CHAPTER I

INDIAN TRADITIONS OF DANCE

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PART A

1.1.1 Man's Response to Nature

Dance may be said to be an instinct or a compelling force to express emotions within. It is an outward expression of deep inner feelings. The man first danced from the sheer urge to express himself before he started to speak even.¹ Man responded and reacted demonstratively to all what he saw around him in nature that impressed him or affected him. The swaying of trees, the running and cascading of water, frisking of animals and other like phenomenon enthralled him. The emotional impulses that were generated found their gratification through the art of dancing. He has always utilized this medium to give vent to his inner feelings of joy, sorrow, anger, elation and trance - like bliss as well as his aesthetic emotions. Dance thus became one of the most cogent modes through which even the emotions or the ideas were conveyed. The dance is found amongst all men and women in the primitive as well as the advanced societies.² According to Projesh Banerji, "the primitive man was born with the quality or attitude of dance within him. Some reputed

thinkers establish that dance took its birth with the creation of universe much before man was born.¹

I shall deal with five important dances of India, namely Kathak, Bharat Natyam, Manipuri, Odissi and Kuchipudi.

1.1.2 ORIGIN AND NOMENCLATURE OF KATHAK:

The word Kathak comes from the root Katha which means story telling. Kathaks were originally a caste of story tellers. They were attached to temples in certain parts of Northern India.² Historically Kathak dates back to vedic period when Rigveda, and epics of Ramayan and Mahabharta were written. Kathak communities used to go around the countryside narrating the stories of these epics and other legends. The modes employed were poetry, music and dance. All these three arts were closely interlinked. The aim of Kathaks was to educate the people in the knowledge of Gods and mythological legends of Aryans.³ While reciting the epics and mythological stories, they also added the element of acting - abhinaya. In Ramayana, we find a mention of reciters who specialised in story telling.⁴ Lav and Kusha, the two brave sons of Rama rendered Ramayana in verses composed by Sage Valmiki.⁵

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1. Erotica in Indian Dance, P 12.
3. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 125.
5. Nritta Shiksha, P 94.
There is no historical proof about the origin of Kathak dance. However, if we look to Raas Lila of Brij, we can conclude that it is a contribution made by Lord Krishna.¹

Kathaks are mentioned in Kathasaritasagara (11th Century A.D.). It is said that King Sahasratika used to listen to tales narrated by Kathaka Sangataka. There is a reference to Kathaks in Natyashastra. The art was handed down from one generation to the other in a hereditary manner as an oral tradition.²

According to Mohan Khokar, "Kathak as a distinct mode of dance came in existence in 15th and 16th centuries with the emergence of cult of devotion through love (Prema-Bhagti), a form of operatic play known as Raas Lila, the traditions of which developed mostly in Brij, and the plays took their inspirations from the devotional poetries of poets like Surdas, Nandadas and Krishnadas. He says, "In time, the Raas Lila developed into a distinct form of folk theatre, carrying a pleasing blend of song, narrative acting and dancing. And the dancing in Raas Lila consisted for the most part, of an extension and amplification of the simple, basic mime and gesture of the Kathak story-

tellers combined with elements of whatever folk dancing was then available in the region".\(^1\)

1.1.3 ORIGIN AND NOMENCLATURE OF BHARAT NATYAM:

This is a form of dance prevalent in South India and the purest style of this dance is found in Tamil Districts. Like all other classical dances, it has its roots in Bharata's Natya Shastra.\(^2\)

The expression Devadasi literally means God's attendant or devotee.\(^3\) In earlier times this dance was called Dasi Attam as it was performed by Devadasis in temples. The term 'Bharata Natyam' came in use in order to disassociate the art from Devadasis who had later fallen in disrepute. Some authors say that the term 'Bharata Natyam' means dance according to the principles of Bharata. However, this term could apply to any of the chief schools of classical dance in India as all these are based essentially upon Bharata's work.\(^3\)

1. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 94.
There are others who say that Bharata comes from three letters viz, Bha, Ra, Ta. The first word stands for Bhava, which is the inner feeling nourishing one or other of nine kinds of Rasas in dance. 'Ra' stands for Raga, melody and tune. 'Ta' means Tala, Time or rhythmic beatings.

Among the people of Mangalore district a story is prevalent that Arjuna was the first person to have taught Bharat Natyam type of dance. He taught this dance while in exile incognito as a woman under the name of Vrihannala to Uttara, the daughter of Virata, the King of Matsya Desha. This is the story in Mahabharata. It is possible that this type of dancing spread from Virata's court throughout Southern India and to Orissa.

Another story is that Arjuna during his pilgrimage came to the city of Manipur. Chitrangada, the daughter of Chitrabhanu, the King of Manipur in Deccan was an artist. Arjuna married her and taught her the art of Bharata Natyam type of dancing and from her this type of dancing spread throughout the length and breadth of Deccan. Most probably Chitrangada was a devadasi or belonged to the same caste.

1. Art of Indian Dancing, P 97.
Classical Dances and Costumes of India, P 33.
2. Art of Indian Dancing, P 95.
3. Ibid, P 96.
1.1.4 SPREADING OF ARYAN CIVILIZATION:

Aryan civilization travelled from North to South. Indian civilization went as far as the Eastern Islands of Java, Sumatra and Borneo. It went from Gujarat and Bengal to Kalinga and from there to far East because Kalinga had number of parts in those days.¹

1.1.5 ORIGIN AND LEGENDS OF MANIPURI DANCE:

Manipur is the home of Meities, a race of slight built with slanting eyes, who are very sensitive and artistic. Here the dance and music are the focal point of every day life of the people. It is a spontaneous expression among the Meities.² Originally Meities were the followers of Bratya Religion, which was a Tantric Cult with an admixture of primitive concept of cosmology and worship of Shiva and Mother Goddess. Manipuris have a rich lore of legends and mythology. Most of these legends relate to Shiva.³ The people of Manipur trace their art to Gandharwas, the celestial musicians of Vedic mythology. Manipuri finds mention in Mahabharata. As mentioned on last page, the story is that Arjuna and Princess Chitrangada had a son named Babruvahan who ruled Manipur. The Rajas

1. Art of Indian Dancing, P 110.
3. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 171.
of Manipur claimed their royal decent to Babruvahan.\textsuperscript{1}

There is a general belief among the Manipuries that they are the descendants of Gandharvas and refer Manipur as 'Gandharvadesa' i.e. the land of Gandharvas. They substantiate this claim by quoting episodes from Hindu Scriptures. For example, Somara is a mountain peak on the Eastern Border of Manipur. Here according to Manipuri traditions, is a gate set by the Gods known as Mongpokhong. Tangkhus guard the gate. Tangkhus is the Meitie name for Tandu, the disciple of Shiva who taught dancing to Bharata, the author of Natya Shastra. Tangkhus, therefore, claim to be the descendants of Tandu. There is a mention in Mahabharata of a gate which is located on this peak.\textsuperscript{2}

A passage in the Ramayan also makes a mention of this peak, where 'Usha', the Goddess of dawn made her first appearance. According to the legend, it was Parvati, who taught the dance to Usha and who in turn taught it to women of India. The women of Manipuri, therefore, regard themselves to be disciples of Usha. The black and white stripes in their costumes represent dark nights and the rays of dawn. The Chingkheirol, one of the oldest Manipuri dances is a representation of Usha's dance.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Dance Dialects of India, P 175.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 172.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Ibid, P 172.
\end{itemize}
A very popular legend relates to Raas Lila dance performed by Shiva and Parvati. It is said that once Shiva and Parvati visited the earth and saw Krishna and Radha dancing the Raas. Parvati was so much enchanted with this dance that she longed to dance in the same manner with Shiva to enjoy the same kind of bliss. Shiva selected an ideal place for this purpose which was girdled by hills but was full of water. He pierced one of the hills and drained off the water leaving a splendid lush green valley. Here he danced with Parvati and this Raas went on for seven days and seven nights. The Gandharvas and various Gods provided the music and Nagdeva with Mani flooded the place with light. From that time this place came to be called Manipur (Mani means jewel and pur means place). Ritualistic dances dedicated to Shiva (Nong-Pokningthou) and Parvati (Pant-hoibi) have been composed by the people since those early days. One of the most famous dance drama is the Lai Haraoba which is based on Raas Lila of Shiva and Parvati.¹ Later the romantic and tragic story of immortal lovers Khamba and Thoibi, a Princess of Moirang Dynasty of Manipur as contained in Moirang Parba, a famous epic of Manipur, was incorporated in it.²

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1. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 105.
2. The Dance in India, P 65.
The legend is, Thoibi, a Princess of Moirang dynasty, fell in love with Khamba, a poor but a brave young man. There was opposition to their being married. However, they married each other. After some time, Khamba said, that he was going out for a night and secretly left his spear in the house. The custom was that if a spear was left in the house of a woman and she kept it, it meant a secret liaison with a lover. Thoibi, noticing the spear, threw it out of the house. It struck Khamba who died of the injury sustained by it. Thoibi, then committed suicide by plunging the same spear in her heart. According to legend Thoibi and Khamba danced the role of Shiva and Parvati in the religious festival of Moirang.

