

Dance: A Survey

(1) Classical Dance Forms

Dance has a long history in India. A large amount of material related to dance, dating from as early as the 2nd century BCE up to the 21st century CE, is available. For example we have a bronze ‘dancing girl’ figurine from Mohenjo-daro and a broken torso from Harappa in a dance pose. For convenience, we may divide the history of dance into three periods — classical, middle and modern.

Classical Period

The first still available classical manual on dance is Bharata Muni’s *Nāṭyaśāstra* (about 2nd century BCE). It gives a clear and detailed account of dance. It is said that *apsarās* (celestial dancers) were made to perform in the earliest drama to make the performance interesting for the audience. After watching the first performance of drama, *Nāṭyaśāstra* narrates that Śiva wanted dance and dance movements to be made a part of drama, and for that the sage Taṇḍu was requested to compose and direct a dance. Taṇḍu taught dance movements — *cārīs* (foot and leg positions), *maṇḍalas* (circular movements), *karaṇas* (movements of hands) and *aṅgāhāras* (dance postures) — to Bharata Muni who made them part of the training of actors and dancers in a play. The dance came to be called *tāṇḍava*, a series of body postures that form the basic language of Indian dance. The parallel dance performed by women is known as *lāsya*.



Śiva’s *tāṇḍava*
(Belūr temple, Karnataka)



A *karaṇa* at the Chidambaram temple

After the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, another significant available work on dance is Nandikeśvar's *Abhinaya Darpaṇa* (2nd century CE). These two manuals present the principles of dance. Indian dance has a grammar. Each dance form is a system of structures at different levels. For instance, the minimal units in a dance are (1) *sthāna*, standing position; (2) *cārī*, foot and leg movements; (3) *nṛttahasta*, hands in a dancing position. A configuration of these constitutes a *karaṇa*. There are 108 *karaṇas*; one can

see them sculptured at the Chidambaram Naṭarāja temple. Any two *karaṇas* constitute a *mātrika*; a combination of two, three or four *mātrikas* constitutes, in turn, an *aṅgahāra*, an organized sequence of postures. Finally, an arranged sequence of *aṅgahāras* constitutes a dance.

Which periods do the above two sculptures belong to?

Dance is either *mārgī* or *deśī*, the two categories that apply to all arts. *Mārgī* is the standard, formal tradition; *deśī* is folk, variable traditions. Another classification of dance, as we have noted, is *tāṇḍava* and *lāsya* in character. In one sense *tāṇḍava* stands for the vigorous expression and actions and feelings regardless whether the dance is performed by men or women. *Lāsya*, on the other hand, stands for elements of grace and softness and gentle emotions. These are usually associated with women because Pārvatī, Śiva's consort, taught it to Uṣā, sage Bāṇa's daughter, who then passed on the art to the women of India. However, since love is the predominant sentiment in *lāsya*, it is also danced by men when their dance needs to express this sentiment. For example, Kṛṣṇa's dance with *gopīs* is in *lāsya* mode.

There are three main components — *nāṭya*, *nṛtya* and *nṛtta* — which together with

other elements make up the classical dance. *Nāṭya* corresponds to drama; it is the dramatic element of a stage performance. Bharata defines *nāṭya* as ‘a mimicry of the exploits of gods, demons, kings, as well as of householders of this world’. (See module **Theatre and Drama** for Class XI for more on *nāṭya*.) *Nṛtya* is the rhythmic movement of the body in dance combined with emotion or *rasa* and *bhāva*. *Nṛtta* stands for rhythmic movements and steps. On this basis, the technique of dancing can be categorized under two clear heads, *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*.

Both *rasa* and *bhāva* are conveyed through *abhinaya* or dramatic expression — *āṅgika* (gestures of the body), *vācika* (verbal), *āhārya* (costume and make-up) and *sāttvika* (physical manifestations of mental and emotional states) — which govern *nāṭya*. The *vācika* of the *nāṭya* is replaced by the music accompanying the dance. The musical accompaniment invariably consists of poetry or lyric or narrative which is set to music and rhythm and strengthens the *bhāva*. The dancer also depicts those emotions through *sāttvika* (voluntary physical manifestations of mental and emotional states) like paralysis, perspiration, hair standing on end, change of voice, change of colour, trembling, fainting and weeping and helps in the realization and experience of *rasa*.

