

INTRODUCTION

Indian classical dance, like its twin art Indian classical music is steeped in hoary, hieratic and time honoured traditions. It is indeed remarkable, that the ancient traditions of dance have been able to endure and weather the onslaughts of time, notwithstanding the numerous upheavels in the social, economic and political structure in the Indian society. The oral tradition apart, it is largely the wisdom of those accomplished writers of ancient and mediaeval India, who have bequeathed to posterity valuable texts and manuals on dance, which has contributed to this surprising uniformity. In their works are enshrined the fundamental principles and techniques of Indian dancing, which are to some extent faithfully practised even today. Therefore it is necessary that these works should not be treated as rusty remains of a dead art, merely for art historians to examine. On the contrary, if they are brought to light and critically interpreted, they can be a potent source of inspiration to the dancer of today and for years to come. Another reason for which these works are required to be exposed to scholars is that there are certain fine and unique aspects contained in them which require diligent research for recreation, since they are

unfortunately not found in practise today. Once these elements are reconstructed on the basis of the material found in the various texts, they will add to the classical richness and artistic dimensions of the contemporaneous dance. In view of these features it will be very rewarding, if these texts are taken up one by one and critically examined. In this study, an attempt is made to reveal the norms and tenets of Indian dance as enunciated in one of the earliest extant mediaeval works of India, to see how far they apply to the present system and also to see how far their relation can be extended to current practices.

The above account should neither create the impression that Indian dance has remained static, nor that such study is being made to turn the clock back and make the art archaic. Rather, there has been growth and development and newer fields and pastures are being explored. The nature of the subject, itself is such that there can be no finality ascribed to it. Dance is a creative art and the creative process of the Indian mind cannot be prevented from making innovations. As a result of this, the changes that have occurred in the dance field in the corridors of time were inevitable. But each phase of development tended to overlap the other giving an impression of continuity and permanence.

At the same time, the history of dance in India reveals that its path was not that of continuous progress.

Setbacks had set in during foreign rule in India, whereby prolonged continuity of ancient traditions were discontinued as well as its progress hampered in many areas, especially in the North. But it is fortunate that the national classical tradition which once pervaded the whole of India could at least be preserved in South India. Here too, changes had occurred, but these however could not alter the fundamental principles and rules which had been formulated centuries back. Finally, tracing through the centuries, it is revealed that it was the period as far back as the pre-Christian Era, when Indian dance had reached the peak of development in all respects. It had achieved a significant degree of stylization in conception, presentation, technique, content and beauty of lasting and almost permanent value as can be gathered from the ancient texts. Through the passage of time, some elements have lasted and continued to have a profound influence, while there are some elements which are no longer in vogue and need to be revived. It is in relation to these aspects, that ^{the} study of the various ancient texts on dance will be helpful for understanding its rich background and traditional heritage. In this context it will be worthwhile to quote the statements of Victor Zuckerkandl and Koestler while expressing their views on the value of inheritance. Victor Zuckerkandl has stated that "the law of all living development

is that each successive stage must incorporate the modes of existence of the previous one".¹ Koestler has written in a similar strain that the pattern of stages in evolution is : step back to leap forward. As carriers of tradition we must foster our roots, be with the time, stimulated by storms of change and sunlight of the spirit, perennially reproducing juicy fruits with which life itself may be sustained."²

The textual literature on Indian dance is immense and appears in various forms. There are some texts devoted exclusively to this subject, but a bulk of the material on dance is to be found in works relating to Sangīta. Sangīta as opposed to the present connotation of music, that is attributed to it was considered as a generic term, which embraced within its fold the three arts of Gīta (vocal music), Vādyā (instrumental music) and Nr̥tya (dance). The tradition is at least as old as the Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa (xxix.5) where it is called Śilpa (Vedic Index, p.381).³ However the earliest extant treatise which treats the subject of dance is the Nāṭya Śāstra, which is primarily a treatise on dramaturgy. In this work, which is believed to have been written around the 2nd century B.C., the arts

1 Quoted from 'Tyāgarājā - Continuities and departures by William J. Jackson. Journal of the Music Academy, Vol. LIII, 1982, p.80.

2 Ibid, p.91.

3 Quoted from Viṣṇudharmottara Khāṇḍa III, Vol. II, p.35.

of drama, dance and music are all merged. Lastly there are books which discuss numerous subjects and include in its purview, a discussion of Sangīta as well. To examine and analyse the technique of dance from all these works, will indeed be a formidable task considering that there exists a sizeable number of such works, which have their sources from various parts of the country, besides belonging to a wide range of period beginning from as early as the 2nd century B.C. to the 18th century A.D. Further, there is also the problem of access to them, since most of these texts continue to be in manuscript form. Only a few of them have been published and fewer still have been critically edited. Some scholars having realized the importance of the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata, Bharatārnava and Abhinayadarpaṇa attributed to Nandikeśwara and Sangītaratnākara of Śārṅgadeva have brought out their critical editions with translations as well. Consequently, these are frequently referred to by scholars and students of dancing. The other similar works that have been published have also served as valuable aids and are relied upon for references. One such work that has been published and is awaiting a critical study is the subject undertaken for this thesis. This work on dancing is actually a chapter in an encyclopaedic work called Mānasollāsa otherwise known as Abhilasitārthacintāmaṇī. It is of great significance and relevance, but has so far not received

adequate attention, probably because it has been confined in a large work which treats a number of subjects.

