There is an abundance of material available on dancing in our religious, theological, sociological and literary texts. Sanskrit, the medium of intercourse for the cultured in the whole country, was the vehicle, the source and the inspiration of culture in its manifold aspects. In the Sanskrit literary works we find descriptions of dancing as they must have been at various periods of history in different regions and communities. The dancing existed as an elemental spontaneous force in the early man's life. As the society grew, there was a great change in his attitude towards the activity, it became an art form, a vocation. The earliest reference of dance in Sanskrit literature indicates the secular position of the art. Here was an amusement, entertainment at its best.

At a higher level of culture and civilization the dance became an important feature of ritualistic practices. Man realised that he could express joy and sorrow through movement. He could formalise movement to transcend himself, evoking a power to which he dedicated body and soul. The significance of physical gestures finds reference in the Rgveda and more visibly in the Yajurveda.
The Rāsa dance as performed today in Gujarat has its basic choreographic pattern a circle. Men and women perform it on various religious and social festivals with singing and instrumental support. I have tried to put forward such prominent textual evidences which throw a light on various aspects of such a dance like choreography, music, movements, mode of presentation etc. The effort is to trace the development of the circular dance form through various periods of time beginning with the Vedic period. Two distinct sources give information on two levels which move parallel at the same time complementing each other. They are the

(1) Definitions found in the texts of Dramaturgy and poetics.

(2) descriptions of this social activity of dancing by various play-writers and poets as part of the thematic content.

The Rgveda regards the creation of the universe a wild and magnificent circular dance of the gods, who whirl into the air the dust of chos. (World history of Dance-Curt Sachs, P.144). One of the Rgvedic hymns relating to the birth of Aditi describes the joys of the gods " Thence as if dancers from your feet a thickening cloud of dust arose." (Rgveda. X.72.Vii, Griffiths translation Vol:II P.487) Dr. Kapila Vatsyāyana concludes that dancing took place in open and was perhaps performed
collectively in circles. (CIDLA P.151) In hymn X.94IV we see very interesting reference of social dancing.
"They cry aloud with strong exhilarating drink, calling on Indra now, for they have found Madhu. Bold with their sisters they have danced embraced by them". The dancing was by men and women in couples (groups of two). Each couple danced in the vast group of hundreds. "The earth resounds with humming sound of the fast, swift and gliding movements of the dance". (X. 94 V). "Men and women seizing each other by arm, whirl around in circles and a cloud of dust arose enveloping the gaily moving throng". The ground vibrated with the accompaniment of cymbals. Perhaps the Rāsa variety of dances are direct descendants of these group dances, where couple formations predominate. From Rgvedic times dancing in circle was a social function, a communal activity in the life of ordinary people. After a day's work, people sat together. The boys, girls, women and men folk would dance in couples for amusement and fun.

Śāmaveda gives the concept of Mārgi and Desī types of music and dancing, which have come to be known as classical and popular resp. over the years. Though other vedas, upanisada-s, Gryhyasūtra-s do not give direct descriptions of circular dances, they do tell us the social history of this period, showing dancing as part of social activity at all levels.
The Mahābhārata has such a circular group dance in the festival of Indramahā (Adi Parva, 63.17 and 57.21) resembling the May-Pole dance. By the time of Bharata, the theatre activity was much stylised and codified. Bharata differentiated Rūpaka (drama) and Uparūpaka (minor dramatic representations). The later having predominence of music and dancing became closer to people. The Rāsaka, Hallīsaka, Naṭya-rūsaka and the like were considered Uparūpaka forms by the later authors. Though Bharata did not talk of any variety of circular dance in particular, he defined four varieties of (circular) group formations under the Pāṇḍībandha as seen earlier.

By the Purāṇik period the dance got identified as Rāsa, Rāsaka or Hallīsaka, becoming synonymus with the Krṣṇa legend. It is described as the sport of Śrī Krṣṇa with the Gopi-s or that of Yaḍava-s with the celestial nymphs. The sanskrit treaties of Dramaturgy and Poetics define the circular dance under the various headings such as Lāsyāṅga, Deśi Nrṣṭa, Geya-rūpaka, Nrṣṭa-bandha, Uparūpaka and the like.

The earliest reference of associating the Rāsa dance to Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd community is found in the play Bālacareta of Bhāsa, the first known dramatist of India. It is written around 400 B.C. The sources of many incidents
described in the play seem to be oral folk tradition.
Bhāsa's Kṛṣṇa specifically asks the participants to perform
the Hallīsaka according to the cowherd tradition. (1)
Hallīsaka is called Niṛtyabandha comprising dancing, singing
and musical accompaniment. The third act of the play gives
us a graphic description of the same traditional folk dance
of cowherds, precursor of the Rāsa dance mentioned in the
later Purāṇa-s. The charming Gopa girls, wearing colourful
dresses dance with Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and other Gopa-s of the
Ābhīra settlements to the accompaniment of musical instruments
including the Dindima. The forest of Vrindavana came alive
with their songs and echoes of their dancing feet. The boys
shouted in joy like roaring bulls. Perhaps the vigorous and
speedy dance prevented the old-man from joining the group (2)
In the Gāthā-Saptasati, a delightful collection of Prākrit
couples by Hala Satavahana, there is a description of the
Kṛṣṇa-gopī dance. The Gāthā says, "while dancing with the
Kṛṣṇa the cheeks of the charming Gopa girls became wet with
drops of perspiration." The Gāthā-s, known for their
faithful recording of contemporary folk-culture, give
evidence of the popularity of the Kṛṣṇa myth and the dance
tradition mentioned by Bhāsa. The Kāmasutra of Vaṣyāyana
refers to Hallīsaka as a social, group activity. The
Hallīsaka and the Natya-Rāsaka both had dancing and singing.
The commentator Yashodhara calls Hallīsaka a circular dance
of the women with a leader, as the Kṛṣṇa in midst of the gopi-s
(3).
Though not belonging to the Sanskrit literature, we have a most interesting and graphic description of the enactment of the Rāsa dance in the famous, Tamil epic of 2nd cen. A.D. the Silappatikāram, under the name Ayaciyar Kuravāi or the dance of the cowherd girls. The dance was largely performed by female members of the community in honour of Kṛṣṇa or Mayavan who according to the tradition, married the cowherdess Pinnāi on Nappinnai. In Canto XVII of the epic, the author says that the Kuravāi was performed to avoid the impending calamity. (Silappatikānam, Oxford Uni. Press p.49) seven beautiful girls were selected to perform it. Three of them impersonated Mayavan, Pinnai and Balarama. They represented seven strings of the YAL, a musical instrument somewhat similar to Veena, and were numbered accordingly. They stood feet evenly and horizontally placed on the ground i.e. in samāpāda and formed a circle by clasping their fingers in the Karkata Hasta. While dancing in this position, they sang in three different pitches i.e. high, middle, low. The four cowherdesses beat time during the dance to the feet movement of the three principal dancers. There were four varieties of group formations. (Pālai) (1) Circular (Vaṭṭam) (2) Rectangular (Āya) (3) Square (catura) (4) Triangle (Treōna) Canto XXIV describes the Kunrakkuravāi or the dance of the Hillmaiden performed in honour of Murugana. One notices
a difference in dance technique in both these forms
performed for two different deities by two castes of people.
Perhaps it was due to geographical and vocational diversity
of the people. Or, the Mother Goddess cult and Viṣṇu cult
had different forms of the same dance like we have today in
Gujarat. To a large extent Dandia Rāsa performed in praise
of Kṛṣṇa where as Garba for the Sakti. The later Lata-
rasaka and Śrīrāthkhala pindibandha having a chain formation
in circle perhaps had their roots in the Kuravā dance.