Indian classical dance forms were nurtured with a purpose in the sacred premises of temples. Temple dancing was imbued with the idea of taking art to the people and conveying a message to the masses. The temple rituals necessitated the physical presence of mortal women (instead of the ornate, carved figures of *apsarās* to propitiate the gods. The allegorical view of dance, used for the purpose of the pleasing the *devas*, was gradually transformed into a regular, service (with deep religious connotations) in the temples of the medieval times. This was possibly the reason behind the origin of *devadāsīs*, the earliest performers of the classical Indian dances. They were supposed to pursue

A devadāsī was a girl married to a deity, who dedicated her life in service of the temple or deity. Find out more about the history of devadāsīs.

the dance forms devotedly and excel in them. They lived and danced only in the temple premises, their vocation enjoying great religious prestige.

Middle Period

In the medieval period, though the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition was alive, yet there were departures and modifications. Sāraṅgadeva, who in his *Śaṅgītaratnākara* introduced the concept of *paddhati* (style) and the movements, spoke of basic movements under two categories: *śuddha* (purely classical or academic form) and *deśī* (regional variants). The recognition of regional styles contributed greatly to the further development of the individual, distinctive, classical styles of the various regions. From the 13th century onward the important manuals of different regions, which include *Nṛṭtyaratnāvalī* of Jayasenāpati from Andhra Pradesh, *Śaṅgītopaniṣat Sarodhara* of Vacanācārya, *Śudhākalaśa* of Gujarat, *Hastamuktāvalī* of Assam, *Govinda Śaṅgita Lilā Vilāsa* of Maṇipur, *Abhinava Candrikā* of Maheśvara Mahāpātra from Orissa, *Śaṅgita Dāmodar* of Raghunāth from Bengal, 'Ādi Bharatam', 'Bharatarnava' and 'Nṛtta Addhyāya' of the *Śaṅgītamakaranda* from Tamil Nadu, *Balarāma Bharatam* and *Hastalākṣṇadīpikā* from Kerala, the *Nṛtyaratnakośa* by Kumbhakarāṇa from Rajasthan, and the *Śaṅgītamallikā* of Mohammad Shah from north India attest to numerous regional variations.

The temples of medieval India also show that the sculptors had considerable technical knowledge of the art of dance. The Bṛhadeśvara temple of Thanjavur (or Tanjore, 11th century) and, as we mentioned earlier, the Naṭarāja temple of Chidambaram depicted *karaṇas*, while the Orissan temples of Vithal Deul, Parmeśvara and Rājarāni (9th–11th century) described *cārīs* and *sthānas* (positions) as given in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The Khajurāho temples of the Candela kings (11th–13th century) and the whole range of medieval sculpture extending from Rajapūtānā and Saurāṣṭra to Odisha and from Kashmir to Thiruvananthapuram (11th–13th century) portray a variety of dance poses and

movements which are accurate illustrations of either the original styles or of texts that were followed by the artists.

The different styles of classical Indian dance were practised and perfected by creative masters belonging to different *gharānās* (family traditions or schools) in different regions. These masters were the repositories of an invaluable oral tradition. They frequently contributed to the growth of their art despite their lack of basic education and academic knowledge of the Sanskrit language. Now the Indian classical dances, which were limited to the temple premises, were performed in royal courts, in the presence of the elite and the nobility.

Modern Period

In British India, the system of education did not recognize the arts or crafts as a subject of educational curricula. Even temple dancing was forbidden. However, the masters of this art continued to practise it in the seclusion of their *gharānās* (family traditions or schools). The recent revival of interest in dance has helped the development and popularity of Indian dance styles which have spread beyond borders. In the early 20th century, Uday Shankar laid the foundation of what may be termed modern Indian dance as opposed to any of the Indian classical forms; his style came to be known as oriental dance. At the same time, art exponents such as Rukmani Devi, Menaka, Gopinath and Ragini Devi contributed to the revival of dance forms, which they presented in a manner easily received by spectators.

The presentation of Indian dance in Hindi cinema has projected modern dances to a global audience. Dance in early Hindi cinema was primarily modelled on classical Indian dance styles and particularly those of historic North Indian dancing girls or on folk dancers. Modern films often use a fusion of Indian dance styles with Western dance styles. It could be a combination or inter-mixing of Indian classical, Indian folk dance,

belly dancing, jazz, hip hop and even folk forms.

Classical Dance Forms

Indian dance forms fall into two broad categories — classical and folk (for folk dance forms, see this module's second unit). The present-day forms of classical Indian dances are performed on the stage on various occasions. In popular culture, the adapted, or 'semi-classical', forms of these styles have been exposed largely through depiction in popular movies and television programmes. These dance forms include Bharatanāṭyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri, Mohiniāṭṭam and Kucipudi.