The 'Mānasollāsa' means 'delight of the mind' and a glance at the size and nature of the subjects discussed in the Mānasollāsa itself fascinates the mind. It is a monumental volume comprising of a hundred chapters covering a wide variety of topics ranging from kitchen to kingship. These chapters are neatly arranged into five Vimsātis or five groups consisting of twenty chapters each. It appears that its author, King Bhūlokamalla Someśvara III, had a special interest for Sangīta judging from the length and manner of treatment of this subject. In comparison and in proportion to the other chapters, the chapters on Sangīta are lengthy and the manner of treatment is very methodical, analytical, selective, and precise.

In the Mānasollāsa, the chapter on dance is discussed as Nr̥tya Vinoda, and as a natural sequel, it follows the Gīta Vinoda and Vādya Vinoda in the fourth Vimsāti called the Vinoda Vimsāti. The three aspects Gīta, Vādya and Nr̥tya are closely linked with each other and it was customary to classify them together. In fact, it is almost practically impossible to think of Nr̥tya, without these two elements of Gīta and Vādya, since it is Gīta which provides the musical content based upon which, expression is manifested and Vādya provides the rythm, based upon which intricate and beautiful feet patterns are

displayed. Nṛtya must therefore be harmonious with both Gīta and Vādyā and consequently a study of dancing involves the understanding of Gīta and Vādyā as well. It is because of the important roles played by Gīta and Vādyā in the presentation of Nṛtya, that this subject of Nṛtya is included in the works on Sangīta. But, Gīta and Vādyā are by themselves complete and independent arts conditioned by their own rules. In dance, once the technique has been completely absorbed by the dancers, it is largely left to their skill and talent to set their dance to appropriate music and rythm. Thus a lot of significance and emphasis is given to technique, which needs to be perfected first. This requires rigorous training and practise, and once mastery over this has been gained, the field for artistic expression through dance, using Gīta and Vādyā as accessories is almost limitless. It is therefore relevant to study first the technique of dance separately. This itself is a long and detailed subject. Indeed there are quite a number of books like the Bharatārṇava, Abhinayadarpaṇa, Nṛttaratnāvali, etc., which treat the subject of dance independent of Gīta and Vādyā. Similarly, the Nṛtya Vinoda chapter inspite of its being placed after the Gīta Vinoda and Vādyā Vinoda chapters is treated as an independent subject, forming one of the twenty Vinodas. Someśvara gives no indication of considering Gīta, Vādyā and Nṛtya as a group, but he considers each as a separate source of entertainment. So a separate study of the Nṛtya Vinoda

should not be criticised, since such an exclusive study will help to render a thorough and judicious examination of the subject.

The scope of this thesis is proportionately small considering that, from the vast ocean of treatises on dance, only the Nṛtya Vinoda from Mānasollāsa is selected for critical study which is only one chapter devoted to dance in that voluminous work. Owing to the multiplicity of subjects considered in the Mānasollāsa, all the chapters including the chapter on Nṛtya Vinoda is very compact and crisp. The Nṛtya Vinoda, comprises of four hundred and fifty-five ślokaś written in the anuṣṭubh meter, covering a limited area in dancing. It discusses only those elements in the technique of dance that were prevalent during the 12th century A.D. and omits portions some of which had been codified during the pre-Christian era and were included in the works of many early as well as later writers, on the ground, that they had become incomprehensible and were no longer practised. Despite this restriction, the field has been extended by Someśvara who has incorporated new developments that were contemporaneously witnessed during his time.

It is therefore endeavoured (i) to make a critical assessment of the Nṛtya Vinoda, (ii) to provide the text with translation and critical notes and (iii) to make a survey of

the technique of dancing in Karnāṭaka during early mediaeval India based upon Sanskrit texts on dance.

The method of approach that has been pursued is as follows :

1. To trace through the channel of Sanskrit literature beginning from Ṛgveda to the works of early mediaeval India, the significance attached to dance with special focus on the relation between Nṛtya and Vinoda.
2. To trace through historical records, and the text of Mānasollāsa, its author and date of the work.
3. To relate the Nṛtya Vinoda with other texts to reveal, how far it has absorbed material from other texts on the one side and how far it has influenced later texts, who have looked to it for source material on the other.
4. To give the text of the Nṛtya Vinoda relating to Āṅgika abhinaya as already provided in the publication of Mānasollāsa in the G.O.S. Each śloka is provided with a translation. Certain modifications and amendments of the text are indicated in the footnotes. Lastly, parallel passages found in the Nāṭya Śāstra are also indicated in the Notes that are provided after the text for reference.
5. To give the text of the Nṛtya Vinoda relating to Deśi Sthānakas, Cāris and Karaṇas, for which purpose, again

the Mānasollāsa published in the G.O.S. is used. Each śloka is followed with a translation and at the end, notes are provided which show concurrent passages in the Sangītaratnākara, Sangītasamayasāra, Nr̥ttaratnāvali and Sivatāttvaratnākara.

