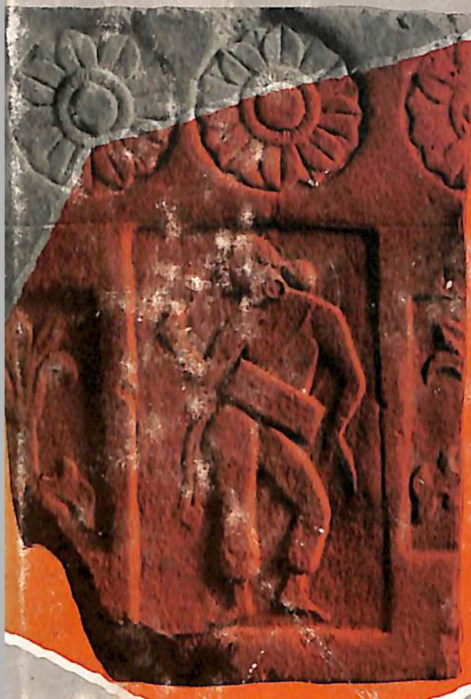
# Bharata Nāṭya and its Costume





G. S. Ghurye

DR. GHURYE'S keen sociological interest gives him a lively eye for significance and relevance. In this brochure, he presents a brief history of costume as worn by performers of Bharatanatya.

THOUGH THIS study originates from an article in a sociological journal, the author outlines and expands in the thesis an account of dance in history and literature, painting and sculpture, male dance in art and history and the dance costume in theory and practice.

DOCUMENTED BY information obtained from first-hand sources and supported by select illustrations as it is, the book should be of immense value to the student and patrons of this popular Indian dance.

*Rs. 4. 50*

# BHĀRATANĀTYA

AND

# ITS COSTUME

by

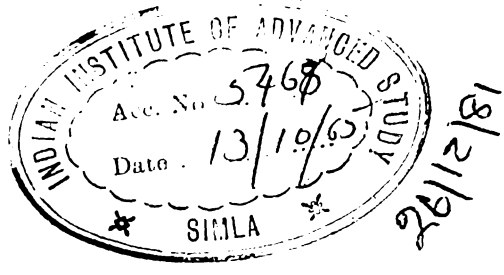
G. S. GHURYE

*Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology,*
*University of Bombay*

POPULAR BOOK DEPOT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Aborigines, so-called, and their Future*
*Culture and Society*
*Occidental Civilization*
*Indian Costume*
*Race Relations in Negro-Africa*
*Indian Sadhus*
*Family and Kin in Indo-European Culture*
*Sexual Behaviour of the American Female*
*Caste and Class in India*
*The Mahadev Kolis*
*Vidyās*






Printed by G. S. Byndor at the Jai Gujerat Printing Press, Gamdevi, Bombay - 7 and Published by G. R. Bhatkal for The Popular Book Depot, Lamington Road, Bombay - 7.

SET IN CALEDONIA LINOTYPE

# CONTENTS

# *BHĀRATANĀṬYA AND DANCE*

'Nāṭya' connotes any one or all of the three allied performances: pure dance, interpretative dance, dramatic representation. The last category, dramatic representation, may, and did, include the first two as well. 'Bhārata nāṭya' means 'nāṭya' in the style laid down by Bharata or rather Bharatamuni. And 'nāṭya' connotes only dance, pure or interpretative or both. However, as we are assured by three recent non-Indian students of the subject, the connotation of 'bhāratanāṭya' is limited now to a particular type of dance. Kay Ambrose[1], writing in 1950, observes, "It should be borne in mind that the *Bharata Natya Sastra,* whilst governing the whole of the application of the classical dances of India, should not be confused with *Bharata Natya,* which last is the term used to describe the ancient secular dance of the Tanjore *bayaderes* [courtezans]". Beryle De Zoete[2], writing in 1953 thus introduces her section on 'bharatanāṭya': "The secularization of the most famous South Indian solo dance for women, now generally called Bharata Natya, presents problems which have only been solved by a few rare individuals". However, she is conscious of the inadequacy of her description. Faubion Bowers[3], writing at about the same time, is even more pronounced in his appraisal. He says, "The home of the type of dancing known as Bharata Natya is South India, most specially the Madras presidency as it was called by the British, or Tamilnad, as it is now known. . . ."

One can understand Ram Gopal, the talented exponent of Indian dancing, observing thus about it in 1951[4]: "The term Bharata Natyam, in its restricted sense, applies to the dance technique evolved in the South of India and practised in the temples of Shiva. . . . The exact birth place of Bharata Natyam is controversial. The argument that it sprang from the Andhra district . . . does not seem sound, since the best Nataraja sculp-

1 *Classical Dances and Costumes of India,* 1950, p. 31.
2 *The Other Mind* (1953), p. 160.
3 *The Dance in India* (1953), pp. 13, 14.
4 *Indian Dancing* by Ram Gopal and Serozh Dadachanji (1951), pp. 54-55.

tures are not works of Andhra craftsmanship." Projesh Banerji, whose book *Dance of India* was first published in 1942 and of which the fifth enlarged and revised edition appeared in 1956, carefully going into the origin and history of dancing, no doubt speaks of "Bharata Natyam of the South," yet is at great pains to trace its origin, through Arjuna's exploits, to North India and observes that it "clearly shows closest affinity with the rules prescribed in that book *[Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra]*"[1]. The elaboration of Beryl De Zoete referred to above, speaks of 'bharatanāṭya' in its secular adaptation as having strayed away from its original character, though she is not quite definite about its origin in *Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra.*

Costume of dance *a priori* should be conditioned by the nature of the import and the type of technique characteristic to it. Yet, it cannot be impervious to contemporary sartorial tastes displayed in daily life. In the case of India, or rather in all cases where there is a tradition of classical culture behind such dance, it is bound to be influenced still more by the sartorial tradition of that culture. It thus becomes necessary to trace and relate in brief the history of the dance called 'bharatanāṭya.'

Some kind of dance would appear to have been an early need of man. How early in his cultural evolution man executed dance of some kind and in connection with what life-activity, we cannot positively state. But we know it definitely from the artefacts of the Upper Palaeolithic Age, i.e., of about 25,000 or 20,000 B.C., that fairly elaborate dances, both solo-masquerade and collective and even mixed ones were indulged in by the people of Europe in that age.

Though India cannot claim to possess the earliest evidence of dance, yet it appears to me that her civilization is unique in the fact that fairly advanced type of dance was a trait of culture recorded in its earliest literature and has almost a continuous history of not less than 3500 years. I believe Coomaraswamy was the first to draw attention to the Rigvedic references to dance and to a female dancer.[2]

The next reference to dance, though the author referring to it is ascribed to the late period of the 3rd or 4th century A.D.,

1 *Loc. cit.*, pp. 128-131.
2 See his contribution to the article on Dance in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th edition; *Rigveda*, I, 92, 4.

yet in content, if traditional history is to be relied upon, would appear to represent a time not far removed from the Rigvedic age, is by Kālidāsa. Kālidāsa[1] has furnished us the valuable information that King Agnivarṇa[2], whom he places about 25 generations below Rama and who is placed 87th in his dynastic lists by Pargiter[3], whiled away his time and energy not merely in the company of dancers ('nartakī') but also played on a musical instrument, evidently keeping time for them. He even went further and caught them napping in the technique of their gestures and postures ('abhinaya'). Evidently, he was such an expert in the technique of dance that he dared point out the faults of the courtezan dancers even when their preceptors in that art were present at the performance. Kālidāsa's description of the amours of the king, stating that the forehead marks of red-lead of those courtezan dancers had got dishevelled through the profuse sweat trickling down their brows through the exertion of dancing, leaves no doubt that the dance of the courtezans was fairly vigorous. It should, however, be mentioned that Mallinātha, the commentator, following the authority of the lexicon *Amarakośa,* equates a dancer ('nartakī') with sportive woman ('lāsikā'). If 'lāsikā' should be derived from 'lāsya', it would imply that the dancers and the courtezans at the time of Amarasiṁha, the author of *Amarakośa,* executed only the subtler and gentler variety of dance.

The next reference is in connection with Arjuna, one of the Pāṇḍava brothers, who in Pargiter's list is only seven generations below Agnivarṇa. While the Pāṇḍavas were in their forest wanderings, Arjuna reached the world of Indra who was his patron and friend. While he was at the court, Indra asked him to get instruction in dancing from the master-expert Chitrasena, the Gandharva, suggesting that knowledge of dancing may prove useful to him. After his return to his brothers, when the Pāṇḍavas had to pass a year *incognito,* Arjuna was given the role of a tutor-master of dance. And in that capacity he was employed in the court of Virāṭa, the king of the Matsyas, whose country lay just

---

1 *Raghuvaṁśa,* XIX, pp. 14-15.
2 Agnivarman, in Coomaraswamy's above-mentioned contribution is a typographical error.
3 *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition,* p. 149.

to the south-east of Delhi and the north-west of Mathura, to teach the art of dancing to his daughter Uttarā.[1]

From this account we know that it was a male Gandharva who taught dancing to Arjuna who, disguised as an eunuch, taught it to a woman. The wording of the account leaves no doubt in my mind that a male expert would not have been permitted in the inner apartment of Virāṭa as a dance-teacher.

It is evident that the royalty, both male and female, used to be well-versed in dancing very early in the history of Indian culture, and though not as early but only a little later, males were the expert-teachers of the subject. Small wonder then, leaving aside the divine origin ascribed to dancing, the earliest, the biggest and in theory at least the most authoritative treatise on the subject of dance is the work of a male, namely, Bharatamuni who handed it down through his numerous sons. That the conspectus of knowledge is ultimately traced to Śiva or Śaṅkara is but appropriate in view of the mythology woven round that God. If the bronze image of Naṭarāja is South Indian and a late contribution, and if the name Naṭarāja itself may also be so, already in the thousand names of Śiva occurring in the *Mahābhārata* are the two names Nartaka and Nartanaśīla. The former means the 'dancer' and the latter, 'habituated to dancing.' An early Gupta temple at Bhumra has a representation of this form of Śiva; and an eight-handed figure of Naṭarāja from the Paraśurāmeśvara Temple at Bhuvaneshvar of the early 8th century A.D. is reproduced by A. Goswami[2]. Two very fine specimens, further specialised in sculpturing Śiva as executing the 'tāṇḍava' on the back of his bull, discovered in Dacca district, are reproduced by R. D. Banerji and three other Nataraja images discovered in Puri district of Orissa are also mentioned by him.[3]

Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* informs us that at the presentation of a dramatic piece by Bharata before Śiva and other Gods, Śiva was reminded of his dance which he usually performed at dusk and how it was made beautiful by various limb-figure configurations. He further thought that dance based on these configura-

1 *Mahābhārata* III, 4-5, 6-7; IV, 2, 21; 10, 8-11.
2 *Orissan Sculpture and Architecture,* by O. C. Gangooly & A. Goswami, 1956, pl. 1, p. 17.
3 *Eastern Indian School of Mediæval Sculpture,* 1933, pp. 109, 124; pl. LII, a & c.

tions would be an exceedingly befitting preliminary to a dramatic piece. And Śiva asked one Taṇḍu to instruct Bharata in those configurations and consequently in the dance.[1]

After describing the various configurations, as communicated by Taṇḍu, Bharata remarks that the dance, comprising the configurations performed by Śaṁkara* after the break-up of Daksha's sacrifice, is known as 'tāṇḍava'. And seeing Śaṁkara dancing the vigorous and violent-looking dance, Pārvatī executed a dance with gentle forms. This dance of Pārvatī is described by Bharata as 'sukumāra', gentle, tender.[2]

It must be observed that Bharata distinguishes two varieties of dance, one performed by males and the other by females. The latter variety he designates as the gentle form and the Sanskrit word he uses is 'sukumāra.' He does not call it 'lāsya', the later term for the gentle dance of the female. According to Bharata, both the varieties, the gentle and the virile, must be considered to be only forms of the same dance, 'tāṇḍava.'

It is specially noteworthy that according to Bharata the 'tāṇḍava' is mostly to accompany the adoration of gods and the gentler form of dance, 'sukumāra', is for the development of the Erotic Sentiment.

It is also to be noticed that the term used for Śiva's dance by Bharata is in one place 'nṛtya' and in another place 'nṛtta', though in the next two or three verses[3], Bharata seems to be involved in drawing a distinction between 'nṛtya' and 'nṛtta.'

Nandikeśvara in his *Abhinayadarpaṇa,* the next important authority on the subject of Indian dance, draws a distinction between 'nṛtya' and 'nṛtta' and also 'nāṭya', and divides each of them into two divisions, 'lāsya' and 'tāṇḍava.' The majestic dance of Śiva communicated to Bharata by Taṇḍu is 'tāṇḍava', while the love-inspired dance performance of Pārvatī before Śiva is known as 'lāsya.' The general inclusive term for the three categories of 'nāṭya', 'nṛtya' and 'nṛtta' is 'naṭana', acting. 'Lāsya' is further said to have been taught by Pārvatī herself to Ushā, the daughter of the demon-king, Bāṇa, who in her turn taught it to the cowherdesses of Dwārakā. These latter taught it to the

1 *Nāṭyaśāstra,* IV, 10-18.
2 *Ibid,* English translation by Manomohan Ghosh (1951), pp. 66, 68, 69.
3 *Nāṭyaśātra,* IV, 267-270, 271, 273.
* Owing to lack of type ń in this brochure stands for ṅ.

women of Saurāshtra and from them it spread to the females of other regions.[1]

It is worthy of note that during the centuries, the study of not only dramaturgy but also of dance had spread over a large part of the country. Dhanañjaya, the author of *Daśarūpa*, a popular text-book on dramaturgy, lived in the last quarter of the 10th century at the court of a king of Malwa, Central India. He speaks of pantomime, 'nṛtya' and dancing, 'nṛtta', distinguishing the former as 'mārga', classical, and the latter as 'deśi', popular [folk]. Further, in each style he distinguishes two forms, the gentle and the virile. The former is 'lāsya' and the latter 'tāṇḍava.' It should be particularly marked that Dhanañjaya, though describing 'lāsya' as gentle, does not restrict it only to the females. He further recognizes ten divisions in the 'lāsya' variety, which are not necessarily his innovations.[2]

The next important authority on the subject is Abhinavagupta, a Kashmirian scholar who lived about A.D. 1013. In his famous commentary[3] on the *Bharatanāṭyaśāstra* characterizing the limb-configurations made by Pārvatī in her gentle dance as 'anuddhata', that is non-majestic, by implication must be considered to be forestalling the description of Śiva's 'tāṇḍava', the male-dance, as majestic and virile.

Perhaps the most important authority after Bharata is Śārṅgadeva, who was an important officer at the Yādava court of Devagiri about the middle of the 12th century A.D. Śārṅgadeva in origin was a Kashmiri Brahmin, who happened to be at Devgiri because his grandfather had migrated there.[4] His *Saṅgītaratnākara* has a whole chapter, which forms the seventh and the last, devoted to an exposition of dancing. It is styled 'nartanādhyāya'. It is noteworthy that Śārṅgadeva not only eschews the omnibus term 'nāṭya', which includes dance as a subsidiary item, but even the more restricted and specific 'nṛtya.' Logically he has seen the need to coin and use a general term which should include both dramatic dance, representative dance, and also pure dance. 'Nartana,' he says, is threefold: 'nāṭya', 'nṛtya' and

1 *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, ed. by Manomohan Ghosh (1934), pp. 1, 2.
2 *Daśarupa*, translated by Haas (1912), pp. 4-5, 99.
3 *Bharatanāṭyaśāstra*, IV, 13.
4 M. Krishnamachariar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature* (1937), p. 852.

nṛtta'. As regards the origin and varieties of dance and its traditional continuity of practice, the account of Śārṅgadeva exactly agrees with that in Nandikeśvara's *Abhinayadarpaṇa* which is already quoted.[1]

The additional important contribution that Śārṅgadeva makes is by no means insignificant. First of all, he uses both the terms 'nṛtya' and 'nṛtta' to characterize both 'tāṇḍava' and 'lāsya.' Thus we have four varieties of dance: 1) 'tāṇḍava nṛtya', 2) 'tāṇḍava nṛtta', 3) 'lāsya nṛtya', 4) 'lāsya nṛtta'.

Śārṅgadeva characterizes the two main varieties of dance, namely, 'tāṇḍava' and 'lāsya', more distinctively and sharply than was done by anybody before him, though the items of distinction were separately mentioned by Bharata in a slightly garbled manner. Śārṅgadeva says about 'lāsya' that it consists of gentle items and is calculated to increase passion.

It is very important to note this in view of the assertion made by the two non-Indian writers on the subject of Indian dance, quoted above that the nautch dance of Northern India was degrading because it had acquired adhesions of sexual excitation through the influence of the Muslim grandees. Without trying to controvert the view that Indian dance, whether of the northern or of the southern variety, tended to grow more and more in pursuit of sexual excitation of the spectators, I wish to stress the point that the nurture of sexual passion or the sentiment of love has been the primeval trait of 'lāsya' dance.

Śārṅgadeva again divides 'nṛtta' into three types which are only met with elsewhere in rather late works. 'Nṛtta', he says, is 'viṣama', 'vikaṭa' and 'laghu'. A dance is 'viṣama' if it is based on straight movements, it is 'vikaṭa' if the costume and gestures are strange, and it is 'laghu' if the limb-configurations are short and sketchy.[2] I must point out that the description of 'viṣama' is as it is given in the Anandashrama series edition of *Saṅgītaratnākara*. The later authority namely, Kumbha, the author of *Śāṅgītaraja* (A.D. 1449), describes 'viṣama' as that dance in which owing to intense practice, a dancer is able to produce the illusion of rope-movement.[3] One wonders whether the reading adopted for

1 *Saṅgītaratnākara*, VII, 2-8.
2 *Saṅgītaratnākara*, VII, 30-34.
3 M. Ramakrishna Kavi, *Bharatakośa*, p. 622.

the current edition of *Saṅgītaratnākara,* namely, 'ṛjubhramaṇādikam', is an incorrect one for 'rajjubhramaṇādikam'.

