CHAPTER NO. 5
REFERENCES OF RĀSA-DANCE AS FOUND IN THE APABHRAṂSA
AND OLD GUJARĀṬI LITERATURE

The continuity of the Rāsa-dance tradition in Gujarāṭa could only be established with the help of the Apabhramśa literature of Gujarāṭa prevalent from around 7th A.D. to 15th A.D. Various scholars of literature, history and folklore have assigned different interpretations to the word Rāsa. But mainly it is used in the following context as

1. Dance of Sri Kṛśna with the gopīs in the Vrindāvanā.
2. Kind of songs accompanying the circular group dance.
3. A form of poetic literature of Jaina and non-Jaina poets of Western Indian region.

I shall now explore the Rāsa literature of this Apabhraṃśa period. This is one of the parameters available which provide evidence of performance of Rāsa as a dance form in Gujarāṭa.

Apabhraṃśa was the literary language of Gujarāṭa at least from the time of rise of Vallabhipura (C. 500). Considerable light has been thrown of late on Apabhraṃśa and its literature. It is very clear that it was never a spoken language. At no stage of history, Apabhraṃśa was identical with the Desabhāṣās. So far no prose work in Apabhraṃśa has been recovered. It was the language of
poetry. Āryans brought their dialect Sauraseni Prakṛt into Rājaputāna-Gujarāt tract in proto-historic times. Ābhirokta or the language of the Ābhiras, who flourished in the early centuries of Christian era, contributed Deśya or indigenous words to the general speech of the trait. The Bhillas were settled in Ābu, Marwad, Baroda, Sabarmati areas around 5th Century A.D. By about 800 A.D. Sauraseni Apabhramśa and the language of Ābhiras, Ābhirokta, the language of Bhillas with a fair contribution from Ādivasi speech led the evolution of Western Rājasthāni or the Gurjari Apabhramśa (M.R. Majmudar, "Gujarāt and its Art Heritage" Chap.I, P.15)

The grammatic structure of Apabhramśa was more developed than that of the Prākṛt. It became a parent to the modern languages like Gujarāti and Hindi in their early stages. Apabhramśa was a Western dialect and had its birth in Sīndha, Rājasthān, and Gujarāt. The well-known scholar Acārya Hemchandra, called it the Sauraseni Apabhramśa, mainly used by Jaina and other poets during 8th to 15th A.D. at the outset. The Apabhramśa tradition continued even after the Desabhāṣa-s became literary languages—The literature was mythological, religious, didactic, erotic, and heroic. The elegant phrases and picturesque images, so often found in these verses indicate a well developed literature.
The Apabhramśa was generally cultivated by the Jaina Sadhu-s. It flourished on the wealth of expression and grace of style furnished by the Sanskrit master-pieces. During the Calukyana period several Jaina monks composed prayers and religious legends in this language. The Jaina-s attained a status as high as that of the Brāhmaṇa-s in learning and politics, and as that of the Kshatriya-s in war. The monks were ardent students, prolific writers and indefitagable preachers of ethical principles. They opened the doors of learning to many for whom they were otherwise closed. The numerous Jaina works of this period indicate the great intellectual activity of the set.

The spoken language of people since the eleventh century A.D. was Gurjara Bhāshā or Gujarāṭī. It was distinct from Apabhramśa. After 1500 A.D., Gujarāṭ became a separate kingdom and the language developed new features assuming its present shape about 1650 A.D. In about four centuries i.e. from Hemcandra (1088-1172 A.D.) to Narsiha Mehta (15th A.D.) Gujarāṭī came to be recognised on its own from Apabhramśa Gurjara or Old Gujarāṭī. Even though the scholars differ in surmising the period of origin of Gujarāṭī, one could count the Bharateśwara Bāhubalī, Ghor of 1167 A.D. and Bharateśwara Bāhubalī Rāsa of 1185 A.D. as the first creations of Old Gujarāṭī on the basis of Phonology, Morphology and Vocabulary.

During the first three hundred years of second millenium, when the Hindus ruled over Gujarāṭ, almost the
entire literature was in old Gujarati. As much of it was written by the Jaina monks, the subject matter was often Jaina theology. The earliest examples of the Gujarati poetry are the illustrations given by Hemachandra-carya in the Prakrt grammar. The innumerable Rasa-s and Prabandha-s of Jaina monks date back to this period. The Rasa, i.e. stories or romances with a moral, usually extolling the Jaina faith were most interesting. The style had unique beauty and draws vivid pictures of the mannerisms and customs of that age. This type of poetry had its basic character from the Puranic Jaina canons, Agams, Sutra-s and Anga. Along with religious teachings the Sringaṇa or Erotic sentiment was explored to a remarkable extent.

