



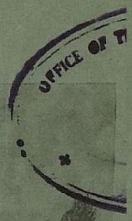
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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

*Issued under the authority of the Director of Public Instruction  
Madras*

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# GUIDE BOOK ON DANCING



NATARAJA  
*The Divine Dancer*

TESY: SUPDT., GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, MADRAS)

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# GUIDE BOOK ON DANCING

PREPARED BY

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## FOREWORD

The attempts that have been made and are being made by various Associations, Sabhas and Educational Institutions for the revival of indigenous dancing systems in our country are a good augury for the revival of the ancient culture of our country.

The various schools of dancing like Bharata Natya, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, etc., now find talented exponents, and popular enthusiasm is drawn towards them. There was a time when the Society, or rather the Hindu Society, looked upon dancing as something vulgar if not indecent. Happily those days are now gone and even orthodox families now deem it a matter of pride to have a child who learns dancing and gives a performance or two.

Steps should be taken to develop popular interest and enthusiasm for dancing. All lovers of culture should evince greater interest in the spread of this art by all possible ways. The enthusiasm for dancing should spread into villages where community dancing for young and old should be organised. This would help to make rural life bright. Villagers would be drawn together and a spirit of co-operation and mutual help will develop. While the highly classical types of dancing are a field for professionals or specialists, folk-dances could be revived and taught to people of all classes and both sexes. For this purpose, a synthesis can be brought about from various schools of dancing and a dozen or more special modes of dancing with suitable music can be evolved and taught to pupils in schools and to adults in social education centres.

The so-called Bhajana dances in which adults also participate serve some purpose in bringing together the villagers, but they lack movement and rhythm. In Bhajanas, the individual's thought is concentrated in singing in the praise of God, while observing the movement of other participants is neglected. Such dancing that would make each participant mind the step and movement of the other and make suitable movements to keep the harmony and rhythm of the dance will help to develop a spirit of mutual helpfulness among the participants. To this end, efforts are being made. Dancing is introduced in the scheme of bifurcated course of subjects in secondary schools and a time may even come when there will be demand to make it a subject of compulsory study.

Mr. N. Lakshmanan's 'Guide Book on Dancing' gives an outline of the various schools of dancing and will be useful to the students and the teacher alike. The Appendices to this Guide Book deserve special mention as being very useful to the teaching profession.

Madras, }  
23rd Dec. 1949. }

K. MADHAVA MENON,  
*Minister for Education.*

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## Chapter One

### The Dance In Free India

There is now a great revival of interest in the art of dancing. The immediate effect is that many parents in India are eager that their children should learn dancing as early as possible. Those who conduct Bharata Natya or Kathakali Schools in South India find it difficult to apply any hard and fast rule about the age of admission; for much depends on the rhythmic aptitude of the pupils and their mental age. Ancient and modern analogies give some guidance. (a) The royal ascetic author of the Tamil classic, *Silappadikaram*, says that Madhavi was taught dancing from her fifth to the twelfth year. That was and is the custom of Tamil Nad, with this fundamental difference that while Madhavi had her debut or "arangetral" in public, the grown-up girls in Free India need not become "stars" of professional or spectacular dancing. (b) Goethe, the German Poet, tells us that from his early youth his father gave him dancing lessons. (c) Anna Pavlova, with a weak constitution, joined the Russian Ballet School in her tenth year, and had seven years' training. While many parents are eager that their children should learn to dance, many others are not yet convinced of the need to teach dancing to their sons and daughters. Those who hold the latter opinion may rest content with the knowledge that Dancing is an *optional* subject in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Forms. The parents are the proper persons to decide whether their grown-up boys and girls should be trained to dance, under the auspices of recognised High Schools. Anyway it is better to hasten slowly. There is no need to force the pace of progress. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru says, "You cannot impose culture on others."

#### Social Purity

The hesitation, in certain quarters, to teach dancing to grown-up boys and girls is due to the lingering memories

of the immediate past. Till recently, association with dance and dancers was considered to be the sign of an "artistic" temperament. The so-called lover of art behaved as if he were a law unto himself, and he set at naught the basic principles of a well-ordered family life. The hereditary dancing girls, on their part, failed to maintain the sacred traditions of art. Sixty years ago, the Social Reformers under the leadership of Mahadeva Govinda Ranade (1842-1901), had noticed the anti-social tendencies of professional or spectacular dancing and started the Social Purity Movement which is popularly known as the anti-nautech campaign. This movement, which began in Madras, has spread to the rest of Peninsular India. The stock argument against the Reformers was that they tried to boycott a beautiful form of art. They were even called 'kill-joys'. But this general impression is not based on facts.

The weekly journal known as the "Indian Social Reformer" has been conducted from the year 1890. It was started with the special object of promoting the cause of social purity. A typical extract from the writings of its Editor, Mr. K. Natarajan (1868-1948), puts the matter in a nut-shell. In welcoming the pioneer attempts to restore the arts of music and dancing to their high status, he writes: "Princesses and ladies of noble families sang and danced before the shrines of ancient India, and considered it a religious duty. They were the true Deva-dasis (Maids of the Gods), a name which has now come to be applied to a very different class of women. The time is not distant when these great arts will once more flourish as valued accomplishments of women of education and refinement in every home in the land".<sup>1</sup> The conditions are now favourable to study and foster Indian dancing from a purely cultural point of view. The Indian Social Reformers, especially the women legislators, will never tolerate any tendency to "debase the moral currency".

<sup>1</sup> *The Indian Social Reformer*, Bandra, Bombay, 14-4-1928. See my source book, *India The Fountain of Peace*, 1937, pp. 77-87.

The advent of Mahatma Gandhi (1869—1948) gave a further stimulus to the cause of Social Purity. He was always upholding the honour of womanhood. Bapu, the Father of the Nation, says: "We are proud heirs to all that was noblest and best in the by-gone age. We must not dishonour our heritage by multiplying past errors. In a self-respecting India, is not every woman's virtue as much every man's concern as his own sister's? Swaraj means ability to regard every inhabitant of India as our own brother or sister". Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore (1861—1941) shares Mahatmaji's firm conviction by saying: "The strength of a race is limited. If we nourish the ignoble, we are bound to starve the noble. Toleration of the low is fraud to the high; it cannot be the result of liberalism. It is moral stupor, and such stupor can never be the essential Truth of India". Supremacy of the moral law is safeguarded by the Constitution of Free India. And so, dancing should be studied and practised with this back-ground knowledge.

### Signs of The Times

The stagnation in Indian dancing was obviously due to the narrow field in which the art has been practised by the professionals. The cure for stagnation is the widest possible popular knowledge and practice of its basic forms. Dancing, as Rabindranath Tagore saw it in many a foreign country, is a companion of true manhood. He expected that in India, too, this dance would remove the feebleness from which the country is suffering. He therefore encouraged men to dance, and to teach the dance to young men in India. His message is addressed to the male dance-teachers of New Education: "Let your dancing wake up the spirit of spring in this cheerless land of ours; let her latent power of true enjoyment manifest itself in language of hope and beauty." Rabindranath thus gave a status to an art which was till recently confined to the professional dancing girls and dance-teachers of a few well-defined castes and tribes. This is what is meant by Creative Education. As pointed out in the Report

of the Hartog Committee, "The true function of education is a creative one — to create new forms of skill, — and, by so doing, to confer a higher social status upon occupations which do not at present possess it." The Sargent Report says that folk-dancing is most suitable for children up to 11 or 12 years of age. It recommends that music and dancing should be provided in schools for grown-up Indian girls.<sup>2</sup> It is now clear that the great educational value of music and dancing has been recognised by the leaders of society as well as by a representative body of educational experts.

Thanks to the pioneer work of Tagore and a few others, there has been in recent years a healthy change in the attitude of the educated men and women of India towards dancing. It has become a popular art, and the demand for qualified teachers, both in private homes and in schools, has enormously increased. The supply falls far short of the demand. The old masters — natyacharis — are slowly passing away, after teaching the classical arts of Bharata Natya and Kathakali to their fortunate pupils.

It is interesting to find that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, ten years ago, in his *Glimpses of World History*, as follows: "When freedom comes you will see a great revival of art and beauty in this country, and I hope this will sweep away the ugliness of our homes and our cities and our lives". A ballet based on his book *The Discovery of India* was staged at New Delhi during the Asian Relations Conference in 1947. The Asian delegates to the Economic Conference held at Ootacamund in 1948 appreciated the dance recitals of Bharata Natya and Kathakali. These events show the signs of the times.

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<sup>2</sup> Report on the Post-war Educational Development in India, Second Edition, 1944, p. 96.

## Chapter Two

### Asian Relations And The Dance

The aim of this chapter is to indicate that in the remote past, the Indian people influenced the dance traditions of such countries as China, Japan, Indonesia and Ceylon. The following facts should be carefully borne in mind: (1) In spite of the limited means of communication, the Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims went across lands and seas in a leisurely manner to establish cultural relationship. (2) Till nearly one thousand years ago, India, China and Japan were known by the collective name of *San-goku*. (3) The people of India and South-East Asia form one-third of the world population.

#### Dancing in China

In modern times, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, his son Rabindranath Tagore, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru have led the way in renewing the ancient cultural fellowship between India and China. The Chinese educated classes raised a large subscription and have themselves built a Hall of Chinese Learning at Santiniketan. A very large library of Chinese books is attached to the Hall.<sup>1</sup> Professor Tan Yun-Shan who is the Director of this Section at Visva-Bharati says: "The common people in China knew Lord Buddha much more than they knew Confucius and Lao-Tzu".<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Abanindranath Tagore's painting of Hsuang Tsang going on pilgrimage to India through the Himalayan pass revives historic memories. It would seem that Hiuen Tsang had witnessed the processions, mystery-plays, and other folk-festivals patronised by Emperor Harshavardhana at Kanauj and Allahabad. Professor B. K. Sarkar's surmise in 1916 was: "The educative influence of these institutions worked upon his imagination, and it is likely that on his

1 C. F. Andrews, *India and The Pacific*, 1937, p. 219.

2 First Number of the Sino-Indian Journal, Santiniketan, July 1947, p. 46.



return to China he may have played some part in the organisation of the popular dances, ballets and other amusements which began to be important features of Chinese life under the Tangs".<sup>3</sup> Professor Mano Mohan Ghose is more specific in the paper which he prepared in 1927 on "Influence of the Hindu Natyas on The Chinese Theatre". Inaugurating the Cheena-Bhavana (Hall of Chinese Culture) on April 14, 1937, Rabindranath Tagore asked: "Can anything be more worthy of being cherished than the beautiful spirit of Chinese culture, that has made them love material things without the strain of greed, that has made them love the things of this earth, clothe them with tender grace without turning them materialistic? They have instinctively grasped the secret of the rhythm of things, — not the secret power that is in Science, but the secret of expression. This is a great gift, for God alone knows this secret. I envy them this gift and wish our people could share it with them".

