



CHAPTER 4

THE SOLO CLASSICAL DANCER IN SCULPTURE



This and the next two chapters of the research work are in continuum of showing and establishing the existence of a solo classical dance in India since at least Bharatamuni's time. We have shown the same through the literature previously. The plastic arts of sculpture, painting and other visual mediums are the tangible evidences of this intangible cultural heritage that is dance. Temples, caves, step-wells, and all such public and private places, especially places which were much visited by people, are endowed with dance and dance like sculptures across India. Similarly in manuscripts, miniature paintings, temple and cave walls show the paintings with stylised classical dancer. The kings were not only patrons of the performance systems but they also supported and provided for the other artistic mediums. It was holistic growth. People came to worship day and night and daily saw dancing figures on the walls! It must have provided them with an appreciation of dance, music and created connoisseurs of art. At no place other than literature, we can identify and find a name given to this classical dance, be it solo or group, till about 18th century. But it shows one codified stylised central system of movements going parallel in the dance and other treatises.

In a discussion between King Vajra and Markandeya in the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, there is a memorable verse which states in a nutshell the inter - relationship of the Visual, Performing and the Plastic Arts.¹ The *Shilpashastra* is one of the oldest texts to have emerged from the classical Indian tradition of the plastic and performing arts. This text is a holistic encyclopaedia of sculptural practice related to different kinds of sculptures, both standalone (*Murty*) as well as those (*Shilp*) that would adorn temples, palaces, common places of worship as well as those of entertainment and cultural importance. In practice, the Dancing Girl (c.2500-2000 BCE, National Museum, New Delhi) of the *Harappan / Indus Valley* civilization is one of the oldest finds of a sculptural example. Several other 'finds' at the Indus Valley sites (2500-1800 BCE, spread from present day east Pakistan, to UP and Maharashtra in India) indicate that the artisans there were already quite adept in sculpting figures in bronze and stone. In later centuries, especially the Maurya (c. 250 BCE) and Gupta periods, sculptural excellence reached commendable proportions, indicating a sound knowledge in the sculptor and his assistants of the material, the available tools, and the brief for the content by the person who

commissioned the works. It is also important to remember that the sculptor's own in-depth understanding of how to express the content in the best possible way must have also been of a superior level. These traditions were taken ahead by sculptors in later periods and from the 5th to the 19th centuries, they were further refined and the style and content interpreted as per the dictates of the rulers and religious heads in question.

Sculptures were created traditionally in stone and clay in ancient times, and later in metal. They have survived the vagaries of time and space and are available to us to this day for interpretation. Sculpture was also a public art, rather than an expression of only personal statement. As a result, sculptors often reflected the norms of their time in their execution of the varied themes and expression of content – the jewellery and clothes worn by the men and women, their hair styles and general physical build, their routine and festive moments, rituals, social behaviour (liberal/regressive), in addition to the depiction of plants and trees, domesticated and wild animals and birds.



Fig 1: Dancing Ganesh, Brihadishwara Temple



Fig.2: Dancing Astalaksmi Somnathpur Temple

It appears as though knowledge of the *Natyashastra* tenets were known not just to the performers but also to the different crafts persons who supported and created the infrastructure for performance. The architects, stone-masons and sculptors who worked on the Tanjavur (Tanjore) Brihadeshwara temple and illustrated the *karanas* of the *Natyashastra*'s fourth chapter on the temple *gopuram* provide a sparkling example of their in-depth understanding not just of the physical human body but also of the laws of dance movement and the technical description of the *karana*. Similarly, sculptures of dance movements adorn the Sarangapani temple at Kumbakonam, as well as the four *gopurams* of the Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram; while illustrations of *charis* and *karanas* are found in plenty decorating the Gangaikonda, Cholapuram, Madurai and Kanchipuram temples (14th - 17th centuries). The accuracy of these sculptures and their role as evidence of a dance-informed and dance-appreciative audiences and scholars is supplemented well by textual criticisms, chronicles and creative literature produced during that time.

The arts of sculpture and dance developed together hand in hand in the temples in India. They have influenced each other's growth. Hindu temples have fostered the arts of dance and sculpture. Apart from Nataraja, Ganesha, Krishna, Parvati,

Saraswati, Lakshmi and Kartikeya are dancing gods. The sculptor was inspired by the dancer and has remained a guide to the generations of dancers. The depiction of dancing figures, in groups or as solo performers, often accompanied by musicians, appears to have been a popular image with sculptors, especially working on temples as well as secular buildings. These often appeared as horizontal panels, near and below the eye level of the viewer. But they can also appear on higher-up brackets and eaves, and in an unusual case like the Meenakshi Temple, cover the entire *gopuram* with classic, textbook style dance poses, corresponding to those described in dramaturgy texts according to experts. In almost all Hindu temples across India, sculptures and sculptural friezes featuring dancers and musicians are found.