Wherever Śārṅgadeva was, from whomsoever he might have got his expert knowledge of dance, as Kavi remarks "his knowledge of 'nāṭya' in all its branches was distinctly Kashmirian."[1]

Haripāladeva, the author of *Saṅgītasudhākara* (A.D. 14th century) has devoted one chapter to dance. He notes the same tradition of handing down of 'lāsya' by Ushā as recorded by Nandikeśvara. But he adds another account of his own. According to this, 'lāsya' was first taught by Indra to Arjuna who in his turn taught it to the daughter of Virāṭa [Uttarā]. She it was who popularised it in Dwārakā. It is in these two traditions and through these two channels that the wonderful dance, replete with technique, has descended. Haripāla is identified by Krishnamachariar as a Yādava king of Devgiri who was killed by Mubarak in A.D. 1318.[2] But Kavi, quoting from the introduction of Haripāla's work, regards him as a Chalukya king of Gujarat and assigns him to the end of the 12th century. He is said to have prepared his great work for the benefit of the dancers and songstresses of Srirangam.[3]

Śāradātanaya, though belonging to the Kashmirian Abhinavagupta school of philosophy, seems to have been an inhabitant of Banaras. He studied the 'nāṭyaveda' or Theatrics under one Divākara who is reported to have run a school of Theatrics in Banaras and, among other things, wrote a work called *Bhāvaprakāśanam* before the 13th century A.D. In some verses quoted by Krishnamachariar[4] from the work of *Śāradātanaya,* in the list of teachers and promulgators of Gāndharvaveda, after Śiva, Brahmā and Bharata, are mentioned Rambhā and Arjuna. Arjuna, as already pointed out, is represented in the *Mahābhārata* as having received the knowledge of dance from Chitrasena, the Gandharva. The mention of Rambhā in the list is unorthodox in so far as she is not met with in the principal authorities on the subject.

---

1 *Ibid,* p. VI.
2 Krishnamachariar, *op. cit.,* p. 859; M. R. Majmudar in the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art,* 1946, p. 89.
3 Kavi, *op. cit.,* pp. IV, VII, 768; Krishnamachariar, *op. cit.,* p. 859.
4 *Op. cit.,* pp. 767-770 & 844-45.

Without in the least trying to be either exhaustive or even comprehensive about literature on the subject of dance, we shall pass on to Kumbhakarna whose opinion is already quoted on one point and who is so well known for his commentary on *Gīta-govinda, Rasikapriyā*. He was a Guhila Rajput of Mewad, the husband of the great saint-poetess Mīrābāi. He ruled Chitrakut from A.D. 1433 to 1468. His work Saṅgītarāja is considered to be a major contribution on all aspects of the Gāndharvaveda.[1]

Two more writers deserve to be mentioned in order to bring up the history of dance in Gujarat and Saurashtra to the time when it is very well represented in art.

Sudhākalaśa, a Jain writer, wrote his work called *Saṅgīto-paniṣad* in A.D. 1349. He reiterates the early terminology in the distinction between 'lāsya' and 'tāṇḍava' and records an altogether different tradition about its being handed down through Arjuna. Gauri handed it down to Ushā, the daughter of Bāṇa, from whom it was studied by Viśvāvasu, the Gandharva. He, in his turn, taught it to Chitraratha who imparted it to Arjuna. Arjuna taught it to Uttarā, the daughter of Virāṭa. Uttarā, however, after the premature death of her husband Abhimanyu, forgot it completely and the tradition was broken. But king Pālaka, having propitiated Hara or Siva, got it from him which thereafter spread in the land.[2]

The other writer is Śrīkaṇṭha, who according to M. R. Majmudar[3] lived about A.D. 1574 but according to Krishnamachariar[4] in the early 17th century—and here I must point out that Majmudar is supported by M. R. Kavi[5] who says that the manuscript of *Rasakaumudi* is dated A.D. 1583. He deals with 'nṛtta', as Kavi informs us, in a compendious manner. From our point of view the most important observation of *Śrīkaṇṭha* is "that as far as the subtleties of the 'lāsya' dance are concerned, the Gurjari dancing woman [naṭi] is the best and she excells others."[6]

---

1 Krishnamachariar, *op. cit.*, pp. 862-63.
2 Krishnamachariar, *op. cit.*, p. 860, M. R. Majmudar, *op. cit.*, pp. 86, 90.
3 *Op. cit.*, p. 85.
4 Krishnamachariar, *op. cit.*, p. 791.
5 Kavi, *op. cit.*, p. XXIII.
6 Majmudar, *op. cit.*

Kumbhakarna's contribution did not mark the end of this kind of activity in Rajasthan. Kavi [1] informs us that one Nāgamalla, a king of Jodhpur, wrote his work entitled *Nagendrasaṅgīta* about A.D. 1700 for the songstresses and the danseuse named Rūpiṇī and Kusumāvatī. Kavi further states that the author "has touched upon several later phases of dancing unknown in Southern India."

In Vidarbha and Maharashtra, too, for the interest evinced by the princes of Berar typified in the story of Siṁhabhaṭa as narrated in *Kuṭṭinīmatam* which we shall point out later, there is cogent evidence in Kālidāsa's drama *Mālavikāgnimitra* to prove that it resulted in the cultivation of the art by court ladies and existed seven to eight centuries earlier too—and continued through the importation of Kashmirian talent in the person Śārṅgadeva. The interest in dance did not die out from the region, though perhaps not prominently evinced by royal families.

Kavi informs us that Dāmodara who lived about A.D. 1630 and wrote *Saṅgītadarpana* hailed from Maharashtra. His work, which is described by Kavi as "a small work of great merit", incorporated in his section on dance several new phases, "probably imitated from the Mughal courts." [2]

That the tradition of Rambhā having a place in the history of Indian dance was current in Northern India is evidenced by an extraordinary contribution published in Calcutta in the year A.D. 1881. Raja S. M. Tagore prepared and published a dedication to the Fifth International Congress of Orientalists in Sanskrit verse. He entitled it, the Five Principal Musicians of the Hindus, or in Sanskrit *Saṅgītopahāra*. The five musicians are: Nārada, Bharata, Rambhā, Huhu, Tumburu. We are here concerned with dance, and though Bharata is introduced as the promulgator of Nāṭyaśāstra, he is made to represent dramaturgy. 'Nṛtya' or dance is introduced by Rambhā. She is made to remark, "here I offer to you the 'lāsyaśāstra' which is 'lalita' and fit to be practised by women. The 'nṛtya' section begins with the same dictum as that of Śārṅgadeva namely, "'nartana' is three-fold, 'nāṭya', 'nṛtta', 'nṛtya'". And here we find nomenclature turning through a circle. If 'tāṇḍava' according to

1 Kavi, *op. cit.*, p. XXIV.
2 *Ibid.*

Bharata was the original or the primeval dance, and 'lāsya' its female accompaniment—a fact distinctly pronounced through Bharata's relevant chapter being designated 'tāṇḍava prakaraṇam'—we have now 'lāsyaśāstra' incorporating in it 'tāṇḍava' dance as its component.

'Tāṇḍava' Tagore says is 'pumpradhāna', principally male, and 'lāsya' mainly female. The deity of the former is Hara or Śiva, that of the latter Gauri. 'Tāṇḍava' was promulgated by Taṇḍu. When the sentiment of valour or the sentiment of violence is involved, males resort to 'tāṇḍava'. 'Lāsya', on the other hand, is danced by youthful and graceful women and is calculated to increase passion. 'Lāsya', according to Tagore, is of two varieties, 'churita' and 'yauvata'. Neither 'churita' nor 'yauvata' is listed in the main part of M. R. Kavi's *Bharatakośa*; but in the appendix 'yauvata' is listed (p. 917) and a quotation from *Saṅgītanārāyana* is given. It is clear from that passage that though it is a definition, it is hardly a description like that given by Tagore. *Saṅgītanārāyaṇa* is a South Indian work of A.D. 1700[1] and characterizes the particular variety of dance as what appears like enticing magic.

1 Ibid., p. XIX.

# *DANCE IN HISTORY AND LITERATURE*

Historical or literary references to dance and proficiency in it may be said to begin in the first century B.C. The Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela, king of Orissa, which is dated about the the end of the first century B.C.,[1] refers to him as proficient in 'gāndharvaveda.' It further describes his activities, celebration of his victories and other prominent events. One of the items through which he carried out the celebrations is by public shows of 'nṛtya', 'gīta', 'vāditra', that is, dance, song and music. For valedictory celebrations he is said to have organized a concert in which sixty-four musical instruments were assembled and played upon. According to a recent interpretation of his inscription given by B. M. Barua[2], Khāravela caused a magnificent religious edifice to be built in the 14th year of his reign, on the walls of which sixty-four panels depicting various scenes of music were moulded in sculptures or were painted. Thus, Khāravela, towards the end of the first century B.C., being well-versed in the 'gāndharva-veda', or the science of dance, song and music, conformed in his practice to the exortation of Bharata as to when dance, song and music were to be employed in daily life.

Samudragupta's famous victory-inscription at Allahabad, dated about A.D. 330-375, describes him as having surpassed or rather put to shame the divine personages Tumburu and Nārada by his own 'gāndharva' and 'lalita'.[3]

It should be noted that Nārada and Tumburu figure in connection with the origins of music and singing, and in one account, we have seen Tumburu figuring in the early origins of dance too. In Tagore's dedication referred to above, Nārada is represented as the formulator of the science of music while Tumburu that of the science and mechanics of musical instruments. In some mythological accounts he figures as the husband of Rambhā, the formulator of the science of dance in Tagore's scheme.

---

1 Dinesh Chandra Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, (1942), p. 206 ff.
2 *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, (1947), p. 47.
3 D. C. Sircar, p. 259.

We know for certain that Samudragupta was very fond of playing on the lyre, so much so that one set of his coinage bears his squatting figure in the act of playing on the 'vīnā'. It is interesting to find this fourth-century lyre of Samudragupta to have been of the same type as that represented in the sculptures of Bharhut, nearly five centuries before.

The next king, who was both a close student of the art of dancing and a patron of dramatics and dance, is Harshavardhana of Kanauj whose reign falls in the early part of the 7th century A.D. About the dance which he introduced in his drama *Ratnāvalī* I shall refer to in detail later. Here I shall only state the information provided by Dāmodaragupta, the author of *Kuṭṭinīmatam*. Dāmodaragupta, as Kalhaṇa informs us[1], was the chief minister of the Kashmiri king Jayāpīḍa, A.D. 751. Dāmodaragupta introduces a 'nṛttācārya', instructor of dancing, attached to the temple of Kāśīviśvanātha in Banaras. A certain prince of Devgiri in the Deccan, by name Siṁhabhaṭa, had gone to the temple with a few attendants of his to worship and pay his respects to Kāśīviśvanātha. Evidently the prince was a connossieur of dance and music and asked the 'nṛttācārya' how things fared with his art in Banaras. In answering the prince's question, the 'nṛttācārya' incidentally referred to the great encouragement that king Harsha gave to him, to his troupe and to his art. He informs the prince that after king Harsha's death, owing to lack of patronage, he came to Banaras, a place of pilgrimage, and there gathered a few female pupils of his, old and new.[2]

The Kashmiri royal patron and employer of Dāmodaragupta, Jayāpīḍa, it would appear, was proficient in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* even before he took Dāmodaragupta in his service. Kalhaṇa, while describing the itinerary of that king, tells us that he once entered the city of Pauṇḍravardhana in 'Gauda Deśa', Bengal. While there, he once chanced to see a dance being performed to the accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music, and being "versed in the histrionic arts of the dance, song and the like in accordance with Bharata, sat himself down for a

1 *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV, 496.
2 *Kuṭṭinīmatam*, ed. by T. M. Tripathi (1924) verses 737 to 801.

while."[1] Jayāpīḍa's reign, according to R. S. Pandit, extended from A.D. 751 to 782.

Another great king, and that nearer the time of Kalhaṇa, whose reign is ascribed to the last decade of the 11th century, who was an aesthete and a temperamental king, showed great extravagance in his patronage of the arts of music and dance and in his passionate knowledge of them.[2]

He is king Harsha of Kashmir. Harsha's appreciation of the sartorial ensemble of Maharashtrian ladies, as pointed out in our *Indian Costume*,[3] made him try to introduce it in Kashmir. He was so fond of music and the allied arts that he was prevailed upon by a famous singer, 'gāyana', by name Kanaka, to leave undisturbed the image of Buddha at Parihāsapura, the birth-place of the singer, when the king had systematically been engaged in despoiling the images to reimburse his treasury. In the earlier part of his career, Harsha is represented by Kalhaṇa as passing night after night, holding conferences with the learned, and discussing and enjoying singing and dancing, 'nṛtta.'

References to dancing in Sanskrit literature, the earliest of which, namely, those by the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa and by Kālidāsa in his *Mālavikāgnimitra*, were brought to the notice of the interested public by Coomaraswamy in his contribution to dance already referred to, conclusively establish the fact that dancing was not only patronised by royalty but also practised by royal ladies and by women of the richer classes. They also bear testimony to the fact that dancing women were attached, and continued to be so, to temples in Northern India from about the 1st century A.D. to at least about the beginning of the 13th century.

Dance in Northern India, according to literary references, was both religious and secular; and though in the former domain, it was a preserve of specially dedicated women, who but for their religious connection ought to be known as courtezans, yet it was a highly prized cultural activity among the elite. Another fact which these references establish is that whether in private schools, maintained on a proprietary basis, or in the

1 *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV, 421-423, (R. S. Pandit's translation).
2 *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, VII, 933, 944, 1097-98, 1116-18.
3 P. 132.

households of the royalty, the teachers were mostly males. And they were either called 'nāṭyācārya', 'nṛtyācārya' or even simply 'nartayitṛ'. Courtezans not dedicated as temple-servants considered it their regular duty to take effective training in dance and to practise it, as testified by Śūdraka's *Mṛtcchakaṭika*, the drama 'Toy Cart'.

I shall state the literary evidence for the prevalence of the institution known later in Southern India as that of Devadāsī. In the *Kathāsaritsāgara*[1] is narrated the story of a young courtezan, by name Rūpiṇikā, whose daily duty it was to dance before the idol in a certain temple at Mathura at certain stated times of worship. In his *Meghadūta*,[2] Kālidāsa refers to courtezans dancing in the temple of Mahākāla at Ujjain simultaneously with the waving of the 'chauri' fly-whisks. Sthiradeva in his commentary has rendered the word 'veśyā', courtezan, by 'devadvāravanitā', temple woman. Dr. V. G. Paranjpe in his notes on the verse draws attention to the dance as the 'deśika'-variety and further refers to Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*.

Kalhaṇa[3] has narrated an incident about one of the very early kings of Kashmir which, if taken as authoritative for that period, will establish the currency not only of dedicating ordinary women but even royal ladies to temples for purposes of dance and song, seven or eight centuries before the Christian era. That king, at a particular moment of his life, is represented as having made over to Jyeṣṭha Rudra, a hundred of the ladies of his household who in their ecstasy "had got up to dance at the hour of dancing and singing." Coming to historical times, Kalhaṇa informs us[4] that the great king Muktāpīḍa Lalitāditya (A.D. 695-732) on one occasion, while training a new horse, went far into a jungle. There from a distance, very remote from human habitation, he saw a lovely maiden singing and another dancing. After some time they finished their song and dance, 'gīta' and 'nṛtta' and went away. The king began to visit that place day after day, and having seen those maidens go through the performance every time, he once overtook and accosted them. They told him that they were dancing girls, 'nartakī', belonging

1 Penzer's trans. Vol. I, pp. 138-149.
2 Verse 35.
3 *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, I, 151.
4 *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV, 265-275.

to a temple, 'devagṛha', and that they lived in the village of Suravardhamāna. They further told him that it was the traditional and sacred duty of theirs, laid upon them by their mother, that persons born in their family had to dance there, and that they did not know the reason. The king thereupon got an excavation carried out at the place where the maidens sang and danced, and discovered underground a closed old temple with two idols of Keśava and an inscription that they were installed by Rāma and Laxmana.

Another Kashmiri king, Jayāpīḍa (A.D. 751-782) while he was in the town of Pauṇḍravardhana in Gauda, Bengal, once saw in the temple of Kārtikeya a dance, 'lāsya', being performed. The dancer, 'nartakī', was one Kamalā by name. Kamalā, on her part, looking at him and seeing his hand stretching to his shoulder-top at intervals, concluded that he must be a royal person. Her reasoning was that the hand was stretched over the shoulders behind to catch hold of the 'tāmbūla' or the betel-nut-leaves-packet from his attendants. She sent her attendant with betel-nut fragments and had them delivered into Jayāpīḍa's hands. Putting the betel-nut pieces into his mouth Jayāpīḍa gave a look of recognition to Kamalā. He was cleverly persuaded by that attendant to go to her mistress's place. Eventually Jayāpīḍa took Kamalā with him to Kashmir.[1]

An inscription of a royal lady named Chitralekhā, found at Bayana in Bharatpur district and dated about A.D. 1000, records what in essence is a donation by that lady of 'devadāsīs' or female dancers to the new temple of Vishnu.[2]

Outside Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the earliest reference to dance showing technical knowledge and by implication giving other important information is that which occurs in Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*, reference to which was made by Coomaraswamy, excluding, of course, the information contained in the Purāṇas whose dates are not ascertainable.

Beryl de Zoete in her book *The Other Mind*[3] has used the reference to great advantage, though she appears to have come to know of it through another source. She has brought out a

1 *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV, 421, 470.
2 *Epigraphia Indica*, XXII, pp. 122-27.
3 *Op. cit.*, pp. 222-226.

number of points of interest to the student of Indian dance. Yet there are a few important points which may be put before the reader, both for their intrinsic interest and for their special bearing on dance costume.