The concept of Rhythmic Vitality ("Life-Movement") is common to Hindu and Chinese Art. (Dr. Coomaraswamy's Essay on the Dance of Siva throws light on this subject). This forms part of the famous six canons of Hsieh Ho (479—502 A. D.), the painter. Dr. Abanindranath Tagore first drew attention to the "*Shadanga* or the Six Limbs" of Painting, and their similarity with the Chinese Principles.<sup>4</sup> Prof. O. C. Gangoly translates the Indian concepts as follows: (1) Differentiation of types (*rupabedah*) (2) Canons of proportion or traditional figuration (*pramanani*) (3) Embodiment of sentiment (*bhava*) (4) Embodiment of charm (*lavanya*) (5) Correspondence of Formal and Pictorial elements (*Sadrsyam*) (6) Preparation and distribution of pigments (*Varnika-bhanga*).

3 Prof. B. K. Sarkar, *Chinese Religion Through Hindu Eyes*, Shanghai, 1916, pp. 250-251. The Tang dynasty, 618-906 A. D. (Bodhi-dharma, the Tamil pilgrim to China, was the son of a king of Kancheepuram).

4 Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, *The Modern Review*, Calcutta, May 1914 and October 1915.

“It is quite possible that this formulation of the six “Limbs” or Principles of Indian Painting, though quoted in a late text, goes back to earlier times — as applications of these “Principles” are illustrated in many masterpieces of the 5th and 6th centuries as in the frescoes of the Ajanta caves”.<sup>5</sup>

### *Painting and Dancing*

It is interesting to note in this connection the traditional unity of the arts in India. The basic principles underlying the visual arts of painting, sculpture and dancing are one and the same. Dr. V. Raghavan has collected and examined all the available Sanskrit texts on Natya (dance) and Chitra (painting). He describes how painting formed part of ancient Indian culture. He shows clearly the intimate relation of painting with the art of dance in his article on Sanskrit Texts on Painting.<sup>6</sup>

### **Dancing in Japan**

India's cultural influence was first felt in China and then in Japan. So Dr. Havelock Ellis thinks that ritual dancing which has played a highly important part in Japan, was introduced into religion from China in the earliest time, and was not adapted to secular purposes until the sixteenth century. According to Professor B. K. Sarkar, the Noh-plays which became popular in Japan in the 14th century may have to be traced ultimately to Hindusthan. Professor J. H. Cousins who saw the Noh-dance in Japan is quite certain that from Buddhist India went the materials that became the Noh-dance. It is a feudal form of opera in masks. Noh means achievement. Professor Arthur Waley's book on the subject is a standard work of reference. Lafcadio Hearn in *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* depicts the Dance of Souls. This is performed in a Buddhist temple by a group of Japanese peasant girls between the ages of ten and twelve. The slow,

5 Prof. O. C. Gangoly, *Chinese and Indian Art*, The Sino-Indian Journal, July 1947, p. 54.

6 Dr. V. Raghavan, *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, 1933, p. 902.

weird "processional movement changes into a great round, circling about the moon-lit court and around the voiceless crowd of spectators; and verily this is enchantment".

Just as the Chinese people have the rhythmic aptitude, the Japanese are famous for their aesthetic sense. Both these faculties were derived from Mother India. Rabindranath Tagore rejoiced to notice the gratitude of these people. He said: "In my travels in Japan, whenever I marvelled at the deep patience, self-control, and aesthetic sense of the people even in their daily life, they have again and again told me that the inspiration of these virtues came mostly from India through the medium of Buddhism". But India herself had lagged behind. "China and Japan have been more fortunate than India and they have preserved still a great deal of their sense of beauty and artistry".<sup>7</sup>

### Dancing in Indonesia

The influence of the Hindu and the Buddhist colonists in Java and Bali was waning after the Muslim conquest. Strange to say, the Muslims borrowed their dance themes from the scenes in their own curious versions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Rabindranath Tagore, during his extensive travels in Java and Bali, found that men and women alike gave dance recitals as an expression of creative joy. We read: "Just as their cocoanut leaves wave to the constant sea-breezes, so do the limbs of their men and women sway to the frequent call of the dance. Every race has its special means of self-expression. When the heart of Bengal was first stirred, its emotion found voice in its Kirtan songs; a voice that, even in this age, is not altogether silenced. Here in Java, when exuberance of life seeks utterance, it sets them a dance. The woman dances, the man dances; in their plays and musical performances, from beginning to end, their movements, battle-scenes, love-scenes,

<sup>7</sup> Pandit J. Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, 1939, p. 114.

even their clowning, everything is danced. One who knows their peculiar dance-language can follow the story without the help of words". This is like the mime of Kathakali. Thus, "the gestures are Hindu, the body Malayan". The dress and ornaments of the women of Java are "very like those of Ajanta pictures".<sup>8</sup>

### Dancing in Ceylon etc.

According to the writer in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, "From Java the drama seems to have spread to Burma, Siam and Cambodia. In all these countries the Rama cycle forms the favourite theme, although Buddhist plays are frequent in Burma". The Kandyan dance is also Buddhist in character. The educators of Ceylon are introducing it in their schools. The Kandyan dancers are typical farmers. Their dress is white, and the ornaments few. The rhythmic effect of this masculine dance is enhanced by playing on the big solitary Mridangam or Mardhalam.

### Status of the Actor

The writers in the Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (on Drama) have made a synthetic study of the varying fortunes in the status of the actor or dancer in India, China and Japan. It is seen how at one period the professionals enjoyed the confidence of the public, and how at other times they lost their status by their low moral life. The ethical aspect of dancing is dealt with in the two subsequent chapters.

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8 Rabindranath Tagore, *Letters from Java*, Visva-Bharati Quarterly, January 1928.

## Chapter Three

### A World View Of The Dance

It is now easy to gain a world view of the dance. Even a casual and desultory acquaintance with the evolution of dancing in foreign countries will serve as a corrective to local pride and prejudice. The average town-dweller thinks of the dance in terms of professional life. It is, in his mind, invariably associated with sex-appeal. But in many countries folk-music and folk-dancing have an irresistible appeal to the vast majority of unsophisticated people.

#### Dancing for Ever

India and Egypt are the two countries which have an unbroken dance tradition for the past five thousand years. As dancing is as old as mankind, it is rather difficult to say in which country it arose first. Dr. Havelock Ellis is inclined to agree with another historian of the dance who terms Egypt "the mother-country of all civilised dancing". There is a close parallel between ancient Egypt and ancient India. What he says sounds like an echo from India. We are told that sacred mysteries were danced in the temples, and queens and princesses took part in the orchestras that accompanied them. This is what is known as Ritual Dancing. "It is interesting to observe that Egypt still retains, almost unchanged through fifty centuries, its traditions, technique, and skill in dancing".<sup>1</sup> Just as Egypt influenced the neighbouring countries, India (as seen in the previous chapter) influenced the South-East Asian countries. Solo dancing, in its pure form, is said to be characteristic of Egypt. Group-dancing became popular in Italy.

Mr. Arnold Haskell, the well-known author of *Balletomania*, has given the regional view in a few simple sentences. "Dancing belongs to the village, the temple, the church, and,

1 Dr. Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, 1933, p. 50.



most recently, the stage. Dancing may be entirely spontaneous — David dancing before the Ark; guided by a simple pattern — the Morris dance; or highly complex and only possible to the specialist — ballet. Such dancing existed in the heyday of Greek culture, was known to the Roman Emperors and practised by them, journeyed from Italy to France". From 1661 to the present day, French Ballet has made considerable progress. "The dance made rapid progress, which students can follow in close detail, thanks to the notation of Feuillet, Thoinot Arbeau, and Rameau". Dance notation is practically unknown in India. An introduction of this system, with suitable modifications, is likely to popularise dancing in India, along with the wonders of Television.

"Dancing is the most positive and striking expression of the national characteristics of a people. Change their dances and you may change their mentality". The following statement is stranger than fiction: In Russia the women were kept apart from the men. So Peter the Great felt that "Eastern seclusion must give way to Westernisation". He, like Kemal Ataturk in Turkey, imposed "upon a backward people the social dance of the West".<sup>2</sup> It means that both sexes should dance, as in the Waltz. This is not suitable to India.<sup>3</sup>

The Guide Book on Swedish folk dances gives an idea of the modern trends. We read: "The remarkable thing about dances in the northern countries in general, and Sweden most of all, is that although new continental or American dances are introduced each season, the most olden dance forms still go on existing side by side with them. The Charleston, the Rumbha and the Lambeth Walk have all had a short heyday during recent years, but are now considered hopelessly out of date, whereas the many hundred years old long dance, or ring dance, is still trodden with the same

2 Mr. A. Haskell, *Ballet* 1938, p. 34.

3 cf. Pandit J. Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, 1939, p. 709.

gusto". Dance festivals and international gatherings are common in many countries of Europe. The Sokol Movement of Czechoslovakia is widely known. It is now in the melting pot.

### Dancing and Social Evolution

Historians prove that the decay of professional or spectacular dancing is not peculiar to any one country. This type is "an interesting instance of the degeneration of something which was at one time a helpful influence to the race into a pure luxury".<sup>4</sup> But the change took place probably after an interval of centuries.

The evolution of dancing is described by Dr. Havelock Ellis thus: "From the vital function of dancing in love, and its sacred function in religion to dancing as an art, a profession, an amusement, may seem a sudden leap. In reality the transition is gradual and it began to be made at a very early period in diverse parts of the globe". The author is foremost in taking an optimistic view of the re-birth of dancing all over the world: "Dancing as an art, we may be sure, cannot die out but will always be undergoing a re-birth. Not merely as an art but also as a social custom it perpetually emerges afresh from the soul of the people. Dancing has for ever been in existence as a spontaneous custom, a social discipline. Thus it is, finally, that dancing meets us, not only as love, as religion, as art, but also as morals".

### Culture Heroes

Those who fail to visualise the dance as a dynamic element in life are apt to take an alarmist or tragic view of the tendency to "debase the moral currency". A statesman cannot abolish the currency system, simply because few criminals venture to issue counterfeit coins and counterfeit currency notes. Dr. Havelock Ellis knew better. He did not lose faith in human nature even when he realised that it

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Louis Robinson, "Natural History of Dancing", *The Nineteenth Century and After*, London, February, 1914.

became scarcely respectable even to admire dancing. About half a century ago, "those of us who still appreciated dancing as an art — and how few they were! — had to seek for it painfully and sometimes in strange surroundings". Many other dance critics have shared this experience, even at the risk of being misunderstood and misrepresented. Thus in many countries, great men have rescued the dance from unworthy hands.