Fig. 3: Dancing Saraswati, Halebid



Fig.4: Dancing Vishnu, Somnathpuram

The *Apsaras*, *Gandharvas*, *Kinnaras* and even the *Bhuta Ganas*, the superhuman beings, are practicing music and dance. The *Bhuta Ganas* are part of the dance ensemble, playing on musical instruments while dancing in ecstasy. They may be roughly hewn or minutely carved, the dance poses may be commonplace or complicated, the accompanying musicians would mostly be portrayed with a drum/*mridangam*, cymbals, flute and so on. Sometimes there are more figures in the background clapping hands. These could be minor musicians giving *tala*, or even an appreciative audience. The main dancing figure can be identified by the dance pose, the jewellery and clothes which are often more elaborate than those of the others. Since ‘dance poses’ gave the sculpted figure a much more dramatic appeal than those which only standing or sitting, there are a number of figures that are not of dancers or a moment in a performance frozen in stone, but those ‘imitating’ a stylized dance pose such as looking into a mirror, and so on. Dance has influenced sculpture so

deeply that even prosaic scenes like pulling out a thorn from the sole of the foot, or daily routines like writing a letter or applying a *Tilaka* on the forehead are all portrayed in a dance-like attitude in all our sculptures. This kind of beauty is felt throughout the length and breadth of our country. Often these figures depict *yakshas*, *yakshinis*, *gandharvas*, *vidyadharas*, *kinnaras* and so on. While they do not have any active role to play in the sculptural design of the temple, *stupa* or palace, they do have a decorative role and presence in the built area adding to its beauty. They are usually placed in corners and cornices, niches and eaves, brightening up these areas.

Most of the sculptural ‘documentation’ of dance is found in temples. Just as an example, at Ellora and Mahabalipuram, entire stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* can be found sculpted within the caves and rock formations, the very same stories that are the basis of the *sahitya* for dance themes. One of the richest source in the entire country of sculptural representations of dance is believed to be in the Chidambaram, Kumbhakonam and Brihadeshvara temples in Tamilnadu. The Nataraja temple in Chidambaram has some especially marvellous examples of the depiction of dance in sculpture. It is not just by chance that both the *Natyashastra* and *Shilpashastra* use the *tala* as of measurement in space. Also, both disciplines require a correct and detailed knowledge of the human body, the bone structure, the joints and their flexibility, the muscular system and the limbs. Our vast architectural heritage dating back to several centuries that is still available to us harbours extensive sculptural treasures in terms of dance documentation. Sculptural imagery of dance is found in stone, wood, metal, terracotta in both classical and regional styles of depiction. Such sculptures have provided an unbroken link for dance and they existed and developed at multiple levels. It is also important to remember that the tenets prescribed in the *Natyashastra* (2nd century) and *Vishnudharmottara Purana* (3rd century) go parallel. The fourth chapter of *Natyashastra* describes 108 *Karanas* or basic movements which were danced by Siva. In the eastern and western *gopurams* of Chidambaram, the couplets defining the respective *Karanas* are quoted from *Natyashastra*. Similarly, the "*Hasta-s*" in *Natyashastra* are called "*Mudra-s*" in *Shilpashastra*. The symmetry of space and filling them up is the common fundamental principle in sculpture and dance. Symmetry and proportion play a vital role in Indian dance. For both dancer and sculptor "*Sama*", "*Abhanga*",

"*Dvibhanga*", "*Tribhanga*", and "*Atibhanga*" are the body bends. These are based on the deflections of the body from the main central axis.

One can thus comprehend how *Karanas* were created as mediums of suggestive representations that were well structured and were given imperial endorsement on the walls of Tanjavur by Rajaraja. This sort of endorsement for "classical" dances in the form of sculptures, inscriptions and frescoes were considered appropriate imperial commissions, immediately admitting the king into an elite class of patrons.

According to Dr. KapilaVatsyayan, "Since Indian Sculpture and Indian dancing treat of the human form and the movements of the different parts of the human form with an identical purpose of suggesting a state of being, a soul's state; they also use a similar formalized language of *abhinaya* and *bhava*, the *angas*, the *upangas* and the *hastas*. We have confined ourselves to certain types of Indian sculpture to show how Indian Sculpture and dancing are related to each other on different planes."

In this chapter, I have looked into a few sculptures of temples and Step wells, across India, of different time periods, supporting the continuity of a solo of classical dance style, running parallel to the literary evidences.