Bhāsa of North India, Halasatvahana of Mahāśāstra
and Itāngā of Tāmilnadu talk of the circle dance of the
cowherd community. The dance is mentioned in vedic
literature as well as in early cave paintings and terracotas.
By the 4th Cen. A.D. the dance is associated to the pastoral
God Kṛṣṇa and his clan. Who was Kṛṣṇa? Buddha was a
historical figure but it is difficult to find anything
factual or historical about any of the numerous Kṛṣṇas
whose myths and legends coalesced to form the dark all
God. Historically one speaks of three Kṛṣṇa-S. The
Chief of Yādava tribe, one of the five main Aryan people
(Paṇca-Janah) in the oldest veda. Kṛṣṇa, who served as
Arjuna's charioteer in the Mahabharata epic, and preached
the Bhāgavata Gītā. Kṛṣṇa of Gokula, the naughty child
who killed Kaṁsa and danced with the gopī-s. He was
a Sātvata, an Andhaka-Vrishni, fostered in Gokula
(cattle herder's commune) to save him from his maternal uncle Kañsā, This transfer related him early in the Christian era to the Ābhiras, an historical and pastoral people, who are the progenitors of the modern Āhir caste. E. Washburn and R.G. Bhandarkar place the first Kṛṣṇa before 300 B.C., the second Kṛṣṇa sometime there after and the third after 200 A.D. The dates refer not to different persons but to different characters of a hero or God who was always thought to be one. We are concerned here with the third Kṛṣṇa. Due to the migrations of Ābhira at different times to various regions a number of areas were called Ābhira. (from Tapti river to Devghar, Elliot-Races of the North-west province, Vol.1 page 3). According to Samudragupta's inscriptions in Prayag, Ābhira-s were proclaimed powerful race in ruling over Rājasthāna, Mālwa, South-west and southern regions. (V.A. Smith, Early history of India, p. 286) Ptolemi introduces Saurāśtra as Ābhiria or the region of Ābhira-s. Even today the Saurāśtra and Kutch regions have large Āhir settlements. Different scholars have not come to conclusion regarding the origins of Ābhira-s. Dr. Bhandarkar believes them to be a migrating tribe from Syria. (The Indo Aryan Races - p.485). Dr. M. Sharma and Coomarswāmi believe them to be original native Dravidians. (Bharatiya Sādhana aur Sāhitya, p.164). Coomarswāmi regards Ābhira a word of native Dravidian
language meaning Gopāla or cowherd and says the Ābhira-s are natives of south India. But all agree on their settlement in the South and Western India. From the ethnic peculiarities of the tribe, Kanedy believes them closer to Sythians than Dravidians. According to him Ābhira-s are the ancestors of today's Āhir, Jāt, Gujar etc. (Journal of Royal Asiatic Society 1907).

Bhāsa of North India, Halasatvāhana of Mahārāṣṭrā and Tānγo Tāmīḷnādu all talk of the circle dance of the cowherd community. It seems that with the migration of Ābhira community this dance or Halīṣaka gradually reached the Southern regions of the country. This shows that long before the coming of Purāṇa-s, the tradition of the Rāsa dance was existent. In fact, what we see in the Purāṇa-s is a rather colourful and elaborate version of the earlier dance tradition. These were not just poetic imagination but descriptions of actual enactment of the Rāsa dance.

Amarakoṣ'a puts Āhirā in the Vais'ya caste as cattle-breeding was a Vais'ya occupation. The free Ābhira society had distinct traditions of music and dancing. Men and women danced the Hallīs on Hallīṣaka together on social occasions and festivals.

The yādava-s came with the second group of Āryan immigrants and resided in the valley of Yamunā. Along
with Kṛṣṇa as their leader, they migrated to Ānarta (Saurāstra) at old Kus'asthali or new Dwāravati (3).

The Yāduva Kingdom was extensive including the Chambāla, Betwa, Valley of Narbāda, Viṣarbhā, Rājasthāna, Saurāstra etc. The Ābhira-s and the Yādava-s belong to the same race of Āhuṣa Kshatriya-s. Both the communities settled in Kutch and Saurāstra enriching each others social and cultural lives. Due to many vices, the Yādava kingdom died with Kṛṣṇa in Saurāstra. But their culture permeated the local society at all levels. The popular dance of the Ābhira viz. Hallīsaka was enriched by the traditions of the royal Yādava-s.

It was a common practice amongst the Ābhira-s to perform the Hallīsaka on festive occasions and religions ceremonies. Perhaps due to the vigorous free movements of the dance and permissive flavour of the society, Dr. V.S. Agrawala refers its origin as the Sanskritised form of mystic Elysian dances. Of the Geeks (The deeds of Harṣa, V.S. Agrawala p.40) was it a brūkr̥t form of Hallīsaka in which the first element Hallī, Heli, Hallā (cf Helī-Kridā) denotes female companions and the second element Isaka their male leader? The word Hallanam is used to denote the speedy movements (Gati-S'ilata) in Braj. Even today the Rāsadharis begin the training with Hallanā (body movements) and then Calana
(rhythmic feet movements). The villagers use the ward Hadalla to appriciate the free rhythmic dance movements. The forth Chapter of S'ab-dartha Cuturmani Kos'a defines the Halllsaka similarly (4).

In course of time, the traditions of dance and music of the Ābhira-s and the Yādava-s alongwith the graceful Lāsyā brought by Us'ā from Maṇipur (5) took a distinct character and flavour in Gujarāt. The Halllsaka on the Rāsa as it was called in the earliest Purāṇa Harivanās'a, a supplement to Maḥābhārata written around 2nd Cen. A.D., remains even today one of the most popular dances of Gujarāt. The festivities at the Pindārika-Kshetra of Dwāraka as described in Harivanās'a show the merging of Ābhira and Yādava cultures. The dance performed on this occasion is definitely called Rāsa.(6). But there is no name given to the graphic description to the dance performed by Ḵṛṣṇa and the Gopī-s in Vṛndāvana (7). Though in the colophon to the chapter the word Halllsaka occures. It is called "Halllsaka Kr̥ḍā Nr̥tya Gīta nr̥tya". On a full moon night of autumn gopī-s came to dance with the Lord, formed a circle with interlocked hands. They formed a chain with pāns and moved in the circle. Nīlakantha in his commentary calls Rāsa the sport of one man with several women in a group (8) and Halllsaka as the group dance of the gopī-s with circular formation (9). According to him 'Paṅkti'
stood for maṇḍala or ring and the couples implied that Kṛṣṇa was between every two gopi-s. Unknowingly he quotes from the Rāsaśṭaka of Bilva-maṅgalswāmi which says, "Between each two gopi-s was Mādhava and between each two Mādhava-s was a gopi and the son of Devaki played the flute" (10). Further elaborating on the sport Nilakantha quotes a verse from some unnamed source, "Driving a stout, round and smooth spike of the measure of a Viṭasti into the earth, and then moving towards one another with the feet and rotating of the hands - this is Rāsa". (CIDLA p. 172). According to him the dance of gopi-s in a circle around Kṛṣṇa was Rāsa. Kṛṣṇa being in the middle of each two gopi-s, the circle formation is complicated where each couple is by itself and yet is in the circle. This perhaps is the choreography of concentric circles in paīs. The driving of the spike into ground and dancing around suggests Rāsa to be a part of fertility site. The group sported various stories of Kṛṣṇa standing in a circle, he being at the centre, and at times between each two of them. The gopi-s danced in unison with the speed of his movements. The rhythm of the instruments was supplemented by clapping of their hands for governing the motions of their dancing. The clapping was the predominant sound in the performance. The word 'tālahastagraih' perhaps suggests that mimic dance governed by the clapping.
hands in a circle was a special feature of the Rāsa.

In another place the words Hallīsaka, Rāsa and Chālikya occur (II 89). Kṛṣṇa desired the Chālikya opera be set in tune (11). The celestial nymphs with Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, Arjuna, Nārada, Revati and other courtesans danced Rāsa and Hallīsaka. Nārada in frenzy with dishevelled hair became the leader of the Rāsa. "The beautiful women laughing, auspicious of limbs, performed amorously and sportively the Rāsa to the rhythm of the clapping of hands, using the language, conduct and costume of the region" (12). "Now the splendidous Balārama, quite intoxicated from drinking Kadamba liquor, leaped about with his wife Revati, to the sweet and even rhythm of the clapping of hands". (13) The word 'Jogūḥ' in the S'loka 15 A, taken in conjunction with 'Nanrituh' in S'loka 5 (Harivams'a, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Chālikya-krīḍā) tells us that there was a verbal accompaniment to the dance and it was charal operatic.

May be the songs were sung by a group of women standing near by for this graceful dance (Lalita-nrtya). The Rāsa and Hallīsaka were thus mixed entertainments. Both were performed by couples round a spike or were performed by women alone. The very common choreographic pattern of a circle acquires of special symbolic significance in the Kṛṣṇa legend.
The Brahmapurana in thirty two verses creates an attractive picture of the Rāsalīlā. Compared to Harivamśa one sees definite signs of progress in story content with elaborate descriptions of activities of various gopī-s. But there is hardly any change regarding the actual dancing of the group.

Another detailed account of expressive dance, though not of pure dance of Kṛṣṇa and gopī-s, is given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Surrounded by gopī-s, Kṛṣṇa thought the lovely moonlight of Autumn propitious for the Rāsa dance (14). Gopī-s imitated the various actions of Kṛṣṇa. The circle of dance could not be formed as each gopī attempted to remain close to Kṛṣṇa. He took each by hand, leading to her place in the circle. Stunned by Kṛṣṇa's touch, losing the power of perception, the gopī-s took hands of their female neighbours thinking it to be that of Kṛṣṇa (15). The chain on Śrīkhalā was formed by interlocking of hands completing the circle at whose centre stood Kṛṣṇa. Then they danced to the music of clashing bracelets and songs that celebrated the charms of the Autumnal season. Kṛṣṇa played the strain suitable to dance. The gopī-s followed his steps whether he went backwards or forwards. The accompanying songs described the beauty of season. The word "Rāsagośṭhi" is used significantly at various places meaning either the group of dancers who performed Rāsa or the actual activity of dancing.
One does not get any reference to actual dancing of Rāsa variety in the Padmapurāṇa. But it does compare Radha to Prakriti, Kṛṣṇa to Puruṣa and gopī-s to śruti. The Union of Puruṣa and Prakriti is Rāsa. The concept of Rādhā, which is not there in the Harivāṁśa or Vis'nu-purāṇa is introduced here.