The story of Thoibi and Khamba is described slightly differently by some authors. For example, in splendours of Indian dance it is recorded that Khamba in a playful mood in the night pushed his lance towards Thoibi to startle her. Suspecting that there was an intruder, she thrust it back. The lance hit Khamba who died on the spot. Thereafter she committed suicide with the same spear.

1. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 105.
2. The Splendours of Indian Dance, P 67.
1.1.8 ODISSI:

The Natya Shastra of Bharat Muni which is said to have been written in 2nd century A.D. refers to four regional styles of classical dance. The Odra-Magadhya style is mentioned as the dance of the eastern region of India (Orissa and Bihar). Odrivisaya and Odradesa are the ancient names of Orissa. Even today the classical dance of Orissa is known as Odra or Odissi dance. Since, Odra Magadha is referred to as an accepted dance form in Natya Shastra, it must have been in existence for some centuries before Natya Shastra was written.

1.1.9 SOURCE OF KUCHIPUDI:

The classical dance as practised in Andhra Pradesh is known as Kuchipudi, and derives its name from the village Kuchelpuri or Kuchelapuram, a hamlet in Krishna District. Through the years this village came to be called Kuchipudi.

1. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 123. Indian Classical Dance, P 35.
2. Dance Dialects of India, P 138.
3. Art of Indian Dancing, P 103. Sangeet September, 1962, P 27.
4. Indian Dances their History and Growth, P 63.
Though springing from the comprehensive principles and techniques of the classical dance as expounded in Natya Shastra, this classical dance has come down to posterity in a highly developed dance drama form.¹

Three different types of dances were in vogue in Andhra Pradesh, each based on the classical modes and trends. These were the dances of Devadasis, the religious dance dramas of Yakshagana of Brahmins and the secular dances of Raj Nartakis. The dances of devadasis were devotional in character and were performed before the Shrine of Shiva on a polished stone slab, placed behind the Nandi bull which faced the Shrine. The dance dramas of religious Yakshagana performed by the Brahmins in temple mandapas took shape from the early indigenous dance, dramas called Bahu Natakas which portrayed the ten varieties of Shiva Leela Natayams or Shiva legends. These showed various manifestations of Lord Shiva, namely Garala Kantha (Shiva as the Saviour of the World who drinks poison to serve mankind), Mrutyam Jaya (Shiva as the destroyer of the God of Death), Tripura Samhara (Shiva who saves the three cities from Asuras), Satvika Ananda Rupa (Shiva depicting both man and woman who creates harmony and unity in the world process), Palonetra (Shiva as destroyer of Kama, the cupid of Hindu mythology), Aradhanari (Shiva as half-

¹. The Dance in India, P 55.
man half-woman, signifying the dual process), Atavika Rupa (Shiva as hunter who tests Arjuna's strength and valour) Kala Bhairava Rupa (Shiva in His dance of anger, as He destroyed Daksha and His enemies), Našaraja (Shiva as the God who controls the harmony and rhythm of the universe) and Sandhya Nritya (Shiva in His gift-giving dance that calls to men to worship Him with peace in their hearts). Yakshagana dance dramas were enacted in the Kalyana Mandapa pavilions of Shiva temples. Lastly there were the secular dances performed by the professional woman dancers, Raj Nartakies, in the royal courts outside the temples.

1.1.10 BHARAT NATYAM (INSTITUTION OF DEVADASI):

It is not exactly known how the institution of Devadasis came into existence but it can be presumed that Devadasis were attached to the temples mainly in order to provide entertainment for the Lord. In this regard the earliest references are found in the Puranas. For example in Padam Purana which was compiled about 4th century A.D. it is written that one who offers a beautiful woman to God attains Heaven for one full Kalpa. Similarly in Skanda Purana which was compiled about 7th century A.D. Rishi Markandeya says "In the course of my supplications to Shiva as I offered oblations to fire, there came about seven beautiful maidens whom I employed in the service of Lord". In the history as well, we find references to the practice of dedicating dancing girls to temples.

1. The Dance in India, P 56.
2. Indian Classical Dance, P 63-65.
1.1.11 DEVELOPMENT OF BHARAT NATYAM:

The development of Bharata Natyam can be traced to the Sangam age namely about 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. In this age two important epics namely *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekhalai* were written which deal with the life of dancing girls and say a good deal about the technique of the dance and its presentation. In the 12th century A.D. Adyar-kunallar wrote a commentary on the *Silappadikaram*. In this references are made on earlier Tamil texts such as the Agattiyam, Jayantam, Gunanool, Bharatam and Issai Nanukam which deal with dance and music. It is significant that though the Natya Shastra too was written about this time, none of the Tamil works of the period make any reference to it. This probably means that in early stages the dance traditions developed in Tamil Nadu did so independently of Natya Shastra. Later it came to be influenced by Natya Shastra and other Sanskrit texts. The Aryan and Dravidian cultures merged harmoniously in the classical art form like Bharata Natyam. 1

1.1.12 PALLAVAS AND CHOLAS REGION:

Pallavas who ruled over Tamil Nadu from 4th to 9th century have no historical record to show that Devasasis were attached to temples in their time. However, the

1. Tradition of Indian Classical Dance, P 64.
existence of certain frescoes in Sittanavasal and carvings in the Pallava temples at Kanchipuram both of which show dance figures, lead to the conclusion that the art of dancing had reached a high degree of perfection by the time of Pallavas. Cholas were in power from the middle of 9th to late 12th century. We find positive evidence of the practice of the employment of devadasis in the temples during this period.¹

1.1.13 POSITION OF TEMPLES AND OTHER ATTENDANTS:

Temples were the centres of religion as well as art and culture. In earlier times devadasis had a high social status. They could sing, dance, read the classics and play musical instruments. These girls were of two categories - those who were voluntarily dedicated by their parents due to some religious sentiments and those who were dedicated due to some circumstances of stress. The devadasis started learning the art at the tender age of five. Tamil inscriptions show that about four hundred dancers were attached to Shiva temple of Tanjore in 11th century A.D. and about hundred to the temples of Kanchipuram.²

¹. Tradition of Indian Classical Dance, P 65.
². The Dance in India, P 29.
Through these dance dramas of the Bhagwata Mela, highly emotional and appealing stories were enacted.¹

1.1.16 CULT OF SHIVA:

After Kharewala, Kara or Bhaumas ruled Kalinga from 2nd to 7th Century A.D., Buddhism was the State religion. In the rock cut shrines we find the dancing figures of men and women. Suvakar Deva was the great monarch at that time in whose time art and culture of Orissa spread far and wide in India.²

Towards the end of Bhauma dynasty, cult of Shiva established in place of Buddhism. In Bharateswara, one of the early Shiva temples (6th Century A.D.), carvings depicting the marriage of Lord Shiva and figures of Celestial dancers are found.³

3. Dance Dialects of India, P 148.
KATHAK'S AS WORSHIPPERS:

In ancient period God was worshipped by the mode of expression. This was confined to Brahmmins only, because they had the exclusive right of worship. The temple without the group of dancers and musicians was inconceivable. Temple sculptures of the North as well South testify to this practice which must have been prevalent all over India. Brahmmins were expert musicians and dancers attached to the temples. They were also excellent narrators and story tellers and used to interpret the incidents from Ramayana, Mahabarata and Puranas with gestures and music. The Sanskrit word Kathak or Kahika means a narrator or a story teller.

It is seen that dance poses shown on the sculptures of Mohenjodaro and Harappa are in Kathak form only. Kathak dance figures are also shown in paintings of 15th and 16th centuries.¹

¹ Kathak Nritya (Hindi), P 26.
Supermacy of Brahmanism took roots during the Kesari dynasty in 8th century. From 9th to 11th century Orissa enjoyed the Royal patronage in art and culture from the Kesari Kings. King Jayati Kesari built a Lingaraj temple at Bhubneshwar. The temples of Guteshwar, Brahmeswar and Parashurameshwar were also built during his reign. The outer walls of these temples at Bhubneshwar are replete with dancing figures of girls in various poses, which are a great store-house for dance artists for learning. In these temples there are innumerable figures of Natraja Shiva in 'Lalita Tandava' style, and also males and females taking part in dancing and musical performances, in solo, duets and groups. Queen Kalavati, the mother of King Udyata Kesari had built this temple of Lord Shiva in 8th century and employed dancing girls for service in the temple. These were known as Maharis in Orissa. Bhubneshwar became the center of Shiva cult and dancing hall was an essential feature of temple architecture.¹

¹ Dance Dialects of India, P 141. 
Art of Indian Dancing, P 113.
1.1.19 MAHARIS (TEMPLE DANCING GIRLS):

Temple dancing girls have been the earliest performers of the Odissi dance and for centuries they continued to be the chief repositories. The history of Odissi dancer, therefore, is largely the history of Maharis (Temple dancing girls).  

