



CHAPTER 5

THE SOLO CLASSICAL DANCE IN PAINTING



From early civilisation to present day Indian paintings provide an aesthetic continuum. It has evolved over the years to become a fusion of various traditions and cultures, though it was essentially religious in the beginning. In Indian art, painting has a very long tradition and history. The rock paintings of pre-historic times are the earliest Indian paintings. In the Bhimbetka caves which are about 30,000 years old, some of the Stone age Rock paintings are found. The paintings found in the Ajanta caves are the most significant examples of the descriptions given in the early Buddhist literature. The manuscript paintings, much smaller in size perhaps practised during this period, though the earliest survivals are from the medieval period. Persian miniature fused with the older Indian traditions perhaps gave rise to the Mughal painting. From the 17th century its style spreaded across Indian princely courts, each developing a local style. Under the British raj, Company paintings were made for British clients. The art schools introduced along Western lines from the 19th century, lead to modern Indian painting.

There has been an old and time-revered link between dance and the fine arts – painting and sculpture -- in India. Images of dancers and their dance are available to dance practitioners through paintings created in India since pre-historic times. The pre-historic Bhimbetka Caves in Madhya Pradesh have some of the earliest painted images of dance. Figures that appear to be like dancers and images of dancing figures are found on walls, on scrolls, *Patta-chitras*, illustrated manuscripts like the *Kalpavrutta* texts (*Dasava-no-pado*), *Gita Govinda* texts, *Rasikapriya*, *Miniatures*, etc. Such paintings were and are still made on walls, ceilings, in caves, on cloth, paper, palm leaves, and ivory, and so on. In terms of the depiction of classical dance, the paintings being two-dimensional were better equipped to depict narrative elements. The subtleties of *abhinaya* with its minute details was easier to bring out through the brush of the painter rather than the hammer and chisel of the sculptor. These paintings were used to illustrate religious texts. Nomadic folk singers and storytellers used the scroll paintings (*Pata* paintings) while singing their stories or legends. Through the paintings, for example those found in the Ajanta caves or the Mughal miniatures, we are able to identify prevalent social, cultural and artistic styles providing much information on the contemporary styles including those of dance, of those eras. Painting on walls, known as murals, was a technique that survived centuries of battering by invaders, natural disasters and was often protected

by natural overgrowths as was the case with the Ajanta Caves. Murals could be executed as tempera and fresco.



Fig.1 Bhimbetka Caves



Fig. 2 Ajanta Caves

Wall paintings are found in pre-historic caves (BhimBetka), rock-cut caves (Ajanta-Ellora) made by Buddhist monks, inner surfaces of temples, palaces and houses of noblemen (Rajasthan). The miniature format of painting was used on paper in medieval times. They developed as narrative stories complete in themselves as well as illustrations to hand-written texts/books. Miniatures became a popular form of art work and several styles developed – *Moghul*, *Deccani*, *Pahari*, *Mewadi*, *Kishangarh* and so on. Dance and music performances, dancers, musicians, *Raga-ragini* were common subjects for many miniatures. They reveal a formal sophistication in the presentation of the dance, especially when the setting is the royal court. Both the *Shilpa Shastra* and the *Chitra Shastra* follow the dictates of their own individual discipline but they also go parallel to *Natyashastra*. As all the art forms interpret and depict life one finds a commonality running through them. The three-dimensional sculptures and the two-dimensional paintings are able to bring out the strength and beauty of the forms as specific to their own medium. Different painting styles prevalent at different points of time in history and regions have nourished the art of dance. The paintings are also a great source of information and historical sustenance to dance. From the pre-historic to present times, through the paintings one is able to get a continuous account of dance and in particular is the solo classical dance style, its technique, its presentation and thematic content.

Indian paintings can be classified into two as miniatures and murals. Murals are executed on the walls of solid structures and are large works. Best example is the Ajanta Caves and the Kailashnath temple. The Miniature paintings are made on perishable material such as paper and cloth and are on a very small scale often for books illustrations and albums. The Palas of Bengal were the pioneers of miniature painting in India. The art of miniature painting reached its glory during the Mughal period. The tradition of miniature paintings was carried forward by the painters of different Rajasthani schools of painting like the *Bundi*, *Kishangarh*, *Jaipur*, *Marwar* and *Mewar*. The *Ragamala* paintings also belong to this category.

Paintings included dance postures and at times even movements, painted as illustrations to the manuscripts. They gave a clear picture of the technique. Nataraja, the God of Dance and Natwara, the Lord of Dance, Shiva and Krishna respectively, and many other gods and goddesses are popularly known for their dancing expertise. All the *Tandavas* of Shiva, many of his other forms such as Bhairava, Raudra;

Krishna, from the infant to boy to adult; Vishnu in all his manifestations; Durga, Kali, Saraswati, are beautifully painted by Indian artists through the centuries.