CHIDAMBARAM TEMPLE

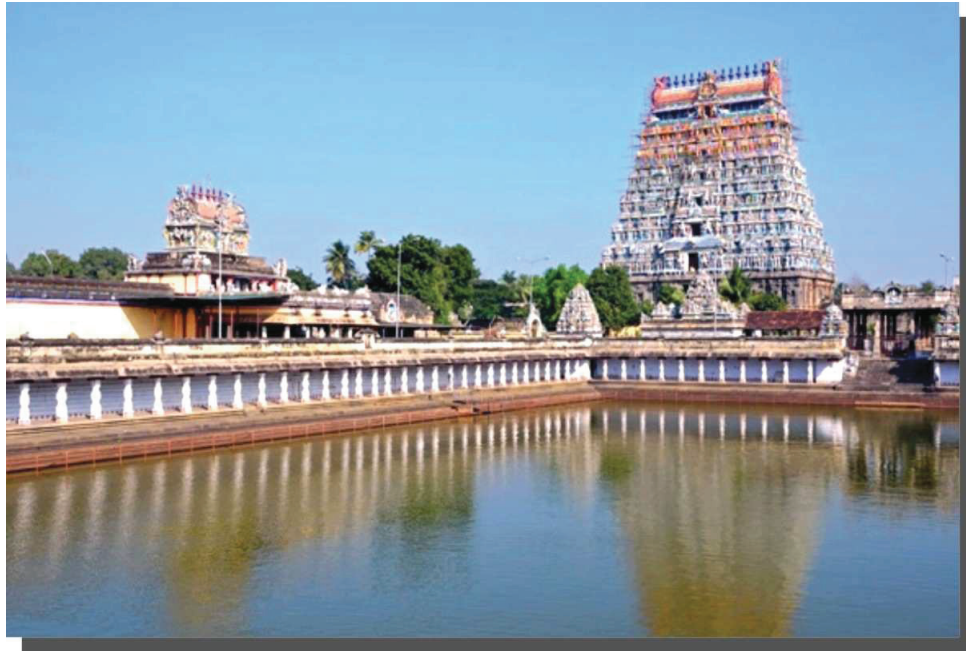


Fig.5: Chidambaram Nataraja Temple

The temple at CHIDAMBARAM, of Shiva as the Nataraja is the strongest and most apt example of the height of development of solo classical dance style of India, with the statue of Nataraja, the 108 Karana-s and numerous dance and dance like sculptures all across the temple on its inner and outer walls, *Garbhagriha*, *Nata-mandapa* and all over the temple. Chidambaram Temple, in the temple town of Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu (1000 A.D.), is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is one of the five holiest Shiva temples. This is an historic and ancient temple. Shiva himself is presented as the Nataraja performing the Ananda Tandav ("Dance of Delight") in the golden hall of the shrine. The marvellous golden sculptured image as Nataraja in the dance pose is the inspiration for all dancers of the world. It is one of the very few Shiva temples where Shiva is not represented by the lingam. The temple complex in the heart of the city is spreaded over 50 acres. It has four *Gopurams*, each about 7 stories high with seven tiers. These *Gopurams* or towers are perhaps the most magnificent structures in the temple. They are the in the four cardinal directions. Each is a gigantic masterpiece in itself - about 250 feet in height. The passages through all four *gopurams* have been decorated with complete representation of 108 *karanas*. In the West and East *gopuram*, under the *karana* panels, relevant verses from the *Natyasastra* are inscribed. The South, East and West *gopurams* are dated to the 12th and 13th century, whereas the north *gopuram* is added somewhat later. It is mainly the eastern *gopuram* that features the 108 reliefs of *Natyasastra* dance postures (22 cm each in a separate niche) and faces the sanctum. The Western tower is the oldest one. There are no representations of Nataraja on the temple towers. This image is in the innermost shrine only. One can thus comprehend how *karanas* were created as mediums of suggestive representations that were well structured and were given imperial endorsement on the walls of Tanjavur by Rajaraja. This sort of endorsement for "classical" dances in the form of sculptures, inscriptions and frescoes were considered appropriate imperial commissions, immediately admitting the king into an elite class of patrons.

The present temple was built in the 10th century when Chidambaram was the capital of the Chola dynasty, making it one of the oldest surviving active temple complexes in South India. After its 10th century consecration by the Cholas who considered Nataraja as their family deity. The temple has been damaged, repaired, renovated and expanded through the 2nd millennium. Most of the temple's surviving plan,

architecture and structure is from the late 12th and early 13th centuries, with later additions in similar style. There are friezes of dancers, drummers and musicians all along the enclosing walls of this temple.