To begin with, it has to be pointed out that barring the accounts in *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Purāṇas*, Kālidāsa appears to be the earliest writer to make a pointed reference to the daily evening dance of Śiva. In his *Meghaḍūta*[1], in connection with his description of Ujjain and its temple of Mahākāla by way of request to the cloud, he refers to the daily evening dance which Paśupati or Śiva performs. For that dance Śiva requires an elephant's 'blood-dripping' hide which he holds with two of his hands over his head while dancing. Śiva's dance with this particular equipment has been sculptured in South Indian temples from about the 7th century onwards ; but quite often it represents the scene after the killing of Gajāsura, the elephant-demon, by Śiva.

In *Mālavikāgnimitra*[2] we have a further reference to Śiva and his dance or rather 'nāṭya', as it is called there, in a more expert and technical manner. Kālidāsa ascribes through Gaṇadāsa, one of the royal dance-masters, to the Ardhanārīnaṭeśvara form of Śiva or Rudra the two-fold dance, combined by Śiva in this particular form of his, half the body representing Umā or Pārvatī. The two-fold dance is evidently 'tāṇḍava' and 'lāsya'.

Secondly, at the court of Puṣyamitra (*C.* B.C. 150) there was not only a 'prekṣāgṛha', theatre or auditorium, but also perhaps a separate music hall for the practice of singing and dancing.[3] Further the two dance-masters, one under the patronage of the king named, Haradatta, and the other, under that of the queen, named Gaṇadāsa, are variously designated as either Nāṭyācārya, Professor of 'nāṭya', or Abhinayācārya, Professor of Representation.[4] One of them, Gaṇadāsa, after a successful performance by his pupil, refers to himself as Nartayitā, generally translated as Professor of Dancing but more accurately as Teacher of Dance.[5] Thirdly, the art or science which Gaṇadāsa and Haradatta profes-

1 *Loc. cit.*, verse 36.
2 *Loc. cit.*, I, verse 4.
3 I, 19, 15-17 ; I, 3, 6-8.
4 I, 3, 7, & 58 ; I, 10.
5 II, 8, 3.

sed is variously called 'nāṭya', 'abhinayavidyā' or even 'śilpa'[1] which means ordinarily art or craft. Fourth, the performer of the exercise and the trainee is called 'pātra'.[2] In the second of the two contexts in which the word is used Sanskrit Professors' translation is 'pupil' and in the first, 'fit person.' Evidently they have missed the import, as they have not realised that it is a technical term. Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* has given instruction regarding the entrance of 'pātra' while describing the Vardhamānaka variety of the 'tāṇḍava' or Class Dance. His instruction is thus translated by Manomohan Ghosh: "Then after the 'Upohana' has been performed to the accompaniment of drums and stringed instruments, a female dancer should enter the stage with the playing of drums only".[3] The word 'pātra' is here translated as 'female dancer'. Later works like *Saṅgītanārāyaṇa* too, characterizing a female dancer refer to her as 'pātra'.[4] Kavi has quoted one Mokshadev who opines that 'pātra' or a female dancer is called 'nartakī' because she is to dance. The author detailing the characteristics of the three types of 'pātra' distinguishes only in terms of female features. Fifthly, both the dance-masters distinguished between 'vidyā', or 'śāstra', that is theory on the one hand, and 'prayoga', performance on the other. The female ascetic prefers the word 'darśana' for theory; and one of the queen's attendants speaks of it as 'āgama'.

The representational piece 'nāṭya' that Mālavikā was being instructed in is designated 'chalita' and that is declared by the female ascetic, who seems to have been a great connoisseur of dancing, to be a difficult piece to perform, again the word used being 'prayoga'. 'Chalita' is further characterized as having been based on four quarters or parts 'catuṣpadodbhavam'. Before the actual performance by Mālavikā, her dance-master, Gaṇadāsa informs the royal audience that the 'catuṣpada', four-quartered piece, which he has selected was composed by one Śarmiṣṭhā—from the way she is referred to, it would appear the reference is to the queen of the famous king Yayāti—and was set to medium time-beat. He further informs the gathering that

1 I, 3, 61; I, 4; I, 12, 6; I, 15, 13; I, 6.
2 I, 5, 5; I, 19, 24.
3 *Op. cit.*, p. 69; *Nāṭyaśāstra*, IV, 276.
4 *Bharatakośa*, p. 884.
5 *Ibid.*

only the fourth part of the whole will be danced.[1] At the beginning of the performance, the stage-direction exactly follows the direction of *Bharatanāṭyaśāstra* and states: "Having gone through the preliminary notes (Upavahana or Upohana), sings the piece based on 'catuṣpada' (catuṣpadavastukam) or the fourth quarter. And the Vidūṣaka, the jester, also refers to the song and the dance as 'catuṣpadavastukam' or a piece based on 'catuṣpada'.

The only musical accompaniment to Mālavikā's performance, song and dance, appears to have been formed by 'mṛdaṅga' or 'muraja'. The actual performance is described as "acts according to the sentiments" or as we should say dances the sentiments ('rasa'). Mālavikā's dance-master compliments himself upon the dance; and the king too describes the performance as dance when he remarks: "Her standing posture . . . is far more lovely than her dance ('nṛtta')".[2] What the king means is that her standing posture is much more enticing to the voluptuous person than her various postures in the dance.

Sixth, Gaṇadāsa, the dance-master of Mālavikā informs us that Mālavikā was very quick of understanding and dexterous in practice of expressive movement ('bhāvikam'). We have to understand that the dance-master explained to Mālavikā gestures, postures and movements which together, forming the configurations, could convey to the audience the notion and experience of a particular state of mind ('bhāva'). Mālavikā, on her part, immediately grasped them and not only reproduced without blemish the instruction in her performance but also improved on it in her manner of actually executing the configurations and creating the attendant emotional atmosphere. Later, Gaṇadāsa says that he had just instructed Mālavikā on 'pañcāṅgābhinaya', representative gestures and postures of the five limbs.[3] This is exactly in the wording of *Bharatanāṭyaśāstra.*

Seventh, the dance-master of the royal household states that he not only learnt the theory from a good professor but also had given public performances. The king himself reminds the female

---

1 *Mālavikāgnimitra,* I, 12, 6-13; I, 3, 7; I, 19, 11-12; II, 7, 6; III, 22; II, 8-9; II, 4; II, 4, 6.
2 *Mālavikāgnimitra,* II, 6.
3 *Ibid.,* I, 5; I, 6, 3.

ascetic that she had witnessed the bodily grace and the representational skill of both the dance-masters.[1]

Eighth, it appears that in Vidarbha, of which dominion Mālavikā was a princess, not only the princesses but also the female attendants[2] of the royal household were versed in 'saṅgīta' which, in accordance with the usual usage, must be interpreted to mean the complex of the three arts of dance, song and music.

Lastly, I must observe that the whole scene, managed and manoeuvred entirely for the voluptuous satisfaction of the passionate king tells us something about costume for dance. As the purpose of the show was to enable the king to drink of the physical beauty of the youthful Mālavikā, a new acquisition in the queen's retinue, a special injunction was given to the dance-master regarding costume. He was told, naturally camouflaging the real purpose of the injunction, that Mālavikā should be dressed in gossamer garments in order that the grace of acting and representational dance may be fully brought out. There was no interest in any particular type of dress, neither that of Śarmiṣṭhā, who was the composer of the piece, nor that of any particular sentiment. It is very doubtful—I should say I feel sure it was not —if Mālavikā's dress at the time of dance was anything different from her usual dress excepting that the garments worn on the occasion of the performance were transparently fine. Modesty current at the time had to be preserved even in a royal private show. The voluptuous whim of a passionate king could not set aside the dictates of that moral sentiment. The only exposure of beautiful limbs that could be tolerated was what could be achieved through the help of gossamer garments on the score of the need for the appraisal of the tautness or vibrance of the muscles in tune with the representational configurations of the limbs.

In another drama of Kālidāsa, *Vikramorvaśīya*, there is even more technical matter about music and in parts, also about dance, though a complete comprehension of the latter has proved impossible at this stage. The fourth Act of the play is almost a solo performance of song and dance in the midst of naturally

1 *Op. cit.*, I, 12, 6-7; I, 15, 24.
2 *Mālavikāgnimitra*, V, 9, 19-20.

exciting scenery of nature. What is much more significant is that the performer, the hero, is the king himself, who owing to the sudden disappearance of his beloved Ūrvaśī gets into an utterly distracted frame of mind.

Even in the prologue to that Act which is enacted by two women, one Citralekhā, a friend of Ūrvaśī, and another by the name of Sahajanyā, we have a 'dvipadikā' which is a song of two lines. Then, after some conversation, a stage-direction states that at that point occurs a 'jambhālikā'. According to the commentator 'jambhālikā' is one variety of 'dvipadikā'. Thereafter, again, before another Prakrit song, the stage-direction says: "Then the 'khaṇḍadhārā'". The commentator again explains it as another variety of 'dvipadikā'—but this time he uses the word 'dvipadī' for 'dvipadikā'—known as 'khaṇḍa'.

When the distracted hero enters the stage, a new 'dvipadikā' or a couplet-song in Prakrit is sung behind the curtain. After the recital of one Sanskrit verse by the king, the 'dvipadikā' is sung again. Similarly, once more the sequence is repeated. Thereafter, the king recites one verse at the end of which the stage-direction reads: "Now is the 'carcarī'". The 'carcarī' consists of a four-lined song in Prakrit. The king more or less acts upto its connotation with an address in Sanskrit. At the end of the king's speech the stage-direction again reads: "Here the 'carcarī'". This time the 'carcarī' is a three-lined song in Prakrit and refers in so many words to the dancing of the wish-fulfilling tree, 'the kalpavṛkṣa'. The stage-direction thereafter reads, "so dancing", which means quite clearly that the hero-king actually enacted the dance referred to in the 'carcarī' sung immediately before. Thereafter follows a short dialogue and a Sanskrit verse carrying on the imagery in the same strain. At this point the stage-direction contemplates the recital of the 'carcarī' and at its end 'bhinnaka'. 'Bhinnaka', according to the commentator, is a particular musical mode ('rāga').

Without going into further details, I should like to mention that after this, reference to 'dvipadikā' occurs about eight times but never once is it followed, preceded or accompanied by dance.

'Khaṇḍadhārā', as stated by the commentator, is one variety of 'dvipadī' or 'dvipadikā' which occurs again only at the end

of the Act when the reunited couple, the hero and Ūrvaśī, exit to the accompaniment of 'khaṇḍadhārā'. In between occurs once 'khaṇḍaka' and another time 'khaṇḍikā'. The commentator explains it as a particular type of song and does not suggest any connection with 'khaṇḍadhārā'. According to one authority, the only authority quoted by Kavi in his *Bharatakośa*, 'khaṇḍadhārā' is a variety of 'tāla' (time-beat). The same authority describes 'khaṇḍikā' as another variety of time-beat. Another authority, however, quoted by Kavi on 'khaṇḍikā' gives it as a mode of song ('rāga').

As earlier stated, the king is represented to have actually danced after the second 'carcarī'. Thereafter, fresh 'carcarī's occur at least ten times, though references to either 'carcarī' or 'carcarikā' occur more often. Out of these, at the end of one 'carcarī' (couplet numbered twentyfour) referring to the cuckoo, the stage-direction reads: "Dancing the same and approaching with valañtikā, kneeling, the king addresses the cuckoo." Here 'carcarī' is not only sung behind the curtain but is also enacted through dancing by the king himself. Once again, before verse thirtytwo, the king is represented as dancing to the tune of a 'carcarī'.

Without referring to half a dozen or more other varieties of songs and postures and perhaps gestures that are indicated by the stage-directions in this Act, I shall conclude that at least sometimes the 'dvipadikā' and the 'carcarī' were intended to be danced.

As we shall see later, 'dvipadikā' is referred to as 'dvipadī' in Harṣavardhana's *Ratnāvali*. The commentator quotes as from Bharata a passage which gives at least four varieties of 'dvipadī' or 'dvipadikā', out of which 'khaṇḍa' is one; but later, he speaks of 'jambhālikā' also as a sub-variety. In Kavi's *Bharatakośa*, 'dvipadī' is listed but not 'dvipadikā'; and among the authorities quoted, Bharata does not figure. Of the seven varieties one, 'śuddha', is the same as one of the four varieties mentioned by the commentator; but nowhere is it indicated that it is a dance.

On the other hand, both 'carcarī' and 'carcarikā' are listed. And here again Bharata is not one of the authorities quoted. 'Carcarikā' like 'dvipadī', according to the authorities quoted,

is a specific type of time-beat. But 'carcarī' is, according to some, a specific time-beat and according to two leading authorities, it is a dance to be performed by danseuses at the time of the Spring festival.

While Vema, the Andhra king who wrote about A.D. 1400, speaks of 'carcarī', the Rajasthani king Kumbhakarṇa goes a step further and speaks of it also as 'carcarī nṛtya' or the 'carcarī dance'. Both the authorities agree that the song may be 'dvipadī'; but while Kumbha speaks of it as tuned to sentiment ('rasa'), mode of music ('rāga') and time-beat ('laya'), Vema positively characterizes the songs on which it is based as full of passionate love ('śṛṅgāra').

It is clear from all this that 'carcarī' was evidently a female dance, a kind of 'lāsya', and that 'dvipadī' too could be danced as an alternate or as a variety of the 'carcarī' dance.

The next reference to an actual performance of dance occurs in *Ratnāvali Nāṭikā*,[1] the play written by the great king Harṣavardhana of Kanauj, and therefore to be assigned to the 7th century A.D. The dance appears to be a folk-dance, indulged in mostly by females, including courtezans, and in connection with the colour-spraying occasion of the Holi festival. The Vidūsaka, finding two of the royal female attendants in the gathering engaged in dance, proposes to the king, who was looking on, that he himself would join them and celebrate the Holi. The conversation between the Vidūṣaka and the female attendants leaves no doubt that the dance was a 'lāsya' to the accompaniment of a particular type of time-beat music. The stage-direction and the later characterization by the maids make it a 'dvipadī' type. One commentator[2] quotes from Bharata the characteristics and varieties of 'dvipadī' dance-song. In that quotation, among the varieties is one 'khaṇḍa'. Later, when the maid tauntingly explains the nature of their dance-song to the Vidūṣaka, she characterizes it as 'dvipadī-khaṇḍa', the last word being the same as 'khaṇḍa', one of the varieties said to be distinguished by Bharata.

The 'dvipadī' was also known as 'dvipadikā'; we know from its use in the fourth Act of Kālidāsa's play *Vikramor-*

1 Nirṇayasāgara Press Edition, pp. 24-30.
2 His comment is reproduced in M. R. Kale's edition of *Ratnāvali*.

*vaśīya* and has already been drawn attention to. In that context, too, I have concluded that though 'dvipadī' is a variety of song, it was also a variety of dance based on such songs. We have seen in the same context that 'carcarī' too was a song and a kind of dance. That Vidūṣaka was not entirely wrong in characterising the dance-song that was going on before the palace as 'carcarī' is supported by the statements we have about *Ratnāvali* in Dāmodaragupta's *Kuṭṭinīmatam*. It is stated there[1] that the king, the hero of the drama *Ratnāvali*, had ascended the top of the palace in order to witness the 'carcarī' that was proceeding in honour of Cupid, i.e. in celebration of the Spring festival. Further, Dāmodaragupta describing Vidūṣaka's action at the time, informs us that with the permission of the king he danced and danced and danced to the tune of half the 'caccarikā' among the women in such a way as to make himself the laughing stock.[2]

The most significant information that Dāmodaragupta gives to us is that the dance expert who met the Berar prince in the temple of Kāśīviśvanātha at Banaras was well versed in setting the drama *Ratnāvali* to music and dance and that his troupe of dancers at Banaras had so far mastered and presented it to the public as to enable the dance-master to earn a competence. The leading figure in his troupe was the danseuse, Manjari. And he requested the Berar prince, who had shown uncommon interest in the vicissitudes of the dance-master's life, to see at least the first Act of *Ratnāvali* enacted by Manjari and the other members of the troupe.

Of the actual performance of the scene of the festival dance, Dāmodaragupta begins his description by informing us about the performance, the grace of it, the tempo of it and the resulting marks of exertion on the old male participants. Thereafter, he details the various indecent talks and indecorous and amorous doings of the young women. Then he describes the gambling in dice indulged in by women, both gentle ladies and courtezans, giving us the important information *inter alia* that the gentle ladies were distinguished[3] from the courtezans

1 *Loc. cit.*, verse 886.
2 *Ibid.*, verse 904.
3 On this see G. S. Ghurye, *Indian Costume.*

by their costume which included in their sartorial ensemble the head-and-face covering of fine fabric known as 'nīraṅgī or later 'dupaṭṭā'.

At this stage are brought in the two maid servants of the royal household. The description of their activity is the most important piece of information about dance. The festival dance, being in essence only a variety of 'bhāratanāṭya', is significant for the study of costume in 'bhāratanāṭya'.

Both the maids with their hands make representational gestures for the waving of a lotus. Tripathi in his commentary identifies it as the hand-'karaṇa' and for its characterization quotes a passage from Kohala, one of the authorities traditionally considered to be second only to Bharata. Immediately they make a hand-figure called 'kapittha' for characterizing which Tripathi quotes from Śarṅgadeva's *Saṅgītaratnākara*. Thereafter, they go through various hand-figures to represent a number of implements, like an arrow, with the appropriate eye-gestures to support the representation of the Heroic Sentiment.