Bharatanāṭyam

Bharatanāṭyam is a classical dance form from Tamil Nadu. It dates back to 1000 BCE. Its inspirations come from the sculptures of the ancient temple of Chidambaram. In ancient times Bharatanāṭyam was performed as *sadiraṭṭam* (court dance) by temple *devadāsīs*. E. Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi Arundale renamed *sadiraṭṭam* as Bharatanāṭyam in the 1930s.



Bharatanāṭyam was codified and documented as a performing art in the 19th century by the Tanjore Quartet of Chinnayya, Ponniah, Śivanandam and Vadivelū of the Tanjore Court, during the rule of Maratha King Saraboji II (1798–1832). The Tanjore Quartet completed the process of re-editing the Bharatanāṭyam programme into its present shape with its various items.

There have been several varieties of Bharatanāṭyam costumes in different periods. From the ancient texts and sculptures, one can see that the original costume did not completely cover the dancers' bodies. In the medieval times, however, the *devadāsīs*

to use a special, heavy *sārī* that severely restricted the dance movements. The modern costumes are deeply symbolic, as their purpose is to project the dancer's *sūkṣma śarīra* (subtle body) into the material world. Also different dances require different kinds and nature of dress.

Kathakali

Kathakali is a classical dance form which originated in Kerala. *Kathā* in Sanskrit means story and *kālī* in Malayalam means play. So Kathakali is a play based on a story. Kathakali, like other classical dances of India, has its origins in Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It is an art which has evolved from many social and religious theatrical art forms like Cakiarkoṭṭū, Kūdiaṭṭam, Kṛṣṇaṭṭam, Rāmaṭṭam which existed in the southern region in ancient times. The main custodian of Kathakali is the famous poet Vallathol Narayana Menon who established Kerala Kalamandalam in 1930 for the preservation of this art form.



Aspects of Kathakali (source: Wikipedia)

Kathakali, a stylised art form, is a blend of dance, music and acting and dramatizes stories mostly adapted from the Indian epics. All the four aspects of *abhinaya*

— *āṅgika*, *vācika*, *āhārya*, *sāttvika* — and the three components of the dance — *nāṭya*, *nṛtta* and *nṛtya* — are unified flawlessly in this form. The *abhinaya* is presented in three stages: (a) word-to-word synchronization; (b) interpretation of the full line; and (c) *abhinaya* of the dancer following the singer. The dancers express themselves through organized *mudrās* and facial expressions.

As far as the costume of this dance form is concerned, it is elaborate and designed to heighten the effect of physical strength. The large overcoats, the flowing scarves, the bulging skirts, the antique ornaments, the strikingly opulent head dresses with streaming hair flowing down to the waist and covering the back — all create enlarged figures well befitting the sculptured facial features and produce tremendously impressive impersonations. If the characters are *sāttvika* (a righteous character or hero), the basic make-up is *pacca* (green); if the characters are *rājsika* (a character with particular vices or anti-hero), the basic make-up is *cutṭi* (white); and if the characters are *tāmsika* (an evil character or villain), the basic green make-up is broken up by red patches. Also, on the basic green make-up, an oval red and white design is made on the nose and on the upper nose.

Make a list of make-up items used by Kathakali performers.

Kathak

Kathak originated in Uttar Pradesh, India. The name Kathak is derived again from the Sanskrit word *kathā* (story): *kathaka* means ‘he who tells a story, or has to do with stories’. This dance form traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, known as *kathakas* (storytellers). Its form today contains traces of temple and ritual dances, and the influence of the *bhakti* movement. From the 16th century onwards it absorbed certain features of Persian dance and Central Asian dance which were imported by the royal courts of the Mughal era.

There are three major *gharānās* (schools) of Kathak from which performers today generally draw their lineage: the *gharānā* of Benares (born in the courts of the Kachwāhā Rajput kings, the Nawāb of Oudh, and Varanasi respectively), the *gharānā* of Jaipur and the *gharānā* of Lucknow; there is also a less prominent Raigarh *gharānā* which amalgamated the technique from all three preceding *gharānā* but became famous for its own distinctive compositions.

Aside from the traditional *abhinaya* pieces performed to a *bhajan*, *ghazal* or *thumrī*, Kathak also possesses a particular performance style of expressional pieces called *bhāva batānā* (showing mood or feeling). It is a mode where *abhinaya* dominates, and arose in the Mughal court. It is more suited to the *mehfil* or the *darbār* environment, because of the proximity of the performer to the audience, who can more easily see the nuances of the dancer's facial expression. Shambhu Mahārāj was known to interpret a single line in many different ways for hours but all the Mahārāj family have found much fame for the naturalness and innovativeness of their *abhinaya*.



