CHAPTER - 1

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF DANCE

The origins of dance can be traced along two streams since the origins of an art that is dedicated to the Gods must have originated from the divinities themselves. Historically the origins can be traced from the extant sculptures, paintings, literature, inscriptions and foreign accounts of the country as the major forms of sources. Mythological origins have also been based on the origins as discussed in the books that narrate the status of dance during the Vedic periods, as narrated in the epics, the Puranas and the literary accounts that followed.

Dance has existed ever since mankind has come into existence. The evolution of the art is however, hidden deep in the roots of the various civilizations and diverse art forms that are complimentary to the art of dancing. “Whosoever danceth not, knoweth not the way of life.” 1 Dance is the mother of all arts.2 Dance as we know is a composite art that involves the study, and essence of music, poetry, sculpture, drama and architecture in its execution. It was collectively referred to as Natya in the treatises of Indian Dance such as the Natya Shastra. “This is an art which is considered as a meeting ground of all arts”.3 Dance is therefore a


2 Idib; p. iii
beautiful representation of life around us as an offering to the Lord, through the medium of our body which recreates all the imagination and real incidents of life as desired to represent by the dancer. It is an art of the greatest order of sophistication for; the body, which attains a state of ecstasy, is forgotten entirely and at most of the times it remains as a mere receiver of the super human powers that it achieves through the art of dancing. The dancer attains magical powers through his desire to dance and this in turn brings him victory, health, life and an indescribably great bonding with the tribe that he is associated with. The state of exhilaration achieved by the performer leads him into the world of the spirits, the Gods and the demons.

It thus carries him away from the world of the everyday bridging the earthly world with that of the world of spirits and the super natural.

**Thus dance becomes a sacrificial rite, a charm, a prayer and a prophetic vision**  

Dance can therefore be viewed as a remedy to aid the ailing, a lucky charm, a link between the dead and generations of their descendants, a means that spells victory in a battle, a creator in its own right and a preserver of the tribe or the community. Hence dance has been more or less an activity that has been both an indispensable and perhaps inseparable part of man’s lives. “As such dance is the earliest outlet for emotion and the cradle for all arts.”

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3 Indu Shekhar, Sanskrit Drama its origin and decline, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1977,p.Xiii.

young maidens or those of the young boys, sickness, marriage, death, planting, harvesting, hunting, at war, after a hunt, feasts, the celebrations of the village headman’s coronation, funeral ceremonies and the like. Dance can be defined as mere rhythmical movement of the limbs of the body and certainly not the movements of the work itself since the art of dancing would be the recreation of the things seen and heard. Civilised people express their emotions through well regulated Actions, while primitive people developed the art of expression through well regulated Movements of their bodies. Thus dance is a great mother of art, religion and erotics. Dance has perhaps come to mankind from a great number of sources numbering in thousands and must have been practised variedly at a great number of civilizations the world over for probably the same occasions, with movements of expression being almost the same, like, expanded movements for joyous incidents and close body movements to express the fearful or sad situations. It can also be concluded that nature and animals were his first teachers for the movements of dance, since the movements of the primates were imitated by early man, the moves of a hunt were enacted, when it was a celebration after a hunt as described in the chapter later.

Dance was seen as an art in the Stone Age while it attained the character of Drama during the Metal Ages. The Later Ages see it is an entertaining art, thus leading the art; to assume different status in society with the passage of time. Since the themes and occasions for dancing are limited, it can be noticed these dances may often be performed in place of one another.

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5 Indu Shekhar, Sanskrit Drama its origin and decline, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1977, p. Xiii
The earliest examples of dance in history can be had from the rock paintings created by the human race in the caves inhabited by them in the prehistoric periods. Of these are extant the ones that are in the present day France, in Europe. These however are suggestive of the fact that primitive man danced. The people must have invariably imitated the moves of the various species of birds and animals for their music and dance movements. It can be noticed that initially, their dwellings were also seen to be circular as much as their important motif in dancing which was also circular. This indicates that man must have incorporated the shape of the sun and the moon in their everyday life. There are also evidences that point at the formation of the concentric circles while dancing with either a man in the centre encircled by women or a girl in the centre encircled by men which is still in vogue in some of the tribal and folk dances that are performed even to this day. The later ages stand testimony to the fact that man donned the mask of the animal around which he danced after a hunt, and imitated the moves of the animal as observed by him during the hunt. There are the dances that were danced to ward off a sick individual off his sickness where the Shaman or the whole group of people would take unto them the spirit causing the sickness by dancing to a state of exhilaration around the sick individual. Interesting to note are the instances where the elderly people of the tribe encircle a new bride to convey the thought that the bride is being accepted into the tribe or is being made a part of the tribe henceforth. There are also instances wherein certain tribal cultures dance around the head of an enemy, the sacrificial animal, like a buffalo, the holy waters, the sanctified altars in order that the power of these objects get transferred to them, which is a strange but true fact. This leads to the thought that the folk and tribal forms of dance
that have an object placed in the centre even to this day must have been inspired and influenced by these practices of the most primitive tribal cultures the world over. Having transported himself into a world of ecstasy while dancing, man tried to become one with the supernatural consequently offering his whole self or by offering anything like a sacrificial animal, material possessions and the like, that he thought was dearest to the Supreme. **This must have been the embryonic stage of relating dance with a ritual, or a ceremony which developed to such an extent that dance and ritual have been thought of to be the two faces of the same coin.**

The custom of choosing a bride in the cultures of the people of Hawaii, Europe and Germany are directly associated with the art of dancing although these are regions that are spaced miles apart and have different cultural backgrounds from which they have basically originated.

“No performance should be begun without fulfilling the Office of the Stage ranga-pujah), and that those who neglect this ritual will be ruined.”7 This has been rightly adapted and justified over the centuries for, every dance form practised in India from time immemorial has been associated with a ritual at least to the extent of a simple material offering or the offering of the whole-self to the Supreme by means of dancing.

The development of dance as a ritual can be traced historically from the existing visual sources. These are predominantly seen in the sculptures of the said historical periods and are part of the significant monuments that

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were erected by the illustrious rulers of these dynasties that ruled our country. They have been nurtured by the various religions that were practised in ancient India, though the land saw innumerable invasions, destructions and influences on the social, economic and political conditions of the society, greatly influencing the culture of the society. It is but remarkable that these monuments have stood the test of time and have been testimony to the fact that dance and ritual are inter related and are complementary to each other. It brings home the fact that the rich culture and tradition are so deep rooted that any number of these invasions has not been successful in eliminating the same.

The earliest civilizations, the cave temples, the structural temples in the various states of India have been discussed briefly to trace the origin of dance in general, its relation to ritual, the social status of those who practised the art in the society, during the patronage of the various rulers over the centuries in a vast and diversified country, India.

The foremost historical evidences can be had from the reminiscents of the great civilizations that flourished in the Indus Valley: the Harappan and the Mohenjo-Daro civilizations. These must have reached the highest degree of civilization before coming to an end. The excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa have yielded conclusive proofs of the existence of classical dance styles practised over 5000 years ago.\(^8\)

Excavations of the archaeological remains of the Harappan civilization, belonging to the later part of 2300 B.C. reveal a glorious past of

\(^8\) Indu Shekhar, Sanskrit Drama its origin and decline, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1977,p.xiv see ref Pusalkar, in The Vedic Age, London(1952), pp. 180-81
the historical beginnings of our country, India. While excavating, a great deal of intricately carved steatite seals, carved with the images of animals and inscribed with a peculiar script were discovered. The craftsman had fashioned images of animals like the bull, elephant, tiger, rhinoceros and the water-buffalo besides the contemporary vegetation. These were the archaeological results of the survey that was conducted in 1921. In the year 1922, a larger site was discovered, four hundred miles farther away which became to be known as Mohenjo-Daro, the city of the dead. The discoveries of the seals and inscriptions found at Ur and sites in Mesopotamia, also dating back to 2400-2000B.C. in the West, on comparison with those found at Harappa, reveal a trade link between the two civilizations. The diversity of the animals depicted on the seals is incredible. The frequent occurrence of the bull’s head and the multi-headed composite animals suggests the fact that these must have been symbols relating to religion. Besides these, the images include the hare, crocodile, antelope, composite animal forms and a very special single horned Ox. These seals are perhaps, the foremost art objects in India. It is interesting to note that one of the most important and magnificent seals, incorporates the primordial form of the image of a God, Lord Nataraja, in bronze belonging to the Chola Dynasty. Here the central figure is in the Yogic posture, with arms extended outwards over the knees, seated at a level higher than the floor suggesting the fact that Yoga was in vogue during the Harappan times. The figure has multiple faces or could be masks, crowned by the Trident or the trishool or the weapon of Lord Shiva.
SEALS OF HARAPPAN – MOHENJA-DARO CULTURES

SEAL OF SEATED YOGI

10 Ibid; p. 17
The terracottas of the Harappan times include a large number of ‘Mother Goddesses’, toys, Votive animals and collection of diverse and humorous figures. The most impressive is the unique copper sculpture of a young maiden, a dancing girl, from Mohenjo-Daro, which is perhaps the only human sculpture extant, depicting the existence of a performing art form such as dance. Also available are the torso of a male dancing figure and several animal figures in broken conditions beyond recognition arbitrarily belonging to the Harappan civilization.

**FIGURE OF DANCING GIRL FROM MOHENJA-DARO.**¹¹

The foremost records of visual art in India were the primitive cave or rock paintings that are extant in very large concentrations on sandstone rock shelters in and around the Central part of India that is in the present city of

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¹¹Ibid; p. 20
These paintings are very sketchy in their execution and are more or less records of the contemporary life and everyday activities such as hunting, bull-jumping, figures with bows and arrows, figures on horse back carrying swords and shields, perhaps belonging to the Iron-Age. One of these paintings belongs to 5500 B. C. or a period just later, during the Mesolithic period and depicts a hunting dance.