1.1.20 GUTIPUAS (TEMPLE DANCING BOYS):

Besides the Maharis there were the Gutipuas or boy dancers who came to be attached to temples about 16th century A.D. They helped in protecting the temples, ensured regular performance of rituals in Jagannath temple of Puri and danced during religious and social functions.

1.1.21 EXCHANGE OF DANCERS IN MANIPUR:

The Tai King, Kohlo-Feng of Burma, who invaded Manipur in 707 A.D. is said to have sent a troupe of dancers and musicians from Burma, Assam and Manipur to China, as a token of good-will. During the reign of King Loyamba, who ascended the throne in 1704 A.D., tragic love affair of Khamba and Thoibi took place. They are specially remembered for their dancing of the 'Lai Haroba', translated

1. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 124.
2. The Dance in India, P 50.
3. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 106.
as merry making of the Gods. They were such fine dancers that the Meities came to regard them incarnations of Shiva and Parvati, known as Nongpokningthou and Panthoibi in Manipur.¹ It is said that in 1467 A.D., during the reign of King Kyamba, King Pong of Burma took expert drummers and dancers from Manipur to his country.²

1.1.22 ROLE OF VAISHNAVITE MISSIONARIES:

In the 18th century Vaishnavite missionaries from Bengal went to Manipur and propagated a form of Hinduism which regarded Vishnu as the supreme deity and Bhagti (devotion) as a way to salvation. Vishnu was worshipped chiefly as Krishna (Ninth incarnation of Vishnu). It regarded Shravana (listening to praise of God) and Kirtan (singing of hymns—Bhajans) as forms of Bhagti. Music and art thus received a big boost through Vaishnavism.³

1.1.23 COMMUNITY SINGING COMMENDED BY GURU NANAK:

When all the participants in a Bhajan sing in union, sacred vibrations and Divine energies are released. When many sing together (named as kirtan), it acquires a Divine power. That was the reason why Guru Nanak commended community singing.⁴

¹. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 173-74.
². Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 106-107.
³. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 174.
STATE'S ADOPTION OF VAISHNAVISM OF RAMANANDA ORDER:

Pamheiba, the king of Manipur under the influence of Goswami Santidas, a Vaishnav missionary gave up his Meithai Bratya religion and embraced Vaishnavism of Ramananda order and soon after, the entire state adopted this branch of Vaishnavism. Pamheiba, not only adopted Vaishnavism, but also got destroyed all records of previous religion and forbade the worship of Meithei images and use of Meithei language and script. The result was that Meithei traditions of dance and music suffered a severe set back and a whole range of Vaishnav dances emerged in Manipur.¹

ADOPTION OF GANDIYA VAISHNAVISM:

Bhagyachandra, the grandson of Pamheiba, ruled Manipur from 1764 A.D. to 1789. He is also known as Jai Singh of Karta Maharaj. He was a great devotee of Krishna. During his reign Parmanand Thakur along with other Vaishnav missionaries visited Manipur from Bengal. Bhagyachandra under the influence of Paramanand Thakur, who was a follower of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, adopted Gaudiya Vaishnavism as his religion. In course of time it became the religion of the State, completely replacing the Ramanandi faith. As a result of this, Bengali language got prominence over Manipur language, which affected Manipur dance as well,

¹ Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 107.
because songs of poets like Chaitanya, Jaideva, Chandidas and Vidyapati came to be used in this art.¹

1.1.26 COMPOSITION OF THREE VARIETIES OF RAAS:

Bhagyachandra, an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna was an artist and a scholar. He composed three varieties of Raas, namely Maha Raas, Vasant Raas and Kunj Raas. It is said that Lord Krishna appeared before him in a vision and revealed the Raas dance to him. Bhagyachandra also devised the Raas costumes which is known as Kumin and it was based on what he had seen in the vision.²

The first Raas Lila of Manipur was performed at Imphal in the Govindji Temple in 1769 A.D. and the part of Radha was played by Bhagyachandra's daughter Lairoibi, who is also called as Bimbavati or Bimbavatimanjuri.³

Bhagyachandra is also credited with the composition of Achouba Bhangi Pareng which is an indispensable part of all Raas dances.⁴ Later Maharaja Gambhir Singh (1825-1834 A.D.), was responsible for two parengs of Tandav variety, namely the Ghosta Vrindaban Pareng and Ghosta Bhangi Pareng. During the rule of Chandra Kirti Singh (1850-1886 A.D.), two more Parengs of Lasya variety were added. These were the Brindaban Pareng and Khurumba Pareng.

¹ Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 107.
² Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 175
³ Dance Dialects of India, P 175.
⁴ Ibid, P 108.
  Dance Dialects of India, P 176.
  The Dance in India, P 66.
Chander Kirti Singh also composed Raas dance, known as Naitana Raas besides sixty four other dances based on Manipur drum technique. The golden age of Manipur actually lasted for about a hundred years, i.e. from the rule of Bhagyachandra to that of Chandra Kirti Singh.¹

1.1.27 GANGA DYNASTY'S CONTRIBUTION IN ODISHI:

After Kesari Kings, Ganga dynasty came to power. Chodagangadeva who ruled from 1077 to 1147 was well versed in vedas and proficient in most fine arts. He built Jagannath temple at Puri which came to occupy a unique position in the cultural and religious life of the people of Orissa. He also employed Maharis for the service of this temple. After his death in 1194, Anangabhimadeva became the ruler. He constructed the Nata mandir or dance hall as an annexe to the temple for the performance of Maharis.² Ganga kings who ruled from 11th century to 15th century were devotees of Lord Vishnu and Lord Jagan Nath.³ Actually Jagannath is another epithet of the God Vishnu and means 'Lord of Universe'. It was during the reign of Chodagangdeva when Vaishnavism was in the process of being established in Orissa.⁴ References to dance rituals for the worship of Lord Jagannath are found in Sekanda. Purana is said to have been written in 10th or 11th century

1. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 177.
2. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 124.
   The Splendours of Indian Dance, P 57.
3. Dance Dialects of India, P 141.
4. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 201.
A.D. 1 During this period i.e. 11th century, Jayadeva, a saintly poet wrote Geet Govinda (songs of Govinda). This work portrays the mystic love of Radha and Krishna. Its astpadis became so popular that these used to be sung every day regularly for the worship of the God. According to an Oriya legend, Jaideva's wife Padmavati before her marriage expressed her desire to become Devadasi to serve Lord Jagannath. Temple dancers enjoyed a high status in society is proved by the fact that Queen Padmavati, wife of King Purushottam Deva of Solar dynasty received the Gopa sadhi award for her services as a dancer in Jagannath temple. 2

King Purushottam Deva died in 1497 and his son Partaparudradeva succeeded him. He gave strict orders that only Geet Govinda shall be recited in Jagannath temple. In his time Vasishnavism as a religion became supreme and Bhakti cult received a boost. By the end of 16th century Orissa lost its independence and came, successively, under the rule of Bhois, Pathans, Moghuls, Marhatas and finally the British. From the time of Ramachandradeva i.e. about 1600 A.D. the Maharis came to be employed in Royal courts. 3

1. Dance Dialects of India, P 141. Art of Indian Dancing, P 113.
2. Dance Dialects of India, P 142. Art of Indian Dancing, P 113.
3. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 6 & P 125.
1.1.28 **DANCES MENTIONED IN NRTITA RATNAVALI BY JAYAPPA NAYAK:**

Nritta Ratnavali a valuable treatise in classical dancing written by Jayappa Nayak in the 13th century defines the classical Margi and popular desi dance forms which existed at that time. He also describes the ritual dances in the temples. Jaypadda was well versed in the theory and practice of the dance. The Kakatiya king, Ganpati Deva who ruled Andhra from Warangal, composed dances for Raja Nartakis of the royal court.  

1.1.29 **FORMATION OF BRAHMANA MELAS:**

When the order of Devadasis deteriorated, Brahmin gurus and experts of the dance assembled in Kuchipudi village and formed into groups in order to preserve the classical dance. They thus became the custodians of the classical dance in Andhra. They formed themselves into Brahmana Melas which consisted of men of highest character and integrity. The Brahmana Melas travelled from Kuchipudi village to other parts of the State entertaining the people with dance dramas based on the themes from Shiva Purana, the Ramayana and Mahabharata.  

