Chapter I.

_INTRODUCTION_

Throughout the web of human history one golden thread is noticeable, viz. that there has always been dance. It would not be inappropriate to say that dance is one of the most popular and firmly rooted activities of mankind. The adage that so long as there is life there is dance, is aptly correct. Whatever its techniques and forms, dance is regarded as a rhythmic expression. It seems that human mind has from hoary past inculcated the fundamental idea of rhythm. This rhythm has been acquired from nature. It was noticed by the early man that there was day followed by night in a regular and rhythmic sequence, beyond change by any human agency. He also felt a regular and rhythmic change in various seasons. With this he realised a sort of regularity in all the occurrences of the universe. His mind began to think that probably there was some power which regulated all the activities of the universe in a rhythmic form. This universal rhythm or dance has been recognised as the very life of human existence. Man from the very early stage felt a rhythmic drama in nature. He saw the sun and the moon dancing around him, the day following the

night, winter followed by summer and then by rain, leaves and flowers coming and then going off at regular intervals. It was thus the idea of a rhythm which was assimilated in the human nature and in turn it gave expressions to various types of songs and dances of life.

Before the dawn of civilization in the universe if there has been any universal medium of conveying one's feeling to another, it has been the medium of expression through gestures. Even before the advent of language, whether spoken or written, human beings conveyed their ideas through bodily movements. Dance is an art which becomes embodied in human beings, who in turn express their ideas through various postures of dancing. In early primitive tribes we find that each tribe had some distinct tribal dances of its own. It was deemed compulsory on the part of each and every member of the tribe to be able to perform his or her own tribal dances. If a person was able to perform the particular dance of a community, it was a positive proof that he belonged to that community.

1. "Every aspect of Creation- man, bird and beast, flower, fruit and tree, the wind and the waves- displays a dance pattern known in the language of Indian dances as the Divine Nritya or Daily dance." Indian Dancing by Ram Gopal and Serozh Dadachan ji, Page 13.
Early philosophers viewed the universe as the work of a **Supreme Artist** and in consonance with this idea they maintained that life was also an art. Plato conceived the life of man as an embodiment of art. He was of the view that man was the measuring rod of all things, of those which existed and those which had no existence. He regarded man as the active creator of life and knowledge. Plato based his theory of man's education on such training in life which could enable him to discover the best expression of his life. He said that a right understanding of the nature of the soul was essential and this could be achieved by proper education. A good system of education according to him comprises two stages: the first upto the age of eighteen concentrates on proper development of body and cultivation of various feelings; in the second stage the rational aptitude is developed. Plato emphasized on education in poetry, literature, music and dance, the fine arts, which train the mind to see the beautiful and the good. Thus we find dance constituting an important element of Plato's philosophy. Aristotle was also convinced that training in music and dance was necessary in a fully developed human being. In the life of the primitive people religion played a very vital part. Like other arts dance was also imbued with religious
significance. It was taken for granted that to dance in rhythmic movements was part and parcel of the universal law. Dance was to be seen in all the stages of life, be it the birth of a child, marriage or funeral ceremony; whether it was the sowing or the harvesting season; whether it was war or the end of war. For all the things the primitive people required, they danced. It can therefore be said that the most ancient and highest form of prayer was dance. That dance had a divine origin is attested to by our ancient scriptures.

As a matter of fact, dance had been present as a predominant feature throughout the universe since its origin. Every nation, tribe or clan has had its dances. Like the history of all other fine arts the history of dance follows changes in attitude and fluctuations in man's concept of art which have given to every period its distinctive character. The present work is concerned only with ancient Indian dances and an attempt is being made to trace its development. The earliest and simplest form of dance is depicted in Indian rock painting scenes. It exists in its primitive state as the earliest expressive acts of man could have been none other than random, impulsive movements, unorganized except as they followed the natural law of this functioning

3. See Prof. K.D. Bajpai, Sagar Through the Ages, 1964 Plate II (b) Rock paintings from Abchand depicting a group dance.
body structure. These scenes recall a passion for rhythm. Lateron it took a definite shape and it can be easily identified in the dancing girl of Mohenjodaro. Not only this but the depiction of dance scenes on pottery and vessels etc. prove that a highly stylish form of dance began to flourish in the Indus Valley Civilization. The dances performed in the Vedic period were not only supposed to be an emotional out-burst as it was in primitive age but it shows that a new religious and secular faith came into existence. It became an element of Vedic ritual. The various technical terms for dance i.e. nritta, nartan etc. and other references in Vedic literature and Brahmanical epics show that dance has been performed in ancient India from very early times.