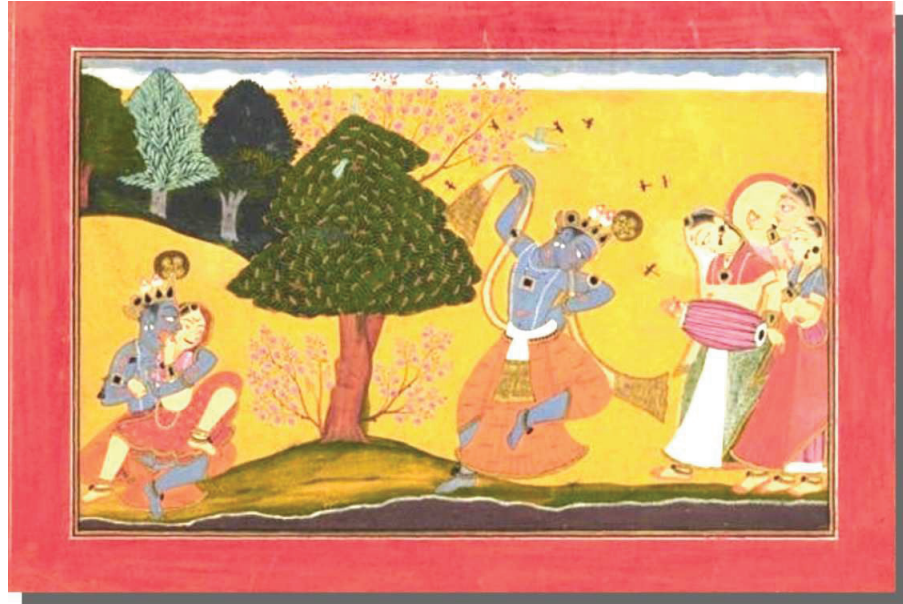


Fig.3 : Geet Govind Painting

MURAL PAINTINGS From the ancient and early medieval times the history of Mural painting of India begins, that is from the 2nd century BC to 8th – 10th century AD. There are about 20 known locations around India with containing murals from this period. They are mainly from rock-cut chambers and natural caves. These are the caves of Sittanvasal, Armamalai Cave (Tamil Nadu) Ajanta, Bagh, Ravan Chhaya rock shelter, Kailasanatha temple in Ellora Caves.

MUGHAL MINIATURE PAINTING With Hindu, Buddhist and Jain influence, *Mughal* miniature painting evolved from the Persian school of painting. During the rule of different Mughal Emperors in India these paintings evolved. The themes of these paintings were hunting scenes, battles, legendary stories, wildlife, mythology, dance moves, royal life of king, etc. Through these paintings, great tales of importance of the Mughal emperors were narrated. With the art form becoming popular by its extensive usage by the Mughals, it was adopted by the various other Indian courts as well. Beauty was depicted with minute attention by most of the

miniature artists of Mughal era. The designs of clothes, jewels and drapes, was given much attention with intricacies.

The first phase of the *Mughal* Miniatures in India had strong resemblance with the Persian miniatures. It started during the rule of the first Mughal Emperor Babur. The book *Baburnama* is the main source of information about the *Mughal* Miniatures. This autobiographical book of writings by Emperor Babur (1483-1530), is decorated by illustrations painted by of miniature artists.

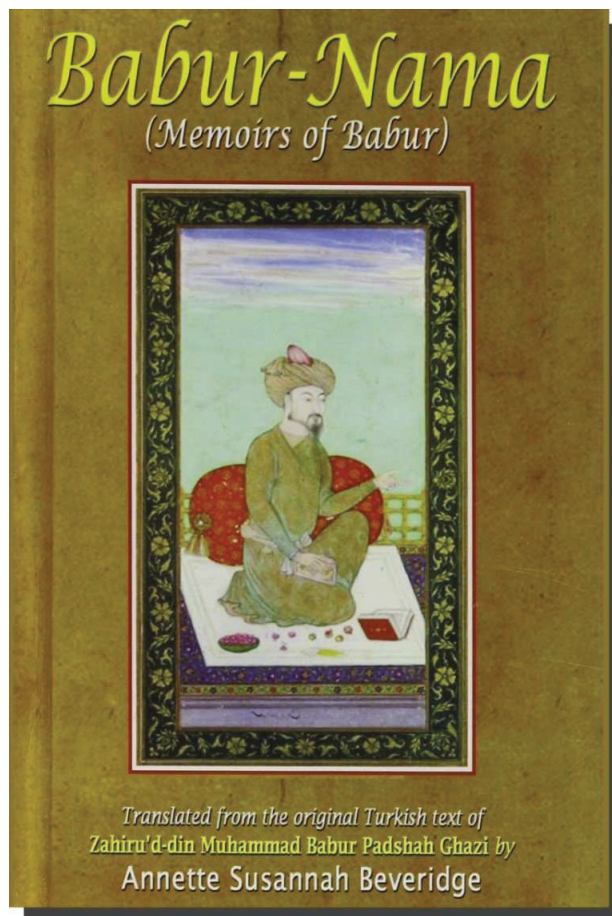


Fig. 4 : Baburnama

During the rule of Emperor Akbar was the second phase of Mughal miniature paintings. Similar to *Baburnama*, the *Akbarnama* is decorated by the illustrations painted by the miniature painters, depicting the deeds of Akbar.

