

**NARRATIVES ON INDIAN 'CLASSICAL' DANCES: ANALYSING
DISCURSIVE PRACTICES IN THE PRINTED TEXTS OF 20TH
CENTURY, FOCUSING ON KUCHIPUDI**

A dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment of the
award of a **Ph.D. degree** in the Department of Dance

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2021



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**Narratives on Indian 'Classical' Dances: Analysing Discursive Practices in the Printed Texts of 20th Century, Focusing on Kuchipudi**" submitted by S. Sindhuja, bearing Reg. No. 15SNPD01 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Dance is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

This thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Parts of this thesis have been:

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2. "The Socio-Political Implications of the 20th Century Narratives on Indian Dances." at the Studia Dramatica, Romania, March-October issue, 2017 (ISSN (print): 1842-2799; ISSN (online): 2065-9539)

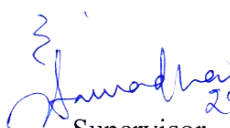
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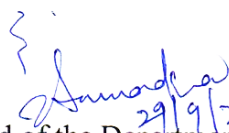
1. Paper titled "Indian Epics and Classical Dances: Relevance, Adaptability and Presentation" at the National Conference on "Epic in India" organised by Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad, August 24-26, 2016, Hyderabad.

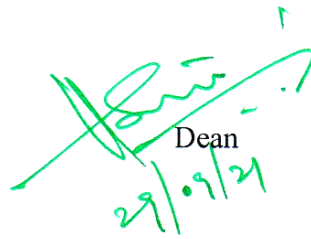
2. Paper titled "Exploring the Role of Sanskrit Treatises in Shaping the Prevalent Indian Classical Dances" at Samskritam and Bhaarateeya Kalaa Vaibhavam, three-day National Seminar by Bhaarateeya Samaakhya and Depts. of Language, Tourism and Culture, Govt. of Telangana, November 10-12, 2017, Hyderabad.
3. Paper titled "The construction/de-construction of Kuchipudi dance form through the writings in Telugu magazines" at the Two-day National Seminar on "Histories of Media and Performances: The Political, The Cultural, and The Deep Pasts" at S. N. School of Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad, March 14-15, 2019, Hyderabad.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfillment of coursework requirement for PhD.

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DECLARATION

I, S. Sindhuja, hereby declare that this thesis entitled "**Narratives on Indian 'Classical' Dances: Analysing Discursive Practices in the Printed Texts of 20th Century, Focusing on Kuchipudi**" submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Anuradha. J is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Preface

Since childhood, I was told that book reading is a trait of the intellect! And the material found in books is accepted as ultimate truth or a matter of fact! So, when such importance got attributed to this genre, what does the books constitute in my area of interest, dance? I embarked on a trail to probe into the vast knowledge amassed in the 'writing' on dance with this premise.

Till I joined my Master's degree course at the University of Hyderabad, I had a rudimentary knowledge about the massive material on dance. My practical teachers suggested some popular books or information prior and those that I came across during my appearances for few exams on dance, like the certificate and diploma courses (conducted by Potti Sriramulu Telugu University). Those were the first introduction to the theoretical aspect that most students like me get. In the little I read then and more so during my Master's course, the discrepancies I noted and my reaction as well of others- be it commoners or dancers that 'oh so much is written on dance!' gravitated me towards this subject for my research. This work has opened my worldview on dance with tremendous scope and unlocked more questions than answers to otherwise seemingly simple questions.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I offer sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Anuradha Jonnalagadda. She was kind enough to accept me as her research student and guided and encouraged me immensely at every instance. With timely intervention, valuable comments and pertinent questions, she directed me towards reflecting every thought I put forward without restrictions. I am indebted to my Doctoral Committee members, Prof. Aruna

Bhikshu and Dr Joly Puthussery. They offered constant support both academically and personally, and their vital suggestions enriched this work.

I am obliged to the University Grants Commission, UGC, for the scholarship, which was of huge assistance and a driving force to complete the work with focus! I thank the University of Hyderabad for facilitating the research and providing the atmosphere to carry forward the work peacefully. Dept. of Dance has become an integral part of life for the last ten years, ever since I joined the Master's course. I acknowledge Prof. M. S. Sivaraju for his motivating words, Prof. P. Ramalinga Sastry, Sri D. S. V. Sastry, Smt T. Manjula for their warmth and assistance. Special thanks to Dr Joly Puthussery, Centre for Folk Culture Studies and Prof. P. Thirumal, Dept. of Communication, for opening up a new academic and critical thinking sphere during the coursework I studied under them. Thanks are due to Dr N. Naveen Kumar at the Centre for Folk Culture Studies.