Hardly any material is available to show the nature of Rasa literature that existed in Prakrt prior to the Apabhrama in Gujarat. Three Prangalakara-s namely Janasraya, Virhanka and Swayambhū who wrote Chhandovicit, Vṛuttajātisamucchaya and Swayambhuchhand respectively during 6th to 9th A.D. describe Rasa as a poetic form i.e. Rasa-prabandha. (Rasa Sāhitya, Bhāratī Vaidya, p.79) Many popular metres were used in Rasa of which Adīkā, Duvaha, Matte, Raddā and Dosa were more apt and easy to sing.
During the Muslim invasion and onslaught in Gujarāt, the Hindu population flew away and scattered to remote areas. The Jaina monks were lucky enough to be able to pursue the scholarly activities in their Upāsrayas. Without royal patronage, they had to depend on the support of the people. New literary and poetic forms like Rāsa, Phāgu, Prabandha, Pawāda etc. were evolved to satisfy the need of this new middle class known as Mahājan. They patronised the plastic arts like painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, music and dancing under the religious beliefs. The rituals were inevitable part of the religious worship and the performing arts associated with them reflected the conditions that helped preserve these traditions. This middle class of mediaeval Gujarāt increased rapidly in wealth and importance, were charitable and philanthropic in other spheres of life and also encouraged artistic activity. It wielded a far reaching influence and power on the political and cultural life of Gujarāt and took rank immediately after the king and the prists. The principles of non-violence of Jaina sect were more acceptable to most of them. This class often formed the subject matter of religious poetry and romances written by the Jaina and non-Jaina poets.

It is not apt to say that there was no secular creative writing or art activity during this period in Gujarāt. Hansāuli of Asāit, Saṃyātsācarita of Bhīma Jaina,
Ranmalla Chhanda of Śrīdhar Vāsa, Kanhad-de-Prabandha etc. are some of the outstanding and beautiful poems composed by the non-Jaina-s. From 15th cen. A.D. onwards one finds a great increase in non-Jaina literature.

The Rāsa literature occupies a considerable portion of available Apabhranṣa and old Gujarāti literature. The Rāsa as a poetic forms is often used by contemporary poets. The well-known scholar Shri K.K. Shastri calls the four hundred years time i.e. 12th to 16th cen. A.D. "Rāsa-Yuga" or the age of Rāsa for Gujarāti literature. (Kavi-carit, Part I p.7). Not only as poetic or dance forms, but, also as the instruments to study social, political and cultural history, the Rāsas are of immense value.

As seen previously, the dance performed by men and women in a circle to the accompaniment of songs and/or musical instruments, with or without a leader is called Rāsa or Rāsaka or Hallīsaka. In Uparūpaka form, Rāsaka is sung and danced. In medieval Gujarāt, a lyrical form is came to be called Rāsa. Hemcandra denotes Rāsa a Rāga Kāvya or Nrtya-Rūpaka in his Kavyanuśasan. He gives two forms of Kāvya. (1) Sravya-which could be heard (2) Prekṣya-which could be seen, which is further divided in two division (A) Pāṭhya-which could be recited (B) Geya-which could be sung and danced. He gave eleven varieties of the Geya-Prekṣya Kāvya including Rāsak and Hallīsaka.
These were Geya-Rāgakāvya which had Padarthābhinaya (1)-Vagbhata, his contemporary, goes on the same lines in his Kavyanuṣāsan (2). Most of the people, who had little knowledge of classical music could also sing this Geya-kāvya for its simplicity of rhythm and use of popular metres. The poets of all castes - all used this form and also the anonimus folk poets, as it provided a very good medium to propagate the religious and social conventions as well as the freedom to express one's individual feeling in a most direct but beautiful way. The old Gujarāṭī Jaina literature had many varieties of Geya-rūpaka according to the subject matter. I illustrate a few.

(A) Chhanda - couplets with a fixed number of letters or mātra-s, like Chaupāi, Chāppāy, Duha, Dohak.

(B) Couplets with names according to the no. of stanzas - Baṭrīsī, Bāvmī, Astapāḍī, Covīsī, Chmatrīsī, Vīsī, Satak etc.

(C) Names according to subject.

I - Rāsa, Māla, Prabandha, Poojā, Swādhyāy, Chaitapāṭi, Bārmasa.

II - Caritra, Lekha, Bhās, Geeta, Stavana, Codhalīu.