Such a seemingly trivial incident as that of Goethe (1749–1832) learning to dance as a youth has led to great results. As Mr. Curt Sachs puts it, a dozen years of Goethe's life mirror the fate of the dance between 1650 and 1800. Herder, Goethe's contemporary, was heard to say: "How mighty is a gesture! Convincing, exciting, lasting".<sup>5</sup> It was also Herder who "liberated Goethe's lyrical genius by disclosing the natural beauty of the Alastian folk-songs".<sup>6</sup> This fellowship reminds one of Pandit Kshiti Mohan Sen stimulating the interest of Poet Rabindranath Tagore in the revival of *Baul* songs. Rabindranath himself has acknowledged it in *The Religion of Man*.

Tolstoy (1828–1910) was all admiration for the composers of folk-songs who not only received no remuneration for their work, but did not even attach their names to them.<sup>7</sup> Tolstoy's hostile attitude towards professional or spectacular dancing is the outcome of a static view of a growing, dynamic art. All the same he represents a school of thought which is to be found in many lands.

Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) was an ascetic among the ascetics. Such was his balanced view of life that his asceticism did not prevent him from appreciating the art of the

5 Mr. Curt Sachs, *World History of the Dance*, 1938, p. 441. A symposium of essays is edited by Dr. William Rose in commemoration of the bi-centenary of Goethe's birth.

6 Sir J. A. Thomson, *The Great Biologists*, 1932, p. 60.

7 Tolstoy — Book of Extracts by Mr. G. H. Perris, 1904, pp. 207–209.

leading professionals. During his travels in Europe, he met Sarah Bernhardt, the greatest actress of the West. She had a great love for India. While staying in Paris, the Swami renewed his acquaintance with Madame Calve, the greatest opera singer of the West. His Eastern and Western disciples have also accurately described his witnessing the ritual dance of a temple woman at Khetri in Rajputana.

After a dozen tours, Rabindranath Tagore observed that in all countries, dancing is considered an art and enjoys respect as a medium of expression. This is also the experience of Madame Anna Pavlova (1885-1931). She "danced round the world" and studied the different types of dancing. She said: "Ever since the dawn of time, human beings have danced as an outlet for their emotions when they have been too great for expression in words. So the poetry of motion is an international language — only the dialects vary in their different countries". The regional languages of gesture in India are mentioned in chapters 4 and 5.

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## Chapter Four

### Dancing And Puritanism In India

A world-view of the dance, in the previous chapter, can now help us to realise that the Indian problem has its counterpart in many other countries. The dancers may be new, but the art is old. Whenever the Indian dancers and musicians deviated from the sacred traditions of art, the leaders of society warned the public against the pitfalls of professionalism. Again and again, the voluptuary made an art of sin, and the puritan made a sin of art. Throughout the ages, the general public avoided both the extremes, and used the middle path in terms of social welfare. The ethical aspect of music and dancing is all important. It is therefore useful to see the light and shade of the social history

of India, to understand why music and dancing suffered an eclipse from time to time, and to know how far the social discipline has been helpful in preserving these two fine arts from very early times. This chapter contains only a brief survey; it is suggestive and not exhaustive.

### Dancing through the Ages

The figure of a dancing girl discovered from the excavations at Mohenjo Daro (in Sind) gives us an insight into the rhythmic aptitude of the people of the Indus Valley Culture about five thousand years ago. Similarly the torso from Harappa (on the River Ravi) is a remarkable instance of artistic continuity extending from pre-historic times. This rare torso is said to represent "a dancer, not very different in form from those of the much later Nataraja type".<sup>1</sup> If this tentative conclusion were to be confirmed by later investigators, it would really delight the hearts of the present-day boys and girls who are very fond of performing the cosmic dance of Siva Nataraja.

The Vedic dancer is equally interesting. Ushas, the Goddess of Dawn, is compared by a Vedic hymn to the advent of a graceful dancing girl. The scholars who have examined the texts of the Mantras draw attention to the war-dances as well as ritual dancing which were popular in Vedic India. That is to say, about 3000 years ago, both the sexes practised dancing in the open air. Dr. Winternitz has pointed out that the people of the Rig Veda were neither effeminate nor ascetic.

*The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold gives a vivid pen-picture of the scenes during the birth-day celebration of Buddha in 563 B. C.

*The nautch-girls in their spangled skirts, and bells  
That chime light laughter round their restless feet*

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, 1946, p. 169.



were there. Later on they tried in vain to disturb, by their dances, the meditations of the Lord of Compassion. One of the precepts of Buddha was to abstain from dancing, singing, theatres and amusements. This puritanical attitude was evidently due to the anti-social tendencies of the dancers in Buddhist India. This precept was revised by Buddha's followers. For example, the earliest classical dramas were written by the Buddhist monk, Aswaghosha, sometime during the first or second century A. D. With reference to the drama of the fourth century, a trained observer from the West says that "Indian producers anticipated the West by some thirteen hundred years in permitting women to play female parts".<sup>2</sup> The result is seen from the warnings given in the two famous dance classics of India.

1. Bharata's *Natya Sastra* is a standard Sanskrit treatise on dance drama. It was probably edited in the fourth century B. C. It is said that he found in his time the dance drama "a ready-made thing", and that all he had to do was to codify the *Lakshya* he found into a *Lakshana*. According to the legendary version, he received a revelation of the dramatic art from Brahma who entered into meditation and brought forth music, dance and drama for the joy of mankind. He is also said to have learnt *Tandava* or the vigorous male dance from Tanduv, and *Lasya* or graceful dance from Parvati, Siva's consort. This myth is intended to impress on the mind of posterity the divine origin of dancing, and to remind the public that dancing is intended not only for women, but also for men. The *Tandava* type is danced to this day by men who have an ecstatic devotion to Siva Nataraja. As a rule, the trouble starts only when music and dancing become the monopoly of a professional caste or tribe. The evil effect is intensified when dancing is confined to the hereditary dancing girls. This is the lesson to be derived from the social history of India.

2 Dr. C. E. M. Joad, *The Story of Indian Civilisation*, 1936, p. 95.

The joint authors of *Tandava Lakshanam*<sup>3</sup> say that even in Bharata's time this great art of dancing degenerated to the level of vulgar rustic performances, losing all the dance's original sanctity and dignity. Doctor B. V. Narayanaswami Naidu and his two colleagues go on to state :

"The progeny of Bharata who were responsible for the degradation of such a noble form of expression were cursed by the Rishis of the day. The incidence of the curse is the sole theme of the 37th chapter of the *Natya Sastra*. It is regrettable that the dance should have fallen into disrepute even in Bharata's days. Probably the personal conduct of the dancers was responsible for the contempt with which they were held by respectable society". The people of Tamil Nad had the same experience.

2. *Silappadikaram* is a famous Tamil classic written by Ilango, nearly 1600 years ago. This has been translated into English and French. It is a mine of information. Two chapters describe the various indigenous and other types of dancing. "The *Silappadikaram* furnishes the legendary origin of dancing. Once in the Sabha of Indra, his son Jayanta misbehaved with the heavenly actress Urvashi, in a manner that enraged the sage Agastya who cursed Jayanta to be born a bamboo stick in the Vindhya hills, and Urvashi a courtesan on the earth. Hence the name Jayanta is celebrated in the ceremony and worship of talaikkol (தலைக் கோல்). It was a bamboo stick symbolical of Jayanta".<sup>4</sup>

*Silappadikaram* means the lay of the anklet. Kovalan's courtesan Madhavi was a carefully trained dancer, as we saw in the first chapter. Her daughter Manimekalai became a nun. She had nothing to do with dancing, but took to feeding the poor during a severe famine. These episodes have their own

3 Or *The Fundamentals of Hindu Dancing*, 1936, p. 6.

4 Prof. R. Dikshitar's translation. See his *Introduction to Dr. R. K. Shanmukham Chetty's Tamil Commentary*, 1946. See page 27.

social significance to a living, articulate society. Its creative and constructive impulse is as vital as the power of self-criticism and self-purification.

Then we take a long leap in history to reach the Mughal period. The ascetic spirit manifested itself in the hermitage of Haridas on the banks of the Jumna, as it did afterwards on the banks of the Cauvery. Tan Sen was the court musician of Akbar. The Emperor asked Tan Sen, "Your Guru's singing is superb; why can't you sing like him?" The prompt reply was: "I have to sing whenever the Emperor commands, but my Master sings only in obedience to the inner voice". Manucci has recorded an amusing but significant story about Aurangzeb. The court musicians desiring to draw the Emperor's attention to their distressful condition came past his balcony carrying a gaily dressed corpse upon a bier and chanting mournful funeral songs. Upon the Emperor enquiring what the matter was, they told him that music had died from neglect and that they were taking its corpse to the burial ground. He replied at once, "Very well, make the grave deep, so that neither voice nor echo may issue from it".<sup>5</sup> Aurangzeb passed away in the year 1707. But music and dancing did not die with him. The historical fact is that no deserving art tradition can be "buried alive". If buried, even a blade of grass shoots up.

### The Bengal Tradition

The congregational type of dancing is free from the temptations of professionalism. The religious atmosphere has been carefully preserved in many parts of India. For example, the Bengal tradition is worthy of emulation. Jayadeva, the composer of *Gita Govindam* in the twelfth century, danced as Krishna with his wife Padmavati as Radha. Singing and dancing in ecstasy "appeared very early in the Tamil South." The gifted and emotional people of Bengal have continued the Tamil tradition. In Sri Aurobindo's

<sup>5</sup> Rev. H. A. Popley, *The Music of India*, 1921, p. 19.

early journal we read : "One great reason for the success of Chaitanya in Bengal, lay in the fact that his *Sankirtans*, with their singing and ecstatic dancing, afforded means of self-expression to the populace. Nor can it be doubted that the organised services of the Brahmo Samaj are a great basis of their popularity".<sup>6</sup> Doctor J. N. Farquhar says that Krishna Chaitanya, in the sixteenth century, introduced into North India the ecstatic singing and dancing of the South. Keshab Chandra Sen (1838—1884) introduced Chaitanya's dancing and singing into the Brahmo Samaj which consists of English-educated Indians. "Chaitanya Dancing" is a fine painting by Sri Khitin Majumdar, one of the disciples of Dr. Abanindra Nath Tagore. Another noteworthy picture has been reproduced by Dr. Farquhar in his book, *Modern Religious Movements In India*. When it was shown to Brahmananda Keshab, he exclaimed, "Blessed is the man who conceived the idea of this picture." In front of the church stand Sri Ramakrishna and Keshab. Ramakrishna (Swami Vivekananda's Guru) is calling Keshab's attention to the group of figures arranged in front of the mosque and the temple. In the middle of this group, Christ and Chaitanya "are represented dancing together, while a Muslim, a Confucian, a Sikh, a Parsee, an Anglican clergyman and various Hindus stand round them, each carrying some symbol of his faith." This picture is full of meaning to-day when India is passing through a constructive phase of her history. As His Excellency Sri C. Rajagopalachari says, "India is one, and her pride is indivisible."