I thank the Librarians for permitting me, and the staff for patiently searching the books and being hospitable at all the libraries I visited during fieldwork. The long list of the wonderful libraries that aided this dissertation are: in Hyderabad- Anveshi, Central Library of Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, City Central Library, Library at Department of Archaeology and Museums, Library at Koti Women's College, Ramesh Mohan Library at EFLU, State Central Library, University Library at Osmania University; in Kuchipudi- Library at Siddhendra Kalakshetra and at Akhila Bharata Kuchipudi Natya Kala Mandali- M. N. Sharma's collection; in Chennai- Roja Muthaiah Research Library, Connemara Public Library and the Central Library, Department of Dance Library and Oriental Research Library at the Madras University; in Mumbai- Libraries at NCPA, The Asiatic Society, MARG, Nalanda Dance Research Centre, and the Jawaharlal Nehru Library at the

Mumbai University; Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Library and Library at the Department of Dance at Benaras Hindu University, Benaras; Libraries at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi; British Library and National Art Library, London; Dr. S. V. Krishna Library and Library at the Department of Music and Dance at Andhra University, Visakhapatnam; Gautami Library, Rajahmundry; Vetapalem Saraswata Niketan, Vetapalem; and John Rotherstein Library, Chicago. I am expressly grateful to the Librarian and all staff members at the Indira Gandhi Memorial Library at our University of Hyderabad, which has an excellent selection of books. It was where I spent most of my research period, and something I will definitely miss! Also of enormous help were the digital resources for hosting and allowing access to the material (all the names are listed in the Works Cited and Works Consulted), particularly JSTOR, Shodhganga and Internet Archive.

A note of gratitude to all the scholars, artists, and writers I interviewed during my research period for sharing their time and treasured responses. I cherish this experience of interacting with: late Dr Sunil Kothari, late Sri Pasumarthy Keshava Prasad, Sri Pasumarthy Rattaiah Sarma, Sri Vedantam Radheshyam, Dr Mandakranta Bose (through email correspondence), Smt Leela Venkatraman (through email correspondence), Dr Vedantam Ramalinga Sastry, Sri G. Venu, Dr Rajyalakshmi Seth, Dr Parul Shah, Dr Daves Soneji, Dr Harshita Mruthinti Kamath, Dr Yeleswarapu Srinivas and Dr Chinta Ravi Bala Krishna. I thank Dr Daves Soneji, Dr Harshita Mruthinti Kamath, and Dr Rajyalakshmi Seth for sharing valuable articles on dance. I am grateful to Prof. Anuradha Jonnalagadda, Dr Yashoda Thakore, and Dr Chinta Ravi Bala Krishna for allowing me to

access their personal treasure of books. Especially obliged to my supervisor Prof. Anuradha Jonnalagadda, whose exceptional collection I had the privilege of visiting numerous times!

I thank all my dance teachers, and indeed Dr Yashoda Thakore- for igniting an appetite to find the past behind words and movements in the dance. She is the reason for me to pursue higher studies in dance. Thanks to Sampreeti Malladi, my senior, co-dancer, co-research scholar and friend, for having my back and those never-ending discussions on dance and life. I acknowledge Devi. G, Aswathy Rajan, D. Aparna and Y. Lalita Sindhuri, Sivannarayana and Rizwana Begum for their solidarity. Acknowledging my relatives, friends and acquaintances for being who they are. Gratitude to my pedananna, Dr S. Jatin Kumar, for instilling the notions of thinking in me.