That the dance was a fairly vigorous one is indicated in the drama *Ratnāvalī* itself by the king's description of the women dancing it. It is further elaborated by Dāmodaragupta in describing the condition of the maid-servants during the progress of the dance.[1]

The description is very important from the point of view of costume in dance. The maid-servants of the royal household were, of course, gentle ladies and not courtezans. It is significant to note that even as such they do not seem to have worn their scarf, the head-covering garment described as characteristic of the sartorial ensemble of a gentle lady. Their hair-do, the flower-garland worn over it and the dishevelling of both have been very vividly described. Both of them seem to have worn their hair in a knot, which in Sanskrit is called 'dhammilla'. Dāmodaragupta, in his elaboration, represents the two women as wearing in their hair two different types of flower arrangement. One of them had what would appear to be a sort of prepared bouquet, 'śekhara', or as Tripathi

1 *Kuṭṭnīmatām*, verse 897—

would have it, a flower-garland worn obliquely. And the other had definitely put on a string of flowers rather loosely worn. Whereas in *Ratnāvali*, the hair-do is described as having been very much upset and as having lost its beauty owing to the falling away of flowers, Dāmodaragupta's description shows one of the women to be so clever in dance as to keep the hair-do and its flowers graceful enough though slightly disarranged. Only the other woman, and evidently because her hair-do and flower arrangement was slightly different, was not able to retain them in anything like their original arrangement.

Both of them seem to have worn very few ornaments. At least there is no reference to any head or forehead or ear or nose ornament. On the bosom, of course, there was the long necklace lying evidently between the divide of the breasts. Both of them wore anklets too which were sounding ones, evidently to be identified with the modern 'paiñjaṇa' or 'jhañjhara'. These are all the details that we get about dance costume from either *Ratnāvali* itself or from *Kuṭṭinīmatam*.

The next piece of information about dance is vouchsafed to us by Kalhaṇa[1] about the Kashmiri king Pratāpāditya II who ruled c.A.D. 650. He was one of the best and valiant kings of Kashmir but, like many of them, had his weaknesses. Once he went to dine with a rich merchant ('bania') from Rohtak near Delhi, who had settled in Kashmir. There he saw the exceedingly beautiful wife of the merchant, and got love-sick. The merchant having come to know of the plight of the king, who within a short time had got emaciated and was pining away, offered to make over his wife to the king as he knew that his wife too was pining away owing to her passion for the king. The king declined to accept the offer. Thereupon, the 'bania' told the king that his wife knew dancing ('nṛtta'), and as such he will dedicate her to a temple as its dancer ('nartakī'), and that the king should then take her as a temple danseuse. After some hesitation the latter accepted the lady and made her his queen. We know that in Kashmir in the 7th century A.D., not only was there the custom of danseuses being dedicated to the temple but also that ladies of the

1 *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV, 15-42.

well-to-do and elite classes of society used to be well-versed in dance.

Another piece of information about the prevalence of dance in Kashmir comes from the reign of king Cakravarman who is known to have ruled from A.D. 923 to 933.[1] Kalhaṇa describes the fitful pranks of this very temperamental king in fairly great detail. On one occasion he called a great gathering of the grandees which in the words of Kalhaṇa, "with clean white turbans . . . , brilliantly illuminated with lamps, shone as if it were the couch of 'Śeṣa' lit up by the jewels borne on the hoods". While such is the description of the gathering, the scene presented and the atmosphere created by ladies thronging in the windows of the royal household is even more splendid and more graphically described[2] as under: "The cool twilight breezes sportively dallying with the chaplets of flowers ['mālā'] in the coiffure ['dhammilla'] of the ladies of the royal household provided an ineffable fragrance. The rows of windows beamed with the faces, fragrant with wine, of the gazelle-eyed ladies of the royal household who were curious to watch the musical performance ['gīta']".

In the midst of that gathering was introduced by the king the famous Domba singer, 'gāyana', who had come from abroad. The Domba singer had his troupe decked in necklaces ('hāra'), bracelets ('kaṅkaṇa'), armlets ('keyūra') and ('pārihārya'), bracelet. In the troupe, far outshining others, there stood the two daughters of Ranga who were named Haṁsī and Nāgalatā. At least one of them, it would appear, wore rings in her ears, which are later described as quivering in the act of singing and acting.[3] Kalhaṇa here gives the description of the singing performance of these girls in technical musical terms, and adds, what is of special interest to us here, that the beauty of the singing was "heightened by a gentle tremor of the head [literally tremor of the head which in no way showed any distortion of it, 'avikriya'] and the movement of the brows and the eyes." When the danseuses saw the king ceasing to chew his betel-nut-leaf and appear almost transfixed, they passed into a more tender variety of singing.

1 *Ibid*, V, 354-387.
2 *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, R. S. Pandit's trans. V, 357-8.
3 *Ibid*, verse 373.

The girls too are called songstresses 'gāyanī'. In the words of Kalhaṇa, the mode is "what is known as 'adhikodrecita'". Seeing his opportunity, after the sycophants had further excited the king's passion, Ranga, the Domba father of Haṁsī, himself took a hand in the purposeful performance. He executed some figures of 'tāṇḍava' dance, combining with them intricate and particularly amorous songs, which seem to have clenched the issue and made the king a slave of Haṁsī. That is at least how Kalhana looked upon Ranga's dancing performance. For he observes:[1] "The lover of this woman [Haṁsī] is the lover of the earth' thus the Domba designates the king at one time and in an extremely rapid ('caṇḍa') 'tāṇḍava' dance he mentions his own name at another time; in the midst he has an extraordinary composition for a song; those who appreciate this as poetry and squander their fortune ...fie on those un-understanding kings who are seekers after notoriety'". In a short while Haṁsī became the queen of king Cakravarman.

It is clear from this short account that male dancers dancing the 'tāṇḍava' and female dancers performing the 'lāsya' were known in Northern India till about A.D. 1200. They were evidently taught by male teachers who conducted either private schools or even perhaps had their classes in the temples. Danseuses from middle-class and elite strata of society were not unknown and female dancers dedicated to the temples were in vogue from Kashmir to Bengal for a long time.

S. M. Tagore, writing in 1881 and describing three varieties of 'lāsya', and ascribing its origin to the 'apsaras' Rambhā, must have known such varieties practised in Northern India either by the temple-girls or by other women or by both. It appears to the present writer that the gap between the Rajasthani king Kumbhakarṇa of about A.D. 1500 and S. M. Tagore, though very wide, will be bridged by some connections if a diligent search is undertaken in the region from the western limits of Rajasthan to the eastern confines of Bengal. In Vidarbha and Maharashtra, tradition seems to have been kept alive by Dāmodara and others in their writings much longer.

---

1 *Ibid.*, 381.

# *DANCE IN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE*

We owe it to Coomaraswamy that the actual representation of dance in the ancient sculptures of Northern India was brought before the students of dance through his book *The Mirror of Gesture* and later through his contribution on Dance already referred to.[1] The scene in the caves of Orissa, generally ascribed to the 2nd century B.C., where a female is figured in a dancing pose, is reproduced in the above-mentioned contribution and is interpreted by Coomaraswamy as a scene in a 'nāṭyaśālā', or dance-hall. If his interpretation is correct, then it is the earliest representation of human beings dancing in our country. Almost equally ancient is the dancing scene in Bharhut sculptures, reproduced in Coomaraswamy's contribution. In connection with the study of costume we have reproduced it and another scene in our book *Indian Costume*.[2]

In the first scene, there is a dwarf dancing in the foreground and four 'apsarasas', two behind two in the background. In the other scene (Pl. I), there are four 'apsarasas' performing in one row. In the first scene, in the middle and to the left, altogether there are eight other females. At least seven of them are distinctly sitting and the eighth may be standing, though Cunningham thinks that she too is sitting. Evidently, at least three of the women are keeping time by clapping their palms. Two, on the extreme left, are playing on the lyre. From the clear picture of the upper one of them, we see the lyre — Cunningham[3] calls it the seven-stringed harp— played upon with the help of a small piece of wood or stylus. The one woman in the foreground is playing a pair of cymbals. The one in the centre with her back turned towards the reader, in all probability, is also playing the cymbals, though we cannot be sure about it. The most interesting of all is the female in the foreground with her back towards the reader. On her

1 *E.B.*, Vol. VII.
2 Pictures 158, 159; p. VII.
3 *Stupa of Bharhut*, p. 29.

lap, there lies a drum. On the face of the drum away from us and concealed by her body, she is evidently playing with her left hand. Her right hand rests over a portion of that drum and plays upon another drum which is standing high, so high indeed that it is actually in line with her head and her hand has to be almost in an erect position, from the elbow onwards, to reach it. In the other scene, the musical accompaniment is on the right and, though there are seven persons altogether, four standing and three sitting, we think only one of the standing ones and all the three sitting ones are the actual musical performers. All of them are males. The three standing figures are, as we can make out, females; and they are either keeping time by clapping or are conversing. Of the males, the standing one has a small drum slung close on the left shoulder, and is beating its exposed face with a stave in his right hand. The first male, sitting with his face almost fully turned towards the reader, is playing on two drums placed in the same manner as in the other scene, but with this difference in the present scene that both his hands for the time being are playing on the standing drum. Both the other males are playing on the lyre. From their position, it is impossible to ascertain how exactly they are doing it.

To describe the costume, first of all we have to draw the attention of our readers to an item-wise description of this type of costume which is given elsewhere.[1] Here we shall only add that the particular type of head-dress, almost male in some, is a characteristic of the early costume of what we have called the Central Region. The hair-do was almost universally carried out with the help of interwoven ribbons or pieces of cloth. At the ankles and at the wrists were worn round rings in a continuum like a spring. They are generally full rounds of six; and the two end-ones which are generally three-quarters or half but not full circles. There are no armlets. In the neck there is either a double set of necklaces, one fairly close to the neck in three or four beaded-strands and another a longer one, generally non-beaded and smooth, two-stranded or three-stranded garland-like thing, falling over the divide of the breasts. Where the second necklace is not garland-like, a much more elaborate

1 *Indian Costume,* pp. 97-101.

one, falling like jacket-ends over the bosom, the abdomen and the sides of the buttocks, is sported. Being elaborate it has a star or a sequin just below the breasts from where the lower portion branches out into two bands, one over each side of the pelvis. In the ear-lobes are heavy drops attached to rings. The upper garment meant for the bosom is very difficult to make out. If there was one, it must have been of very fine material and quite close to the body. But its presence is not indicated even on the arms.

The 'sāri' was worn in what we have called the 'dhoti' fashion. The front pleats are very elaborately done. The mode of its arrangement is explained in our book already referred to. There is also a flat piece of belt, either of velvet or of some such fabric, very tastefully tied round the waist. It is knotted just over the pubic region and the ends of the bow, one longer than the other, are turned flat in front to dangle there above the front pleats of the 'sāri-dhoti'. The waist is further bedecked with at least one girdle, either of three, four or five or even seven strands; and it is possible that there is another two-stranded non-beaded smooth girdle, too, not clearly noticeable. The postures of the legs and the lie of the front pleats of the 'sāri-dhoti' and the clearly indicated oblique folds, finely stretching across the thighs, can leave no doubt that a portion of the 'sāri-dhoti' was drawn in and tucked behind to allow the legs extreme freedom of posturing; and may we add, to add grace to the dance movements.

Coming from a little later time, we have a dance scene—and this time it is perhaps a lady of the elite class dancing at the time of birth-festivities—from Mathura. The scene is reproduced in Pl. II. The dancing lady is in a very vigorous pose; and there are at least five, and may be six, ladies acting as musical performers. They are all to the dancer's left. Two of the standing ladies are evidently keeping time by clapping. Of the others sitting on nice cushions, those with their backs turned to the reader, from the position of their hands, may be taken to be playing on the kind of standing drum that we met with in the Bharhut scenes. The lady sitting in three-quarters or in profile position on a similar cushion is evidently playing on the same kind of lyre as in the Bharhut scene; even the coiffure of

the two ladies with their backs turned to the reader, and a single fat braid hanging down to the waist-girdle, is the same as in the Bharhut scene.

The principal dancer wears her hair finely parted in the middle, and to judge by the coiffure of others, it must be at the back turned into a double or single braid. She does not seem to have any armlets; but her wristlets are like those of the Bharhut females, perhaps only a little longer. At the neck she has only one two-stranded beaded necklace, lying well on the divide of the bosom. She has double anklets. One type is the same as that of the Bharhut women but is very much longer, reaching within two or three inches of the knee. The other anklet is a big, round one which, to judge by its modern equivalent, must have been hollow with some seeds or pebbles inside it, giving out a jingling sound as the wearer moved. At the waist, she seems to have two girdles, one, two-or three-stranded beaded one, lying rather low over the hips, and the other, just at the waist as perhaps the retainer of the 'sāri-dhoti'. The surplus portion of the 'sāri-dhoti' is rather negligently gathered lengthwise, and with a little tucking in over the public region, is left to dangle in front. We have drawn attention in *Indian Costume*[1] to the highly fashionable use of the scarf at the waist. This piece of attire was quite often girded round the waist with a coquettishly formed bow, which in the case of this dancer is on her left side.

A little later, i.e., about the 1st or the 2nd century A.D., two tiles from Harwan,[2] a village a few miles away from the famous Shalimar Gardens in Kashmir, of the time of the Kushans, bear two female figures (Pl. III). In one, the female has slung a drum on her left shoulder so that it rests over her lower abdoman, and with a slightly curved stick in the right hand and with the palm of the left she is playing upon it. On the other tile, the female figure is evidently dancing, her right foot being raised fairly high. The figures are fine, tall and impressive with well-moulded chins and fine noses. The palms too would appear to be very fine and long. At least one of them has worn her hair in a well-made knot, falling rather low

1 Page 87.
2 *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir* by Ram Chandra Kak (1933) pp. 105ff., plate XXVII.

over the neck. The hair-knot of the other appears to be little more elaborate; anyway, it does not fall as low down as in the other case and seems to stand out a bit.

Both the women wear in their lobes round, large rings, 'kuṇḍala'. No other ornament is visible. Both the women seem to wear on the lower part of the body what we should call the equivalent of the modern 'salwār' or 'sūthan'.[1] It is close at the lower end and ample above, as worn by the dancer but not by the music-player. The dancer's 'salwār' is so ample that with her right foot raised it has shown a number of gathers. The music player has worn her 'dupaṭṭā', scarf, tied round the waist with a bow-knot at the right waist, one end of the bow being rather long and dangling down the right side, almost to the knee. The dancer has worn her scarf ('dupaṭṭā') as a helpful addition to the grace of her dance. She has pleated it finely, the fineness of the pleats being very well marked in the ends of the scarf that dangle through her hands; for she has held the 'dupaṭṭā' in her two hands. The forks in the two dangling ends of the 'dupaṭṭā' should be well marked. They are a fashion feature, not infrequently met with further east and south.[2] The middle portion of the scarf is slightly spread and blown out and held just over and behind the head in a very coquettish manner. The danseuse wears on her person, what is quite positively a 'salūkā' or 'khamise' in modern terminology.[3] It has very long sleeves, not only reaching up to the wrists but perhaps even lower. They are rather close and tapering, so that the right hand, being bent and raised, shows a number of lateral folds in the sleeve over the arm.

Coomaraswamy, in his contribution already referred to, has reproduced two sculptured scenes from the Stupa at Amaravati in the Andhra Desh which represent solo-dance-performances by women. One of them shows a female dancing on a lotus. She is in a fairly vigorous pose. She wears both wristlets and armlets—the smooth spring-type already referred to. Her hair seems to be done in a style featuring a crown. Her neck ornament seems to be a single one and rather very close. At the ankles, she wears double hollow anklets, the single variety

1 See G. S. Ghurye, *Indian Costume*, pp. 148-49.
2 *Ibid.*, pictures 140, 185, 191, 192, 248, 256, 263, 284, 285, 288.
3 *Ibid.*, pp. 125 and 148.

of which has already been referred to. At the waist, her girdle is beaded no doubt but does not seem to have more than two strands. The 'sāri-dhoti' that she has worn is in keeping with the costume of Amaravati women, giving ample pleats and folds to hang in front, over and down the pubic region.[1] If she has a scarf—and she should have it—it is also wound round the waist and its surplus portion is evidently mingled with the gathers and pleats of the 'sāri-dhoti'.

The second scene[2] is very much more important for the study of dance and costume. It is a dance by a female, executed in front of a royal couple. It is to be noted that in this scene the dwarf, more or less dancing in the foreground, is a female. One male is sitting on a high cushion with crossed legs in the standard Brahmanic fashion, his 'dupaṭṭā', scarf, going round his shins and one knee. What he is doing we cannot exactly ascertain. In all probability he is exhorting the danseuse by his acclamations and gestures. There is a female behind him about whom again we are not sure. She seems to be in some dance pose. If our interpretation is correct, then even the admiring female just to the left and back of the danseuse is a member of the dancing party.

Leaving the problematic figures, of the remaining five figures, we may be pretty sure what exactly they are doing. The female just behind the right arm of the danseuse is sitting on a cushion in a rather peculiar manner and is engaged in playing on a flute. The female sitting just below the king and farthest to the reader's left is playing with her right hand on a small 'ḍamaru'-like drum over the middle of which passes her left hand, the drum resting on her left lap. The next female with almost her front towards the reader is also sitting and is perhaps plying the cymbals, though her hands and the cymbals are concealed behind the cushion. The woman with her back to the reader is playing on a guitar. The woman sitting with her front to the reader and beyond the dwarf is evidently playing on some drum, kept on her lap. Thus we have a complete musical accompaniment for the

1 *Ibid.*, pictures 293, 297, 299.
2 *E.B.* VII, pl. V, 4.

danseuse who is doing her performance with grace and virility.