PAINTING SHOWING A HUNTING DANCE FROM A ROCK SHELTER:

12 Ibid; P.27 ch 2
13 Ibid; p.26
However, between the 1500 B.C. 486 B.C no sophisticated art forms are available that can help in documenting the practice of all the arts, an insight into the knowledge of the prevalence of which, can be had through literary sources of that period alone. A brief idea of the arts in vogue can be had from the stone sculptures of the Buddhist monuments and stupas at Bharhut, Sanchi, Bhaja, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda and the paintings at the Ajanta caves.

The occasions for dance in ancient India, is found to be every celebration indicating the popularity and importance of the prevalence of the art. “It is specially associated with worship, and particularly with the worship of Shiva, as Nataraja, the Lord of Dance, where the Natya Mandapa was specially devoted to the exposition of Bharata’s Natya Shastra in the presence of the Lord of dance himself.”

All major scenes of festivity have been marked by the presentation of dance which in turn has been immortalized in the ancient monuments and can be noticed in the extant forms of architecture, sculpture and paintings of the said periods in the history of India. The most important fact that connects and relates to both dancing and sculpture is the very fact that; the dancer evokes the sculptured image of Indian temples in the mind of the spectator, while the figures of Indian sculpture evoke visions of the dance of the Gods and human beings. These sculptures have however helped a great deal in reconstructing the missing links in the History of dance. Since the art followed an oral tradition in its development and execution, sculptures form

the only source to trace the growth and development, its social status and popularity besides a few literary works that give an account of the art. Their visual and three dimensional character helps in the reconstruction of many a data that has been omitted due to the oral tradition of the various dance forms that must have existed. Amongst the various Gods and Goddesses represented in sculpture, the dancing sculptures of Lord Krishna, Shiva and Saraswathi are quite significant.

One of the sculptures in the Buddhist monument at Bharhut mentions the names of the dancers on the occasion of the adoration of the enlightenment of Siddhartha, with a turban. The occasion of the Buddha’s funeral is also marked by a general rejoicing in the form of dancing and music besides the receiving of the relics of the Buddha, which were further made into stupas by them.

Chandra Gupta Maurya’s rule in Northern India from Pataliputra gained impetus for a period of about twenty-four years from 322 B.C. to 298 B.C. The empire was then ruled by his heirs Bindusara and Ashoka who encouraged Buddhism and led the faith to become a world religion. During the rule of Ashoka as many as 84,000 Stupas with the relics of Buddha were erected to spread the faith of Buddhism. Columns were erected with a symbolic representation of animals carved on the columns. The Lion, the king of the jungle was chosen to represent the idea of the Buddha, being the Supreme amongst the spiritual leaders. Four animals were often carved on the abacus: the Lion, an elephant, a horse and a bull each of these beasts being significant with regard to the four directions as interpreted during the Vedic period. Further, it is interesting to note that Nature was personified as
sculpture, as seen in the instance of the Didarganj Yakshi, the sculpture made to represent Female Earth Spirit and that of the Yaksha, made to represent the Male Earth Spirit which is akin to the tribal and folk dance themes and beliefs that have come down to us from the past few generations.

“Yakshas, no less than nagas [serpents], dwelling in the hills and mountains, are the guardians of the precious metals, stones and jewels in the womb of the Earth, and so are the riches and prosperity.”15 They are also viewed as divinities of fertility since they are personifications of the soil or the Earth.

With the end of the Mauryans, there was the emergence of the Shunga dynasty, which facilitated the construction of the Chaityas. The basic meaning of the term being ‘Place of worship’ which in reality would be, either a building, a stupa, an altar, or even a tree.

By the AD320 a new dynasty, the Gupta Dynasty grew in power and emerged as a dominating empire ruling the north central parts of India and their art came to be identified as the ‘Classic period in Indian art.’ The Ajanta caves with frescoes belong to this period. The Buddha Jataka tales have been painted in these caves. Some of the best examples of Gupta-Hindu Art can be seen in the sculptures of the rock cut cave architecture at Udayagiri in Central India. It can be noticed in these sculptures that Nature has been personified as much as it is worshipped and chosen as a theme by the tribes and the folk cults while dancing. While depicting the mythological episode of the Amrutha manthana, Earth has been personified as a beautiful

15 Roy. C. Craven, in Indian Art; Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1976,1995; p.46.
Goddess. The Yakshis were represented as the tree spirits during the period of the Kushans, while they are represented as river goddesses by the Gupta sculptors. These became a typical feature of the Gupta architectural doorways in the monuments that followed. Further the Gupta sculptors have portrayed these river goddesses as standing on the Makara, a half crocodile half elephant together portraying the Holy Ganges.

THE DIDARGANJ YAKSHA AND YAKSHI.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid; P.44.
The dance traditions of Andhra are evident in the Buddhist temples of Nagarjunakonda, Amaravathi, Ghantasala and the ruins of the temples of the Shatavahana period. A variety of musical instruments and dance friezes can be seen on the walls of the Nagajunakonda caves. The GaathaSapthashati authored by Hala of the Shatavahana period, refers to dancers and actors of this period. The rule of the Eastern Chalukyas over the Andhra region gave encouragement to the religion of Jainism. They promoted all forms of dance to propagate their religion. The Kakatiyas who ruled from Warangal, were Shaivaites and hence the dancers danced the stories of Lord Shiva profusely during this period. They were overthrown by the Kalinga rulers whose religious faith was Vaishnavism. Veera Narasimha the III an illustrious ruler of this dynasty was a great lover of art and a patron of Dance. The compositions of this period were hence based on the Radha-Krishna theme and popularized. The works of Srinatha Mahakavi, in his Palanati Veera Charita, gives ample evidence about the patronage of the Reddy Kings to dance, which was more a court art and took new dimensions during this period.

The court document of 1505 A.D mentions the practice of the Kuchipudi dance form, the migration of the artists from Siddhavatam, to Vijayanagaram. It speaks of the enactment of the atrocities of Sambata Guruvaraju, the local ruler, in the presence of Veera Narasimha, and the beheading of the former. The successor of Veera Narasimharayalu, Shri

17 Kapila Vatsyayan, Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts; Sangeeth Natak Academi, New Delhi; 1968, 1977; fig 3-4.
Krishna Deva Raya, an illustrious king of the Vijayanagara Dynasty, was a great patron of Music and Dance. The festivities of the Navaratri, the nine day festival, was concluded by the king by ordering the festivities to a close with the presentation of the existing folk dances, conducted from the Mahanavami Dibba, one of the largest Royal platforms of this period.

Frieze showing dancing sculptures belonging to the Vijayanagara Empire

Down South the Chalukyan Dynasty ruled for about nearly two hundred years dating from the mid sixth to the eighth century A.D. They were perhaps the pioneers in the construction of the free standing, structural temples. These were constructed in three phases at three different sites, with an architectural improvement at every phase of construction. In the second phase of the rock-cut temples at Badami, a beautiful sculpture of Lord Shiva

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18 Kapila Vatsyayan, Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts; Sangeeth Natak Academi, New Delhi; 1968, 1977, fig.106.
with sixteen hands holding different attributes has been sculpted in the chatura posture of the Natya Shastra. The exteriors were severely plain in the initial temples such as the Ladkhan and Durga temples but showed an improvement in the sculptural decoration with the second and third phases at Mahakoota and Pattadakal based on the sculptural decorations of which the history of dancing can be reconstructed. Yet another dynasty that contributed to the construction of wonderful dance sculptures were the Rastrakutas who ruled from 700A.D. to 1000A.D. For about nearly two and a half centuries The Kailasanatha temple at Elura is a magnificent example of their excellence. It depicts various Mythological episodes that are associated with dancing such as the episode of Ravana shaking Mount Kailasa, the episode of the fight between Ravana and Jatayu which has been a theme very beautifully sculpted by the Pattadakal sculptor of the Chalukyan dynasty can also be noticed. The Nandi or the Bull makes its appearance in the sculptures of this temple since the temple is of Shaivaite affiliation. On the walls of the Lankeshvara cave has a particularly graceful image of Dancing Shiva\textsuperscript{19} which stands testimony to the fact that dance was a very well known and prevalent activity during this dynastic rule. The figure is depicted with maximum movement and the energy and rhythm such that it remains to be one of the most powerful sculptures in spite of its damaged condition presently. The body of the Lord represents the trampling of the demon Apasmara by the Lord and the body is in the Athibhanga posture with the head facing upwards and the body superbly balanced revealing the skill of the sculptor besides his knowledge of the art of dancing. There is yet another representation of the dance of the Lord in the Ravana-ka –khai, cave

where the Lord is in the Lalita Karana, represented with eight hands holding a damaru, axe and the trident, with the remaining five hands revealing the different hand gestures as used in the art of Indian dancing, also incorporating a suitable, well balanced, dancing posture of the body.  