Rabindranath Tagore continued the Bengal tradition. Gandhiji told Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal that their mutual friend, even in old age, "can dance with the vigour of a young man of seventeen." On Tagore's seventieth birth-day, Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar gave the following pen-picture which was published in the Golden Book of Tagore : "Rabindranath has danced with the *Baul* singers of Bengal,

6 Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, Calcutta, Vol. I. No. 37, 1909—1910.

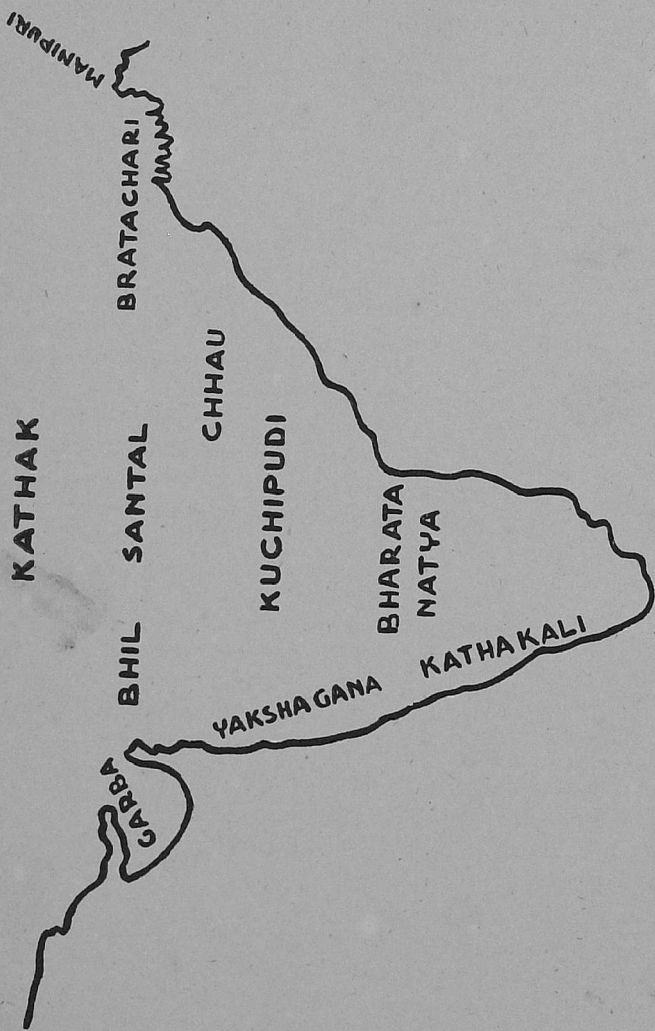
the *Abhang* poets of the Marathas, and the *Carans* of the Rajputs. He has danced with the street-processionists of the *Swadeshi* epoch, with the boys and girls of his own Santiniketan, with the young men and women of the four quarters of the globe. Like Nataraja he has participated in the dance of the universe." Example is better than precept.

### Modern Trends

When a person sings in a wrong tune, the remedy is not to abolish singing, but to teach the correct tune. Babu Ramananda Chatterjee (1865—1943), Editor of the *Modern Review*, described the correct method of the reformer by saying: "When reformers want to reform any custom on grounds of morality, decency, or refinement, something unobjectionable but enlivening ought to be substituted. The obscenities and vulgarities indulged in by some people during the *Holi*<sup>7</sup> have been substituted by reformers in many places by refined and innocent music and other similar recreations in the form of *pavitra-holi*". The same method is applicable to the Dances of India. Professor O. C. Gangoly, a leading dance-critic, has sounded a note of warning: "Of all the Graphic and Visual Arts, Dancing is least capable of secularising its function for individual amusement, without descending into degrading and dangerous levels". Therefore, the duty of the true lover of art is to rescue dancing "from all the pitfalls and vices of Exhibitionism inherent in an appeal or display of the body addressed to a secular audience or private patrons".<sup>8</sup> Thus, when Bharata Natya (as performed by professional dancing girls) reached this degrading and dangerous level, the enlightened public and their representatives in the legislatures set their face against the *nautch* system. According to the Madras Devadasis Prevention of Dedication Act of 1947, *Chinnamelam* or *nautch* party is illegal. The art of dancing thus rescued deserves to be maintained in its state of pristine purity.

7 A festival of the spring season in Upper India.

8 *Prabuddha Bharata*, Calcutta, Nov. 1938, p. 553.



THE DANCE MAP OF INDIA (SEE CHAPTER V)



## Chapter Five

### Regional Languages Of Gesture

India is a perennial fountain of dance ; it is so by virtue of being the fountain of *Santi* — the Peace that passeth all understanding. “To dance is to pray”. The Aborigines of India are to-day a living witness to the truth that the tribe which ceases to dance ceases to live. Those who are acquainted with one or two regions of this vast country are likely to conclude that dancing is either alive or dead. One may as well say that the chess-board is either black or white. It is better to avoid such a hasty generalisation, especially with reference to the tribal people who are scattered among the hills and forests of India. Folk-songs and Folk-dances have an equally long lease of life in rural India, as testified by the regional programmes of the All India Radio Stations. It is gratifying to note that persons with an urban outlook are fond of these items.

#### The Dance Map of India

The dance map of India appended to this Guide Book gives a synthetic view of the various types of dancing. Overlapping is inevitable. It is not at all a complete picture. Those who have accurate local knowledge should fill up the gaps. This chapter is intended to stimulate interest in the study of the subject on an All-India basis. It is to be noted that culture unites while other interests divide the people in an artificial manner. When all is said and done, “Knowledge knows no geography.”

The traditional account given by Sarangadeva (A.D. 1210–1247) gives us an insight into the natural history of dancing in India. He says in his Sanskrit treatise known as *Sangita-Ratnakara* that Parvati taught *Lasya* or the graceful type of dancing to Usha (Bana's daughter) who taught it to the Gopis of Dwaraka from whom the Sourashtra women learnt it and spread it throughout the country. The traditional

method is for the Gopis to put Krishna in the centre of the ring dance! The Vaishnava dance tradition of Radhakrishna is seen from Gujarat in the West to Manipur in the East and also in the South. The dance of Siva Nataraja is popular in the Tamil Land, though the original source of inspiration is the Himalayan region. Anyway, no clear-cut division is possible when we deal with a composite culture, especially after the process of fusion. These tentative observations should be verified. Suffice it to say that music or dancing does not yield its full value, when studied in the abstract or *in vacuo*. The linguistic map is useful for the present survey. There is unity of culture in the midst of diversity.

### Garba

Apart from the folk-dances of Gujarat which one sees during the *holi* festival, Garba is part of the ritual dance among the Vaishnava families of Gujarat. The group dancing by ladies is not meant to be witnessed by the public, due to its non-professional character. For the first time in April 1920, Rabindranath Tagore witnessed the Garba at a public garden party given in his honour at Shahibag, Ahmedabad. Sri K. M. Jhaveri has described it. "In the *Garba*, girls, small and big, sing songs, while moving round and round a circle, with movements of hands which entrance by their rhythm, and movements of the body that magnetise by their mechanical regularity." This is like the Kummi of South India. Gandhiji's favourite hymn, *Vaishnava janatho* and Mirabai's songs are spreading all over India, along with Rabindranath's National Anthem. What a grand synthesis!

### Kathak

It is a far cry from Dwaraka to Quetta. Gandhiji, during his visit to the North-West Frontier, witnessed a healthy type of Kathak dancing with songs in Pushtu. The performance had "an antiseptic quality" about it, as it was arranged by public-spirited young men. As early as 1892, a score of Kashmiri young men of Lucknow formed a club and pledged

themselves to abstain from attending *Nautch* parties. The professional dancing girls have no chance of marriage. That is why Baiji dancing is losing patronage in North India. Now this art is being revived on rational lines. Lucknow is the recognised centre of Kathak dancing, as great teachers of this art gather there. Professor Sambamoorthy says that the Kathak dance of the North wherein the whirling movement figures prominently may be traced to the Urdhava Tandava of Siva Nataraja.<sup>1</sup> Another critic is justified in saying: "A dead conventionalism, emphasized and over-strained by difficult contortions, has repressed the development of the art, especially in the northern, more abstract, method".<sup>2</sup> The Kathak dance is performed with songs in Hindi.

### Bratachari

Manipuri dancing was introduced in Santiniketan by Rabindranath Tagore in 1922. Later on, Mr. Guru Saday Dutt acted as the Magistrate of Birbhum District. He and his wife Mrs. Saroj Nalini Dutt had thus the opportunity of constantly meeting their friend and neighbour Rabindranath at Santiniketan. This is described in Mr. Dutt's biography of his departed wife, *A Woman of India*. Mr. Dutt first studied "the long forgotten but glorious old Raibeshe dance" which used to be performed by the old military caste known as Bagadis. Mr. Dutt incorporated his own Bratas. These Vratas or vows are Knowledge, Labour, Truth, Unity, Joy. He took enormous pains to correlate this dance with social service and village guidance. He composed suitable songs. He trained youngmen and women in his Central Institute at Calcutta. Mrs. Saraladevi Choudhurani who saw the demonstration at a gathering of the All-Bengal Teachers' Association said: "The sight of Bengalee young men and adults in fine vigorous plastic poses of masculine dances gave me genuine pleasure". For a time, the movement was popular

1 Seven Dances of Siva by Mylai Seeni Venkatasami, *The Hindu*, Madras, 2—10—1949. எழுவுகைத் தாண்டவம்.

2 Mr. Otto Rothfeld, *Women of India*. 1928, p. 160.

in the High Schools of Bengal. On retiring from the I. C. S., Mr. Dutt toured in South India with the Bratacharis in the year 1940. The lecture-demonstrations were very impressive. Then the great man passed away. He has taught the younger generation the joy of "disciplined creative service".

### Manipuri

Manipuri dance derives its name from the Manipur State of Assam which has now merged with the Central Government. Leaving aside the professional type of dancing, the amateur style is confined to girls between the ages of 5 and 12. As in Bali and other places, grown-up girls are not permitted to dance in public. It is said that the Pahaimbi Maharaja in the 17th century dreamt of the costume of Radha with a flounced skirt and veil. This costume is still used in the Manipuri dance. The old style of Satra-dancing in Assam deserves to be widely known. The Satra in the Majuli Island is situated 600 miles away from the mouth of the Brahmaputra, and is accessible only to the touring officers. This and the other Satras of Assam are Hindu Religious Endowments. The sanctity of these shrines are preserved with religious care. A portion of the fund is devoted for training deserving boys in the art of dancing. The music teacher and the dance teacher are honoured for training young men for temple service. The Satra-patis are hereditary monks. Dancing girls are conspicuous by their absence. The boys who receive systematic training in ritual dancing take part in the annual festivals under the auspices of the Satras. As one third of the population of Assam consists of the Aborigines, tribal dancing is widely distributed.