The principal danseuse has done her hair elaborately and with the help of a stringed ornament over the forehead and perhaps with others too, has erected a sort of crown over her head. She wears pendants in her ears. There are armlets which would appear to have not more than two or three rings. The wristlets, however, would appear to be doublets with a thickish round one terminating in a few rings at the wrist proper. The ankles are bedecked with only single rings, in all probability the hollow type of ring. She seems to be wearing the usual 'sāri-dhoti', rather a thinner and shorter variety, which is not very common in Amaravati sculptures, excepting perhaps in such scenes as depicted in pictures 292, 295, 296 in *Indian Costume*. But even in the majority of those pictures, the gathers falling over the pubic region are very full and ample. In the case of the costume of the danseuse, these gathers do not seem to be ample. She seems to have worn the usual girdle over the hips, perhaps in two separate strands. It is very interesting to note her use of the scarf which wrapped in a graceful manner with loops and terminating in pliant ends, appears to be rather neatly pleated. Altogether, the deployment of the scarf not only harmonizes with the grace of the figure but also emphasises the charm of gestures and postures and in a sure manner demonstrates the dancer's great skill and mastery in her art.

Sculptures and paintings ascribable to the Gupta Age, that is generally to the 4th and the 5th centuries A.D., have furnished dancing scenes of great significance from our point of view from almost half a dozen different places. Without being very particular about precise dating, we shall begin our brief reference to them from a geographical view-point. To begin with the northernmost centre, at Sarnath in Banaras were discovered some lintels on a panel of which are carved out scenes, particularly those in which figure the dancing girls of the king of Banaras referred to in one of the *Jātakas*. One of the scenes is reproduced in Pl. IV; and both of them figure in Daya Ram Sahni's *Catalogue of the Museum of Archæology at Sarnath*, plates XXVI & XXVII.

In the first scene, there are five persons including the danseuse. Sahni thinks that all the four persons giving the musical accompaniment are also females. We have doubts about the person standing to the right of the danseuse playing on the flute; we should take him to be a male. The female sitting in front of him is evidently plying the cymbals. The female sitting on the left side of the danseuse is playing upon two drums—we should have called it the 'tablā'. It appears to be the origin of the 'tablā', the two drums being employed as in an earlier instance. The erect drum is fairly high, but not as high as in the former case and the drum that is being played upon with the left-hand is placed laterally. The female standing behind her has a small 'ḍamaru'-like drum, more or less close on the left shoulder. She is playing upon its face with her right hand, it appears to us, not directly but with some adjunct. In the other scene, perhaps both the back figures are males. It is to be noticed that there are two flute-players, one female sitting in front and the other standing behind. The figure to the right of the danseuse is plying the cymbals and the female sitting in front, to her left, is playing on two drums, as in the first scene.

The pose of the danseuse in the second scene is not only much more graceful but also more virile. As there is no difference between the costumes of the two, we shall describe only that of the latter. The most important thing to notice is the utter absence of anklets. As for the wrists, there is only one beaded bracelet adorning each of them. The armlet too is altogether of a different variety, being of two-ridged, flattish type, having in the flattish part either studs or facets. Even more individualistic is their arrangement. They are worn so high up as to be almost called shoulder-ornaments, going under the armpit. For the neck, there is a medium-sized necklace, lying just above the breasts. Its type too is different, consisting as it seems to do, of small bead-like or container-like units, strung together. The central one is longer and bigger than the others. Essentially it would appear to approximate to, what is today called in the Marathi region, the 'maṅgaḷasūtra'. In the ear-lobes are large rings which seem to have ridges and are introduced whole into the enlarged ear-holes. At the waist, she

has a two-stranded girdle. Her lower garment is, one is surprised to note, a prototype of the famous Banaras-patterned 'sāri'. One can see the pattern very clearly wrought by the artist in fine lines and dots. And the artist has been very particular to show the few pleats hanging in front, and in both, to show the lower end of the 'sāri-dhoti' at the ankles. The danseuse is wearing the scarf or 'dupaṭṭā' neatly pleated, going high over the right shoulder to the back, coming again high over the left shoulder and falling in a dangling manner by the side and within the curvature of the forearm. The scarf is only partially a graceful adjunct, which the dancer has not dared to use more artistically and amply. She is wearing another cloth, a portion of which seems to go over the head from the back and to lie there just exposing a portion of the front hair, and coming down from the right side over the right thigh and the abdomen, it falls over the left thigh as a cornered end. The other end of this portion of the cloth is tucked up at the left armpit.

The next scene of a female dance in progress hails from Pawaya, ancient Padmavati, in Gwalior region. It is ascribed to the Gupta Age, and is carved on a lintel. It seems to us to be a scene in a private hall (Pl. V). There are at least eight women sitting and one dancing. Out of these, at most two may be spectators. Six women are giving musical accompaniment. Two of these ladies sitting at the back, one of them on a double cushion, are evidently keeping time with cymbals. Another has two upright drums in front of her, her right hand being placed on the right one. The lady in front of her is playing on the flute. The one in the left fore-ground is playing on the guitar and that on the right is playing on a lyre with a piece of wood or stylus.

The danseuse is in a rapt mood, engendered by the æsthetic enjoyment of her own art. Her hair-do is one of the most fashionable and bizarre styles. The hair seems to have been formed into three buns, one of which is over the left ear, another at the crown of the head, and the third lies in between, like the hood of a cobra. In her ears there are heavy rings, and they appear to be introduced into the distended ear-lobes, as in the case of the dancing girl of the king of Banaras. She

has a neck-ornament which again is neither too close nor too loose but lies smugly above the breasts. It is not clear if she has any armlets; but from the fact that others in the picture do not have them, she too may be said to have none. The wristlets, which are of the unusually heavy type, are rings one above the other—twelve of which we can count—and reach from the wrist to within an inch or so of the elbow. At the waist, over the lower pelvis, the thigh and the hips, she wears a single-stranded girdle. But the way it lies shows that it must have another strand, keeping tight at the waist, to which the former is drawn up and linked at the front centre. At the ankles, she has a single heavy-looking anklet, which we may suppose to have been a sounding, hollow one.

One cannot say anything about her breast-garment, but from the way her upper abdomen is clearly visible and from the manner in which the contours of her breasts lie, she must have worn a short 'coli' or 'aṅgiyā'. The arrangement of the scarf ('dupaṭṭā'), which is of course very carefully pleated, is novel and is both graceful and functional, though not as coquettish as in the case of the dancing girl of the king of Banaras or of the danseuse of Harwan or again, as that of Mathura. Over the bosom, she has drawn it up to the left armpit where she has knotted it, and twisting one end of it, she has thrown it over the left shoulder behind and has allowed the other end, the longer one, to hang below her left armpit on to the left thigh. This end will naturally dangle about according as she takes up one posture or the other. In her lower garment, it appears to us, she has forestalled the style of some of the contemporary female dancers. She has worn a 'sāri-dhoti', which is a patterned fabric, in appearance very much like the 'sāri' of the dancing women of the king of Banaras, and has put on the 'kaccha' (hind-pleats) tightly. The front-pleats, few, neat and not very broad, show themselves from the navel to just below the pubic region and are drawn behind flat and tight. The mode of wearing the lower garment, which would appear to have been of the thinnest variety, gives the appearance, and we may add, should have given the ease, of tights.

For the next piece of information, we have to move into

the heart of Maharashtra, to a place not very far from old Devgiri, a place which, as we have seen, continued carrying on the old tradition of the cultivation of dance till the 12th and the 13th centuries. The painting which provides this information hails from the Ajanta caves. It is reproduced in colours in Yazdani's *Ajanta,* Pl. XIII.

The dance would appear to be by a professional woman in front of a royal pavilion from which the royal personages can view it. It appears that the danseuse is served by seven artistes on various musical instruments. To begin from the left side of the danseuse, the first two women are handling the cymbals. The third female has in her front two upright drums, both being more or less of the same height—an early form of the 'tablā'. The female with her back to the reader is probably playing on a lyre, like the one we came across in the Bharhut scenes. The older female who is the nearest to the reader and in profile has slung over her left shoulder rather loosely a 'ḍamaru'-like drum which rests on her left lap, is playing on its right face with her right hand. To the right of the danseuse, in the foreground, a female is playing upon a flute, and behind her is another woman doing the same.

The danseuse is in a non-vigorous pose, her hand-postures only being visible. She and all the females in this set have worn their hair in the 'dhammilla' or chignon form. The danseuse has worn at least two flower-and-leaves or ribbon-braids over her chignon, one at the root and another in the middle of it. Over the middle of the head, she has a star or spangle on each side, the two stars being connected by some decorative stuff over the vault. At the forehead end, she wears a fine coronet or diadem. In the ears, she has worn, what may be discerned to be, pearl pendants. At the neck, she has one large pearl-necklace, fairly close, and below it a five-stranded pearl or gold-drop-necklace falling over the spot where the divide of the breasts begins. At the wrists, she wears two bracelets, one a purely round thing and the other of pearls or pearl-pendants.

The upper part of the body of the danseuse is clothed in a cut-away 'salūkā' as we should describe it or cut-away 'khamise', a type of garment met with in the Ajanta paint-

ings.[1] The long sleeves of differing material, which we cannot appreciate in a dancer, it being too dark, fit close and taper to the wrists—an item not very appropriate for a vigorous or even graceful dance. The 'khamise' is so cut away as to cover the abdomen and fall loose over the front to about the middle of the thighs, the lower portion of the sides and the back of the danseuse being fully exposed. The lower part is clothed in a striped 'lungi'. Because the knot and the seams are not visible in such draping in these paintings, the garment may be, and because it is on the person of a danseuse, must be considered to be a sort of a very close 'ghāgrā' or skirt. It must have reached the ankles as is clear from other pictures of ladies wearing such a garment. This garment would have severely limited the foot-work of the dancer.

Further south, the dance scenes presented in the paintings of Sittannavasal are those of the Gupta Age but they are only of the 'apsarasas' and may be left out.

From the fourth and the sixth centuries to the 12th is a big gap, but it is there and cannot be helped. The magnificent Dilwara temple of Mt. Abu is ascribed to the 12th century A.D. Coomaraswamy reproduced[2] three dance scenes from the sculptures of that temple. We should add three more, one of which is described as "frieze of dancers", the second as "dance of Indra and Indrani" and the third as "dancing kinnaras", two of which are given in Pls. VI & VII.

According to Goswami[3], in the first picture we have five Jain goddesses dancing, the central one having a pair of cymbals. We do not see all of them to be females. The central one appears to us to be male, the same as in the next plate which according to Goswami represents the dance of Indra and Indrani, Indra the central male playing the cymbals, just as the central figure in the first scene does. There is a symmetry in the dance poses of the four females in each of the pictures. The legs and feet postures of the two end-females in the first picture are represented in the second one by the two females who are on the two sides of the central male in the second. These are very vigorous and virile postures. In the

1 *Indian Costume*, picture 257.
2 *The Mirror of Gesture*, pl. IV.
3 A. Goswami, *Indian Temple Sculpture* (1956), plates 87, 88, 89.

third picture, there is a 'kinnara' couple dancing, the male playing on the flute. We shall not refer either to the ornaments or to the costumes, because it is evidently a mannered stereotype set.

About the middle of the 13th century is the time when the Sun temple of Konarak in Orissa was built. Two female drummers have been reproduced by Goswami.[1] Their interest for us is that in one the drummer is playing on the drum with two slightly curved sticks on the two sides, while in the other, she is playing with her hands (Pl. VIII).

The next pieces of art from Northern India depicting dance scenes can hardly be dated earlier than the 14th or 15th century A.D. A piece of sculpture from Vadnagar in Saurashtra[2] has two dancing scenes in which both males and females figure as dancers before a goddess. The musical accompaniment is provided by three male drummers who are playing with their palms, one male playing on the flute and two females plying the cymbals.

The other pieces of art, furnishing dance scenes, are dated in the 15th and 16th centuries and hail from Gujerat, Western India. They are various Jain paintings reproduced by S. M. Nawab.[3] There are a number of pictures, about twenty-nine, which depict various dance gestures and postures, the dancer being a female. They are printed in plates XXXIV—XXXVII of Nawab's book. There are three other pictures, plates LIX, LXI, LXIX (picture 222), which depict what is called there Kośā-nṛtya, which means the dance of the courtezan named Kośā. There are other pictures, too, in which one female is shown dancing, from which we shall pick out at least two: those presented in picture 223, pl. LXIX, and the large coloured reproduction in pl. LIII which depicts the scene of 'varaghoḍa', or marriage procession of Sri Neminath. In only one picture, viz., the marriage procession in pl. LIII, is the musical accompaniment shown. The dance in this case is evidently an accompaniment of the marriage procession. The bearded person who, to judge by his forehead marks and

1 *Ibid.*, plates 49, 50.
2 *Archæological Survey, Western India, Northern Gujerat*, pl. LXIV(1).
3 D. R. Mankad, in *Jain Chitra Kalpadruma* by S. M. Nawab, 1936, 2nd part, p. 62.

also the sacred thread-like thing on his body, and by the neck and ear ornaments, would appear to be not an ordinary person but a high personage or a Brahmin perhaps, is playing on 'mṛdaṅga'. The danseuse, contrary to what one would expect from the musical accompaniment by a Brahmin but in conformity with the occasion, is a courtezan. Her dress, the lower garment being a pair of shorts, highly ornamented, proclaims her so, though we shall see that Kośā, the famous courtezan, did not dance in such shorts.

In the gestures and postures of these pictures and in other dance pictures too, the one common thing throughout is the ornament. The ear-lobe is bedecked, generally with what must be considered to be a sort of large star so that it projects outside from the confines of the lobe. At the wrists, the wristlets are not so uniform; but generally they are double, though in the case of Kośā they are treble. At the ankles, more often than not, there is evidence of some anklet, except perhaps in the case of Kośā herself. The anklet is very clearly marked in picture 118, pl. XXXV. Other pictures in the series of dance postures (pictures numbered 137, 141 and 142), equally clearly establish that it was not a universal accompaniment. In one picture of Kośā's dance, pl. LIX, the ankles seem to be devoid of it. At the neck, there are generally at least two ornaments, and sometimes three. Of these, one is generally so long and loose like a garland that its lower end falls over the pelvic region, and in certain dance postures it almost seems to fly in the air. The other is a closer one, lying just above the neck-opening of an ordinary neck-cut of a 'coḷi'. The third, whenever it is there, is a very close neck-ornament, almost fitting round it.

Invariably, the hair-do is the same. It is a braid, with a long tassel at the end, looped or not looped. There is always a head-ornament or flowers, just above the root of the braid. The ornament is a fairly biggish thing and sometimes, as in Kośā-'nṛtya' (II and III illustrations), there is a high coronet or diadem above the forehead, below which and a little above the forehead, fine lines of hair are arranged from the frontals up to the ears. The ear ornament is sometimes, as in picture III of Kośā-'nṛtya', in the case of the danseuse in the marriage procession, and in many of the pictures of dance

postures, held in position by some ornamental attachment which, going over the front of the head, is tucked into the hair. Though there seems to be some ornamentation in the middle parting of the hair, there is no evidence of an ornamental drop or pendant falling on the forehead. Nor are there any signs of spangles and stars, fixed into the hair, on two (either) sides of the parting line, somewhere in the middle of the vault.

As for costume proper, there are two items common to all of them. They are the 'coḷi' and the scarf. The 'coḷi' is uniformly long-sleeved and a fairly longish garment, evidently fastened at the back. The garment is so long that it comes well below the upper portion of the abdomen, and leaves only a small portion of the belly open between itself and the lower garment. Its sleeves generally extend an inch or so below the elbow; rarely do they end about an inch or more above the elbow line or above the wrists. They usually end in borders which are neither too wide nor too narrow. In only one case, that of the dance of the courtezan Kośā, which seems to have been either painted by an outside painter or brought from outside Gujerat (picture 198), does the 'coḷi' end immediately below the breasts and has also very short sleeves, ending even above the middle of the upper arm.

The scarf is never drawn over the head but is almost always worn round the waist, with two ends left free to flap about in dance motions. Being highly patterned and stylishly sported, it appears to add grace to person and performance. We say almost always because in some pictures of dance postures, as for example 116, 28, 29, 131, the scarf is only partially worn round the upper abdomen, and one of its ends is thrown over the left hand to dangle at the side and the other is held in the right hand so as to allow the end portion to serve as the tassel.

As for the lower garment, we shall first describe the dress of the courtezan, as that dress must have been the usual one for dancers. Of the four pictures, in two (180, 222), the navel is clearly visible, and in the third (198) it is not visible only because it is covered by the garland. In only one picture—even the figure of the courtezan is markedly different from

that of the others being slim with long arms—the navel could have been exposed. Of the twentynine pictures of dance postures, in only one (upper one of 118) is the navel clearly exposed.

Our observations in *Indian Costume*[1], made with supporting evidence on the costume of females of Gujarat and Saurashtra, current among gentle ladies before the 16th century A.D., will show that the costume of danseuses described here can hardly be said to have conformed to the prevailing sentiment of modesty in dress. And the pictures illustrating the dance postures, in so far as they conform to them, were evidently intended for the use of non-professional gentle ladies. The lower garment of the Saurashtra and Gujerat ladies of the time of these pictures noted here, as we have made clear in the book[2], was made up of a piece of cloth of varying richness of material or/and of prints, which were just enough to go round and be knotted at the front without leaving much extra material for gathers. We have designated this costume for the lower part of the body as 'luṅgi-costume'. But with a 'luṅgi', it is impossible to execute the vigorous dance movements that the courtezan is shown as doing. In all the three pictures, her left leg is high up, bent at the knee, with the left foot almost touching the right knee. This is a position which a 'luṅgi' dress will not admit of. Nor does the piece of apparel appear to conform to the trousers. We must, therefore, conclude that it is a type of 'dhoti'. At least it is quite clear that courtezan Kośā in the picture where her lower garment is most exquisitely printed in many colours in alternating patterns (Pl. IX), has worn a kind of 'sāri' rather than a 'luṅgi', 'dhoti' or trousers. One end of it after being brought forward and tucked in at the navel, has been left to dangle in the air and shows off beautifully. The few gathers that must have been formed in the front at the navel have definitely been drawn back and tucked, improving the total effect and facilitating the division of the garment, so that it clings trousers-like to the two legs separately.