The Vesara styled temples of the Hoysalas contributed their utmost to the temple dance sculptures. These give us evidence to the fact that dance was profusely performed and the sculptors and dancers were adepts in their respective art forms and had the knowledge of the rules lain in the respective treatises. The temples stand testimony to the fact that the arts must have reached its zenith during this period. The most famous amongst the temples of this dynasty are the ChennaKeshava temple at Belur, the Hoysaleshwara temple at Halebidu and the Keshava temple at Somanathapura. The architectural specialties of these temples can be seen in the stellate plan, the eka kuta, dvikuta and trikuta that is the single shrine two and three shrines respectively. The temples are rich in their sculptures so much so that the period is identified as the period of Ornamentation in history. Hence dance sculptures are found in abundance in the temples of this period. The exterior of the Belur Chennakeshava temple has Salabhanjakas depicting female figures in the act of a Huntress, the Shukhabhashini, the Drummer, the Darpana Sundari, the Mohini, or the Enchantress, which provides ample source material to a dancer. It can be noticed that these places of worship incorporated these sculptures to educate the people about the art form since the temple was the centre of all social and religious activity. Besides the other offerings to the deity, dance was also offered and dancers were

\[\text{Ibid; p.213.}\]
patronized by the kings and enjoyed a respectable place in society. The Queen of King Vishnuvardhana, one of the illustrious rulers of this dynasty was herself a dancer. The architecture and sculptures of this period have remained surpassed till today.

THE SALABHANJAKAS OF THE HOYSALA PERIOD.

By the early tenth century, the Cholas succeeded the Pallavas, a powerful dynasty that ruled the Tamil country and slowly rose to be one of the most powerful dynasties in the Southern most regions of the country. The Cholas, were greatly influenced by the Shore Temple at Mamallapuram of the Pallavas. Several Nrttamurthis of the Nataraja were sculpted. They used these as decorations for both the interiors and exteriors in their temple architecture at Kancheepuram. The Cholas, had their temples designed based on this. The Rajarajeshvara temple at Tanjore, is a gigantic masterpiece of South Indian Architecture built to commemorate the victory of Raja Raja

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21 Kapila Vatsyayan, Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts; Sangeeth Natak Academi, New Delhi; 1968, 1977, fig. 32-33.
Chola the first, over the North and is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Following this, were the temples of Gangaikondacholapuram Shiva temple and the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram. This Nataraja temple at Chidambaram is, even to this day, revered as the home of Dance. On the inside walls of one tower, dance poses have been sculptured which are clearly the different karanas as described in the Natya Shastra, an ancient Sanskrit treatise on Dramaturgy, authored by Bharata muni. The Nataraja temple at Chidambaram displays the 108 Karanas with the nomenclature of each of these, as described in the Natyashastra. These have been sculpted one above the other to give the effect of pillars. The popularity of the art of dancing and a thorough knowledge of the treatise, during the rule of the Cholas, is very evident from this Monument. **Rajaraja Chola appointed well trained and adept dancers in the temple, who were identified as Devadasis, numbering four hundred in order to perform the ritual dances.**

“The great builder Rajaraja Chola (1010.A.D.), the illustrious ruler of the Chola line of Tamil Nadu, commissioned a detailed inscription on the walls of Tanjore Brihadishvara temple. **The inscription records dance and music was performed every evening when the community assembled for the worship of the deity amidst the chanting of hymns.**

Rajaraja Chola specially constructed two long streets just to house the four hundred girls attached to the temple services.”

The system perhaps was the only one of its kind that helped the survival of the art form as it is seen and performed today since this period in History, eventually led to the Anti-Nautch Movement imposed by the British throughout the country, creating a

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22 Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal, Classical Dance Heritage of Karnataka, Karnataka Bharatagama Pratishthana (Regd) Bangalore; 2011, Section-II, p.21-22.
downfall and deterioration of both the art of Indian Dancing and the lives of the dancers themselves.

“The dance has also found extensive representation in iconography, which has given us such celebrated pieces as the Nataraja bronze.” The Cholas were also the foremost to make bronze sculptures, in South India, after perhaps, the Guptas in the North and the bronze dancing girl sculpture that was discovered from the site of excavation of the Mohenjo-Daro ruins. The craftsman of the Cholas excelled in the art of making sculptures in bronze. They followed the Lost-Wax method, which created a unique icon time and again. The Nataraja icon was the sculptors’ favourite subject and these representing dancing Shiva were produced in great numbers the evolution of which can also be traced to the Chola bronzes.

There is a great significance that is attached to this icon and hence is revered as an important aspect of every performance that is held in the southern states of the country. Every recital is complete in the real sense of the term, only after an offering of salutations are made by the performers to the idol that is invariably placed on the artists left on the down stage. This clearly indicates the relation dance shares with the ritualistic tradition that has been passed on to the present generations from our ancestors. In this icon the lord has been represented as conqueror of all evils, embodiment of knowledge, prosperity and benevolence. He is represented as Ardhanarishwara, as the creator, preserver and the destroyer as required to suit the corresponding situations.

23 Mohan Khokkar, The Illustrated Weekly of India, Dec 1, 1963, Classical Indian Dances-3; The Role of the Temple.
THE CHOLA NATARAJA IN BRONZE

The founding of the Vijayanagara Dynasty ushered in a great importance and a new dimension to the arts in general and dancing in particular. The temples of this period were built out of Granite. The sculptures were hence huge and robust. There was the innovation of the Multi shaft musical pillars in stone. The architecture was of two types, one being the religious type and the other being Civic Architecture. Royal platforms were built at various places in the kingdom, for the king to conduct the festivities. One such Royal platform is the Mahanavami Dibba, from where the king Krishnadevaraya, conducted the Navaratri festival,
which incorporated the dance of the folk of that period. It is interesting to note that dance was an integral part of the celebrations of a festival by the whole community or the kingdom. Even to this day are extant the sculpted friezes of panels of dancers in the folk style identified as the Kolata today, on one of the biggest Royal stone platforms, the Mahanavami Dibba.

![The frieze depicting the Kolata dancers on the Mahanavami Dibba; a Royal Platform.](image)

In the Northern part of India, between the mid eighth and thirteenth centuries, the struggle between the various dynasties of the Deccan, to capture power over Kanauj, resulted in their disintegration and the emergence of a great number of small kingdoms that were always vying with one another. Buddhism underwent the Vajrayana phase, and permitted the Brahmanical institutions to grow under it as well, after the seventh century onwards. The **Tantra** or the **DOCTRINE AND RITUAL OF THE LEFT HAND**, i.e. the fact that the Female or the Shakti is the dominant force of the universe and also that, it is the one and only force that can drive

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24 Kapila Vatsyayan, Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts; Sangeeth Natak Academi, New Delhi; 1968, 1977, fig. 105
the dormant male force into action, was the outgrowth of this period. The
practice of the tantra in its true sense being all that is magical and mystical
also came into vogue. The female consorts of the Buddha made their
appearance during this period. During this period was erected the Surya
temple at Martand in Kashmir. Nature found its representation personified in
temples as much as its representation is seen in the allied forms like dance
the world over. A special mention of the temples of Central India that were
built during these years, gives a clear picture of the prevalence of the dance
forms as part of the everyday rituals, and a thorough knowledge of the same
amongst the subjects. The largest of the temples in Bhubaneswar is the
Lingaraja temple dating to about 1000A.D. The master piece of this temple
is a nayika. A contemporary temple of this period is the unfinished, smaller
yet superb Rajarani temple with its splendid sculptures.

The Udayagiri and the Khandagiri caves of Orissa, besides the
excavations at the sites of Ratnagiri and Lalitagiri provide ample evidences
to the existence of the dance form that later came to be identified as Odissi.
The dance sculptures at the Rani Gumpha and Hathi Gumpha caves are
explicit enough to conclude that dance was as popular with the Bhuddhist
sculptors too. **The fact that the Jagannatha Temple at Orissa incorporated a Nata Mandir, brings home the fact that dancing was part of the Temple activities.** There is the carving of the various Nayikas
on the walls of the Mukteshwara, the Parashurameshwara Temple and the
Vittaladuel temples indicating that the extent of knowledge of the art and its
wide spread popularity amongst the people.
Salabhanjaka or dancer from the Rajarani temple at Bhubaneswar.\textsuperscript{25}  

Also belonging to this group is the masterpiece the Surya temple at Konark. The temple houses a huge Nata mandir signifying the fact, that dance was an inseparable part of the religious rituals in a temple, with a striking similarity to the dance sculptures on these walls of the Nata Mandir to those that are seen in the temples of Lingaraja and Raja Rani at Bhubaneshwar. It can also be noticed that the tribhanga posture of the Yakshis form an integral part of the dance sculptures that have been carved in this temple. “Ladies in various dance poses, some holding musical instruments, adorn the pillars of the nat mandir (dance hall), in front of the main temple.”\textsuperscript{26} In the Vittala Duel sculptures of dancers in various charis can be seen and the Raja Rani temple houses sculptures that are close to life

\textsuperscript{25} Kapila Vatsyayan, Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts; Sangeeth Natak Academi, New Delhi; 1968, 1977, fig.22. 

so much so that they look like they would come to life and commence to
dance any moment.

‘Khajuraha’ The city of the Gods is a town renowned for its wealth of
temples in north central India attributed to Chandella kings of Bundelkhand.
The figures of dancing sculptures adorn the ceilings of these temples and are
sincere records of the dance of the devadasis, who danced in the temples as
part of the everyday rituals. The sculptures here again similar to the
salabhanjaks of Belur are seen depicting various activities like applying
Kohl to the eyes, removing a thorn from her foot, feeding a bird seated on
her shoulder, the Kandhuka Krida,(playing the ball). Here one can find the
richest array of dancing figures as seen in Mathura, Belur and Halebidu.

The Solankis or Chalukyas [11th to 13th century] ruled over Gujarath,
Western Rajasthan, including the parts of Chitor and Mount Abu. Only the
ruins in these regions give us an idea of the architecture, sculpture.

