



## CHAPTER 2

### THE CODIFICATION OF SOLO CLASSICAL DANCE WITH RESPECT TO SANSKRIT TREATIES, STARTING WITH *NATYASHASTRA*



## THE BEGINNINGS

Even before dance attracted attention as a serious subject of study, references to dancing and dancers appear in the earliest literature of the vast Indian sub-continent, stretching from Afghanistan to Burma. The study of the thesis begins with my trying to trace the beginning and continuity of dancing and that too of solo dancing in India through the literary sources, specially the Sanskrit treatises of Dramaturgy and Dance.

From Bharatamuni's *Natyashastra*, also known as the fifth Veda, we come across a very graphic description of a dance performance described there in. (N.S Chap. 4 Shloka 273-287)<sup>1</sup>. It proves conclusively that dance was already an evolved performance form practiced often and popularly in the public domain. In the practical tradition of theory following praxis, Bharatamuni was putting it in a structured format, identifying the correct grammar of the dance language. The Hindu epics also have numerous references to courtesans and women dancers, as normal and necessary adjunct to both palace and temple.

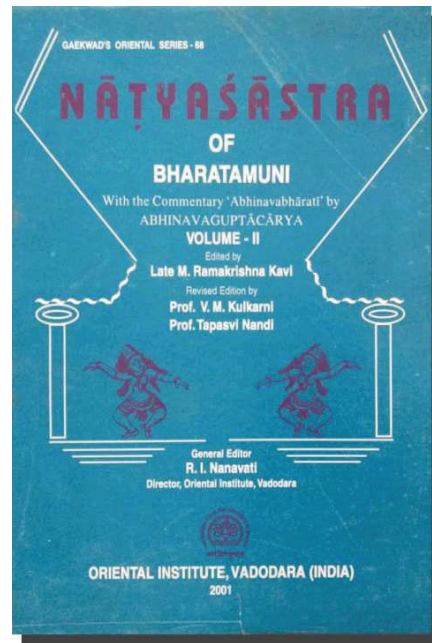
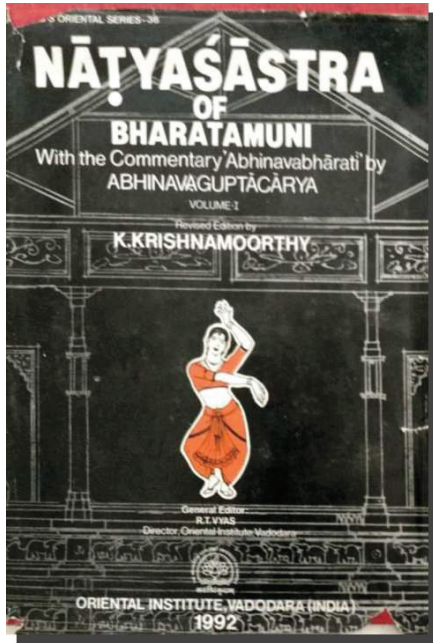
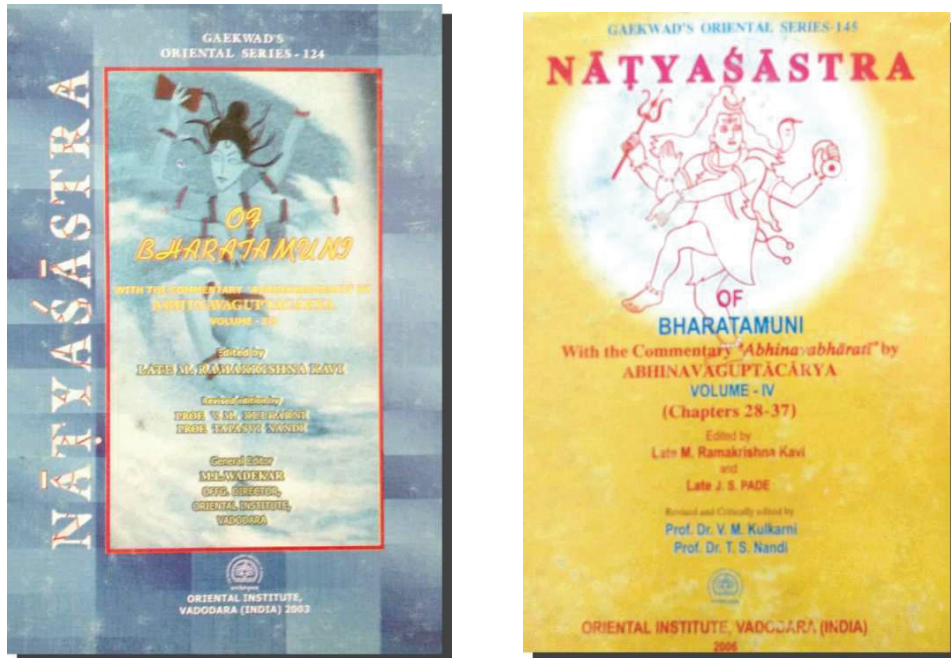


Fig.1 *Natyashastra* Of Bharatamuni VOL. I & II, Oriental Institute, Vadodara



The gods in heaven were entertained by the dances, the *apsaras*. Rambha, Menaka, Urvashi and others performed extensively in the darbar of Indra. Their dancing was both solo and in groups. These nymphs danced to the music of the *gandharvas*. They danced to please *Devas*. Often, kings were invited by Indra to judge the dance contest of the *apsaras*. They were the court dancers, those who entertained the king and his guests. Vishnu dancing as Mohini insisted that the *asura*, match her in dancing step for step if he wished to marry her. We know what happened then. Thus existence of solo dancing has ample examples in our mythology!



