sages and sculptures and images of temples surely possess a high degree of specialization with regard to exercises, postures, movements , attire, gestures and language. The form of the Padma-pada ,lotus -like opened feet and knees in half-sitting posture or "Arai -Mandi" is a replica of the Mahā Kumbh [the golden pitcher]image wherein the Chakras [lotuses /wheels] are balanced well. Nāṭya Yoga with the Tandava and the Sukumāra dances has the innate seed to blossom into a fruitful tree . It is here that there is unification of Śiva and Śhakti - male and female principles, matter and spirit, energy and consciousness are all in play during this dance. Pure Knowledge—Consciousness is Purusha (male) Śiva, the Self, and the equipments of the individual and the confusing

universe of endless plurality constitute Prakriti, (female) Śakti, the non-self. The combination of Śiva and Śakti (Male-Female) is creation. This glorious concept, and all its sacred implications, the man-woman form of Śiva - Ardhanārīśvara presents in art -form, the significance in realizing the macrocosm and the microcosm as the mere play of the ONE SELF in and through the non-self. Ardhanārīśvara concept in dance is obviously Tāntric in name and form as it represents the oneness, equality, complementariness of Prakriti and Purushā. The duality between male and female only exists in form and this unites to become one whole formless self . THAT THOU ART is the highest realization in Tantra. During Nāṭya Sādhana, a feeling of being One and the same, yet different ; different yet one and the same - can be observed repeatedly while eg- a Bharatanatyam danseuse is in action and is depicting the polarities like soft and fierce, big and small, beautiful and ugly, man and woman. Since we are referring to practices of Nāṭya, we can extend it to studying the choices open to the practitioners, if we broadly categorise them as men and women. It has been averred several times that Tantra and Nāṭya are open to all people, irrespective of differences based on caste, creed, sex but on the whole we have more men practicing Tantra especially as priests while we have more women practicing Nāṭya. The austerities to be observed in temple worship make it difficult for women to take up the role of priest due to biological reasons. Yet there are few temples which do have only women as the priest. Nāṭya cannot be termed as only feminine or only masculine by nature as the origin itself gives equal footage to both these aspects as being incorporated in dance. Although, it is maintained that Śiva performed the Tāṇḍava or dynamic role and Uma performed the Lāsya or gentle role, their direct disciples imbibed the Tāṇḍava and Lāsya equally in order to master the dance drama. Śiva also is seen to perform the Kaisiki [graceful] style by Bharata and Uma is known to perform the most fierce dance as Kālī.

It is interesting to analyse this concept of roles assigned for men and women in the social context. Every human is made of both these components. Just as Puruṣa is mistaken by ordinary people to be male and Prakriti to be female, the active

dynamism is associated with man and the passive softness with woman since ages. On the other hand, Sāṅkhya reveals that it is actually Prakṛiti who acts while Puruṣa remains quiet. In this scenario of mistaken identity, women continue to be suppressed especially in Indian society and rare instances of courageous women wins laurels but if she violates accepted parameters , she is insinuated. Qualities of kindness, warmth, compassion are also extolled in a man but are appealing only if veiled in his inherent, habitual ‘manliness.’ Here comes a GENDER gallery of contrast and congruity. Today, if a woman could carry herself well with elegance and grace alike, she becomes a true beauty, if she exudes confidence, courage and determination, she becomes a true example, if she can fight a battle and also nurse the wounded, stand up boldly yet shed tears, she becomes a legend. But in the name of equality with men, if all that men do is imitated and women counterfeit their appearances to deliberately create a semblance as a habit, although in conformity with changing norms, it is rather a poor approach, betraying ignorance of the actual beauty possessed by them.

It is after all the dominance of Prakṛiti in her form as woman that makes it simpler for her to don many roles when compared to a man. Those days, women were not allowed to chant mantras, perhaps because of the fear that they would easily master them faster and develop spiritually much higher than their counterparts. The fact remains that the form of a man makes it more essential to develop spiritually when compared to a woman who already bears the supreme spiritual quality of an inborn “Mother” The corollary of the above is noticed in the world of Bharatanāṭyam as well. The whole universe is the dance of the Supreme Dancer, Natarāja, the ascetic yogi and destroyer of ignorance and evil. Ordinarily, the dance of Śiva, Lord Natarāja [even the dance pose] requires the highest brilliance, sheer pulsating tempo and a powerful vocabulary. If at all one is capable of reproducing this, then maybe one or two shades of the cosmic dance becomes visible in the dancer. This ‘Tāṇḍavam’, performed by dancers, whether male or female, exudes delight and aplomb. The other dance aspect of ‘Lāsya’ which is the graceful and charming element is equally delectable but care has to be taken while

performed by a male dancer to see that this effect does not linger beyond the stage limits and seep into his personality, lest he gets a synonym of the crude word 'effeminate'. To tackle the situation, a pragmatic reaction without emotional bias or penchant is essential. With reference to this, we see that in the Nāṭya Śāstra, the description of the Kaisiki style of the blue-throated lord (Śiva) consists of elaborate gestures (Mridu Angahāras, movements of limbs), sentiments (Rasās) and emotional states (Bhāvās). Actions (Kriyās) are called its soul. The costume has to be charmingly beautiful and the erotic sentiment (Śringāra) is its foundation. But Bharata points out that it cannot be adequately portrayed by men and women can practise it properly. It is being commonly observed that male dancers are keeping very good standards of performance, enacting various roles and challenges of depicting heroines of varied types. But the dilemma arises when the kind of dancer articulations usually associated with women, look exaggerated within him. As a result, people may refrain from enrolling young boys into this dance form as although subtle, any transformation affects the overall personality. Added to this is the difficulties usually faced by artistes of the logistic kind due to which we have fewer men willing to take up this profession. Kings patronized the arts those days but now, the conditions for the growth of these arts are not that easy.

Male dancers rarely performed those days but often taught as Nattuvanars. It is again related to the Puruṣa - Prakṛiti dualism embodied in the dualism of the human nature. Puruṣa [the macrocosm] remains unmoved whereas Prakṛiti [containing the Puruṣa's atom or seed as microcosm] is permitted to oscillate. It was felt that a woman's body is better suited for performing this dance, while a man's mind is better at analyzing and teaching it. Learning from the traditional lineage of male Gurus gave the girls the best training to dance and blend the dualities cohesively. Bharatnāṭyam or any other dance form cannot be gender specific and has space both for the male and female and it is true that outstanding male dancers have come up during the last many decades. This is a good trend against the kind of popular dances seen these days in the fast-track world which

are so explicit that there is no need to suggest as nothing seems hidden or to be represented through a symbol at all.

Although bearing similarity to HINDU religion, considering the attire and the stories portrayed, Bharatanāṭyam is a dance form which speaks a universal religion. It's intricacies can be understood by anyone with a open mind who wishes to receive. It's beauty lies in the form itself which encompasses almost all possible variations of body language and idiom and reaches out to all clustered with the light of empathy flow between the artiste and the audience. The Vedic stories, style of rendition and appearance, although basically Hindu harp on a universal law applicable to all, commonly dealt with by all in mundane lives and propound universal truths of love, devotion, beauty, brotherhood and peace. Hence, the religious end here is characteristic of Vedānta, that all religions are leading to the same destination through different paths . The artiste dons many images and returns every time from role to role and has to maintain the involvement in the many parts with the one same base with equilibrium throughout. It is with years of such good practice that one transcends and sees the oneness below the surface.

It is the goal of a dancer to unite with the divine spirit through the medium of dance, trying to explore the higher dimensions and also obtaining a mystical experience. The challenge lies in demystifying this experience itself in order to communicate to the viewers. It is here that lies another core difference between Tantra and Nāṭya. Whether right-handed Tantra or left-handed Tantra [Dakshinācāra or Vāmacāra], Śaktā, Śivā, Suryā, Viśnu, Kumārā, Ganeshā, Dattatāreya or any other cult or path, the practice is limited to self-experience. This can be shared with followers through dialogues, discourses, telepathy and meditation .This is transmitted by the mere presence of the enlightened seers [almost everyone who has risen to the topmost Guru level has understood and gone through Tantrā and it's Yoga] causing joy, enlightenment and benefit to others in society. These Gurus often advise the path of Bhakti, the sweetest, safest

and surest in Kaliyuga, not without sufficient reason, and may offer Diksha to some devotees depending on the eligibility and also necessity for such a course. The great mystics and saints in every religion, whether Vajrayāna Buddhism, Sufism or Hinduism have set the precedent and prescribed either prayer or meditation or both. Prayer, it is said, is talking to God and meditation is when we see, listen and feel God through our inner ear, our inner eye and heart for which the mind has to be in single-pointed concentration. It is not an exaggeration to say that a good danseuse performs the role of a Tantri, worshipping with Mudrās and offering the self before the Lord as the Yogi, the body harnessed as the Yantra here. The artiste reaches far and wide and serves the purpose of sages and worshippers through the art itself, an art which is a discipline like Tantra with scientific connotations and applications as well but is more popularly used due to its appeal to the fine and subtle senses and the mind. Seeing the movements made by the practitioners of Tantra Pūjā, especially in temples of Kerala, we see the Mudras being used often to convey esoteric messages while communicating with the divine. The Buddhist monks of the Vajrayāna order use gestures of the hands while performing rituals and play instruments simultaneously. They [either the priests and monks themselves or people who are appointed specifically for these functions] perform ritualistic dances, some which are convulsive and others soft, before temple deities as a part of the temple worship. A supernatural meaning and symbolic denotation can be ascribed to all these traditional practices.