Of course, I am forever indebted to my family for being my biggest strength and enduring my idiosyncrasies. Love to my father, S. Jaswant Kumar, who is ever ready to offer any support. I owe it to my husband C. Kishore, for his empathy and incessant motivation, and my little Raaga to allow me to work and tolerate my absence for extended periods. As much as it sounds hyperbole, without one person, I wouldn't have thought of accomplishing whatsoever in dance- my amma, Dr Radha Rani. My pillar, my friend, my foe, my lifeline, my everything. This is for her.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Idea of Writing and the Journey towards Print

The traditions of dance in India are long-standing, which are much documented, contemplated, debated, and celebrated. There are multiple forms and groupings of dance due to their origins, presentation style, structure, and other factors. Almost every state in the country has its share of different genres, from solo to group to community dances. Amongst them, the identified classical dances¹ were augmented to become esteemed representations of the composite Indian culture. Each style of dance, in turn, is entrenched in a complex web of occurrences and traditions. To know and understand how dances got shaped, the printed texts are a principal source.

India is one of the few countries to have a written tradition on dance, consisting of some form of documentation. It includes inscriptions, epigraphs, palm-leaf manuscripts, and, much later, print. Besides tomes², the sources for gathering historical data on dance include paintings and sculptures. While painting and sculpture freeze moments in time, writings collate from various sources, cull out the core, elaborate the ideas and add more material to the existing knowledge. Writing is in a continuous-descriptive mode³.

Though writings are a product of space, time, and culture, D. H. Green, in his article on orality, noted that writing liberates from the constraints of space, time, and memory and

¹ Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Mohiniattam, Sattriya are the eight considered classical dances. For more on the term classical, meanings, and controversies, refer to the second chapter of this dissertation. Since the word is used numerous times, it is spelt as classical and not 'classical' as mentioned in the title.

² Large, scholarly and important books or part of a larger work, referring here to the treatises predominantly ("Tome").

³ Painting and sculpture, however, have helped immensely in recreating movements (Vatsyayan, *Classical Indian Dance in Painting*)

accumulates information over time (267–280). They are communicative units that chronicle significant events in the journey of dance. Thus, writings become the medium through which identities get constructed, besides preserving information. Occasionally, these writings convey scattered and multiple perceptions about the forms that they deal with. Some writings codified the then existing practices. For instance, in *Natyasastra*, the first known treatise on dance, the prevalent styles and previous body of knowledge were dwelled upon⁴. To read the writing, realising these very ideas is crucial.

Firstly, knowing what existed is essential to either discard previous data or add something or create anew. Kapila Vatsyayan⁵ used the term 'chronicler sources', which means that writings offer proofs for recreating a social history but not the actual dance (Vatsyayan et al. *Dance Scholarship* 3). Most of the writings on dance fall under this category of theory and not praxis. Writings are possibly unique as a dominant and continual source of gathering past information and substantiate a singularity. Parul Shah⁶ believed that "something stays only when written" as performance is ephemeral, citing that "the recreation of Russian ballet was likely only because they had the documents for the same." (Shah). Usage of the word recreation refers not only to the notation but also to the musical score, lighting, costume, and all involved elements. Though Indian dance is in a different context within the multitude of forms and sub-sects, the documentation of basic patterns is

⁴ This is said referring to the mentions of Kohala as a previous scholar and backed by the fact that rather than conjuring up a dance style, *Natyasastra* talks of the overarching principles. It is a belief that treatises record what was in practice and not otherwise.

⁵ Kapila Vatsyayan is an art historian, writer, thinker, administrator of repute, apart from being a student of numerous dance forms. Her works are elaborated in various parts of this dissertation, specifically in the third chapter.

⁶ Parul Shah is a Bharatanatyam artiste and her doctorate degree was on Raas Dance of Gujarat. She was former Dean and Head of the Dance Department, M. S. University, Baroda.

observable in the books. Alongside, it is a belief that the Indian organisation of *gurukula*⁷ is far more efficient in preserving the structures of dance without actually notating. However, contemporary situations and changes in the habitus⁸ of all the stakeholders and the pedagogical system, in general, might not be conducive for such transmission any further. Hence, the documentation through writings becomes more appropriate⁹. In this study, through the documentation and transmission process, 'writing', 'print', and 'publication' are indexical terms. Thus, the initial endeavour is to understand these concepts.

1.1 The 'oral', 'written' and 'print' interface

There are three modes of information spread that are targeted in this segment. The first is the oral - which is a tradition relying on the verbal transmission, usually from one generation to another. The second is written and expressed through a script be the manuscripts or hand-written notes, but usually not mass-produced. The third is print, which means "broadly, any written or pictorial form of communication produced mechanically or electronically using printing, photocopying, or digital methods from which multiple copies are available through automated processes" ("print media"). While the written matter could be disseminated through the oral or vice versa, and limited in its outreach, print media¹⁰ encompasses the dissemination of information and communication

⁷ *Gurukula* refers to a system where the pupil stayed with the teacher and obtained an education, practised widely in ancient India.