In another picture of Kośā, viz., 198, the figure is draped

1 Pp. 143, 235.
2 G. S. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

in a patterned 'ghāgrā' without many gathers, the front lower end of it being drawn back, turning it into a 'kaccha', hind-pleats. The dangling end, lying more or less vertically in front, is, quite clearly, in this picture the end of her 'dupaṭṭā' or scarf rather than that of her 'sāri'. In the third picture (222), however, it is a 'sāri', whose front pleats have been turned back; and the dress-improver type of dangling end is quite clearly the 'pallav' end of the 'sāri'. At least its design and pattern conform to the 'pallav' as it is called in modern terminology of the 'sāri's of Indian females. The portion of the 'sāri' remaining after it is brought round the whole lower body, is turned round the loins, brought forward and there, with a sort of a knot with a 'pallav' end, is let fall to dangle.

The courtezan dancing in the marriage procession is wearing the shorts which also is the dress of females in pictures 114 and 115 of the dance postures. That tights or full-length tight trousers with a thin 'ghāgrā' over them could be worn, is illustrated by dance posture picture 137. But it will be readily admitted that with that kind of costume, the beauty of a number of leg postures would be lost. Some other dance pictures like 128, 129, 130 are quite clearly examples of 'ghāgrā' wear. But the material is thick and we cannot decide if drawers were used underneath.

The total effect left on one is that the costume of danseuses in Gujarat and Saurashtra of about the 15th and 16th centuries would consist of only the longish 'coḷi', with either short or long sleeves, and of the lower garment which, whatever its type, was so arranged as to make it a divided garment. In the case of a 'sāri', the surplus end was tucked in at the front to enable it to be used as a dress-improver and a grace-imparter. It could dispense with the scarf, which if used, was employed for the same purpose as the surplus end of the 'sāri', its other end being used as a balancing item at the back.

We have stated above that the dance of the courtezan Kośā was vigorous, an impression one receives not only from the position of the legs but also from that of the hands. In one picture (222), she holds a flower in each hand. According to the story, she was demonstrating her skill to a proud archer,

by dancing over a flower placed on the point of a pin, stuck in the ground.

Another Gujarati painting of about the same time, which forms one of the illustrations accompanying the manuscript of *Gīta-Govinda* (Pl. X), is particularly interesting. It is a vigorous dance posture that this female is depicted in. Her hair is turned into a braid, evidently without any ornament in it. A four-pearls-star is worn in the hair, towards the top, on the side exposed to the reader (left), and we can take it that there must be a similar one on the other side. At the wrists, there are bangles or rather a conjoint bangle, covering almost half of the forearm. From their appearance, one can be sure that they are of the type at present worn by Marwari women. At the lower rim of the bangle, at the wrist, there are in each hand more than three pom-poms, two in each hand being so loose and free that they should dangle about in various dance postures. At the neck, she has some ornaments, the necklace being double, one rather close and the other fitting. At the ankles, she has worn a single strand of jingles, known in Marathi either as 'cāḷa' or as 'ghuńgur'.

As for her costume proper, the tight trousers or drawers are visible over the lower legs and are of striped material, the stripes running horizontally. The whole body is covered with what we have called, following Rajasthani practice, 'jaguli', a complete description of which is given elsewhere.[1] The sleeves, contrary to general Rajasthani practice, are short and end about an inch or two above the elbow. The great peculiarity of the dress is that at the waist the danseuse has secured her 'jaguli' with two scarfs worn in a very stylish manner. The scarfs themselves, having ornamental 'pallav' with vertical stripes, are meant to be special pieces, designed to enhance the charm of the sartorial ensemble. One of the scarfs forms a bow behind, its two ends standing out on either side of the back centre. One end of the other scarf is sported to dangle beautifully in front over the divide of the 'jaguli' and the other falls pliantly on the left side.

1 G. S. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

A Gujarati painting of a little later time depicting Śālibhadra's life[1] gives us a most remarkable specimen of the costume of female dancers (Pl. XI). The dress of the principal danseuse is almost exactly the same as that of Kṛṣna in a Rajasthani painting.[2]

Before turning to a brief account of whatever is available about male dancers, this is the proper place to refer to a sculptured scene which, to the best of our knowledge, has not been so far reproduced anywhere, either in a dance book or in an art book. For, though its placement here disturbs the chronological sequence, its subject-matter makes it very appropriate, since it depicts both the end of the female dance and the beginning of the male dance. It is from Aihole in Bijapur district and represents ten-handed Śiva dancing the 'tāṇḍava', two of his hands holding, behind his high-coronetted head, a stretched out hooded cobra (Pl. XII). Another cobra lies with its hood at the right and yet another, put over the neck and round the right arm, has pushed out its hood from below the arm and put it out immediately behind standing Gaṇeśa, who is engaged in the innocent act of eating a 'laḍḍu' (sweet-ball). To the right of Gaṇeśa is evidently Pārvati or Umā, dancing the 'lāsya'. This will convince the reader of the significance of the sculpture. Earlier, from the ancient accounts we have seen that the male and the female dance almost simultaneously arose as a blissful activity of the divine couple, Śiva and Pārvati. Being ascribed to the 6th or the 7th century A.D., it is one of the earliest representations of the dancing Śiva.

1 Nawab, *op. cit.*, LXXXVI.
2 *E.B.* 14th ed. Vol. VII, pl. V, 3.

# *MALE DANCE IN ART AND HISTORY*

To trace the representations of male dance, one has to begin with the scene painted in the caves at Bagh in Gwalior region, generally ascribed to the 4th century A.D. It should be borne in mind that Bagh is not very far from Pawaya. The scene is reproduced in Pl. XIII from Mukul Dey's *My Pilgrimage to Ajanta & Bagh,* (Pl. LIV). It is in cave No. 4 which, as Dey has observed, is perhaps the most magnificent of the series. Dey is inclined to date the paintings a century or two later.[1] There is another scene, too, in the cave, described by Dey (Pl. LV) as "a group of musicians." It is a pity that this picture has been effaced to such an extent that nothing further can be said about it than that there are five women, one of whom, the fourth from the reader's right, is elaborately dressed, with a fine coronet or diadem over her head, a white garment clothing the upper part of her body. She and all the other women, too, like the thirteen women present in the other scene, have done their hair in some kind of chignon. This woman would appear to have been the danseuse of the group, to judge from a similar scene in Ajanta already described.

While we are still on this group of female musicians, we may refer here to the dress of the female artiste in the other scene, as the garments of some of them are identical with the upper garment of Ajanta danseuse. At least two of the thirteen females in that group have worn that cut-away 'salūkā' or 'khamise'.

In the first scene (Pl. XIII) there are two groups, each centred round one male, who is the dancer. The group of the male dancer with a striped, flowing, cap-like dress, to the left side of the reader, is the larger one, consisting as it does of the dancer and at least seven females. The seven females are the artistes, helping the dancer with musical accompaniment. Of the seven females, four are bare from the breasts above. The one, nearest to the reader and on the right side of the

1 *Loc. cit.*, p. 170.

dancer, and the next two women beyond are playing cymbals. The next three women are keeping time with two pieces of staves, one in each hand. The seventh woman, to the left of the dancer, has swung round her shoulder a drum and is playing with her two hands on its two faces. In the other group, there are only six females round the dancer, none being to his right. To begin with, the one nearest to the reader and to the left of the dancer—observe the star she is wearing in her hair, almost near the top of her head on the left side—is playing the cymbals. The woman next to her, to her right and a little above her, is playing on the two faces of the small drum, like the woman of the other group. The next three women are keeping time with staves, one in each hand, and the sixth is keeping time with cymbals. Except for their head-dress, the visible costume of the male dancers differs so little that we shall confine ourselves to the description of the costume worn by the dancer to the left of the reader.

It should be noted that in the ears, he has the rings known as 'kuṇḍalas'. On each wrist, he has three to four bracelets. Whether he has worn any anklet or not, we cannot say, only one leg of his being visible up to about the calf. But we are sure—and shall we add, we are fortunate to have the view of at least that much of the leg—that the dancer's legs are swathed in tight trousers or perhaps in 'cuḍidāra pyjamas'. On the upper part of the body, he wears a 'salūkā'-like or 'sūthani'-like garment which is long enough to reach the middle of his thighs. Its sleeves are tight, close-fitting and tapering at the wrists. The cloth from which it was made is evidently 'cunaḍi'-type dotted one. There is at the neck-end rather a broad star-shaped collar falling over it. Perhaps at the waist, there is a small scarf tied up, with its end dangling.

Of about the same date, among the pottery figures discovered at Pawaya, ancient Padmavati, Gwalior region, at least one has been declared to be that of a male dancer. It is a headless figure (Pl. XIV) with its left hand intact, which is bedecked with a heavy round wristlet. The attire is almost identical with that of the male dancer from Bagh caves. In this figure, the small scarf is tightly drawn in at the waist, and firmly but finely knotted over the region of the navel; and the

two ends, too small to dangle, are left to rest over the sides of the lower abdomen.

The other representations of male dance are mostly known to be the dancing Śiva, sometimes known as Naṭarāja. But we shall always speak of him as dancing Śiva to distinguish the early sculptural representations of the dance of Śiva from South Indian bronze images, specifically known as Naṭarāja. In all probability the earliest representation of dancing Śiva is the one we have in a panel belonging to the Śiva temple at Bhumara in Nagod district, formerly Nagod State. The temple is ascribed to the 5th or 6th century A.D.[1] In the caves of Badami in Bijapur district, there are at least two representations of dancing Śiva, one small in cave 2 and the other, quite often reproduced in art books, a big one in cave 1 dancing on a lotus.[2] Both these caves are ascribed by R. D. Banerji to a time before 600 A.D. A few interesting points from the bigger sculpture may be mentioned. One is that the hooded cobra is held in two hands high behind the head as in the case of the representation mentioned in the last section. The image itself is eighteen-handed as against the ten-handed one of the afore-mentioned sculpture and of the smaller sculpture of this series. From the point of view of dance, another important point is the presence of an attendant with two drums, one erect and the other lying horizontally, both the hands of the attendant resting on the horizontal one. The third point is that the little Gaṇeśa, too, is dancing, to judge by the pose of his right hand and his trunk.

The sculpture of Śiva dancing the 'tāṇḍava' in the Daśāvatāra cave of Verula (Ellora) would appear to belong to the 8th century A.D. It is an eight-handed image and is shown as dancing on a lotus. One of the left hands is raised in a most weird and unusual pose. One handles a crescent moon, another a hooded cobra. A dwarf is dancing just within the space behind the feet of Śiva, visible between Śiva's legs. His two hands are more or less in the same position in which Śiva has his, the left hand coming over the left side of the

1 *Memoirs of the Archæological Survey of India*, No. 16, pl. XIII, (b).
2 *Memoirs of the Archæological Survey of India*, No. 25, p. 2, pl. VIII, ii.

chest, going down the right side and the palm dropping on the lower side of the abdomen and the right thigh. One attendant to the right of dancing Śiva has three erect drums, standing side by side; but only one of them has its broader face turned up. The attendant encircling the drum with his right leg, is playing with both hands on the open surface. To the left of Śiva, there are five attendants of whom nothing can be said because they are indistinct. The two next to that figure are evidently keeping time with the help of cymbals, the pair being held together, as in contemporary practice, by a connecting rope. Two attendants to the left of the front one are playing on the flute.[1] In the rock-cut temple of Kailāsa at the same place[2], a small four-handed slim figure of Śiva is dancing on a dwarf. By his left side stands an unusually slim Pārvati, evidently dancing on a lotus. A most interesting point about this sculpture is that one of the left hands of Śiva is resting on the neck of Pārvati.

In the Lańkesvara cave occurs what is to our mind the most virile and tortuous dance-figure of Śiva. It seems to have been a six-handed figure, three on the left being quite clearly seen. In one of them, he holds an erect hooded cobra. The head of Śiva, in the crown of which lies not only a crescent moon but also a skull, is thrown so far back and the chest thrust so far forward that at the left side, there is a regular 'U' formed between the armpit and the left hip. The right foot is thrust far down and the left foot is brought forward to the right side to such an extent that the whole contour of the left buttock stands out.[3]

Over and above the fine necklaces, one round and the other flat-faceted, the 'udarabandha' over the navel, and the rich sacred thread, there are other jewelled straps going over the pelvis and the back, and it would appear, coming intricately over the hip and somehow drawn in front. While the wristlets are three flatish rings, the armlet is much more artistic, and flower or leaf-shaped designs are worked on it. At the ankles, there is a single strand of what must be consi-

1 *Archæological Survey of Western India*, Vol. V, pl. XXI (4).
2 *Ibid.*, pl. XXVI, (1).
3 *Ibid.*, pl. XXIX, (2).

dered to be jingles, 'cāḷa' in Marathi. To add to the virility and the grace of the performance, the figure has two scarfs, both of them just below the navel. One is turned into a knot of beautiful double-bow-ends, softly lying over the back of the left leg. The other scarf is evidently pleated and neatly flattened, but instead of being worn over the shoulders, it is turned round the lower abdomen, one end of it passing under the left leg comes out at the left and its forked end—a characteristic of the graceful deployment of scarf, noticed very early and already drawn attention to—is standing erect by the side of the tail of the hooded cobra. The other end, coming straight out to the right side of the abdomen, again rises up with a curved sweep and faces its forked end up on a level with the first 'udarabandha'. These forked ends of the scarfs, showing such an upward swing, are enough to convey the majesty, the verve and the virility of the dance.

Without meaning to be exhaustive, we should mention one more representation of dancing Śiva from the area so far covered because it is an unusual pose for dancing Śiva. In this sculpture,[1] quite contrary to most representations of dancing Śiva, instead of the left hand coming across the chest to the right side, it is the right hand that goes over the chest to the left.

Next, we must mention the two images from Sankaibondhah and Rampal, both in Dacca district, East Pakistan, as the most extraordinary pieces of the dancing Śiva representations (Pl. XV). From R. D. Banerji's observations we learn that representations of dancing Śiva are very common in Orissa too.[2] The Dacca images are ten-handed, and in both cases, Śiva is standing on the bull. At least in one of the two images, the one reproduced in Pl. XV, the bull, too, is clearly shown in a dancing pose. Śiva dancing on the back of the bull, and his mount too responding by his own activities to the master's dance, indicate a tradition of Śiva-dance which should establish a strong currency of the practice of dance in what was once Eastern Bengal.

1 Ravan-Ki-Khai at Verula (Ellora) reproduced by A. Coomaraswamy in his article in *Ency. Brit.*, XII, pl. vii.
2 R. D. Banerji, *Eastern Indian School of Sculpture* (1933), p. 109; pl. LII (a), (c).

Orissa furnishes another even more important piece of evidence of the prevalence of dance than can be indicated by the existence of dancing Śiva images alone. In a 10th century sculpture-piece from Kapileśvara temple at Bhuwaneśvara[1], a perforated window has three male dancing figures sculptured on it (Pl. XVI). They are in a row. All the three are in different poses, though the centre one and the one to the right of the reader, approach each other very much. Both of them have taken up almost the same pose for their left hands. This pose of the left hand inclines one to the belief that they were acting the Naṭarāja. The left arm coming from the left goes over to the right, and the hand falls limply on the middle of the thigh. The right hand postures of the two, however, are very much different. Of the third dancer, the one to the extreme left of the reader, it is altogether different. Not only are his feet, rather the lower legs, crossed but they are resting on the ground, though we are not sure about the exact position of the right leg. His right hand is raised high in a peculiar pose, being in line with the top of the head. His left hand, holding one end of the scarf, rests on the left thigh.

The costume and ornaments are almost[2] identical. As for the ornaments, a single huge ring in one ear, the other being bare, is the most noteworthy feature. At the neck, there is a single-beaded necklace. At the waist, there is the 'undarabandha', rather ornamental, whose clasp, if any, must be on the back. Lower down the pubic region, there is a five-stranded belt, with a clasp at the front, below which there seems to be formed a bow-knot with a narrow fabric belt, its two ends being turned on the thighs. The ankles are free and unbedecked. Over the arms there are both armlets and wristlets. Both of them are rather broad for their kind. The upper part of the body is positively bare, except for a rather narrow scarf which is very stylishly worn in three different ways by the three dancers. The dancer to the left of the reader has one end of it drawn over the right upper arm and left dangling in front, low down enough for

1 Stella Kramrish in *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, 1947, p. 186; pl. xx.
2 One male figure has a 'coli'-like apparel on him, the real nature of which is not easy to gauge.

its edge to lie between the 'udarabandha' and the belt. Taking the remaining portion from behind the right upper arm, with a fine curved sweep, he has drawn it at the back to the level of the 'udarabandha', and, at the left side, raising it from behind over the left upper arm just below the armlet, has drawn the other end in front. Holding it in his left hand, a few inches above its ornamental edge, he has let it fall over his left thigh. The way the central dancer has worn his scarf is not quite clear. A portion of it appears in front over the armlet, another portion comes over the left armlet and dangles over the left abdominal region and one end lies in the middle of the left thigh. The loop formed by the middle portion is not at all seen. In the case of the third dancer, the deployment of the right portion of the scarf cannot be ascertained; but we know quite positively that howsoever disposed to the right, the remaining portion of it comes in a sweep from behind, over the back, about the region of the lower ribs, and rises up over the left shoulder going in front under the left armlet. It then issues out over the left side, and flaps in the air a little away from the left thigh. All of them seem to wear shorts, the 'ardhorūka' of Sanskrit literature.