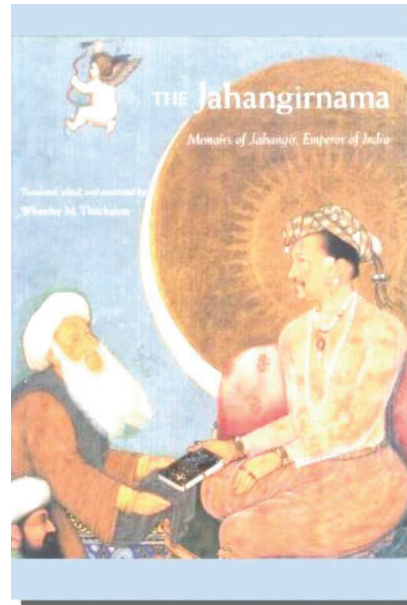
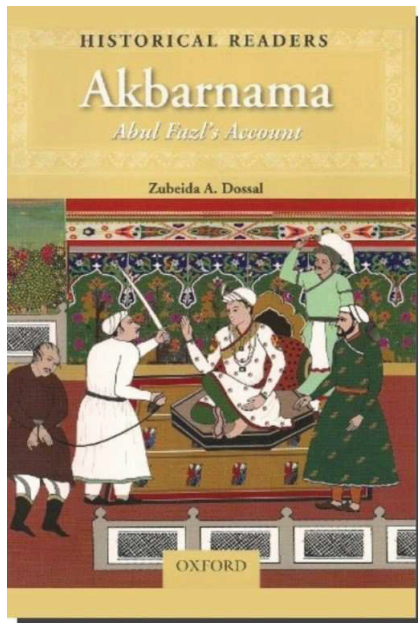


Fig.5 and 6 Akbarnama and Jehangirnama

The miniature painting art in India went through some technical changes during this period. The third phase was under Jehangir, the son of Emperor Akbar. It was the *Jehangirnama*, which was a collection of the miniature paintings done under Jehangir. The fourth phase of miniature art in the medieval India can be called as a parallel phase, as it moved with the time of these three Emperor. The miniature painting art percolated to the other parts of India during this time too.

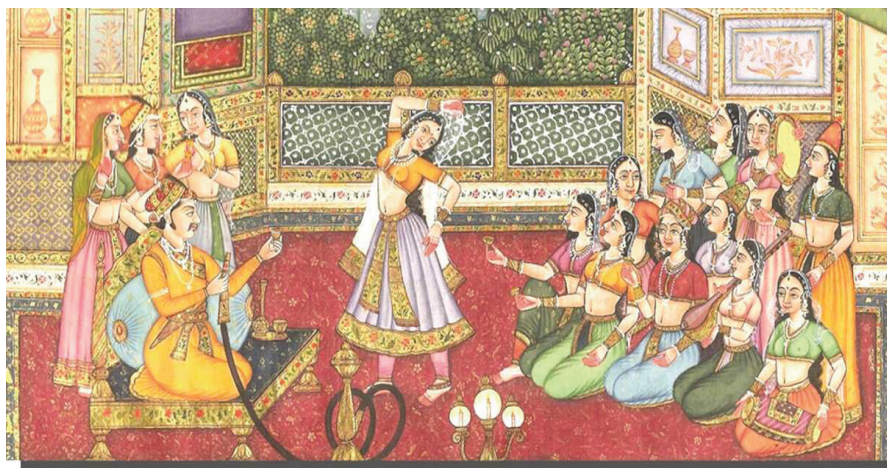


Fig.7 Mughal Miniature

This painting is from Mughal Era. Here the king is sitting and enjoying the Dance. The accompanying group of female musicians are playing *Mridangam*, *Tanpura*, *Daff*. The dancer is wearing *Chaniya*, *Choli* and *Dupatta*. Perhaps it is the Court Dance in the *Janankhana*. There are some royal ladies too.



Fig.8 Mughal Miniature

In this Mughal Miniature Painting the king and queen are dancing together and other lady musicians are standing. One lady is playing *Mridangam*, another two are with *Veena* and *Tanpura* and other two are singing and clapping.



The dancer is entertaining the king with her musician. She wearing *Chaniya*, *Choli* and *Chunnari*. Her female musician is playing *Mridangam*, and man *Sitar*.

Fig.9: Mughal Miniature

RAJPUT PAINTING During the 18th century, there evolved and flourished a n Indian painting style as the Rajput painting in the Rajaputana. With certain common features, each kingdom evolved a distinct style. All of them edicts episodes from the Epics, Bhagavat and other Puranas, life of Krishna, humans and beautiful landscapes. Miniatures were the preferred Rajput painting medium. Several manuscripts are also illustrated in this style. These paintings were even done on the walls of the Havelis and palaces an inner chambers of the forts. Many colours are from natural elements from certain minerals, flowers and plants, conch shells, precious stones, and even gold and silver were used. Colour preparation was a long process.



Fig. 10: Bundi Miniature Painting

Spring celebration by the male dancer. Mughal-style costume. Here the dancer is wearing a criss-crossed long sleeved upper garment with a *dupatta*. Mughal painting style turban. Accompanying female musicians playing the *Dafli* and the *Damaru*

PAHARI PAINTING The *Rajput* style paintings made in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir is known as the *Pahari* painting. They flourished and developed during 17th to 19th century. They are mostly done in miniature forms. *Pahari* paintings have been widely influenced by the *Rajput* paintings, Because of the family relations of the *Pahari* Rajas with royal court at Rajasthan, the *Pahari* paintings seem to have their influence as well as some influence of the Gujarat and Deccan schools. With the emergence of *Bhakti* movement, the Shaiva-Shakti, Krishna and Rama themes are popular. Also the themes of the paintings revolved around devotion and love with illustration of great epics, *puranas* etc. The styles *Bilaspur*, *Garhwal*, *Basohli Chamba*, *Guler Kangara*, *Jammu*, etc. are all type of *Pahari* miniatures.