2. नर्तकिन - Rig Veda 1-51-3
   राज्यकर्षण - Rig Veda 10-72-6
   नर्तकिन - Katha Upanishad 1-26
   नर्तक - Gopat Brahmana 1-2-7, 1-2-21,
   नर्तकिन - Taimini Brahma 1-42
   शेष - Valmiki Ramayana (Hindi Translation by S.P. Sharma 1958)
   नर्तकिन - Ibid 18 Sarga, 16 Sloka
   नर्तकिन - Ibid 18-18
   नर्तकिन - Mahabharata - Virat Parva
   पार्वत्य - Parvata Pravep Parva 1 - Lesson 2, Sloka 29
   नर्तकिन - Ibid - Lesson 11, Sloka 8
   नर्तकिन - Ibid 11-10
   शेष - Ibid 11, 11
Vātsyāyana has also observed that during the Vedic period, schools of different kalās developed. Vocal music, instrumental music and dancing etc. have also been referred to in his Kāmsūtra among sixty-four kalās.

The zenith of dance in ancient India must be assigned to the golden age of the Gupta. This was the classical period not only of dance but also of every art like Sanskrit literature, culminating in the dramas of Kālidās and to the same time is assigned the monumental treatise of Bharat on the theory of dance and drama. Kālidās is known as one of the foremost poets of the world. In the age of Kālidās, Nrītya reached the height of consummation and has always been associated with acting and drama. So if we want any search in dancing in Gupta period we must go through the dramas.

2. Ibid, Page 74.
4. Vikramorvasi, IV, 12.
5. B. S. Upadhyaya, India in Kālidāsa, 1947, Page 228.
of Kalidāsa and the literatures of Kalidāsa are
Abhijñāna Sakuntala, Vikramorvasi, Malvikagnimitra,
Raghuvarsha, Meghadūta, Kumara Sambhava and Ritusamhara
which reflect the genius of the poet. His dramas deal
with the various references of art of dancing and the
name of Ganadāsa is also remembered as he was a
teacher of music, dancing and acting and he taught
Malvika (pancagabhina), the five limb dance.
A dance known as Chalika was also performed which
was based on Catuspada i.e. a song of four parts and it has
has been regarded as the most difficult of dances to be
demonstrated. Commentator Katayavema observes that
expression and sentiments predominate in dance. The
references of other distinct types of dances are also
traceable in Gupta period. For example, Kutilika
Mallaghati and Galitaka are important. Among these the
first is danced without the help of a rāga but in
accompaniment of a particular poste and gesticulation

1. पञ्चागाधिकारिनयपुरा (Malvikagnimitra, Page 14. 2. चलिकमस् Malvikagnimitra, Pages 4, 5, 6, 21, 24.
3. चकुम्प्रदशोधलिकमस्, Ibid., Pages 21, 24.
4. तुष्मोघ्यमथिनै, Ibid., Page 21
Also see B.S. Upadhyaya, India in Kalidās, Page 228.
5. Ibid.
called Ardhamattali (the Ardhamattali posture is explained as उपेताप्यूषौ पायैं नामर्चनेषु पतिति: करेः | कर्णामसमः |

The names of various postures like Caturasraka, Ardhacaturasraka, Sthānaka, and Vāmaka are also known in the days of Kalidās. The word Nartaki and Vanini comes out for female professional dancers. There is also a description of music hall where teachers of the highest order imparted training of music and dancing. Similarly, the other words like लालितिकन्तरायेपी, संगीति आयार, सुभिकला, प्रभोिग प्रधानेः हि तत्त्व शास्त्रम्, etc. suggest that music and dancing were exclusively cultivated in the time of Kalidās. "Courtesans were employed to sing and dance in the great temple of Mahākāla at Ujjaini. They were regular servants of the temple whose business it was, apart from their demonstration in honour of Śiva, to act as the bearers of the Lord's flywhisks."