Although there were strict initiation rules in earlier times in all ritualistic arts that had extended to classical forms which have emerged in their full forms much later, this ritual became generally less austere and stringent as compared to Tantra initiation. The difference is also that Nāṭya Tantra with all its divine origin and intricacies is learnt, practiced, performed, taught. All the other Tantras are also learnt, practiced and taught but lose value if performed for an audience. An element of secrecy is always maintained in Tantra and none or hardly any from outside are usually allowed to observe closely, interrupt or mediate,

question or try to understand the methods that can mystify. The dos and the don'ts when it comes to ritual, hand gestures, sacrifice, offerings etc. has to be borne well in mind. Tantra Mudrās are few - Nāṭya Hastas are varied. 'Vinīyogās' are many. At the same time, the healing potential of hands in both cases is developed. One has to remember that when the Mudrās are taught, they have to be practiced in privacy. Dance Hastās on the other hand, [which have originated and become varied from the Mudrās] hold no such secrecy and whatever healing potential they create or magnetism they add on, it is all simultaneous and spontaneous in the dance execution. Dancers, immersed in the dance energy may not be distinctly aware of what is the extent of positive energy caused by these Hastās. But in Tantra, since there is no external pressure of trying to entertain, trying to bring in others, trying to share emotions, the energy levels created in the practitioners of austerities could definitely be of very high potency, electromagnetic and severely dynamic. The word Tantra also means to spread religious knowledge but only with the truly qualified, devoutly sincere and adventurously self-confident people who are willing to expand, explore and discover boldly, with direct introspection and intuition, well prepared to answer the divine call, join hands with the supreme energy that can create, sustain and destroy and be free from the fear of death. Hence, all the more the necessity to observe the regulations under the guidance of competent and positively charged mentors, else the result could be threatening and disastrous. Wrong practices can churn out negativities like madness, obsession, malpractices and hardly achieve any of the goals meant from the Tantra, thus adding on the anathema attached to the word Tantra. On the other hand, despite some degree of damage of authenticity of Nāṭya, being caused by those, who without sufficient knowledge or endowment of the raw material [talent] still are practising and propagating misconceptions on the technique or nature of the art, the mere exercise involved in the ancient art could be in one way or the other beneficial and preserve its value from going extinct in the modern world.

A modern student of dance may not even have traditional belief in the

popularized Hindu gods such as Ganeśa, Kriṣṇa, Rāma etc., then how is it even vaguely possible to know Śiva and Pārvati, Viśnu and Lakshmī, Brahmā or Saraswatī . Our religious Gods and Goddesses are not mere myths or beliefs but are symbols of eternal truths that have meaning and power, way beyond the clutches of time or space. Our ageless and priceless traditions including our dances are harnessing these truths and hold a charm when mystified and an appeal when demystified through innovative methods. Lofty ideals and thoughts get conveyed and interpreted through an artistic and aesthetic medium, much to the wonder of the public. The principles of creation, sustenance, destruction as an endless chain is represented by the trinities and their consorts are their working energies. The origin of Nāṭya itself assembles all these symbolic powers and the essence is based upon the unity between opposing principles of soft and loud, slow and fast, Lāsya and Tāṇḍava, Śiva and Pārvati. And obviously, when these two unite, it is Tāṇḍra. Besides this, when there is spread of religious knowledge , it is Tantra. Nāṭya has been through ages, attempting to spread religious knowledge alone. Earlier on, they used to symbolize Vedic worship by symbolically treating the stage itself as an area of sacrifice. Ritual dances were in co-ordination with the chants and prayers. Events, episodes followed from the Purāṇas. Then after the advent of the historic and deified heroes whose lives were extolled as exemplary, Nāṭya borrowed from their epics. All along, the idea has been maintained that Nāṭya improves the lives of common man by offering entertainment as well as education. Even the songs that were specially written for the dances had a homogeneous composition, attuned to take off to the higher spheres. Later, love songs on the Gods were added, here again, treating the Gods as approachable, benevolent, lovable, adorable and sometimes fallible too, committing mischiefs and errors like a normal human would do. It is only later that, secular knowledge has been added on through stories on Kings, dynasties, histories and much later on through many other narratives, poems on topics other than these.

The rendition, having evolved out of a tradition such as these, should not become

reduced to an exercise that caters to entertainment and should be pointed towards positive release of higher Chakrās or energy circles .Dance gives ample scope to become a Tantri who is worshipping the deity. If Tantra is the Dravya [content], Nātya is the Rūpa [form]. Can there be any dance without sound or symbol ? A meditative dance like the martial art of Tai-Chi and other trance dances follow the unheard music and create distinct symbols .In Bhartanatyam too, the silence between the music ,the freeze in sculptures are all examples of silent speech.....

In this respect, what Bharata prescribes for a Nātya enterprise is a wholesome, well appropriated mixture of many beautiful aspects. The same outcome of Rasanubhava is achieved as through the mystic practices of Tāntra worship which use the principle of personification of Goddesses and Gods eg -through symbolic Mandala inscriptions and Thangkas [Tibetan Buddhism], inscriptions and drawings, deities and worship, charms and amulets energized with divine powers, Mudrās and gestures, veneration of the occult deities and holy chants and Mantrās, some of which are common to several religions. The point of communication with the divinities would happen while these divinities are created, manifested, absorbed [the order of these may differ from person to person] and projected to communicate with the seekers and followers. Each of them are charged with an almost dramatic expression of feelings of protection for worshippers, anger to destroy enemies, compassion to save the suffering devotee, love of motherliness and similar 'bhāvas'. It would actually be the hand of Godliness, Spirit, Energy, Consciousness that would be acting through the medium of Sādhaka upon whom 'Grace' has been showered. This grace cannot be taken for granted by an 'Ego' but sought with absolute self-surrender by which alone can the Divinity accessed, tuned in and reflected. In dance, these divinities are accessed in first person by taking on their characters, roles, episodes and events, in second and third persons by treating as fellow humans with feelings of love, anger, fear, disgust, humour, wonder, courage, compassion either addressing them directly or communicating about them to others, all through their songs in praise and awe as well as songs containing any other element as the

theme. The dividing line between the dancer and the character vanishes for sure but comes back when another scene or character is portrayed or when the entire spectacle ends. In some dances, the dance drama extend to more than a day and continues and the artistes are expected to follow some rules until the course of the event in order to get well charged. Assembling together and decoding these through dance enables the artiste to reach the common man who wishes to view a comprehensive, enjoyable, enlightening work of art. Both inspiration and imagination will add on to completeness. Better the genius, the greater the fulfillment out of this. In this manner, the goal of uniting with divine spirit becomes possible as one gets freed from the material cocoon, the emotional web during and after the sublime dance. One witnesses the individual ego getting dissolved into the Cosmic Ego.

Bharata and all other sages who contributed to creating and preserving Nāṭya treatise definitely would have been masters over Tantra principles already. Although Tantra treatises became known and promulgated much later than Nāṭya historically, Nāṭya treatise whether written by Bharata alone or a host of many Rishis /sages, it surely has been derived from widespread and deep-sighted knowledge of past, present and the future. It is a Nāṭya Veda and a Nāṭya Tantra. It is a combination of all the other pre-existing Vedas and Bharata's knowledge flows from the combined blessings of both Śiva and Pārvati.

The theories of Tantra and Nāṭya are to be applied in intensive practice resulting in thorough knowledge of the subject matter, mastery over oneself, the elements that one is made of and blissful happiness which are the prime goals of life.

"We can understand the evolutionary process from the transcendental plane to the earth realm through an analogous model furnished by modern cosmology. At the "time" of the Big Bang, the world existed in a state of unimaginably condensed ball of energy, sometimes called "quantum vacuum." Suddenly (and for no known reason), some fifteen billion years ago, a chain reaction occurred in this original

high-energy soup which led to the creation of hydrogen atoms. This event coincided with the emergence of space and time and the gradual formation of our spatio-temporal universe, with its billions of galaxies, supernovas, black holes, and quasars, and the cold dark matter interspersed between them. Within this unimaginable vastness are planet Earth and the human species-both products of the original flash from chaos to cosmos or, in Indian terms, of Shiva's ecstatic dance".[5]

16. The dance form of Bharatanātyam can induce such immense power in the practitioner that a sort of healing happens from within. The holistic therapeutic doctors are commonly of the opinion that dancers consciously or unconsciously open out the Chakrās due to the very movement involved in dance. This movement being stylized in the classical dances, there is enhanced channelizing of energy in a positive direction. Since the classical arts offer beatitude in a subtle, symbolic yet highly significant manner, there is generally a gentle transmission amongst audiences that is woven out of the artistes. Unlike the popular loud cultural forms that highlight corporeality, treating the body as one attractive force and using movement that express several themes ideas basically with body language alone, in the traditional classical arts, the entire focus is on achieving spiritual satisfaction. There is hardly the intention to derive this with any personal command at all as the higher command will drive forward every action making it sublime.

Healing through Chakrā - breathing exercises, transcendental meditation is commonly heard of these days. Dance is not just one such isolated unit but encompasses a whole lot of these exercises combined in a dynamic rhythmic style that is enjoyable and exhilarating other than the main purpose of being enlightening.

India being one of the oldest civilization in the world, it is obvious that its cultural tradition will be deep-rooted and closely related to man's life, values and beliefs. Indian art has been almost always linked to its religion and philosophy. Although

trends have changed in the arts, the truly Indian has an ethnic flavour of joy, colour, unity in diversity and celebration of life. Be it the fine arts or performing arts, the distinct differences in style and rendition merge into the universal principles of harmony, symmetry, beauty and aesthetics. In fact the last, aesthetics, is a subject that has been extensively dealt with by Indian Scholars, thinkers, sages and mystics in various treatises and shastras. The form and content given equal importance within the larger background of spirituality is what touches the soul. The framework of time and space in the physical and mental levels is transcended towards the higher realm of timeless and spaceless consciousness. Some of the best works in Indian artistic and cultural traditions are created out of single-pointed concentration and introspection leading towards the domain of energy all over. They all universally talk of Rasā. The importance to Yogic consciousness and transmission of energy has been the greatest contribution by Abhinavagupta through his theory of Rasā.