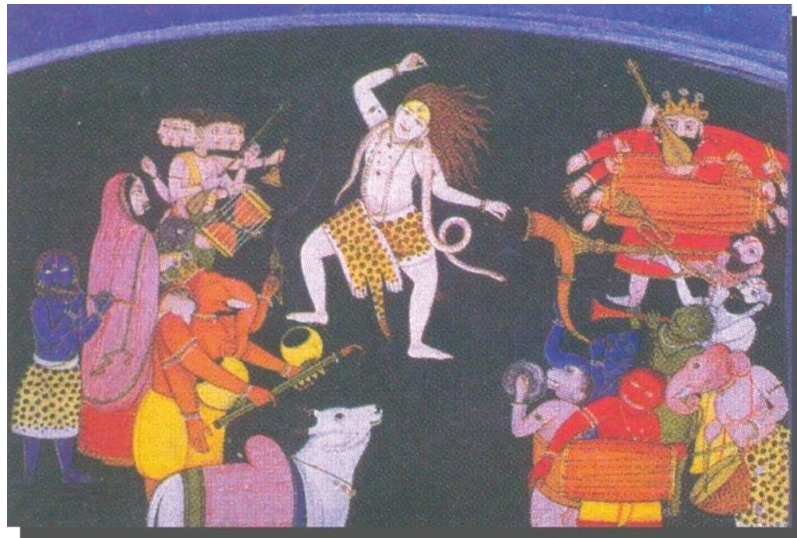
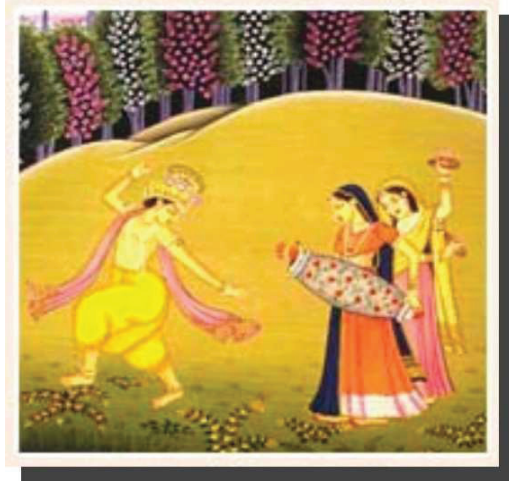


Fig.11 : Chamba Shiva Dancing (*Pahari* Painting)

This is very popular painting in of *Chamba* in *Pahari* style. In this image lord Shiva dancing while his *Ganas* play different instruments. Lord Ganesha playing *Saroda* and *Nagara*, Lord Brahma palying *Damru* and *Veena* and other ganas playing *Bhungal*, *Mridanga*, *Pakhavaj*, *Cymbles*, *Shahenae* and *Flute*.

Illustrations of *Gita Govinda*, the 12th century poem of Jayadeva are amply found in various styles of painting. The story of the love of Radha-Krishna in all its colours captivated the imagination of painters. The *Gita-Govinda* theme in *Kangra* style (19th century) represents this style at its best. The example shows the scene of Krishna surrounded by *gopis*. The sound of soft flute is magic to the deer-eyed maidens. It

also charms the entire universe, animate and inanimate. The depth of feelings is beautifully and delicately brought out by the painter.



In this beautiful *Kunj* Krishna danced with *gopis*. Two *gopis* are playing *Mridanga* and *Kartal*. This is *Kangara* painting.

Fig.12: Geet Govind (*Kangara* Painting)

RAGAMALA PAINTING: The *Ragamala* in Sanskrit is the "garland of *ragas*," is a series of paintings depicting *Ragas* the musical melodies. The melody is given human form, and *raga* also means mood, delight, and colour. In later Indian court paintings the depiction of these moods was a favourite subject. The celebration of music in painting is a distinctly Indian preoccupation. In the second half of the fifteenth century *Ragamalas* were identified as a specific painting genre. Love is the unifying subject of *Ragamala* paintings, which is evoked using a musical form with corresponding emotions (*rasa*). The trials and passions of lovers, which are explored in both analogous imagery and sound (*Raga*) in these paintings.

The *Ragini* generally understood to denote the female protagonist and *Raga* the male. The six seasons spring, summer, monsoon, autumn, early winter and winter as well as the times of day such as dawn, mid-day, evening and night are linked to these musical modes. Various themes like the hero and heroine dancing, singing, waiting for the lover, angry towards the lover etc are the favourite themes of the *Ragamala* paintings. These paintings mainly sketch the flavour or '*Rasa*' of a particular raga. The earliest *Ragamala* paintings are from the Deccan.