III - Saloko, Geet, Hundī, Bol, Bhāvna.
A few of these which are often used in connection to the dancing need explaining. Hinclna symbolises the expression or feeling of swining.(3) Hamacnadi word does not have much sense except to show a kind of jump.(4)

The Rásas were performed in a limited time span and the songs accompanying were short and rhythmic according to Prof. M.R. Majmudar. Sri Vijayrāi Vaidya describes Rāsa as a narrative poem, written in Duha, Caupai, or Desi of various raga-s, in praise of great heroes or religious leaders. (Gujarāti Sāhitya ni Ruparekhā P.20) They provided significant information about the social, cultural, literary, political activity of the period.

Through metrical romances, legends, chronicle ballads and songs the Jaina writers taught lessons that affected profoundly the social life. The general trend of Gujarāti literature upto the end of mediaeval period was more objective and universal than subjective and individualistic. A definite moral purpose underlined the Jaina Rāsa-s. Several themes - Purānic, mythical, historical, social and devotional - reccur in the Rāsa-s, achieving wide popularity with the masses.
Hemcandra in his 'Trisastiralaka Purusa Carita' indicates the existence of a poetic form in Gujarat which was sung and danced. This form was essentially popular in tone and expression, the great feature being its freedom from strict rules of prosody. Each poet had his own law; all that was necessary was cadence, the possibility of the poem being sung to a popular melody known as raga or Desi, the local style of singing. Dhanḍāla of Mālva in his 'Pailachānāmālā' and Hemcandra in his 'Deśināmālā' call the dance of Lord Kṛṣṇa with the gopī-s in circle by two names of the same form. That one dance form came to be called synonymous is a significant fact.

'Carcari' and 'Rāsak' were the Prabandha written in Prākṛt. Carcari was a delicate dance (Lāsya-nṛtta) with predominant erotic (sṛiṅgāra) sentiment. Apart from being the popular entertainment for royal courts and the masses, Carcari and Rāsak were sung and danced in the Jaina religious ceremonies and festivals. We get a detailed description of performance of Carcari and Daṇḍa(stick) Rāsa in Karpūramāhārāj of Rājsekhara. The King and Vidusaka watch beautiful and attractive damsels dancing delicate (Lāsā) dance. The poet called the dance daṇḍa-Rāsa because the movements of the dance and not because they were holding sticks or dancing in couples. The two characteristic common to all these movements are position of hands when
women stretch their hands out with Harisapakṣa hasta on either side diagonally and feet moving freely and taking turns on one foot, taking pirouette and then moving jointly in a circle. They kept their body, hands, shoulders and head in a balanced unbroken line. The another technical term used by poet in describing this dance is 'bandh' which denotes the circular formations which could be chaīm (Srūvikhalikā) or (latābandha) creeper kind. There are thirty two dancers and they beat their feet to the rhythm. The emphasis is on pure dance which had quick tempo.

The Rāsa, Ścarcārī and Phāgu are all connected with spring, circular dancing and music. The simple poetry could be sung in various Desī musical styles by common and expert musicians as well. By second half of the 13th century of Vikrama, the Rāsa-s could be sung in various melodies. At many places, popular melodies were mentioned so that the particular Rāsa could also be sung similarly. Even today this system continues. This poetry of stanza or Kadavak-bandha was popular. Rāsa-s or Rasāu like 'Revantagiri Rasu' were composed in a greater number. The small poems were Rāsa and the lengthier ones Mahakavya.

The Rāsa prabandhas had to be written in a particular way, with various local tunes and rhythm so that they could easily be sung while dancing by one and all. It became essential to add flavour to this poetic form. Some believe
that because it is called Rāsa— which is full of Rāsa.

"Rasi Rasāulu Cāriu junījāi"

[Panchnāndav Carīt Rāsu

Salībhadrasuri, Samā 1410]