1.1.30 **PROPAGATION OF KRISHNA CULT:**

Later on, Bhakti movement made inroads in Andhra and Krishna Cult was propogated at the beginning of 14th century.

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1. Dance Dialects of India, P 67.
2. The Dance in India, P 56.
The poems, its musical modes and its language of gestures were taught to Raja nartakis at Srikakalam.¹

The Bhakti movement gave rise to an order of yogis who were of the firm belief that devotion of God when done through music was good but it was better if done through the combined art of music, dance and drama. Thus, they started a movement by which bhaktas began to approach God by singing, dancing and acting in His honour. The themes for this purpose were based on Bhagvata lore. Therefore, these artists came to be known as Bhagavatars in Tamil Nadu and Bhagavatulus in Andhra and their form of dramatic art came to be called Bhagavata Mela.²

1.1.31 CONTRIBUTION OF VIJANAGAR KINGS:

Art and culture reached its zenith in Andhra during the rule of Vijanagar kings. The earliest references in the history about Kuchipudi Bhagvathulu was made in 1502 A.D. in the MuchupalliKaifiat. It is said that people of Siddhavattam were suffering great hardships under the local tyrant Gurava Raju. Brahmna Bhagavathalus went to Vijayanagar and gave a performance of the play exposing the sufferings of people due to misrule of Gurava Raju

1. Dance Dialects of India, P 67.
2. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 114.
before the king Vira Narasingha Raya and his queen, and the
king took immediate measures to improve the situation.¹

1.1.32 MIGRATION OF BHAGAVATUALS TO TANJORE DISTRICT:

With the fall of Vijayanagar Empire in Andhra the art
fell to evil days, and a sizeable number of Brahmins Bhagavatulus
who were well versed in dance and music migrated to Tanjore
District in Tamil Nadu where Nayak king gave them shelter.
Achyutappa Nayak who ruled between 1561 and 1614 A.D. granted
land to Brahmin families to encourage and develop the art of
dance. The place where the colony was thus formed was named
Achutapuram. Later this center came to be known as Melatur
and retains this name even now. When these Bhagavatulus migrated
to Tanjore, a number of secular professional dancers and Raja
Nartakis also migrated there, bringing their art of music and
dance with them.²

1.1.33 DISTINGUISHED COMPOSERS WHO MIGRATED TO TANJORE DISTRICT AND
THEIR WORKS:

Amongst the distinguished composers and masters of music
and lyrics who migrated to Tanjore district from Andhra were
Bhakta Kshetranga and Bhakta Tirathanarayana. Yati-Kshetranga
had composed Padams which brought him honour. When he migrated
to Tanjore he took with him his compositions full of Rasas
(flavour) which influenced the trend of classical dance there.
Tirthanaryan Yati (1620-1700) became famous as the author of
Krishna Leela, Tarangani was composed by him in Sanskrit between

¹. Art of Indian Dancing, P 104.
². Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 62.

2. Art of Indian Dancing, P 104.
1680 and 1690 A.D. He composed number of dance dramas in Telugu. Well known among them are Parijataharanam and Rukmangada. With the settling of Bhakta Tirthanarayana Yati in Tanjore District, the tradition of Bhagavata Mela, Nataka gained importance and he had many followers for years to come.  

1.1.34 NOTABLE SCHOLARS WHO DID NOT MIGRATE AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION:

Though some notable scholars and dancers migrated to Tanjore yet many remained in Andhra to stabilize the cultural art centre in Kuchipudi village. Amongst these the most notable was Bhakta Siddhandra Yogi who composed the Parijata Harana commonly known as Bhama Kalapam, in Sringara Raas, based on the dance drama by Tirthanarayana Yati and inspired by the theme of Sanskrit play Parijatam written by Umapathi of Bharhut in early 14th century A.D.  

The story of Parijata Harana recounts how Satayabhama compels Krishna to get and plant the celestial Parijata tree in her garden after Krishna had given Rukmini a flower from such a tree. Krishna Lila Tarangini is the biography of Krishna beginning with his birth and ending with his marriage to Rukmini.  

1. The Dance in India, P 57. 
Art of Indian Dancing, P 106. 
2. The Dance in India, P 57. 
The Splendours of Indian Dance, P 75. 
3. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 119-120.
Kuchipudi dancers of the Brahmana Melas were well versed in Natya Shastra of Bharata Muni, Abhinaya Darpan by Nandikeshwara and Nrittaratanavalli by Jayapa Senani among others. Therefore, they were able to draw upon all the fine points contained in these books. They also had high proficiency in Sanskrit and music, besides Telugu language. Their dance-dramas therefore had in them all three main elements of classical dance, namely Nritya, Nritta and Natya.

1.1.35 KATHAK'S REFERENCES IN OLD TEXTS:

The technical words such as tatkar, gat etc. used in Kathak are found in Sangita Darpan, Sangita Makaranda, and Kohal Rahasya which are old texts on music and dance. The poetries of Chandidas, Tulsidas, Meera, Vidyapati and Surdas incorporate dance-syllables known as boles. This indicates that dance was an essential part of such hymns.

During the period of rise of Vaishnavism there were communities of artists like Dhandi, Natwa, Charan, Keertania, Rasadhari and Kathka who were proficient in dance, music and dance-drama. Some of them have kept alive the glorious traditions till date. Dancing blossomed under the patronage of Vaishnavism. Dhandis are Punjabi singers who play upon Dhand.

1. The Dance in India, P 58-59.
2. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 129.
1.1.36 **GUPTA PERIOD:**

During Gupta period the Sangeet occupied a prominent place in the society. The art of sculpture also made great strides and mostly sculptures depicted various dance poses.  

1.1.37 **MUSLIM INFLUENCE:**

From the 8th century, India was subjected to Islamic influence and conceptions, first by the Arabs and then by the Turks. Islam preached that all men were brothers under one God and there was only one path to heaven which lay through the teachings of the Prophets. It forbade making representations of living things. It adversely affected Kathak dancing which portrayed different Gods and Goddess in human form.  

1.1.38 **SCHOOLS OF DANCE:**

The dance was therefore taken from temples to courts with the advent of Muslim rule. It developed into two different schools, one represented by the Hindu courts of Rajasthan, particularly the court of Jaipur, and other by the Muslim Courts of Delhi, Agra and Lucknow.  

1. Nritya Prashan Panjika, P 15 (Hindi).
1.1.39 NRITTA, NRITYA AND BHAVA:

In Rajasthan the nritta aspect of dance received much importance whereas Muslims patrons had no liking for technical virtuosity. They desired to see an art which depicted life in all its moods and passions. The result was that greater stress was laid on Nritya and Bhava. Thus it was transformed into a graceful, decorative, expressive, suggestive and sensuous dance.¹

1.1.40 PERVERSION OF DANCE:

The Muslim kings could not enjoy the Bhavas of Bakati-Rasa and therefore ordered the dancers to dance on the cheap songs. The dance thus became a cheap and base art for entertainment giving rise to perversion and remained confined to courts only.²

1.1.41 IMPORT OF DANCERS:

As Kathak was connected with religion, the early Muslim rulers regarded this form of dance as unsuitable for their patronage. They sent for musicians and dancers from Persia and Central India. These dancing girls were known as domnis and hourkinis. Each of them had their own distinctive style of dancing. The few Hindu dancers who found their way to the courts were influenced by the new styles.³

1.1.42 AKBAR'S CONTRIBUTION:

The period of emperor Akbar is marked by its enlightened

1. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 95.
   Prabhakar Prashanotry, P 31.
   Sangeet, Feb 1969, P 18.
   Kathak Nritya, P 28.
3. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 129.
approach to culture, when Kathak took a strong hold in the Mughal court; Akbar married, among others, a Rajput princess and encouraged Hindu music, dance and other fine arts. Kathak dancers achieved a high status under his patronage.¹

The Mughal emperors had refined taste which was reflected in their patronage to the artists of both music and dance.² Akbar's friend and adviser Abul Fazal wrote Ain-i-Akbari in Persian which describes Akbar's reign. It records the prevalence of dancing and music in his court. There was a dancer by name of Vallabh in Akbar's court. Kathak entered its golden era as Akbar respected dancers, musicians and poets.³

1.1.43 CONTRIBUTION BY NAWABS AND RAJAS:

Kathak received encouragement at the hands of Nawabs and Rajas. Many of them were very good dancers. The last Nawab of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah, was an accomplished dancer and musician. He wrote poetry in Hindi as well as in Urdu. Although he was a Muslim he liked the Radha Krishna themes. He himself presented a dance on the Raas Lila which he called Rahas. He spent most of his riches on dance and music. When Wajid Ali Shah received a pension from the East Indian Company he spent that also on Kathak dance and music. He composed Thumaries in classical style and these were sung by Kathak dancers. A single line was expressed in different ways with

1. Indian Cultural Patterns and Process, P 149, 151.
Kathak Indian Classical Dance Art, P 2.
hand gestures and facial expressions. It was during his time that the Lucknow Gharana of Kathak dance came into existence. Prakash Ji, who was a famous dancer of Rajasthan was appointed the Court dancer by Nawab Asaf-ul-Daulah of Oudh and his son Thakur Prasad was a court dancer during the period of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. Thakur Prasad's two sons Bindadin and Kalika Prasad were also the court dancers and they introduced the expressional form of Kathak.