Fig.13 : Vasant Ragini (*Ragamala* Panting)

In this *Ragamala* Painting, *Vasant Raag* is established by the images. Here young Krishna is dancing with Gopis. Krishna plays *Veena* and other gopis are playing *Pakhavaja*, flute and cymbals. Krishna is wearing the Shrinathaji kind of dress while the gopis are in traditional Western Indian style.



Fig.14: Kalyan Raga (Ragamala Painting)

The painting is identified as the Kalyan Raga. The dancer is dancing with three female musician, playing *Pakhavaj*, *Manjira* and Singing. Interestingly she is wearing a frock with *payajama* and *dupatta* but her stance is *Aayat mandala*.



Fig.15: Nat Narayana Raga Ragini (Ragamala Painting)

This is also Nata Narayana *Raga-ragini* Painting. In this painting King and queen sit in the *zarukha* and lower level solo dancer is with female musicians. Interestingly she is wearing a frock with *payajama* and *dupatta* but her stance is *Aayat mandala*.

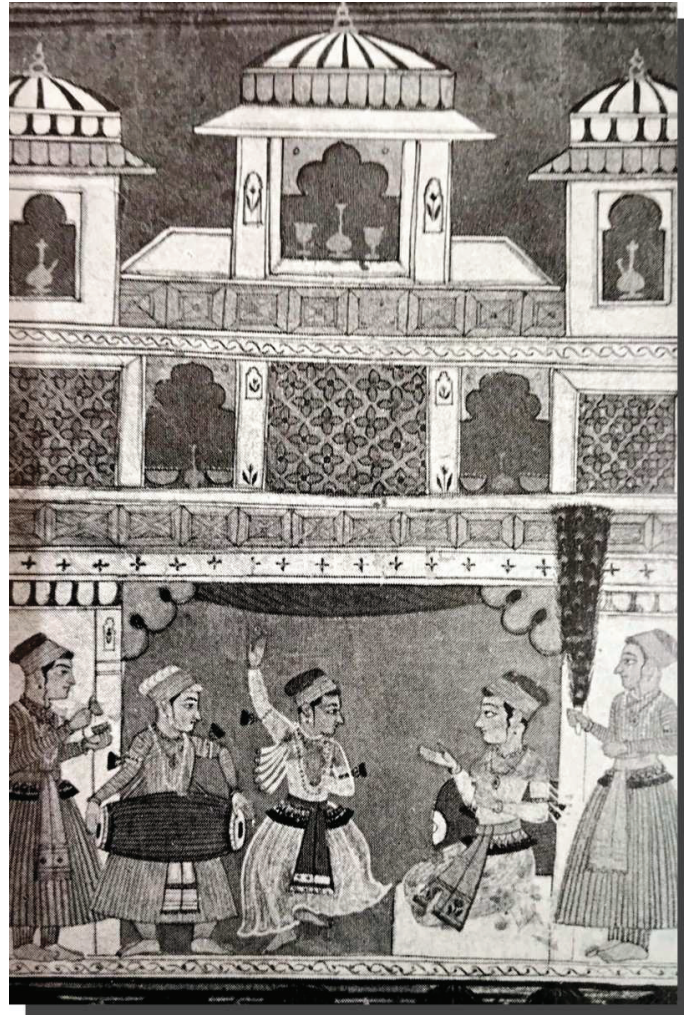


Fig.16 : Malwa Style Painting (Pancham Ragini)

Malwa style painting from Malwa. This painting shows *Pancham ragini*. In this painting prince is watching dance. The solo male dancer is wearing long *kurta* with cap. Two musicians in similar costumes are playing *Mridanga* and *Manjira*.

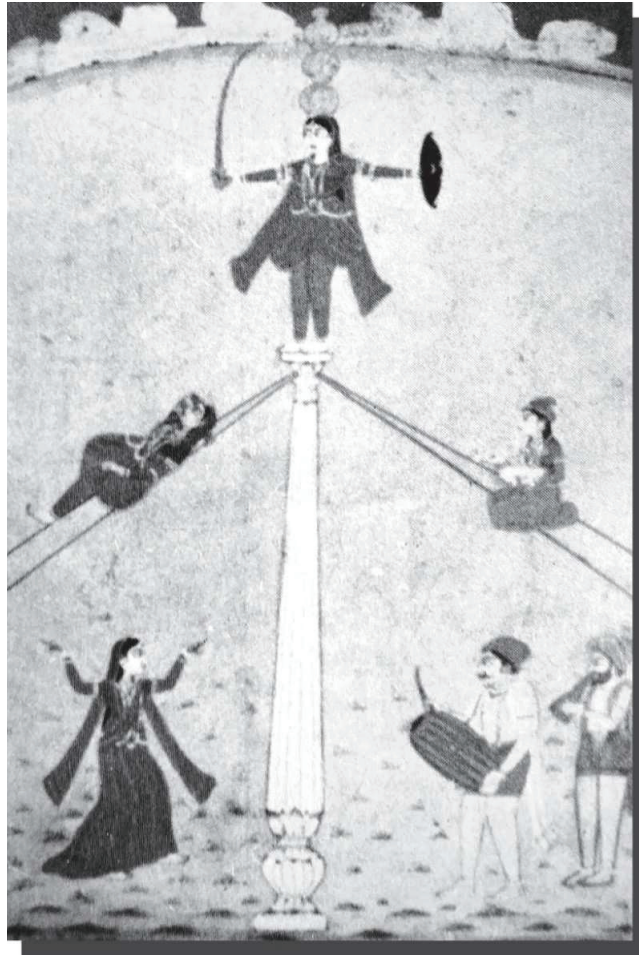


Fig. 17 : Malwa painting

One of the rare depiction of an acrobatic dance perhaps referred as *Kalasha Lasya* and *Prenkhini*. (*Bhartarnava*, Chap 13 and 14, *Kalasha Lasya*, *Prenkhani*. Sloka no 743,744 and 868,871 respectively) In this painting girl is rope walking with the balance of pot on her head with a sword and shield in two hands, with music accompaniment.