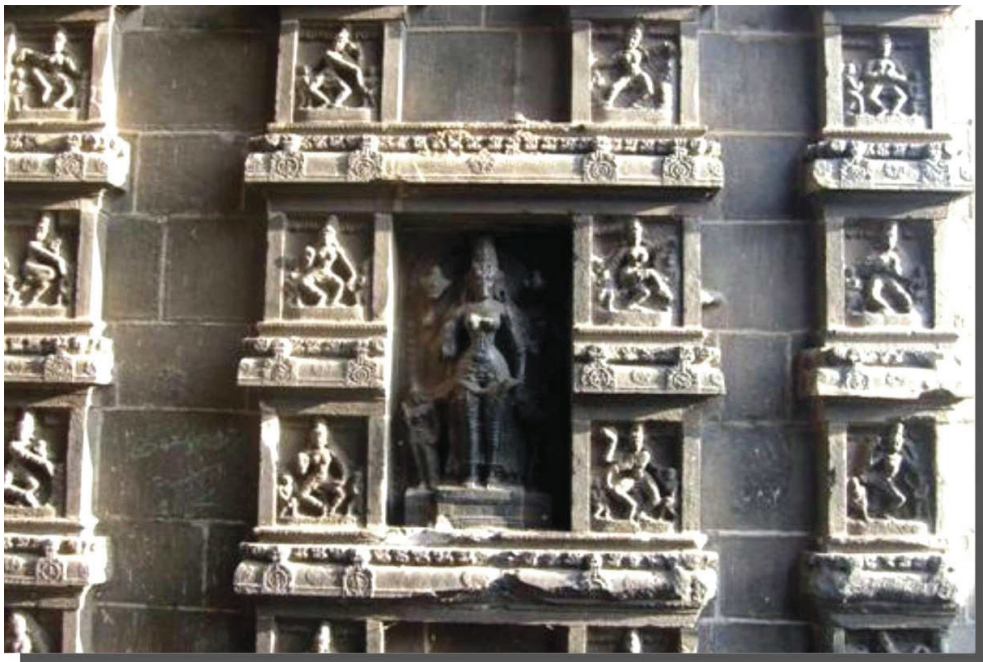


Fig. 6.1, 6.2 & 6: Karanas of Natyashastra on the gate/ gopuram of Nataraj Temple, Chidambaram

Nrittasabha is the Hall of Dance in the Chidambaram temple. It has 56-pillars. This 13th century hall, as per the legend, is where Shiva and Kali originally entered into a dance competition. It is so considered traditionally. Dancing with the *urdhva-tandava* pose that raised his right leg straight up, Shiva won as Kali refused to execute that posture because she was a woman. The pillars here are intricately carved from top to bottom. The lower levels have dancers in classical dance positions similar to those referred to in the *Natyashastra* accompanied with expressive musicians. It is so easily seen from the expressions carved in the stone as if both dancer and musicians are enjoying creating the dance and the music.



Fig. 7: Chidambaram temple: a classical female dancer accompanied by a drummer



Fig.8: Chidambaram temple: Nartaki in Aalidha posture, accompanied by two musicians, one playing themridangam and the other the Kansa (Manjira)

BRIHADESHVARA OR RAJARAJESHWARA TEMPLE



Fig.9: Rajarajeshwara Temple, Brihadeshvara- Thanjavur

RAJARAJESHWARA TEMPLE, BRIHADESHVARA Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu (around 1000 AD), was built during the Chola period by Raja Raja I. Lord Shiva, in his dancing pose of Nataraj is the deity of the temple. It is also famed for the quality of its sculpture, as well as being the location that commissioned the brass Nataraja – Shiva as the lord of dance, in 11th century. The temple is a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. This adds to its exceptional historical significance and cultural value. It took 12 years to build this tallest temple in South India. The *Shikhara* or the *Vimana* is built above the *thegarbagriha*. It rises 14 storeys high. This tower is one the major attraction of the temple. On the exterior walls of the upper storey of the temple various postures of the classical dance are beautifully carved. The corridor wall of the *aditala* of the upper storey is carved with 81 *karanas* and not all 108! The 27 blank blocks of stone are empty. It is not clear why these were not carved and those Karana-s remain unrepresented. These 81 carved postures definitely support and suggest the significance of solo classical Indian dance form by early 11th century.



Fig.10: Panel of Female dancers in various classical postures (Karana-s) with musicians.



Fig.11: Brihadishwara temple. Female Dancer with musicians.

An inscription on the north wall of enclosure, dated 1011 CE, gives a detailed account of people employed and supported by the temple. It gives their wages, roles and names including those of dance gurus, dancing girls, singers, superintendents of performance artists, male and female musicians among others. From these inscriptions we understand that the temple employed *devadasis* who were dancers and singers.



Fig. 12.1 & 12: The dancer with Aayata Mandal position, with Dola Hasta and group of musicians.



Fig. 13: Here the Dancer is seen performing with her female musicians which is rare. The musical instruments played include (from left to right) a string instrument and Thalams. The lady performer is with Eka Pada, right Kapitha and left Dola Hasta and Paravrutta Shira, seems to be in a Nritya sequence.

CHENNAKESHAHA TEMPLE OF BELUR



Fig. 14: The Chennakeshava Temple, Belur

THE CHENNAKESHAHA Temple, is also known as Vijayanarayana Temple or Keshava temple. It is in Belur in Karnataka, belongs to the Hoysala architecture style and is one of its finest examples. It was built in the early 12th century by Vishnuvardhana in soapstone. It stands out even amongst the wondrous Hoysala architecture dotting the Hassan district, even though it is also one of the earliest temples of Hoysala. Its scale is magnificent as it rises like an elegant mammoth, 37 meters high, with delicate sculptural work, and all its outer walls are adorned with sculptures of dancers. This Vaishnavite temple is remarkable for its sculptures, iconography architecture, friezes, reliefs, inscriptions and history. The 12th century temple depicts scenes of the contemporary life, dancers and musicians, along with pictorial scenes from epics and the Puranas through numerous friezes. It is a temple that includes many images from Shaiva, Shakti, Jaina and Buddhist lore.