6. Finally to sum up the entire Nr̥tya Vinoda highlighting its noteworthy features.

A number of literary works have been referred to during the course of this study. They can be conveniently classified into two groups: (1) classical Sanskrit texts and (2) works of modern writers. In the first category, Mānasollāsa edited by Śrī G.K. Śrigondekar and published in the G.O.S. was the principle book, which was utilized and it provided the ground-work for this thesis. Śrī G.K. Śrigondekar has reconstructed the text with great diligence and care from many manuscripts. For the third volume of the printed Mānasollāsa wherein the Nr̥tya Vinoda is presented, Śrī G.K. Śrigondekar has used the following manuscript material.

1. A: A photostat copy of the manuscript belonging to the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Poona.
2. D: a photostat copy of the manuscript belonging to the Bikaner Darbar.
3. G. A third manuscript belonging to Muni Śrī Puṇyavijayaji Mahārāja, Luṇsāwāda Upāśraya, Ahmedabad, was procured,

but this was found to agree with A in all readings and therefore, it was not very helpful in reconstructing the text. The thesis was undertaken on the inspiration drawn from this publication of *Mānasollāsa*.

The other Sanskrit texts, that were useful and have been amply quoted in the thesis are those books which have considered the subject of dance. It is only the portions of dance contained in these works that were delved into for information. These books include :

(1) The *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata. The text of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* with the commentary of Abhinavagupta that has been edited by Sri M. Ramakrishna Kavi and printed in four volumes in the G.O.S., was the one that was employed. The eighth and ninth chapters in the second volume of this series were very relevant for the purpose of technical study of dance. The first chapter in the first volume was also of assistance in providing information on the role and purpose of dance, which is the subject of discussion in Chapter I of this thesis. The English translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* by Sri Manmohan Ghosh which has been printed by the Royal Asiatic Society, Calcutta, was also availed of.

(2) *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, *Khanda III* : This has been edited by Priyabala Shah and published in the G.O.S. in two volumes of which the text, introduction and translation of

the Nṛttasūtra chapter were of assistance.

(3) Sangīta Ratnākara of Śārṅgadeva : It is edited by Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri, printed in the Adyar Library series with the commentaries of Simhabhūpala and Kallinātha was used. This refers to only the fourth volume of the series which contains the seventh chapter that pertains to the technique and art of dance. The translation of this chapter by K. Kunjunni Raja and Radha Burnier was consulted as well. This translation has been printed in the Adyar Library Series.

(4) Sangīta Samayasāra of Pārśvadeva. Āchārya Brhaspati's edition and translation of the Sangītasamayasāra, brought out by the Sri Kunda Kunda Bharati, Delhi, was availed of. The text edited by Mahāmahopādhyāya T. Ganapati Sastri in Trivandrum Sanskrit Series was perused, but was not relied upon since the readings of this text are already included in Āchārya Brhaspati's edition.

(5) Nṛttaratnāvali of Jāya Senāpati. This work has been published in the Madras Government Oriental Series. Dr. V. Raghavan the renowned Scholar has critically edited it with introduction and notes which was a setting example for this thesis.

(6) Śivatattvaratnākara of Keladi Basavabhūpala. This work has been edited by Vidvan S. Narayanaswamy Sastry and

has been brought out in two volumes in the Oriental Research Institute publications, Sanskrit Series of the University of Mysore. In the first volume the third, fourth, fifth and sixth *Ṭaraṅgas* (ripples) of the sixth *Kallola* (waves), which elucidates on the technique of dance, were referred to and employed in the thesis.

(7) *Bharatakośa* compiled by Ramakrishnakavi: This is a work of a modern writer but has been included here, since it deals with classical works. It is an index of technical words used in drama, dance, vocal and instrumental music and prosody giving their meanings as found in various texts. A number of definitions have been taken from *Mānasollāsa* and these were also scrutinized as additional references.

A number of other works were also referred to though their use was very limited. They include (1) *Saṅgīta Cūdāmaṇi* of Jagadekamalla that has been edited by Sri Velankar and published in the G.O.S.

- (2) *Nṛtyaratnakōśa* of Kumbhakarna's *Saṅgītarāja* edited by Parikh Rasiklal C., in the Rajasthan Oriental Series.
- (3) *Śāradaṭaṇḍya*'s *Bhāvaprakāśam*, edited by His Holiness Yadugiri Yatiraja Swami, Melkot and K.S. Ramaswami Sastri and brought out by the G.O.S.
- (4) *Saṅgīta Makaranda* of Nārada edited by Mr. M.R. Telang and published in the G.O.S.

- (5) Abhinava Bharatasāra Saṅgraha of Mummūdi Chikkabhūpāla, edited by R. Sathyanarayana and published in the Varalaksmi Academy Publication series.
- (6) Abhinaya Darpaṇa, edited and translated by Manmohan Ghosh and published by Firma Mukhopadhyaya.

The manuscript of Sangīta Sudhākāra of Haripāladeva deposited at the Oriental Institute of Mysore and transcript maintained at the Oriental Institute of Baroda were also pursued for specially getting information on the Deśī aspects and to see if there was any influence of Mānasollāsa in this work.