The Vimala vasahi and Luna vasahi temples are the chief Jaina
temples of the Dilwara group of temples on Mount Abu in Rajasthan. The
Luna vasahi temple is dedicated to the Twenty second Tirthankara,
Neminatha. It can be noticed that there is the representation of the joyous
festivity, with dance as a medium to express their joy, in the series of
sculptures commemorating the wedding of Neminatha. The dome of the
Vimala vasahi temple is adorned with concentric circles of carving which is
supported by sixteen brackets incorporating the figures of the Goddess of
Knowledge. These rings are filled with the carvings of the human and
animal figures, elephant processions and countless dancers, with repeated statues in niches.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{Dancer from the Surya temple at Konark.}\textsuperscript{28}

Saraswathi, the Goddess of Knowledge, especially the arts of Dance and Music appears as a sculpture in a temple, at Pallu, in the desert state of Bikaner too. The Goddess is specially honoured by the Jains in this temple, which signifies that music and dance could have been a part of the rituals in these desert states too.

\textsuperscript{27} Edith Tomory, A History of fine arts in the East and the West, Orient Longman Limited, India, 1982,1989, 1992, Indian Art, Sculpture; P.206

\textsuperscript{28} Roy. C .Craven, in Indian Art; Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1976,1995; p 182.
With the invasions of the Mohammedans, the Portuguese, the French and the British, all the arts underwent a great setback, due to the lack of patronage and political instability. They have been individually revived by the respective pioneers in the distinct dance forms and developed them into the sophisticated art forms, as what we see them today, thus existing as mere entertainment forms rather than ritualistic ones. The Post–Independent India saw many social reforms by the pioneers of the regional dance forms and institutions like the Kalakshetra, the Shantiniketan and the like.

Saraswathi from Pallu, Bikaner, Solanki 12th century marble.  

People from respectable middle-class families took to the art of dancing and contributed to its respectable place in society and its revival in all its grandeur and magnificence. Masters of the art, with enormous

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knowledge, trained enormous students, by imparting the hard techniques of the art and encouraging the promising disciples to be the guiding spirit and torch bearers to the generations that followed. Over the centuries the tradition of dancing has continued to be an offering to the Lord without which even to this day any pooja or obeissance to the Lord is unfinished. There have also been a lot of changes and adaptations in the presentation of these dance forms to suit the present day life and to meet the demands of the improving technological advancements and performing areas chosen. But yet, one can observe the presence of strong religious and ritualistic flavour, as inseparable components of the art. No dance institution, perhaps imparts training to the aspirants without a formal offering to the Lord of the Dance. Every performer, irrespective of the place, occasion, time or any other parameter, is seen to initiate the performance with an offering to the Lord of their choice.

**Mythological origins of dance.**

The occasions for have been enumerated as the celebration of a wedding, childbirth, coronation, water sport, a triumphal procession, meeting the lover, the inauguration and occupation of a newly built house, the attainment of a desired object, for general prosperity, on all auspicious occasions, the foremost of these being offering of rituals as worship to the Lord.

The noblest purpose of dance has, however, clearly been given as the adoration of the Lord, as it is considered higher than all offerings, like flowers, oblations and the rest. The offering of dance to the
accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music was considered as meritorious as conducting a yagna or a sacrifice.  

It is and was believed to fulfill all the desires of the performer and gives great prosperity besides being auspicious and pleasing to the Lord. The Indian Origins of the art of dancing are generally attributed to the Gods. Lord Vishnu, who himself is the creator of the art, danced as Mohini, the Enchantress and seduced Shiva, as the mythology goes. Dance can thus be understood as a voice and movement of God. The fact that Lord Krishna danced with the Gopis in Brindavan in rapture adds to the significance of the tradition of the art of dancing in the lives of the people since those times.

It is yet to be ascertained if the Indus valley civilization was the foremost of those that happened or if there existed one previous to this one too. Dance has been such an absorbing art, is revealed to us from the fact that the Gods themselves danced and their creations the human beings also followed suite. Hence the Indian Gods and their creations danced from time immemorial, which has followed as a continuous stream that has flown from the Vedic period into the times of the Epics, the Classical period as noticed in the Classical literature, until the present day. In the mythological works, often, it can be noticed that every God or the various characters are adept in the art of dancing and are respected members of the contemporary society for practicing this profession. The idea of the Trinity, dancing, specially the Cosmic Dance of Lord Shiva, is itself a great tribute to the art of dancing. The fact that the Lord danced for creation and destruction is in itself a great contribution to the significance of the art in Hindu Mythology and social

life. The dance of the Goddess and consort of Shiva, Parvathi has been described to be graceful and beautiful and that of the Goddess in the incarnation of Chandi or Kali to be Vigorous, fearful and dreadful add to the origin and traditional flow of the art.

Every festival and significant event of the lives of the people is seen to be expressed through the spontaneous collective, art of community dancing. Dancing thus became an invariably, important, inseparable, part of a joyous and cultured social life of any community that flourished through the ages. The arts exhibit spontaneity, so much so that, the onlooker could easily conclude that the presentation is unstudied. But there could be hardly a gesture or movement executed which is of independent origin, which reveals the performer’s mastery and skill over the art form presented. The more we perceive and study the spontaneity of the art presentation the more ‘natural’ they appear to the onlooker’s eye but, it is to understood that what seems natural and spontaneous is actually long-inherited, well-considered and well-bred. “Under these conditions life itself becomes a ritual.”

The origin of Natya or Dramaturgy of which Dance is a primary requisite is attributed to the Natya Veda from which the Natya Shastra, a treatise on Dance, Music and the art of Acting were compiled. “With a bow to Pitaamaha(Brahma) and Maheshvara(Shiva) I shall relate the canons of Drama.—We want an object diversion, which must be audible as well as visible. As the existing of Vedas are not to be listened to by all, be pleased to create another Veda which will belong to all the Colour—groups (varna).”

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It is believed that in the Tretayuga, when miseries and evil deeds had overcome the lives of the ordinary people, Indra and the other Gods requested Lord Brahma to create an entertainment with the essence of the Vedas, easily available and understood by the common man. Brahma in return created the Natya Veda by amalgamating the Word from the Rig Veda, Song from the Sama Veda, the gestures from the Yajur Veda and the Rasas from the Atharva Veda. This science was then communicated by Brahma to Bharata and to his hundred sons. The first play depicting the story of the Amruthamantana was staged. The defeat of the Danavas enacted by the actors annoyed them so much so that all the actors on the stage were dumbfounded by the asuras by casting a magical spell. Indra, the lord of the Heavens then presented the actors with a Jarjara, his weapon to ward off all such mishaps from happening. “O (Bharatha,) you have got a divine weapon with which all destroyers of a play have been made jarjara (beaten to pulp). Hence it will have the name Jarjara.” The Jarjara was ceremonially consecrated on the stage. This is perhaps the very first instance of a ritual being incorporated on stage, following which, were the rites of the Poorvaranga, which incorporated the salutations to the asthadikpalas, the Brahma mandala culminating in an obeisance to Lord Shiva and a brief salutation to the musical accompanists. Lord Shiva, the cosmic dancer, taught Tandu his assistant the art of vigourous dancing which was later

32 C.Shivaramamurti, in Nataraja in art thought and Literature; Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Director, Publications Division, New Delhi 1974,1994.,1-3

33 Projesh Banerjee, Indian Ballet Dancing, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1983, p.23

identified as Tandava. The presentation included the four vrittis\textsuperscript{35} or the styles of presentations namely; the Bharathi vritti that is the use of word or dialogue, the Satvathi or the grandeur in presentation and the Arabhati, or the energetic presentation. The lack of the feminine graces was observed and Lord Brahma who created the apsaras for this purpose, who, were 23 in number for, as the mythology goes Bharatha says that the first performance had just the three styles in it and Brahma asked him to include the fourth vritti or style, the Kaishiki vritti saying thus “This style cannot be practised properly by men except with the help of women.”\textsuperscript{36} These apsaras were then taught the art of dancing gracefully by Parvathi, the consort of Lord Shiva, who taught Ushas, the daughter of Banasura to propagate it on Earth. It was called the Lasya or graceful form of dance and the vritti associated with was termed as Kaishiki. Further the rules of Natya were compiled by Bharata in the form of verses in a text called the Natya Shastra. The greatness of the treatise is that there does not exist anything that is not found in the Natya Shastra and if it is mentioned in the Natya Shastra, it is definite to be prevalent in all and any region of the world.

Thus dance has been an important ingredient of Natya or Dramaturgy as studied in the Natya Shastra. Thus Natya developed in a variety of ways in the regions of Aavanthi, Odhra maagadhi, Paanchala and Dakshinatya, acquiring the regional flavours and being influenced by the culture, occupation, topography, fairs and festivals, rites and rituals, linguistic variations, and beliefs in the supernatural and the sublime.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid; p, 35.
\item Projesh Banerjee, Indian Ballet Dancing, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1983, p.21
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“Due to its divine origins, the earliest support to the art of dance came from temples, which were also the hub of community life. The temples reverberated with devotion to the Gods through elaborate rituals, part of which were also the twin arts of singing and dancing.”

“Hindu drama, unlike modern productions, was not for everyday entertainment. It was performed on special occasions such as a spring celebration, a religious festival, a marriage, a coronation, a victory or the visit of a special guest.” Dance can be traced to the early Vedic times, the later Vedic and through all the dynasties and ages. A thorough knowledge of these can be had from the ample references of the contemporary life and records by the poets and writers of the various periods. The growth of dance from a mere form of entertainment to the extent of a vocation and the respect these artists held in the society is also evident. “There are still innumerable Indian temples where the ritual dancing of Devadasis before the image is a part of the regular office; while in orthodox circles the Nautch is still an indispensable element in all festivities such as weddings and coronations.”

Descriptions of the dance as it was, with the varying patronage in history, can also be noticed.