In the course of time, Rāsa came to be identified with a long composition, giving a sustained narrative in rhythmic verses; partly in Apabhṛṣṭa metres like Duḥā, Chānda, Caupāi, partly in Desṭī melodies which were prevalent in Gujarāt even prior to the 11th century A.D. Such a Rāsa in Apabhṛṣṭa has been referred by Yaśodeva (118 A.D.) in his 'Navatadvabhāṣya'. Perhaps the popular carita-s and Dharmakathā-s were called the Rāsa earlier and later, all poems of such narrative form came to be known as Rāsas irrespective of musical and rhythmic elements. The Rāsa-s were performed by men and women on festive and religious occasions to the accompaniment of such Rāsa songs. But with long narrative form of poetry, the charm was lost. They became stereotyped without reaching any creative heights. Also the Jaina monks forbade the practice of performing Rāsa dances in the temples, without apparently giving any reason. The "Upadesa Rasāyaṇa Rāsa" of Jinadaṭṭha Śuri (12th Century A.D.) forbade the performance of Tāla-rāsa at night and said only men should perform Lakuta (Dānda or stick) Rāsa.(7) Perhaps the free spirit and abundance of this pastoral dance form was too primitive for the elitist Jaina-s who rejected the pleasures of the body.
But the Jaina authors kept up writing the Rāsa-s in the language of the masses which is remarkable. The different melodies or Desīs of different regions had special names like Maru from Marwar, Godi from Gauda (Bengal), Varāḍī from Berar and so on. The Rāsa-s were divided into Khaṇḍa and different parts of the poetry were named such as Bhāsa, Thavaṇī and Kadvak almost similar to sthāyī and antara of songs in north-Indian classical music system.

After about five hundred years, the Rāsa-s became excessively lengthy. Repeatative descriptions, incidences and religious moral made them dull and unimaginative. There was a great loss in the lyrical element. Though the monks were great scholars, they at times lacked the imagination of a poet. It was difficult to sustain the interest of common people for long with same subject matter of religious preachings. The lyrical form, evolved mainly by Jains monks became eventually dead in their own hands as far as the art of poetry was concerned. Its importance in the literary history of Gujarāt remains as the Rāsa-s offer invaluable social, cultural and political information of the time.

The Rāsa-s sung in spring festival were called Phāgu. The phāgu tradition of dancing flourished away from temples, amongst the people with Rāsa in the fourteenth century A.D.
The earliest Phāgu text now available is 'sthoolībhadra Phāgu' of Acarya Jinapādmasuri. (1360-1400 A.D.) The Phāgu tradition is also a gift of Jaina monks only. As seen earlier, due to various social and political factors, the performances of Ṛasa-s were almost nil in the Jaina temples. But no religion can survive by neglecting its mass appeal. To fill up this gap, the Jaina found a middle way. The religious teachers gave a new shape to the Rāsa and created Phāgu for the relishment of the masses. The erotic Ṛasa-s with descriptions of spring in the form of Phāgu became a centre of attraction for the masses. Both the Jaina and non-Jaina societies accepted this new form with much enthusiasm. Later, the Jaina, the Vaisnava and other poets wrote Phāgu which were performed by all to celebrate the spring and Holi festival. (8) By 14th Cen. A.D., Phāgu was accepted as a Ṛasa variation. In Nala-Damyanti Ṛasa of Mahirāja, the ill-omen is felt in the city when young women did not dance Ṛasa, the scholars did not recite it and when Ṛasa and Phāgu were not sung nor enacted. (9) The Phāgu reflected contemporary life of Gujarāti-s which was gay and joyous. One of the excellent examples of Phāgu is that written by Natarṣi in 1439.

Phāga: The month of Phāga, spring has come, filling the hearts of people with joy. The cool Mālayan breeze burns the hearts of separated lovers.
Rasaka: The sylvan goddess came and has besought the Lord.
The ten quarters have assumed new forms. Lord Murārī, pray come, Kamadeva is here to embrace you Kṛṣṇa.

Having heard this, the Lord, happily went to the forest with his friends.

Maidens, with heavy breasts walked like intoxicated elephants, excited with passion. Their anklets tinkled and bracelets shown. The thick hair braids looked like cobra's were nestled there. Even the corals stood no competition to the colour of their lips.

Āndolā: To the accompaniment of hand drums, gopī-s began dancing rhythmically with graceful bends and movements of their beautiful bodies. Sarangadhara, the best of his family, played the flute.

While keeping rhythm with feet, they sung the new spring songs in Śrīrāga.

Gopī-s held lotus stems in their hands, weaving them over their heads. They kept time to every tune.

As the moon shone amongst the stars, so did Mukunḍa in midst of the gopī-s, where men and Gods bowed to him.
Phāga: Mukunda and the gopi-s wonder in the forest which bows down to him, inspired by the breeze (10),

The description is very similar to the Rāsa-dance of Kṛṣṇa given in the Purāṇa-S. The Rāsak, Andola were metres in Phāga. The gopi-s held lotus stems in their hands and during the dance wove them over their heads. The lotus stems became a variation of Dānda or stick. As seen in previous Chapter, the Dānda-rāsa was usually performed by men. But here the women are dancing, beating the lotus stems instead of Dānda to keep time and rhythm, along with the feet movement. There must have been a lot of wrist movements as the stems were woven in different ways over their heads.