Without throwing much light on the movement part of the dance, the Brahmavaivarta purāṇa elaborates on the Rāsamandala - the arena where Rāsa was performed.

According to Wilson (Wilson-Vishu purāṇa, Vol.IV p.425) the mandala described is not a 'ring of dancers, but a circle of definite space at Vṛńdāvana within which Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and gopīs diverted themselves. In the centre of this Rāsamandala on Rāsa-sthāna, there was a Raṭnāmandala, an area studded with pracious stones on a decorated area where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa stood. The open air Rāsa stage was situated on the bank of a beautiful lake. Being circular in shape it was called Rāsa mandalam (Vartula-kāraṇa ṭatraiva Rāsamandalam). It was spacious (Susnigdham). The detailed description of this mandala shows that by the time of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa Rāsa dance was not only performed in the natural surroundings like seashores and river banks but also in specially enacted
arenas. Rādhā was accompanied by thirty-six of her special friends and in turn they were each attended by thousands of other gopīs. Each one had a male multiple of Kṛṣṇa. So here we have couples dancing in circles. Also another new aspect was introduced in this Purāṇa that of Vasanta-rāsa, Oh dancing as a part of spring festival. Experts believe that the first part of this particular Purāṇa was written around 800 A.D. but got its present form in the 16th cen. Thus it brings us to the medieval period of Bhakti. The origin of Phāgu tradition along with Rāsa has its roots here.

Deviḥagavata purāṇa portrays Kṛṣṇa not as an incarnation of Viṣṇu but Parabrahma himself. The Vilāsa (play) of Kṛṣṇa with Prakriti Rādhā/Rāsa. The Lord of Rāsa performed Rāśakṛīḍa with Prakriti in the Rāsa-mandala (16). The Rāsa was performed for the creation of S'rusti - Universe - which is the activity of union of Puruṣa and Prakriti.

The five chapters of S'rimada Bhāgavata Purāṇa written around 6-8th cen. A.D., describing the Rāsa episode are known as Rāsa Pañchadhyāyī which form the base of erotic mysticism inherent in the Kṛṣṇa cult. Dance, drama and music found an important place in the cult of the deity who himself was adept at these arts.
They were the best medium for propagation of faith among people. This tradition was perhaps put to use at the earlier stages of Buddhism (Braj ka Rāṣa Raṅgamaṅgaṇa - p. 33). Mathura, one of the centres of Kṛṣṇa's Rāṣa and Hallīsaka tradition was also major Buddhist centre as Upagupta, the guru of King Ashoka belonged here and these popular traditions became media for the propagation of the Buddhist faith. The time of Harsavardhana (606 to 648) saw that the life-stories of Buddhist monks were put in the format of Kṛṣṇa-rāṣa and used extensively. (Dr. Dasharath Oza) as seen in 'Ripu-Damana' Rāśak was even more popular in the Jaina faith. The devotees (Sravakas) sang Rāṣas with accompaniment of claps in the temples which I shall discuss in detail in the next chapter.

The Rāṣa-pañcadhyāyī have elaborate description of the Rāṣa dance. On hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute, gopīs went running to Vṛndāvana forest leaving behind all worldly possessions. Following this the narrative describes the meeting of Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs, their pride, separation and ultimate union with Kṛṣṇa which culminated in performing the Rāṣa dance.

In the actual sport, Rāśakṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa multiplied himself with his yogic powers and stood between each
two gopīs, forming a circle. The hands of Krśna and
the gopīs were crossed, resting on the shoulders. Here is
definitely a suggestion of couples dancing either in pairs
or individually but remaining in the same choreographic
pattern of circle. Yogeswara Krśna entered the circle of
gopīs (17) The dance demanded vigorous practice and
stamina. The feet moved slow or fast according to the
rhythm. The eyebrows were raised. Various sentiments of
the songs were expressed by the gopīs through hand gestures.
Here is the only suggestion of Abhinaya found in Rāṣa dance.
The gopīs were like lightning amongst the dark Krśnas (18)
The main information available regarding Rāṣa dance in the
Bhāgavata purāṇa is as follows:

1. The dance was circular
2. The Rāṣa dance was of two types.

A dance where in one man i.e. Krśna stood with one
woman i.e. gopī alternately forming a circle.

B One Krśna at the centre like a dark cloud and the
gopīs moving in a fast tempo with shining clothes
in the circular dance resembling the lightning.

3. The songs as in Harivamsa purāṇa were about Krśna
4. The graceful dancing was enhanced by the stylised
   movements of hands and feet, with facial expressions

5. Krśna laid the shoulders of the gopīs and vice-versa
   forming a criss-cross pattern of hands on the backs.
Bhāgavata also confirmed that Rāsalīlā was allegorical to Rādhīlīlā, i.e., movements of the stars and planets. Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs were enthralled by the moonlight and the act of their imitation of moon surrounded by the Nakshtras was called Rāsalīlā. (20).

All the Purāṇas with predominance of Vaiṣṇava faith describe Rāsa dances. The narratives vary according to the taste of the author and the customs of society. Many scholars admit that the imagination of writers had much to do with the exaggerated accounts of Kṛṣṇa's relations with gopīs as described in Bhāgavata, Viṣṇu etc. Purāṇas. All that can be said is, "Kṛṣṇa's youthful loves did not go beyond violent flirtations and a taste for group dancing and singing and they were rather a precocious manifestation of his richly artistic and vital nature."

It seems that by the time of Bhāgavata purāṇa, Rāsa had become a mixed entertainment, wherein men and women danced freely, at times kissing and embracing each other. Perhaps this was the permissive behaviour of the liberated Ābhiras. But how did the Hindu society with its rigid moral codes permit Rādhā to be a goddess with her free passion? How did Kṛṣṇa the non-Āryan tribal hero become the main deity, breaking barriers of caste, creed, language and society? The life in the cities of North India, the settled cultural customs of society were shattered by the invasions
of Mohammed Ghor and Iltamish in 12th & 13th cen. Saints, poets, craftsmen, musicians fled from the cities seeking sanctuary and anonymity in the forests, across rivers and mountains. They were exposed to robust forest people and pastoral nomads, our āhirs. In this society there was free and passionate man-woman relationship which was reflected in their dancing. But perhaps to stop this, the Bhāgavatakar forbade the entry of Para-Puruṣa i.e. another man, one who is not yours, in the Rāsa maṇḍala. Thus in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa we have Kṛṣṇa multiplying himself and dancing with the gopīs, or Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in the centre with gopīs dancing around. Even Lord Śankara could only enter the Rāsasthāṭa in the disguise of a gopī.

The detailed information found in various purānas about the Rāsa dances of Kṛṣṇa leads us to believe that they were developed and had an all pervading secular flavour. The circle being the first prerequisite of this dance, it was performed by women around a man, by men and women standing alternatively in a circle in pairs around the deity, a pole etc. The dance was part of the autumn festival as well as the (Vasanta) spring festival. Mridaṅga, Veena, Cymbals along with clapping at times provided the musical and rhythmic accompaniment to the singing and dancing. The dancers followed the rhythm with slow or fast, graceful yet vigorous movements, at times keeping the rhythm by clapping and singing songs in praise of Kṛṣṇa. The sport of
pastoral Abhiras became a social community dance of Indian society.

It is significant that one of the important works of the Gupta period, the Kāmasutra of Vātsyāyana mentions Hallīsaka and Rāsak. Hallīsaka is a social group activity. Rāsa and Hallīsaka both have singing and dancing in circle. Commentator Yashodhara calls Hallīsaka circular dance of women with a leader as Kṛṣṇa amidst the gopīs.

The 7th cen. A.D. Poet Bāna in Harśacarita (King of Vardhamāna dynasty of Thaneswar, Kanauj, 606-648 A.D) talks of various kinds of dancing in the five gosṭhis. "The dust whirlwinds hurrying through the desolate tract appeared like actors in Ārabhati dances performed with passionate circular motions." In this simile describing dust storm in summer, the author said that the rising dust seemed as if the dancers were performing Ārabhati style of dance. This style was danced in the form of a Rāsa dance where recakas predominated. According to Nātyaśāstra the Ārabhati is a style and not a specific dance. And so the mention of Ārabhati here would be pertaining to the general character and impression of the dance rather than a particular form of dance. The author further gives the five characteristics of this dance.

(1) Maṇḍala-nṛta - could be interpreted as the dance of the group or dance in circle by group. The second
meaning is more pertinent here as the commentator Saākara interpreted it as the Hallimaka, which was certainly a mistake for Hallīsaka wherein a male dancer at the centre lead the women dancers standing around him, in a circle (24) So certainly Mandalīnattā is a circular social, group dance.