Dancing formed an important, inseparable, part of the religious ceremonies and various rites and rituals from times dating back to the Rig Vedic period. Initially it was a spontaneous activity. As the society and

37 Ashish Mohan Khokar Classical Dance, Rupa &Co, New Delhi, 2004, p;Vi-Vii
life became more cultured and organized, dancing also became an organized activity. It came to be a means of livelihood at sometime in History. **Dance was an entertainment, a disciplined education and an amusement for various occasions.** Various dynasties honoured and offered prestigious positions to these dancers as revealed by the chronicles in history.

Over the years, dance developed along two major aspects. **Primarily,** it was an expression of man’s joy through dancing, which later developed as the most important feature in the ritualistic practices of one’s faith. In the latter situation man realized the necessity to transcend himself from the everyday and selfish, possessive life and offer HIMSELF and devote his body and soul to a being higher than himself. Thus he evoked a power and dedicated himself to it through the magnificent act of dancing. **THIS IS THE VERY BASIS OF THE RITUALISTIC ASPECT OF DANCING IN THE VARIOUS REGIONS OF OUR COUNTRY AND PERHAPS THE WORLD OVER TOO.**

The religious rituals as represented by dance were symbolic, codified with elaborate gesticulations and Abhinaya. Gesticulation, a major feature of this art, was practiced from a time as early as the Early Rig Vedic period. However, the art of gesticulation developed and reached its zenith during the Yajur Vedic period. The evidence of the fact can be verified in the literary works of the following centuries.
The concept that the gods danced themselves is seen from the times of the Rig Veda itself, “Indra is the greatest of them all”\(^{40}\) wherein Indra, himself is termed as the Leader of the Dancers. Also, nature personified and the representatives of nature are described to be dancing and singing both at weddings and funerary ceremonies, as much as the humans on Earth, in the hymns of the Rig Veda. In yet another hymn Lord Indra is invoked as the Leader of the dancers, the giver of the rains, food and prosperity. Closely related to this is the concept of the dancing of the twin gods, the Ashwins, Marut and the Apsaras. Ushas, the Goddess of Dawn is pictured beautifully with poetic adjectives revealing the fact that she was a dancer in the profession. The description of the dance during the birth of Aditi, gives a glimpse of the fact that dancing must have been in practice both as a solo and collective activity. Further, dance as seen in the lives of the common man during the Rig Vedic times has also been described. Dance was an integral part of the occasions such as weddings, harvest festivals, sacrifices and any carnival of merrymaking. The Rig Veda instructed their people to sing, dance and laugh after the mortal remains of the deceased was laid to rest, in order to prolong their own life span vide the following hymn:

“The living from the dead are separated
The sacred rite today has prepared for us
And we are here prepared for the mirth and dancing
Prolonging still, the span of our existence.” \(^{41}\)

\(^{40}\) Kapila Vatsyayan, Classical Indian dance in literature and the arts; Sangeeth Natak Academi, New Delhi; 1968, 1977, p.148

\(^{41}\) Ibid; p. 151
Dances have thus formed an important part of the funeral rituals since the time of the Rig Veda. It is also indicated that couple dances existed during the times of the Rig Veda. The songs to these dances were those that were rendered by the dancers themselves out of the joy within them on the occasion of the celebration. Dance was an amusement during this period since there was the meeting of the people at a particular place after their work was finished over a drink which was followed by dancing.\(^{42}\) Besides this on the religious front dancing was an offering to the Gods as there is an evident mention of the dancer in important sacrifices. The most important aspect of the Rig Vedic period is the religious practices. They were perhaps the beginnings of the symbolic, codified, fascinating gesture language that we find in the dance forms even till this day.

**The Sama Veda:** contributes to the fact that dance was either as per the technical rules or as per the traditionally accepted norms contributing to the idea of the Desi and the Margi types of Music and Dance art forms. This is perhaps the seed of the demarcation for what is termed as the classical and folk dance forms in the years that followed. The other references to the practise of dancing during this period of the Vedic Age as either an amusement or a vocation are quite few in comparison to that of the Rig Veda.

**Yajur Veda:**

It is interesting to note here that the ritual practices of this Veda, lead to the fact that man desired to offer himself wholly to the Supreme

\(^{42}\) Kapila Vatsyayan, Classical Indian dance in literature and the arts; Sangeeth Natak Academi, New Delhi; 1968, 1977, p.35
power. That is, man here tries to annihilate himself to the supernatural. He offers his soul through the means of his body and by means of consecration of the human body; he tries to attain the Sublime or the Universal Self. The images of the various limbs of the human body have been used for the purpose of comparisons to the offerings to be made to the Supreme. During this period, it can be observed, as mentioned earlier, that every ritual is invariably associated with gestures, which has been the very basis of the abhinaya that developed later. The Yajur Vedic ritualistic practices have been the source of enormous material that was symbolic, beautiful, stylized and technical since the mantras of these rites and rituals were set to a particular, special rhythm and tone. Besides this, these verses that were chanted or rather sung were gesticulated through the hand gestures that signified and denoted the meaning of these verses. This leads to the direct inference that Abhinaya in dance, as seen in all the Indian Dances from times dating back to their origin must have had their beginnings in the Yajur Veda invariably. It can also be noticed that these movements of the hand gestures, the placing of the feet, the directions of their use, the use of fingers were done scrupulously, with the precision of both an artist and that of a mathematician. The practice also gave rise to a conscious effort to move systematically, by stepping aesthetically in strides, each identified and characterized by the Lord to which the offering was to be made and also set to a particular metre that defined the dimensions of the stride to be performed, by the performer, besides the lavish use of the gestures as a symbolic language for rituals.

Further, the performer lifted his own self entirely to offer himself to the five elements, to the accompaniment of about seventeen drums sounded
by the BRAAHMANA, as a prelude to the sacrifice. This is followed by the sounding of the other drums and the rendering of the words by the raising of his arms by the VAJAPEYA,\textsuperscript{43} indicating the completion of the invoking ceremony. The performer of the sacrifice looks towards the respective elements as the accompanist points and addresses the text to them. These ceremonies were repeated time and again. Therefore it can be concluded that a set of gestures must have been to denote these elements and a codified language to represent the text or the words must have been evolved. \textbf{These explicitly lead to the fact that a clear and finished language of gestures had thus originated out of these rituals.}

The human body, ever since, has always been revered as an instrument of sacrifice or of worship thus elevating and sanctifying the human self to be one with the Universal Supreme and the Universal truths. \textit{This aspect is evident in the art of Indian dancing where in the performer desires absolute annihilation through the medium of dance which has, as we see must have been an integral part of rituals.}\textsuperscript{44} The Ashwamedha Yagna speaks of the \textbf{RITUALISTIC} practice that was very close to the art of dancing itself. A marriage ceremony conducted according to the Vedas, incorporates a lot of these symbolic movements. While performing a ritual like that of the Cleansing ceremony, the one who sacrifices, touches the various parts of his body, recites a Benediction and offers himself in obeisance. From the Vedic times it can be observed that the body was considered as the means or the instrument to attain the Eternal, and the body and soul were thought off as one and one only.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid; p.155

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid; p.36.
ATHARVA VEDA: The Veda relates to the casting of Magical spells, unlike the other Vedas where the primary concern was sacrifice and rites and rituals. References to dance are seen here after quite a length of time. There is one of the best hymn refers to dance by the mortals on Earth, indicating the celebration of a joyous occasion. References to dancing as a vocation, as an important activity that involved any celebration of joy or sorrow and as a prominent activity of the entire community can be seen. A mention of the dance of the Apsaras and the Gandharvas is also made a number of times.

The Brahmanas indicate a flourishing system of music and dance during their times.

The Grhya Sutras tell us about a very well established, accomplished society and community that encouraged dancing and made it an invariably integral part of every ceremony. From birth to death every stage of man, here is associated with dancing as prominently as the ceremonies themselves.

The Epics:

The Ramayana: This great epic speaks of the dance of the Apsaras apparently dancing on earth to disturb the concentration of the various sages. Dance was taught to the Princes as a necessary and indispensable part of their educational training. Dancing in this society was a simple entertainment and a happy pastime. Rama and Ravana are attributed with the knowledge of dancing. Ravana was a great composer, an accomplished veena player an adept in the arts of Music and Dance. Pleased with Ravana’s Dance and Music, it is believed that Lord Shiva presented him with a sword
called Chandrahasa. There was the use of the gesture language to the text that was danced before the lord and the dance incorporated some of the most intricate and difficult movements of Shiva’s Tandava itself. The dance of the rakshasis to scare Sita in the Ashoka vana is also said to be the very beginning of the ritualistic KALI dancing. This dance is characterized by the Arabhati Vritti which incorporates very vigorous movements defining the Vritti. The household ceremonies continued to incorporate dancing as an important activity where in the language of the hand gestures must have developed further beyond that during the Vedic times.

**The Mahabharata:** Dancing was a prolific art during the period of the Mahabharata. However, the technique is not evident although Arjuna taught dancing disguised as Bruhanalaa in the Virata Parva. There is a mention of the dance of the Apsaras in many contexts, besides the teaching of dance and music to Arjuna by them. Tilotamaa, Urvasi, Menaka are all described to adepts in the arts of dancing and music. Dancing was a major art that was enjoyed by the society during this period. The dance of Subhadra, and her friends in Dvaraka the slaying of Kichaka in the Nartana Shala as mentioned in the Mahabharata speak of the existence and importance of the art of dancing in the lives of the people but do not clearly indicate the ritualistic aspect of the art.

