Notes and References-


[3] Ibid…. Page 48,49,50

[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 Kohn, (published by Shambhala Publications in 1998),

[5] Some Pearls from the Fourth Chapter of Abhinavabhāratī (Karanas and Angahāras), Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam


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. Patanjali ..........Page 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. Nayar ........Page 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. Upadhyaya ........Page 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
Yakshagana 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
depth 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
sahalakshana. 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 cowhers (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 Mishra ……Page 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 Vatsyayan ……..Page 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 dancesunnes.
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 “chams-yig” 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
that Vajra Master meditates on and mimics in turn the attributes and activities of all the principal deities of the Vajrakīla maṇḍala, and a similar process seems to characterise the Black Hat Vajrakīla monastery '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 mythical⁵ 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 Tibet⁶. 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.
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.


Thus, Pratyahara serves Nagas and Raksasas, Apsaras take pleasure in Avatarana, Gandharvas in Aramba, Danavas in Asravana and Vaktrapani. Again, Rakasas 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, Uthapana, 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 Natyasstra connected with worship of the three supreme gods, Siva, Brahma and Visnu, in neuter, male and female hypostases. The Sutradhara 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 Siva (Rudra), was with the raised right- ‘male’ – leg; the next, Brahma’s was with the moderately raised right, ‘neuter’, and the last, for Upendra (Visnu), 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, Samkara (Siva) the second, Visnu the third section, Karttikeya (Skanda) the fourth, and the great Nagas – Sesa, Vasuki and Taksaka – 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)

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.

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.

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.

The Prarocana was meant to guarantee divine protection for the Natya played right after the Purvaranga.

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.

Performed in the light of Mula star.
Connected with a wealth of omens, it demanded utmost care.

(Cantric)
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).

Page 36
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.

Page 37
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 the concept regards the Natyasastra rites as part and parcel of Vedic ritualism – an equivalent of yajna, the Vedic offering.
Yajnena sammitam hy etad rangadaivatapujanam.

Page 38
All yajna rites in three basic types, with seven particular forms in each: the Somayajna, some 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 Natyasastra 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.

Page 41

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)

Page 42

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.

Page 43
The Natyasstra 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.

Page 44
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.
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).

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.

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).

Page 48
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 – Avrta, 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.

Page 49
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 analogues 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 Nrtta), 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 Nrtta. 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 Nrtta 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 Nrtta. 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 commoin to all three worship practices under review-the Vedic sacrifice yajna, Natyasastra rites and the Agamic puja.

Agamic rites knew another analogues 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 srite 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 Natyasastras, and the priest who performed the Agamic puja.

Page 53
Neither did it originate out of the rite, but evolved parallel to as part and parcel of the ritual ceremony.

(Veda- natya- tantras)

Page 54
Four genres – Samvakara, Dima, Jhamrga and Vyayoga – present the greatest scholarly interest.

In Chapter XIV, the Natyasstra set forth the basic characteristics of the Avidda dramas, recurring practically unchanged in Chapter XXXV. According to the treatise, “the play which requires energetic aggressive (sattvavidda) 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 Avidda.

Avidda dramas.

The category of the style (Vrtti) – to be more precise, a blend of two styles, the Sattvati and the Arabhati.

Page 55
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.

Page 56
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 it 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 assuming that ancient India knew a unique type of temple of Guha variety – sites of regular puja, with their universal sacral message, and 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 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 certainly 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 an mimes, or for proper actors. Panini already knew the difference between Nṛtta, 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 Nṛtta, 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 Nṛtta 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.

Page 112
Panini mentions these Sutras in the section which enumerates treatises written in the various Vedic schools. He cites the Natasutras of Silanin 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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