Another off-shoot of Rāsa was Baramāśī which usually described the state of a love-lorn heroine, whose lover or husband was away. Baramāśī is a lyrical form of the regional languages and not Apabhṛṣṭa. (Dr.H.C.Bhayani, 'Streejeevan' Oct. 1965). The Baramāśīs have been written in Gujarāṭī literature from about 13th cen. A.D. to 19th cen. A.D. They reflect the social customs, different seasonal changes and separated lover's plight. There have been also Baramāśīs written on philosophical way of life, a farmer's plight etc.

'Kuvalaya-māla' the romantic story of Kuvalayamāla of Vijayanagar and Kuvalayacandra of Ayodhya is a long narrative expounding Jaina theology. In course of the story the
author Srimad Udyotansuri (779 A.D.) has given vivid pictures of social and political life extending to different regions and time. On many different occasions one finds the descriptions of Rāsa-dance performed by various people of the society.

In the city of Ujjain in Avanti colourfully attired young men and women sang and danced Rāsa while drinking Madhira to celebrate the festival of Madana and coming of spring. The group was gay and nosiey. (Sātī-Anand Hem Granthālā book 10th. Kuvalayamāla p.36, Kandikā 100). Bhagawana Sudhaswami attracted five hundred thieves to the forest under the pretext of showing Rāsa-dances, being performed by beautiful maidens with heavy breasts, thin waists and big eyes to the accompaniment of sweet melodies. (ibid p.78). The travellers were drawn towards the city of Vinita of Madhyadesh, the region south of Vaitādhya maintains and in the middle of Ganga and Sindhu rivers, by the sweet music of gopi-s. The intoxicating sounds of the hand ornaments made while giving rhythm by clapping by the Rāsa-mandalī-s or groups of young women invoked the god of love, in that country. The words, 'Dāṅga' or sticks and 'to stamp feet' were only used in connection to dance and umbrella there. (ibid. cha. 2, p.12). In a Tribat Bhil village on the river bank of Narmāḍā the coming of spring was celebrated by singing and dancing of various Rāsadā-s
having multiple rhythmic patterns and loud cries of groups of children. (ibid p. 89).

At the end of monsoon, in course of his travels, Kuvalayakumar reached Vindhya mountains where the fields were fresh and Paddy lush, and Indra festival was being celebrated. The young couples performed Rāsalīlā in the village square. The rhythmic striking of their hands produced a peculiar noise. (ibid p.247). In another description of the Sidir season the author gave a smile. "The intoxicated bee pairs humm, making sweet music like the songs sung by the playful Rāsa-groups". They celebrated the wedding of chief characters. The towns women had dapped themselves beautifully and were dancing with joy. The Khelā or performers danced to the accompaniment of musical instruments played with effort. The crowd gathered on hearing the sound of clapping of dancing groups. (ibid. p.286). On the Vaitādhya hill resided pastoral communities. While performing Rāsa in circles, with rhythm they sang. (ibid p.392).

In course of the story, one finds references to Rāsa-dances at various levels of society and at different geographical regions which definitely points to the prevalence and popularity of this group dance. One can easily say that such dances were eye-catching and were integral part of the festivals and auspicious social and
religious events that people participated in and women and professional performers danced, together and separately, in circles, at times clapping with the accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music.

Till this time the Rāsa-s were written in praise of Jaina incarnations like Mahāvīra, Neminātha in same fashion of Purānic literature describing the Kṛśnālīlā. From the time of Upadeśa Rasāyana Rāsa (12th cen. A.D.) the poets started glorifying great heroes and kings like Bharata, Sagara, Baldev etc. through their poetry, (11) so as to be acceptable to the masses. Actually Upadeśa Rasāyana Rāsa is a Prabandha as we learn from its commentator Jinapāla Upādhyāya. He said, "The Carcarī and Rāsa, both Brāhīṛ prabandha, are so simple that no learned scholar ever thinks of writing Sanskrit vritti on them" (12).

The tradition of singing the Rāsa-s flourished more in the Jaina temples as the religion was created from the need of the people and the Rāsa-s were danced to attract them. But it was not possible to have performances of Rāsa in all temples. So the singing tradition got a prominence as it could impress the masses, activate their participation and through the medium of singing, the religious teachings could be easily propagated.