It is without doubt that energy is the factor that spirituality is after, termed as Static Consciousness [Purusa] converted into moving, wavering nature [Prakriti]. Even the profoundest theories like reincarnation or life after death finds a place through the substratum of energy, because if the body which is a mass of particles itself has been dissolved and disappears, then what survives is only purest energy which lingers until the next mass gets assembled. We name this energy as Śakti and its atomic light as Śiva. Dance is Śiva and Śakti.

In India, art has religious and philosophical undertones. The Indian mind tends to interpret all happenings in the world in philosophical terms. And philosophy here is in turn closely interwoven with religion.

The present Indian society offers many facets of education be it the conventional education system, or the traditional Vedic system. The tastes of today's youth on a fast-track are like the Mexican wave, the monetary and lucrative gains form the acid test of growth. Often the cornerstone in the development of children and

choice of careers itself is how much material is procured. Unfortunately, they are gauged on the basis of this dictum and get stressed out as a result. From one dance form to another, from the sublime to the ludicrous, The cafeteria approach of today's quicksilver genset has led to a conflated identity and the canons have been replaced or released, if not subverted. The trend today is to conjecture a hypothetical presentation, a mixed bag which is flavoured with a touch of nonsense making any unequivocal interpretation appear unlikely. Lyrics chosen or written for dances ,especially in the glamour world ,are becoming colloquial and common place.

Dance is an art form characterized by use of the human body as a vehicle of expression. Dance has been described as "an exciting and vibrant art which can be used in the educational setting to assist the growth of the student and to unify the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of the human being". Dance is an immediately instinctive, direct and natural 'move' for most people--no special equipment is needed. Dance may be used as one of many windows to the history, religions, and customs of people. Rhythm and movement are the life-breath of dance. At some time or another ,each one of us has exhibited our emotions through movement as rhythm is within us .

A systematized and stylized form of movement and synchronized with rhythm, acquired through training, makes dance an entertainment on the stage. A combination of these factors have a therapeutic value. Indian classical dance, with its rich heritage and foundation of the Spiritual, is especially well suited for dance/movement therapy as it is an effective vehicle for the expression of emotions, authenticity, spontaneity and connectedness. It is popularly said that "Movement doesn't lie." Practice of yoga and allied contemplative arts including classical dance would keep one quick off the mark to all situations, astute, well articulated and energetic. The methodology and modus operandi is scientific although this art revolves in a beautiful and imaginative world. Dance is a powerful form of direct communication. It can be used symbolically to represent

hidden emotions, release anxiety and serve as a vehicle to integrate body, mind and spirit.

Nāṭya is a fulfilling Tantra of the highest order. It is Upāsana, Sādhana, Japa Mantra, Yoga with āsana, prāṇayāma, Viniyoga and Mudrā, all integrated with appeal to aesthetic sense as well. Rhythm is inherent in nature of which man is an important part. Viceversa, man is composed of nature as well, meaning that his life force, prāṇa, activated by the five elements of fire, water, ether, earth, sky along with mind and consciousness. There is an element of dance in every human endeavour as Tālā is the root everywhere. Cosmos, the origin of which is traced to Dhvani or Sound, vibrates with Tālā. Just as Śiva without the central vowel becomes Śava or Corpse, there is life only when supreme Nāda unites with Bindū. Sound waves unite with energy and rhythm is thus tapped. When this rhythm is kept as the basic quality of an enterprise, one can imagine the extent to which it can expand and create endlessly. When the causal force itself has become an identity of an enterprise, one can again imagine as Bharata rightly said **–the creator of drama on this stage is likened to Prajāpati Himself.** When dance is mastered, the essence of this spirit is simultaneously integrated into the body-mind system.

True spirituality in the arts highlights love, peace, co-existence, tolerance, positivity and is actually the fundamental essence of all religions of the world, beyond the shackles of regional and religious differences. The significance and glory of Indian music and dance lies in its divinity, purity and ethereal basis that gets portrayed through a myriad emotions using a variety of songs, episodes, epics and moods which are producing a magical ambience and culminating in a resonance of peace and bliss.

“Among the references to some of his contemporaneous traditions, Abhinavagupta’s reference to “Dombikā” is interesting from both technical and sociological points of view. This is performed by a single danseuse (*nartakī*) and in

short it seems to have been erotic in nature, designed as an entertainment for the royal audience, to win favors. It certainly involves mastery over music and dance, in which the prince is himself addressed indirectly or directly as the Lover.

Abhinavagupta then analyzes the results of performances from the mundane perceptible and the spiritual invisible levels. From a yogic angle the result of singing is not considered as tangible. But that of programs like Dombika, is its vicinity. It is merely worldly (*laukika*), thus being a gross physical object of pleasure to the senses along with an economic advantage. This is the level of perceptible fruits *a*). But Abhinavagupta himself criticizes his contemporaneous Dombika as not even fulfilling the above needs. Apart from the entertainment value and vocational advantage of these arts, Abhinavagupta glorifies the fruit of true art. It has an intangible fruit. The very entry of the danseuse (*nartākī*) is meant to please the Gods. The gratification of the spectators is the core of the subject of *rasa* in *nāṭya*. But it must cater to the goals (*purusārtha*) of life: *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *moksha*. Otherwise *nāṭya* would merely become a means for living. While commenting on Pushpāñjali (“offering of a handful of flowers”) and rules regarding the theatrical Preliminaries (*pūrvāraṅga*), he says that while performing the dance-gestures (*abhinaya*) for Pushpāñjali, one’s looks must not be diverted towards the audience. It is not addressed to the spectators. It must be performed looking into one’s own soul. This lights up the core of the monastic philosophy of Kashmiri Shaivism. While enunciating the fruits of *nāṭya* and its study (*phalaśruti*), he says that the dancers, actors, sponsors, and financiers and spectators are all purified from their sins and attain unlimited benefits, including the realm of Shiva (Śiva-loka), merely through *nṛtta*. In the colophon at the end of the chapter, he refers to himself as a “a supreme Shaiva teacher” (*maheśvarācārya*), whose ignorance is being burnt by the three eyes of Shiva, which are the sun (*sūrya*), moon (*candra*), and fire (*agni*)”[6]

We could enhance our lives and those of many others by extensively

propogating Nātya Tantra to induce positive, united, healthy and peaceful living. In this age of speed, commerce, trade, material comforts and likewise a high degree of negative impulses and abuse, spiritual education would make a concerted effort towards conciliation amongst people. While painting, sculpture and other beaux-arts including architecture are static, music and dance are dynamic with relation to the means employed in expression. The former is grasped instantaneously when the artist becomes a 'live wire' and the latter implies an unfolding in time.

Nātya, a kind of meditation is intended to establish a link with the HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS. Tantra is the 'loom' wherein threads are woven diligently to create the canvas of drama. Nātya is co - related to Tantra in every aspect.

Nātya Śāstra is Nātya Tantra.

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- [2] In the The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta
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- [4] From the essay Kundalini: Awakening the Serpent Power
[by Georg Feuerstein](#) which has been reproduced on yoga-age.com with
slight changes from Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy, Georg Feuerstein, Marek
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Appendix - 1

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- [1] Abhinaya Darpanam- by Nandikeswara ed. & Transl. by Dr. Gosh. M.,
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Appendix - 1

Inspiration and consolidations

Some interesting and relevant notes on dances other than Bharatanatyam in order to link Tantric aspects [highlighted in **bold**]

Kuchipudi Dance : V. PatanjaliPage 41

In the ancient gurukula system, a syllabus for training was unknown. Depending on the mental resources of the student, the teacher would hesitate him into new and more complex numbers. The custom has been that a boy of five is taken to the **temple of Sri Ramalingeswara** and **initiated into the natya-veda** by holding the patakihasta and pronouncing ta tai tai ta ttam. After over five years of grounding in the basics of music and dance, the boy is introduced to the elements of abhinaya along with teaching the pancha kavyas. Following this seven-year period, the boy is allowed to observe the performance of veterans. He graduates only after successful completion of these exercises. By now, he realizes that the **oral tradition he has been raised on is much more useful and dependable than the rules written in the texts.** Indeed, this was what was emphasized by Bharata and Nandikeswara.

Origin and Development of Thullal : P.K. Sivasankara Pillai.. Page 54

In one of his poetical works, he has indicated the style of singing, the order of hands, feet, eyes and emotional expressions during dance:

The **song is to be sustained in the throat;**

Its meaning to be shown by the hands;

Its moods are evinced by glances;

Its rhythms are marked by the feet.

Kathakali – The total theatre : M. K. K. NayarPage 64

The gestures can be generally classified as :

Imitative : to show an elephant, a lion, a deer, a snake and so forth

Descriptive : to show things like fire, river, mountain, city, house, etc.

Expressive : to express different moods like courteousness, anger, impatience, contempt Etc.

And symbolic : to indicate destiny, Heaven, Hell, God, etc.

Ilakiattam, the Forte of Kathakali

One of the unique features of a Kathakali performance is what is called **Illakiattam**. The term is used to distinguish it from Cholliattam. Cholliattam means dancing to the words sung by the musician. The musician can sing only what is written in the poem. When the artistes act to express the meaning of the slokas and the padas sung by the musician, it is Cholliattam. At the end of it one should normally expect the curtain. But the curtain does not fall so soon in Kathakali.

Yakshagana Bayalata : K. S. UpadhyayaPage 82, Page 85

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, a renowned critic and research scholar, has opined that **ancient Shaivites were practicing a Natya Sastra which was in no way inferior to the Natya Sastra of Bharata and that the center of this Natya Sastra was the famous Nataraja Temple of Chidambaram.**

That these dance-drama were distinctly different from the Sanskrit dramas was apparent. Sanskrit dramas were a combination of prose and poetry in champu

style and the characters therein had to learn by rote the dialogue and there was no dance movements. But in Yakshagana it is different. Yakshagana is essentially a dance-drama with the characters depicting their roles effectively through dance, keeping step with the accompanying music.