1. B.S. Upadhyaya, India in Kalidās, Page 229.
2. Ibid.
3. Raghuvamsa, XIX, 14,15,19.
4. संगीतशास्त्र, Sakuntala, Page 150
   Mālvikāgnimitra, Pages 4,6.
5. Mālvikāgnimitra, Page 14; Raghuvamsa, XIX, 36.
7. Vikramorvasi, Page 27.
Some popular dances are also referred to in the Vardhan period, among which Mandalī Nritya, Rechakā Nritya, Rāsanritya, Rabhsārabdha Nartana and Chatulsikha Nartana are important. Among these dances Mandalī Nritya deserves special mention. This is also known as Hallishaka in the Saraswatikanthābharaṇa of Bhoja. This Mandalī Nritya is also called as Hallimaka. The performances of a male dancer surrounded by the female dancers in a circular way is the special feature of this Mandalī Nritya and it is similar to Rāsanritya which is performed by eight, sixteen or thirty-two persons. Rechakā dance gives more importance to the movements of waist, hands and neck.

In Rabhsārabdha Nartana we see a passion for great excitement which is expressed by the forceful movements of hands and feet.

All these dances come into the category of Arbhati Vritti. There are four types of vrittis as

1. रैणनांतीं मंडली रेचक एवं एस्सरम सागवङ्गल नर्तनाया वाद्यिति नियतः


2. मंडली न तु अन्यत्र हृदयौ जगत् स्मृता तद्यथा गोप स्नेहार्य भए होते।

   तद्यथा हृदयण्या रक्षित तालमुखिक्षणं भूतं एस्सरमण्युज्यते
   हर्षचारितम् १००

3. मंडली दूष्टं हृदयमंकर् आदि

4. महश्यायों महामार्गं न्ययमक्ति नामका: ।

   पिंडिको नल्लासुरि रितावते तत्तुष्टं एस्सरम स्मृतां ॥

   See V.S. Agrawala, Harshcharita (1953), Page 33.

5. Ibid.
described in the Nāṭya Śāstra of Bharatamuni, i.e. Bharati, Sātwati, Ārāhāti and Kaishikī Vritti. Other names like Vārutilāsini, Varṣanitās, ashīlarāsakāpad and the description of the dancing performance at the time of birth of Harsha suggest that dance flourished to a great extent not only in Gupta period but even in Vardhana period as well.

It is acknowledged that the most authoritative and exhaustive text on Indian dancing is the NĀṬYA ŚĀSTRA attributed to Bharata Muni, who is said to have composed it under the direct command of Brahma, the Creator. It is said that once many high ranked sages, Atri and others, approached the sage Bharatamuni.

1. भारती साक्षरी एव दृतिमारणी तथा समासित: प्रभोगस्तु प्रयुक्तव ज्ञमा विन्ध्याः || ४१||
परिपूः प्रसंगमाय्याक्ष विस्मयिनी सम्भव || ४२||
अश्राहै सत्तुरघुः नैरतीकीचापि मौलय || ४३||

(साहेज शास्त्र,प्रश्नमोहद्वयम्)

2. Court Dancers
   See V. S. Agrawala, Harisha charita, 1953, Page 47.

3. Ibid.


5. Ibid, Page 66.
and asked him about the origin of Nāṭya Veda. In reply Bharata Muni asked them to listen to him attentively about the origin of the Nāṭya Veda, devised by Brahma. He explained that when the golden age (Kṛtayuga) had passed with the reign of Svāmbhu (Manu) and the Silver Age (Tretāyuga) commenced, the people became addicted to sensual pleasures and fell a victim to the four evils; viz. Kāma, Krodha, Lobha and Moha, with the result that their happy life became mixed with sorrow.