Source: www.kathak.org

As this dance form can be performed by a man or a woman, it has different costumes for them. For women there are two types of costumes, traditional Hindu and Mughal. The traditional Hindu costume for women sometimes consists of a sari, whether worn in an everyday style, or tied up to allow greater freedom of movement during dance. However, more commonly, the costume is a *lehaṅgā-colī* combination, with an optional *oḍhnī* (veil). The traditional Mughal costume for women consists of an *aṅgarkhā* on the upper body. The design is akin to a *cūḍīdār-kameez*, but is somewhat tighter fitting above the waist, and the 'skirt' portion explicitly cut on the round to enhance the flare of the lower half during spins. The traditional Hindu costume for men leaves them bare-chested; below the waist is the *dhotī*, usually tied in the Bāṅglā style that is with many pleats and a fan finish to one of the ends. There is the option of wearing a men's *bandī* too. The Mughal costume for men is *kurtā-cūrīdār*.

Kucipudī

Kucipudī is a dance form named after a village in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. Renowned gurus like Vedāntam Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa, Cintā Kṛṣṇāmūrthy and Tadepalli Perayya broadened the horizons of this dance form.

Kucipudī is non-narrative and abstract dancing. Usually *jāṭiswaram* is performed as the *nṛtta* number. Next is presented a narrative number called *śabdām*. One of the favourite traditional *śabdām* numbers is the Daśāvatāra (the ten avatars of Viṣṇu). The *śabdām* is followed by a *nāṭya* number called *kalapam*. Next in the sequence comes a pure *nṛtyabhinay*, a number based on literary-cum-musical forms like *padam*, *jāvli*, *śloka*m, etc. In such a number each of the sung words is delineated in space through dance i.e.



Kucipudī dancer
(source: Wikipedia)

visual poetry, *dṛśya-kavitā*. A Kucipudī recital is usually concluded with *taraṅgam*. In earlier times, the themes were related to Śiva, but with the arrival of the Bhakti movement from the seventh century onwards themes linked to Kṛṣṇa were also enacted.

The Kucipudī costumes look similar to those of Bharatanāṭyam. The important characters have different make-up and the female characters wear ornaments and jewellery such as *rakudi* (head ornament), *candravanki* (arm ornament), *addabhāṣā* and *kasinasāra* (neck ornament) and a long plait decorated with flowers and jewellery. Ornaments worn by the artists are generally made of a lightweight wood called *būrugū*.

Maṇipurī

Maṇipurī dance is one of the main styles of Indian classical dances that originated in the beautiful north-eastern state of Manipur. The origin of Maṇipurī dance can be traced back to ancient times. It is associated with rituals and traditional festivals; there are legendary references to the dances of Śiva and Pārvatī and other gods and goddesses who created the universe. The dance was performed earlier by *maibas* and *maibīs* (priests and priestesses) who re-enact the theme of the creation of the world. With the arrival of Vaiṣṇavism in the 15th century, new compositions based on episodes from the life of



Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in *Rāsalīlā* (source: <http://news.lib.uchicago.edu>)

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were gradually introduced. It was in the reign of King Bhāgyacandra that the popular *Rāsālilā* dances of Manipur originated.

The *rāsa* costume consists of a richly embroidered stiff skirt which extends to the feet. A short fine white muslin skirt is worn over it. *Patloi* is the typical costume of the female dancers. The *leheṅgā* is called *kumin* with mirrors and *zari* work intricately woven into beautiful designs. The women also wear a tight-fitting cone-shaped cap, garnished with a border of synthetic pearls, under a thin white veil. A dark coloured velvet blouse covers the upper part of the body and a traditional white veil is worn over a special hair-do which falls gracefully over the face. Kṛṣṇa wears a yellow dhoti, a dark velvet jacket and a crown of peacock feathers. The jewellery is very delicate and the designs are unique to the region.

The *kīrtan* form of congregational singing accompanies the dance which is known as *saṅkīrtana* in Manipur. The whole community celebrates childbirth, *upanayanam*, wedding and *śrāddha* with *saṅkīrtana* performances. The male dancers play the *puṅg* and *kartāl* while dancing. The *thaṅg-ta* is a martial dance which has its origin in the days when man's survival depended on his ability to defend himself from wild animals.