(2) Redhaka-Bharata used this term with reference to the circular or free movements of certain parts of the body. Saākara said these were three varieties
   A Katirechaka - circular or free movement of the waist or the hip region.
   B Hastarechaka - that of hands or arms
   C Grivarechaka - that of neck and head
This feature distinguish Arabhati style from other styles and also makes it very effective to create a powerful impression.

(3) Āsarasā - here we have the reference to the patterns formed on the floor, rather than the physical movements of the salo dancers. According to Saākara the dance consisted of the formation of eight, sixteen or thirty-two māndalas (circles) (Kapila -IDLA P.202).
I think it was the circular dance where eight, sixteen or thirtytwo dancers took part, and danced in the four varieties of group patterns i.e. Pindībandha,(25)

(4) Sabhasārbudha nartana - refered to the frenzied emotion and tempo of dance. The dancing steps were
of vigorous nature indicating at times unrestrained movements.

Thus the ārabhati style of dance of Bāna consisted of the formation of a circle by eight, sixteen or thirtytwo women who used free circular movements of the neck, hands and waist, expressed vigorous emotion, enthusiasm or dynamism through quick springing tempo and fast movements. It had the choreography of the circle and the group formations.

The Ṛgvedic reference of couples (brother & sister) dancing as part of social activity re-occurred here. There is no specific term used for couple dancing in Hārṣa-carittra but it repeatedly says that "they took each other by arm and danced." The word Rāsakamandala, meaning the dance with stress on tala was often used. The accompanying instruments were ālīrīgya (a form of muraja), maṇjū (flute) tantrī, kāhala (a large drum) pāṭak, Jhāllarika and of course the clapping of hands. V.S. Agrawala in his Hārṣa-carittra (P.41) compares this dance with the Greek Elysian dances. He is also of the opinion that Indian Ḍasa and Greek Hāllīsaka combined to produce this particular dance of the Ārbitae or Ārbiti which came to be known as Ārabhati. The sculpture panels found in Mirpur Kās-satupa shows such mingling of Greek and Indian arts. Dr Agrawala also stressed that in both, the Indian Ārabhati and Greek or Baluchi Elysian
dancing, dancers began movements in frenzied with dishevelled hair. (26)

At the time of Harṣa's birth the ladies sang obscene (as'lila) Rāsa songs, while many groups danced with joy in the celebrations. Their movements made the whole festival look like a whirlpool or an ocean of winding, revolving human beings (27). The reference to Rāsaka-paṇḍāni is significant showing the existence of Rāsaka songs that were sung at so early a period. Also the word 'as'lila' prefixed is the proof of the existence of a particular class of Rāsaka songs which were marked by obscene passages. Such songs are still sung at the time of marriages and other social ceremonies. Perhaps this is the earliest reference to Rāsaka songs in Sanskrit literature and it seems to have signified the folk music prevalent amongst the women. The ladies of Harṣa's court performed a pitcher dance in the village accompanied by their singing. In Yajurvedic ritual, women carrying pictures go around the sacrificial fire with elaborate steppings. Even today the Gujarāṭī ladies often dance during Navarātrī in circle with pitchers on their heads, singing and clapping. Bāpa talked Rāsa as a vigorous dance in circle, having various circular movements of the body and also floor patterns, which was performed by trained performers (nataḥ) as well as women with various rhythmic patterns and singing.
The Mahābhārata has such a dance in the festival of Indramaha resembling the May-pole dance (Adi Parva 63.17 and 57.21) So by 6th 7th century A.D. the Rāsa dance not only remained associated with the Kṛṣṇa theme theatrical forms but also became a social dance which needed some training, stamina and vigour. Though we usually associate Rāsa dance with Kṛṣṇa, it did not only remain the dance of the Ābhīras or Yādavas or for that matter of pastoral society but was perhaps the popular dance form of the masses, without the bars of caste and creed. The form of this circular dance being so powerful, primitive yet sophisticated, that it continued to be universal.

From now on we find ample references and definitions of Hallīsaka, Rāsa, Rāsaka, Nāṭya-rāsaka etc. in Sanskrit dramatic and Kāvya literature as a pure dance form and/or as a Upārūpaka. Abhinava Gupta (9th Cen-A.D) in his commentary on Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, Abhinava-bhāratī described Hallīsaka as a pure dance form, to be danced in a circle with one leader like Hari amongst the gopīs. (28) Elaborating further he said that there could be many dancers but maximum upto sixtyfour couples, having delicate as well as vigorous movements, varieties of rhythmic patterns and different speeds in this dance. (29)

The Pratihara King Bhoja of Dhāra (1010 AD -1062 AD) defined Hallīsaka as Abhinavagupta (30) but Rāsaka according
him was a particular variety of circular dancing of females. The number of dancers were eight, twelve or maximum up to sixteen who danced forming various circular patterns.

He further elaborates on the four Pīndībaṇḍdhās. This was pure dance or nṛtta as explained by the experts of dramaturgy, which was both delicate as well as forceful and accompanied by various songs. (31) In the Alāṅkara section, Bhojadeva said that Hallīṣaka itself becomes Rāsa if performed to definite rhythms. (32) The Uparūpaka, Nāṭya-rāsa was described in detail comprising twelve verses. This dance, performed by women in spring was also called Garcanī. It was a pure dance of Pīndī, Bhedya and other group movements and patterns, performed in graceful, delicate Lāṣya style. The dance began by entering of a pair of dancers on the stage. They strew flowers, performed, made exit. Then the dancers entered in pairs, forming groups they executed the Gulma, S'rākhala etc. dance patterns. While going around the circle or going round the partners, the women clapped for keeping the rhythm and their bodies crossed. This generates possibilities of various choreographic patterns.

The musicians sang and recited rhythmic syllables along with instrumental accompaniment. The drums played with the rhythmic recitation and beating of sticks kept up the steady rhythm. The dance ended with auspicious (hymns) verse which said that such a Rāsa was originated by the Devas as an expression of joy when they got the nectar in the
process of churning the Amṛta, milky ocean. (33)

Bhoja mentioned in Alavikara section a hitherto new term Sampa which actually corresponds to the description of Samyā. He defined it as a variety of Chalika performed by the Kinnara-s (34) Further, Sr. Pṛṣa. (Vol. II, P. 283) called it a delicate (Lasya) Chalika of the Deva-s and the Kinnara-s. Tarunavacṣapati has quoted Bhojadeva, but Hṛdayamāṇa explained as a term related to the motion of hands in a downward or falling movement for keeping the time. (35) There is a term Samyā, connected with Tāla often mentioned in the Tālādhvāya of Bharata's Nātyaśāstra. (Chap. XXXI, Sh. 14-19, 32 etc. Kāśi ed) The word 'Sannipāta' is of similar connotation. The two verses i.e. that of Hṛdayamāṇa and Bharata could be compared. (36) Here Samyā is a movement of the right hand to keep time (Right palm struck on the left and thrust downward-संमया) The beating of both palms i.e. clapping, for keeping time was Sannipāta. The meaning of the word Samyā is
a a wooden stick or post
b a staff, a measure of length equal to thirty-six Aṅgulas (Sanskrit-English dictionary, P.K. Gode Vol. III, P. 1536)

It can be inferred that Samyā, the name of the dance form is derived from the original meaning of the word. From keeping time in dance with palms i.e. clapping it got extended to dance in which the time is kept by striking small sticks and to those time keeping sticks themselves. (37)
Ramayana refers to the word Samyāgrāha in the sense of time keepers in dance. When at the desire of sage Bharadvaja, the sylvan surroundings turned festive in a miraculous manner, the trees turned into dancing troupes, Bilvas the drummers, Vibhītakas time keepers and Asvathas dancers. (38) In Sanskrit - Tamil text 'Sudhānandaprakāsa' the dance performed by using sticks or Daṇḍa or Kolattā was described under Samyā. (39) The author identified Lord Kṛṣṇa as the creator of Daṇḍa-rāsaka nṛtta (circular stick dance having pure-dance). The sticks to be held in palms were about an inch thick and eight to ten inches long. The maidens struck each other's sticks while they danced in various choreographic patterns, prominent amongst them being hexagonal and octagonal. This description of Samyā as Daṇḍa-rāsaka performed then by women brings before our vision today's Danda Rāsa of Ahirs, Mers etc. of Gujarāta, Kolattam of Tamilnadu and such other dances which are almost similar as performed about a thousand years ago. The clapping of hands and then throwing them down with force brings forth vision of Garba of Gujarāta or Kummi of Tamilnadu where ladies dance in circle while clapping the hands in almost identical way as seen in Samyā. Due to various social, political religious changes, the name of the dance might have changed but the form has remained almost intact.

The Uparūpaka tradition seems to be well defined and codified by the 11th century. Apart from Rāsa and
and Hallisaka as pure circular dance forms, we have Uparūpakas of the same names and also one more called Nāṭya-rāsaka. The earliest known work mentioning the Uparūpaka of various types is Vatsyāyan's Kāmasutra, which mentioned Hallisaka and Nāṭyarāsaka. These are others like Kohala, whose works are not available but who are quoted extensively by others. Bhāmala, Daṇḍin, Kumārīl (Tantra Vārttika) classify Uparūpakas including Rāsaka. But the earliest work now available, which not only mentions the various URs but also their features is Abhinavabharati of Abhinavagupta.