Amongst the modern works, 'Classical Indian Dance in the literature and the Arts' by Srimathy Kapila Vatsyayan. 'Nāṭraja in Art, Thought and Literature' by Sri C. Sivarama Murthy, 'Soul of Indian Dance and Other Essays' and 'Bharata-nāṭyam: A Critical Study' by Sri R. Sathyanarayana were useful.

'Studies in Karnāṭaka History' by Srimathy Vasantha Shetty, 'The Early History of the Deccan', edited by G. Yazdani, 'Karnāṭaka through the Ages', edited by R.R. Diwakar and others and 'Early History of Deccan' by R.G. Bhandarkar were of assistance to understand the contribution of the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī, to the Arts.

Thesis of Siva Sekhar Misra on Mānasollāsa which has been published was also referred to. The thesis of Smt. Saradha

Srinivasan, 'The Relation Between Karnāṭaka and Gujarat from Seventh to Early Fourteenth Century A.D.', was useful for the information provided on Kalyāṇi Cālukyas.

A number of Journals were also referred to during the course of the thesis, some of the most noteworthy articles found in these journals that were utilized are 'Early Sangīta Literature' and 'Later Sangīta Literature' by Dr. V. Raghavan in the Sangīta Nāṭaka Academy Bulletins.

With the aid of these literary materials and by virtue of having a practical knowledge of dance gained through training during the past decade, both the theoretical and practical aspects of the Nṛtya Vinoda have been critically examined. It is felt that it will be useful for the practising dancers in future. Nṛtya Vinoda of Mānasollāsa being the first extant work dealing with post-Bharata innovations, comprising the Deśi tradition, it is also felt, that a critical interpretation of this work will be helpful for future research scholars in Deśi aspects.

Chapter - I

NRTYA IN RELATION TO VINODA

The existence of dance from time immemorial, its practise in all societies - whether primitive or advanced, ~~its~~ attraction to all categories of people - whether belonging to the cottage or the palace, and its performance on all important occasions, speak volumes not only for its rich appeal and popularity, but they also accentuate its importance and significance in human life. Like Music, its twin art, dance must also be accepted as a necessity and indeed it would be impossible to think of a world without dance and music. This is largely, because dance relates to the primary urge of man seeking happiness through the release of tensions and upliftment of the soul. Dance constitutes a blend of expressive and rhythmic body movements capable of conveying a wide gamut of human emotions, which can be easily appreciated and enjoyed. The people of India, in particular, have shown and retained an intense love for dance, and have also exhibited an exceptional artistic ingenuity and proficiency in it. In this country dance is accepted as one of the distinguished and refined art forms. This is evident from the innumerable dance forms and styles prevalent in India which feature regularly on all important occasions and festivals. Dance is performed not only for

entertainment but also as a ritual during religious occasions and as an expression of joy during happy occasions.

Characteristically, dance is a refreshing form of entertainment (vinoda), which exhilarates the mind and body of the dancer and provides aesthetic enjoyment to those who view its graceful and meaningful movements. It provides one of the most pleasant and stimulating diversions for the agitated and tired soul. Bharata has in the Nāṭyaśāstra stated that "drama (which included dance) becomes a relaxing entertainment to the distressed, to the tired, the wearied and the sages.

दुःस्वार्तानां श्रमार्तानां शोकार्तानां तपस्विनाम् ।

विश्रान्तिजननं काले नाट्यमेतद्भविष्यति ॥११४॥

In the same context, Bharata has also mentioned that it "gives diversion to kings, firmness of mind to persons afflicted with sorrow, wealth to those who are keen on earning it, and brings composure to persons agitated in mind."¹

ईश्वराणां विलासश्च रुथैर्यं दुःस्वार्दितस्य च ।

अर्थोपजीविनामर्थो धृतिरुद्विग्नचेतसाम् ॥११५॥

Drama in which dance was prominent was expected to entertain the audience. This is the main purpose of dance that can be deduced from Bharata's words:

¹ Translation by Manmohan Ghosh. N.S. (i) 110.

विनोदकरणं लोके नात्यमेतद्विष्यति ॥
 विनोदजननं लोके नात्यमेतद्विष्यति ॥ (१९-२०)

Bharata has said "The innate charm in the graceful movement of limbs and beauty of flexions has in the most natural manner, ushered in dance, of which the whole world is enamoured".¹

किं तु शोभां प्रजनयेदिति नृत्तं प्रवर्तितम् ।
 प्रायेण सर्वलोकस्य नृत्तमिष्टं स्वभावतः ॥२६४॥

It is eulogised as being the source of amusement on occasions of marriage, childbirth, reception of a son-in-law, general festivity and attainment of prosperity.²

विवाहप्रसवावाहप्रमोदाभ्युदयादिषु ॥२६५॥
 विनोदकरणं चेति नृत्तमेतत्प्रवर्तितम् ।

Jāya Senāpati in the *Nṛttaratnāvalī* has recognised dance as a superior past-time and as being ideally suited for kings. "He states that when the king can have the enjoyment of dance art by accomplished dancers, indulgence in other pastimes is very much inferior."³ This is because, it promotes the zeal of princes in every way, it prevents their slackening enthusiasm for Śṛṅgāra, arrests the attenuation of their heroic spirit (dhairya), helps them never to tire in pleasure (vinoda), overcomes lassitude in increasing ego or confidence, stops indifference