Oḍissī

Oḍissī is believed to be the oldest form of Indian dance from the state of Odisha according to the various sculptural evidences available. Archaeological evidences of this dance form dating back to the 2nd century BCE are found in the caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri near Bhubaneswar. The dance movements, frozen in stone, continue to inspire Oḍissī dancers even today. For centuries *mahārisa* or *devadāsīs* (temple dancers) were the chief repositories of this dance. Later, a class of boys called *goṭipuas*

Did you know that young boys learning Oḍissī are called *goṭipuas* and many of the present-day gurus of this dance form belong to the *goṭipua* tradition?

were trained in the art. They danced in the temples and also for general entertainment. Many of today's gurus of this style belong to the *gotipua* tradition.



(Top) Gotipua (source: www.citizenside.com)
(Left) Odissi dancer (source: www.ananyadancetheatre.org)

Odissi mostly derives its theme from the 12th century *Gīta Govinda* by Jayadeva. It is generally believed that the composers fixed the *tāla* and *rāga* of each song after the model of *Gīta Govinda*.

Odissi closely follows the tenets laid down by the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Abhinaya Darpaṇa*. Facial expressions, hand gestures and body movements are used to suggest a certain feeling, an emotion or one of the nine *rasas*.

The techniques of movement are built around the two basic postures of the *cowk* (a position imitating a square — a very masculine stance with the weight of the body

equally balanced) and the *tribhaṅga* (a very feminine stance where the body is deflected at the neck, torso and the knees). There are a variety of gaits for doing pirouettes and jumps and also certain postures inspired by the sculptures.

The opening item is *maṅgalācaraṇa* (invocation) where the dancer slowly enters the stage with flowers in her hands and makes an offering to Mother Earth. This is followed by an invocation to the deity of the dancer's choice. Generally, Ganeśa is called upon to grant an auspicious beginning. The item ends with a *nṛtta* sequence with salutations to God, the guru and the audience.

An Oḍissi dancer is adorned in elaborate Odiya silver jewellery. The dancer wears a *coker* (a longer necklace), armlets, bracelets, a belt, anklets, bells, earrings, each placed on the bun, and a *sīnthī* (a piece placed on the hair and forehead). She sports an elaborate hair-do in a knot adorned with the *tahiya* (part of the crown), which represents a temple tower. Palms and soles are painted with *āltā*, a red dye. The head ornament is called *maṭhami*. The dancer also wears the ear covers, bangles on the wrists, armlets and an elaborate belt. On her ankles are bells strung together on a single cord. A *padaka-tilaka* (a necklace with a locket) rests on her chest.

Sattriya



Sattriya, recently included among principal classical Indian dance traditions, has been a living tradition in Assam since its creation by the founder of Vaiṣṇavism in Assam, the great saint Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva in 15th-century Assam. This dance form originated in monasteries and then moved to the

Sattriya (source: musicaindiana.wordpress.com)

metropolitan stage. Śaṅkaradeva introduced this dance form by integrating different elements from various treatises and local folk dances with his own rare outlook. Conventionally, this dance form was performed only by *bhokos* (male monks) in monasteries as part of their daily rituals or to mark special festivals. In the modern days, Sattriya is performed on stage by women and men. It is governed by strictly laid down principles in respect of *mudrās*, footwork, *āhāryas* (costume), music etc. It is performed with *borgīts* (musical composition) which are usually based on classical *ragas*. For tradition performance, the instruments that are used are *khole* (drums), *tālas* (cymbals) and the flute. Some of the recent additions are the violin and the harmonium. The dress is typical of Assam as the silk that are worn are produced in Assam, woven with meticulous designs.

Comprehension

1. What is the significance of *abhinaya* in dance?
2. What are hand gestures called in dance? Are they common to all dances?
3. Explain *aṅg*, *upāṅg*.
4. Explain the four kinds of *abhinaya*.
5. Describe the structural composition of Bharatanāṭyam.
6. What are the steps and body movements called in Maṇipuri?
7. What is the technique used to balance the movements in *thang ta* and *pungchulam* to avoid any injury?
8. Explain the basic technique in Oḍissi. Where in India do you find sculptures depicting this style?