Fig.15 : Different Dancing Poses as well as panel



Fig.16: Different Dancing Poses as well as panel

The temple structure is in many bands as was the case in design of many temple. The fifth band is mostly of female figurines and *Yakhsas*, with various expressions. In this layer there are numerous dancers and musicians. Above the perforated screens, on capitals of the supporting pillars, are *Shalabhanjika* figures. And others are dancers in with classical gestures and postures, musicians, a woman with a pet parrot, women dressing or doing make up etc. Similar figures are also carved into miniatures in the sixth band of the outer wall. This wall also features 80 large reliefs around the temple of various Gods and Goddesses such as Brahma, Saraswati Vishnu, Narasimha, Varaha, Nataraja, Vamana, Ranganatha, Balarama, BhairavHarihara SuryaMahishasuramardini; Kama and Rati, Ganesha and many more.



Fig. 17: Dancing Panels



Some of the statues show exceptional details. Secular life is shown in these images, such as an artist making a drawing or musicians lost in their music. A notable image is the depiction of 12th century Rudra-vina and a delicate dance posture. This is an artistic sculpture of a female dancer.

Fig.18: The dancer here appears like a *Shalabhanjika*, wearing a beautiful Pajamalike costume. She is adorned with a special crown like jewel with different ornaments. Right leg is in *agratala* and left in *samapada*.

HOYASALESWARA/HALEBIDTEMPLE, KARNATAKA



Fig.19: Hayasaleswara Temple

HOYASALESWARA/HALEBID Temple, Karnataka, also built by Raja Vishnuvardhana (in 1150), it is dedicated to Lord Shiva as Nataraja. Constructed in dark schist stone the temple accommodates a large *mandapa* for performance of dance. The bottom frieze of the temple is marked by a magnificent procession of elephants with their mahouts, but no two elephants are in the same position, which illustrates the tremendous technical skill of the artisans.



Fig.20: The Image dancing Shiva with the whole group of musicians



Fig: 21.1 & 21 Female classical dancers with musical accompniment (*Mridangam*, Flute, *Edakka*, *Talam*). Both have worn many different ornaments on their body. Both in Ekapada. Laft fig with multiple hands



Fig. 22: The dancer in a perfect *araemandi* pose, right hand *Dola Hasta* and left raised above may be in *Pataka Hasta*. Her dress is *Pajama* like with two fan. Two *Mridangam* players one on each side, two flutist on the right above and a *Taldhari* lady on left top is the musical ensemble.

DARASURAM AIRAVATESVARA TEMPLE, TAMILNADU



Fig.23: Airavatesvara Temple, Darasuram

DARASURAM AIRAVATESVARA temple, is near Kumbakonam, at Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. This temple complex comprises three stone temples, built by the Chola Kings. They are important as they are very ornate with sculptures and epigraphs. This temple was built by Raja Raja II (1150 A.D.), is the most beautiful with fine carvings and is in the form of a chariot pulled by an elephant.



Fig.24: Two females in a performance to the accompaniment of two musicians, one playing the *Mridangam* and the other playing the *Dafli*. Female dancers are in *ardhamandali*, with raised left hands, right one in

Abhay mudra and the other with *Dola Hasta*. The costumes are body fitting and heavy hair designs.



Fig. 25: A solo dancer with two musicians. Dancer is in *araemandi* with right *Pataka hasta* and left *Dola hasta*. Drummer to the right and *Taladhari* on the left.



Fig. 26: Karana from *Natyashastra* karna which is demonstrated by a dancer with one lady *mridangam* player.



Fig. 27: The very famous sculpture of Darasuram has the female figure in very acrobatic position, accompanied by two other females, another dancer with Swastika Pada and musicians.

EKLINGJI TEMPLE, RAJASTHAN



Fig. 28: Eklingji Temple, Rajasthan

EKLINGJI Temple, Rajasthan, as its name indicates, is dedicated to Lord Shiva and also known as Kailashpuri. It is one of the most famous temples of Rajasthan. It is carved in stone and was constructed by Bappa Rawalin 734 AD, as Lord Eklingaji is

the presiding deity of the Mewar rulers of Udaipur. In the later years, it was repaired and modified by various Kings. Its magnificent architecture is simply remarkable. The double-storied temple looks awesome. The temple boasts of a striking four-faced idol of Eklingji (Lord Shiva) that is made out of black marble. Varieties of sculptures adorn the inner and outer walls and pillars. Along with the usual motifs, classical dancers are carved with musicians here too.