1 Translation by Sivaramamurthy C. in Introduction to Yakṣagāna by Ashton and Christie.

2 Translation by Ghosh Manmohan: N.S.(iv) 269.

3 Translation by V. Raghavan in Nṛttaratnāvalī, p.3.

towards munificence and prevents disinclination towards personal fame and glory".¹ It is this attitude of the kings, that helped the dance art to flourish as a royal pastime. The local people were also able to enjoy dance during festivals and temple celebrations organised by the kings. Besides this, the local people witnessed and performed dance during all joyous occasions like marriage, coronation, entry into the city, entry into a house, watersports, meeting the beloved, fasting, charity, birth of a son, at the time of pilgrimage, test, festival, victory and consolidation of position, and for general prosperity, but more than all these, it was considered most appropriate to perform dance for the adoration of the gods.

स्यागोद्वाहजहाभिषेकजगरीवेशमप्रवेशोदकक्रीडासु प्रियसङ्गमपूतमहादानात्मजोत्पत्तिषु।
यात्रापर्वपरीक्षणीस्सवजयानन्दप्रतिष्ठेहिनेप्राप्तिष्वभ्युदयाय नृत्तमुचितं स्थेदेवपूजादिषु॥१८॥

In Jāya Senāpati's view "dance is so magnificent that the eyes that do not witness it are like *lilies* that are not caressed by moonbeams, Kadambas, peacocks or Chakoras not hailed by laden clouds, and swarms of bees that refrain from honey".²

King Someśvara has described dance as a pastime in the Vinoda Vimśati of Mānasollāsa. He has enumerated several occasions on which dance is performed and has also pointed out

1 Translation by C. Sivaramamurthy in Nataraja in Art, thought and literature, p.14.

2 Translation from Natraja in Art, thought and Literature, p.13, Nrttaratnavali, p.3.

that dance should be well-formed, varied, beautiful, attractive and pleasing to the mind. He has also indicated that accomplished dancers were maintained in his court to provide entertainment.

उत्सवै विजये हर्षे कामे त्यागे विलासके ॥९५०॥

विवादेऽथ परीक्षायां कार्यं नृत्यविनोदनम् ।

सुरेश्वरं विविधं रम्यं प्रेयसीचित्तरञ्जनम् ॥

इ(ई)हविधं ममास्ती ति स्त्रीरत्नं यत्प्रहृश्यते ॥९५१॥

नर्तकी पररूपाणां विलासः स तु कथ्यते ।

All the same, describing dance as an entertainment (Nṛtya Vinoda) should not create the idea that all dance is just idle and profane luxury or a sort of weakness. Indian dance in its classical style has an extensive scope for expression, which has been used by tradition to provide delight as well as enlightenment. In fact Indian dance has always been associated with the highest ideals of culture and religious fervour. It has been employed as an appropriate form of worship in temples and is regarded as a Sādhana*, Yoga* and Yagña* as well. So the purpose of dance is not only to provide entertainment to the audience, but also to educate them and elevate them to a higher realm of thought and vision. It should direct the minds of the people towards righteousness. Bharata has said that it should also increase Bhakti (devotion) in the minds of the people".

* Classical Indian dance in Literature and the Arts p. 5.

लौकै भक्तिविवर्धनं नाटयमेतद्विष्यति ।

In the view of Bharata, drama is a mimicry of actions and conducts of people which is rich in various emotions and which depicts different situations. This will relate to actions of men-good, bad and indifferent and will give courage, amusement and happiness as well as counsel to them.¹

नानाभावोपसम्पन्नं नानावस्थान्तरात्मकम् ।
लोकवृत्ताञ्जुकरणं नाटयमेतन्मया कृतम् ॥११२॥
उत्तमाधमजडयाजा जराणां कर्मसंश्रयम् ।
ह्रिलोपदेशजननं धृतिक्लेशसुखादिकृतम् ॥११३॥

Thus, it must be conceded that the sole purpose of Indian classical dance is not merely entertainment. Along with giving pleasure it must teach the path of Dharma (ideal life), and increase Bhakti (devotion) in the hearts of the audience.

Both dance and drama with their well-arranged pattern of presentation, technique and capacity to express varied ideas have been conceived as entertainments worthy of the Gods. In India, it is the practise to assign some divine source as well as divine purpose for every branch of learning, whether it is science or arts, and dancing is no exception to this.

Bharata in keeping with this convention, which arises from a deep sense of devoutness has visualized the emergence of Nāṭya and Nr̥tya from the Vedas. According to him, at the request of Indra and other dieties, Brahmā created the Nāṭya

1 Translation by Gosh Manmohan N.S.(i) 111-112.

Veda by taking the essence of the four Vedas. He took the words from the Rg, gestures from the Yajus, music and chanting from the Sāma and sentiments and emotions from the Atharva Veda. Unlike the other Vedas, the Nāṭya Veda was not barred to the Śūdras and its main purpose was to provide delight and entertainment both to the ear and eye irrespective of caste. It is said that this Veda was presented to Bharata and during the Flag festival at Lord Indra's court he enacted, with his hundred sons the first drama 'Amṛta Manthana' containing the theme of the victory of the Gods over the Asuras. The dance steps that were incorporated in the drama were learnt through Taṇḍu and Pārvatī, who had been instructed in Tāṇḍava and Lāsya respectively by Śiva. (N.S. I.(i), 12-18, 55, (iv), 17-18, 253-54).