THANJAVUR PAINTING or the South Indian painting started in Thanjavur or Tanjor around 1600 AD under the Chola dynasty and spreaded in the other Tamil areas of the state. It further developed in the Maratha court of Thanjavur (1676-1855). The art was patronised by the Nayakas and the Vijayanagarayas along with the arts of Dance, Music and literature. The paintings were mainly of Hindu religious subjects in the temple. It is distinguished by the famous gold leaf coating and use of

precious as well as semi-precious gems. They evoke a sense of class and timelessness.

These paintings are characterised by rich, vivid and flat colours, overlaid with glittering gold foils and simple iconic composition. It was done on delicate but extensive gesso work and inlay of very precious and semi-precious gems, glass beads and pieces. The influence of Vijayanagar, Deccani, Maratha and even European or Company styles of painting is seen on Thanjavur paintings. Most of the paintings have subjects the Hindu Gods, goddesses, and saints. Episodes from Epics, Puranas, and other religious texts are visualised, sketched and painted. The main figure or figures are placed in the centre of the painting in a mandapa surrounded by several subsidiary themes, figures and subjects. Many other subjects are also painted in Thanjavur style. These are panel paintings as done on wooden planks, they are referred as *palagaipadam* (*palagai* = "wooden plank"; *padam* = "picture").

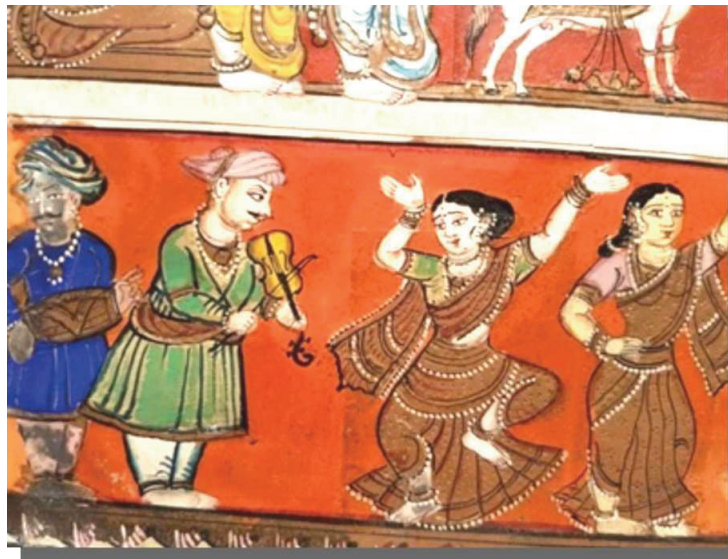


Fig. 18: Thanjavur Style Painting

In this Image we see the dancer dance accompanied by two musician with *Violine* and *Mridanga*. This Image is around 1970 Ad. that time first time introduce *Violine* as an instrument for dance recitals in South India

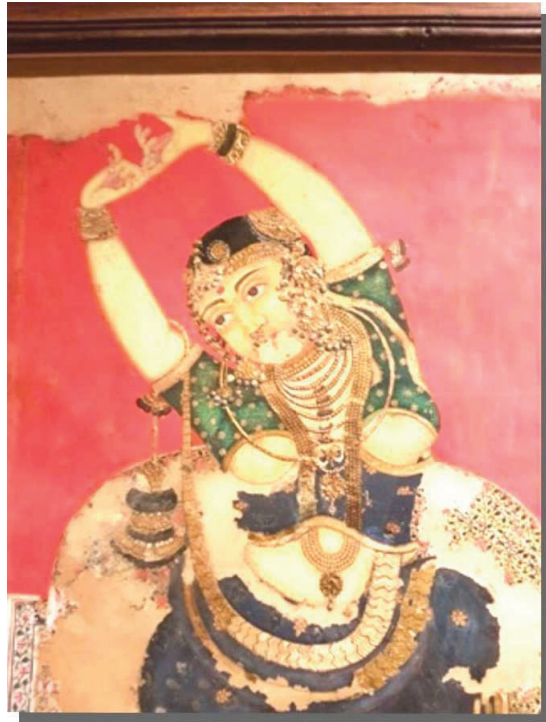


Fig. 19 : *Thanajvur* Style Painting

This Image is found in Maratha court palace. This is image of devadasi is sitting and do Abhinaya.



Fig.20 : *Thanajvur* Style Painting

In this image we see 3 dancers danced together. The dancers wear saree and tie a *juda* on head. 2 musician give music. one play *Cymbals* and another played *Violin*.