Fig.29

This depicts a solo dance in middle of two sitting *murtis*. She is in *araemanti* position

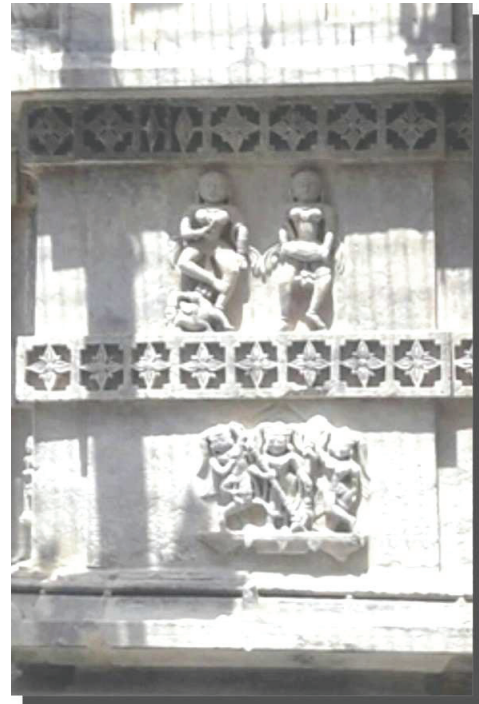


Fig. 30 & 31 This also depicts a solo dancer. A few dancers are carved at various parts and walls of the temple. Some with and others without musicians.

MODHERA SUN TEMPPLE, MODHERA-GUJARAT



Fig.32 Modhera Sun Temple, Modhera Gujarat

MODHERA SUN Temple (11th century), is on the banks of river Pushpavati in Modhera Gujarat, built by Raja Bhimdev I of the Solanki dynasty in 1026 AD. It is dedicated to Surya, and is one of the few Sun Temples across the country. It is a piece of brilliant architectural work. It appears majestic with its grand structure erected on a high platform. The temple encompasses three different yet axially-aligned and integrated constituents. Temple is divided into three parts namely *Sabha Mandap*, *Surya Kund*, and *Guda Mandap*.

In order to get into the Sanctum Sanctorum, one has to cross the passage with pillars and arches. The *Surya Kund* in front of the temple, comes in the tradition of *Vavs* or step-wells, a singular geometric architecture of water bodies found in Gujarat and Rajasthan. It is a visual spectacle with a size of 100 sq. mtrs. and believed to be the grandest water tanks in a temple complex anywhere in India. The *Sabha Mandap* has 52 delicately carved pillars and is open from all the four sides. The whole structure is covered with the plenty of sculptural dance panels both solo and in group and also of various Gods and Goddesses. The intricate carvings depict scenes from the epics and from the life of Krishna. The Sun Temple itself is beautifully carved and an ideal

location for the Gujarat Government Modhera Dance Festival held in January every year.



Fig. 33: Dancers and musicians on the outer wall of Temple

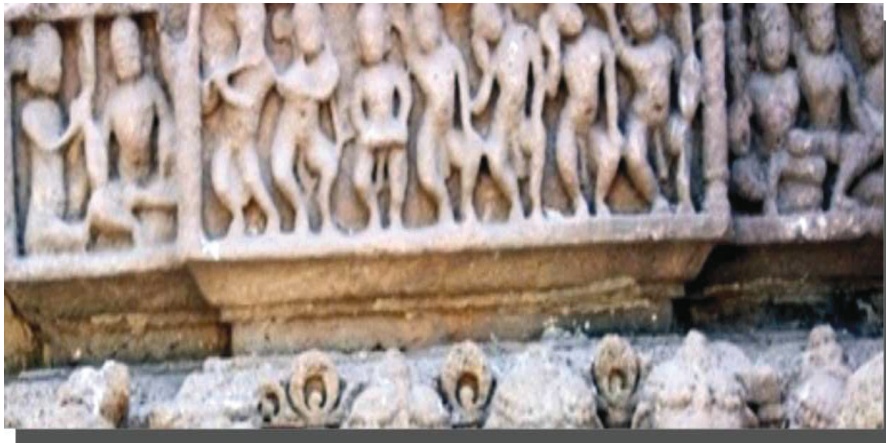


Fig. 34: Modhera, Group of dancers and musicians.

SHAMLAJI TEMPLE, GUJARAT



Fig. 35: Shamlaji Temple, Gujarat

SHAMLAJI Temple (11th century), Gujarat, is built on the banks of the river Meswo, nestled in the Aravalli hill range. It is dedicated to Lord Krishna and held in esteem as one of the 154 Vaishnav pilgrimage sites. Believed to have been built during the Solanki rule in Gujarat in the 11th century, it appears to have been renovated about 500 years ago as the temple inscriptions suggest. The local tribal (Bhil) communities in the area also venerate the Shamalaji deity as *Kaliyo Dev* and the traditional popular fair held here on Kartika Poornima is celebrated by all devotees with much fervour. The Shamlaji temple has a white flag installed at the top of the temple shikhara and so it is also referred to as the *DouliDhwaja* Wada in Gujarati. The temple is administered under the erstwhile Idar state rulers.