The Jambūdvīpa, which was protected by the Lokapālas, was full of gods, dānavas, gandharvas.
yakṣas, rākṣasas and great uragas (Nāgas). The gods with Indra as their head approached Brahmā and requested him to bestow on them an object of diversion, which could be heard as well as seen. Since the Śūdras were not entitled to listen to the Vedas, they requested him to create another Veda which could be open to all Vānas. After meditating deeply Brahmā thought of making a fifth Veda on Nātya with the semi-historical tales which would comprise the teachings of all scriptures and a review of all arts and crafts. It would be conducive to the human well-being and would also inspire men to perform their duties and attain wealth and fame.
With this consideration Brahma composed the 1 Natyaveda from the four Vedas. The recitative portion was taken from the Rig Veda, the song from the Sama, the histrionic representation from the Yajur and the sentiments (rasa) from the Atharvaveda.

Thus in the creation of the Natyaveda, Brahma took the chief characteristics of the four Vedas, viz. the literary aspect of the Rig, the action aspect of the Yajur, the musical aspect of a Sama and the rasa aspect of Atharva.

After the creation of the Natyaveda, Brahma asked god Indra to get it dramatised and acted by gods. Indra, thereupon, narrated the difficulties of gods to dramatise it. Brahma commanded sage Bharata along with his one hundred sons, to take charge of the Natyaveda and practise it. Thus ordered, Bharata
learnt the Nāṭyaveda from Brahmā and made his able sons to study it along with its proper application. Brahmā, along with Bharata, went to the abode of god Śiva and a play named Tripurādāha, was staged before lord Śiva. Lord Śiva was greatly impressed and he, being the originator of Nṛttta, called his chief follower to teach this Nṛttta to Bharata. Bharata learnt Nṛttta from Taṇḍu.

The Nāṭyaveda, as practised by Bharata and his one hundred sons, lacked the graceful style (which included rasa and bhāva). Brahmā then created apsaras and gave them over to Bharata to help him in the
practising of Nātyaveda. Sages Swāti and Nārada were employed to play the instrument and sing in accompaniment. The first performance of the Nātya Śāstra was then held in the court of Indra.

Later on Bharata, with his sons and apsarās, performed a dance before lord Śiva, the Nātarāja. Lord Śiva in turn instructed Bharata in the Tāṇḍava style of dance. The female aspect of dance (lāsya) was known to Pārvatī. She gave instructions in this mode of dance to apsarās. From them lāsya came

1 सन्म्ह तपस्यकलो श्रेण कलमा श्रेण में देशेवे
हन्तिस्मीरा घाण्ड नियु कृत्तु सह शिष्ये: हन्त्यस्मुना।।
(१-४०)

2 नाट्यस्मात्प्रत्याप्तम् प्रतिपद्धार्थम् कि कर्तवायाधम्।।
स्ततंत्रनं स्वतं सत्यनाय पर्यवच्छिद्य जितामहः।।
(१-४४)

(नाट्य शास्त्र)
down to the milk-maids of Dwarka and from them to others.

Bharata's Nātya Śāstra is recognized as the fundamental book on all classical dances of India. The dance based on it has three principal aspects: the Nātya, the Nritya and the Nritta. All these aspects are performed either by males or females. When it is performed by males it is known as tāndava. When the performer is a female, giving expression to feminine grace, it is known as lāsya. Before we proceed to discuss the various schools of classical dances as evolved from the Nātya Śāstra, it will be worthwhile to mention the significance of each Nātya, Nritya and Nritta.
Nātya is a dramatic part. It consists of various purposeful aspects necessary for a successful drama. Broadly speaking, the drama portrays the different actions of the world, viz. performance of duty, amusement, earning wealth and enjoying peace. It also depicts laughter, war, killing and fulfilment of ambition. It will teach righteousness to those having a religious bent of mind, love to mankind, harassment to those leading a wayward life, help to those who are restrained, courage to the coward, bravery to the heroes, enlightenment to the foolish, intellect to those seeking wisdom, self-control to the aggrieved, riches to the persons desiring wealth and calmness to the disturbed mind. Bhāva is