There is no historical and written evidence to trace the origin of the name Yakshgana given to this form of music. Scholars have felt that like Gandharvagana, this form was called Yakshagana. Gandharvagana became marg music while Yakshagana became popular as desi music. Those who specialized in this form of desi natya shastras were known as Yakshas.

The derivation of the raga is so vastly different from that of Karnatak music that Yakshagana music is distinctly a separate system altogether.

The distinct features of Yakshagana music are that, though the swara prasthara may be the same as either Karnatak or Hindustani style of classical music, the gamaka and alapana style here is unique.

The stage – rangasthala as it is popularly known – is a square ground with a bamboo pole stuck in each corner to mark off the outer edge; its only decoration being bunches of fresh mango leaves, green and tender, festooned from pole to pole. About 30 to 40 feet from this is the green room, chowki, in popular language. Here, in the blaze of torches, now fast being replaced by petromax lights – the characters do the make-up. The torches and the brown soil and the deep green vegetation around, canopied over by the dark blue sky, provide a most enchanting backdrop for the play.

The play is preceded by a few traditional dances to keep the audience engaged as well as to allow enough time for make-up. In fact, **the Yakshagana Bayalata is the only traditional dance-drama which still observes almost all the details given for poorvaranga abhinaya by Bharata in his Natyashastra.** Here it is called

sabhalakshana. The first of these dances is the dance of the kodangis, or trainees, and begins after sunset. This is followed by a prayer to Lord Ganesha. After puja in the chowki, the man who plays the jester in the drama (vidushaka) carries the image of the deity to the rangasthala accompanied by the Bhagavata and drummers and offers it a ceremonial arati. The argument of the drama to be enacted is given at this moment through recitation of one or two brief songs. The stage is then engaged by two small bodys made up as cowheres (Bala Gopalaka), and they dance for a while, and when they make their exit, two female characters come on the stage and do some lasya dance.

A glimpse Into Odissi Dance : Dr. Minati MishraPage 88

Siva and Parvati images found in Soro (Balasore) have used the **abhaya mudra** which is the earliest of mudras to be found in Orissan architecture. We can find the **mudras of dhyana, abhaya and bhumsiparsa in the dancing Heruka in Tandava** pose at Ratnagiri, Orissa. For evidence one has to take the Konark temple into consideration, one of the last milestones of Indian architecture. Since the Konarak is a lasya conception, the dancing forms on the walls of this temple are also of lasya type. Every inch of the Natamandir is sculptured with the carvings of the dancing girls and musicians. Dancing holding the drum, cymbals, mirrors, flute, show excellent expression of dance forms. The most fascinating of all is Alasa Kanya an expression of relaxation.

Mayurabhanj Chhau : Dr. (Mrs.) Kapila VatsyayanPage 93,94,96

Many propitiation rites are common to this tribal group of people, and the agriculturists particularly have rites which revolve around the installation of a pole as a **symbol of fertility**. Many dances of the Hos and the Oranos are held at a place away from their actual living area where the pole is installed before the Jhum (shift-cultivating rites) ceremonies begin.

It is important to note that there is no icon worship during the festival. **The pole continues to represent Lord Siva.** The devotees are called Bhaktas, a word which is also vulgarized into the form Bhagtas.

The Bhagtas are not ordinary people. After the initiation they have to perform a **fire-walking ritual called the nian-pata**, which we observe is absent from the Seraikala Chhau festival.

They **perform another rite where the devotee is suspended by his feet on a pole over a flaming fire.** This ritual is called jhela nata. Finally, they hang in suspension by their arms while a pole makes a complete revolution of a T shaped structure. There is also **some walking on thorns.** These and other ceremonies come only on the 26th day of the month of Chaitra when a pitcher of water is brought out to herald the beginning of the festival.

On the first day of the festival which roughly coincides with the last three days of the month of Chaitra corresponding to April 11th to 13th, the Chhau dancers proceed not to the area where the ritual has been performed but to the **temple of Bhairava.** The teachers or the gurus of the dancers are not called gurus, but are called ustads. Obviously some syncretism has taken place. The ustads and musicians worship Bhairava and also initiate new dancers on that date.

The initiation is done through tying a piece of red thread on the right wrist of every dancer. The ustads and musicians are given new dhotis to wear. The preliminaries over, the whole assembly performs the ritualistic pranamic dance. A characteristic feature of the dance is an offering of the leaves of wood-apple and flowers mixed with the earth collected from the practicing area of the dance. All these are tied in a piece of red cloth which is kept inside a proscenium stage – 19th century building. Each dancer offers his pranams to these articles which were first offered to the Lord Bhairava.

At the end of the ritual, at midnight, another pitcher or pot, this time called the nishi ghata or the night pitcher, or sometimes also the Kamana, the desire ghata is worshipped. In many ways this **ghata also represents Shakti**. Another ritual connected with the dance is the offering of a specially prepared dance to the Sun-god. This is performed sometime during the festival. Perhaps it is pertinent to recall here that sun worship is common to many tribes, villages and to the sophisticated, high class Brahmins of Orissa.

Also it has affinities with the danda-nata, a dance ritual of the tribes of Southern Orissa.

Like other classical styles of Indian dance, Mayurabhanj Chhau begins with two basic stances of the sophisticated Orissi. **Bharatanatyam can be understood as a rhombus or a series of triangles in space, Kathakali as a square or rectangle, Manipuri as a figure of eight and Kathak as a straight line, Orissi as a tribhanga, Mayura bhanj Chhau in contrast, has an open tribhanga and Chauka (akin to an open grand pile of western ballet or the mandala sthana) as a basic motif .**

Folk-Dances of Gujarat : Parul Shah..... Page 113,115

In Rigveda we have mention of couples dancing in circles. But from the point of view of folk tradition, the description of 'Hallisaka' a group dance, in the Harivamsa Purana is very significant. Here is a group dance, in a circular formation with the hands joined together forming a chain. **The time (tala) is kept by clapping** and is accompanied by singing. A young man (krsna) stands in the middle of two damsels. The feet movements, toes, heels, and legs first start their journey to explore rhythmic expression in measured steps, long, short, quick and slow accompanied in single, double, and triple timings.

Later on, these Rasaka and Hallisaka were described as two of the Uparupakas in many treaties on Dramaturgy by authors like Kohala, Vastyayan, Sarangadevea, Sharadatanaya, Bhoja and others. Uparupakas are the minor dramatic forms, having predominance of music and dance. These treaties denote Rasa or Rasaka, Hallisa or Hallisaka as the dancers of the cowherds. While in Hallisaka there is one hero and several heroines; there are as many men as women in Rasaka. The **'Garbo' or 'Garbha' is the life inside a woman's womb.** An earthen pot with holes around the circumference and light burning inside symbolizes so. Such a pot placed on the head of a lady is comparable to the starry dome of heavens, handled by Maha-shakti. The dance in motion as well as songs came to be termed as 'Garba'.

The actual performance **begins at night** after the women finish their house-hold work.

Folk Dances of Punjab : Kapila Vatsyayan.....Page 118,119

Bhangra, the most popular and virile of the community dance of the villages of Punjab is closely linked with the ritual importance which is given to wheat. In spite of the seeming contemporary paucity of a large variety of tribal and folk dances in Punjab, it must be remembered that this was the **home of many ritual and trance dancesunes.**

A BLACK HAT RITUAL DANCE

– Cathy Cantwell

Tibetan “Black Hat” ritual dances are a central feature of many Tibetan “chams” (ritual dance performances). This paper examines a Black Hat dance at a small Tibetan refugee monastery in northern India, in the light of a consideration of the overall meaning and significance of the Black Hat dance in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition⁽¹⁾.

“BLACK HAT” RITUAL DANCES : ORIGIN AND MEANING

Little historical work has been done on “chams”, and even though ritual dance manuals exist — for example, the Fifth Dalai Lama’s “chams-yig” (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1976) — which are clearly dependent on much older written sources, inevitably, in the context of complex ritual performances, much was left to oral instruction and is inaccessible to historical research. Handbooks such as the above-mentioned “chamsyig” were intended as detailed commentaries on and further clarification of an orally transmitted tradition, for the benefit of the ritual practitioners themselves, who would have been familiar with the basics of the tradition as it existed at that time. Thus, for instance, when the Fifth Dalai Lama talks of the Black Hat costume (ibid. : p.114-119), it is difficult to determine how closely it corresponds with the modern version (see below). Nonetheless, ritual forms can be remarkably persistent⁽²⁾, and in the case of ‘chams, there is no doubt that many dance sequences have been preserved exactly for centuries⁽³⁾. The tradition itself claims an Indian Vajrayāna origin for ‘chams, and in the absence of convincing proof otherwise, there would seem little reason to doubt this claim. The Fifth Dalai Lama is clear that the complex Vajrakīlāya dance described by him, much of which is performed by Black Hat dancers, derives from Indian Buddhism. He states (p. 113) that it is connected with the origins of the Tantra, and that moreover, it played a significant role in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet : Guru Padma performed the dance to prepare the ground at bSam-yas for the first Tibetan monastery.