**Fig. 2 *Natyashastra* of Bharatamuni VOL. III & IV, Oriental Institute, Vadodara**

The *Natyashastra* chapter 4, *Tandav Lakshan*, devoted entirely to Dance therefore becomes the earliest known comprehensive literature in Sanskrit on the subject. Dance was seen by Bharatamuni as an introduction and ancillary to dramatic performance, placed there by Lord Shiva who prescribed it to enhance the beauty of such a performance. The *Natyashastra* focuses on the performance of Dance, expanding its presentation, content and context. It combines theory and practice carefully and seamlessly, formulating the concepts of dance as it describes the techniques. These concepts introduced and discussed in the *Natyashastra* continue, even today, to remain central to all discussions on Indian Dance.

Bharatamuni uses two terms for dance – *tandava* and *nritta* (Chap 4, *Shloka*. 259-61). It is explained in the following way – *rechakas*, *angaharas* and the *pindibandhas* were created by Shiva and then given to sage Tandu. The method of dancing which was then created by him (Tandu), accompanied by appropriate songs and drums, was known as *Tandava*. Taken as a *karmadharaya samasa*, the compound *nrittaprayoga* in the last line of this passage equates *tandava* with *nritta*.<sup>2</sup> *Nritta* is described as an art form which is beautified with *angaharas* made of various *karanas*. He describes these *karanas* and *angaharas* in detail, with a combination of 6 to 9 *karanas* making one *angahara* as a basic dance sequence. He then describes the *rechaka*, a basic circular movement of the feet, hips, hands and neck, as fundamental to a dance performance. He goes on to describe the practise of *pindis* as of four types of group formations – *pindi*, *shranakhalika*, *latabandha*, *bhedyaka*. *Pindibandha* is a roundish mass, *shranakhalika* is a cluster, *lata* is entwined in a net and *bhedyaka* is performed with *nritta*.

Though the precise nature of the formations is not easy to understand from this passage, later scholars have tried to explain and interpret it in simpler ways. Dr. V Raghavan, in his introduction to *Nrityaratnavali* has suggested an improved reading of the edited version of the commentary on *pindibandhas* and explains it thus: The employment of female dancers, joining with one another (in a dance figure) is *pindibandha*, the symmetrical form of a figure like a pair of lotuses joined in one stalk, the asymmetric form of a lotus stalk held in the beak of a swan. *Gulma* is expressed by the word chain as performed by three *nayikas*. Through its capacity for diversity, *Latabandha* of symmetrical and asymmetrical nature as demonstrated by four female dancers becomes entertaining.<sup>3</sup>

It is generally believed that Bharatamuni's *Natyashastra* was such an authoritative text that even if there were any other written literature on Dance before that, they would not have survived or would have become redundant. Written between 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD <sup>4</sup>, *Natyashastra*'s powerful influence was exerted over subsequent works as well. This was not just because of its chronological advantage but because of the vast range of dramaturgy including dance topics it brought under its scanner, from stage architecture to the most complex of body

movements. However, it must be acknowledged that there were other authors such as Kohala, Panini, Matanga who wrote about dance before the *Natyashastra*. Extensive references to these works are made by later authors such as Abhinavagupta, Sarangadeva, Kallinatha, Maharana Kumbha, Vedasuri, and one of the most quoted sources is a work by Kohala, believed to be lost.

Most of the Sanskrit manuals on dance after the *Natyashastra* were written between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. While they do follow the *Natyashastra* in their main accounts, one can see strong efforts made to document regional varieties and variations as well in these books. Amongst the most important books to do so is the *Samgitaratnakara* of Sarangadeva. In fact, the *Samgitaratnakara* encouraged this so persuasively that many of the books written between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries not only documented a vast number of regional dance forms but also began to incorporate more and more regional terms in the dance language.

### **AFTER NATYASHASTRA: ABHINAVABHARATI OF ABHINAVAGUPTA**

Dance literature is classified according to three time periods. The first period begins from before Bharatamuni and ends with Abhinavagupta in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Though few works from this period are available, the overwhelming presence of *Natyashastra* in this period, makes up for its significance to a scholarly study of dance practice in the Indian sub-continent. Abhinavagupta's commentary *Abhinavabharati* on the *Natyashastra*, towards the close of this period, is also very important. Many scholars believe that Kohala wrote an equally authoritative text during this period<sup>4</sup>. This is evident from the fact that almost every important Sanskrit scholar-writer on dance quotes from it or refers to it. Unfortunately, it is lost as have treatises by writers such as Bhattatota, Bhattatandu, Sankuka, Lollata, Dattila, Matanga.

In Abhinavagupta's commentary we find more terms representing concepts and categories of dancing than there are in the *Natyashastra*. This shows that such terms and what they represented had by this time passed into general use, as is also attested by their use in other kinds of literature of the time. It is evident that by

Abhinavagupta's time dance had proliferated into many more forms than known by Bharata. But it is also clear that Abhinavagupta views them as embodiments of the basic concepts stated by Bharata, for he often cites instances of such new categories of dancing to elucidate Bharata's concepts. The proliferation of concepts and categories after Bharata's time revealed by Abhinavagupta's commentary, is especially seen in his classification and interpretation of *nritta*. For him, *tandava* and *nritta* were synonymous. He has laid out the seven stages for the development of *nritta*. He classifies it into seven categories:

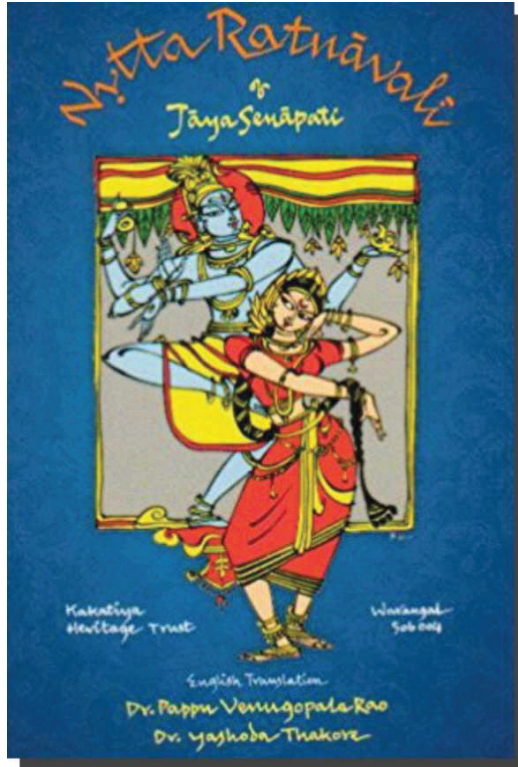


**Fig 3. Acharya Abhinav Gupta**

*shuddha* (pure or abstract dance), *gita-kavya-abhinayonmukha* (a dance that expresses the meaning of a song), *uddhata* (vigorous dance), *sukumura* (a delicate dance), *uddhata-misrita-masrannritta* (a delicate dance mixed with vigorous movements), *masranamisroddhata* (a vigorous dance mixed with delicate movements), and *vadya-talanusari* (dance following instrumental music and rhythm). Since many of these dances were expressive, they required *abhinaya* or interpretative movements. Such dances were later known as *nritya*. In this first period of evolution of dance nobody appears to have dealt with the nature of *nritya*. Dhananjaya, who was a contemporary of Abhinavagupta, was the first to recognize

*nritya* as a distinct category of dance, but he said nothing about its nature except that it belonged to the *marga* tradition and is *bhavasraya* (expressing emotions). The *Abhinayadarpana*'s fuller treatment of *nritya* suggests a later date when the concept had developed beyond Dhananjaya and Abhinavagupta.

## **SAMGITARATNAKARA, NRITTARATNAVALI AND OTHER TEXTS**



The second period extends from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> This period is important because new trends in dancing were recorded and the distinctions between the *margi* and *desi* became pronounced. Dance began to be discussed in its own right rather than as a part of dramatic performance. Vocal and instrumental music also began to be accorded independent status.

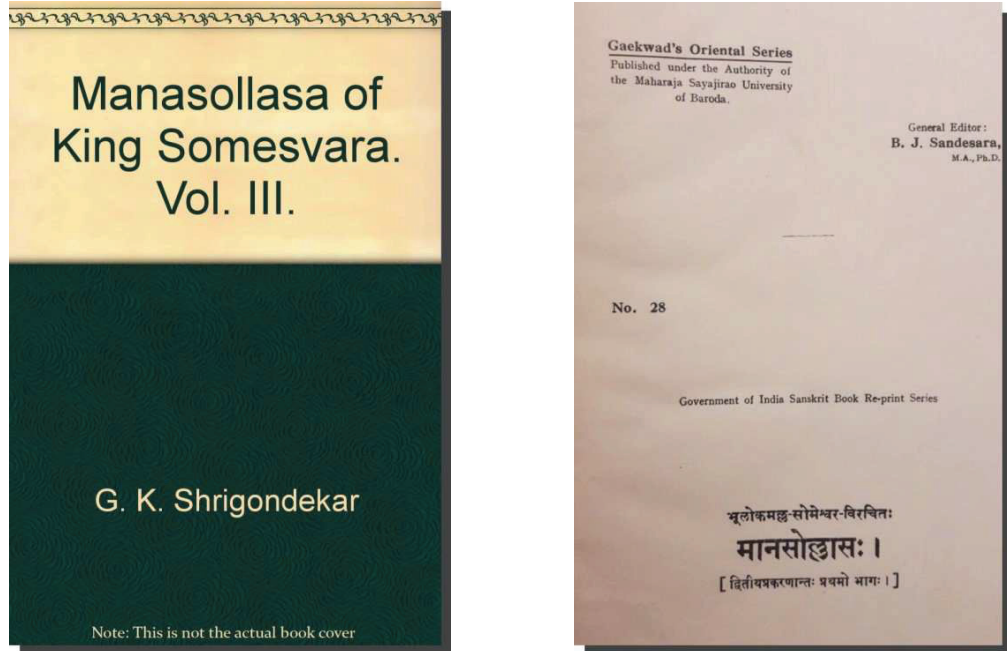
(Fig. 4. *Nrityaratnavali* by Jaya Senapati)

*Nrityaratnavali* by Jaya Senapati is an important work from this period wholly devoted to dance alone. It is believed to be a part of a much larger treatise in which music is also covered, under a sub-headin *Gitaratnavali*.<sup>6</sup> According to Raghavan, “The *Samgitaratnakara* follows Abhinavagupta so closely that in many places it forms merely a metrical recast of the *Abhinavabharati*.<sup>7</sup> Jaya Senapati does the same in the discussion of the *marga* dance in his *Nrityaratnavali*. So, what is often taken today as the influence of the *Natyashastra* in these texts is in reality the influence of Abhinavagupta. Being from Kashmir, where the study of *natya* had at that time (of the ruler Jayapida, a patron of *natya*) seen a kind of renaissance, the importance of



*natya* and *sangita* were emphasized by Abhinavgupta. This is also borne out by Kalhana who refers to *natya* presentations by courtesans in his book, *Rajatarangini*.