Fig. 36: The dancer is in the *araimandi* position with back *swastika*, and is accompanied by musicians playing *mridangam*, flute, and *karaatala* (cymbals).



Fig.37: A female dancer with lady musicians.

TARANGAJI JAIN TEMPLE- GUJARAT



Fig. 38: Tarangaji Jain Temple

TARANGAJI Jain Temple (12th century), Gujarat, nestles amongst the Taranga Hills that are part of the Aravalli hill range, near the north Gujarat town of Vadnagar. This area has an ancient connection with Buddhist and Jain devotees. The Tarangaji Jain *Mandir* is a *derasar* still in fine condition and is believed to have been

commissioned by the Solanki rulers of that area. Its central image is that of a 5 meter tall sculpture of Shree Ajitnath, the second Jain tirthankar. On the climb to the *derasar*, one passes by the shrines to Devi Taranamata and Devi Dharanamata which house the images of the Buddhist goddess Tara. There are rock caves and shelters on the way and carved terracotta and stone images of Buddha are also seen.



Fig.39 & 40: Two panels showing classical dance positions and musicians

PALITANA TEMPLE- GUJARAT



Fig. 41: Palitana Temple

PALITANA temples are located on Shatrunjaya hill by the city of Palitana, Gujarat. The temple complex is one of the largest Jain temple conglomerates spread across acres of the Palitana hills. Beautifully designed, most of the temples are elegantly ornamented with abstract carvings and figurative sculptures.

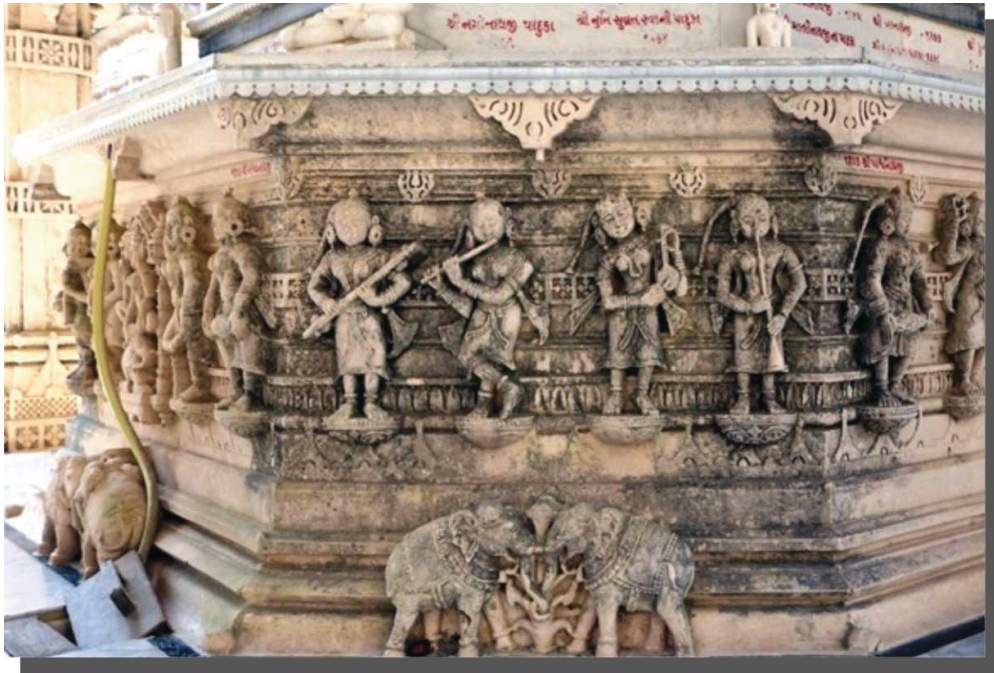


Fig. 42: Women Musician Panel

This site on Shatrunjaya hill is considered sacred by Svetambara Jains. There are approximately 900 temples in the complex. Kumarpal Solanki, a great Jain patron, probably built the earliest temples. The buildings are carved in marble and are considered to be prayers in stone. It is said that sculptors' skills and capacity to carve with abrasive cords (not tools) the intricate designs was paid on the basis of the marble dust that they had collected every evening. The interiors are intricately carved, with carved ceilings with geometrical lace designs, clustered together to form a canopy. The sculptural panels adhere to the tradition of Shilpashastra. One is able to see similar bands starting with flora, animals, humans and so on.



Fig. 43: This is an image of Talanudharini, a celestial figure as indicated by the four hands. In keeping with her exalted status, the dancers and musicians are smaller and placed at a lower level.