Dancing Gaṇeśa's independent images have been referred to as coming from South India. We may, therefore, mention here that R. D. Banerji has stated that eight-handed images of dancing Gaṇeśa are common in North India. He has reproduced two such, one from Bihar and the other from Gol in Rajshahi district.[1]

Another dancing deity is Kṛṣṇa. Cousens has reproduced a sculptured panel from the Kṛṣṇa temple at Vaghli near Chalisgaon in Khandesh district, ascribed to the 11th century A.D.[2] The most interesting feature of the sculpture is that the right leg is lifted high, the sole of the foot resting at the root of the left thigh. The temple under reference appears to be a place of worship patronized by members of the Mānbhāv sect.

An early 16th century illustrated manuscript provides us with the dance pictures of Kṛṣṇa which may be taken as the

1 *Eastern Indian School of Sculpture*, p. 118; pl. LX (b), (c).
2 *Mediæval Temples of the Deccan*, 1931, pl. XXXVI.

type of male dance known in Gujerat of the time. Plate XVII reproduces one of the scenes. It is evidently a human Kṛṣṇa, as he is two-handed. His dance pose, however, is exactly the same as that of the Kṛṣṇa idol from Vaghli in Khandesh already referred to. He wears a spotted 'dhoti', whose pleats the artist has taken care to show very clearly. We take it, since he has shown them spread out, that they are intended to convey the notion of vigorous motion. The 'dhoti' is long, reaching to the ankles. Only a scraf goes over the upper part of the body. It is rather ample and going over the left loins and upper thigh and coming over the pelvis to the right side, it is turned over the right shoulder in an overlap. Its end coming from behind flaps gracefully at the right knee. The end that goes over from the front dangles at the back behind the left shoulder.

A 16th century Rajasthani picture, reproduced by Coomaraswamy in his dance-contribution already referred to,[1] depicts Kṣṛṇa and his male companions dancing a fairly vigorous dance below the window of Rādhā's residence from which two females are peeping out. Two males keep the musical accompaniment, one on the huge 'mṛdaṅga', drum, and the other with the cymbals. Kṛṣṇa's dress is the typical costume of a rich agriculturist of the region of that time. The head is covered by a two-coloured turban with a crown. The scarf is very gracefully worn over the shoulder and below the waist. There is a fully pleated short double skirt in two colours draping the lower part of the body. As Coomaraswamy notes, it occurs as one of the illustrations to the manuscript of a Hindi work called *Rasikapriyā*.

Another Rajasthani picture, reproduced in Coomaraswamy's article on Indian and Sinhalese Art and Archaeology[2], representing a particular mode of song (rāga) provides perhaps the latest representational evidence of male dancing. It is ascribed to the 16th or 17th century A.D. While the male, with his right arm stretched and raised fairly high to his right, and his left arm bent at the elbow and turned towards the abdomen,

1 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th Edition, *op. cit.*
2 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. XII, pl. X (1).

is evidently dancing, the musical accompaniment is kept by a frail-looking female playing on a huge North Indian 'mṛdaṅga'.

We shall draw our reader's attention to only one or two special features of his costume. The lower part of the body is swathed in a narrow chintz-like printed 'dhoti' which reaches only upto the knees. The front pleats of the 'dhoti' are rather broad and show no lines of the pleats but lie below the 'dhoti' and reach the middle of the shins. At the lower end, they stand spread out but without showing any line of the pleats. An ornamental scarf, whose two breadth-wise ends are highly decorative, is worn round the waist over the 'dhoti' high up and so knotted at the front that one end of it falls over the pleated front of the 'dhoti' nearly upto about one-third of its length. Even more interesting is the deployment and the lie of the scarf proper, a narrow piece of attire, which is so common a feature of Indian male dress. It is evidently folded properly and flat. One end of it comes over the right upper arm and falls in front, its edge being almost in the line of the waist. The remaining portion of the scarf coming from over and behind the upper right arm descends in a mild sweep to the region above the loins. From there, it turns back and from behind emerges at the left side of the waist and ascends in a mild sweep to go over the left upper arm from behind it and then comes down in front between the upper arm and the forearm, and gently descending dangles by the side. There its end lies almost in line with the frontal end of the scarf at the waist.

The dance idea was extended even to the godlings. In the 6th century temple of Śiva at Bhumara in Nagod district, almost in the centre of North India, there are panels in which not only Śiva but also his 'gaṇas' (attendants) are sculptured as dancing in various postures.[1]

The eight Guardians of the eight quarters are depicted as dancing more than once. The ceiling in Sidheśwara temple at Haveri in Dharwar district, has the eight Guardian images, all four-handed. They are shown in dance poses without any musical accompaniments. One of them has his left arm thrown over the chest to the right side and the right foot is resting vertically on the ground. Another panel of eight Guardians is

1 *Memoirs of the Archæological Survey of India,* No. 16, pl. X and p. 10.

even more interesting. It is from Belagamave in Dharwar district. In it the Guardians themselves are not dancing but there is below each Guardian, a panel of dancers and musical accompaniments. In each panel, there are seven to eleven persons of whom only one or two are in the dancing pose; others provide musical accompaniments.[1]

Further down south, we have sculptures of the 12th century A.D., depicting what is quite clearly secular dance. Two friezes from the Halebid temple in Mysore, reproduced in Goswami's *Indian Temple Sculpture*[2] provide these. In one frieze, there are six persons. The third from the reader's left who is a male is alone the dancer. The other five males keep musical accompaniment. Three of them are playing on the usual drums, two on the 'mṛḍaṅga', the third one on a smaller drum of a different kind, perhaps beaten on one face only. The male to the extreme left of the reader is evidently playing with staves, and the one to the extreme right with the cymbals.

The central dancing figure of this group is very interesting. His ornaments are of the usual type: rings in the ear-lobes, a double necklace round the neck, a sacred thread of an ornamental type, an armlet and a wristlet. The 'dhoti' that he wears is a short one, reaching just above the knees. Its front pleats are worn negligé and are not properly folded. The scarf used round the loins has a bow-knot on the left side, the end portion dangling over the left leg, with one of its corners touching the left foot or even the ground. At the ankles, he wears four rounds of the jingles, known as 'cāḷa' in Marathi, not more than two rounds of which we came across in North Indian dance representations.

In the lower frieze, it appears to us, there are four females and four males. The male to the extreme right of the reader, along with the female to his right, are the only dancers of the group. The female to her right, though she can be construed to be dancing, yet to us she appears to be playing with cymbals. The two males to her right are playing on the drums. The next two females are quite clearly playing with cymbals. And

1 Cousens, *Chalukyan Architecture*, pl. LXXXIII, pl. CXIV.
2 *Loc. cit.*, pl. CXX, CXXI.

the male to the extreme left of the reader is playing on the flute.

The legs of all the four males are intact and visible; they are bare without any ornament. Hollow anklets are seen on the legs of the three females visible in the picture. The 'sāri-dhoti's worn by the females are also short or made short so that they end just above the knees. But the pleats are ample in front. It seems that the other end of the 'sāri' is disposed in a graceful manner in a fan-shaped bow to the right by the dancer and to the left by the woman who is second from the left of the reader.

# *DANCE COSTUME IN THEORY AND PRACTICE*

The history of Bhāratanāṭya and its costume, brief and broken though it be, that we have been able to piece together in the foregoing sections, demonstrates the absence in actual practice of the dicta of old writers on the subject of dance and costume. In Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* and in other works following it, for a representational or interpretative dance, external representation 'āhāryābhinaya' is stated to be one of the four principal types of representation or interpretation through which dance and drama succeed in conveying to the audience the appropriate æsthetic experiences. This particular type, i.e., external representation is otherwise called 'nepathyābhinaya' by Bharata.[1] It consists of four kinds of costume and make-up—(i) living objects, (ii) models, (iii) painting of the body, and (iv) decoration of the body. In Sanskrit, 'nepathya' generally means costume and toilet of the body. But in Bharata's terminology 'nepathya' is conceived as a wider category. In non-technical literature only one variety of it, viz., decoration or 'alaṅkāra', drapery, ornaments and other things, is subsumed under 'nepathya'. Nandikeśvara[2], evidently having only dance in view, has in a straightforward manner equated 'āhāryābhinaya', or external representation, with "decoration with such things as costume, armlets and necklace." Śārṅgadeva, too, being concerned only with dance, has done similarly; but he has excluded costume and has put in the head-ornament, viz., the coronet instead.[3] But that does not mean that he attaches great importance only to adornment through ornaments.

It is noteworthy in this connection to compare the requisites in a danseuse qualifying her for her role detailed by Nandikeśvara in his *Abhinayadarpaṇa* and by Śārṅgadeva in his chapter on 'nartana', dancing.

---

1 *Nāṭyaśāstra*, XXIII, 2.
2 *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 40.
3 Sārṅgadeva, *op. cit.*, vii, 22.

Here is Coomaraswamy's rendering of the relevant passages from *Abhinayadarpaṇa*:[1] "It is understood that the Danseuse (*nartaki*) should be very lovely, young, with full round breasts, self-confident, charming, agreeable, dexterous in handling the critical passages, skilled in steps and rhythms, quite at home on the stage, expert in posing hands and body, graceful in gesture, with wide-open eyes, able to follow song and instruments and rhythm, adorned with costly jewels, with a charming lotus-face, neither very stout nor very thin, nor very tall nor very short. . . . The following accessories are called the Outer Life of the Danseuse: the drum, the cymbals of a good tone, the flute, the chorus, the drone, the lute (*vīṇā*), the bells, and a male singer (*gāyaka*) of renown. The ten factors of the Inner Life of the Danseuse are swiftness, composure, symmetry, versatility, glances, ease, intelligence, confidence, speech and song."

Sārṅgadeva goes a step further and as already stated, recognises three varieties of danseuse. Leaving aside the descriptions of these three varieties, the qualities or the requisites of a danseuse are laid down in twelve lines of verse, ultimately emphasising tuning with the sound expressing itself in the external poses and gestures in a manner so as to present it incarnate to be seen by the eye. Her limbs should be like lovely good flowers pulsating with (juice-) sentiments.[2]

Nandikeśvara has nothing much to say about the equipment of a danseuse in the manner of either costumes or further details of adornment. Śārṅgadeva, on the other hand, devotes sixteen more verse lines to describe the personal adornments that a danseuse should carry out. To begin with, the hair should be well-groomed and oiled and should be turned into a loose, graceful knot at the back. It should have in it bright flowers. In the alternative, the hair should be braided into a straight long plait and decorated with a string of pearls. The forehead-mark should be made with musk and sandal paste, and a little collyrium should be put in the eyes. In the ear, there should be brilliant rings and also hollow cylindrical ear-ornaments. Her cheeks should be adorned with lines or figures, painted with

1 *The Mirror of Gesture*, pp. 15-17.
2 *Op. cit.*, 1241-1246.

musk. Her teeth should be so white as to cast lustre on the stage. She should put on her neck a necklace of large and bright pearls so as to adorn her breasts. The forearms should be bedecked with bracelets of gold in which fine jewels are studded. The fingers should carry rings of various kinds of precious stones. The body should either be smeared with sandal paste or with red lead ('kuṁkuma'). For the bosom, she should have the short 'coḷi'; and she should clothe her body in milky white silk cloth; in the alternative, she should put on the 'coḷā' the long gown-like coat which, as we have shown in *Indian Costume,* has a venerable antiquity. Over all this, Śārṅgadeva concludes by saying that all these ornaments, including the costume should be in accordance with the prevalent custom of the particular region.

Readers will have realised that it is this last exhortation of Śārangadeva that was the basis of actual practice as evidenced by our description. From the story about the origin of 'lāsya' dance, perhaps one may expect some influence of Saurashtra costume on the dance costume of Indian females. We have also noticed that in another tradition, the Saurashtra ladies are said to have at least revived the technique of dance and that by the time of the writer of that tradition, Gujerati females were considered to be adepts in the art. We should have expected some influence of their dress too. But we have not discovered it, at least in the scenes of actual dance that we have come across so far.

Perhaps the regional or sub-national differentiation within the over-all unity of Indian culture has been for long a persistent phenomenon. Not that here and there a temperamental monarch of strong likes and will did not transcend the limitations of regional outlook, but that the people as a whole, not only believed in their regional speciality but also, true Indians that they were, perfectly well tolerated and appreciated its continuity.

In *Indian Costume* we have already drawn attention to regional peculiarities of ordinary costume. We have dwelt on the doings in the realm of sartorial fashion of the Kashmiri king Harsha. If in the 11th century A.D., a temperamental Kashmiri king appreciated the southern costume of the Deccan,

writers on dance not long afterwards had begun not only to patronise but to eulogise the capabilities of women of particular regions in the domain of dance. The Gujerati writer of the 14th or 15th century thought Gujerati women as capable of being the best danseuses. Another writer, Somarājadeva by name, quoted by Kavi,[1] while characterising a danseuse ('nartakī') observed: "Women of Karṇāṭa, Lāṭa (Gujerat), Saurashtra, Maharashtra and others, when taught by a good teacher, become best danseuses." Here, though after the enumeration of the four regions, the saving and inclusive expression 'and others' is added, yet it is clear that by naming the four regions, the author has put them above others. The author from whom Kavi has quoted appears to have been an officer in the employ of king Ajaypāla and wrote his work in A.D. 1118.[2]

While the regional participation in dancing performance was growing apace, it appears there was some development not only in the process of regional differentiation of ordinary costume but there was in progress a theory, too, of sentiments which easily lent support to it. The literature and the time at our disposal do not enable us to trace even briefly that process of development. We shall only mention here a marked indication of it which, thanks to Rāghavabhaṭṭa, the commentator on Kālidāsa's *Śākuntala,* we have. While commenting on the very first words of the 'Sūtradhāra', Rāghavabhaṭṭa quotes one Mātṛguptācārya to the effect that Sentiments ('rasa') are of three types: those based on speech, based on costume, and based on physical and mental qualities. And though Mātṛguptācārya ends by stating that it is the last variety of sentiments that is preferred for dramatic composition, yet, as Rāghavabhaṭṭa points out, even in a drama, ornaments and dress of actors do help the experience of particular Sentiment. With such a theory, regional costumes, already popularised by the use of dancers, naturally gathered a halo round them.

Information about the costume of dance as practised in modern and recent times is confined only to the female performers. And these female performers were all from the professional class, known by various names in the different parts

1 *Bharatakośa,* p. 864.
2 *Ibid.,* pp. iv, v.

of the country. Those who have delved into the modern history of Indian dance are sure that the first information is that provided by Dr. Shortt in a paper on the "Dancing Girls of South India" read before the Anthropological Society of London in 1870.[1] Evidently stimulated by Dr. Shortt's paper, K. Raghunathji of Bombay published a paper on "Bombay Dancing Girls" in 1884.[2] In his paper, Raghunathji includes some observations on the South Indian 'devadāsis' too. Raghunathji speaks of six kinds of dancing current among the Bombay dancing girls, three of which they performed in their own quarters and three at the houses of others. The dress of a dancing girl ready for performance is thus described by him: "She wears a short gown, or 'peshwaz' with short tight sleeves. . . She puts on a thin embroidered muslin 'dupaṭṭa' in graceful folds and an embroidered bodice or 'choli'. . . and has a silk hand-kerchief in her hand." Her musical accompaniments as described by K. Raghunathji consisted of one drummer—we take it the one who played on the 'tablā'—one fiddler on each side of her—by fiddler, we take it, is meant the 'sārańgī'-man.

In view of what was said by Shortt and some others of the dance of South Indian 'devadāsīs', it would be of interest to read the following observations which appear to have been made by some scholar in the Asiatic Journal (Vol. XVIII) quoted by K. Raghunathji: "But there can be nothing more modest than their dress and demeanour and in their movements they are considered unrivalled. The great charm of their dances consists almost wholly of the elegant and graceful attitudes which they assume. You see no violent swings of the arm, no unnatural curving of the limbs, no bringing of the legs at right angles with the trunks, no violent hops and jerks. . . She occasionally turns quickly round with a burst of song by which the loose folds of her thin short gown are expanded, and the heavy gold border with which it is trimmed opens into a circle round her neat little figure, showing for an instant the beautiful outline of her form, draped with the most becoming and judicious taste."

1 Beryl de Zoete, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
2 *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XIII, pp. 165-178.

The dancing dress of South Indian 'devadāsīs' as reported by K. Raghunathji in the above-mentioned paper, may now be noted. They had their short jackets, called 'coḷi' in the Indo-Aryan tongues. For the lower part they had drawers or 'pyjamas' and a small 'sāri' which it would appear to us, to be bigger than the Gujerati or North Indian 'oḍhani'. They sported this wrapper in 'sāri' fashion and it went round the waist at least once. Two or three feet of the material was turned into pleats or gathers which were tucked in at the waist, evidently over and into the pyjama waist-string. The other end of the 'sāri', going from the right side, was drawn over the breasts to the left shoulders—here the account given by K. Raghunathji does not seem to be quite correct—and over the back and under the right armpit, the end being brought forward over the 'sāri' portion already draped, and carefully, neither too tightly nor too loosely, drawn to the left side. There the spread out ornamental end was secured partially in front and partially at the waist. The ornamental end thus appeared in front as a dress-improver. From the front pleats, dividing them, the lower end of one was drawn behind and tucked at the back so that the 'sāri', too, became a divided garment. That is at least how K. Raghunathji describes it.

The pictures of South Indian 'devadāsī'-dancers available, whether the one given by Coomaraswamy in his dance contribution[1] or that of 'devadāsī' from Baroda given by Miss Kay Ambrose[2] or again that of the great contemporary danseuse, Balasaraswati[3] or of the Kalyani sisters[4] do not convey the impression that the 'sāri' is tucked in behind to make it like the trousers a divided garment. But the side views of the same costume provided by Miss Ambrose in picture 9 A on page 49 and picture E on page 43, dispel all doubt. We see that Raghunathji's statement that the 'sāri' was worn by South Indian 'devadāsīs' in such a manner as to be turned into a divided garment and not in the Tamil fashion, represents the truth.