*Nrittaratnavali* has eight chapters devoted entirely to dancing, four to the *margi* and four to the *desi* traditions. It is one of the few treatises that deals exclusively with dance. The scholar V Raghavan has also critically edited the text *Nrittaratnavali* with a detailed introduction. He compares the work with other contemporary writings. Its seventh chapter discusses auspicious dates for beginning of dance lessons (the term he uses in *nritya*), the characteristics of the stage and discussion on presentation, the time and location of dance performances, the worship of Ganesa, methods of practice, the qualification desirable in a *nartaki*, dance costumes, hand-gestures for practice, and the accompanying vocal and instrumental music. The chapter then concentrates on describing individual dance pieces, calling them *desi nritya*. These include *perani*, *pekkhana*, *suda*, *rasaka*, *charchari*, *natyasatra*, *shivapriya*, *chintu*, *kanduka*, *bhandika*, *ghatisani*, *charana*, *bahurupa*, *kollata* and *gaundali*.



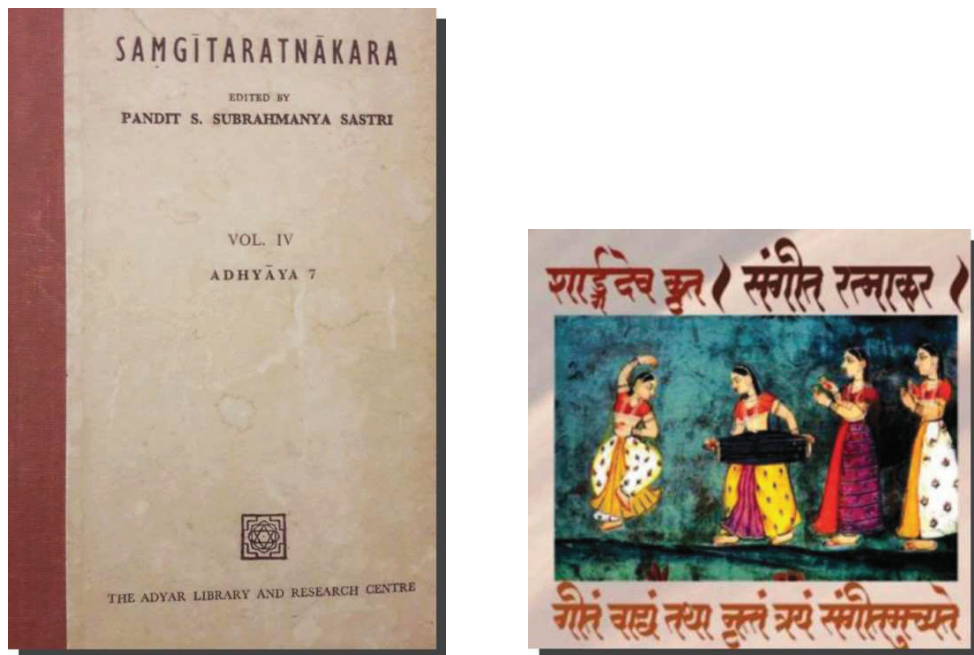
**Fig 5. *Manasollasa* of Someshvara Gaekwad's Oriental Series Collection**

*Manasollasa* is a treatise from the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Someshvara, also known as Abhilashitarthachintamani.<sup>8</sup> It describes six varieties of dancing and six types of *Nayikas* (*nartakas*). *Nartaka* stands for performers in general and includes *Nartaki*



(female dancer), *Nata* (actor), *Nartaka* (male dancer), *Vaitalika* (bard), *Charana* (wandering performer), and *Kollatika* (acrobat). The texts that followed *Manasollasa* from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries drew heavily upon it, in various ways including offering their own variations and understanding as per the time they were written in. But the most valuable contribution to remember is that this treatise greatly encouraged interest in scholars to understand and document the regional varieties and to incorporate more and more regional dance terms in the formal dance theoretical language.

One of the most important treatise that included detailed discussions on the regional or *desi* styles is the *Samgitaratnakara*. *Samgitaratnakara* is divided into seven chapters dealing with *Svara*, *Raga*, *Prakirna*, *Prabandha*, *Tala*, *Vadhya*, and *Nritya*. This is a very important text and this is evident from the fact that many commentaries were written on it.



**Fig.6. *Samgitaratnakara* of Sarangdeva , The Adyar Libraby And Research Center, Vol- IV**

In *Samgitaratnakara* we find the delineation of guidelines for dance practice. Since it was the tradition to find the auspicious time during the day for wholesome pursuits, the dancer also has to begin practice at an auspicious hour, starting with prayers to

Ganesha (Vighneshwara) to ward off obstacles, to Sarasvati, the goddess of all learning, to the Holy Trinity, to the deity installed on the stage, to the cymbals and other musical instruments that will be used in the practice/performance. After that, the dancer pays obeisance to the guru, other participants in the dance, the two pillars and the bar. Flowers, musk, sandal paste, pan leaves, incense, the traditional oil lamps, *naivedhya*, etc., were the customary paraphernalia that the dancer must make sure are available.

The dancer's credentials were also very sharply described indicating that there was a clear understanding of the dancer's physical attributes that would help in expressing the content of the text. The *Nayika's* age corresponds to her physical and mental state. The *mugadha nayika*, in the glow of adolescence, will exhibit a predisposition for love play but is shy and holds back, concealing limbs believed to be seats of erotic sensitiveness -- rosy lips, heaving breasts, sparkling cheeks, delicate hips and shapely thighs.