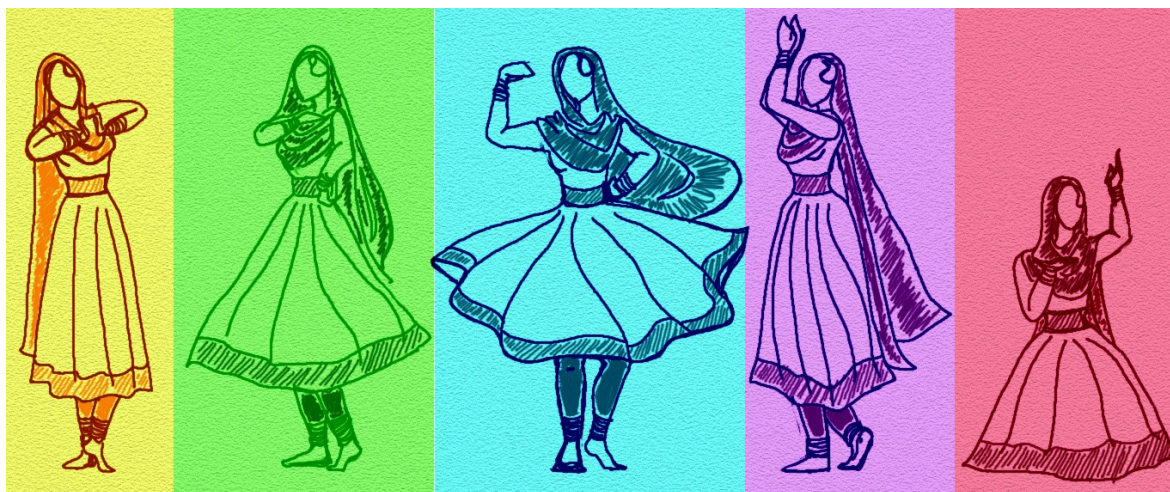
Activity 1

- Identify the classical dance forms on the Indian stamps.



- Mention two eminent performers/groups/*gharānās* related to each dance form.

Activity 2



- Identify the various postures of Kathak present in the composite above.

Activities

- Try to imitate the *mudrās* (hand gestures, illustrated below) with your class.



- Collect some videos of *cārī* and *maṇḍala* movements of various classical dance forms of India. Watch with the class and try to identify the name depicted in *Nāṭyaśāstra*.
- Collect videos of *vandana* / *nṛtta* being performed in the initial part of a classical dance performance.

Project ideas

- Visit a nearby museum/heritage site and explore the evidence of dance in the sculptures and various painting styles of India. Act as a team of journalists and click pictures. Prepare a report of your visit and present in front of your class like a team of reporters.
- Arrange a visit to the nearest cultural centre / amphitheatre / auditorium. Try to understand the stage, curtain system, entry–exit for participants and audience, light and sound system, capacity and seating arrangement. Document all information along with photographs and sketches. Submit your project after sharing with class.
- Prepare a PowerPoint presentation with various *mudrās* and facial expressions. Let the students imitate the gestures while presenting in the class.
- Sketch the jewellery / ornaments and various props used in various dances; label them and exhibit your work.
- Prepare a semi structured interview for a legend / a master performer in any form of Indian dance. Present your report to your class.
- Collect images as evidence of dance from the traditional painting styles of various states of India. Pay attention to the costume and jewellery worn by the dancers and also the accompanying instruments illustrated in the painting.
- Search and explore the UNESCO world heritage sites in India. Find the sculptures that seem similar to any dance form / features depicted by Bharata. Get to know about the place, period and dynasty when these marvels of architecture were built. Present a slide show in class with all the collected information.

Extended activities

- Create a tableau of dances with all the flavour of colour, costumes, sounds, music, beats and songs. Present in front of your school at your annual function.
- Identify the students of your school who are learning various classical dances. Involve them in your group. Collect the basic information on some particular dance form. Present all the information in lecture cum demonstration style in front of the school. You may also present a self-choreographed dance show on some event / celebration in the school.
- Study the biography of a renowned dancer of India. Focussing on the early years of his / her life, try to find what made him / her a legend.
- Arrange a visit to a nearest cultural centre to view a live dance show.
- Interview a classical dance guru at his / her place and observe the lifestyle. Share your views with class.
- Invite a master of dance to school for a lecture-cum-demonstration class to explain the nuances of dance to the students of your school.

Further Reading

1. Bharata, *The Nāṭyaśāstra, A Treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics*. Manmohan Ghosh, tr. Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 2nd ed., 2 vols, 1967.
2. Bhatkhande, V.N. *The Hindutānī Sangīt Paddhati: Kramik Putak Mallikā*. Allahabad: Sangīta Sadan Prākāśana, 2003.
3. Gautam, M.R. *The Musical Heritage of India*. Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1980.
4. Gouri Kuppaswami and Hariharan. *Indian Music: A Perspective*. Delhi: Sandeep Prakashan, 1982.
5. Nandikeśwara. *Abhinaya Darpaṇa*. Tr. Manmohan Ghosh, Calcutta: Metropolitan Printing & Publishing House, 1934.