Kalikāla-Sarvagna Acala of Anahilavāda Pātaṇa (1088-1173 A.D.) categorised Hallisaka and Rāsaka as Geyarūpaka i.e. Dance-dramas having prominence of music and dance. The metres used were easy to sing. Hemacandrācārya supported the definitions of Rāsaka and Hallisaka as given by Abhinavagupta. But going further in his Desināmaśāla (8/62) and in Pañjalacchinnāmaśāla of Dhanapāla of Mālawa, we find that both Rāsaka and Hallisaka were the circular dances of the women (40). Two different names of one activity. This is one of the most interesting, historical facts. Two contemporary authors belonging to different regions of present day Gujarāt used the Pāribhāṣika words as synonyms of each other. Also
Hemacandra had defined Rāsaka (41) and Hallīsaka (42) separately. One could surmise that by 11th and 12th cen. A.D., this popular circular dance of the (Abhiras) pastoral people was performed all over the present region of Gujarāt, i.e., in Kutch and Saurāsastra, from Pātañ in north to Mālwa in South, by men and women individually. They danced in circles using sticks or claps for keeping the rhythm, executing various individual movements on one level and at the same time forming various group patterns in the circle. Thus one could definitely say that performing Rāsa was a popular social activity of the medieval Gujarāt.

Rāmacandra and Gunacandra, disciples of Hemacandra Cārīya lived in Gujarāt in the courts of Siddharāja (1093-1143 A.D.) and Kumārapāla (1143-1172 A.D.). They described Hallīsakam (43) and Rāsakam (44) in the similar fashion of the earlier authors. Nātya-Darpana called Samyā the dance of professional female dancers (Nartakī) which has Padartha-abhinaya and medium (soft Lalita) tempo. It was the delicate (Lāsya) pure dance, pertaining to the Kinnaras (45). Nātya-rāsaka was danced by women while singing in joy the songs of the spring season and imitating the gestures of the King (46). All the above mentioned were the part of thirteen Uparūpakas described in the Nātya-Darpaṇa. The forms, though recognised earlier were still in the process of growth according to the authors.
Saradatanaya (1175-1250 A.D.) in his Bhāvaprakāśa gave most extensive descriptions of twenty varieties of Uparūpakas including Rāsaka, Hallīsaka, Nāṭya-rāsaka, Pārijata etc. in the ninth Chapter. All the previous different descriptions that we have seen in Abhinavabhāṣāti, Nāṭya-darpaṇa, Śringara Prakāśa were incorporated by Saradatanaya to describe Rāsaka (47) Hallīsaka (48) and Nāṭyarāsaka (49). The previous authors have identified Hallīsaka as the circular dance of women with one leader just as seen in the case of Kṛṣṇa amongst the gopīs. Saradatanaya has identified the same dance as Rāsaka. He has called Rāsaka as being graceful as well as vigorous, a dance of maximum sixty four couples having beautiful and complicated rhythmic patterns and tempo. Hallīsaka and Nāṭyarāsaka have not been dealt in detail.

Hallīsaka was described as one of the Nṛttā-rūpakas i.e. the dramas which had prominence of pure dance movements by Amrutānanda, a twelfth century A.D. poet from Āndhra. A dance composition (Saṅkula) with seven, eight or nine female dancers and one male, in graceful Kaisiki style, having many rhythmic variations and different tempos with one act was Hallīsaka. Keliraivatakata has been cited as its example (50).
The joyous playful dance of women performed an the moonlit nights as part of the Jyotśarī-Kṛti has been vividly portrayed in Mānasollāsa or Abhilaśitarthacintāmani written by Someswara, son of Vikramāditya Chalukya of Kalyāṇi (1131). Some of the ladies formed a circle and moved inside and outside. The flowerballs made of flower garlands were thrown on one another with the help of Danda or sticks and played similarly with the King also. The gopis sang and danced with interlocked hands in a circle, threw flowers on Kṛṣṇa with joy. They rested and relaxed on each others shoulders after such straṇṇaus dance. (Srimadā Bhā. Pu. 10/36/2.3). This Rāsa was performed by Śri Kṛṣṇa and gopīs on the full-moon light night of the autumn on the bank of river Yamuna. The same Rāsa has been named Jyotśarī-Kṛti, a social recreational activity of the King in company of noble ladies, by Someswara.

Dandaśāya with graceful movements and various gaits was one of the Saptāśāya or gāryālaṅkāra as given in the Bharatārṇava of Nandikeswara. The authors of Abhinaya-Darpaṇa and that of Bharatārṇava are the same or different is yet a question. But we can definitely put Bharatārṇava around 7th-8th A.D. The group of graceful damsels danced forming beautiful groups while striking sticks with eachother. This dance was identified
as Dandalasyam. The sticks were an inch thick and about ten inches long. This popular variety of regional dance had prominence of delicate movements. To the accompaniment of rhythmic syllables of instruments the dancers executed circular or rotatory dances. Beginning with standing in the equilibrium position (Samāpāda) the dance began to the beat of Vināyaka tāla while going through the initial six poses and gaits specially laid down for the beginning of the dance. Then the Dandalasya progressed with variegated footwork (52) As Danda lāsyā occupied a prominent place in provincial dances, it has been described in greater detail. According to the author it was as sacred as a vedic ritual. The Dandas or sticks were not just any ordinary ones. Brahma presided over its head, Sadas'iva at the middle and Mādhava (Viśnu -Krṣṇa) at its end. The sound created by hitting them brought Nārada (53). In this stick dance of Danḍika Natana, the dancers stood in Vaiśakha sthāna (sthanaka No.10 holding Kapiṭṭha mudra with sticks and moved on the fore feet with short, small steps. The movements were repeated five times. The Vijayānanda tāla composed two laghus and three gurus, making eight matras was played during the dance. (54) The syllables were Tho Janaka tagunakakudhim dhimkudhikudhi Kuku talia Kiṇam tharikudjakātaddhikakukiṭa takak^e.
The unit of dance (Karana) that followed was Visnukanta and the feet movement (cari) Adhyardhika. Nandikeswara believed that this dance was first performed by Mahalaksmi. Such an elaborate and extensive description definitely shows for the first time, Rasa as something more stylised and refined than a mere circular group dance of the pastoral community. From the above passages of Bharatārṇava it is definite that the dancers were trained in certain classical positions and gestures. The groups must have been practicing this specially composed dance. As seen earlier we know that such circular stick dances were performed by masses on various occasions and social functions. Perhaps there were two parallel trends - one, which had few common movements known to everyone and was performed by one and all and another, which had specially composed stick dances, wherein the dancers had previous training and the dances had specifically stylised movements. Today such trends are very much alive. The Rasa (stick and dāp) performed by everyone in city and village squares have common movements and rhythms but those performed on the stage are full of stylised complicated rhythms and body movements.

In the fifth chapter of Nṛtta-Ratnāvalī, author Jayasenapati (army commander of King Ganapati of Kakatiya dynasty in Andhra 1250 A.D) has described the local and regional (Desa) dance styles prevalent then.
After the older modes had been set forth and defined by Bharata and his followers, the artists observed additional poses and sequences. In their texts, they described and codified them. These additional poses, movements, and modes themselves became settled as supplement to the classical repertoire. A great many of them bear Sanskrit names. They came into vogue by being incorporated into older tradition. Further, local variations and varieties were observed, recognised, and dealt with. The process thus continued. This new material was called Desi, literally meaning regional.

It was dealt in two sections:

1. Additional poses, movements, etc. under the heads of Sthanakas, Karakas, Bhramaris, Garikes, etc.

2. The several regional dances themselves such as Perani, different varieties of Rasakas, Garcarfi, Garana, Kolhata, etc.

In the flowing current of the development of arts of music and dancing, it became difficult to draw a line, to show exactly where Marga ended and Desi began. (56), (57)

After Bharata, Matanga appears to have been the first author to have dealt at length with Desi music and dance. A large credit goes to him for having pioneered the codification of the Desi. His text Brhatdesi means the magnum opus of the Desi art, which belonged to about 9th Cen. A.D. (mss available at the Thanjore Saraswati Mahal Library).
Though we do not find any specific names of dance compositions pertaining to Desī nṛtta in Brhaddevī, many later authors like Jayasenapati refer certain movements as given in there.

Someswara's (Mānasollasa 1131 A.D.) treatment of the subject of Desī was succinct but of great importance as he diverged from Bharata and incorporated the current practices that he saw around. He took into account forms that came up in the subsequent times of Bharata. For later writers like Jaya, Śārṅgadeva, Pārśvadeva, all of whom incorporated considerable amount of Desī material, Someswara was the basic source. Besides Mātāṅga's Brhaddevī, there was another large work on Desī ascribed to Nārada called Desinṛttasamudra.