1. नाट्यं तत्त्वानं चैन पूर्वे पूर्णकाधायुतम्
   (निन्देशकवित्रेभिरपृष्ठारम् - पृष्ठ ३ - लोक ४२)
   अन्वत्तानुष्ठाति नातिसङ्गम् (गुण वेणुमात्रः ९, ५)


conveyed through abhinaya or acting and nātya performance covers all the four types of abhinaya, viz. (1) āṅgika, (2) Vācika, (3) āharya, and (4) sāttvika. Āṅgikābhinaya is performed with the use of Angas, Pratyāngas and Upāngas, in Āṅgikābhinaya the use of the hands and fingers is vital and through these alone can one convey the exact meaning of words on the stage. The Vāchikābhinaya is performed by means of speech and includes poetry and songs, it is also expressed through the musical accompaniment and the songs by the dancer. The third, āharyābhinaya, includes make-up, costumes, jewellery etc., which are also an important factor in adding grace and beauty in dance and drama. Sāttvikābhinaya is the fourth aspect of abhinaya and is the essence of dance. It can be successfully expressed only by an expert dancer. It deals with the ability of various human emotions caused by


Also see: (i) Gopinath and S.V. Ramana Rao, The Classical Dance Poses of India, Page iii.


(iii) Gaekwad's Oriental Series, No. XLVIII, Natyadarpana of Ram Chandra and Yuna Chandra, 1959, Pages 167-169.
immobility or paralysis, fainting, horripilation, sweating, the broken voice, trembling, weeping, change of colour, etc. which are the results of fundamental human emotions.

**NRITYA:**

Nritya includes the mode of application of abhinaya and is representational and deliberate art. It is capable of expressing rasa similar to Nātya and Nṛtta. As a matter of fact bhāva predominates in the Nṛitya aspect of dancing. Thus Nṛitya is that form of dance which possesses flavour, mood, and suggestion ( rasa, bhāva, vyañjanā ), and the like. It seeks to express sentiments and simultaneously creates its corresponding mood. It conveys meaning

1. अभिनयानाथर्थं नृत्यस्मि
   Deśarūpaka, Page 1 - 9.

   Nandikeshwar, Abhinayadarpanam, Page 3.
of the songs through body movements and gestures. Thus expression which plays an important role in dance and drama is the chief characteristic of Nritya. The abhinaya or the act of communication, and its various aspects specially āṅgikābhinaya, āhāryābhinaya and sāttvikābhinaya, constitute an inherent quality of Nritya. It would be apt to say that in Nritya explicit gestures predominate.

**NRITTA:**

Nritta is that form of dance which is void of flavour (rasa) and mood. Nritta and Nritya constitute dancing as a separate art. The ordinary performance of a nāca includes alternate Nritya and Nritta, the former consisting of set dances with some special subject, and accompanied by varied gestures, the latter merely moving to and fro, marking time with the feet, and so forth.

Dhanañjaya speaking of Nritya and Nritta, says that the former representing gestures with meanings is called high (mārga) and the latter is known as popular (desī). As nritta is based on tāla and laya it is said to be composed of āṅgahāras and Āṅgahāra is mainly made of Karṇas. Nritta is a

2. Krsnānath Pandurang, The Daśānūpaka of Dhanañjaya, page 3

3. 

(सायणशक्ति ७ अध्याय ४)
non representational art. It is also observed that Nritta needs all the qualities that an architect needs. Nritta is a pure and abstract dance. Body movements expressing decorative and ornamental patterns offer great scope for dance compositions based on intricate (tāla) time measures and laya or rhythm patterns. Like Nritya it is also of two kinds: vigorous (tāṇḍava) and soft (lāsyā). Tāṇḍava consists of the Uddhata angahāras while lāsyā includes sukumāra or madhura angahāras. Thus it can be safely repeated that Bharata Nāṭya Śāstra is the Grand Norm of classical Indian dances. It is now apt to study various schools of dancing which have evolved from this basic norm.

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Also see: Gopinath and S.V. Ramana Rao, The Classical Dance Poses of India, page 11