In the earlier years the Rāsa-s were both sung and danced. But later on, special Rāsa-s were written for singing
only with different metres. Upadesa-rasayana Āsā is of this variety, which could be sung by expert musicians in different melodies (13). Dr. Dashratha Oza sites that this tradition of singing was established by 11th cen. A.D. or even prior to that. The 'Mavatatva Prakarana' of 11th cen. A.D. says the 'Mukut Saptami' and "Manikya Prastarika Āsā-s" should be sung before the sun-rise, after the morning prayers. According to Rāmanāyana Agrawala, all these Jaina Āsā-s which have no story content but are full of religious teachings, were written specially for singing and not dancing. (Braj Ka Rāsa Raṅgamanca p. 69). The Āsā-s with the format like Upadesa Rasayana Āsā, Kachhuali Rāsā were only sung and not danced. Jinaḍatta Suri affirms thus, "Ones who listen to this Āsā will become immortal". He does not say watches or sees. This Āsā was only Śrāvyā-Kāvya and not Drasya-Kāvya (14). These Āsā-s had various emotions like erotic, vallor, compassion etc. Even today the system of singing Āsā-s continue in the Jaina temples, where as dancing has almost disappeared from the scene due to social taboos. But again in last few years there has been a revival to the tradition of dancing Āsā-s in the Jaina temples which I shall discuss at a later stage.

The oldest literary creation of Old Gujarāti is believed to be Bharateśwara Bāhubali Ghor of Vajrasenasūri written in sam 1225. The, Bharateśwara Bāhubali Rāsa of Śalibhadra sūri sam 1241, has the same story content. The
poetry is divided into twenty four Thavani or parts with different metres. At the end, the poet says that the devotee should recite the Rāsa in various metres with joy and listen to them as well (15). There is no reference to the Rāsa-dancing but this Rāsa marks beginning of old Gujarātī literature.

The Revantagirī Rāsu of Vijayasen Suri (Sam. 1288) reveals the majestic beauty of mountain Giranara, a place of pilgrimage for the Jainas, situated in Saurāshtra. The poet paints in vivid words beautiful pictures of public and religious buildings built by the two brothers Vastupāla and Tejapāla, after hearing the lush beauty of Soratha region. He worships Goddess Ambika. The Goddess would grant a boon to all those who would perform this Rāsa with pleasure and Nemijan would be satisfied (16). The Rāsa-s which were performed were called played. It is certain that the Rāsa was sung with a dance, but we hardly know the kind of dance. The point of interest is the association of Goddess Ambika and her pleasure at such a performance.

Lakshamanagire (Sam. 1143) described the Rāsa thus, some ladies dance Rāsa giving time beats with their hands held high and low while some smile as their hands move in rhythm (17). This means the ladies were dancing with clapping their hands high on their heads and also by bringing them down perhaps at the knee level or even lower. It is more than probable that there were graceful body bandings while
taking hands up and down. Even today, the Gujarati women clap their hands in similar manner in Garba or Tāli-rāsa.

The Saptakṣetra Rāsa of some unknown poet written in sām 1327 described the seven stages a Śrāvak had to go through before reaching the final goal of liberation from the worldly bondages. One of the steps was to organise religious festivals at the Jaina temples. In one such Ochāva, the śrāvaka-s had gathered where Tāla-rāsa was performed and the professional singers or Bhāta recited. The khelās danced Lakuta Rāsa, who looked alike with decorated bodies. The tender songs were sung in beautiful melodies in different metres and rhythms, to the accompaniment of musical instruments (18). On such Jaina festivals, two kinds of Rāsa-s, Tāla and Lakuta (Danda) were performed in the temples in the presence of the whole Śramaṇa Saṅgha and the monks. The professional singers on Bards came along with the Rāsa-s. We do not know who performed Tāla-rāsa but Lakuta Rāsa was performed by Khelā or professional players-dancers.

There was a tradition in Jaina temples to invite the Bhavāya-s or professional folk actors to sing and dance during festive occasions to fill up the time between various ceremonies. But there is no written evidence. The Khelā-s were definitely professionals as the word 'Khel' means to play, to perform. There did exist such a community of performers as the folk-theatre popular in western region
the Bhavāi also began around 13th to 14th cen. A.D. Also the Khelā-ś had similar physical structure and were dressed alike, both points to their being professionals. The songs in praise of Mahāvira were accompanied by musical instruments and sung in different tunes and rhythms. Perhaps there was slow and fast dancing according to different rhythms.