"Through this theory, Bharata attributes to dancing a divine origin, a literary and religious heritage both in thought and technique and an aesthetic secular purpose. The story of handing over of this art by Śiva to Taṇḍu asserts the religious, literary and secular aspects of this art."¹ In ascribing to dance a celestial origin, and describing them with plays of the acts of the Gods, it appears, that, dance was a refined and polished art form which entertained the masses at the time of Bharata. "The audiences were in this way presented with high and noble themes which provoked them to the fear of God or to

1 Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts (iii), p.142.

the elevation of the spirit or urged them to duty, and at all events, to the living of a better and useful life by emulation."¹ Bharata has clearly stated that stories taken out of Vedic works as well as semihistorical tales, ideas from Śruti, Smṛiti, and good conduct and other similar values were the themes that must be presented.

वेदविद्येतिहासानामाख्यानपरिष्कम्पनम् ।
श्रुतिस्मृतिसदाचारपरिशेषार्थकल्पनम् । (119 - 120)

The Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa of the 7th century A.D. reveals a close affinity between dance and the temple which must have existed in mediaeval India. This Purāṇa has a large bulk of information regarding dance, which has been taken up in connection with temple building. According to this work, music, dancing, drama, painting and sculpture ultimately found their culmination in the temple. The paintings and sculptures of Gods and Goddesses, some of them in beautiful dance stances adorned the temple walls and pillars and dance, drama and music were required to be performed in adoration of the deity enshrined in the temple. The Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa states that Śiva, who is Nṛteśvara eternally dances and gladdens Madhusūdhana, when all the universe is just one sheet of water and is in turn pleased when adored by dance as many other celestials are.

सोऽपि तुष्यति नृत्तेन सम्यग्ग्राहितो हरः ॥२३॥
अन्येऽपि देवास्तुष्यन्ति सम्यङ् नृत्तेन तोषिताः ।

1 Studies in Indian Dance, p.9.

Therefore the Nāṭya Maṇḍapa or the 'dance hall' is a common feature in the Śiva temples built during mediaeval India. Here, dances were performed to please and entertain the Lord.

'Nṛttam Samarpayāmi', Gītam Samarpayāmi, Vādyam Samarpayāmi, ^{rajopachāra} ~~devopachāra~~ pūjām Samarpayāmi, ~~xxx~~ the fitting finale given to arāṇas to the Lord is significant in this connection. God was believed to bear a likeness to man and in the artists aim to achieve spiritual identity with God, made idols of the divine in a human form and worshipped him with all elaborate and best of offerings. The Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa goes on further to say that offering of dance is more superior than other offerings like flowers, etc.

पुष्पनैवेद्यदानेभ्यो नृत्तदानं विशिष्यते ॥२५॥

Offering of dance to the accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music assures the merit of sacrifice performed.

नृत्तं गीतं तथा वाद्यं दत्त्वा देवाय विष्णवे ।
सर्वकामसमृद्धस्य यज्ञस्य फलमश्नुते ॥२६॥

Offering of dance to the God not only fulfilled all desires but assured liberation for the devotee.

देवताशर्धनं कुर्याद्यस्तु नृत्तेन धर्मवित् ।
सर्वकामानाप्नोति मोक्षोपायं च विन्दति ॥२७॥

It particularly pleases Viṣṇu, who created this great art that assures wealth and fame and prolongs life, cheers the dejected, admonishes the blunderhead, enhances feminine grace, promises auspiciousness and prosperity here and hereafter.

धन्यं यशस्यमायुष्यं स्वर्गलोकाप्रदं तदा ।
ईश्वराणां विलासं तदार्तानां दुःखनाशनम् ॥ ३० ॥
भूतानामुपदेशं तत्स्त्रीणां सौभाग्यवर्धनम् ।
शांतिकं पीष्टिकं काम्यं वासुदेवेन निर्मितम् ॥ ३१ ॥

The foregoing slokas indicate that dance was a part of the temple rituals during early mediaeval India. It was considered as a respected and distinguished art form which served a cultural as well as spiritual function. Later works like Abhinayadarpaṇa, Saṅgītaratnākara, Nṛttratnāvalī, etc., mention several social occasions for the performance of classical dance. At the same time, they also attribute a spiritual significance to it. Both Nandikeśvara and Śārṅgadeva say that "This is verily higher than the great Bliss of Brahman, How else could it have captivated the minds of Nārada and others (who have realized Brahman)? Beyond this there is nothing to be seen or heard in this world."¹

अपि बह्वर्षाज्जन्मदादिमग्धधिकं ध्रुवम् ।

जह्यार जायद्वीनां चित्तानि कथमन्यथा ॥१२॥

न किञ्चिद् दृश्यते लोके दृश्यं श्राव्यमतः परम् ।

In the Nṛtya Vinoda of Mānasollāsa, Someśvara confines his discussion of Nṛtya as a pastime. Judging by the number of occasions listed by him, in which dance was performed, it can be said that the people of his domain (Karnāṭaka) were keenly dance-minded. However, Someśvara does not mention dancing in relation to temple, though the tradition of temple dancing and institution of temple dancers were known to have existed at his time.