Both the Fifth Dalai Lama (p. 115) and contemporary Tibetan monks and bla-mas say that the Black Hat costume is that worn by the Vajra Master, and the Black Hat dances display his activities. In some cases - as my example below - such activities consist of relatively simple symbolic demonstrations of the Vajrayāna transmutation of the emotional poisons, but there are innumerable variations. In the “Root” section of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s Vajrakīlāya ‘chams alone (p. 115 ff.), the Black

hat vajra master meditates on and mimics in turn the attributes and activities of all the principal deities of the Vajrakīlāya maṇḍala, and a similar process seems to characterise the Black Hat Vajrakīlāya 'chams at the 'Brug-pa bKa'-rgyud monastery at Tashi Jong, Himachal Pradesh.⁽⁴⁾

There is a further dimension to the symbolic significance of the Black Hat dance in the contemporary Tibetan context. According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz (ibid. : p.1, 80, 93), popular tradition equates the Black Hat costume and dance less with Buddhist India than with the ancient Bon-po priests, and in the mythical⁽⁵⁾ account of dpal gyi rDo-rje, the Buddhist monk appropriates the "black" Bon-po garb while remaining inwardly "white", for the purpose of protecting the Buddhist teaching in Tibet⁽⁶⁾. Nebesky-Wojkowitz is a little ambivalent about the actual origin of the Buddhist Black Hat costume. He mentions this oral tradition without critical comment on the first page of the book, while later (p. 80) arguing that the informants who rather identified the Black Hat dancers with tantrics are more likely to be correct. Yet his justification for this - that the Black Hat dancers have important roles and are often senior bla-mas-relates to the dances' contemporary significance rather than to derivation. Nonetheless, he clearly states (p. 93) that the costume has no particular similarity to the ancient Bon-po dress. It would seem to me that the identification between the Black Hat dancers and Bon-po religious specialists is not a statement of historical fact but rather a symbolic association, in which the Vajra Master brings under control and transforms the most sophisticated indigenous Tibetan powers, through the Vajrayāna ritual activity.

APPENDIX - 2

The following book was highly inspiring and re-iterated my views.
Observations are in **bold**

Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism – Natelia Lidora

Page 6

The Yajna was central in the Vedic era as a ceremonial rite, while puja became widespread in the post-vedic time to come to the foreground as the basic Hindu ritual.

The sophisticated symbolism and magic of the puja, as the personal message of the former, performed for a particular donor (yajamana), contrasted with the public character of the latter – a rite dedicated to a god in the name of all worshippers.

Pratyahara – Avatarana, Arambha, Asravana, Vaktrapani, Parighattana, Samghotana, Margasarita, Asarita, Gitavidhi (NS.5.17-21).

Thus, Pratyahara serves Nagas and Raksasas, Apsaras take pleasure in Avatarana, Gandharvas in Arambha, Danavas in Asravana and Vaktrapani. Again, Raksasa hosts enjoy Parighattana, Guhyakas Samghotana and Yaksas Margasarita, while the hymn Gitavishi sounds in honour of all gods (NS.5.45-50).

Page 8

A ritual song of the Madraka or Vardhamanaka type with an accompanying dance, Utthapana, Parivartana, Nandi, Suskapakrsta, Rangadvara, Cari, Mahacari, Trigata and Prarocana (NS.5.12-15)- all these also a symbolic ritual meaning, as worship of the principal Hindu gods.

Page 7

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Rudra, jarjara, lokapalas

Gods, Brahmins and the king,

Soma

Ancestors

Visnu. Cari

Srngara Rasa

Uma, Mahacari

Raudra Rasa, siva.

Sutradhara, pariparsvaka

Trigata, prarocana

Purvaranga

Puja to Gods, dharma, fame and longevity, pleasing the Daityas, Danavas, denizens of the celestial world" (NS.5.57-58).

Dhruva

A unique, celestial music

Gandharva system (NS.28.9)

Page 10/11

Sutradhara's movements stage started singling out its centre, ritually the most important point symbol of the centre of the Universe materialized on the symbolical plane in the Brahma-mandala, where, according to the treatise, the god

was present in person: “Brahma himself occupied the centre of the stage, that is why flowers are scattered there”

(NS.1.94; 5.74).

Page 11

The Pradaksina

of dancing steps,

with a gold jug of water for ablution, Sauca,

palms (Acamana)

sprinkled water over his body

The ablution over, jarjara,

Symbolism of the jarjara

Principal vertical axis of ritual space, 70

Imaginary world (axis mundi)

(Backbone Vajra)

Page 12

Characteristics of the cosmic model on stage.

Page 13

The Nāṭyaśāstra connected with worship of the three supreme gods, Śiva, Brahma and Viṣṇu, in neuter, male and female hypostases. The Sūtradhara turned to face east and, with emphasized solemnity, performed three steps and bows, presented by the treatise as the ‘male’, the ‘neuter’ and the ‘female’, each in a different manner. The first, in worship of Śiva (Rudra), was with the raised right- ‘male’ – leg; the next, Brahma’s was with the moderately raised right, ‘neuter’, and the last, for Upendra (Viṣṇu), with the left, ‘female’ leg.

Page 14

The sections (parva) (of the jarjara) the best and powerful gods were present. Brahma occupied its topmost section, Śaṃkara (Śiva) the second, Viṣṇu the third section, Kārttikeya (Skanda) the fourth, and the great Nagas – Śeṣa, Vasuki and Takṣaka – the fifth. (NS.1.91-93). Thus, the very arrangement of the gods in the jarjara made it with the top in the highest divine spheres, and the roots reaching

the underworld, ruled by Nagas, Great Serpents.

(Kundalini Chakras)

Page 15

Nandi, scenic sacrifice, pronounced by the Sutradhara in logical correspondence with the ritual development.

Suskapakrsta Dhruva,

Recited a sloka

To dedicate the puja to any god made its ritual goals extremely variegated and – even more important – guaranteed a universal ritual character of the Purvaranga as a whole.

Page 16

Sutradjhara and his assistants did next was meant to desacralise the scenic space and divest it of ritual functions.

The desacralisation of the ritual site is as essential and logically conditioned.

Rangadvara, the ceremony of jarjara deposition

Addita Dhruva

Solemn deposition,

Jarjara-sloka

Sloka

Deposition proper

Cari

Carisloka, the congregation of the Srngara Rasa.

Page 17

Sutradhara recited the Raudra Rasa sloka,

These enigmatic movements

Dhruva which disclosed their meaning

This song as canonical and indispensable

Let this Tandava dance of Hara (Siva) ever-beneficial which smashed the hills by the impact of his sole and agitated the ocean with all creatures therein protect you at the time of the destruction of the world (Pralaya)” (NS.5.130-131).

Sutradhara was likened unto Siva

With his Tandava dance, Siva destroyed the Universe, while the Sutradhara was destroying its sacral scenic image.

Page 22

The Prarocana was meant to guarantee divine protection for the Natya played right after the Purvaranga.

Page 23

Complicated rites and endowed with the necessary esoteric knowledge.

The Purvaranga involved four male priests, with the Sutradhara as leader.

Suddha, pure.

Citra, decorated, female dancers

Celestial maidens and acting goddesses.

After its fourth participant spread white flowers on the stage (NS.5.158-162).

Staccato drumbeat, assumed the ritual posture,

She spread flowers to form a mandala.

Page 24

Performed in the light of Mula star.

Connected with a wealth of omens, it demanded utmost care.

(Tantric)

Courtesans, persons clad in dark-red, cripples and Sramanas, were driven off the site for the ceremony (NS.2.37-38). Sacrifice of incense, flowers, fruit and ritual food – Bali – was made with the night fall, arranged in tend directions in honour of the gods protecting them.

White for the east, blue west, yellow south and red north, with mantras recited in honour of the patrons of all four points.

(like temple)

Gems and precious metals were put in the stage foundation, a diamond to the east side, lapis lazuli south, quartz west, coral north, and gold in the centre (NS.2.69-74).

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Seven Natya mothers enumerated in the Acarya's prayer.

Mystical union of the principal carriers of the sacral energy;

The solemn esotericism of the rite created the sensation of actual divine presence on stage, deification of the King.

To grant him victory, the Acarya broke a kumbha and ran around the holy space with a lamp, which he later placed on the stage to symbolize the King's conquest of the world.

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The Purvaranga had more music and pageantry, whereas the rites of theatre foundation and consecration were, to all appearances, meant for small congregations, and so were more austere and esoteric.

Type of religious mentality, sharing ritual semantics, liturgical structure, arrangement of the sacrificial site, ritual symbolism and the manner of offering – in short, all components of which consists the conceptual basis of religious mentality.

F.B.J. Kupier was concept regards the Natyasastra rites as part and parcel of Vedic ritualism – an equivalent of yajna, the Vedic offering.

Yajñena sammitam hy etad rangadaivatapujanam.

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All yajna rites in three basic types, with seven particular forms in each : the Somayajna, soma libation; the Haviyajna, the fire sacrifice of milk, clarified melted butter and grain; and the Pakayajna, home worship better known as the Grhya.

Vedic rites of the Agnistoma type reached the purpose by mounting the altar,

The Natyasasta rites, the mandala taking the place of the absent altar. The symbolism of a circle with the centre emphasized and a vertical axis, perhaps, belongs to the world's oldest cult ideas, and is found in many cultures totally

unrelated with each other. Nevertheless, the mandala as a magic circle was never known in Vedic ritualism.

In the Pakayajna and Haviyajna, milk and melted butter was poured onto the fire, and grain thrown in it.

Sacrificial animals

Herb gathering, the squeezing and diluting of its juice,

The Natyasastra rites imply offerings of an entirely different kind.

The puja sacrifice has more aestheticism and a simpler form than overcomplicated fire magics of the Vedic sacrifice.

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Crowned the theatre consecration ceremony.

Homa shall be performed by pouring butter into the fire) it makes the Vedic nature of this rite evident.

The jarjara and the yupa, Vedic sacrificial pillar erected in the ceremonial rites.

They shared not only the cult mission but the ritual semantics – a factor which disperses all doubts on this score. Brahmanas theology saw the yupa as incarnating the vajra, Indra's mace (S'Br.III.7.2.1) . The Natyasastra similarly interprets the jarjara – as incarnation of the vajra, the Daityas bane.