**Fig. 7 Prof. Dr. Parul Shah As *Mugdha Nayika***

The youthful *madhya nayika* embodies attractiveness, with her full hips, rounded thighs and high and firm breasts. The adult *pragalbha nayika* is voluptuous with

intoxicating charm, adept in amorous sport and a protégé of cupid himself. These three are the ideal *nayikas*. Neither a *atipragalbha* nor a *bala* was believed to make for a good or attractive *nayika* – one would be at an age when swift movement might be difficult and there would be a certain lack of spirit and charm; and the other would be too young to portray feelings with confidence. (Samgitaratnakara, Vol- IV, Chap- 7, Shloka 1224-1230)

Whether one agrees with this or not in this day and age, in olden times, the primary attribute for a *nayika* was physical attractiveness as well as the mental and emotional strength. This was also elaborately described in the texts – well-proportioned, shapely limbs, a beautiful face that exudes charm, wide, large eyes, full, lush lips, sparkling teeth, slender wrists, a delicate neck, clear complexion, and so on. The *nayika* also had to have a good temperament, courage and generosity - these were traits indispensable for a *nayika*. This is important because dancing is a delicate art, focusing on highly symbolic visual presentation that centers around beauty of form, clean-cut movements, and a certain genuineness of purpose. (Samgitaratnakara, Vol - IV, Chap -7, Shloka no.1231-1236)



**Fig 8. Smt. Anjali Merh Teaching her students at Department of Dance, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Mid 1970s.**

The importance of dance teachers, their ability and creativity as trainers, and the role they played in their wards' success as *narthaki*, have been documented in Tamil

classics like *Silapadikaram* and *Jeeva Chintamani*, which poetically describe the skill, versatility and talent of *nartakis* Madhavi and Gandharva Datta respectively. They were trained by their great teachers and their potentialities tapped into. Authors Saragadeva, Ilango and Tirutakatevar understood well the contribution of a dedicated teacher in the development of their talented student-*Nartakis*. Great dance teachers understand the magnetic glow of an awakened personality, and the absolute mastery of technique integrating the body and soul of the dance art. They have the skill to harness a live sense of rhythm and tempo in all their subtleties, expertise in conducting the dance ensemble. The guru-s have a deep understanding of individual musical instruments, a sound knowledge of tradition acquired from seasoned veterans, a capacity to improve songs and rhythmic sequences, and a flair for innovation and creativity in style.



**Fig 9. Prof. Dr. Parul Shah teaching her student Ms. Ami Parikh**

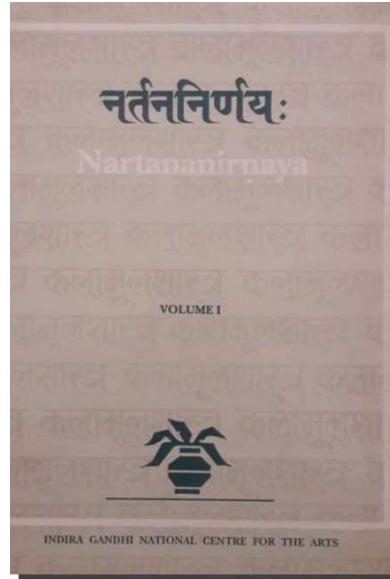
### **NARTANANIRNAYA AND OTHER TEXT**

The third period extends from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The 16<sup>th</sup> century work, *Nartananirnaya* by Pundarika Vitthala has four *prakaranas* namely, *TaladharirPrakaranas*, *Mrdangi Prakaranas*, *Gayaka Prakranas – Ragadhikarana*, and *Nartaka Prakaranas – Nartanadhikaranas*. The final chapter in the book is



devoted to dance and sub-divided into two *adhikaranas* – *nartana* and *nritya*. In certain manuscripts of the book, it appears that the author defines *nartana*, *natya*, etc. somewhat differently (1-9). There is superiority of verbal representation (*Vachikabhinaya*) over others (11,12). There is exemption of *pusta* in *Aharyabhinaya* for *nritya*, and (4) details differentiating *chittavrityapika* from *Bahyavastavanukarini* in *dharma* (40-57) are novel features of this *adhikarana*. *Nartananirnaya* also mentions that *gharghara* was a distinctive feature of the *desi* dances of southern India.<sup>9</sup>

The *desi* dance has been classified into five types in *Charyalankarnatanm and Perunyadikalashantnartanani* in text *Bhartarnava* by Nandikeshvara. These look more like the popular forms prevalent in those times. (Chap : 13, Shloka no: 729-730 & Chap : 14 , Shloka 863-64). Sangit (Dance) texts like *Sangitadamodara*, *Nartananirnaya*, *Sangitadarpana*, etc. which were prevalent during this time in the neighboring states of Tamilnadu gave two broad divisions of *desi* style of dancing. They were *baddha nritya* and *anibaddha nritya*. *Baddha nritya* has eleven varieties -- *Mukhachali*, *urupa* (twelve varieties), *dhuvada* (twelve varieties), *vidhutagava* (twelve varieties), *brahmari* (five), *sabdanritya*, *svaramanta nritya*, *gita nritya*, *cindu nritya* (six), *daru* (two) and *dhruvapada*.