1. Tradition of Indian Classical Dance, P 95. 
Dance Dialects of India, P 167.
2. Kathak Darpan, P 166.
Prabhakar Prashanotry, P 118-119. 
Sangeet Oct 1957, P 11.
4. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 131-132.

British Period and Degradation of Dance:

With the decline of the Mughal Empire and the rise of European power, Kathak fell in disgrace. The petty princes and the Britishers had little appreciation of fine arts like dance and so Kathak degenerated into sensual styles and there was tendency towards lecherousness. The performers became notorious as women of easy virtu. This corrupted form of Kathak was called 'Nautch' by the Europeans. This discouraged girls from respectable families from adopting dancing as a profession. However, Kathak continued to be taught to high caste Hindu girls in Rajasthan to seek good matches, as accomplishment in this art was taken to be an asset. They were given training at home and their attainments were confined for the pleasure of family.

1.1.44
1.1.45 MANIPUR UNDER BRITISH RULE:

Manipur came under British rule in 1891, and thenceforth the dance was considered as immoral. This was a dark period for this art and it was able to survive in a few temples only, such as the temple of Govindji at Imphal. This state of affairs continued till the early part of this century when Ravindranath Tagore recognizing its potential included it in the curriculum in his Cultural Centre at Santiniketan. It was due to the interest of Tagore that this form of dance was first seen outside Manipur. This interest thereafter spread to other parts of the country like Assam, Bombay, Ahmedabad etc. Jhaveri sisters are well known dancers of Manipur style. Dance institutions were also opened in Manipur which resulted in its revival.¹

1.1.46 KATHAK'S REVIVAL:

The first dancer to overcome the prejudices against the dance and its revival was Menaka. She was the daughter of Pyare Lal Roy who was a rich zamindar and a practicing barrister at the Calcutta High Court. She was married to Capt. Sahib Singh Sokey who was later Knighted and promoted to the rank of Major General. She learnt Kathak under the guidance of able gurus and gave her first public performance in Bombay in 1928.² She formed a residential school of dancing

¹. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 178-179.
at Khandala in 1938, however Projesh Banerji dates it as 1942. Pandit Jawahar Lal was one of its patrons. During the World War II, this school was closed in 1944. Because of her aristocratic Brahmin birth and social high standing, she was responsible to remove inhibitions and stigma which was attached to dance. She gave performances in principle cities of India and abroad. In Calcutta, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was so much impressed that he came on the stage and blessed her for the revival of India's great dance art traditions. Even Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore sent some persons from Santiniketan to study under her.  

After India gained independence in 1947, the art of dancing received great encouragement and number of institutions to promote this art were opened. To name a few of these are, Sangeet Natak Academy and Kathak Kendra at Delhi.

REVIVAL OF ODISSI:

Odissi did not escape a decline any more than the other dances of India, but the old Gurus with the help of state patronage helped in its revival. To name a few leading ones, they are Kelu Charan Mahapatra, Pankaj Charan and Deba Prasad Das. Indrani Rehman is the first contemporary professional dancer to have studied Odissi seriously and

1. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 132.
given performances in various parts of India. The other dancers of repute are Priyambada Mohanty, Pratima Das, Ritha Devi, Yamni Krishnamurthi, Kum Kum Das and Sanjukta Misra.¹

Examination of Orissan manuscripts on dance illustrates the existence of a distinct regional style. However these also demonstrate that in principle the local style by and large, follows Natyashastra, namely the classification into Tandava and Lasya and the division of the dance into Nritta, Nritya and Natya.

The most notable manuscript is Abhinayachandrika of Mahesvara Mahapatra which gives detailed description of various movements of hands, feet, standing postures and dancing repertoire. Other manuscripts which deserve mention are Sangita Narayana Nritya Khanda by Narayan Dev Gajapati of the 15th century, Nritya Kaumudi and Natya Manorama by Raghunath Rath and finally the Abhinaya darpana of Jadunath Sinha of the 17th century. The study of these manuscripts gives the idea of the prevalence and popularity of the Odissi dance during these centuries.²

Creative literature also inspired the Odissi dancers and provided themes for the dances. Besides the Geet Govinda, a glorious work of Jayadeva, the writings of the Gajapati Emperor Kapilendra, the songs of Upendrabhaj and lyrics composed by various writers of Bhakti cult, like Kavi Surya

¹. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 203.
². Indian Classical Dance, P 35.
Baldev Rath, Gopal Krishna Patnaik and Banamali Das were also popular, and were source of inspiration for the composers of Odissi dance till early 20th century.¹

¹. Indian Classical Dance, P 36.
KATHAK

1.2.1 GANESH VANDANA:

Kathak recital usually begins with Ganesh Vandana. Ganesh represents good luck and remover of all obstacles. But now sometime invocation of Goddess Saraswati or that of Shiva is also done at the beginning of the dance.

1.2.2 THATT, AMAD, SALAMI, TORA, TUKRA ETC:

Vandana is followed by Thatt. It is a decorative and graceful gesture. The neck glides subtly from side to side in tune with Tal. In this the dancer moves neck, eyes, eyebrows, wrists, hands and shoulders in consonance with rhythm. Next comes Amad. This is a type of Uthan in Kathak. In Kathak dance Amad has different types of group of Bols, which are depicted on both sides of the body in the same manner. Amad corresponds to the Allarippu of Bharat Natyam. After Amad, the dancer performs Salami, Tora, Tukra, Paran, Chakkardar Paran, PramlU, Gat Nikas, Gat Bhava and Tatkhar.

2. Kathak Nritya Shiksha, Part I, P 76.
   Sangeet March 1962, P 57.
   Kathak Nritya Shiksha, Part I, P 78-79.
1.2.3 GAT BHAVA:

Gat Bhava is the art of story telling in expressive mime (Bhava) in dance. Radha-Krishna legends are the usual themes. The religious themes of mimetic dance describe the activities of various deities. In tandava style, Siva Tandava, Kalika Tandava, Sandhya Tandava and Kaliya Mardana are the typical themes.¹

1.2.4 COSTUMES DURING MUGHAL PERIOD:

During the Mughal period, the dress in the court was of Persian style and the Court dancers also adopted the dress of the same style. However, in the last few years of Akbar's reign there was a change. The men wore a jacket, and women choli with half sleeves. Both women and men wore churidar pajama. Over these they wore shirts made of stiff material. They also wore over their shoulders a scarf of silk or muslin known as dupatta. The head dress consisted of a turban. In Jehangir times, it consisted of chust Pajama over which was worn angarakha. The women wore embroidered waist coat of satin and a gossamer orhni. The soft flowing bell shaped skirt was of full length. The palms and feet were dyed with henna.²

1.2.5 PRESENT HINDU COSTUMES OF WOMEN:

Kathak dancers now have a lot of freedom in the choice of costumes. Broadly speaking these are Hindu or Muslim inspired. Among the Hindu costumes which is generally used

1. Dance Dialects of India, P 171.
2. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 130.
by women is the 'Ghaagra and Orhni'. Ghaagra is long with a broad gold or silver border. The Choli which is worn has embroidered sleeve-bands. The Orhni which is draped over the head and left shoulder is interwoven with gold patterns. Bracelets, armlets, necklaces, heavy ear rings are worn as articles of jewellery, besides a jewelled 'Tikka' which is suspended in the middle of forehead. An ornate girdle or belt is also used. Anklebells are tied on feet. These are used by all the Kathakas throughout their recital.

1.2.6 PRESENT HINDU COSTUMES OF MEN:

The Hindu costume for men consists of a silk dhoti with brocade border. It is tied around the waist and between the legs. A silk cloth is also tied round the waist. The upper part of the body is left naked. Sometime a jacket with short sleeves is also worn. Gilt necklace with stones is worn as a part of jewellery.

1.2.7 PRESENT MUSLIM COSTUMES:

The Muslim costume is the same as it was in Jehangir's time except that the skirt of the Angarkha is of calf length. The ear rings are plain and golden. A necklace of pearls of two rows may be worn. A Jhumar is worn on head.