**The Puranas:** The Harivamsa, Vishnu Purana, Srimad Bhagavata describe the Raas dance of Lord Krishna and the Gopis of Brindavan. Most of the Puranas describe the Raas. The dance is observed to be a dance in the circle with all women dancing around one man; Lord Krishna. The Gopis sang the praise of the Lord; and the Lord sang the praises of the Moon. The
followed every move of the Lord. The dance is also described to be a dance wherein the Lord multiplied himself to be between every alternate woman. These couples also danced in a circle. The dance is thus not just a simple circle but is formed in such a way that each couple is by itself but still is a part of the circle formation. There must have been concentric circles to form these pairs. Generally a spike was driven into the ground around which the Raas was performed, thus elevating the dance to the status of a fertility dance. There was the interlocking of the hands and clapping of hands as the prominent feature of the Raas. It can inferred that the Raas dances of the Manipuris as seen even to this day and the Raas dance at Brindavan as seen in the contemporary times are direct examples of the dance described in the puranas as the Raas dance.

The prevalence of the art of dancing can be had from the literary works that were written during the respective periods in history. The shastras or the texts give us a very good picture of the status of the dancers, the respect they enjoyed in the society, the royal patronage that was accorded to them, the rules that they were subjected to, by the royalty, considering the art forms as a thorough professional activity can be understood by a study of the same. In Kautilya’s Arthashastra, a treatise, on the political rules and regulations, the social status of the dancers and actors and the facilities that they were provided with, for their sound training in the field by the state, have been detailed. Kautilya speaks of the maintenances of these artists by the state. The strict rules that governed the professional dancer, the courtesans and the prostitutes have also been dealt with. The professionals were expected to pay a certain fee to the superintendent as an amount of her daily fees and also as part of her future maintenance fees from the income
earned. The visiting professionals were supposed to pay a fee of five panas to obtain a license fee for his / her performance. The arts were thus viewed upon as not mere hobbies but as a profession. It can further be noticed that Kautilya has mentioned the Devadasis in one of his chapters. These are associated with the temples and are adepts in the art of dancing and music since their formal training in the art has also been discussed. A demarcation between these dancers that is the Devadasis, meant for the ritualistic dancing in the temples and the category of dancers or the Ganikas, who perform on the stage, has been made very distinctly. There were two distinct traditions of dance. One of them was that of the devotee or the devadasi dancing to the God and the other was that of the ganika on the stage. The training for both these was rigorous while the differences in approach or the rendering of the ritualistic, religious dance of the Devadasis or the secular, entertaining dance of the Nartakis or the Ganikas is, however, not explained.

Dancing finds a mention in the works of almost all the literary works that followed. But dance has been described as an education, an entertainment, and sometimes a serious vocation too. Its use as a ritualistic activity is seen in the dance of the devadasis who have been the preservers and perhaps the curators of the art form through the centuries that followed. A detailed study of this aspect can be studied under the different classical dance forms which are to be discussed hereunder. Dance has had no religion since it was practiced and propagated by the Jains, the Buddhists and the Hindus alike, in history, the evidence of which can be had from the Jain sculptures and the Buddhist Jatakas besides the Hindu temple sculptures.
Indian Traditional theatre is one of the foremost, and is extremely rich in the elements of traditional culture. It includes the arts of poetry, music, dance, mime, religious and various decorative arts and crafts. These traditional theatrical forms provide a vital link between the periods of the Sanskrit classics, the medieval times, and the present day. It can be noticed that these traditional theatrical presentations follow the rules laid down by the Natya Shastra, in executing the preliminaries or the poorvaranga of a play, and also in the execution of the play besides adhering to the norms that were laid in the Dasharoopakas and other Sanskrit classics. “Most Poorvaranga stages were accompanied by ritual songs (Dhruva), with rhythm and tempo specified in chapter V of the NatyaShastra.”

It can also be seen that these theatrical presentations are a homogeneous fusion of Realism, Stylisation and the element of illusion. They generally adhere to the unity of time and space and the use of dialogue is fairly stylized. Dance and Music form an integral part of the traditional theatre. Since most of these are operatic in form, Music for these presentations decides the pace of the play, besides the rhythm and movement of the play. The drum is predominantly used in the traditional plays and is often used to emphasise the Entry, Exit, the gait of the character and the Rasa that is to be portrayed. Some of these have highly developed musical accompaniment to incorporate impromptu dialogue rendering after the lines have been sung, to entertain and educate the masses about the various incidents happening around them. There is also the use of the chorus which is extensively used in the traditional theatres that are either secular or religious in presentation. Unlike the chorus of the Greeks, these singers are least involved in enacting the play

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but are rather secondary singers who either repeat the narrative text or accompany the actors in singing the dialogue. At times they sing the entry songs, describe the costumes and the qualities of the character entering the performing area. One of the Operatic forms that is perhaps the closest to the rules laid by the Natya Shastra and that which has been kept alive in the traditional style as seen in the Sanskrit Classics is the Yakshagana Bayalata that is presented in the various regions of Karnataka during the Spring season, more often, by the traditionally trained artists. This form incorporates the elements of the purvarangavidhi as is described in the Natya Shastra.

**YAKSHAGANA BAYALATA OF KARNATAKA:**

A mention of the Yakshagana can be found more often in the literary works of the Kannada poets Nagachandra and Ratnakaravarni belonging to the 12th and 16th centuries respectively. It has been described as a form of dance-drama, the Ekkalagana, the present Yakshagana. There are references to Yakshagana artists as Yakkadigaru in the ancient texts. The origin of the art form is however a matter of great controversy, but has a great similarity to the traditional theatrical regional forms such as the Kathakali of Kerala, the Bhagavata Mela of Tamilnadu, and the Veedhinatakam of Andhra Pradesh. The Yakshagana is an Operatic form of traditional theatre with a hoary tradition of at least a thousand years. It flourished chiefly in the coastal regions of Karnataka and is seen to have a great influence in the rites and rituals of many ancient temples of this region besides being a part of the choral hymns of many old fashioned weddings. **The art form draws all its inspiration entirely from the movements of the ritualistic dances offered in the worship of the Snake- God, Naga, propitiated from, perhaps, the**
prehistoric times, by the earliest cultures that inhabited the area known as the Nagamandala. The art form is an ad-hoc mixture of dance and music, with a theme incorporated in it. The theme invariably eulogises the triumph of the good over evil and is generally chosen from the episodes of either the Mahabharata or the Ramayana or the Puranas. The dancer dances to the lines sung by the Bhagavatha. The Bhagavatha pauses and the actor-dancer indulges himself in impromptu dialogues and converses about everything relating to the episode that is in progress, to the situations faced in the contemporary everyday life. Veera – sentiment is predominant in the chosen presentations generally. The mandalas and the charis as described in the Natya Shastra can be seen being performed by these artists. These have been passed from one generation to the next by means of the oral tradition, which justifies the prevalence of the rules laid by the Natya Shastra in actual practice. There is a very close relationship to the hastas and their usages as described in the Natya Shastra and the enacting of any character using these mudras in any presentation. It can be noticed that the Yakshagana artist masters the art by sheer observation and a rigorous training under a preceptor and definitely not by studying the books or the Shastras. The characters enter the performing area by means of the Vaddolagas wherein the performer reveals the various movements accomplished by his feet and the Mudras, besides the elaborate head gear of the character represented by him thus exposing only half of the body of the character, who is dancing behind a curtain and is with his back turned towards the audience to begin with. The Veera and the Raudra rasas are predominantly portrayed by choosing suitable prasangas or episodes from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata.
Another striking feature of the Yakshagana is the observation of the poorvarangavidhi or the preliminary offerings on stage before the actual play is staged as described in Bharata’s NatyaShastra. The ritual is followed even to this day after which the presentation begins. Here it is identified by the term Sabhalakshana. The very first dance is of the Kodangis or the dance of the under trainees, just as the sunsets, which is followed by an obeissance to Lord Ganesha. The Vidushaka then carries the deity to the area of performance accompanied by the musical ensemble where an arati is conducted ceremoniously. The play begins with an introductory dialogue giving the audience an idea of the prasanga to be enacted for the evening. It is also to be noticed that some of these troupes are maintained or patronised by the temples in South Kanara districts of Karnataka which emphasizes the fact that ritual and the traditional theatre of Yakshagana are very closely related. Devotees offer to organize a drama by the troupe of a particular temple to initiate the deity and to appease her in their times of stress and trial or to beget a child and the like.

THE VEETHI BHAGAVATHAM OF ANDHRA PRADESH: The Veethi Bhagavatha or the Gollakalapa owes its origin to the Kuchipudi Bhagavatha. It is the Bhagavathas or the Brahmin scholars who were well versed in Sanskrit and the Natya Shastra, who were the originators of this form thus evolving it into a complete art form that incorporated themes from the Bhagavatha. The already existing, detached pieces of their repertoire with the disconnected lyrics were replaced by a theme that was continuous and chosen from the Bhagavatha. The art form incorporates a single female artiste as its main performer and one additional artiste to support her in the
presentation. The adept female artistes had to enhance their knowledge of religion and philosophy besides their existing expertise in the art of Music and knowledge of Sanskrit. At times the main dancer is supported by a secondary female artiste too. A Vidushaka is employed to convey the plot by means of dialogues, which predominantly uses the hasya rasa to be more emphatic and explicit in conveying the required ideas. The main dancer represents the milk-maid or the GOLLA and holds a conversation with the vidushaka thus leading to “Gollakalapam”. The introduction of the various special characters on the stage is made by the use of the curtain, behind which dances the Gollabhama to the accompaniment of the beats of the mridangam, the jatis and the vocal carnatic musical refrain. This was a requisitioned presentation for occasions such as temple fairs, weddings and celebrations of any joyous events in the houses of the rich patrons.