Jaya has described the Desī varieties of sthāna, Karāṇas, Bhramaries, Padas, Caries, Gatis and Desi Lāṣyāṅgas. He also wrote in detail about several of the interesting popular dance forms called 'Desī-nṛttas' like Perāṇi, Prēkhaṇa, Suda-martana, Rāsaka, Carcarī, Nāṭya-rāsaka, Kollata, Gondali etc.

According to Jaya Rāsaka was a group dance of ladies numbering eight, twelve or sixteen. The dance presented different choreographic patterns i.e. Pīndī-Bandhas woven by
the group. Similar to earlier authors he described various Pīndi-bandhas, executed by expert dancers who participated. The costume worn was a saree, a tight fitting jacket as upper garment or according to the region where the dancer belonged, with the hair styled in a bun or plait. With the playing of instruments at the beginning the dancers entered executing the same caries from either side of the curtain. Jayaa has eloquently described the beauty, youth and alluring qualities of the dancers and their flashing movements, comparing them to lightning. Carcarī songs in divers melodies (rāgas) suited to the season or Deś songs and gesticulations according to their meanings by the dancers was also referred to. The dancers made frequent entries and exits, like the crescents of the moon they appeared and disappeared. While dancing, they sounded the rhythm by snapping the fingers or by striking each others palms and formed manifold patterns while performing Khanda, Mañdala, cārī etc. This festival of Rāsa was similar to that of the Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs. It was very clear that Jaya fully followed Bhoja in his description of Rāsaka. Bhojas's words were more or less reproduced by Jaya, But he has combined a part of Bhoja's descriptions of the text of Nāṭya Rāsaka with Rāsaka. (58) By saying at the outset "carcarībheta devahu" Jaya meant that Rāsaka described above became Carcarī when the dancers entering the stage sang Carcarī songs in the Varṇa-Tāla or Dvīpadī (two verses) songs portraying the erotic or heroic sentiments. They described the beautiful spring season and sang the praises of the patron King. The
dancing in circle of women had circular movements, both are the main characteristics of Rāsaka (59). According to Jaya, Nāṭya-rāsaka, is another form of Deś-nṛtta for women, different from Rāsaka and Carcarī. Though the dance was performed during the spring, the qualities of the King were interpreted and shown with Paḍārtha-abhinaya and the songs in Hindola rāga. (60).

The next dance described by Jaya in this Rāsaka was Danda-rāsaka. The dance was similar to an extent to the Rāsaka previously described. It was performed with the dancers having two sticks in their hands. The sticks were struck in course of the dance to keep the rhythm. The Danda-s or sticks were short, made usually of teak wood and painted with various colours and designs. Instead of using the sticks, flying whisks, cloths, flowers with long stems, or a dagger along with a stick could be held in the hands during the performance according to the regional practice. The movements of the dance follow the beats of the rhythmic instruments. The dancers moved to the right, to the left as well as executed the circular movements while striking the sticks at specific points in the course of the cycles of time. On the mode of the entry of the dancers, Jaya said, "Eight of them may enter first, gradually by addition of batches of four, the number may go up to sixty-four, forming two rows". The dancers performed graceful
circular movements with various gaits and beautiful feet movements. All the musical and dance compositions that were used in a solo performance of a dance-piece may, according to the King's fancy and with the training from a learned mature teacher, be sung and danced in this Danda-rāsaka. (61) The Gāraṇa Nṛtta of Jaya was a dance mode prevalent in Saurāstra (Gujarat) where in men and women of ministrel class performed. The main characteristic was circular choreography and circular motions, Maṇḍalvṛtti. The women covered their heads with a veīt and held it with their teeth. The characteristic songs accompanying the dance were Dohaka, derived from Dohaka metre. Many later writers have called dance Dohaka-nṛtta also. The melodious Dohakas were sung with regional intonations, and various instruments. The movements were forcefully graceful having various feet patterns, circular motions and hand gestures.(62)

Lakṣmīdhara's commentary on Gīta-govinda, namely Sr'utirājaṇa said that the Gāraṇa nṛtya as given in Vāmadeviya has the dance with instrumental sounds and loud noises (nārakānakara)(63) Sanīt-Ratnakar called Gāraṇa an expert musician, Kinkinī-player and performer of Vikala i.e. difficult, tough nārtan or dancing (Sanī-Ran-Chap VII Sl.1329).

By twelfth and thirteenth century we see distinct trends in the development of Rāsa-dance. At one level,
there was a universal dance form of circle, performed all over the country in multiferous ways, on social occasions as a group activity as part of the Kṛṣṇa celebrations in autumn and spring. The dance had varieties of movements choreography patterns and used sticks or claps to keep time with other instruments. According to Saradatana Rāsaka of three varieties.

1) Laēa-rāsaka - the Rāsaka where dancers entwined with each other or formed creeper like patterns, either with their bodies or on floor holding hands keeping the basic pattern of circle.

2) Danda-rāsaka - the Rāsaka where sticks or at times dagger, knife or lotus flowers were used to keep time.

3) Mandala-rāsaka - the circular dance with claps perhaps was of this variety. (64)

The other trend was development of regional varieties. Though the form of circle remained and most of the times was called Rāsaka, it acquired various local names and flavours as earlier by us in the Desī-nṛttas described by Jaya. Due to various dynastic rules over the different parts of the country the many social and cultural changes not only generated regional forms of dance and music but also in literature, sculpture, paintings etc. Sanskrit literature continued to provide the medium.
With coming of Jayadeva in 12th cen. and his Git-Govinda, Radha-Krsna consciousness was born. The songs and dances in the liquid language and with abandoned free movements, saturated with the Raṅga-Rāga-Rasa of Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā were sung and danced in deserts, on mountain tops and around the village well, bringing to pāyeo-erotic consciousness of the people a new Rasa, an ecstasy, born of Rādhā's passion. This love poetry of Braj-bhūmi was taken by communities of Gārapas, the Ḍāḍhās and such others to the vast country side, where in the light of oil lamps, in front of temples or at village squares, under flowering mangoes and open sky, the story of Kṛṣṇa was danced and sung. The circular dance of the Ābhiras was extensively used by Jayadeva. "In the presence of the (Ābhiras) cowherds' beautifully-browed-women who were carried away by whirling-about with a great amount of joy and jumping in the Kāsa dance, Hari was passionately kissed by Rādhā.\(^{(65)}\)" While his sweet-toned flute is sounded, rows of bracelets shake on their clapping hands, in the enjoyment of the Kāsa dance.\(^{(66)}\) "... my mind remembers Hari - he joked and played love-games here during the Kāsa dance.\(^{(67)}\)" The various inscriptions and manuscripts of Gitā-govinda found in different parts of the country; its painting on scrolls and on palm-leaves are the evidences of a new narrative art, an art that was visual and in movement, recounting the robust and bawdy Āhira legends. Here was Kāsa dance of women with one leader, clapping of hands, gesticulation and music.
According to Parlivadeva, a Jaina author of early fourteenth century, a number of rhythmic instruments like drum, Mridanga, copper cymbals, bells, dhol etc. were played in a performance of Danda-rāsaka. The dancers entering in pairs, at times faced each other, at times stood back to back. They beat the sticks in unison to the rhythm, executed various poses and formed patterns while dancing to different rhythms. The experts of Nṛtta called this Danda-rāsa. (68)

Another name used by Kohala was Rāsakāśa for Rāśa according to Rājānaka Ratnākara in his Haravijaya. Here eight, sixteen or thirtytwo women danced accordingly forming various formations in the pure, dance sequences. (69)

Hallīsa and Rāsaka were two of the fourteen Desī-nṛtta Kāvyas or Geya-rūpakas mentioned by Vemabhupala, Reddy King of Konduvidu of Andhra of early fifteenth century. Along with some other varieties of nṛttabandha-s, Carcarī, Rāsaka, Hallīsaka were described. The erotic Carcarī songs and dance performed as part of the spring festival were similar to Rāsaka. The beautifully decks maidens entered the stage in pairs, sang carcarī to the accompaniment of musical instruments and rhythmic variations. As yet hitherto unmentioned dance formation called Caturmukhu nṛttabandha where in dancers in pairs entered making groups of four was elaborated by Vemaphupala. The female dancers formed circle
with such foursome-s. While hitting each other possibly by hand, sticks or something else, not clarified, and executed dance sequences. They moved diagonally in the circle, whirling, but keeping the square constant. The pairs also moved together as well as alternatively. (71)

Here we have the possibilities of having definite choreographic patterns with-in the frame of a circle.

A number of foursomes form a circle.

a When all four are closed together we have pattern of clusters.

b When they separate in pairs we have two concentric circles similar to an object of light throwing out equally intense rays in all directions.

The scope of various combinations is unlimited in this form.