### Open-Air Dances

A full description of Aboriginal dancing in various parts of India will cover many pages. Two facts are noteworthy. (1) As a rule, Aboriginal dancing has its own highly developed gesture language. (2) Aboriginal dances, in their pure form, are free from sex appeal.

In 1941, a critic saw at Seraikella in Orissa six different types of dances—*Kurmi*, *Kara*, *Kole*, *Khasi*, *Oraon* and *Santal*. These types cover a large portion of the dance map of Central India. The diligent student is expected to locate them on the map. A dance enthusiast has compared these dances to the French ballets. The war-dance of Seraikella is known as the *chhau*. "All *chhau* dancers are masked, the term "*chhau*" itself meaning a mask. These dances represent selected themes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata".

### Mrs. Sarojini Naidu

Rajkumar Shurendra Narayan Singh Deo was the world famous exponent of Seraikella School of dancing. When he passed away in 1944, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) wrote: "Through the medium of his dance, he created beauty, harmony and magic in every rhythm and movement, and revealed to the Western world what India's genius has given to her children in one corner of this vast land. I hope that Seraikellas will keep alive the memory of the royal artist by fostering the spirit of the Seraikella folk-dance in all its original loveliness and poetic symbolism". From the Vedic times, open-air dances are popular in India.<sup>3</sup>

Under the direction of General Sinde in 1936, folk dances of Marwar, Konkan and Maharashtra origin were performed by the Sepoys of the Baroda Army. The Military Officers have also preserved the torch light dances of the followers of Sivaji.

The Lalita of Maharashtra and the Yatra of Bengal form part of the regional languages of gesture. "The origin of these various provincial theatres of the people is not very clear". Among the street dramas (Veethi-Natakas), the Andhra Kuchipudi,<sup>4</sup> the Bhagavata-mela-nataka of Tamil Land, and the Yaksha Gana of South Canara are well-known. They have been described by Sri Thandava Krishna and Dr. V. Raghavan. Bharata Natya and Kathakali demand separate chapters.

<sup>3</sup> See page 15.      <sup>4</sup> See page 41.

## Chapter Six

### Bharata Natya In Schools

Kalidasa shows his admiration for Bharata Natya by saying: "It holds up a mirror to nature and life in all their phases—peaceful, passionate and dark. It is the highest exponent of the varying emotions and feelings. It is the one and only means of pleasing through the eye and the ear, people of diverse tastes and dispositions".

The art of dance according to Bharata is known as Bharata Natya. All those who have preserved this sacred art deserve honour and respect. The contents of Natya Sastra are explained by Ramakrishna Kavi, the Editor of the Baroda Text. Bharata divides his book broadly into four sections. They are "based on Abhinayas or modes of conveyance of the theatrical pleasure to the audience". This pleasure called Rasa "is pure, and differs from the pleasure we derive from the actual contact with the objects of the world which is always mingled with pain". These modes or abhinayas are four:—

1. Satvika, conveyed by the effort of the mind,
2. Angika, the natural movement of the body when any thought is expressed or conveyed,
3. Vachika, the delivery through (vocal) expression,
4. Aharya, the dress, deportment etc.

The Editor of the Baroda Text goes on to say: "The sage Bharata attaches great importance to the first of these modes and deals with it in chapters 6 and 7. Expression of feeling is conveyed to a stranger only by gesture or through the organs of speech. Hence angika abhinaya comes next and is dealt with in chapters 8th to 13th. Then, delivery or vachika is taken up, which extends over chapters 14 to 20. Then comes aharya, i. e., dress and scenic appliances and mutual conduct or movements on the stage, along with the musical auxiliaries behind the stage to intensify the emotional



effect produced on the Stage. To this four-fold division of the subject are added chapters on the origin and greatness of the theatrics, the forms of the stage and rules for their construction, and the auspicious ceremonial on the foundation and the opening days". Kalaimani K. S. Ramaswami Sastri's Essay on Natya Sastra is illuminating.

A summary of the Sanskrit Text known as Natya Sastra Samiksha was published in 1936 under the orders of the Director of Public Instruction, Madras. Reference has already been made to Tandava Lakshanam which was also published at Madras in 1936. It is a translation into English of the fourth chapter of the Natya Sastra of Bharata, illustrated with the original photographs of 108 sculptured dance poses in the temple of Siva Nataraja at Chidambaram, near Annamalai University. The 108 Karanas or single postures and 32 selected Angaharas (Combinations of two or more of these Karanas) are fully described by Bharata in the fourth chapter. It is interesting to note that the Tamil classic Silappadikaram has also classified 108 varieties of *Chokkam* (சொக்கம்) or pure dance. Dr. R. K. Shanmukham Chetty's Commentary on Silappadikaram is easy to learn.

The combinations of the four Abhinayas are divided into three types : Nritta is dancing pure and simple. It consists of graceful rhythmic handwork and footwork. It is also called *Talalayasraya*. Nrthya is co-ordinated gesture or gesticulation, pure and simple. It is danced without the aid of language or dialogue. This is the typical mime of Kathakali. "It is said to be *Bhavasraya*, as the emphasis is on Bhava or aesthetic emotion. Rasa or aesthetic delight is the chief element in the Natya. Natya is dramatic representation proper, where song, dance, expression, speech and scenery are combined".

#### School Exercises

Till a decade ago, training in Bharata Natya was confined to girls. During the past ten years, boys also are coming forward to receive training in some parts of Tamil Land. The

Nataraja type of dancing is quite suitable for boys. Two such experienced educators as Bishop Pakenham Walsh and Sri Aryanayakam saw them dance in a school during May 1939. The comments were: (1) "The progress made by the young boys in music and dancing within such a short time is commendable. (2) There are great possibilities for drawing out the creative self-expression through such health-giving activities. (3) Such a movement will be of immense significance for the future of India". The sequel shows the correctness of the forecast.

Let us continue to follow the Syllabus. The young pupils of a Bharata Natya School are first taught the Adavu series, like the alphabets and words in ordinary language training. Adavu (அடவு) is a key word which means "manner, fitness, propriety, order, succession". The pupils stand erect, then touch the ground and rise up to salute the Guru in customary style. Foot-work always begins with the right foot and then the left foot. The Jatis or Solkattus begin with tapping the floor with: *Theyya, Thei*. After the Thattu-adavu and Nattu-adavu come the Vil-adavu for placing the legs to the front and sideways. Thattumettu is intended to strike the heels. (There is no such thing here as standing tip-toe). This is a variation of Kuthumettu. Suthu-adavu expresses the graceful gyrations of the hands in all directions, with the rhythm: *Tha Thei-Thei Thaum-Dithai-Thei Thaum*. Mundy-adavu is for the action with knees bent. Theermana-adavu is the finale Ginathome, Thathi Ginathome, Thaka Thathigina Thome. The beauty of this series of action is that the names of the adavus are so arranged as to be self-evident to the pupils themselves. The Adavu finale corresponds to the Kalasam of Kathakali.

Gatis are: 1. Bhanavi or Sun-like gait, 2. Meenavi or Fish-like gait, 3. Gajagati or Elephant-like gait, 4. Tharangini or Horse-like gait, 5. Hamsini or Swan-like gait, 6. Harinee or Deer-like gait, 7. Khanjani or Gait as of a wag-tail, 8. Lavakee or Quail-like gait, 9. Mayuragati or Peacock-like

gait, 10. Tittiri gati or Ostrich-like gait, 11. Kukkutee or Cock-like gait. This thoughtful arrangement promotes observation of Nature, especially animal life.

Pandit K. Vasudeva Sastri's edition of the Text and his translation of Sangita Makaranda Nrityadhyaya is very useful to the students of Bharata Natya even to-day. The serial articles appeared in the Journal of the Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Library beginning with Volume IV, No. 3 of 1945. It is interesting to note that this Natya Manual was written by a Natyacharya (Dance teacher) named Veda Suri for the benefit of Sambhu, the brother of Sivaji, who was being instructed by Veda Suri in this art. This Manual was written about the year 1640 A. D. The following definitions of Sanskrit terms are simple, and easy to learn from a trained teacher.

The rhythmic movements have been classified into (1) 'Chari' or the movements of the legs upto the hip (2) 'Mandalas' or the combination of the 'charis' (3) 'Rechakas' of the feet (Pada-rechaka), hip (Kati-rechaka), hands (Hasta-rechaka), and the neck (Griva-rechaka) (4) movements of the arms and hands such as 'Hastakaranas' or the winding movements, 'Karavartanas' or the revolving movements and 'Chalakas' or graceful poses (5) 'Karanas' or the simultaneous movements of the hands and legs (6) 'Angaharas' or the combinations of Karanas. Such words as karana and chalaka are in everyday use. So the pupils need not fight shy of these words. Mere reading, unaccompanied by actual exercises, leads to confusion. The recent tendency to protrude the hip should be avoided in school exercises. A critic has observed the difference between the 'chari' of Tamil Land and the 'chari' of Kathakali. "The movement which lifted the left foot of the Nataraja and sent it athwart the right leg is an example of 'akasa chari' The nautch finds more frequent employment for the 'bhouma charis', while Kathakali prefers the 'akasa charis' more often".<sup>1</sup>

1 Sri K. V. Ramachandran, Dance Traditions of South India, *Triveni*, January — February, 1935, p. 317.

### School Concert

The usual items of concert in Bharata Natya are: Alarippu, Jathi-swaram, Sabdam, Varnam, Padam and Tillana. All these items should be adapted to suit the needs of recognised High Schools. The general principles of teaching are indicated in Appendix II.

Alarippu is the rhythmic invocation beginning with the jatis or solkattu (சொல்கட்டு) Thaum Thi Tha, Thei Thathei. Some Tamil critics opine that this item can be dispensed with, in a concert, as Alarippu in that context seems to be as superfluous as reciting the rules of grammar when expounding to an audience the art of public speaking. It is also argued that Alarippu is like a temporary structure of poles and planks intended to be removed as soon as the main building is constructed. This new suggestion is due to the fact that teachers of the old school are training their students to repeat the poses without any variation. However, this item should not exceed five minutes. Some teachers have begun to include such a select piece as 'Athala Cheda Narada' in Sankarabharanam, Tisra Tala. (திருப்புக்கு).

Jati-swaram in Bhairavi-Tisra begins with:

Sa ni dha Pa Ma ga Ri Sa.

The Vachaspati Jati-swaram in Adi-tala begins with:

Sa nidani Pa ma Ga Ri Sa.

The piece in Sankarabharanam, Misra-tala

Sa Dha Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Sa

is quite effective in the dance. The other Jatiswaras used in dance concerts are in the Ragas Thodi, Khamas, Vasanta, Kalyani, Atana etc. All these are said to be the compositions of the senior Ponnayya. (He is one of the Tanjore Quartet mentioned in the next chapter).