(Vajrayana – Tantrik)

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In both, priests prepared for the rite with fasting, ablutions and wearing new unwashed raiments (S'Br.III.1.2.2-20; NS'3.3).

The ritual space, objects and sacrificers purified and consecrated by sprinkling, and the reading of mantras, to name but two.

Refined melted butter, Madhuparka, Payasa and others. The performance of rites at sacral time – a season or an auspicious month an part of day – specified by the celestial position of Naksatra, particular stars, who also inherited from the Vedic era.

All Agamas, Hindu ritual texts,

Agamic texts are little studied and were for a long time regarded as sectarian writings at odds with the canonical tradition.

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The Natyasastra and Agamic rites similarly arranged the sacrificial space – with the mandala oriented on cardinal points. As pointed out above, scenic ritualism demanded the magic circle made during the rites. Agamic texts also refer to permanent mandalas in places of worship (Raur.19.1-7; Mrg.8.52), and kumbhas placed essential ritual symbols of Hindu deities (Aj.27.39-53; 64-90; 120-129).

Siva=kumbha, ritual embodiment

Of the principle mandala.

Agamic rites were analogous to the Natyasastra as the Centre

By the supreme god – Siva

Confessional tradition

Hindu rites had a vertical axis, dhvaja, Siva's banner. According to Agamic theology, the god was present in it during worship, just as Brahma, Siva, Visnu, Skanda and the Nagas were present in the jarjara during scenic rites.

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Agamic texts name puja as the basic ceremonial rite

Fruit, incense, water and foods in honour of gods and basic ritual symbols.

The Saiva puja, in its most detailed version, traditionally comprised 16 obligatory stages, comparable to the basic parts of the Natyasastra sacrifice.

This sacrament, which demanded an Avahana, with the god's name repeatedly called, was usually accompanied by music of the same bells and shells. The Natyacarya did a similar performance as he addressed his prayers to Hindu gods. Most often, a kumbha with water. The likeness of these ritual stages to what the Acarya did to consecrate a theatre is evident.

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To the site to wash the god's feet or the elevation on which his ritual symbol stood (Padya).

Acamana, twice performed by the Acarya, rinsing his mouth with water taken in small gulps out of palms.

Similarly, Sutradhara in the Purvaranga and the Acarya in the rite of the theatre consecration.

Pradaksina, Sutradhara in the third Parivarta.

Sacrificial gifts (Balidana).

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In the Agamic Puja, flowers were spread before the image or symbol of Siva in worship of the supreme god, like in the Natyasastra.

In diksa, Agamic initiation, the novice also threw flowers on the kumbha, believed to be abode of Siva.

It had a communal message and was meant not for a particular donor but for the affluence of the whole community.

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As the puja made him closer to the divine world, every believer could address his prayer to god with his personal entreaty, whereas the Vedic religion gave this right only to the person who ordered the offering, and sometimes his family.

The closeness of symbols and worship structure hints at direct genetic links – not mere typological likeness – between the Natyasastra and Agamic rites.

Nyasa postures and Mudra gestures, as demonstrated throughout the worship. As was believed by demonstrating these gestures and attitudes participants of the rite abstracted from their earthly self as they received Sakti, sacral élan, and rose to a divine essence. Agamic theology treated attitudes and gestures as specific forms of communion with gods, which allowed mystically to be transformed into

them. Symbolically significant poses and conventional gestures were unlike natural ones and considered iconic manifestations of the divine element. Agamic treatises usually devoted a special chapter to the descriptions of Nyasas and Mudras (Aj. 26.1-66: Mrg.5.1-18).

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Many analogues of the Agamic ritual attitudes are offered by dance movements described in the *Natyasastra*, Chapter IV. We can't but notice that many of them are closely linked with cult practices. Some, like the *Sthanas* of Chapter XI, were associated with particular gods – *Avrtta*, or *Avarta*, with Kubera, *Skhalita* the King of the Nagas, and *Visnukranta* Visnu. Many demonstrated Siva in his numerous hypostases – *Talasamsphotitta*, the good god, source of mercy and protection, and *Ancita*, *Bhujangatrasita* and others, *Nataraja*, king of dance, to name but two. *Nisumbhita* fixed an extremely sophisticated movement, but signified the central moment of Universal destruction in the *Tandava* orgiastic dance.

Many dramatic postures fixed, in a way, the actions of puja performers. *Vaksahsvastika* and *Prthesvastika* were special for prayer and meditation. *Atikranta*, in the floral symbolism, portrayed flowers and garlands. *Talapuspaputa* and *Parsvanikuttana* signified flower spreading, and *Elakakrdita* flower offering to a god. To all appearances, a ritual context gave rise to *Dandapada*, symbolizing the ritual offering of water and *Mandalasvastika*, the mandala circle.

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Their semantics are largely connected with ritualistic concepts and, doubtless, arose in ritual contexts. Gestures stand for cult actions, symbolizing sprinkling, flower spreading, *Acamana* and bringing the lamp. *Padmakosa*, the gesture signifying a lotus bud, at the same time symbolized puja worship (NS.9.70-72). Gestures also represented gods. *Sucimukha*, with the hand going down, stood for Siva, and a similar gesture with the hand raised to the forehead and crossing it

horizontally, for Indra (NS.9.77-79).

As we see it, this explanation lies in the fact that the scenic puja and the Natya were for a long time parts of a single ceremony. Naturally, joint ritual and ritualistic drama performances helped to make discoveries in the field of movement not only to become the basis of an abhinaya in the ancient Indian theatre but to enrich the symbolic imagery of the scenic puja. It is much harder to explain the appearance of analogous gestures and postures in the Agamic puja rites which, at first sight, seem unconnected with the evolution of the ancient Indian theatrical tradition. We shall not dwell on this important problem but merely notice that the movement forms of worship we have described may be viewed as a proof of common origins of the Natyasastra and Agamic rites.

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Some puja forms finished with pure dance (Suddha Nrta), also part of ceremonial worship during Utsava festivals (Raur.19.1-2). Many Agamic texts have special characters on cult dancing which, however, specify only ritual actions preceding the Nrta. Let us analyse a typical description of a ritual dance in Rauravagama (Raur.19.1-8).

The dance was to be performed by a ganika – young, chaste, beautiful, serene in her spirit and devoid of mercantile interests. She made two ablutions, put on lovely raiments and jewellery, crowned her head with white flowers, washed her feet, and then entered the ritual hall, Mandapa, to draw the mandala in the stage centre. She sprinkled it with water as she recited incantations, and spread flowers in it, thus worshipping Siva Natesvara, Lord of Dance. Then she sprinkled with water the priestess who assisted her, standing outside the mandala, and took flower bunches from her again to spread them in the magic circle, this time in worship of Siva Parameshvara, Supreme God. Then she pressed her palms in the anjali gesture and made the mudra lotus to start dancing to the sound of many instruments, mainly percussion, and ten sacred tunes. The Rauravagama description of the dance finished on this. The end of the chapter contained only a traditional notice of the pivotal role of Nrta as atoning sins.

It is easy to see that the Agamic ceremony before the dance was analogous to the one of the dancing girl in the Purvaranga. The Raurava and other Agamas do not provide concrete characteristics of Nr̥tta. The texts explain this absence by Bharata's detailed description of dance. In other words, it was described in the Natyasastra (Raur.19.7) – a notable allusion and clear indication that the Hindu religious tradition saw the Natyasastra chapters on dancing as ritual texts. It was no use to repeat them in the Agamas, as a treatise was always at hand. More than that, this Agamic indication makes us revise the customary attitudes to these parts of the Natyasastra as describing secular, rather than ritual dancing proper. Evidently, not only sections on the scenic puja canon should be regarded as ritual texts but, at least, in the main, chapters on Gandharva music, dancing, dance poses, and gesticular symbols and techniques.

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Worship with postures, gestures, songs, music and dancing belongs to features shared by Agamic and scenic rites. At the same time, the Hindu ritual system allows to single out features common to all three worship practices under review – the Vedic sacrifice yajna, Natyasastra rites and the Agamic puja.

Agamic rites knew another analogous item, the dhvaja, banner staff, outwardly synonymous to the yupa and jarjara. The dhvaja-jarjara connection is self-evident – both represent one sacral symbol, the divine banner staff. In fact, the jarjara is a variety of the dhvaja as used in scenic worship and owing its name to the first dramatic performance. Not only the semantics but the ritual function of the jarjara and dhvaja coincide as pivotal objects of puja sacrifice. The presence of the dhvaja, identical to jarjara, in Agamic ritualism allows us to trace the yupa-jarjara-dhvaja connection to see the divine banner of the Agamic puja another heritage of the Vedic ritualism.

Another major feature uniting the yajna and puja systems, Homa, performed in the royal rite of the Natyasastra, was inherited by the Agamic tradition without essential change.

Like in the Vedic era, ghee, melted butter, and milk were poured into the

consecrated flame, and grain and other food thrown – all this to mantra recitals (aj.10.38-44; 27.184-198; Mrg 8.64) **(Dakshinachara tantra)**.

Both the Vedic and Hindu times demanded that the priest should fast, make ablutions, put on new, never washed garments, and concentrate on the coming ceremony. This was obligatory for the Vedic Brahmana, the Natyacarya of the Natyasastra, and the priest who performed the Agamic puja.

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Neither did it originate out of the rite, but evolved parallel to as part and parcel of the ritual ceremony.

(Veda- natya- tantras)

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Four genres – Samvakara, Dima, Jhamrga and Vyayoga – present the greatest scholarly interest.

In Chapter XIV, the Natyasastra set forth the basic characteristics of the Aviddha dramas, recurring practically unchanged in Chapter XXXV. According to the treatise, “ the play which requires energetic aggressive (sattvavidha) gestures and dance movements (Angaharas) to represent cutting, wounding, challenging and piercing, and contains the use of magic and yogic powers, as well as painting and plastering work (pusta) and make-up, and (also) has many numerous men and few women (characters) and adopts mainly Sattvati and Arabhati Vrttis is called Aviddha.