Many of the patterns used today for stage presentation of Kāsa could be easily traced back to earlier times and the ones talked by Vēmabhupala in this particular nṛttabandha could be imaginatively utilized to create a most graphic and scintillating panorama of whirling movements in a Kāsa-dance composition. After such unique and
creative descriptions, the Natya-rasaka definition followed earlier author Jaya. Experts of Desi nṛtta called the dance performed by females in the spring with Desi-Hindala rāga and padarthabhinaya, a Natya-rasaka according to vemabhupala. (72) The Rasaka had three varieties one Rasaka itself, second Natya-rasaka and third Garcarī. (73) Here Rasaka became an all accepted dance form which was called by different names according when, by whom and how it was performed. Rasaka could be performed by sixteen or twentyeight female dancers or by maximum sixtyfour couples. Both execute various pindibandha with peculiar rhythms and tempos. The graceful yet vibrantly forceful dance of couples was Rasakam. (74) We have yet another description of Rasaka coming from Vemabhupala. The dancers entered the stage from both the sides, executing similar feet movements, remaining at equal distance, to the accompaniment of songs. The melodies were suitable to the seasons and time of the day. They used various Prabandha-s or tunes like Dwipadis, Desi-s and the like. The various patterns were created by captivating and imaginative combinations of Khaṇḍa, Maṇḍala, Cārī and Lasyaṅga, along with some gesticulations. Their clapping with cutki (snapping of hands) enhanced and stressed the appeal of rhythmic accompaniment. This beautiful dance created an audio-visual impact on the onlooker. (75) The circular dance of women with one leader as Kṛṣṇa in middle
of the gopi-s was Hallisaka. But with multiple Krishna-s, the gopi-s entered in couples. Similarly the dancers might enter while dancing in (pairs) couples. Each moved with the male partner. This circular lilayukta dance was integral part of festivals. Many times the Hallisaka with its leader as a great king or Krishna was identified as Mandala-rasaka. (76) Vemabhupala, Jayasenapati, Saradatanaya, Bhojadeva, Nandikeswara and others gave detailed extensive descriptions of the Rasaka class of dances in context of technique, and social background.

The Rasaka, Nathyarasaka, Hallisaka were also described as minor dramatic forms and were classified under Gey-rupaka, Nṛtya-bheda, Nṛtta-rūpaka etc. In 14th Century A.D. Viswanath elaborated them under the class Uparūpaka in his Sahityadarpana.

The Rajaputa King Kumbhakarna of Chitor, Mewar (1433-1468 A.D.) extensively described the varieties of Rasaka, Carcarī Nātya-rasaka, Daṇḍa-rasaka, Dohakanrityam etc. under the section titled Desī-Nṛtya-bheda in his Nṛttaratna-Kosa. The dance with various gaits, postures and delicate movements, having Desī rhythms (tāla-s) and prevalent over the land was called Rasaka by the experts of dance art. (77) No other songs except that glorifying
the beauty of spring accompanied the ladies dancing in spring. In such a Nātya-rāsaka, the heroism and valour of the King was to be danced with abhinaya. (78) The lotus-like palms of eight, sixteen, thirty-two or sixty-four graceful Rādhās i.e. beautiful ladies of the city, holding sticks in their, danced. The round, soft sticks were made of gold or such other metal, one foot long and about an inch in diameter. According to the prevalent regional practice, the sticks could be substituted by flying-whisks, daggers, knives Dandaka-vyāpāl or Dandaka-vattha. While dancing, the mlild sticks made heavy sounds as if the swords were colliding. This was possible only if they were struck with great force, four to five times with great speed. They moved to the sides, in the front and back with various postures, gaits and circular movements. Creating such beautiful picturesque patterns and formations, from time to time (again and again) they came to the basic formation of the circle. This dance of pure rhythmic patterns, different tempos and performed by the courtēsans was called Danda-rāsaka nartan by experts of dance. (79) The danda-rāsaka was both performed by the women of the region as well as the courtēsans. So perhaps this was such a social dance where all and one could take part without any discrimination of social classes. The usage of daggers and knives in place of sticks perhaps symbolised the martial, Rajput communities. Today the Mers of Saurāstra
do use shields and swords in their Rāsa dances. Though it is not been specified by Kambharāṇa, the dance must have been performed not only by women but also by men.

The captivating Carcarī was sung in Dviṭipādi with Varnatāla and gracefully danced with several gaits and rhythms by groups of women in a circle. Dressed in regional fashions, they danced while clapping hands as part of the spring festival. (80) Kumbharāṇa described the beautiful dance of the women of Saurāstra called Dohakanrityam. The hair was covered by the edge of the sari, held by teeth; the women were charmingly clothed and jewelled in their traditional costumes. To the accompaniment of mrdaṅga, they sang melodious Dohaka-s with regional intonations. With graceful and delicate foot movements, hands creating visual images in the air, they executed various cārīes and bhramari-s. It was a favourite dance of the performers. (81). This was yet another popular dance of women of Saurāstra.

Kumbharāṇa wrote about the Vādhyaprabandha or the rhythmic cycle, tāla which could be used for Daṇḍarāsaka of Rāsa-class of dances. (82) According to Acārya Veda, the Rāsatāla has syllables like Teṭi Gidha etc. The dance was performed in four cycles of Carcarī tāla by the dancers Carcarī nārtanam. (83)

The author of Satigītadharmānaḍa and Hastamuktāvati, Subhavikara put Rāṣaka and Naṭya-rāṣaka under the

The author lived around 1560 A.D. in Sivagaṅga Village in Khanadeśa under Sultan Burhankhān of Faruqui dynasty.

The sticks to be used in dance should be about an inch in circumference, ten inches long, straight, made of strong solid wood, smothered and decorated with gold caps and lacquer painting. This group circular dance had songs, rhythmic patterns and many speeds. The sounds created by clashing of the sticks were pleasing to the ears.

(while performing the danda-rūsa) The dance without using sticks was called Rāsa-nṛtyam.

We have covered about two thousand years (4th B.C. to 16th A.D.) of time span in tracing the origin and history of the Rāsa dance through some of the major Sanskrit works on dramatargy and poetics, written by authors residing in different regions of India. (There are still many more)

The circular dance of primitive man developed with the civilization. The freedom of spirit and movement experienced by the participant and the onlooker sustained it through the pressures of time. It became the dance of the pastoral Ābhira-s and was a favourite past time of Kṛṣṇa with the gopī-s. By 8th Century A.D. it became a popular and accepted form to be mentioned in detail by numerous texts on dancing. The simple movements of the
circle were further enhanced by addition of various gaits, postures, rhythmic patterns and tempos. The Danda or sticks and the like, clapping and chain formations were popular. Various group formations became the integral parts of the basic choreographic pattern of circle. This dance of men alone, women alone or with one leader, or both men and women together, was performed on all popular religious and social festivals in the village squares, on specially enacted stages, in temple court yards, in the gardens, on river banks. In Gujarat, dance developed and spread with the pastoral culture, remaining a favourite past time of women and men. Many aspects of the dance e.g. movements etc., as visualised in this chapter are seen in today's dance of Gujarat.
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   गोपाल: धोषाधूनुशीलः वचनं इत्यदृश्ये | अशास्ति धोषवाच्याः श्रावनं अङ्गकृतःक वृत्ताभवति
   उपमुत्त्य तामूः।
   महाय: अः भूता आवागः।
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   तुप्पौ करोणे।
   गायकः: प्रेमको भगवन नकू।
   - 'Balaacarita' of Bhāsa, act 3.
   "Hindi Nātaka, Udabhava aur Vikās," by Dr. Dasharath Ora.
   p. 76.

2. भूमिः महाय लग्न सिद्धमुरुः। अः भूमिः भासोदोपः विसंग
   पुश्करांने मोक्षकारकाः हृदर्शीकाः नाम प्रभुविति
   आय स्त्रियः | अशास्ति गोपालः: भक्ताः अस्तित्वान्
   अर्थेन जनस्तः भूमिः भासोदोपः हृदर्शीकां प्रकटायः।
   - ibid

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   तथाच भूमिः गोपालः कुरुविदितम।
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   दारी हरदीपें अलाल
   नरकवेद अवद्यकन हरदीपक्षस्म।-अवद्यकनदुध्धवृक्षः
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- Hariwanśa Purāṇa, Adhyāya 61, Verse 30.

(7) ताचु कौलय प्रवाक चुकींतः अर्थं सयदन्ती मोक्षसात।

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(9) गोविन्दवीरूः, शमशक्ति अर्थं शमशक्ति अश्लीलः।

- ibid.
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अधिक भाष्यते दासकेशन ना।
बृहस्पतिर्माण अरुणात्मक
अभिकृते अस्थना देशकीर्तनः।

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अर्थातः तत्तथात्मा अह्मत अर्थातः आर्यादेव केक्यातः।

- ibid, Uttarādha, Adhyāya 86, Sh. 7.

(13) आर्यादेव केक्यातः महृद्यः अभ ते ते आर्यादेव यास्यनामः।

- ibid, sh. 16 and 28.