Somamurthy of Mārwar ends his Vivāhalau (Saṃ 1331) saying, "Those who read and recite this Vivāhalau or make the Khelā-ś play with joy will be the favourites of Jinasasuri." (19) Samyakatva Chaupai of Jagadukavi (Saṃ 1331) elaborates on one of the major principles of Jaina theology. The sixty four lines are written in Chaupāi Bandha. The poet points out at one place the do's and don'ts for a believer of God. One of them was that he should not enter the temple at night neither should he play Tāla-rāsa at that time and should never play Lakuta-rāsa. (20). The poet's forbidence for performing Lakuta Rāsa is thought provoking. The Rāsa dance of Lord Kṛṣṇa was performed at night. But Jagadukavi forbids the performance of Tāla-rāsa at night. These are two contradictory traditions. In most of the descriptions there is hardly any mention of time when the Rāsa should or should not be performed. I think here is an indication of changing of social customs due to the coming of outsiders like Muslims.

Except for the four months of Monsoon, the Jaina monks travelled from place to place throughout the year.
Muni Devasuri, on one of his such travels, arrived near Bhrugukutcha (Broach) The cowherds of the region requested him to create a Rāsak. He wrote one in Prākrit using local tunes—Deśī-s and Dhāla-s, familiar to the cowherds. This Rāsak could be danced while moving in circle with circular movements and clapping of hands in rhythm. The cowherds were overjoyed and named one of the villages as Tāla-Rāsak. The description is from the Prabhavāka Čarīta of Prabhacandrasuri (Samāl 1334)(21). The area near Broach as we come to know was occupied by cowherds who sang in Deśī tunes while dancing in circles, clapping their hands. The Kṛṣṇa legend of a pastoral society and their activity finds its roots here with cowherds of Broach.

There is a tradition in Jaina community to take a group of people on pilgrimage. Māndalika (Samāl 1360) described the Sangha being taken out by Pathoda and his brother in 'Pathodā Rāsa'. When the Sangha reaches a town, it is customary to receive it with great rejoicing. Māndalika narrated the performance of Rāsa dance on one such occasion, wherein the feet were stamped to various changing rhythms. (21) Amongst joyful cheering the dance full of emotions was danced with different movements giving a spectacular effect of colours of rainbow. The beautiful maidens with large eyes danced vividly with clapping of hands, taking pierouttes and moving in circles. These girls also danced
Laudā-rāsa where as Khelā's danced for long. (22) The tradition of performing in Jaina temples in presence of a congregation continues here. The word 'Nācaı' points to Khelā-s or kheda-s being professionals. The maidens performing Dānda or Lauda Rāsa was a comparatively new concept as we hardly have such references. Usually women performed Tāla-rāsa. There must have been musical accompaniment to support the clapping and stamping foot.

The sangha of Samarā, son of Des'ala went to Girānara as narrated by Ambadeva (Sani 1371) in "the Samarā Rāsu". The Jalanätaku and Lauda-Rāsa-s were performed in temple by Khelā's for the benefit of the Saṅgha. The skirts worn by Khelā's flew around creating a spectacular colour spectrum (Navarāṅga) (23) 'The poem ended with, "The God will favour those who would recite, sing and dance this Rāsa." (24) Similar descriptions are found in S'ri Jinodayasuri Pattabhiseka Rāsa (Sani 1415) The women with large beautiful eyes wore colourful clothes which matched the variety of Rāsa-s they performed. The onlookers were happy and bewitched by such a spectacular show. Gyanakalāsa muni points to the Rāsa performance of Khelā-s. (25) Both men and women were separately dancing, varieties of Rāsa-s.

The Vasanta vilasa Phāgu supports the tradition of women performing Rāsa. In the group, while one was clapping
the hands in rhythm of the chhanda another was making the
 gestures as if she was embracing her lover. (26) These
descriptions bring to our notice a totally new concept yet
untouched in the old Gujarati or the Apabhramśa literature.
There have been references of dances by men and women in
circles to the accompaniment of musical instruments and
singing. But in 'Vasanta Vilasa Phāgu' though the group
dances as one unit, individual dancers perform different
gestures. The dance is on two levels and the dancers
perform individually even while remaining an integral part
of the group. The similarity of Kṛṣṇa's Rāsalīlā is striking
where each gopi danced in the same circle at the same time
they imitated different actions of Kṛṣṇa individually. The
theory of Hemacandra and Vagbhata of Rāsa as a Geya-rupaka and
Nrtya-rupaka finds support. Many texts of the old Gujarati
literature of 15th century of Vikrama mention the performances
of Rāsa dance by men and women: Chihurigati Chaupāi of Vāstig
(Sarī 1462) (27), Pañca Pañdava Carita of Salibhadra Suri,
Gautama Rāsa of Vinayaprabha (28) to name a few.