Aviddha dramas.

The category of the style (Vrtti) – to be more precise, a blend of two styles, the Sattvati and the Arabhati.

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The Sattvati, Vrtti spiritual style is hard to define.

The Sattva is the key concept in these Vrtti descriptions, its qualities fully

displayed in the spiritual style.

The doctrine of Sattva, the inner spiritual energy, is one of the cornerstones of the ancient Indian theory of drama. The Natyasastra mentions Sattva on many occasions. Sattva means originating in the mind (manas). It is caused by the concentrated mind. Through mental concentration the Sattva is evolved. This nature of the mind evolving horripilation, tears, paleness and the like cannot be properly portrayed by one absent-minded. Such is the Sattva, essential in the Natya, based as it on imitating the human nature. And how can happiness, which has delight as its basis, be represented by one who is not happy? Such is the Sattva necessary for the drama, which is determined by the fact that tears and horripilation should be respectively shown by any performer who is not actually, sorry or happy.

Manas, reflecting the body and the mind in their unservable unity, a merger of the spiritual and the intellectual in man's inner life.

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As we see it, the Sattva doctrine – the basis of the spiritual style.

Of creating reality on stage, demanded of the actor not merely a masterful representation of the outward aspect of his role but full self-identification with the hero

To all appearances, the ability to live the part resulted from a system of professional training connected with meditation.

Actor was to nourish limitless joy in himself – an euphoria of a kind – at the same time achieving precision and clarity in this emotional state, for this style “has no place for despondency.” (NS.22.40)

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Mahabharata recorded its narrative variant, while the Natyasastra prescribes its scenic practice, to which it traces the genesis of the performing tradition. The early drama immediately followed the Purvaranga on stage – a pivotal factor to

bear in mind.

The drama could be performed only after the Purvaranga following all rules. Chapter I states this even more categorically : “Pitamaha (Brahma) said to all gods : ‘Make a sacrifice in the playhouse in due order. Either the stage or the dramatic performance should not be held without the puja. And he who will hold the stage and the dramatic performance without the puja will find his knowledge useless and he will come to a bad rebirth. Whether it is the Nartaka (actor) or the Arthapati (his wealthy patron), if he does not perform the puja in accordance with conventions will attain auspicious wealth and (in the end) go to the celestial world”. (NS.1.122-128).

The esoteric message of the puja could be above the congregation’s understanding, whereas the mythological content of the drama was clear to all. In other words the puja was a liturgy addressed mainly to gods, while the scenic myth played the part of a visual sermon intended for an impact on the worshippers. Thus the drama played a major ritual and homiletic part as acquainting believers with the canonical tradition. Though appearing together in one sacred ceremony, the rite and the ritual drama were autonomous enough as related to each other. The Purvarangapuja had a universal message, as shown in Chapter I of this study. A rite with a pre-set and unchanged theological basis, it could be performed even without its drama complement – as, for instance, in the medieval puja – whereas the early drama was, to all appearances, impossible outside the ceremonial worship, and was enacted only in the sacrificial process.

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We shall sum up the above by assuminmg that ancient India knew a unique type of temple of Guha variety – sites of regular puja, with their universal sacral message, anmd ritual dramas.

Importantly, the idea of the temple-theatre long outlived the early ritual Natya in Indian culture. As we see it, the medieval Natmandiras (playhouses or dancing halls) within templar ensembles were later interpretations of the same idea. They

served for ritual dancing, and some kinds of the puja performed to great congregations on religious feasts. The vast numbers of Apsara and Gandharva sculptures on the facades of Hindu temples testify to this Unity of the theatre and the worship as they stand in postures prescribed by the Natyasastra.

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They are assumed to have appeared at about the same time as a group, while the corpus of manuscripts comprising the basic and supplementary Upagamas had taken its final shape by the 9th century AD to reflect medieval Hinduism. Supposedly, they were preceded by older ritual texts which corresponded to the initial formative stage of Hinduism – a proto Agama, which has not gone down to us. Thus, the Natyasastra turns out to be much older than all the Agamic literature available today. It fixes many features of the emergence of the iconic cult and, at the same time, is the earliest source on the puja ritualism. As we feel bound to remind in this connection, the ritual texts of the Natyasastra took shape much earlier than the conventionally accepted 1st and 2nd centuries.

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It is appropriate here to pose the question when templar rites of image worship became spread. The Agamic treatises give documentary proof that confessionally varied iconic cults flourished in medieval India. Proceeding from the dating of the Natyasastra, we can assume with a great degree of certainty that sophisticated forms of templar ritualism connected with stage performances existed as early as the turn of the present millennium.

Thus, Panini's grammar, the Astadhyayi, dated 5th to 4th century B.C, mentions image of gods, to which it refers as Prakriti (Pan.5.3.96) or, more specially.

Commentary on the Sutras, written a century or two after Panini (Vart.1.3.25; Pat., Pat.,vol.I.p.281), and in Patanjali, presumable author of the Mahabhasya (2nd century B.C).

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The earliest extant ruins of stone temples and samples of stone statuary, going

back to the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C, show an established canon and exquisite craftsmanship of stonemasons and sculptors, which had acquired refinement, as experts think, in the period of wooden architecture preceding stone sculpture and building. Thus, the tradition of templar architecture and decorative sculpture must have emerged several centuries earlier, at the same conventionalized borderline of the mid - 1st millennium B.C.

According to the *Astadhyayi*, that same period was noted for the formation of religious and mythological ideas linked to the ritual practice of image worship. Panini refers to Siva and Skanda among the post-Vedic deities whom, as Patanjali noted, “the Vedas do not intend together for offering gifts” (Pan.6.3.26: Pat., vo.III, p.149). Panini mentions Bhavani, Rudrani, Sarvani and Mrdani- names corresponding to the female hypostasis of Siva and derived from his four names (Pan.4.1.59). The ancient grammarian also points out the adoration of Maharaja, or Vessavana – Kubera the lord of the four keepers of the cardinal points, who may be identified with the Lokapalas, unknown in the Vedic tradition but important in the mythology of the *Natyasastra* and the medieval Agamic texts (Pan.4.4.135).

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The *Astadhyayi*, among others, provides proof that the theatre did exist and even had a theoretical background at the time. Many scholars pointed out Panini’s references to *Natasutras*, which go together with the epithet ‘enigmatic’ in the common practice. Many books have been written to discuss whether those *Sutras* were manuals for dancers and mimes, or for proper actors.

Panini already knew the difference between *Nrtta*, dancing (Pan.3.1.145) and *Natya*, drama proper (Pan.4.3.129). Of importance are his observations on the linguistic connection between these terms. As the *Astadhyayi* specifies, *Natya*, nor *Nrtta*, were derived from *Nata*. Probably, these kinds of scenic action were mutually separated not only terminologically but in practice. In particular, Patanjali’s comments on the corresponding *Sutras* by Panini make a special proviso for the use of the term *Nrtta* to denote dancing. The *Natyasastra*, which, doubtless, concerns well-developed forms of the drama, repeatedly refers to

actors as Natas. Proceeding from this, we can say that even in Panini time, the term Nata denoted not only dancers-or dancers least of all-but actors in the proper sense of this word, and by Natya, meant a performance close to the drama typologically and according to the nature of the imagery.

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Panini mentions these Sutras in the section which enumerates treatises written in the various Vedic schools. He cites the Natasutras of Silalin and Krsasva with the Brahmanas, Kalpasutras and Srautasutras, referring to them as sacral writings. In his comment to Panini, Patanjali points out that the study of the Natasutras differed from the accepted textual form of passing ritual lore on, as it took place on the stage. "The teaching (starts) when the beginners appear on the stage (and say): 'Let us listen to (and learn from) the Nata'" (Pan.1.4.29; Pat., vol.I p.329). Panini's commentators attributed the Natasutras to the Amnaya tradition – fact of the utmost importance. By amnaya were meant sacred legends and writ, so it belonged to the tradition to which the medieval Agamic texts ascribed themselves, when the system of ideas fixed there was meant by Amnaya. Thus, we can assume that Panini's time saw Natasutras as religious works connected with a kind of ritual practice.

There is an opinion that the treatise was directly preceded by the Natasutra by silalin, mentioned in the Satapatha Brahmana as a master of rites (S Br.XIII.5.3.3.). As follows from Patanjali's comment, the Astadhyayi meant the name of a school ascending to renowned Silalin, rather than the particular author of a Sutra.

Notably, the Natyasastra often refers to drama performers as Sailalakas – a term evidently

Derived from Sailalinas, ignited Silalin school students of Natasutras. This is a weighty testimony of the link between Silalin's Natasutra and the Natyasastra.

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Fully recalling to his mind all the Vedas after this resolution, the Holy Lord created Natyaveda, born out of the four Vedas.

May this Natyaveda be passed and indefatigable'. On hearing what has been mentioned by Brahma, Indra bowed to him with folded palms and replied thus: 'O the best and holy One, the gods are unworthy of the art of Natya because they are incapable of receiving, retaining, comprehending and putting it into practice. The sages, who possess the esoteric mystery of the Vedas and are firm in the observance of holy cows, are capable of receiving, retaining and putting it into practice' "(NS.1.5-23).

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According to the legend, Brahmins had acquired the esoteric Vedic knowledge – i.e., had gone through special schooling required to qualify as full members of the priestly varna – before they received the Natya doctrine. This mention is fully in keeping with the fact that Natasutras emerged in Vedic schools, centres of Brahmana learning.

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Unlike the Vedic canon, it opened to all varnas, even the Sudras.

In this sense, the sacred knowledge of the Natyaveda was counterposed to the Brahmanic theology, with its pivotal dogma of the Aryans.