**Fig. 10. *Nartananirnaya* by Pundarika Vitthala**

*Anibhaddha nrityas* have twenty different styles and they are: *Namavali, yati, neri, salaganeri, sankirnaneri, bhavaneri, nadaneri, kaivartana, muru, rattamuru, talarupaka, gundala, kamala, natajanuka, mandi, mudupa, murandari, kudupa, tiryakarana, lavani, chindu*. Two varieties of dance which were not mentioned in either group are *jakkadi* and *rasa nritya*. A few items from both the classifications were very popular in solo performances. The performer picked and chose items from *baddha* and *anibaddha* varieties to present a balanced repertoire. For example the items in solo recitals were *mukhachali, sabdanritya, dhuvada, gitanritya, chindu nritya, dhruvapada, daru, yati, kundupa, lavani*. *Jakkadi* and *rasa nritya* were performed as group productions.

### **MOVEMENT IN DANCE: TANDAVA, LASYA, NRITTA, LASYANGA**

Bharatamuni did not make the distinction of *tandava* and *lasya* according to what males or females do. He uses the word *lasya* in the context of *lasyanga-s* which are fully interpretative, and where the heroine who is in love expresses her state of mind and emotions. But in the later treatises, *lasyanga* was linked to a female dancer. It was more related to the *angika* and *nritya* performed by a female dancer. Saradatanaya in *Bhavaprakashana* states that *nritya* is one which is executed by *karana-s* and *angahara-s*. He doesn't explicitly state that *tandava* and *lasya* are a part of *nritya*. The *gita* which contains *uddhata karana, angahara* with the *arabhati vritti* is "*tandava*". No other treatise tries to include the *vritti-s* while explaining the elements of *nritya*. He divides the *tandava* into *chanda, ucchanda* and *prachanda*. He defines *lasya* as the *gita* which contains *lalit angahara* in *lalitlaya* infused with the *Kaishiki vritti*.

Sarangdeva is very clear as to what *nritya* is and what could be its divisions and its types. He says *nritya* is movement of various parts of the body which is not suggestive of any particular meaning. He divides this into two elements, *tandava* and *lasya*.

The *Natyashastra* mentions twelve types of *Lasyanga*. The *dasharupaka* mentions ten types of *lasyanga*, viz. *geyapada, sthit-paathaya, aasina, pushpagandika,*

*prachhedaka, trishula, saindhyavakhya, dvighudhaka, uttamottaka, ukt-prayukta.* *Natyashastra* describes two more types apart from the above ten, viz. *Vichitrapada* and *bhavita*. Apart from this, in *Nrityaratnavali* of JayaSenapati mentions 12 types of *lasyanga*. The seventh section of *Samgitaratnakara* and *Sangitaratnavali* also describes Lasyang-s. These appear to have been selected from among the 12 types listed in the *Natyashastra* and the 47 listed by Ashokmall in *Nrityaadhyaya*. The *Nrityadhyay* of Ashokmall and the *Nrttaratnakosa* of Maharana Kumbha also describes *lasyanga* in a lot of detail. There are 12 *Maargasthitalasyanga* and 36 *desi lasyanga* according Ashokmalla. <sup>10</sup>(*Shloka 1487-1512*) The 19<sup>th</sup> section of *Natyashastra* has a detailed description of the application of *lasya*.

### **LASYANGA IN NATYASHASTRA**

The following types of *Lasyanga* are described in *Natyashastra*. (*Chap- 19, Shloka 119-137 GOS*)

1. *Geyapada*: The *nayika* performs while singing a song, which is directed towards her lover.
2. *Sthitapathya*: The *nayika* performs a dance full of the *shringara-rasa*, creating an ambience of this *rasa*. In this *lasyanga* one has the same effect as in a *padam* performed in *Bharatanatyam* which has a predominance of *shringaraabhinaya*.
3. *Aasina*: The *nayika* expresses sadness because of separation from a loved one, often sitting in one place. There is no accompanying music.
4. *Pushpagandika*: The *nayika* takes on the character of a man and converses with her friend to the accompaniment of music. This *lasyanga* has the predominance of *aharya*, where in the *nayika* enters another character losing her own identity in the new one she has assumed. This *lasyanga* is generally seen in almost all dance forms. For example, in *Bharatanatyam*, the *nayika* herself portrays the multiple roles of lover, beloved, friend and so on in one song itself.
5. *Prachhedaka* : In this *lasyanga*, the predominant emotion is that of sadness triggered by separation from the beloved. It is reflected in the darkness of the night. The *nayika* is unhappy and looking at the stars and the moon sparkling in the night, her sadness deepens. It reminds one of the *virahotkanthita nayika*, at times seen in the *Padams* in *Bharatanatyam*.

6. *Trimudha* : The *nayika* praises her lover (hero- *nayaka*)’s bravery and courage. It also has the overtones of a victory song, and reminds one of some of the *kirtanam* in the *Bharatanatyam* repertoire.
7. *Saindhava* : This *lasyanga* depicts betrayal; the *nayika* arrives at the rendezvous, but there is no sign of the lover who has set up the meeting. The disappointed *nayika* feels betrayed and sad at being thus insulted and cheated.
8. *Dvimudhaka*: This *lasyanga* involves dancing in circular formations. It has movements that remind one of folk forms like Kummi and Raas Garba.
9. *Uttamotiamaka* : The *nayika* sings a love song that describes Kamadeva, depicting the expressions of different shades of love and loveplay. In *Bharatanatyam*, this corresponds to the items, *Shabdam* and *Varnam*.
10. *Vichitrapada* : The *nayika* paints a picture of her lover, and feels sad looking at it.
11. *Uttapratyukta* : The *nayika* asks questions and also answers them. This *lasyanga* expresses multiple emotions like joy, anger, argument, love, etc. and its use can be seen in present-day items like *Varnam*, *Shabdam*, and so on.
12. *Bhaavit* : The *nayika* sees her lover in her dreams, and she recounts the entire dream to her friend. This *lasyanga* is often seen in the *Varnam*.