The Kumarapala Rāsa of Devaprabhagani is a small poem
written in Rola and Vastu Chanda. The poet, a Čaulukyana
King established his Kingdom on the Jaina principles of non-
vioence and equality. He travelled to Setrunja with the
Sangha where musical instruments like Bheri, Bhunjala and
Dhola were played. The dancing Khela-s showed many variations
and styles. The groups of young ladies performed Rāsa and
sang beautiful melodies to the Bhāsa. (29) Even today Dhol, the large drum displayed as the accompaniment to Rāṣa dancing though Bheri and Bhungala are and were used more for invocation. Samāra-rāsu, Cihugati Caupai and now Kumārapala Rāsa mention Bhāsa with respect to parts of Rāsa or as a style of singing.

From 'Visaladeva Rāso' we know that flute was one of the most essential and often used instruments for Rāsa dance. The dancer used to match their own pitches with the help of flute and then dance, performing Abhinaya on the strains of the flute. In the group dance described here, the outer circle was more dense and compact than the inner one. (30). This is the description of Maṇḍal-Rāsa or group Rāsa of Kṛṣṇa and gopīs where the inner circle had only Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, or her thirty six close friends where as the outer one comprised a number of gopī-s. The anklets tinkled to the movements of feet in synchronization with the rhythmic patterns of drums.

The word Rāsa-Bhāsa occurs in the 'Sumatisadhusure Vivahalo' of Lāvanyaṣamaya (16th Ce, A.D.) The poet said, "The heart melts on witnessing this Rāsa in Bhāsa being performed by beautiful ladies." (31) Kanhadade Prabandha throws a new light on the social custom. Most of the Rāsa-dance references that we have come across describe the performances of Rāsa, in Jaina temples. But like Kuvalayamāla,
Kanhada-de Prabandha says that the Rāsa-s were performed by women at many places in the city. (32) In the spring in the month of Phāguna young maidens danced at many places in the city of Pātañā as written in Virah Desauri Phāgu. (33)

Due to lack of evidences of literary works of non-Jaina community we do not find many descriptions of this social activity of dancing as that existed outside the Jaina community except a few stray references. But definately the Jaina-writings do reflect the trends of Gujarātī-society of 12th to 16th Century. A.D.

The Sandesa Rāsak of Abdul Rahemana (Sani 15th) is important in more than one ways. It is one of the few Rāsa-s written by a non-Jaina. The whole poetry is in Geet-metres and could be dramatised. The Uparūpaka tradition of Sanskrit dramaturgy of which Rāsak is a form, find indirect mention. 'The Bahurupi performed and acted the Rāsa." (34) The word, 'Bahurupi' suggests professional actors who acted more than one characters or roles. The Dwādhīlā and Rāsalīlā of Vaisāpava Havellīs which are now in vogue perhaps date back to this time. "Sri Jinadattasuri Akabar Pratibadha Rāsa" of Labdakallola muni of Cambay describe in detail the dances of local women. The sound of Madal filled the skies when the beautiful women danced to the accompaniment of
Bheri, Bhungal, Veena, Kaňsa etc. They sang Rāsa in melodic voices while receiving the Saṅgha and the monks. (35)

The writings in old Gujarāṭī and Apabhramśa continued though in a fever numbers till the nineteenth century. In Gajsīh Rājā-no-Rāṣa' of 1851 AD Rāsa performance is mentioned as part of the many happenings in a city. (36) The Rāsa was performed with Veena, Tālam, Rabāba, Kartala, Mṛidaṅga and various tunes and melodies with a soft sound. The dancers bent gracefully with humbleness as described in the Śhitalnātha Stavan of samā. (37)

There are perhaps many other texts of Apabhramśa and old Gujarāṭī literature where in one finds the references or descriptions of Rāsa-dancing. The ones we have seen do indicate the popularity of this form for religious worships and as a group and communal activity. One could conclude that from 5th and 10th Cent. A.D. onwards Rāsa dances have become a part of social, cultural and religious life of Gujarāṭī. There have been a few technical references such as that Tāli or claps and sticks or Danda were frequently used to the accompaniment of musical instruments and vocal support. Usually men performed Dandia Rāsa and women Tāli rāsa with a few exceptions as is the case today. The main themes were propagation of Jainafait and they were performed in Jaina temples.
Also there existed a group of professional dancers called Khelā who were expert Rāsa performers and they were invited on different occasions to perform Rāsa dances. The Sanskrit tradition of Rāsa as a dance and uparūpaka form continues though the old Gujarātī and Apabhramśa literature.
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है यह झाड़ गोरी यह, घृंघी घृंघी समर राख।
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धृतर धर धुत गारान।
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है। आँधी दालन करे है, कांट समय कईक राम दे
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