(14) गोपीपरिच्छन्नीश्वरः गोिस्मि अर्थशचमनोऽस्मातः।
आर्यादेवः गोिविष्ठा रासारम्भवस्यूः।

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3) दृष्ट्या तृः हृ तथा आर्यी नामेन्द्र अति प्रकाशीः। श्रद्धेन्द्र नामन्त्युज्यते हेषां ताकर हैः।
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उदाहि अभावन्ते भक्तात्।
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19) अकेचिस्विनं नायिनि प्राप्तो हुमाणः श्राय।
आया अतिष्ठितं कल्पतु वादके परिवीरभूती।
आरित्वं अपराधो भगवत्कृत्यवनानं आत्मं
जलाहारि अतुलग्रामे न अद्वैतं वेदमति।
- ibid.

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as in (3)
(23) "Harṣacarita" of Bāṇa, Chap. II, p. 113.

(24) Jñānaśekhara Bhaṭṭāchārya

(25) "Sākara" commentator of Harṣacarita

(26) Abhinavagupta's commentary on Abhinavagupta's Harṣacarita

(27) Ibid., p. 57.

(28) Ibid., p. 130

(29) "Harṣacarita" of Abhinavagupta (Gadkari's Oriental Series No. 1, 1983).

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(31) "Śāṅkara-Piśāca" of Bṛhadāvata. Vol II., p. 425.
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अनुक्रमांशे है नेम हे नायिका अभिविनिष्ठार्थ:।।
- स्र. ३६. वृ. वृं. आय. १२५-६।
(३२) तात्त्व दिक्षिका भाग नालायतीविशिष्टरूपं अस्त
(०ष्ठ: प्रयत्नं)।।
- इभादि. प. २८३।
(३३) कालिनीभिषुर्धो भूताविधिते अनु० वृत्ते त्।
अनु० भक्ताविधिते अति।।
- इभादि।
(३४) दर्शाकोट्ट विविधरूपं अधर।
(३६) नारों क्षत्रियां नाली: यानि अनते: अनते:।
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(३५) पार्वती: नारायणानाम! पार्वती: नारायणानाम!।
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(३६) 'वायुविष्ट्र' दशरथ, चैत. २८१-२८।
- 'वायुविष्ट्र' दशरथ, चैत. २८१-२८।
- होटिस्त्र चेति स्वरुपं क्रम:।
37. अभिभाषत नारायण विश्वनाथ शिबसिंहः। 
अनुभवः। 
अहं सिद्धि ते तलं । 
तल्लोकं तालसिद्धिणाम्। 
तकावध्यं अक्षराणं द्र, तलो विना द्वितिक्यं नामिपिता द्र, शाखा उद्भवे। 

- 'हदयांगमणी' द्वारा पं. प्र. 

38. बिनाहो शापितः आयतं भ्यथाते दिवितन्तः। 
अर्ध्वधाम गिर्लिकाकाविं भ्रक्तरथ शाखनारं। 

- 'रामायण', 'क[['II, 91-48।

39. कुठलों निम्बरं तुनं । रुद्रार्दकर्मणि हर्षीतः। 
राज्यसिद्धिः चतुरभिभाषा । शास्त्रभूषणः। 
एतत्त्रस्मि काव्यस्मु शुभदार्शिभिंर्भितः। 
रुद्रार्दा भ्रयितम् रक्षकं। तथेतु तस्श्चेतिन्यम्। 
वृद्धिकर्ममेव ध्वजः। अभ्युभस्य दीर्घकृतं 
परस्परं नस्यजशः। रुद्राद्य जस्य जगते। 
अज्जो त्व च द्रुक्को चे त्रिपुचित्रे नेपते। 

- 'सुधानंदाप्रसादः।

40. राज्यसिद्धिः शब्दार्थः। शब्दार्थः आयतकः। 
हस्तेनं शर्यान्ति। 

- 'मेदानिकोश' द्वारा हेमचंद्रकृष्णः। 

41. अतिष्ठते अवस्मिन्तत्ततो अवशोषितः। 

- 'कव्यानुसारिणी' द्वारा हेमचंद्रकृष्णः।
(42) भागचरित्र तु अत्यद्वैत सक्तिः सक्तिस्च भिन्नः ।

- Abhichāracīrtamāni kosa of Hemacandra. 
Rāsa-sahitya by Bhaṭṭa Vādya. p. 46.

(43) भागचरित्र तु अत्यद्वैत सक्तिः सक्तिस्च भिन्नः ।

- Kāvyanusīkāna of Hemacandra.

(43) अभिचरित्र तु अत्यद्वैत सक्तिः सक्तिस्य भिन्नः ।

- 'Nātya-darpana' of Rāmacandra and 
Kāvyacandra. Vol. I, GOS no. XLVII
p. 213, sh. 6.

(44) ibid sh. 8, 9.

(45) ibid.

(46) ibid. sh. 10.

(47) ए लोका निषेधायुः यत अविन्यः स्वयम् भाविकः ।

- Bhāvakāśa of Sāradattayana. 
GOS no. XLV chap. 9, sh. 1 to 4, p. 263.

(48) ए लोका निषेधायुः यत अविन्यः स्वयम् भाविकः ।

- ibid, p. sh. 10 to 14, p. 265

(49) ए लोका निषेधायुः यत अविन्यः स्वयम् भाविकः ।

- ibid.
117

18. ibid, Sh. 1, p. 267.

19. ibid; Sh. 7-8, p. 264.

20. क्षेत्रीयिक तो अनुभाष्टर श्रीललिताकुमारी ||

— Amatānandī of Andhara.

Bharatakosa of Rāmkrṣṇa-kavi, p. 771.

21. श्रीरामकुमारी अनुभाष्टर श्री ललितकुमारी ||

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22. अनेक अभिव्यक्ति: परमार्थनोबहु ||

— "Bhartārṣṇava" of Nandikēśwara
chap. 13, Sh. 745 to 748, p. 377.

23. दुःखमुक्ति लक्षणो सभ्य पुस्तकेश्वर "नाटिका" ||

— ibid, Sh. 749

24. ibid, Sh. 877, 878, p. 450.

25. ibid, p. 450.

— San. Ret. of Sārāṅgādeva.
(57) गनाधृति प्रविष्टें द्वारा "रसकूमुदि" के अनुसार "तालमाला" में दर्दमादिषिर्।
— "Rasakaumudi" of Sukaśita.

(58) अध्यात्मिक साहित्य अर्थिती ज्ञानम् ज्ञानम् कोषा नामकोऽपि।
अन्यत्र किवि धर्मिकसुत्रम्: पृष्ठभूषण नाथिकाः।
— 'Nṛtta-ratnavali' of Jayasenapati.
Madras Gov. Oriental Series no. CVIN

(59) परमीतैं देवान।
— ibid, shloka 98-99 p. 218

(60) ibid, sh. 100, p. 219.

(61) नातकेऽस्मि समाधिर अर्थित अपुव्यूहकेऽपि।
नार्तकी धृ. तथा कुप्यतार्थो वेदनार्थिकीषिकाः।
— ibid, sh. 101-107, p. 219.

(62) ननान्युधाबंध्या वाहके गोकुलानु समाधिर्त्य असाधिर्याणि।
— ibid, sh. 134-136, p. 224.

(63) यासनरूपमात्राः शुन वामेवते—
स्वरुपा वायु-वर्णमाला (वायु) श्वातुपुरुषावर्तिता।
— "Vāmadevīya."
Sūti Satāyi—commentary on Gītā-govinda by sahaṅkara
64. The task of the performer may be summed up as:

- 'Bhavaprabhâsanâ' of Sarada-tanmaya.
  Chap. 10, p. 296.

65. The sources are:

- "Gita-govinda" of Jayadeva, Canto I, Song 4, sh. 49.
- ibid, Canto I, Song 4, sh. 44.
- ibid, Canto II, Song 5, sh. 1.

66. The sources are:

- "Sangîtasamayâsara" of Pañâsvadéva.

67. The sources are:

- "Haravijaya" of Reýanaka Rudrâkand.

68. The sources are:

- Vêmabhupâlî.
  Bharatakṣaṇâ of Râmâkîśa kâvi, p. 203.
71. अवसर अनुभव करने के लिए अत्यधिक अनुभवान: ||

— ibid, p. 197.

72. ibid, p. 590

73. आधुनिकता के प्रभाव तथा आधुनिक गतिशीलता: प्रकृति ||

— ibid, p. 552.

74. ibid, p. 552.
75. ibid, p. 551.
76. मुस्लिम शैली अनुसार कलात्मक कल्पना: प्रकृति ||

— ibid, p. 77.

77. नये अनुभव प्रकृति साहित्यिक भव्यता प्राप्त: ||


78. ibid, sh. 111, p. 299.
79. ibid, sh. 112-117, p. 214.
80. ibid, sh. 118, 119. p. 212.
81. ibid, sh. 120-122. p. 212-3.
83. तेनि शिख तुमि शुद्र . . . .

— Veda
Bharadakṣṣa of Ramakṛṣṇa Kavi, p. 203.

84. असकऽपरेकांभुथ । अतितात्त्वकपूहुँ ।

— "Vartama-nirnaya" of Pundarika-Vithoba
unpublished mss. at Oriental Research Institute, Baroda.