Raghunathji's description of the costume of Bombay dancing girls does not fit in with all the details of the dress of

1 *E.B.* VII.
2 *Op. cit.*, p. 37.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

North Indian dancing girls. Coomaraswamy has reproduced a picture of a dancing girl from North India in the contribution already referred to. He describes her dress as consisting of a 'peshwaz' and a 'dupaṭṭā'. Coomaraswamy's 'peshwaz' is a long gown, reaching upto the ankle. The sleeves are not tight, but they are not very loose either, and end above the elbow. If the dancing girl used trousers inside, as one would think she did, their ends are visible. Therefore, Coomaraswamy's description is to be taken as correct. Coomaraswamy's description of the second piece of attire as 'dupaṭṭā' is not correct. It is quite clearly an 'oḍhani'. It is very much broader and slightly longer, too, than the usual 'dupaṭṭā' or scarf. And the way she has worn it, is not very different from the usual way of sporting an 'oḍhani'. Only it is not drawn over the head. Its breadthwise ornamental ends, both of them, would appear to be worn as dress-improvers.

The North Indian dancing girls have been known by various terms of which 'paturiā' deserves more than a passing mention. 'Paturiā' is rightly derived by W. Crooke from the Sanskrit term 'pātra' which we had occasion to mention as a technical word used by writers on dance for a female dancer. He has given a picture of a 'paturiā' dancer. The dancing woman there is performing to the accompaniment of a 'sārańgi' and a 'tablā' man. She is dressed in an amply pleated skirt, a short bodice, which does not appear to be of the front-fastening variety, and wears an 'oḍhani' or scarf over her head which she holds with one or the other hand.[1]

The description of the circle-movement of a Bombay dancing woman quoted by Raghunathji from *Asiatic Journal* fits better the type of skirt that the dancing woman in Crooke's picture is wearing than the usual 'peshwaz'; and it is to be noted that a talented American female dancer who executed a number of Indian dances, sported this type of dress to perform North Indian dance.[2]

The recent and contemporary interest in Indian dance, including Bhāratanāṭya may be said to originate with the active concern about it shown by the famous European

1 *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Vol.* IV, 364; *Natives of Northern India,* pl. 22.
2 See 3.

danseuse Anna Pavlova and with the performances she put through, dressed in Indian 'sāri'. While her visit to India in search of dancers of traditional schools failed to fructify for her, it stirred enough enthusiasm for the local investigators and searchers to patronze the dancing girls and to bring them forward. Another talented Occidental danseuse, who caught her fever of enthusiasm from her senior and teacher-like co-professional, Pavolva, is the American Ruth St. Denis. The special interest in Ruth St. Denis' entry into the field of search, study and performance of Indian dance is that in her venture, she contacted learned oriental[1] scholars and peered through numerous books on Indian art and philosophy too. It is no wonder then to find that in the Indian dances that she put through, she tended to choose her costume and colour with judgment and taste. Witness, for example, her picture produced as an accompaniment in the Dance-article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.[2] She has put on a skirt whose ground is light green and whose proportionately large border is in four colours, the brighter colours occurring in very narrow stripes. The skirt itself has, like the skirt of the dancing girl from North India pictured by Crooke and already referred to, ample gathers and pleats. The existence of these pleats or gathers has enabled the danseuse to use the material, the colour and the border-design and the shape of the skirt to great advantage. By holding the two side-ends in her hands, the arms being stretched out in their plane and on their proper sides, she has created a fan-shaped front which, needless to say, must shine and shimmer with the movements. It will also heave and deflect. She has used the traditional 'udarabandha' for her ornament, the front fastening 'coḷi' with close-fitting sleeves, covering about two-thirds of the upper arm and conforming to the 'coḷi' pattern, without too much decolletage, of dull red ground which fits with the coloured border of the 'oḍhanī', scarf, put on in the negligé manner over her head and back. We take it that by some clip or head-ornament she held fast the hem of the 'oḍhanī' resting on her head. Evidently, lower down at the waist, she must have tucked in a little of the 'oḍhanī' material in the waist-

1 *Ruth St. Dennis, An Unfinished Life*, pp. 59—; W. Terry, *Invitation to Dance*, p. 58.
2 Vol. VII, pl. I(1).

string, neither too tight nor too loose. At the ornamental borders, she has gathered the ends, putting each end in her hand, securing them in the bracelet or in the elaborate finger ornaments, so that with the movement of her arms the whole skirt would look like a flapping bird or would produce a wave-like effect.

Dance costume, as already stated, has a functional side, a cultural aspect and an æsthetic one. In all these three aspects, the culture of a particular society, the current æsthetic notions —under cultural must also be included moral notions subsumed under the concept of modesty—will condition the danseuse in the choice of her costume, not only in these specific aspects but also on its functional and æsthetic sides. However, in these two aspects, functional and æsthetic, the artistes who are considered brilliant exponents of their art do have a say the precise amplitude of which cannot be gauged.

In our situation, with the sartorial tradition handed down mostly through professional women, the pioneer artistes are likely to have been hampered in their free choice of costume for their art. To add to their difficulties, to judge by the books on the subject of Indian dance, half a dozen or more of them published during the last ten years or so, the available cultural and other data on the history of our costume were very meagre. Earlier still, the first society ladies that entered the field of Indian dance were handicapped by the utter lack of all such information.

Under these circumstances, it was a very fortunate event that the first society lady that ventured to execute Indian dances in public, Rukmini Arundale, came from an atmosphere fully charged with Sanskrit cultural studies. We do not know the background of most others, but their general cultural background being of a high order, the sartorial aspect of Bhāratanāṭya in contemporary times has, it appears to us, shown fair achievement.

We have had the benefit of being able to see about sixty pictures, reproduced in books, of ten different famous danseuses of contemporary India. Analysing their practice as seen in these pictures, we shall make a few comments in the light of the historical material that we have presented above.

To begin with the hair-do, we know that in the historical material, some kind of knot, the 'dhammilla' of the classical writers, was by far the prevalent mode, the braid being confined to one region, more or less, and that too in the late period. That does not mean, it must be noted, that it was so because of general lack of either practice or knowledge of different modes of hair-dressing in that age. Anybody, who goes through the album of Ajanta frescos or looks at the sculpture illustrations of the Orissan temples or goes through Rajendra Lal Mitra's books, *Antiquities of Orissa* and *Indo-Aryans,* will be struck by the rich variety of known and practised hair-styles. And the technical writers on the subject of dance, though rather late, as is evident from quotations in Kavi's *Bharatakośa,* specify at least half a dozen different modes of hair-dressing. Yet the 'dhammilla', or the knot, seems to have been preferred, above all.

In the practice of contemporary great danseuses, the braid seems to be much more preferred to any other form of hair-dressing. The professional dancers, figured in the books, including the great Balasaraswati, dance with a braid. The younger ones like G. Kausalya, or Kamala, too, dance with a braid. So does Chandrabhaga. As for Shanta Rao, perhaps the most famous Indian danseuse of today, out of about thirty-eight pictures which we have examined, in eleven we are unable to make out the nature of her hair-do and in two she is evidently featuring particular roles. Of the remaining twenty-five pictures, in only seven has she turned her hair into a knot or chignon behind her head. In the rest, she is shown as dancing with her hair braided, with the braid left dangling. Rukmini Arundale, on the other hand, seems to have favoured some kind of chignon. At least of her ten dance pictures available to us, in seven she has worn a chignon and possibly in two others too. None of her pictures shows her in a braid. The five pictures of Usha Chatterji show her with that loose type of spread out collection which we should call the honey-comb knot because the shape presented from behind is like that of a honey-comb.

Apart from the dancing of the representational roles, when the hair-do must conform to some traditional or functional pat-

tern, the question of hair dressing is very largely a matter of personal æsthetics of the danseuse. Convinced of the truth of this observation, however, we should like to point out that the braid has certain possible disadvantages, particularly if it is rather short. In the dance movements, specially in the vigorous ones, which shake the head and the neck violently, the end of the braid, especially if it is not very long, has a tendency to topple over the shoulder on to the chest in front. The danseuse, though an expert, may not be able, as we know from our previous account—one of the female pupils of the Banaras master in the 7th century A.D. was not able to hold up her loosening 'dhammilla' knot though the other was—to prevent its transgression. And then she might get conscious of the fact that something extraneous is lying in front; and the sight itself may not be quite pleasant to the audience. Secondly, even the æsthetics of a person about hair-do has to be properly cultivated and must not remain the usual or the traditional one.

The cultivated æsthetics of hair-do takes into account not only the quantity and the texture of the hair but also the shape of the head. Though, generally the female head tends to be more roundish in contour than the head of the males of the race, yet it is only relatively so. Further, there is the variation in the protuberance of the occiput behind and the prominence of the crown at the top. These considerations will show that there cannot be a set rule for hair-do to be followed by all danseuses.

We are not going to deal with ornaments in this essay. Yet we shall make an exception in the case of the head-ornament, because, it appears to us, that the proper appearance of the head, resulting from hair-do and the use of flowers and ornaments, is an important element in the total æsthetic feeling that a danseuse or an actress will be able to put through to her audience. A small, simple head ornament which allows the full gloss of the oiled hair to shine is much to be preferred to the elaborate ornaments used by some of the danseuses. Particularly is this the case with the frontal ornaments. A small fan-shaped ornament lying just at the frontal end of the middle parting of the hair, secured from behind, the 'caṭulātiḷaka', is all that should be deemed sufficient. Some of the famous

danseuses, on the other hand, by the use of the most elaborate frontal ornaments with pearl strings or other chains, emanating from the central fan-shaped ornament and going over the temples to the ears, though it may sometimes give its wearer the look of youth, offend against the natural æsthetics set by physical features. The female forehead tends to be on the narrower side, the temples particularly so, and an elaborate ornament of this kind by concealing some portion of the already smallish forehead reduces it still further. In the pictures, besides the old-world dancing girls figured—Balasaraswati is an exception—Rukmini Arundale and Usha Chatterji are shown as sporting that elaborate ornament. Shanta Rao has worn it only once or twice in the pictures.

A little collyrium in the eyes as prescribed by Śārṅgadeva certainly adds to the total beauty of the head.

Coming to dress proper, the 'coḷi', the female garment for the upper part of the body, has had a chequered history which we have detailed elsewhere.[1] It will be seen from that account that the front-fastening short 'coli' was credited to the Maharashtrian account. In Northern India and particularly in the Western region, that garment as far back as is known, has been a back-fastening, long one with long sleeves reaching upto the elbow. But even there it has never been long enough to cover the entire abdominal region upto the tie of the 'sāri' or the skirt at the waist. The short Maharashtrian 'coli' has always been so short that it hardly ever reached beyond the lower breast-line. Its sleeves, as worn by elite ladies and those of most upper castes, generally covered two-thirds of the upper arm. When they ended above the middle of the upper arm, they invariably elicited critical murmurs. In *Indian Costume* we have shown how with European contact the elite class females accepted the European blouse in place of the 'coli', whether back-fastening or front-fastening, generally reaching upto the waist. Its sleeves were sometimes long, but more often, answered to the standard of 'coli' sleeve-length. One fashionable feature of the blouse sleeves was that they were puffed at the shoulder and with a number of gathers, puffing up the

1 *Indian Costume.*

upper arm, tapered into the lower fitting end of the sleeves. Indications were already rampant, about fifteen or twenty years ago, that the blouse with decolletage in front or at the back, along with a shortening of its length on the trunk, was coming into vogue among society ladies. It tended to leave some portion of the upper abdomen uncovered below the thin 'sāri' covering of the bosom. That tendency has grown apace, and along with it, the sleeves of the garment, which may now be called longish front-fastening 'coli', have tended not only to reach the elbows but to go slightly beyond them.

Among the well-known danseuses whose dance pictures have been available to us, it is only Mrinalini Sarabhai in the only dance picture of hers included in the agglomeration of books, appears in the back-fastening longish 'coli', its sleeves fitting and ending just an inch above the elbows. Her 'sāri' being all draped, entire length of it, only over the lower part of the body, and there being no scarf or 'dupaṭṭā', about two inches of her abdominal region is exposed. No other artiste in this agglomeration has worn such a 'coli', either with such length over the trunk or even with such sleeves.

We have quoted in *Indian Costume* views and practices about covering the upper part of the female body, current for a long period of sartorial history in our culture, to the effect that considerations of propriety and modesty require the upper part of the female body to be properly covered. The indications and the vogue mentioned above have not gone to the extent of permitting any part of the female upper body to be exposed. So long as this notion of modesty is current, we wonder how far the danseuse who violates it serves the best interests of her art. Anyway, excepting one picture among many of Rukmini Arundale, we do not find any one of the living famous danseuses—at least in the sixty odd pictures that we have been able to assemble together—exposing any portion of the upper part of the body.

Tautness or vibration of muscles and the shapeliness of female shoulders are components of the total æsthetic feeling that female dancers create. The puffed-up sleeves or too long sleeves are a hindrance in the way of the play of muscles of the upper arm. Besides, the puffed-up sleeves create an appear-

ance of broad and squarish shoulders which generally detracts from feminine grace.

For the lower part of the body, excepting in one or two cases, which we pass over as rare, a full length, i.e. nine-yards 'sāri' is generally donned by most of the famous danseuses of the day. Its draping is partially conditioned by function and partly by æsthetics. Excepting two artistes, Mrinalini Sarabhai and G. Kausalya, drawing upon the sixty odd pictures referred to, all the others have taken one portion of the 'sāri' over the bosom from the right side and then drawing it over the left shoulder and bringing it forward from under the right armpit, have pulled the ornamental breadth-wise border, fairly tightly, over to either the front centre or to the left waist from over the front centre. There they have gathered or spread the ornamental border and used it as an improver of the dress and as the enhancer of the grace of their dance-activity. This is a very becoming and appropriate manner of using our cultural heritage.

After the front pleats are formed, for functional use of the garment, viz., to allow the two legs fairly independent and separate movements, they are divided. One end is brought back, tightly drawn in and tucked into the waist at the back. This divides the garment, no doubt, and drapes it on the legs like gathered trousers, but destroys the natural grace of the free-flowing frontal pleats and their ends lying between the ankles. This particular aspect of the pleats has been appreciated from of old, whether in the male or in the female, as will be seen from pictures 68, 72, 73, 102, 106, 129, 147, 148, 196, 200, 210, 227, 245, 247, 248, 264 and best of all, 315, 316 reproduced in *Indian Costume*, from about the 1st century B.C. to about the 17th century A.D., from one part of the country to the other. The feature was so far prized as a fashion item that in a number of sculptures of Bharhut, made-up pleated fronts of some stiff material are seen in the costume of many of the large figures. Even now, it is so far appreciated by some of the famous danseuses that in singleton pictures, in this agglomeration, of Tara Chaudhary and Kamala, they seem to have done something of the same kind. In one or two pictures, even Rukmini Arundale seems to have used sewn-up pleats, if not

for the lower part of the body, at least for the region between the bosom and the lower abdomen.

To leave ample pleats in front so that their lower ends present a beautiful bunch and yet to divide the 'sāri', the whole of the nine-yards long 'sāri' will have to be draped over the lower part only. Its ornamental breadth-wise border, the 'padar' or the 'pallav', can be used in the manner in which the famous danseuses of today have so far used it. But the draping of the entire material on the lower part of the body alone, while providing ample frontal pleats, is likely to increase the volume of the material at the navel and thus to give a slightly ugly corpulent look. Very fine material, it appears to us, will enable the wearer to reduce its bulk and add to the grace of oblique folds created by the gathers of the garment in this manner.

If the 'sāri' is draped over the lower part of the body, a thin fine scarf, appropriately fitting with the colour scheme of the 'coli' and the 'sāri' can be used for fulfilling a double purpose. It can cover the open abdominal region, provide a second covering to the bosom, considered so essential in our notions of modesty, and with a graceful sweep from behind, its end can be tied on one side in a sort of a bow with a small flap end, a portion gracefully dangling, in unison with or in contrast to the 'pallav' portion of the 'sāri'. Actually, G. Kausalya has in some of her dance pictures worn a white scarf for such an ensemble; and Rukmini Arundale, too, in one or two dance pictures of hers, seems to have done the same. But neither of them, to judge by the pictures, has knotted the end or used the bow as a flapping adjunct. In the dance pictures of old, referred to above, the bow-tie idea and the flap-end practice have been noticed.

Addition of the scarf or the 'dupaṭṭā' is a fitting tribute to our cultural heritage. The 'dupaṭṭā' or the second garment, was considered to be an element of sartorial propriety, both in the female and in the male. If one or two female danseuses have tended to bring back this second garment, the scarf or 'dupaṭṭā', to its rightful place in an artiste's ensemble, the male dancers have simply ignored it. In one or two of the great sculptures of dancing Śiva, the scarf has been beautifully

employed to harmonise with the majesty of the hooded cobra sported by Śiva. Lest it be said that to manage a well-pleated scarf with its two ends dangling gracefully with ten or even four arms of Śiva is a simple matter and the advice of its use by a two-handed male is a prescription devoid of reality, we draw our reader's attention to the three mere human males of the Orissan temple sculptured in their dance ecstasy in the 10th century A.D.[1]

1 Pl. XVI.

# *Social Studies*

*a Selection*

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Rs. nP.

INDIAN COSTUME
G. S. Ghurye
1951 52. 50

CASTE AND CLASS IN INDIA
G. S. Ghurye 3rd Edition
1957 16. 25

INDIAN SADHUS
G. S. Ghurye
1953 15. 50
With the collaboration of L. N. Chapekar

THE MAHADEV KOLIS
G. S. Ghurye
1957 14. 00

VIDYAS
A homage to Comte and a contribution to sociology of knowledge
G. S. Ghurye
1957 6. 50

PROFESSOR GHURYE FELICITATION VOLUME
Edited by K. M. Kapadia
1954 18. 00

Here is a brilliant and authentic history of the costume of Bhāratanāṭya dancers from the pen of an established scholar of international repute