6. Ranade, G.H. *Hindustānī Music*. Delhi: S Lal & Co. 1989.
7. Vātsayana, Kapila. *Indian Classical Dance*. New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1974.
8. *Viśṇudharmottarapurāṇa*. Khaṇḍ III. Tr. Priyabala Shah. Delhi: Parimal Publications, 2002.

Internet Resources (all URLs accessed in May 2013)

- Demonstration of gaits of animals and birds in Manipur dance traditions by Guru Bipin Singh — a legend and maestro of Maṇipurī dance:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=QD9rraCwI-Q
- Maṇipurī Dance by Rinku Bhattacharya Das (disciple of Guru Bipin Singh):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSogQYsFTnI
- Pung Cholan dance from Manipur: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndPcNgupCdM
- Kathak by Uma Sharma: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jssQvY9INU
- Kathak Surya Namaskar (Shovana Narayan and group):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PG5-DTtykdk
- ‘Subhadraharanam’ (Kathakali) enacted by Kalamandalam Gopi:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=MH50TuGHWM8
- Raudrabheeman (Dushasanavadham) Padmasree Kalamandalam Gopi Ashan, 2 parts:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkCJqANqvcs & www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5kM1Ockjv8
- Kucipudī Dance Concert, part 1/8. Performed By Raja Radha Reddy
www.youtube.com/watch?v=92qGxUj7sxx
- Oḍissī Mangalacharan Sujata Mohapatra : www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wX5yHh6DHc
- Sattriya by Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva the great Vaiśavite Guru of Assam in 15th-16th century: www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcRQs7uy1U4
- Sattriya: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJ15-lRx_dA



Primary Texts on Dance in India: A Selection

Nāṭyaśāstra (tr. Manomohan Ghosh)

Brahmā writes the first play [*Amṛtamanthana*, a *samavakāra*, a category of play] and gets this performed.

Then all the [Bhūtas] and Gaṇas were pleased to see actions and ideas familiar to them, and Śiva too was pleased and said to Brahmā:

“O the high-souled one, this drama (*nāṭya*) which is conducive to fame, welfare, merit and intellect, has been well-conceived by you.

Now in the evening, while performing it, I remembered that dance made beautiful by *aṅgahāras* [dance postures] consisting of different *karaṇas* (the combined movement of hands and feet). You may utilize these in the *pūrvaraṅga* (preliminaries) of a play.”

... the preliminaries which you have [just] performed are called “pure” (*śuddha*). [But] when these dances will be added to them [pure preliminaries] they will be called “mixed”. (4:11-16)

Note: Here a suggestion for adding dance to a dramatic performance has been made by Śiva to Brahmā.

Nāṭyaśāstra

One who will perform well this dance created by Maheśvara (Śiva) will go [at his death] free from all sins to the abode of this deity. (4:327)

Nāṭyaśāstra

The Class Dance (*taṇḍava*) is mostly to accompany the adoration of gods but its gentler form (*sukumāra-prayoga*) relates to the Erotic Sentiment.

... [The Gentle Dance] should be the procedure in performing the *āsārīta* songs. Now consider [all] that relating to the adoration of gods as the Gentle Dance (*sukumāra*).

The Gentle Dance with the Erotic Sentiment [relates to] a dialogue between a man and a woman when they are in love. (4:272,309-10)

Note: Here dance has been explained in terms of class dance and gentle dance.

Nāṭyaśāstra

Experts should apply dance when the principal words of a song [in a play] as well as its [ornamental adjunct known as *varṇa* comes to a close or when any character attains good fortune [in a play].

And dance should take place on an occasion in a play when something connected with love occurs between a married couple, for it (the dance) will be a source of joy.

Dance should also take place in any scene of a play when the lover is near and a [suitable] season or the like is visible. (4:312-314)

Note: It is an account of occasions in plays when dance should be introduced in the course of songs.

Nāṭyaśāstra

The combined [movement of] hands and feet in dance is called the *karaṇa*:

Two *karaṇas* will make one *māṭrkās*, and two, three, or four *māṭrkas* will make up one *aṅgahāra*. Three *karaṇas* will make a *kalāpaka*, four a *śaṇḍaka*, and five a *saṁghātaka*. Thus the *aṅgahāras* consist of six, seven, eight or nine *karaṇas*. (4:30-34)

Nāṭyaśāstra

I shall now speak of the hand and feet movements making up these (*karaṇa*). The *karaṇas* are one hundred and eight in number. ...