The information that can be gathered from dance texts on the relation between Nṛtya and Vinoda is limited. For this, it

¹ Translation from SR. Vol.VII, p.2.

will be necessary to resort to other literary sources like Vedas, Epics, Purāṇas, etc. These sources throw a lot of light on how dance provided entertainment and also how it came to be related with religion.

From the very early works of Indian literature itself, one finds references to dancing which reflect on the dance traditions that were practised and the values attached to this art form, from the early times. In the R̥gveda for instance which is the earliest work and also a sacred book of the Hindus, there are numerous instances where dance is described as part of the secular and social life of the people. In this Veda, marriages, funerals, harvest festivals, sacrifices and communal gatherings are listed as occasions when dance was performed. "Funeral Hymn X.18 asks the survivors and relations of the deceased after he had been laid to rest to go forth to sing, dance and laugh and prolong their own span of existence."¹

"Dance must have been practised as a simple form of entertainment in the Vedic society. Here is a picture of a happy society where once work is finished people sit together over a drink. Their wives and maidens attired in gay robes set forth to the joyful fets; boys and girls hasten to the meadow, when forest and field are clothed in fresh verdure to take part in dancing. Cymbals sound and seizing each other by the arm, men

1 Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts (iii), p.151.

and women whirl around until the ground vibrates and clouds of dust envelope the gaily moving throng".¹ In the Sāma Veda, also there are such descriptions to be found. But here there is indication of the classical dance as against only the folk form of dance mentioned in the Ṛgveda. The Gandharva Veda which is an Upaveda to the Sāma Veda treats the subject of dance wherein a distinction is made between the classical style and the popular style.² "At the time of the Atharva Veda the Sabhā is the recognized place of meeting where social entertainments including music and dance abound."³

From the Epics and Purāṇas also, the social pattern of dancing of the ancient times can be gleaned. For example in the Rāmāyaṇa, the Gaṇikās (courtesans) are treated as important members of the society who dance to entertain the kings and the masses. Here, dance is associated with jubilation, and amusement. The populace dance, when Rāma is proclaimed as Yuvarāja, when he returns to Ayodhyā after exile and during his coronation as king. The courtesans danced to amuse Bharata who is depressed. In the Sundarakhāṇḍa dance is connected with pleasure and sensation. Both Rāma as well as Rāvaṇa and other Kings and queens were adepts in this art form. From the Rāmāyaṇa therefore it can be inferred that dancing was a part of royal education, there were classical as well as popular dances,

1 Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts (iii), p.152.

2 Ibid, p.153.

3 Ibid, p.157.

meant for the professional dancer as well as the layman, and dancing was mostly a manifestation of joy and was always performed during festivity. Such features can be deduced from the Mahābhārata also.

In the Purāṇas, one finds the earliest reference to the social dance of Rāsa, which because of its close association with the Kṛṣṇa legend has attained spiritually symbolic significance. This dance is still practised in varying forms in different parts of the country, specially in Manipur, Vrindāvan and Gujarat. It is a simple dance in circle formation in which sometimes, men alone, or ladies alone dance and sometimes men and women dance together. Mirth and gaiety are essentially manifested in this communal dance and almost all purāṇas give a vivid description of this dance tradition.

However, the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa prescribes among other things the offering of dance and Music for the adoration of Devī.¹ The Agnīpurāṇa dated about the 9th century A.D. describes the dance performed by ladies during rituals and religious functions.² The Śiva purāṇa requires the temple of Śiva to be provided among other thing, with hundreds of beautiful girls who should be proficient in the twin arts of singing and dancing.³ As mentioned earlier, the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa also speaks of dance in association with the

1 Traditions of Indian Classical Dance (ii), p.26.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

temples. From these instances found in the sacred works, the dance which afforded entertainment has been given religious sanctity.

There are other literary sources which affirm the parallel traditions of temple dancing and secular dancing which existed in ancient times. Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* refers to dance being performed in festivity. In the *Arthaśāstra*, Kauṭilya makes a distinction between the *gaṇikā* and the *devadāsī* and from his accounts it appears that they played important roles in society. According to *Kāmasūtra* dance was a necessary accomplishment of a lady and a comprehensive knowledge of dance was a necessary item of the education of a *Nagarka*. The arts are not confined to the courtesan but the populace perform, participate and witness dances very often. The *Samāja* and the *Goṣṭhī* are the assemblies where discussions and demonstrations on the arts are held and witnessed. The *Sukranītisāra* declares that "the man who does not find pleasure in teaching, learning, preceptors, Gods, arts, music, dancing and literature is either a man, who has attained salvation or beast in the form of man."¹ *Sukrācārya* requires the king to encourage the arts and in this regard he says : "The King should always take such steps as may advance the arts and sciences of the country. He should train up the officers appointed with salaries in the cultivation of all arts and having seen that they have finished their

¹ Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts, (iii), p.181.

studies, should appoint them in special fields. He should also honour those every year who are very high in arts and science."¹

The Kāvya and Nāṭya literature are galore with allusions to dancing. They indicate the prevalence of social dancing, the classical dancing, dance of the courtesans and dance as part of education and royal upbringing.