The Harikatha Kalakshepam of Tamil Nadu

The Maratha Rulers of Tanjore introduced the art of story telling which would last time duration of about three to four hours and was by and large an impromptu performance. A thorough knowledge of the epics and a virtue of the various languages were the requisites of the presenter. A pair of wooden planks were held and played in a rhythmic fashion by the presenter with a control over the movement and tempo. Rukmini Kalyanam, Sita Kalyanam, and Meenakshi Kalyanam were some of the favourite themes chosen for the presentation. The dialogues were rendered with a modulated voice, the rhythm would be so chosen to give the effect of the chosen episode as in the instance of Rukmini Swayamvara wherein the rhythm, the
words and the music would roll so fast as to match the idea of the speed of the chariot wheels of Lord Krishna who is carrying away Rukmini.

**The Bhagavatha Mela of Melattur:**

This a popular dance-drama that was performed all over Tamil Nadu initially but is now confined to the Melattur village. The Hall-mark of this presentation is the dialogue with very good diction and the symbolic and very subtle abhinaya. The presentation follows the rules of a dramatic production as mentioned in the Sanskrit Classics, for; Death and violent scenes of war find just a narration on stage and are not enacted. The Mela is rich in dramatic elements in its presentation, besides the movements of dance and is accompanied by classical Carnatic music both on the instruments and on the vocal. The performance starts with the entry of the Buffoon or the Konangi who dances for a few minutes and sets the prelude to focus the public towards the presentation that is to follow. This is followed by the rendering of the Todayam Mangalam, an invocation by the musicians. The audience is then introduced to the drama that is to be enacted. **An actor, rather a young boy donning the mask of Lord Ganesha dances to the accompaniment of the musicians** after which all the characters of the said play are introduced and the play is presented. The performance is held annually to mark the celebration of Narasimha-Jayanthi that is held arbitrarily in the month of either May or June. **It can be inferred that ritual and religion form an inseparable element of dance from the times that dance and humanity have existed.**

The arts of dancing and dance drama are thus religious in their nature. Lord Shiva is considered as the Supreme dancer and his dance is called as
Ananda Tandava. This is the utmost achievement of the Lord that unites the heavens and the earth, leading to one's attainment of salvation or moksha. His temples are therefore regarded as the home of dance. These temples of Tamil Nadu, therefore were full of music and dance from dawn to dusk, wherein the Lord was woken up with, feasted with and put to sleep with the art of dancing. To accomplish the above task, young girls were dedicated to the temples early in their childhood, trained in the art by Nattuvanars. The ceremony of dedication was conducted by the priest of temple who tied a tali around the neck and married her to the deity. These dancers were responsible to perform the ritual dancing and the other chores in these temples that were considerably big in size. There are instances in History that narrate the dedication of highly cultured, proficient women belonging to respectable and noble families to the temples for services that lasted a lifetime. “Called Devadasis (or servants of God), they were highly accomplished women who were proficient in music, dance and literature.”

To reconstruct the history of the classical dances as seen today is perhaps a Herculean task, traced by many art historians. Of these Manipuri, Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali and Odissi shall be discussed with special reference to the Ritualistic importance in these dance forms.

**Bharatanatyam:**

The dance is referred to as Kuttu in Tamil literature. Shanthi kuttu and Vinoda Kuttu are perhaps the earliest references to dance in regional Tamil literature. Besides this, are the references that are taken from the dance

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46 Ibid; p.2
sculptures in the temples as early as the fifth century that have been discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

It can be observed that the Bhakti cult provided ample source to the art of dancing throughout the country simultaneously, for, all Indian arts are directed to the Sublime and are aimed primarily for the attainment of salvation through the service of the Lord. Dance was patronized in the temples and in the courts of the kings, eventually leading to the categories of temple dancers and court dancers. “The tradition of both temple dancing and dance in the court milieu continued until the early part of the twentieth century. In the temples, the Devadasi performed dance as part of the seva and in the court milieu professional dancers performed before the patron King to an audience.”

47 However the technique and style of presentation were more or less the same except for the theme of the chosen songs. The former eulogized the Lord, while the King was referred as Supreme, in the case of the latter. “The temple rituals of Rangabhoga and anabhoga

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necessitated the physical presence of the women replacing the imaginative celestials, propitiating the gods as per agamic prescriptions.”

It was termed as ‘Sadir’ meaning ‘to Present’ in Marathi since the patrons of the art were the Maratha Kings of Tanjore. The Pallavas and Cholas were the prominent rulers in the South who had magnificent temples built during their rule.(fourth to twelfth century A.D.). The Chola kings maintained hundreds of dancers in the temples. The arts of dancing and music flowered during their rule which was continued as a tradition by the successive rulers till the end of the nineteenth century. The period between 1910 -1930 brought in a dark period, for this art which was revived from 1926 onwards. The dance continued to be part of the Bhagavatha Mela for many years that followed.

**KATHAK:**

This art form predominantly belonging to the northern regions of India owes its mythical origins to the dance of Lord Krishna who is referred to as Natwar. The Raas dance of the Lord and the Gopis is believed to be the very source of this art. It was initially the art of the story-tellers. That is a story teller was referred to as a “kathaka” or a “katha vachaka.” The origin of the name of the dance form is thus. Its roots are traced to the temples since stories that were narrated had their sources in the epics of the Mahabharatha and the Ramayana, besides the Bhagavatha Purana. “They (story-tellers) roamed from village to village singing the glory of God,

48 Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal, Classical Dance Heritage of Karnataka, Karnataka Bharatagama Pratishthana, 2011; p.23.

dancing in circles and holding their arms above their shoulders, as if in worship.” The characters that occurred in the narration were very beautifully picturised by way of enacting the characters to close reality by the narrator. Since Lord Krishna was the patron deity of these narrators the dance was initially named “Natawari nritya,” which later came to be identified as “Kathak”. The Bhakti cult influenced the dance form to a very great extent. Owing to the innumerable invasions, political instability, frequent wars and varying patronage, the art form underwent a sea of changes, leading to a great number of transformations and adaptations to make it a dance form as we view it today.

The themes even to this day are religious and the ritualistic aspect of the dance is seen in the presentation of the Rangamanch, the gaths and the Vandana which are the exclusive features of the dance form. The dance form is purely Vaishnavaite in its rendering of themes owing to which the Ramacharita Manasa, the Geeta Govinda and the Bhagavatha Purana have been constant inspirations to the presentations of the Ramalila and the Krishnalila respectively. It is interesting to note that the Kathak dancer adapted the presentation of the dance, to suit the patron, but constantly made an obeisance to the Lord, through the abstract designs that were presented. This aspect is present in the dance form even to this day.

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50 Ibid ; p.7
Manipuri:

Manipur is the land of the tribes that are identified as the Nagas and the Kukis. The valley is believed to be the place of the first meeting of Chitrangada and Arjuna in the Mahabharata. The dance form has thus a great history and is perhaps one of the oldest forms existing in the country. The Lai-Haroabha is the most fascinating and enchanting dances of the Manipuris’.

The dance is perhaps the foremost amongst the ritualistic traditions that came into existence before the Bhakti cult came into vogue. It re-enacts the ritual of the beginning of the cosmos, the creation of the world and the ultimate destruction. In its literary sense it is the festival of the Gods. There are at least five different varieties of the Lai Haroabha with variations associated with the venue of their performance. The festival begins with a procession moving towards a pond or a river nearby. The spirit

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of the waters is invoked by the leaders of the village. The symbolic union of matter and energy that Shiva and Shakti is conducted by placing two leaves one above the other such that one of them faces the sky while the other covers the first leaf.

A seed is now placed between the two leaves ritually. The procession returns with a pitcher filled with water and the LEAVES covering it on the top. In a temporary shrine, this consecrated pitcher and the leaves covering it are then placed and installed by the leaders. The leaders of the community are the priests and the priestesses who are in an ecstatic state through the dance of the creation of the world till the enactment of the destruction. The whole village community participates in the ritual and the dancing, the celebration of which lasts at least a fortnight. Interesting, is the

52 Ashish Mohan Khokar Classical Dance, Rupa &Co, New Delhi, 2004, p;
choreographic pattern of the eight that is followed by the dancers, who are identified with the Nagas or the Snake God.

The Thangta the martial art form of Manipur is also associated with the rituals where the solo dancer wields his sword and shield and executes intricate designs through the movements of his feet and his arms. Each one of these is the pattern of an intertwined snake called Pankhanba.

The legend about the dream of King Bhagya Chandra seeking the Raas and its costumes in his dream is a very popular one. He made his daughter to characterize the role of Radha and perform the raas. The traditions of the Krishna cult grew stronger from this period onwards. Sankeertan and the revival of the annual festivals celebrated with dancing and music marked the lives of the Manipuri community from the late 19th century onwards. On the full moon of the Phalguna the festivities were and are celebrated to mark the Doljatra, the harvesting season, the season of the Spring, the season of Birth, the making of new huts, the Birth of Lord Krishna Chaitanya, the great devotee of the Lord and the period that celebrates the dance of Lord Krishna and the Gopis. It also coincides with the celebration of the Holi festival all over the country. Other seasons specially the Autumnal full moon, the Sharad Poornima, the Karthik Poornima, which follows the festival of Diwali provide an opportunity for the collective presentation

The life cycle of the Manipuri Hindu individual is marked by a series of ritual performances. This gave ample opportunity to perform the Sankeertan of the varied types. The Sixteen samskaras that mark the life of a Hindu are punctuated by the presentation of a particular type of Sankeertan.
These are thus performed at Birth, at the first feed of solid food--- the anna prashana, when the ears are pierced, at the Upanayana ceremony, during a wedding, at death, after cremation and during the ritualistic death anniversaries. Be it a sorrowful or a joyous occasion, the Manipuri community celebrate these moments through music and dance. These are community dances and they form the very basis of the Manipuri society.