Many of the Sabdams used to-day in dance concerts are fit only for adults, and are not meant for the students in recognised High Schools. Javalis can be safely omitted.

"Varnam" is colour or decoration. Varnams are longer compositions than Kritis or Kirtanams, though composed of the same fundamental parts. Unlike those compositions, Varnams are invariably accompanied by Swaras or Symbols of musical notes and exhibit the various phases of the Raga in great detail. Varnams are generally made to Ata Tala, Rupaka Tala, Adi Tala and Jemba Tala. They are adapted also for dancing. "Our illustration is a Varnam in Kapi Raga which for grandeur, grace and fertility of imagination stands unrivalled in the whole range of Hindu music. It begins with the words *Sumasayaka*."<sup>2</sup>

'Sami Ni Ramannavey Sakiaro' is the Khamas Varna addressed by the *nayaki* (beloved) to the *nayaka* (lover) through their mutual friend *sakhi*. The esoteric concept is supposed to be that they are respectively Jivatma, Paramatma and the Guru. As in the case of the Tamil Nalavenba (நள வெண்பா); such pieces which are suitable to young students should be selected. Varnas are of two kinds:

*Tana Varnas* are practised by students of music. The textual portion (Sahitya) is limited. There are two such Telugu Varnams *Chalamelara* in Sankarabharanam, Kantajati Ata-tala and *Viriboni* in Bhairavi Raga, Kantajati Ata-tala. *Pada Varnas* (also called *Chauka Varnas* and *Ata Varnas*) are the compositions heard in dance concerts. "The music is in a somewhat slower tempo and is intended to give full scope to convey the *bhavas*. Because of its affinity to the padam, both in point of tempo and theme of the sahitya, this composition came to be called pada varna."<sup>3</sup>

The superb Varnam *Sarasija Nabha* in Kambhoji Raga is popular among the dance-masters in South India. "In beauty, stateliness, grace and melody, it takes rank with the best compositions in Hindu Music", says Sri Lakshmana Pillai,

2 Isai Kavi Arasu T. Lakshmana Pillai, *Essays* 1918, pp. 105 — 106.

3 Prof. P. Sambamoorthy, *South Indian Music*, Book III, 1946, p. 73.

the Tamil composer. Srimathi Dhanam Ammal of revered memory has left behind some Gramophone records of the Varnas and Padas played by her on the Veena. Her rendering of Veena Kuppier's Begada Varnam *Inta Chalamu* is worth hearing. Similarly her Pada renderings in Ananda-bhairavi and in Mohanam have a classic purity.

### *Padams*

"Padams are compositions allied to Kirtanams and are mostly devoted to the subject of love, though some have a religious significance too. They differ from Kirtanams and Krities in that they do not present any variations in the Pallavi. In Kirtanams and Kritis of a high order, the Pallavi and sometimes the Anupallavi and Charanam are arrayed in variations ranging with the fertility of the composer's imagination". Another critic adds that "whereas the Telugu Padakaras chose Krishna as their hero, the Tamil Padakaras chose Subrahmanya instead. These are padas of a purely sringara (love) nature which will not admit of any philosophical meaning by any stretch of imagination". It should also be recognised that most of the padas treat of *gaurava sringara*, or dignified love (கௌரவ சிரிங்காரம்). If the dance-masters (Nattuvanars) of Tamil Nad had given the place of honour to the devotional padas (such as the Kannada padas of Purandara Das and the Tamil padas of Muthu Thandavar), enlightened men and women would have gladly given their moral support to a wider diffusion of the sacred art of Bharata Natya. Anyone who has carefully studied and witnessed the use of the old dance material will agree with the considered opinion of the late Keertanacharya who found no justification for the so-called mystic eroticism.<sup>4</sup>

As our object is to teach dancing to innocent boys and girls in a pure and dignified environment, the padas fit for Expression (Abhinaya) should be in harmony with the social transformation from an aristocratic to an altruistic society.

<sup>4</sup> Sri C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Dance*, 1948, p. 174.



Prof. P. Sambamoorthy has listed some Telugu padas fit for use in recognised High Schools. "The humorous padas of Sarngapani contain many popular sayings. He has written many padas on other themes as well. His *I simala harinakshi* (Kalyani-Adi) contains the names of some ragas. The pada *Avaluganti matala* (Saveri-Tripura) contains the names of herbs. *Padatinestamu* contains the names of trees. *Kadapadati raniya* (Pantavarali-Adi) contains the names of places. *Varakanya tilaka* (Gualipantu-Jhampa) contains the names of medicines. *Kankanamu gattinadu* (Gaulipantu-Adi) contains the names of jewels". Such useful padas await to be composed in the other regional languages of India. Whenever and wherever they are available, the Dance teacher should give priority to them.

The teacher may refer to Rasikamani T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliyar's collection of Tamil padams. Varuvar Azhythuvadi (Begada-chapu) is a padam on Siva Nataraja, the Divine Dancer by Ramalinga Swamikal. In Marimuthu Pillai's padam, Kaulai Thooki (Yethukula Kambhoji-Adi Tala), the tradition of Nandi playing on Mardhalam, and Narada playing on the *Yazh* to Tirumal's accompaniment of Tala is skilfully woven.<sup>5</sup> In descriptive value, this is like the Kannada song, *Krishna Ni Bhagana Bharoe*.

### *Tillanas*

While the padas are composed in slow tempo, a tillana is in quick or medium tempo. A tillana dance in Bharata Natya reminds one of the Kinjin in the North Indian Kathak. The explanation for this trait is simple. Tillana "is a species of composition made in imitation of Hindustani pieces and are noted for their briskness and liveliness. They exhibit the Jethies or parts of a Tala with great variety and emphasis".

The famous Gauri-nayaka tillana (Kanada-Simhanandana) was composed by Maha Vaidyanatha Aiyar (1844—1893).

5 See the Annamalai University Publications of Tamil Songs.

This scholarly tillana *Dhim—Dhana—Tirana* is in praise of Gauri and her nayaka, Siva Nataraja. The beginners can practise this piece in Adi-tala. The tillana bearing the Mudra (signature) of Srinivasa begins with *Tham—Thaum—Thillilana* (Kanada-Adi) and is in praise of the Ishta-Devata (the chosen ideal) who protects the weak and the poor. The same composer's tillana *Uthar-Dhana Dhimi-Dhim* is in Kapi Raga, Roopaka Tala. Patnam Subrahmanya Aiyar (1845—1902) is said to have composed a number of tillanas. "Hearing his recital of the tillana in Janjhuti Raga *Tirana Dhim-Dhim Tirana* the Maharaja of Mysore honoured him by decorating both his hands with bracelets". The names of the other composers are not easily known.

To sum up: Bharata Natya is a harmonious combination of *Bhava* or aesthetic emotion, *Raga* or melody-mould, and *Tala* or time-measure. Success can be achieved only by years of devoted study and systematic practice under the guidance of a Guru.

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## Chapter Seven

### Kathakali In Schools

As Bharata Natya and Kathakali have a family resemblance, the previous chapter should be read along with this chapter. As a German critic says, Kathakali is one of the few still living off-springs of the pure traditions of Bharata Natya.

Katha means a story, and Kali means a play. This story-play is also known as Attakkatha. The Mime of Kathakali is explained in a comprehensive manner in the Malayalam Manual published by the University of Madras. Dr. C. Achutha Menon's Introduction is in English. Two of his observations are helpful to a clear understanding of the origin and purpose of Attakkatha.



KATHAKALI  
ARDHA CHANDRA



BHARATA'S  
ARDHACHANDRA



KATHAKALI  
MUSHTI



BHARATA'S  
MUSHTI



KATHAKALI  
SIKHARA



BHARATA'S SIKHARA = DRINKING



BHARATA'S SIKHARA =  
PITR TARPANA OR  
OFFERING OF WATER  
TO MANES



BHARATA'S  
SUCHI MUKHA

## CHART OF MUDRAS

( See page 43 )

### Cultural Fusion

Prof. J. H. Cousins has had the advantage of making a comparative study. He writes: "Three aspects of the dance in Travancore come before us: (1) the indigenous folk-dances in which the unsophisticated imagination and rhythmical impulse of the folk found, and still find, expression that is largely spontaneous but controlled by traditional ideas and methods; (2) the Bharata Natya that developed in the Peninsula, particularly in the South, and passed over into Kerala both as a separate form of dance and as an art-influence; (3) the culmination of the joint folk and classical dance in the modern Kathakali that has recently entered on an era of renaissance simultaneously with the revival of indigenous dance in other parts of India". This statement about Travancore is equally true of Cochin and Malabar.

Jayadeva's *Gita Govindam* is Bengal's great gift to South India. Sir Edwin Arnold translated it among the *Indian Idylls*. A critic asserts that this is "the oldest and the most complete of the classics on Natya Lakshya".<sup>2</sup> As already stated, it was given to Jayadeva to guide and watch the wondrous mazes of his wife Padmavati's feet "as they went through the mystic dance before the Lord, in consonance with the music and substance of the *Ashtapadis* he sang, in accompaniment". Jayadeva's influence is felt all along in the development of Kathakali, as proved by Prof. Pisharoti in his *Essay on Kerala Theatre*.

Bharata Natya began to thrive in Travancore under the patronage of Maharaja Swati Tirunal (1813-1847). His reign in Travancore was brief but brilliant. It is worthwhile to record here the co-operative achievement of Ponnayya and his three brothers, mentioned in the Syllabus. They are known as the Tanjore Quartet. Ponnayya the composer was assisted by his talented brothers Chinnayya the dance teacher, Sivanandam the singer, and Vadivelu the violinist. Ponnayya

<sup>2</sup> Sri C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Dance*, 1948, p. 77.

Nattuvanar composed several Padams and Varnams which are popular among the dance teachers in South India. His Swarajit in Bhairavi Raga :

Sa    ni    dha    Pa  
Ma   ga   Ri    Sa

is studied by beginners both in music and dancing. ("Swarajits are pieces wholly composed of Swaras and are helps to students in understanding the nature of *Ragas*"). Some say that Vadivelu Nattuvanar was Tyagaraja's violinist for a time in Tiruvaiyar, six miles from Tanjore. He is said to have first introduced the violin in Travancore. He was one of the experts who enjoyed the patronage of the Maharaja. Vadivelu went over to Travancore in 1830 and passed away in 1845. He was thus a witness to the Augustan Age of Travancore music and dancing.