With regard to Nāṭya, Bharata discusses the subject of aesthetics which relates to the quality of entertainment expected in a dramatic performance. This can be applied with slight modifications to dance as well.

Bharata's Rasa theory emphasises that the audience must enjoy the art presentation. Enjoyment (āśwāda) usually conveys a sense of joy or pleasure. But here it is not joy or pleasure in the ordinary sense that is being alluded to, but the state of pure joy (ānanda) second only to the state of absolute bliss in the Brahman (Brahmānanda). It is losing one's own identity and getting involved with the spectacle, so that the experience of the feelings, however transitory, is realized giving pure joy." "According to Abhinava Gupta, the essence of Rasā is nirvighna Samvittih (N.S. p.280, G.O.S.) and is known amongst literary critics by such words such as Camatkāra, Nirveśa, Rasana, Āśvādana, Bhoga, Samapatti, Laya,

¹ Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts (iii), p.181.

Viśrānti etc. The last three words Samapatti, Laya, and Viśrānti are the words, which are also the highest state of spiritual experience."¹

"According to Abhinavagupta the concomitant condition of Rasānubhāva is Prakāsa which is essence of Ānanda. He compares the cognition of Rasa with the highest experience of a Yogin and distinguishes it from Yogi's experience by the fact that the Rasānubhava is characterized by beauty (Saundarya) while the Yogi's experience is devoid of it (Saundarya Virahat) (N.S. Vol.I, p.286). Thus, the experience of Rasa being akin to this mystic vision of the divinities makes arts eminently suited as modes of worship."²

"The scholars agree that the state of being which art-experience evoked was a state akin to that of spiritual realization. In order that the empirical features of dance are converted to spirituality the spectator must have taste (rasikatva), aesthetic susceptibility (Sahradayata), power of visualization (pratibhā), poetic culture (Kāvyanuśīlana), contemplative habit (bhāvana) and a capacity, for identification of 'becoming' (tanmayibhāvanā - Yogyata)".³ Similarly for the dancer, the ultimate aim was to seek happiness and to provide happiness for which his art was the special instrument.

1 Vismudharmottara Purana, Vol.II, p.218.

2 Ibid, p.219.

3 Ibid.

Most of the above details were drawn from the works of eminent scholars and authorities on dance. These have been put together in ^{order} to indicate the views of different scholars on "Nṛtya" in relation to "Vinoda" ^{and} to provide the background of the approach of King Someśvara on this subject in his chapter on "Nṛtya Vinoda", where he deals on Nṛtya mainly as Vinoda, an entertainment. This is understandable since his entire work Mānasollāsa is of the nature of a thesaurus (encyclopedic) relating to the pleasures of royalty and this chapter on Nṛtya is a very small part of it. If he had written a monograph of Nṛtya alone, probably he might have considered it from angles other than Vinoda also. The divine and religious approach seen in the works of other scholars are therefore not seen in this work.

To sum up, dance and music, have since the early times formed an important part of the social life of the Indians. The courts, temples and, the people at large, have nurtured these arts. The art of dance has assumed different shapes and forms at different periods of history. In the very early primitive society where every aspect of life, from cradle to grave was accompanied with dance, it performed a basic function of providing expression. Later in an organized society, dance developed into a vocation. "Thus if man danced for pleasure, he also danced for a living and made it a vocation as good as any other. This development in society gave dance a different

impetus, and very early the secular dance for professional and social purposes became an established fact. Actually, the earliest references to dancing found in the written Indian texts are the ones which indicate the secular position of this art. Here it is an amusement, an entertainment at its best, and an instrument of indiscipline, temptation and vice at its worst."¹

"There is then the second direction of development, a direction which is at a higher level of culture and civilization than the desire of man to express his sense of fun through dancing. Here dancing is the most important feature in the ritualistic practices of our faith."² Through symbols and gestures man sought to transmute spiritual ideas and transcend the mundane with the object of gaining sublimation. The traditional Indian dancer was also influenced by the concept of worship at work, which is related to the idea that any creation which is perfect and free from errors is itself Godliness and dedication of it to the divine is the highest form of worship. Therefore the dancer dedicated his art to God whom he considered was the supreme dancer.

Nrtya has been acknowledged as a Veda, Upveda Vidyā, Kalā, Śilpa, Sādhana, Yoga, Yagna, Vinoda, etc., depending on the sociological state, which varied from place to place and

¹ Classical Indian dance in Literature and the Arts, p.144.

² Ibid.

which also changed with the times. It is a Vinoda when it is used as a source of amusement and pleasure, and when it ascends, it achieves the status of a Sādhana. The same technique and steps form the basis for both, but each of them are dictated by different motives. However it is the association of Nr̥tya with Vinoda which has been most longstanding and Nr̥tya will continue to provide Vinoda as long as man is sensitive to swiftmess, motion, beauty and sapient expression.