[These *karaṇas* will be used in dance], fight, personal combat, walking as well as movement in general. Foot movements which have been prescribed for the exercise of *sthānas* [standing postures] and *cārīs* [foot and leg positions], will apply also to these *karaṇas*. (4:55-56)

Nāṭyaśāstra

I shall now describe the four *recakas* [moving a limb round or drawing up or its movement of any kind separately] ... Among the *recakas* the first is that of the foot (*pada*), the second is that of the waist (*kaṭi*), the third is that of the hand (*hasta*) and the fourth is that of the neck (*grīvā*). (4:246-247).

Padarecaka [movement related to foot]: going from side to side with wavering feet or with differently moving feet, is called their *recaka*. (4:249)

Kaṭi-recaka [movement related to waist]: raising up the *trika* and the turning of the waist as well as its drawing back, is called the *kaṭi-recaka*. (4:250)

Hasta-recaka [movement related to hands]: raising up, throwing out, putting forward, turning round and drawing back of the hand is called its *recaka*. (4:251)

Grīvā-recaka [movement related to neck]: raising up, lowering and bending the

neck sideways, and other movements of it are called its *recaka*. (4:251)

Seeing Śaṁkara (Siva) dance with *recakas* and *aṅgahāras*, Pārvatī too performed a Gentle Dance (lit. danced with delicate forms) and this dance was followed by the playing of musical instruments ... (4:253-54)

Note: *Nṛtta* technique of Indian dance is the law and methodology of human movement. It encompasses both the technique of rendering *tāla* (rhythm) through movements and the important features of projecting specific poses within a given rhythmic cycle. The above selections from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* describe components and forms of dance such as thirty two *aṅgahāra* [dance postures], one hundred eight *karaṇas* [postures / movements of hands], *cārī* [footwork], *maṇḍala* [circular movements].

Nāṭyaśāstra

As the *cārīs* prescribed by rules and connected with [different] limbs relate to ... one another they constitute (lit. are called) a *vyāyāma* (system).

Cārī: the movement [mainly] with a single foot, is called the *cārī*.

Karaṇa: the two feet moving [together] is called the *karaṇa*.

Khaṇḍa: a combination of the [three] *karaṇas* is called the *khaṇḍa*. Three or four *khaṇḍas* combine to make up the *maṇḍala*. ...

There following sixteen are the earthly (*bhaumi*) *cārīs*: *samapādā*, *sthitāvartā*. ...

Samapādā: the two feet close together, the nails [of the toes] meeting, and standing on the spot.

Sthitāvartā: one *agratalasañcāra* foot drawn up to cross the remaining foot and this movement repeated with another foot after separating the two. ...

The aerial (*ākāṣikī*) *cārīs* are sixteen in number: *atīkrānta*, *apakrānta*, *pārśvakrānta*. ...

Atikrānta: a *kuñcita* foot thrown up, put forward and caused to fall on the ground.

Apakrānta: the *valana* posture of the two thighs, a *kuñcita* foot raised and thrown down sideways.

Pārśvagrānta: one foot *kuñcita* and another thrown up and brought near the side. (11:1-4, 8-14, 29-31)

Note: Here the movements of *cārī* (moving simultaneously feet, shanks and hip) are explained.

Nāṭyaśāstra

... [Now] learn about the *maṇḍalas* (circular movements) arising out of a combination of the *cārīs* [the aerial *maṇḍalas* and the earthly *maṇḍalas*]

The aerial *maṇḍalas*

Atikrānta: the right foot [to be moved successively] in the *janitācārī* and [the *śakaṭāsyācārī* in which the breast is] *udvāhita*, the left foot in the *alātācārī* and the right foot in the *pārśvagrāntacārī*. ...

The earthly *maṇḍalas*

Bhramara: the right foot [to be moved] in the *janitācārī* and the left foot in the *syanditācārī*, then the right foot in the *śakaṭāsyācārī* and the left foot to be stretched, (next) the right foot in the *bhramarīcārī* [by turning the *trika*], again the left foot in the *skandita* (*askandita*) can and the right foot in the *śakaṭāsyācārī*, then the left foot in the *apakrāntā* (*apasarpī*) *cārī* and the *bhramarīcārī* by turning about the back. (12:6-9, 42-44)

Note: Here Bharata gives definitions of the *maṇḍala* movements.

Comprehension

1. What do you understand by *maṇḍala* movements?
2. What is the significance of dance in preliminary activities of *nāṭya*?
3. According to Bharata when should a gentle dance take place in *nāṭya*? Do we still find this tradition in India? You may quote some beautiful dance pieces from old movies.