#### A Royal Composer

His Highness Swati Tirunal Maharaja reigned in Travancore from 1829 to 1847. He had mastered about twelve languages including English. While Tyagaraja (1767—1847) composed in Telugu, the Maharaja's compositions are couched in seven languages — Malayalam, Sanskrit, Mahratti, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Urdu. And they reconcile word with "melody and often both with the demands of the *Natya*". His *Bhaktimanjari* states the true ideals of Indian music thus : "Mingled with the melody of string instruments, compact of balance and harmony, sweet to the ear with gradations of three *gramas*, must be the song that celebrates Thy name and its sweetness and glory. Other varieties of music are, indeed, like the voices in the wilderness". These compositions prove that "even when conforming to the Sringara ideal, music in India has always had as its background, an abiding devotion to an *Ishtadevata*" (The Chosen Ideal).<sup>3</sup>

Of the 19 Varnas composed by the Maharaja, one is in Telugu, and one is in Manipravalam : and all the other 17 are in Sanskrit. The Maharaja's Padams are equally useful for Abhinaya renderings in Bharata Natya and Kathakali.

3 Journal of the Tagore Academy, Coimbatore, April 1941, p. 62.

"Padams form a class of musical compositions specially intended to accompany and guide dancing. Their proper spirit is devotional. They are like the Songs of Solomon. They are supposed to be addressed direct or through a lady messenger by a lady to her "lover" at whose separation she mourns and pines. The metaphor of the loved and lover will most effectively convey in human language the ardour and earnestness of devotion or Bhakti towards God. The Maharajah's Padams are all addressed to his family deity, Sri Padmanabha, and have the same esoteric meaning as the *Gita Govindam* of Jayadeva". "Of the Maharaja's compositions, under the head of *Padams*, 10 are in Sanskrit, 50 are in Malayalam and 5 are in Telugu. The Telugu *Padams* are popular in Andhra country. The Padam in Surati beginning with "Viditham" is as popular as the Tillana beginning with "Dithrom-Dithrom-Tha".

### Musical Instruments

The ancient instrument *Udukkai* is still in use. It is the very same drum that is seen in the image of Nataraja, the Divine Dancer. "The Idakka, though only a percussion instrument, is capable of producing all the seven notes of the gamut". It is used in temples. Another drum mentioned in Silappadikaram as *Thannumai* is also to be seen in Kerala. The big drum known as "Chendai" played with a stick is not fit for use in schools.<sup>4</sup> The Mrdangam or Mardhalam is enough for school concerts. Many other musical instruments survive in the temples of Tamil Nad and the United States of Travancore and Cochin. As the people (young and old alike) are accustomed to hear these rhythms from generation to generation, the Tala-gnanam is of a high order in these regions. Mrs. Margaret E. Cousins rightly says that drumming is in the blood of the Indian: "The Indian mastery over time, or rather over periodicity in time, is one of the most

<sup>4</sup> The school equipment is incredibly simple. *Thattukol*, made of strong wood, is used for early training. Then comes *Jalra* for rhythmic effect. Sruti-box or *Tambura* is essential. Flute also can be used if local resources permit. After all, the method of teaching is more important than the material. See page 44.



noticeable traits in its national psychology, and it shows itself in music in the amazing popularity of drumming. There is no other country in which the beat of the drum is to be heard day and night".<sup>5</sup> It is pleasant to recollect that no less a scientist than Dr. C. V. Raman has been carrying on researches into some of these fundamental instruments. Some of them are used by the Aborigines even to-day, along with their folk-songs and folk-dances.<sup>6</sup>

In Ashtapadi-Attam, at the time of *purappadu* or the starting of Kathakali, the singers stand behind the actors. "Before the actual performance commences, the drummers display their cleverness and songsters sing *Manjuthara* which is a selection of some verses from Jayadeva's Gita-Govindam".<sup>7</sup>

### School Concert

Kathakali was till recently a typical masculine art, just as Bharata Natya was a typical feminine art. While Bharata Natya was supposed to be the ideal form of solo-dancing, Kathakali was considered to be fit for group acting. All this is changing, in this age of transition. It is however not easy to put up a profit and loss account, and thus strike a balance. Suffice it to say that there is enough talent in our country to avoid any violent fluctuations in art and life. After all, as Dr. Lin Yutang says, art is both creation and recreation. In the course of this year, Hon'ble Sri K. Madhava Menon (the present Minister of Education) and Professor D. S. Reddi (the present Director of Public Instruction) saw the Kathakali concert of the young students in a High School of Malabar. Both of them were particularly impressed with the histrionic talents of the boys and girls who took part in the school concert. Bhasmasura Mohini, the story of Kuchela, Panthadi and Harvest Dance were skilfully done. This method of combining Art with Education is full of possibilities in India.

5 Mrs. M. E. Cousins, *The Music of Orient and Occident*, 1935, p. 24.

6 The drum in India is "the lord of instruments". In Bengal, the *Kol* is made of mud, in accordance with the old Indian custom.

7 Sri A. C. Pandeya, *The Art of Kathakali*, 1943, p. 56.

## Chapter Eight

### Mudras

Mudra ordinarily means a seal. In Indian musical compositions, Mudra means a signature. In the technique of dance the word Mudra is used for a definite symbol, as finger-pose or finger-signal. Mudra is also known as Hasta Abhinaya.

Some critics speak and write as if Bharata's Natya Sastra enjoined a rigid and unalterable adherence to its rules. It is no doubt true that "an accepted gesture language" should not be altered according to an actor's whims and fancies. Let us in this connection note Bharata's own observation. With reference to the prevalent notion that Bharata has given a prescribed sum total of Mudras (finger poses) and any new creation or addition can be attempted only by heterodox radicals, Dr. V. Raghavan reminds us that this view is not supported by the text of Natya Sastra dealing with gestures. He writes: "If they have patience to study the Hasta-abhinaya carefully and with interest, they will find that they are least conventional and that they are based upon Nature.....The Hastas given by Bharata in chapter 9 are not sheer inventions or arbitrary formulae.....The life-giving principle regarding these Hastas is that they are directly derived from Nature.....When one understands this secret.....he can invent suitable symbols for any new idea that may confront him. Bharata gave a few Hastas, and others that followed him some more, only to indicate; the world has to be studied and the artist must enrich himself with Abhinayas for other objects and ideas. Bharata lays this down clearly....."<sup>1</sup>

### Illustrations

The teacher of Bharata Natya and Kathakali should study all the available illustrations of Mudras or finger-signals, not only from books but also from the images found in temples

<sup>1</sup> See his article on Lokadharmi, *Journal of Oriental Research*, Vol. VIII, 1934, pp. 71—3.

and city museums. Single hand action is known as Asamyuta Hasta. Double hand action is known as Samyuta Hasta. Dr. V. Raghavan's illustrations and comparisons of Mudras which appeared in the *Triveni* journal are reproduced in the Appendix to this Guide Book.

Bharata's classification of Mudras is thus self-evident to any one who knows Sanskrit and its allied languages. For example, Pataka means a flag, Mayuram the peacock, Hamsa the swan, Kartari mukha the scissors. The Anjali Mudra is the usual Hindu way of offering respects to an elder by joining both the palms of the hand. Every Mudra is followed with the instruction as to its proper usage. The Glossary appended to *Tandava Lakshanam* (pages 65—84) is thus useful. There is one difficulty: "Very often the same name is used by Bharata for the movements of several limbs. No benefit can be derived from the glossary if it be not first determined which limb a given term refers to". In such cases, the correct use of Mudras is secured by learning from a qualified teacher of Bharata Natya or Kathakali.

### Kuchipudi

It should not be supposed that Mudras are peculiar to Bharata Natya and Kathakali alone. The village of Kuchipudi on the Krishna (near Machilipatnam) and some villages on the river Cauveri (in Tanjore District) have preserved the dance technique through their highly trained Bhagavatars or male dancers. Hon'ble Sri B. Gopala Reddi writes: "The Kuchipudi dancer is a past-master in the art of representing various ideas both through appropriate facial expression as well as appropriate symbols (Mudras). It is a treat to watch the successive emergence of the ten Avatars, the highly expressive rendering of the love songs of Kshetrayya, and the expert portrayal of Astapadies of Geeta Govinda, as staged by the well-trained Kuchipudi dancer".<sup>2</sup> This observation is equally true of the Bhagavata Mela Nataka of the Tanjore District.

2 The Dance Art of Kuchipudi, *Madras Information*, 15th September, 1948, p. 26.

A German critic has pointed out that a correct rendering of the Mudras dispenses with the need for stage settings, as every visible and invisible thing is suggested to the public by means of gestures. "No elaborate stage arrangements, no revolving scene, no complex mechanism can give a more convincing illusion".<sup>3</sup> It is obvious that the cultural co-operation of the audience with the dancers is essential. While Bharata Natya recital in Tamil Nad is suggestive, the Kathakali recital is realistic to the extent of multiplying the details of a given situation. After all, something should be left for the play of imagination by an appreciative audience.

Text books on Natya and Kathakali say that there are thirty-six kinds of glance; eight kinds of looks, nine movements of the eye-ball, nine movements of the eye-lids, seven movements of the eye-brows, six movements of the nose, six movements of the cheek, six movements of the lower lip, six movements of the chin, six movements of the mouth, four actions of the face and nine movements of the neck. These classifications are, more or less, common to Bharata Natya and Kathakali.

Co-ordination and synthesis are far more important than anything else mentioned in this chapter. The following aphorism from Nandikeswara's *Abhinaya-Darpana* (Mirror of Gesture) is well-known :

*Yato hastastato dristir yato drististato mana :*

*Yato manastato bhavo yato bhavastato rasa :*

The translation is : "Where the hands go, there should go the look, for where the look goes there goes the mind, where the mind goes there rests Bhava or the imagination and where the imagination rests there rests the Rasa or aesthetic effect".

Kambar has explained it as : கைவழி நயனஞ் செர்தல், கண்வழி மனம், மனவழி பாவனை, பாவனைவழி ரசம் நிறற்றல். See Swami Suddhananda Bharati's book on the Treasure of Silappadikaram (சிலம்புச் செல்வம்).

3 Essay on Kathakali, Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, June 1935, p. 64. See also Dr. Raghavan, *Natyadarmi*.

## APPENDIX I

### Chart of Kathakali Mudras as Examined By Dr. V. Raghavan

"When one sees the chart of 'mudras' published in Mr. Poduval's booklet, one sees clearly that Bharata, Nandin, and the Tamil Text agree, whereas the Kathakali stands apart, with many differences.

"Taking the 'ardha chandra' hand, every one knows it as one of the hands in the Nataraja icon. Any lay man must know its correct shape, for the Sanskrit idiom means 'necking out' and the 'ardha chandra' hand is employed in that action. Sculpture, Icon, Bharata, Nandin, the Tamil Text, and above all, Nature give the correct 'ardha chandra' but the Kathakali counterpart has no resemblance to the shape of the sickle moon.

"The difference and the deterioration can be seen with respect to the 'mushti' hand also. The Kathakali passes the thumb in between the four closed fingers. The 'fist' which everyman shows in his anger, and in his action of fisting another, does not have the thumb like that. The 'mushti' is given as the symbol of old age, because it is the hand which holds the supporting staff which is a symbol of old age. One does not have the thumb as in Kathakali 'mushti' when he holds the staff.