PANCHASARA PARSHVANATH Jain Derasar at Patan in Gujarat, dates back to the Solanki era, and is characteristic of Jain temple architecture with the elaborate floral carvings in stone and extensive use of white marble for floors and pillars. Patan, in central Gujarat, was a major centre of Jainism. From 9th to 14th Vikram



centuries several kings of Chawda dynasty ruled this area followed by Jain Kings of Chalukya-Solanki dynasty. During this period several Jain temples were built. During Vikram years 1252 and 1356, the army of Allauddin destroyed temples here and later many were constructed. Patan is only one such city where from the very day of its foundation in Vikram year 802 till to-date hundreds of Jain temples have existed. Patan is indeed a treasure house of Jain literature, art and culture.

Fig. 44: The panel shows two female dancers.

THE UTTARA CHIDAMBARAMNATARAJA TEMPLE - SATARA, MAHARASTRA



Fig. 45: The Uttara Chidambaram Nataraja Temple, Satara - Maharashtra

THE UTTARA CHIDAMBARAMNATARAJA temple was built in Satara Maharashtra in 1990s. It is a replica of Nataraja temple at Chidambaram in Tamil-Nadu. The temple is called '*Uttara*' Chidamaram since it is north of the first *Chidambaram* at Tamilnadu. In this temple, Nataraj and Goddess Shivakamasundari have come to stay. Main *Mandapa* of the temple is supported by 18 pillars, carved beautifully, similar to the original *Chidambaram* temple. The temple has unique and rich 108 Nataraja *Karanas*. The newly sculpted set of 108 Karanas are put around the sanctum. These new sculptures have tried to capture the moments of the movements. Here each Karana has a combined figure of Shiva and Parvati, different from the ones of Chidambaram, which has only Shiva. The togetherness is able to create the animation of the movement. The *Natyashastra shloka*-s are written in Nagari script at the bottom.

These Karana-s, are definitely architectural embellishments but they have now become the visual evidences of continuum of the age old everlasting connection between dance and sculpture in India.

I was very enthralled and the image captivated my heart by seeing the image of the dancer in the Maharaja Fatesinh Museum of the Laxmi Vilas Palace, Baroda. Here is one unique sculpture that is specifically made by Fellini, a visiting European sculptor at the Baroda Court in the early part of the 20th century. This depicts a court dancer and I am sure the dancer may have served as a model herself. She and a group of musicians and another dancer came to Baroda from Tanjore as part of the dowry with the princess who was married to Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda. It is the live history for me.

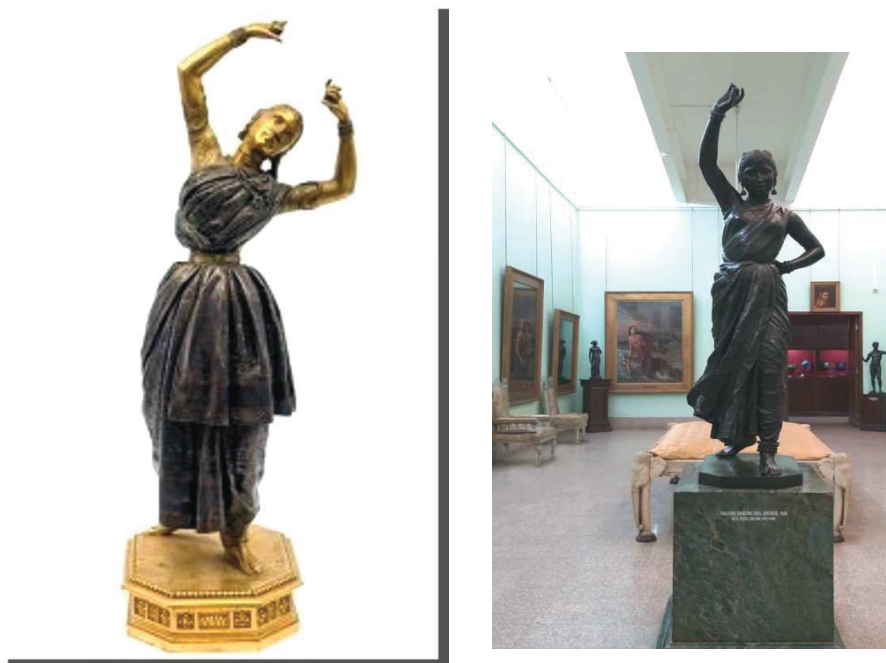


Fig. 46 and 47 : Dancer of Baroda Court

From the un-countable number of sculptures that we have across the length and breadth of our vast country, across the history of 2000 years, so many styles of sculptures have evolved in different times. It was not at all easy for me to select a few for the specific purpose of showing the continuity of a solo classical dance style. We have tried taking a few prominent and very specific temple sculptures of South and from Gujarat my region. After this work and from my studies, I definitely believe that there existed solo classical dance in India at least from 2000 years and the *Natyashastra* and *Shilpashastra* have run parallel supporting and enhancing each other in their knowledge!

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