1. Indian Dances, their History & Growth, P 136-137.
3. Indian Dances, their History & Growth, P 137.
1.2.8 INSTRUMENTS:

The instruments used in Kathak are Tabala, Sarangi, Pakhawaj and Harmonium. These days Sitar, Dilruba and Violin are also used.

1.2.9 THE LAI HARAOBA DANCE DRAMA OF MANIPUR:

The traditional dances of Manipur, Lai Haraoba is the oldest. It means invocation and providing pleasure for the Gods. It can also be termed as 'The festival of Gods'. It is a ritualistic dance drama performed in the month of May lasting for 10 days. It portrays the invocations to the Gods, the creation of man, birth, youth, adult life and marriage. Though it is performed in the whole of Manipur Valley, yet the main venue is the village of Moirang. This dance drama contains Nritta (Pure dance sequence) and abhinaya with explicit hand gestures, songs and musical accompaniment. The musical instrument which is played throughout the dance is Pena a single-stringed instrument played with a bow.

1. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 108.
3. Indian Dance, their History and Growth, P 184.
4. The Dance in India, P 66
5. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 108.
Lai Haraoba being a ritualist dance, is directed by high priest (Maiba) and high priestess (Maibi). They are the persons who have dedicated themselves to the service of God and art of dancing.¹ This dance is performed in several stages. In the first instance, Maibi places flowers on the water of a nearby stream, which means the summoning of deities. These flowers are brought to the village in a procession and scattered. Maibi then prepares a seat in the centre of the stage by placing a cloth on a plantain leaf. She then worships Indra and moves anti-clockwise to the four corners of the stage, offering prayers to the deities. The second part of the dance is Lai Pou. It starts with the chanting of the words 'Hoirori' and 'Hoya', seven times in seven different notes. Lai Pou portrays by using appropriate gestures, the birth of God, building of a temple to house him and making garments for him. The dancer describes the development of child in the womb and then its birth. For the building of a temple the details regarding gathering of sticks, laying of foundation and thatching of the roof are shown by appropriate mudras. The growing and picking of cotton, spinning and making of garments therefrom are also exhibited in the dance. Thereafter there are love duets enacting the parts of Nongpokningthou and Panthoibi, who are believed to be the reincarnation of Shiva and Parvati.

¹ The Dance in India, P 66.
The last stage consists of dance performed for the pleasure of Gods which include the depiction of various sports, fishing and hunting. Thereafter the villagers bid farewell to the deities by placing them in the boat and sending them down stream. The dancers wear white costumes. The arms are covered with long-sleeved blouses. A flower is worn behind one ear. The ornaments are less elaborate than used in Kumil.

The most beautiful part of the Lai Haraoba festival is the performance of Moirang Parva. This is the tragic story of Khamba and Thoibi which is performed in duets by the dancers. The Lai Haraoba dance drama contains both lasya and Tandava types of dancing. The dance is set to a love song. The female dancers wear phanek with red, pink and black stripes and a flowered border at the bottom. The valvet blouse is of emerald green colour and is embroidered in gold and silver. The hair are set loose and a red band with gold fillers is tied round the head. The man who portrays the part of Khamba, wears a purple and gold dhoti and a valvet jacket of green colour with gold trimmings. Head dress consists of a white turban with red and gold embroidery and decorated with a peacock plume.

1. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 184-186.
2. The Dance in India, P 66.
3. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 186.
1.2.10 **RAAS LILA:**

Generally there are seven types of Raas. Five varieties of Raas namely Meha Raas, Vasanta Raas, Kunj Raas, Nitya Raas and Dija Raas are of lasya type. All these relate to the stories of Krishna and Gopies. The other two viz, Ghoosta Raas and Ulukhal Raas are of Tandav Type which exhibit the stories of Krishna and Gopas. In these it is shown how Krishna looked after the cows, played with gopas. Killing of demons is also portrayed. ¹

1.2.11 **SANKEERTAN:**

Another important dance of Manipur is Sankeertan. Sankeertan means community prayer. In Manipur it is not done through singing only, but through dancing as well. This dance is performed by men only. It is of two types. One is Poong Cholom which is performed with a drum and the other Khartal Cholom which is performed with cymbals. The Manipur Sankeertan is performed on religious occasions, weddings or birth of a son.² The movements of this dance are forceful and vigorous of Tandav style. The basic position in both the dances is the same but the drum dance has a number of vigorous and acrobatic movements, whereas in cymbal dance there are subtle, dignified and graceful body movements.³

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¹ Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 187.
² Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 112.
BHARAT NATYAM

1.2.12 ALLARIPU

This is the first Charan of Bharata Natyam. The dancer starts the dance with her feet together, body leaning slightly forward and palms joined above her head. This is an invocational section in which greetings are offered to the deity and to the audience. The word Allaripu is derived from the Telugu word 'Alarimpu' which means to decorate with flowers. Some of the movements do suggest that the dancer scatters flowers in honour of the deity on the stage. But the use of the word may be purely figurative as the dance also shows the gradual flowering or opening out of the dancer's body in readiness for the recital which follows. As the music begins, the dancer glides her neck in subtle movement from side to side. The eyes of the dancer follow the neck in a triangular movement—up, right, left, and back to normal. This is done a few times and after this repetition the shoulders and hands join the movement of the eyes and neck. Throughout Allaripu, there is no accompanying song. The only vocal accompaniment used is in the form of dance syllables known as Sollakuttus. The speciality of this dance is that every action on the right is also mirrored on the left. ¹

¹ Indian Dance, their History and Growth, P 42-44. Bhartiya Nritya Kala, P 13.
1.2.13 **JATISWARAM:**

After Allaripu comes Jatiswaram. Jatiswaram is an item of pure dance (Nritta). In this there is no song or expression. In place of sound syllables there are musical notes or particular ragas and talas. It produces a kind of aesthetic pleasure "the meaning of pure dance is this - with the God given body and limbs you create as many forms of beauty as possible in poses and movements in rhythm". ¹

1.2.14 **SHABDAM:**

In this the theme may be devotional, erotic love or a narrative episode from the lives of Gods. Bhava is given importance. The singer sings the song with rhythm and the dancer depicts the various bhavas with facial expressions and graceful postures. There is a combination of Nritt and Natya. ²

1.2.15 **VARNAM:**

Varnam is the most difficult and elaborate item of Bharat Natyam. This brings out the best in pure dance. ³ In this the music is of high order with exquisite dance patterns of great variety.

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1. Bharat Natyam Indian Classical Dance Art, P 84.
1.2.16 PADAM:

Padam is a love lyric which covers every aspect of love, mystic and divine. The padas are in Tamil, Telugu or Sanskrit. There is an exposition of Abhinaya for a number of Padams. The Padams of Kshetrayya and the Ashtpadies of Jaideva are the best suited for Abhinaya. The emphasis in a Padam is on the words of the poem and in order to allow the fullest interpretation through Abhinaya, the movement of the dance is slow. ¹

1.2.17 TILLANA:

The term Tillana in Karnatic music of the South is synonymous to Tarana, a form of song in Hindustani music of Northern India. Tarana in course of time came to be absorbed in Karnatic music and is now known as Tillana. This pattern was incorporated as a dance form in Bharat Natyam programme by four late masters of the Ponniah Pillai family, who taught it to their descendants. The dancer performs rhythemical variations. ²

It is joyous fantasy of pure dance, the most graceful and lyrical of all styles of Bharat Natyam. The 'words' of the song comprise rhythm syllables continuously repeated by the singer. The dance is an elaboration of the basic rhythm syllables in beautiful poses and foot work. Fine flexions of neck, breast and waist, elusive play of bewitching glances and slow and rapid movements provide a brilliant

¹ The Dance in India, P 43.
Kathak Darpan, P 199.
² Classical Dances and Costumes of India, P 63.
Bharat Ke Shastrya Nirtya, P 5
1.2.18 SLOKAM:

Slokam is the final number in Bharat Natyam. This is an expressional number. The slokas are generally in Sanskrit but sometimes these are also drawn from Geet Gobinda of Jai Deva. To give a full play to abhinaya, the dancer stops the foot work and expresses bhavas by facial expressions and movements of hands.²

ODISSI

1.2.19 TECHNIQUE:

Odissi draws upon several ancient texts, most important of which are Natya Shastra, the Abhinaya Darpan and the Abhinaya Chandrika. Odissi bases its pure dance technique on Karanas of the classical treatises which are the alphabet of all dance movements. Karnas are known in Odissi as Sthanaks. Based on Karnas, the experts have evolved what are known as Belis of fundamental bodily positions combined with dance movements and Bhangis which are the principal dance positions.³

