PREFACE

I am extremely indebted to my revered Prof. K. D. BAJPAI, Head of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Saugar for his valuable guidance and paternal care bestowed on me. He guided me at every step, corrected the manuscript, gave me new ideas and showed me the path to put in some novelty. In fact, he endowed me with the necessary zeal and stimulus for the arduous job taken up by me of traversing the vast field of Indian Dancing. He took much pains and care, suggested to me the books to be consulted and without him I would not have been able to present the thesis in the way it has been done. His constant guidance has enabled me to steer through the task smoothly in a much less time.

I am also grateful to Shri Pramod Kumar, Lecturer in the Faculty of Law, Lucknow University, for taking keen interest in my work and giving me necessary advice and all possible facilities in consulting the valuable books available in different libraries at Lucknow. But for his kind help and brotherly affection it would have been an uphill task for me to get in touch with some of the most useful and rare books. He also took pains at the cost of his personal work to review the work done by me from time to time, to guide me properly and suggest amendments, where necessary.
A brief account of the topics discussed chapter-wise is now given:

With the growth of culture, various forms of classical dances gradually evolved. The origin of all the classical dances is traced in the Nāṭya Śāstra. But there have been variations in the forms and styles due to differences in the customs of different communities. India being a vast country could afford to nourish variations of styles. Four main schools of classical dancing evolved in the country: (i) the Bharata Nāṭyam, (ii) the Kathākali, (iii) the Maṇipuri, and (iv) the Kathak.

The Bharata Nāṭyam school is said to have originated in the Tamilnad around the Śaiva temples. This style of dance has survived for nearly three thousand years in our country and it can be regarded as one of the proudest possessions of our traditional heritage. Bharata Nāṭyam has a spiritual background. It is obviously a temple art and was mainly practised by devadāsis, who were deemed to be the servants of gods. This dance gives a divine universality and comprehensive approach to life. A detailed discussion on the origin and styles of this school is given in Chapter II.

The second classical school of dance is Kathākali. It flourished in the extreme South on the Malabar coast and in Kerala. The legendary history of Kerala attributes
it to the Brāhmaṇa warrior Parasūrāma, an incarnation of Lord Vishṇu. The classical dance art of Kathākali has an accumulative growth from the social and religious background of Kerala where Śaiva and Tāntrika cults flourished. In the Kathākali dancing a mythological tale is narrated. The whole story is set in the framework of dance and gesture and is largely based on imagination. A detailed account of the Kathākali style of dancing is given in Chapter III.

In the hilly region of Assam people lived a community life of their own. They still preserved their own distinct tradition of art and culture. In the early pre-Hindu period the dances of the region of Manipur were animistic in nature. The people of Manipur have been dancing the love-tale of the two lovers Khamba and Thoebi. With the advent of Vaishṇavism and Hindu religion, the Manipur dance was associated with the worship of lord Śiva and Pārvatī which came to be known as Lai Harobā. The Lai Harobā dance is thus a form of dance drama and represents a ritual. The early history of Manipur is rather scanty and there is a lack of authoritative historical data. Manipuri dance is at once soft, delicate and full of grace and beauty because of the prolonged insistence
of the feminine style, the Lasya. It is the product of centuries of mythmaking. It has been said that the spell of Manipurī is its inner magic, in the slow awakening of the senses, the transformation of men into gods. The origin and technique of the Manipurī style of classical dancing have been discussed in Chapter IV.

The fourth dance-style- Kathak, occupies a large part of North and Central India. Its origin is attributed in the Śāstric texts of Dwarkā. Pārvatī instructed the Lasya to the disciples and the apsarās of the Bharatmuni who in turn gave instructions to the milk-maids of Dwarka. Later, the Rāsa Lilās of Krīṣṇa and Rādhā were danced by the people. Thus the word Kathak is equivalent to Kathika, a storyteller. This style of dancing gradually spread in the whole of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and the Punjab areas. This dance style has suffered most, because of the northwestern invasions. This school of dancing was also influenced by the foreigners. A detailed account of this school is posited in Chapter V of the present work.

Dance is rooted in nature of man and people of a community have a dance of their own. Although classical school of dancing as originated from the Bharat Nātya Śāstra was popular, it would not be
performed by the common uninstructed persons. Thus people of a particular community as a whole had and still have a dance of their own; such dances may be termed as folk or popular dances. They vary from community to community and from region to region. In Chapter VI various important folk dances have been discussed and the influence of respective classical school of dancing has been traced.

The archaeological monuments and sculptures of a period depict the cultural life of that period. If dance is a part of the life of the people, it is natural to find its expression through the art and architecture of ancient India. It is needless to point out here the majestic grace in some of the ancient images found at Mathura, Sarnath, Amaravati, Nagarjunikonda, Ajanta, Ellora, Konark, Chidambaram, etc. Chapter VII gives an account of the Indian dancing poses as depicted in ancient Indian sculptures. In ancient times India had cultural contacts with several neighbouring countries. The influence of these contacts can be seen in the relics and life of the people of several countries. Spread of Hinduism and Buddhism in Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Indo-China and in Java, Sumatra, Bali Islands (now Indonesia) only speaks of this cultural influence. Many of the dances of these
countries bear influences of Indian dances. Chapter VIII discusses Indian dances as depicted in the neighbouring countries in Ceylon, Burma, Indo-China, Malaya, Sumatra, Bali and Indonesia. These two chapters attempt to corroborate the role of dancing in Indian life.

Having thus corroborated, it is only left to assess the influence of dancing on the life of the people of our country. What has been the role of dancing in the society and what it is today is reflected in the last chapter, of course with remarks as to what it should be.