In *Samgitaratnakara*, Sharangadev has identified ten *lasyanga* and calls them as *desi lasyanga*. The ten *lasyanga* listed by Sharangdev are as below (SR. Chap - 7, Shloka 1209 - 1215) :

1. *Chaali* : Not very fast and not very slow, but at medium pace moving together with *tryashrataaprachur* feet, waist and biceps.
2. *Chaalivad* : When the *Chaalilasyanga* is performed at a faster pace and multiple times.
3. *Ladhi* : A delicate dance performed with joyful and elegant movements of the waist and the arms.
4. *Sukam* : When the performer is wearing the *karnabhushan* that are *leelayukt* and *shobhayman*; the dance has frequent pauses and yet is fast in pace, and the movement of the ornaments worn in the ears becomes extremely captivating, and its value is held more than the *shringaar bhaav*. The advanced expressions of the nose, eyes and eyebrows as well the ideas of the mind are captivating and present.



5. *Urangann*: The dance is performed with pauses and at fast pace with beautiful movements of the shoulders and the chest and slanting expressions.
6. *Dhasaak* : Catching a very captivating pace, with chest movements.
7. *Angahaar* : The movements of half the body, full of rhythm and *laalitya*, in a sequential manner like *dhatushya*.
8. *Othaar* : Dance performed with somewhat slow and slanted movements of the head.
9. *Mann* : When a *sthayi* pace is established from the very start of the performance, and the dance is performed to match this pace.
10. *Vihasi* : The acting and dance full of *shringaar rasa* that captivates the minds.

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A D, one finds many references of the elements of *Lasya* and *Lasyanga* in several plays and dramas. They appear as short cameos or as an integral part of the narrative that strengthen the theme of the narrative. Some of the strong examples are Malavika's dance in Kalidasa's *Malvikagnimitra*, Harshapadika's performance in *Shakuntalam* (Act V), or Malayavati singing with the *Vinain Nagananda*. Among the early writers on *Alamkara Shashtra*, Dandin specifically mentions *lasya* as a form of dance.<sup>11</sup> Kavi Rajshekhara in his *Karpurmanjari* refers to *lasya*<sup>12</sup>. It is believed that components of dance in a theatrical performance were appreciated and enjoyed by the public as a separate art form. Bharatamuni took cognizance of this when he wrote down the tenets of dramaturgy in the *Natyashastra*. Bharatamuni's extensive exposition on this topic, wherein he describes *Lasya* in great detail, contextualizes it in three ways– firstly, *Lasyanga*, its *Nritta* part, involving only pure dance, without any *Abhinaya*, is described in connection with the stage preliminaries called *Purvaranga*(Ch.5). In the chapter devoted to the ten varieties of drama, he says that it is to be danced by a single danseuse, *Ekaharya* or *Ekaprayojya*, and that the performance comprises a series of emotional pieces which may be interlinked into a continuous theme (*ekartha*) or each standing separately (*Prthagartha*) as in a *Bharata Natyam* recital today.

There are Tamil treatises on dance with Sanskrit titles, for example, *Bharathasenapathiyam* by Senapathi which could have been a translation of a Sanskrit work into Tamil. Another work in Tamil is *Panchabharatham* by Narada. Five more works ascribed to Narada, with the word *Bharatham* in title are

*Adibharatham, Nandibharatham, Matangabharatham, Arjunabharatham* and *Hanumanthabharatham*. Dr. R Kalarani explains how in the text *Panchamarabu* is described as a complete repertoire consisting of sixteen varieties of dance items. They are *adi, anu, prakasam, pitam, pushpanjali, puyangam, desi, desiyottu, nidi, nilal, vaippu, vaguppu, vakkyam, kavtuvam, tunukku* and *dandapadam*. Some of these items have Sanskrit names like *pushpanjali, kavtuvam, desi* and *dandapadam (dandalasya)*, which were continued in the dance repertoire of the later centuries.

Thus we get the serious, theoretical reference to the practice of a single dancer performing several pieces one after the other, and the seeds of the evolution of the ‘Solo (single performer) Margam’ appears to have been sown here.

Raghavan examines these *Lasyangas* and their relationship to the themes or ideas of the items selected by modern-day performer in a solo recital. The *Lasya* and *Lasyanga* allow for full and imaginative exploration of the *rasas*, and they are often performed by a single *Nati*(dancer) assuming various roles as fit the narrative danced/enacted. In Smt. T. Balasaraswati's repertoire, there is a Tamil *padam, Niddirayil Soppanattil* which corresponds in theme to the *Bhavita* or *Bhavika* (NS Chap 19 Shloka no.136-37). Thus, the emotional themes of the *Sabdams, Varnams* and *Padams*, and even of the *Alarippu*, of the *Bharatanatyam* recital of modern times clearly reflect and show the themes of the original *Lasya*.