PAINTINGS FOUND IN JAIN MANUSCRIPTS

The *Kalpa-sūtra* is text of the *Svetamber* Jain sect and it is the most frequently illustrated. During the months of monsoon, during the festival of *Paryushana*, it is read and recited by the Jain monks. *Kalpa-sutra* is in three parts, wherein the first deals with the lives of the *Tirthankaras*, their birth, lives as the princes, renunciation and enlightenment. The second praises the early Jain teachers and the third deals with the monastic rules.



Fig. 21 : Jain Manuscript

This painting we found in Jain Manuscripts in Patan Jain Derasara in Gujarat, early 12th century. In this Painting one dances dancing and one musician played *Mridanga*. Dancer wear *payjama* with blouse and *khes*. She seems in *araemandi*.



This image I found in my home town Patan Jain Derasar *Bhandara*. in this image male dancer danced and female and *sadhvi* maharaja is watching. The musician is playing *Pakhavaj* and *Aektara*. The male dancer is wearing dhoti style *payjama* and *paghadi* on it.

Fig.22 : Jain Manuscript

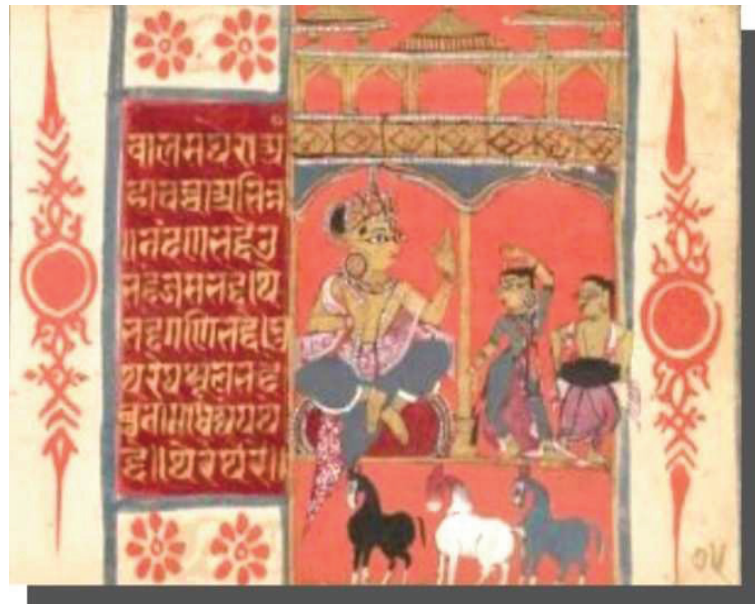


Fig. 23: Jain manuscript

This painting is also find in Jain Manuscript around 15 cen. in Patan, Gujarata. In this painting Dancer dance in front of king. She wear payjama style costume .one male musician played mridanga behind dancer.



Fig. 24: Jain Manuscript

This Painting we see dancer and musician. This Image is found in patan Jain Derasar Bhandara. Gujarat



Fig. 25 Kalpasutra painting

This is Kalpasutra Painting. We see one dancer dancing with two male musician.

SOME PAINTINGS FOUND IN TEMPLE WALLS



This image found in Brihadeshwara Temple in Thanjavur. Three female dancers dancing together.



Fig. 26 and 27 Brihadeshwara Temple, Tanjore

This painting we found in brihadeshwara temple at tanjore. In this picture Narthaki Dance in front of lord and wearing saree as costume



Fig.28 Ajanta Ellora Caves Wall Painting

This image is find in Ajanta Ellora Caves No.1. In this Image we see one dancer with many female musican.

PATTACHITRA The classical paintings of Odisha and Bengal from Eastern India, are known as Pattachitra in the eastern region of India. The paintings on cloth that is Patta painting is Chitra. From many varieties or styles of these Pattachitra the most wellknown are The Bengal *Durga Patt*, *Medinipur Patachitra* and *Kalighat Patachitra* etc. Their subject matter most often is religious, mythological, social and folk lore. The last *Pattachitra* of Bengal the *Kalighat Patachitra*, was developed by Jamini Roy. The Odisha Pattachitra tradition is linked with Lord Jagannath worship. Their theme of centres round the *Vaishnavism* and cult of Jagannatha. Their subject matter is the similar to that of Benagal *Pattachitra*. *PattaChitra* is mostly mythological, religious stories and folk lore. Addition to this is the ten incarnations of Vishnu '*Gita Govinda*' of Jayadev. Mostly natural colours are used and prepared by the painters themselves. Old painting skills survives to-day with the *Chitrakaras* in Puri, Raghurajpu and some other centres.