Thus the puja became entitled to the status of a solemn festive rite performed to a large congregations. Probably, this factor accounted from the start for the overall idea of a spectacular, stagy divine worship, encouraged by ornate aesthetics intrinsic to the puja, for which the natural beauty of flowers and the exquisite aroma of incense were so important. More than that, its theatrical nature, to all appearances, allowed to involve even the least trained worshippers from the lowest varnas as it preached new religious values in the varied and easily understandable idiom of stage performance.

All this explains why none other than a treatise on the theatre reflected the oldest premises of the Agamic ideology, which came to replace the Vedic Nigama.

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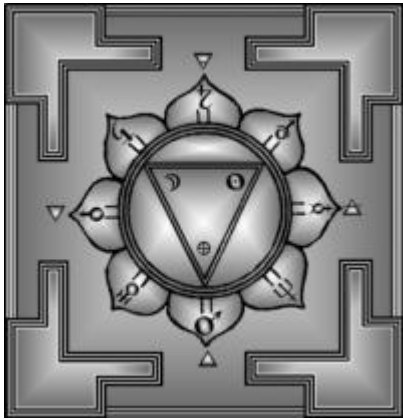
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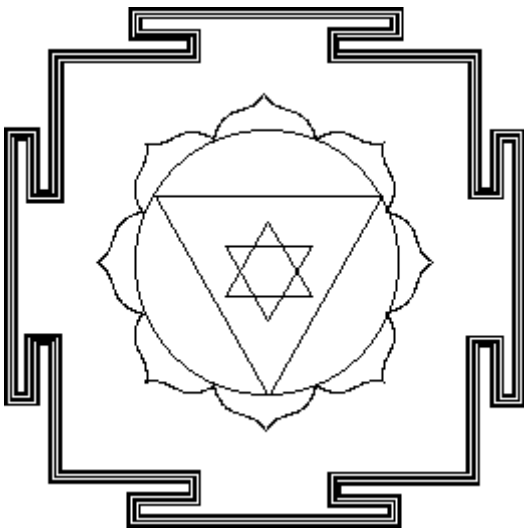
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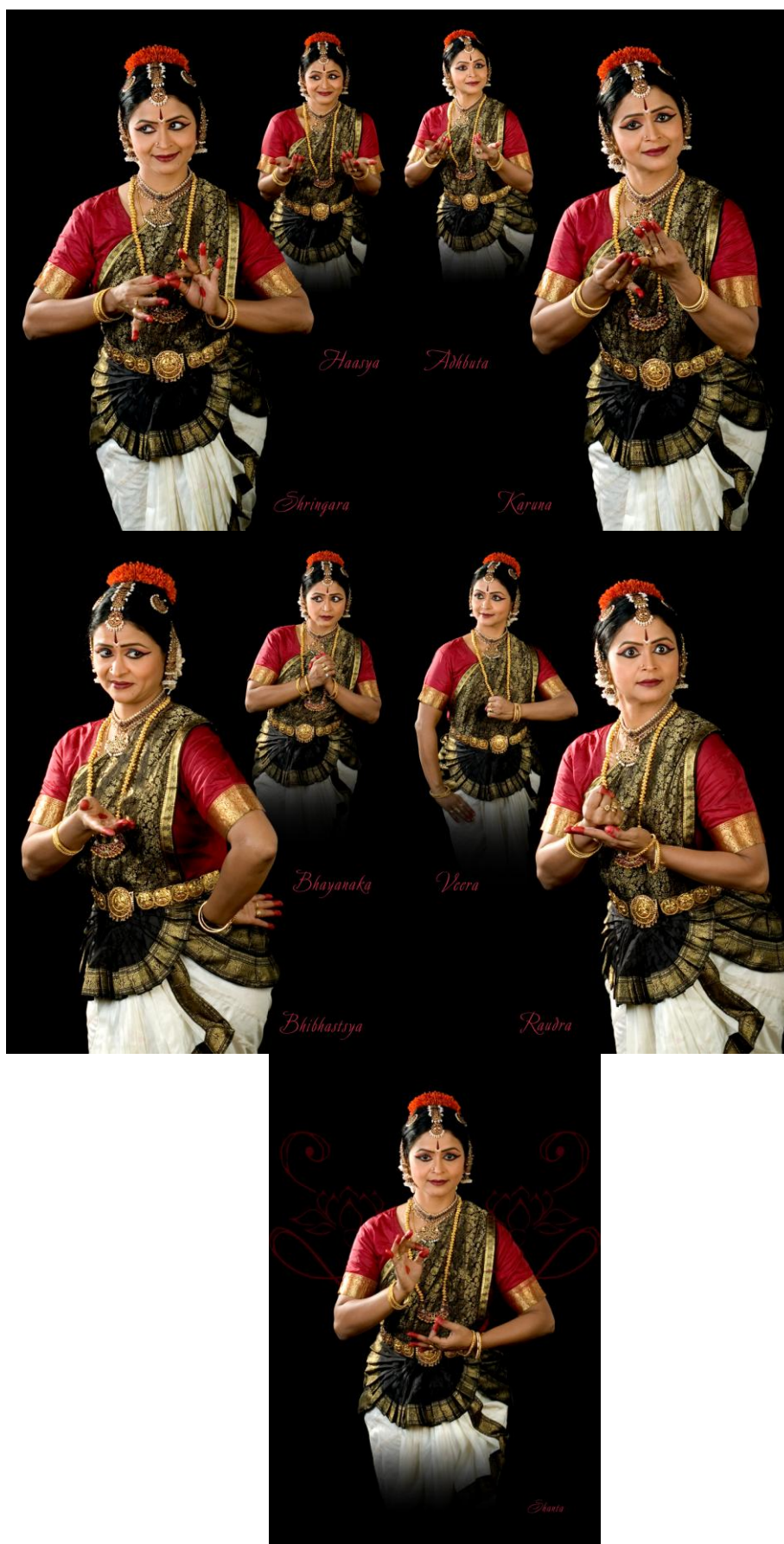
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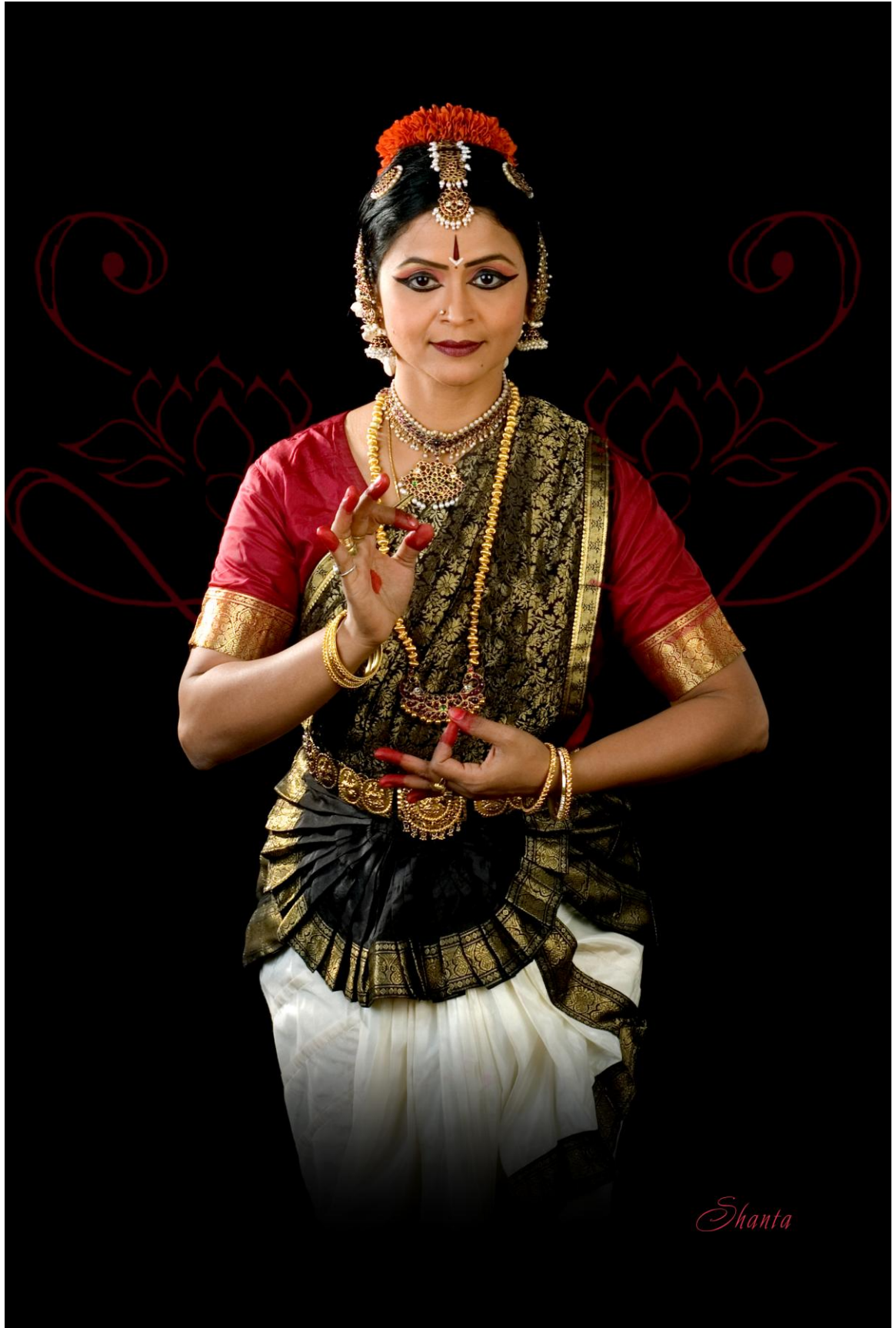






2. NAVARASAS, an illustration-







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