The raas dance of the Manipuris depicting the gopis and Radha.

Besides these, are the various types of Cholams and the various Kartalis. The Cholams are both of the Lasya and Tandava types. Those belonging to the feminine group are those that are danced with the small cymbals, termed as the Manjira Cholam and those that are danced by the men with large cymbals is the Kartala Cholam which is Tandava in nature owing to its virtuositry. There is the dance of the men with the Poong which can be categorized as a dance of the greatest order and the highest as an achievement. The Cholam, Kartali or the sword and spear dances are performed either in the context of a ritual magical performance or as a sequence in the Lai-Haraoba.

53 Ashish Mohan Khokar Classical Dance, Rupa &Co, New Delhi, 2004, p;
Odissi:

The archaeological evidences exemplify the fact that Odissi is perhaps the earliest of the Classical Indian dance styles. Different schools of Buddhism developed in the state between the second century B.C and the ninth century A.D. However Shaivism also took roots from the seventh century A.D onwards. The beginning of the Vaishnavaite cult can be inferred from the time of the new temples that were dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the eleventh century A.D. The Jagannatha temple at Puri was the first temple of Vaishnavaite affiliation. This marked the beginning of a new cultural movement in Orissa. The temple was outstanding in its elevation with sculptural reliefs and a special hall for dance called the Nat Mandir. It is clear from the records of the temple that dancing was definitely an indispensable part of the temple RITUAL.

Further it states that the Devadasis were attached to the temples exactly in the same manner as they were part of the temples at Kashmir, Bengal, Saurashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The Madal Panji is one of the richest sources of information about the existence of the dance traditions in Orissa.
Guru Kelucharan Mahopatra a Gotipua from Orissa.

It states the occurrence of both the temple dancers and the court dancers. Further there is the mention of the devadasis or the Maharis who danced inside the sanctum and those that danced outside the sanctum but within the temple premises. They have been identified as the Bhitar gaoni Maharis and the Bahar gaoni Maharis. In addition to these were the young boys who danced in the garb of women in the temples who were called the Gotipuas. This dance of the Gotipuas continued as long as the early twentieth century.

Although the dance form has a great history and it is one of the earliest existing dance traditions, it is still the youngest since the revival of the same post Indian Independence happened as late as the 1950s.

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54 Ashish Mohan Khokar Classical Dance, Rupa &Co, New Delhi, 2004, p;
Kathakali:

This dance form can be classified as a purely religious form of dance in its presentation and is perhaps the foremost amongst the dance forms in India besides the art of dancing of the Manipuris which is also one the most ancient dance forms of our country with a deep religious significance.

This is an ancient Dance-Drama form of the southern state of Kerala. There is the characterization of the Gods and heroes, demons and spirits leading into a world of magnificence with the elaborate costumes, headgears and the amazing dramatic quality. A living link between the Sanskrit plays and the Kathakali performance techniques is the highly stylized and sophisticated form of theatre, Kudiyattam. It can also be understood that the highly stylized gestures of both the face and the hands are the Kudiyattam traditions themselves that have preceded those of Kathakali. It evolved as a highly stylized Dance-Drama form only in the seventeenth century after having amalgamated certain aspects from the kuttus, tullals, attams, Bhagavati and Kali forms. The excellent body training, the massages jumps and leaps are a contribution of Kalari to the art of Kathakali. the art forms is believed to have originated due to the refusal by the Zamorin of Calicut to send his troupe to Travancore to perform the Krishnattam. Consequently the Raja of Kottakara wrote eight plays in praise of Lord Rama which became the precursor to the evolution of Kathakali. The Ramanattam that was enacted had highly Sanskritised version of Malayalam. The present day presentation of Kathakali incorporates themes from the Mahabharata, the Bhagavatha Purana, Shiva Purana and a great number of stories chosen from the regional versions of Indian mythology.
“The costumes, make-up, and the external appearance of the characters are refined versions of the ritual forms of both Aryan and Dravidian cultures.”\textsuperscript{56} The art was patronized by Swathi Tirunal, Rama Varma, Maharajas of Travancore. Thus it moved from the courtyard of the temples to the courts, eventually to the villages, the fields, open spaces and ultimately to the proscenium stage.

Generally a troupe consists of about twelve actors. The performers are all men and the female characters are also enacted by these men. A typical Kathakali performance begins with the loud sounding of the drums, to establish the appropriate atmosphere for the presentation. This is followed by the todayam, an invocation seeking the blessings of the Gods by either one or two of the actors. This is performed behind a stage curtain held by two stage hands. Similar in its presentation to the Yakshagana, the characters enter behind the curtains, Trishila, which is beautifully decorated, revealing

\textsuperscript{55} Ashish Mohan Khokar Classical Dance, Rupa &Co, New Delhi, 2004, p;
\textsuperscript{56} S.Balakrishnan, Kathakali, Wisdom Tree, New Delhi, 2004, p.12
just the head gears and thereby creating a feeling of suspense in the minds of the audience. Here it is termed as the Tirunokku. An invocation is sung by the chorus to invoke the gods and goddesses which in the form of the todayam. this is followed by the purappadu or the pure dance technique of Kathakali. There is the elaborate use of Make-up which is mask like in its appearance and is significant of a particular type of character. The performance lasts a whole night.

**Kuchipudi:**

The dance was formerly the prerogative of men. It derives its name from the village of its origin and young Brahmin boys of the village danced the art form, in the past. The legendary origin of the dance goes to the fact that Siddhendra Yogi, owed to dedicate himself to a life of devotion and dedication to the Lord if were to be saved while crossing the river, from drowning, on his way to meet his bride.

To fulfill his vow he wrote the BhamaKalapam which would be a celebration of devotion to the Lord through dance and Music. The present day presentation allows women also, to be a part of the presentations which was initially the prerogative of the men.

During the Kakatiya period, a group of Bhagavatulus took to enacting of a variety of Shiva Leela Natyams, the themes however, were drawn from the stories of Lord Shiva and were danced by both men and women. Ritual dances were performed in the Shiva temples by the men, while the women
performed as Kelika in the Kalyan Mantapas of the temples as an entertainment for the Gods.\textsuperscript{57}

Dating to the times as early as the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century B.C., a mention of about 300 families of the Devaganikas, can be found. It can be further noticed that the Devaganikas served as significant propagators of the dance form at its best, besides performing the various rituals in the temples and performing the aarati to the Lord in the temples. These ganikas were trained systematically in the art and in the Shastras, particularly the Natya Shastra by Brahmin gurus, who taught them in Sanskrit and perfected them. They sang in praise of the Lord and danced around the Lord in the Sanctum Sanctorum. The prevalent religion of the rulers was Shaivism. Hence the dancers danced the popular episodes of Shiva Leela and the Shiva Tandava.

In the years that followed, Vaishnavism became popular and these Devaganikas were employed to perform for the Vishnu temples and hence

\textsuperscript{57} Raja & Radha Reddy Kuchipudi, Wisdom Tree, New Delhi, 2004, p.20
were initiated into Vaishnavism. Dance became more graceful. The ganikas who danced exclusively in the Sanctum Sanctorum now danced outside the cella, during the religious ceremonies and during processions of these deities. The kings further employed the Devaganikas to dance for private occasions, thus deteriorating the standards of the themes of their performance to mere entertainment in place of the highly devotional ones of the earlier times. There was therefore a transformation of the dancers from temple dancers to court dancers.\(^{58}\)

The boys who performed the dance were also educated in Telugu Sanskrit and the texts of dramaturgy and dancing. It was night long performance that was staged in the temples, meant to be Dance- Dramas rather than solo performances. The Krishna leela tarangini of Narayana Teertha, the Balagopala tarangini are amongst the most commonly performed compositions in Kuchipudi presentations.

**Mohiniyattam:**

This is defined as the dance of Mohini, the Mythological Enchantress. In Indian mythology Mohini is regarded as the epitome of femininity, female charm and beauty and as the personification of the Shringara rasa, or the erotic sentiment. Most of the episodes in the Puranas relate to Lord Vishnu, the Preserver’s incarnation as Mohini to save the Gods from the impending dangers by the rakshasas. That is Lord Vishnu transformed himself into Mohini whenever righteousness had to be restored and evil had to be warded

\(^{58}\) Ibid; p.22
off. The Lasya aspect of dance is the predominant feature of this dance. Lord Shiva represents the Tandava or the Vigourous dance and his consort, Parvathi, represents the graceful feminine aspect of dancing, Lasya. Rightfully she is referred to as Nateswari, the queen of dancers or the wife of Nateswara or Lord Shiva. The Devi is also referred to as Lasya Priya, or the one who loves feminine grace. Therefore, the art of the graceful dance of Mohiniattam is thought of as the dance of the Devastris or the celestial women. The devadasis, were referred to as tevadachi in Kerala, which also

59 Bharathi Shivaji, Vijayalakshmi, Mohiniyattam, Wisdom Tree, New Delhi, 2004, p.14
meant servants of God. In the initial years of this traditional practise, the dance was performed by the women of royal and noble families since women with the highest social and cultural status were fit to make offerings to the Supreme Lord. It is therefore believed that the King of the Chera dynasty, Kulashekara Alwar, offered his daughter as a devadasi to the Lord of the Temple at Srirangam. Since their dance was strictly confined to the temple precincts, and their dance was purely devotional, they came to be known as a class called, Tevadiyar. Inscriptions stand testimony to this fact. By the end of the 20th century a decline in the system lead to the degeneration of the tradition which was revived during the post Independence period as seen in the various regions of the country.

60 Ibid; p.25