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1. Dance Dialects of India, P 57-58.
2. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 50.
3. The Dances in India, P 51.
There are eight belis or basic body positions and movements each of which has many varieties. The various sitting positions are called *baithas*. *Uthas* are the positions used in rising and jumping either on one foot or both feet. *Sthanka* is the act of standing still on the flat of feet with the feet together or apart, or on the toes, or on the heels with one foot flat and the other resting on toes. *Chalis* are the gaits and walks, various directions of the steps and fast circular movements with hands and arms. The quick movements, *burbas*, suggest joy and excitement. *Bhasa* is the alternate bending of body from left to right. The spins executed on the spot are called *Bhaunris* and retreating movements done at the end of each sequence of dance is called *Pali*. The stretched foot resting on the heel and dancing on heels is a marked mode of the Odissi.¹

Bhangis add more distinctive technical touches to the Belis, such as the curve of the hips with head inclined and legs bent at the knees. In the Odissi style of dance emphasis is given to bending the hips. Odissi dancing treats the body in terms of three changes along which deflections of the head, torso and hips can take place. In Hindu plastic art, there are actually four bends of body for beauty of line and posture. The four bends are same *bhanga* (equal bend with hardly

1. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 203. The Dance in India, P 51.
   Bharat Ke Shastriya Nritya (Hindi), P 35-36.
any noticeable bend to any one side); Abhanga (the state of slightly bending the body to either side); Atibhang (exaggerated bend); and Tribhanga (the Triple bend in which there is emphasis on deflecting of the hips. Trobhanga is very common in Odissi dance. The Atibhanga is also found in many sequence of Odissi dances.1

1.2.20 PERFORMANCE OF INSTRUMENTS:

In Odissi performance the dancer uses a balanced combination of nritta and nritya. Though the style is lasya yet there are some elements of tandav in it.2

The instruments used now are Mardal, a drum, the gini (cymbals) and a flute. Violin or Veena is also added some times. In the former times the dancer used to sing herself but now a singer is usually included among the musicians.3

The entrance of the dancer on the stage is known as Patra Parbash which is the beginning of the dance. The performance opens with Bhumi Pranam which is invocation to mother earth and salutation (Jagaran Nritya).

2. Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 205.
3. Ibid, P 205.
It is introductory and invocatory, the dancer commonly standing still in Sthai bhangi with hands clasped and feet close together in a manner that the big toe of the right foot rests on that of the left. Trighanga poses then follow, and *vandana* commences. To the chant-like recitation of the word syllables and drum sounds the dancer touches the ground with hands inclining forward in an act of obeisance and then retreats and salutes the Guru. Thereafter the dancer performs *Vighnaraj Puja*. It is the invocation addressed to Ganesh. Sanskrit sloka is recited and interpreted by the dancer rhythmically. *Vighnaraj Puja* is followed by *Batu Nritya*. It portrays the worship of Lord Shiva. This is also known as *Batunata*. In this item the dancer shows the techniques of pure dance incorporated in the Belis, Bhangis and Karnas as well as the art of interpretation accompanied by complicated patterns of rhythmic word syllables. Movements combine both *Tandava* and *Lasya* modes. Various modes of prayer offerings like offering of flowers, incense, light, food and salutations are shown in it. The dedication of Lord Shiva is followed by *Ishta Deva Bandana*. At this stage the dancer worships her chosen God or Goddess. A sloka in Sanskrit or Oriya poetry which is chanted is interpreted through bhavas by the dancer and many facets of the
particular deity are presented through movements and gestures. Next comes the Swara Pallavi Nritta in which stress is laid on both music and rhythm. A melody of a chosen Raga is sung which the dancer illustrates through movements. The swara Pallavi is pure nritta with an emphasis on hand gestures (hast-abhinaya) during the singing of alap. The dancer sets the mood by using decorative poses and eye movements. After this the dancer interprets the musical notations of the raga in movements. It is followed by Abhinaya Nritya which is also called Geeta Abhinaya. In this the dancer interprets a romantic poem usually on Radha-Krishna theme emphasizing the Sringar Rasa (Love Mood) or a lyrical verse from Geet. Gobinda denoting the worship of God through love and devotion (Bhakti) may be interpreted. Compositions of other well known poets like Upenderbhaaj or Banmali Das are also sung and interpreted by the dancer. Each couplet of the poem is punctuated with Nritta which becomes progressively more intricate and enters the last stage known as Tarijham or Natangi. It is in fact a continuation of the previous stage and is pure dance showing statuesque postures, swift movements of arms, the tilt of head, jerks of neck and fine patterned feet rhythms set to rhythmic patterned playing of the drum syllables. The bols are sung.
The dance reaches a climax and ends with Tihai done three times. However, now many compositions have been added to nritta and abhinaya portions and final number is often the Moksha nirtya.¹

KUCHIPUDI

1.2.21 NRTITA:

Nritta contains the items of pure dance comprising foot work and movements of limbs. These items are generally used as decorative pieces and have no bearing on the theme of the play. In this group are included pieces such as the Puja Nritya, Jatiswaram, Tillana and Kannakole. Puja Nritya is a dance of invocation performed at the beginning of a concert. The Jatiswaram and Tillana are similar to such items as in Bharata Natyam. The Kannakole is an item composed mainly of footwork. ²

1.2.22 NRITYA:

The Nritya part has items such as Sabdams, Slokams and Padams. The Nritya items also like Nritta numbers may be added to dance drama for adornment or rendered

1. Indian Classical Dance, P 38-39.
   Indian Dances, their History and Growth, P 205-206.
   The Dances in India, P 52-54.
   Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 128-129.
   Dance Dialects of India, P 138-157.
2. Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 118.
as independent numbers. Sabdams are poetic compositions in praise of a chosen deity. The most popular Sabdams are the Krishna, the Manduka and the Dasavtara. Krishna Sabdam portrays the Nayike waiting for Krishna to come. It is from the play Usha Parinayam. Manduka Sabdam is the story of a female frog who emerges from the pond as a beautiful woman—Mandotri—who is taken away by Ravana to Lanka as his queen. Dasavtara unfolds the sequence of ten incarnations of Vishnu. There is no Kuchipudi dance-drama which does not feature Sabdam. A special variety of Sabdam which is peculiar to Kuchipudi dance is Abhisheksam. In these, story of a God right from his birth to coronation is depicted. ¹

The Slokams, like Sabdams are pieces of abhinaya or expressions rendered solo. Since the important thing in Slokam is its expression, generally the Slokams are performed in a sitting position. A favourite type of Slokam is the one which has the theme of Vipralambha Sringara i.e. depictions of pangs of separations of the loved one.²

1.2.23 PERFORMANCE: A typical programme of Kuchipudi is as follows:

¹ Traditions of Indian Classical Dance, P 119.
² Ibid, P 119.
(i) **Puja Nritya.** This is a dance of invocation.

(ii) **Jatiswaram.** This is a sequence of pure dance in which skilful timing, rhythm and speed are characteristic of head, arm and foot movements.

(iii) **Tillana.** It is a very attractive dance piece to a fine melody performed diligently in which expressions, gestures and rhythm combined with speed exhibit the great technical skill of the dancer.

(iv) **Kannakole.** In this musicians and dancers combine in fast rhythm with exciting foot work.

(v) **Krishna Sabdam.** This depicts a story of love for Krishna.

(vi) **Manduka Sabdam.** This dance portrays the story of a frog which transforms into a beautiful princess Mandodri and is taken away by Ravana to Lanka as his queen.

(vii) **Dasavatara Sabdam.** It depicts the ten incarnations of Vishnu including the coming of Maitreya who is yet to come to save the mankind.

(viii) **Bhama Kalapam.** It is the story of celestial Parijata tree during which Sacred Flower Dance is performed.¹

¹. Classical Dances and Costumes of India, P 29-31.
I have dwelt upon these five classical dances prevalent in India to indicate that these dances have always been imbued with religious fervour and were part of human activity and all classical dances developed from folk dances which were connected with every day life. Music had also been an integral part of all dances including folk dance. Music had also been an inspirational element in Baba Nanak's life. It was inseparably engrained in his compositions which is evident from the fact that his all hymns were composed in various ragas.

Classical dances have number of common elements with folk dances, some of which according to Pani Grahi Director Kathak Kendra, New Delhi whom I interviewed are as follows:

1. Both classical and folk dance have rhythm.
2. Both of these have elements of expression.
3. Both the dances have Rasa.
PART C: TRANSFORMATION OF FOLK-DANCE TO CLASSICAL

1.3.1 DEFINITION OF FOLK DANCE:

Dance amongst the arts is the most primitive and sophisticated vehicle of expression of joy and sorrow. Folk according to Oxford dictionary means a people; nation; race; people in general.\(^1\) Generally people have a wrong notion as to the word 'folk', and say that folk-art is village art. Since folk means people in general - common people - both living in rural and urban areas, therefore folk-art is the common man's art. Folk-dance, therefore, means a dance of people. It is characterised by the quality of spontaneity and of participation of everyone without any barrier between the performer and the audience.\(^2\) The folk-art may not be very sophisticated and so refined as to be included in that of classical, but it has its own rules, rigidity, beauty, richness and grandeur.