"The 'sikhara' hand can likewise be examined. The symbol given by *Bharata*, *Nandin*, and *Silappadikaram* is correct. The hand indicates hero, leader or chief; holding of a bow; drinking, if the upraised thumb is taken towards the mouth; the manes ('pitris'), if we turn the hand horizontal, etc. All these are based upon Nature. We do that correct hand while speaking whenever we have to refer to importance, leadership, and when we do 'pitri tarpana', etc. But these can never be shown by the 'sikhara' hand as Kathakali gives it with thumb closed and the next 'pointing finger' raised. The 'sikhara' hand of Kathakali is the 'suchimukha' of the Sanskrit texts. The difference therefore between the 'sikhara' and the 'suchimukha' is shown by Kathakali, by a very insignificant change in the position of the thumb. The 'suchimukha' is a very common hand which any layman knows as the hand which we show while 'pointing out,' for showing 'one', etc. Every 'hasta' should be firstly correct as based upon Nature and secondly, must have 'soushthava'—beauty and grace.

"What has been said above is about the very basis of 'abhinaya', and it does not get nullified by local peculiarities and provincial adaptations which are bound to be. Nor is it contended here that there are not parts of Nautch-abhinaya in the Tamil land which show deterioration. To the modern re-creator of Hindu classical dance, Kathakali, Nautch, the Bhagavata Mela, Kathak, nay, every small surviving thing is of importance.

"Let dancers of modern India resort to some traditional master of 'abhinaya', learn the whole foundation and science of the thing, steep themselves in the tradition of Indian art, culture, legend and literature, and then try to devise new forms".—(*The Triveni*)

( See the chart )

## APPENDIX II

### To The Teacher

In this booklet we are dealing with music and dancing as part of the curriculum of ordinary High Schools. The schools are not specialist dance schools, and the pupils are not selected for specialist interest in dancing. Most of them are *not* wishing to become professional dancers or cinema stars. The first thing needed is a clear idea of the purpose and value of dance as a subject of study for ordinary boys and girls, some of whom will have little natural aptitude for it. Then why is it a desirable part of the training of the ordinary citizen?

First of all, dancing is a desirable part of education for the same reason that drawing and painting, music and poetry are desirable parts of education. Like them it is one of the great *arts* of mankind; like them it is one of the means by which growing boys and girls can express their creative instincts and find emotional release. It is now widely admitted that our school programme has usually been too intellectual, and has expected the child to be merely receptive. For full and balanced development the emotions must also be trained through creative activity. This is the function of the arts in schools.

In addition, the art of dance has merits of its own as a vehicle of education. It is a magnificent *physical* exercise, by means of which every part of the body is exercised, disciplined and harmoniously developed. Emotionally, it satisfies in two ways; by developing and using to the full the profound enjoyment of rhythmic movement, and secondly by its social nature, by the pleasure of being part of a team, of working *together* with drummer, singers and fellow dancers to produce a satisfying whole. Intellectually it demands and strengthens the qualities of alertness and concentration. The traditions of Indian dancing especially are rich in spiritual and devotional ideals, and therefore the practice of this dance, if taught by someone who is sensitive to its lofty significance, can express and develop the lofty but inarticulate ideals of adolescence.

Ideally, training in dancing would begin about the age of seven, and use to the full that period of growth, between seven and eleven, when the physical development is relatively harmonious and stable, and the child feels itself master of the body. It should then be continued through the early adolescent period from 12 to 15, when the physical and emotional harmony tends to be upset by comparatively rapid change and growth, and when rhythmic discipline is of special value. The Madras Educational Department Syllabus is for the later age group; if, before they enter upon it, the children have had a preliminary dancing course, so much the better.

Kirtanacharya C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar once said that teachers are of three kinds—those who know a lot but cannot impart their knowledge, those who know only a little but who cannot only impart, but inspire; and the

rare Masters, those whose teaching is as inspiring as their knowledge is deep. We cannot all belong to the third group, but it is far better for the children that we should belong to the second than to the first. We may not have much knowledge to begin with, but if we can make the whole subject really interesting, the children will learn of themselves; and if we are serious in our work, we shall gradually add to our knowledge.

The first chapter in this booklet is on the right attitude to dance. It will help you to think about the content of your teaching in the light of the social and cultural condition of the place where you are working. Other chapters give outlines of the history of the dance in India and the variety of dance types both in India and in other parts of the world. Your older pupils especially will be interested in the historical and social aspects of their art, and these and similar facts can be given to them as the opportunity naturally arises. It is not suggested that you should give formal lessons in these subjects, but that you should informally arouse the children's interest in them by pictures, stories etc. A talk with the teachers of Indian history, literature and drawing will lead to many useful suggestions about how this aspect of your work can be correlated with theirs. The material given in this booklet on dance as the Way of Bhakti should be treated on the same lines. It is obvious that no teaching of ethical and devotional ideals can be effective except in the atmosphere of friendliness and respect which should prevail in every good lesson, the dancing lesson included. Unless the right atmosphere is present, it is better to say nothing.

The remaining chapters are concerned with some of the more technical material and the particular problems arising in its use. There is one matter of method however on which a word may be said. It is *far* more important that your pupils *on the whole* should leave school with the standards of good taste and knowledge which will make them intelligent and critical members of the public, than that one or two of them should become star performers. It is far more important that your routine weekly lessons should be full of varied interest and progress for *all*, than that a selected few should be able to put on brilliant items at a school concert. The teacher of dancing must resist the temptation to concentrate on a few children or items for the sake of producing a "show". Shows, if they are real demonstrations of the powers of the class as a whole, are valuable *occasional* activities, but they must not be allowed to take too much time, and they must not unduly boost the "star pupil". It is not good for any child's social development to be too much in the lime light; it is bad that any children should feel themselves, however small their natural aptitude, to be "left out" or "no good". — Marjorie Sykes.

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## APPENDIX III

### Dance Drama And Social Education

Natya means Dance as well as Drama. Representation in Natya has to adopt certain conventions, as also certain idealistic features. These have been clearly explained by Dr. V. Raghavan in the light of modern knowledge in his articles on Natyadharmi and Lokadharmi in the Journal of Oriental Research, Madras (Vol. VII. 359-375). His views are summarised thus: The word Dharma means attribute or characteristic. Loka-dharmi and Natya-dharmi generally mean qualities pertaining to Nature or world and to the Stage respectively. The two may be rendered as "World-ways" and Stage-ways" which refer respectively to the element of Realism and element of Idealism. In Tamil Literature we have two words corresponding to Loka-dharmi and Natya-dharmi, viz., Ulaka Valaku (உலக வழக்கு) and Nataka Valakku (நாடக வழக்கு). The Tolkappiyam speaks of these two Valakkus or Dharmis in Sutra 53, *Ahattinai-iyal, Porulatikaram.*" (தொல்காப்பியம், பொருள்தி காரம்.)

Dr. V. Raghavan goes on to state that Bharata has drawn up a list of things which are prohibited on the Stage. The audience is composed of men and women, husbands and wives, with their children. Things which women hate to see or men will loathe to see along with their wives and children are prohibited by Bharata. That great sage stood for decency and abolished all vulgarity. The eating, and sleeping of persons on the stage, kissing and other sights that deserve to be hid are not to be shown. Dr. Raghavan's conclusion is noteworthy. "A poor dramatist and a poor producer will present on the stage scenes of burning. Tolstoy supports Bharata when he rules that death should not be shown on the Stage or that things should not be burnt; for these exciting shows are not productive of aesthetic emotional response."

### Nine Rasas

At first, there was a classification of only eight Rasas or kinds of aesthetic joy. They are Sringara (the Erotic), Hasya (the Comic), Karuna (the Compassionate), Raudra (the Fierce), Veera (the Heroic), Bhayanaka (the Terrible), Bheebhatsa (the Disgusting) and Adhbhuta (the Marvellous). Later on, Santa Rasa (Tranquillity) came into the Rasa scheme. (See Dr. V. Raghavan, Number of Rasas, Adyar Library Series). Thus we have nine Rasas in usage. The Indian genius for classification is evident in this scheme. There are many ancient Sanskrit works on this subject. The Rasa chapter in Dr. S. K. De's Sanskrit Poetics may be consulted by the teacher, as also Bhava Rasa Prakarana printed as an Appendix to the Telugu edition of Abhinaya Darpana. The Rasa Manjari used by the hereditary teachers of Bharata Natya is a work of Bhanu Bhatta and it is to be consulted for understanding the varieties of Nayakas figuring in the Padas intended for Abhinaya. There is also a Tamil version of Rasamanjari.

### Models

The Syllabus recommends getting up of a portion of one of the following operas:—

Jayadeva's Gita Govindam, Narayana Tirtha's Krishna Lila Tarangni, Tyagaraja's Nowka Charitram, Arunachala Kavirayar's Rama Natakam, Gopalakrishna Bharati's Nandanar Charitram, Sankaran Pothi's Kuchela Vrittam.

The Bible episode of Mary Magdalene is being dramatised in Kathakali and Bharata Natya Schools. The Life of Buddha has been staged as புத்தர் கருணை in Tamil. This theme has fresh versions in Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu. Swami Suddhananda Bharati has given an exhaustive list of suitable dance drama themes in his 'Navarasa Natananjali'.

### Social Education

Prof. Humayun Kabir has prepared for the Ministry of Education the Pamphlet No. 58 dated October 28, 1948 on Basic and Social Education. To begin with, the Government of India have arranged at Santiniketan (West Bengal) to train teachers on an all-India basis. Training is given in Bharata Natya, Kathakali and Manipuri under the auspices of the Visva-Bharati Institute of Teachers Training. Music, Dancing and Dance Dramas are given their due place in New Education. A distinction is made between Adult Education and Social Education. "Social Education may be defined as a course of study directed towards the production of consciousness of citizenship among the people and promotion of social solidarity among them. It has three aspects, namely:

- (a) The introduction of literacy among grown-up illiterates,
- (b) The production of an educated mind in the masses in the absence of literacy education,
- (c) The inculcation of a lively sense of rights and duties of citizenship, both as individuals and as members of a powerful nation.

"Social Education is synonymous with Adult Education, but lays more emphasis upon the two latter aspects mentioned above. ... The village schools are to be the centres of community life. The village school teachers are to be the main instruments in making the masses conscious of "life" in its real sense. ... Popular dramas will be organised in the schools, and from time to time prizes given for the best plays produced".

The Education Minister, Hon'ble Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, inaugurated in Mysore the UNESCO Seminar on Rural Education on 2nd November 1949. He said that the Government of India propose to give first priority to a programme of social education in its scheme of educational development for the country. He defined social education as education for the complete man.

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