Thirdly, Bharatamuni describes the *Lasya* in the *Tala* chapter from the perspective of its *Prayoga* or performance. Dr. V. Raghavan offers one telling example of this, through the theme of ‘love’. “As the curtain is drawn and the members of the orchestra have taken their seats, there is, as already stated, pure instrumental music with strings and flutes first and then with voice. The next item is then described in all its *Tala* details. In the third, *Asina*, the thematic description given previously is supplemented here musically; though the *Nati* is silently acting, the orchestra plays its music which is descriptive of the hero who is occupying her thoughts; the drum is prominent in this item and the *Asina-Chans* or movements of feet or change of seated positions are done by the danseuse. In the next, occur masculine and feminine gaits, alteration of voice and instrument, and *Angahara* movements at the end of each section. In the fifth, there are three parts and it is elaborated into three ideas; the

danseuse sees here the reflection of the lover in the moonlit place, or water or mirror and, in great flurry and glee, displays herself in a sportful mood; the *Tala* here is a *Chacchputa* variety, the verses or songs in *Matra-Vrittas* like *Sirsaka*, and the melody *Kaisiki-Jati*. The next item takes off in the melody *Gandhan Jati* and *Dvikala Chacchputa-tala*; masculine expressions and dances and manifold emotions are shown here, in the next, *Saindhava*, in *Saindhavi* dialect, the movement is to be subdued and devoid of instrumental accompaniment. The *Dvimudhaka* which follows is in *Chacchputa* measure and in masculine tempo. In the last item, *Uktapratyukta*, after the heated exchanges, the dance should end in *Prasada* or a mood of peace and reconciliation between the lovers. The *Lasya* was given eleven or twelve *angas* in some recitations which shows that what Bharata gave was indicative of the nature of the *Lasya*-theme and naturally new phases and moods of love on the same lines were thought of.”<sup>13</sup>

It is amazing how this *Lasya*, for instance, is depicted all over the country, through the medium of literature, epigraphy, sculpture, painting created over the last 2000 years. The *nati*, or the solitary *nayika*, had a huge presence, physical and visual, and this presence flourished in the two main venues where dance was practiced, presented and patronized – the palace and the temple. In between these two, there invariably must have been social and festive platforms that also supported it, to be enjoyed by ordinary people in domestic and public domain. The *Kama Sutra*, the works of Kalidasa, Sudraka, Bana and Dandin, *Kuttanimata*, *Rajatarangini* and *Kathasaritsagara*, *Bhanas* – all of these paint a vivid image of the richness, beauty, appeal and popularity of this art.

Raghavan traces the development of *Lasya* in its oldest form as described by Bharata and its later history. He also traces the way it spread, and its development in different regions of the country, taking on certain features that shaped its evolution with regard to recital in medieval and modern times. One line of its history is seen as it clearly moves from Kashmir to Malwa and Saurashtra and then to Karnataka, Andhra and Tamilnadu. In both music and dance, folk and regional elements and classical and standardized forms frequently interacted mutually, mostly in a healthy way, leading to much enrichment on the side of the latter and refinement and systematization on the side of the former. There are some technical terms, even in the *Natyashastra*, for which there are no satisfactory explanations and hence could be of

a folk origin. Dance, being what it is, is naturally less amenable than music to the strict standard of a science or norm being pressed on it at all times and with all types of people who perform it. Therefore, the later treatises have continuously tried to observe all the forms coming into vogue, codify them and deal scientifically with them; they have regularly two sections in their treatment of aspects of dance, an earlier one in which the oldest and classical tradition is set forth, and called *Margi* and a later one devoted to the *desi* regional tradition.

Then in *Samgitaratnakara* and *Nartanaratnavalli*, Sarangadev and Jayappa respectively described the *Desi Lasyanga* with *desi* terminology. Some of the *desi lasyangas* have names in Sanskrit, some in Prakrit and others are in the vernacular language. *Chali*, for instance is from *chalana* to indicate simultaneous soft movements of the limbs in medium tempo. Raghavan recognizes in the *Desi Lasyangas* the ‘precursor of the movements of *Alarippu*’ wherein the *Mukha-Chali* underlines the soft, graceful movements of the neck, brow and eye, typically found in the *Alarippu*. The second *anga Chalivada* is the same as the first but in a quickened tempo. *Ladhi*, the third element, is the delicate and graceful lateral movement of the hands and the waist. The further three *arigas*, *Suka*, *Urongana*, *Dhasaka*, refer respectively to similar graceful movements of other limbs, the ears, head, arms and breasts. The seventh element given in Sanskrit as *Angahara*, refers to the bending into a bow-like curve of part of the body.

According to Raghavan, texts like the *Lasya puspanjali* of Veda, the *Sangitadarpana* of Damodara and the *Sangitamuktavali* of Devendra reveal what connoisseurs of those days witnessed in the solo performances of *nayikas*. The *Darpana* offers the following sequence of dance items: *Mukhachali*, *Yatinritta*, *Sabdachali*, *Udupa*, *Dfiruva* and other songs, *Sudasabha*, *Kvada*, *Gita*, *Chindu*, *Desi*, *Sabda-nritta* and so on. Some of these are items of a dance-recital, some different forms of dance, e.g., *Jhakkani*, *Bahurupa*, *Perani* and *Gondall*, in some of which not a female *nayika*, but a male *nayak* figured. The items given in the *Muktavali* probably keep more closely to the sequence in a solo recital of a *Nati-Pushpanjali*, *Mukhachali*, *Suddha-Yatinritta*, *Raganga*, *Yati-nritta*, *Sabdanritta*, *Rupa-nritta*, i.e., dance and *abhinaya* of song compositions, *Rupakas*, *Dhvada*, *Sabdachali*, *Sudasabda*, *Sudagita*, various *Gita-prabandhas*, then dances to compositions more definitely local, *Chindu*, *Dam*,



*Dhrupad*, etc. In this chapter we have traced the development of dance and that too the solo dance form, its development and transitions from about Pre-Bharata times to 19<sup>th</sup> century in literature.

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