1.3.2 PRIMITIVE DANCE:

In a community of lower culture there is primitive dancing. It is only done for pleasure sake to depict the inner feelings. It is not done to entertain people. It is a spontaneous rhythmic expression at some festival or ritual. It is inborn and not learnt from any teacher. With the development of civilization folk-dance came into

\(^1\) The Concise Oxford Dictionary.

\(^2\) Traditions of Indian Folk-Dance by Kapila Vatsyan, P 1.
existence. It takes its birth from the primitive-dance and is a refined shape of primitive dance. The emotions expressed in the folk dance are original and natural whereas in refined dance these tend to be artificial.

1.3.3 IMPORTANCE OF FOLK DANCE:

Progress of civilisation brings changes in art and culture. Folk-dance in India developed amongst the peasantry, because majority of people (more than 85%) belonged to rural areas. Thus it came to be termed as an art of village folk, though it may not be accurately correct as all the people whether rural or urban contributed to its development. It is of great national importance. Washington Irving remarked that the character of a people is often to be learnt from their amusements, for in the hour of mirth, the mind is unrestrained and takes its natural bent. Folk dancing of a nation is the nation's mirror as it reflects nation's temperament, art, culture, social and political status.

1.3.4 CULTURAL AND CIVILIZATION:

In order to know about the aesthetics of Indian folk dances, it is essential to know the cultural background of the Indian folks which provides beauty to their folk dances. Literature, music, painting, dance, philosophy, religion etc., all these combine together in one word 'culture'.

1. The art of Indian Dancing, P 7.
Culture is the internal condition of an individual of which civilization is the external expression. Both these mean refinement. In Hindustani, culture means Sanskriti, and civilization means Sabhyata. Folk dance only is not an integral part of Indian culture and civilization, but folk art as a whole has given birth and is the originator of Indian culture and civilization.¹

It is essential to have civilization and culture in our daily life as only then a perfect understanding of the friendship between nations and people can be developed. Without culture there can be no true civilization because it will be like a house without foundation. To find the real culture it is necessary to study the rural rustic people as they constitute the bulk of population.

1.3.5 IMPACT OF RELIGION:

Religion had a great impact on folk dances in India. It was the most prominent and forceful impulse to the rural peasantry to engage them in this religio-artistic pursuit. This is the reason that the folk dance-art of India is an art of masses and is not an aristocratic art of bourgeois class. Stories and legends from the epics, the Mahabharta, Ramayana, the Puranas, the folk-lores, folk-legends and tales of Gods and Goddesses have given inspiration to the villagers since ages and they have

1. Aesthetics of Indian Folk Dance, P 31.
formulated their dances with that religious background. The folk dances of South are generally based on Shiva. Bengal and Assam being the worshippers of female-aspect of Shiva Shakti have folk dances influenced by Kali and Durga cult. The folk dances of Northern India have been influenced by Radha-Krishna episodes. Ganapati, and Goddess Lakshmi have influenced the folk dances of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Saurashtra.

1.3.6 CLASSIFICATION:

There are various kinds of dances and these differ in various classes or tribes. They are broadly classified according to clans, such as boatman's, fisherman's, milkman's dance. So in India dance depends not on technique but on the tribes practising the art. Generally a dance goes by the name of the tribe and its type of vocation although there are exceptions to this general classification just as virile Bhangra dance of the Punjab can be classified in the martial group.

Folk dances in India can roughly be divided into three broad classes viz Men's dances, Women's dances, and mixed dances. These dances may further be divided into three main categories: (1) Social - These are semi-religious and connected with seasonal festivals, (2) Purely religious and (3) Martial or heroic. It may, all the same be added

1. Aesthetics of Indian Folk Dance, P 38.
2. Ibid, P 44.
that it would be very difficult to draw a clear cut line between social and ceremonial dances or seasonal and ceremonial dances. It is a matter of common knowledge that a serious ritual in one generation may become merely an adult amusement of the next. Similarly most of the dances which were originally seasonal or ceremonial have become a source of periodic diversion and show.\(^1\) Taken together we find in all parts of India four levels of performances, (i) Performance reflecting man's response to natural environment (ii) his response to the social structure, (iii) at other times functional occupation and (iv) to the consecration of the moment of the change of season through ritual performances.\(^2\)

1.3.7 **TRANSFORMATION:**

Characteristic in the folk dance of India is that there was interchange and interconnection of prevalent folk dances. On religious occasions and ceremonies, fairs used to be held in the temples or near these and invariably folk dances used to be performed. Naturally folk dances influenced the dance art of dancers whose art was purely religious to appease the deity. Dances gradually became much refined, polished and sophisticated and in time gave birth to classical dance. In this way the dance art of Bharat Natyam owes its origin from the dances of devadasis

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1. Aesthetics of Indian Folk Dance, P 35.  
2. Indian Folk Dance, P 372.
in South and Odissi of Orissa from the Maharis, who are the devadasis of that state. Similarly in North India too major part of the dances were enacted near temples or performed on religious occasions such as Bharat Milap, Ram Lila and other festivals. The existence of devadasis institution in Northern India though may seem some what strange to layman yet devadasis played an important role not only in Southern India but in every part of our country. The system of devadasis in Hindu temples was officially abolished by legislation in Tamil Nadu but there was no necessity to pass such legislation in North because devadasis institution died long ago when the country went in Muslim hands. It can be said that most of the refined and classical forms of dance in India were preserved in their pure forms by temple dancers. Virtually the development of tribal dancing into folk dancing and folk dancing into classical forms and then degeneration of that again into ruder forms is an endless cycle.¹

"Folk dance provides enormous succour to the dance expressions of the classical forms in the present day of improvisation and extempore compositions, musical phrases and dance pieces as well as modern ballet themes based on "free style" of dancing." writes Projesh Banerji.²

1. Aesthetics of Indian Folk Dance, P 40-41.
2. Ibid., P 48.
During the pre-independence period, the dancers and dancing parties of rural areas received patronage from the Zamindars, Jagirdars, Chiefs and Nawabs. During Muslim period these artists received Royal patronage. This patronage contributed a good deal towards the sophistication of folk-art expressions by the classical forms of urban areas. With growth and development from feudal agrarian society to modern industrial civilization, the basic expressions, movements and time beats of folk dance gradually found their way to urban areas from villages. Songs from folk-tunes, many thumri and Dadra tunes, Kajri, etc., even a number of Khayal tunes, time beats of four, commonly known as Kaharwa tal, based on rhythmic steps of the Kahars (Palanquin bearers) are the best examples to support this. Thus classical types of cultures had their origin from temples and field culture, and became an admixture of court and temple-cum-field culture with great intricacy of design and perfection. Also, all classical styles in India have evolved from strict adherence to a particular pose or stance where the body achieves an abstraction of a totally different order. The ardhmandali of Bharatanatyam, the rectangular open position of Kathakali, the tribhanga and chauk of odissi, the figure of eight of Manipuri are the examples in this regard. Further there are differences in the movements, both in abstract and in mime positions. It would also be logical to accept

1. Aesthetics of Indian Folk Dance, P 48-49.
the view that in India it would always be possible for a tribal folk form to achieve excellence through the introduction of a literary theme set to a musical mode and by attempting to relate the word and the sound to specific movements while retaining all the characteristic, mannerism of folk style.¹

To sum up, it would be incorrect to consider folk dance as uncivilised, but it should be understood as the form of expression of simpler agrarian civilisation built on fundamental emotions. The range of psychology behind folk-dance covers almost the whole gamut of human feelings and emotions. In folk-dance forms there are more truthful and direct elements than the classical which is loaded with artificiality. It is, therefore, natural that folk-dance expressions supply abundant raw material for use in the contemporary period whereas classical dance tends to go into blind alleys of formalism. Folk traditions are more near to reality and more truthful to emotions and feelings of people than classical which has the element of outward polishing. Therefore folk-dance is an easier means of communication between man and has a mass appeal than the classical dance.²

1. Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, P 375.
2. Aesthetics of Indian Folk Dance, P 49.
I have given a resume of various types of classical dances prevalent in India because the dance has been the most ancient medium of representing collective gaiety which has been handed down from posterity. Guru Nanak, who had deep insight of human nature could never be averse to this natural and noble impulse of mankind which is involuntarily exhibited through the movements of human body. In the next chapter I will deal with mythological, religious and historical aspects of dance.