Fig.29 Dancing Ganesha in *Patta* Painting

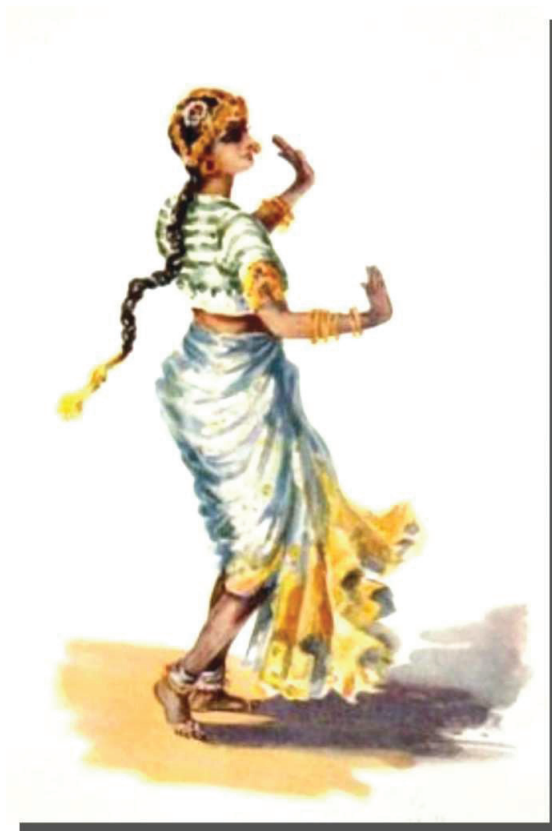


Fig. 30: Dancing Girl

Painting of 1914 by Lady Lawley. From the costume it is easy to identify the dancer as a Devadasi who is wearing the pajama style costume with pleated fan, long *choli*, Head ornaments such as *Talaisaman Surya-Chandra*, *Zimkhi+Mattal*, *bajubandh* and *bangles*.



Fig.31: Nautch Party, Thanjavur

Watercolour and gouache on paper. This is a dance (*Nautch* party) ensemble; a dancer with six musicians and three lady members of the group. The men are playing

Talam, a violin, a flute, a mridangam and a bag pipe. The dancer and 3 other females are in Saree, men with Angarkha and dhoti with Marathi style cap. Perhaps the group ChinnaMelam is from the Maratha court of Thanjavur.

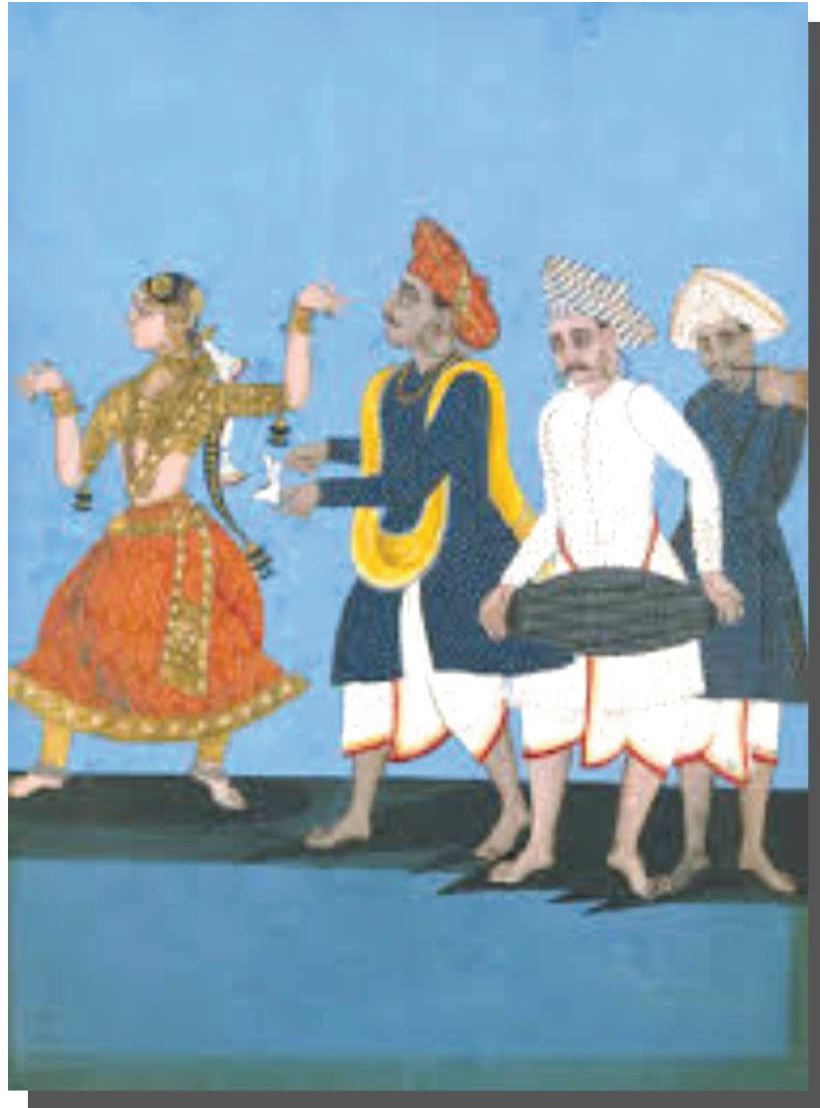


Fig. 32: Devadasi Girl Dancing with Musician

Devadasi in action, seems of Maratha period in South India from the costume, perhaps Sadir?

Throughout the history of Indian classical dance, we are able to see its growth and development with the help of paintings from different historical periods, various painting styles on temple walls, miniatures, murals, cave paintings, and many more.

The paintings have shown the different costumes, jewellery, emotions and images of the environment. They are one of the best evidences of this ethereal art!

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