⁸ Habitus here refers to socially entrenched dispositions in people who come from a similar background and how they perceive and react to the world around them.

⁹ This idea is borrowed from Rudolph Banesh's article on notating Indian dance. Though the article cited refers to the notation, it is generalised to any dissemination on dance (Banesh).

¹⁰ It includes newspapers, tabloids, magazines, books, journals, pamphlets, flyers, billboards, and so on.

to multitudes. The idea here is not to discuss print theory but to learn the impact of print, before and after its advent.

Coming to the modes of transmission of oral and literary traditions, Kapila Vatsyayan (Vatsyayan et al., *Dance Scholarship* 3) divides the countries into two traditions. The first is robust oral and weak literary traditions, and the other with parallel oral and literary traditions. India falls under the second considering the numerous treatises it has since the 2nd century¹¹. Nevertheless, the oral tradition was very strong or relatively stronger in dance. The exact method of dances (the cadences of movement, as Kapila Vatsyayan calls it) is explainable in writing. Nevertheless, the manner of its executions and correspondences in any particular style, specifically as seen today, has to be passed on through the body, i.e., embodied transfer (Vatsyayan et al. *Dance Scholarship* 31-21). The positive outcomes of oral tradition are that since dance is ever-evolving, there was scope for improvisation and fresh thoughts. Negative is paradoxical. There is a probable loss of original thoughts or some ideas in the process of person-to-person transmission owing to memory or other issues. The movement pattern is conceivably through oral tradition as specific nuances and complexities are intangible. It is not categorically achievable to note or notate the multiple layers of movement for replication¹².

To add to the general communication methods, Sitakant Mahapatra, in an article on oral traditions, outlined the process of transmission as entirely oral to written or chirographic to print or typographic and lastly to the present electronic culture (69-78).

¹¹ Though the exact period of Natyasastra is not confirmed, it falls between 2 BCE-4 CE. Considering even the latter date, having documentation since the 4th century speaks of an active literary institution.

¹² Notating Indian dances did not gain as much popularity as the Western dances did. It could be because of the complexity and multiple factors in executing a movement in the former as discussed in ensuing chapters of this dissertation (Seth, *Oral*).

Again, he proposed a culture with no knowledge of writing in oral, and another that depended on hand-written material. Knowledge needs to be transmitted to future generations to become aware of what existed and what is accomplishable. It is a fact that oral tradition was the method for transmitting data for ages, more so in the Indian framework. However, owing to human errors, there is a possibility of loss or unwarranted modification of information through that mode. This could have led to the need for a permanent solution of transference. Probably this is one of the purposes why writings took birth and came to perpetuate the knowledge systems. Writings structure and also re-structure thought processes and gives it a form by providing clarity (Ong 8).

Talking about print, Marshall McLuhan, a communication theorist, posited that 'print' has changed the psyche of humans (Benedetti and Nancy 108-113). It is not just through mere repetition but as a media it has affected the thought processes and understanding. While the primary idea was to reproduce and repeat the existing data with ease, the print had wider repercussions in changing the existing dynamics. In his book on print and publishing history, B.S. Kesavan, a print historian, gave a method of working with print (Kesavan). He said it is not about the time of print or what is in print. Instead, the focus is on how print modified the cultural awareness. Whereas it acted as a support for the existing tradition in some cases, there are instances of it challenging and questioning. This is what is observed in the dance arena as well. Printing facilitated the projection of diverse perspectives, which led to further disquisition. Moreover, in some cases, print led to obvious standardisations. This is the fundamental motive for selecting this area for study, where the published works are analysed.

To recognise the negotiations between oral and print, Romila Thapar, an Indian historian, proposed a threefold division for the oral-literate connections as follows (196),

- the oral pre-literate tradition,
- the interface between oral and literate questioning why the oral continued when literacy was prevalent - both being complementary and not against each other, and
- the use of literacy

Romila Thapar stressed that both oral and written are integral and are not contrasting. Even within the oral, there are no categorically fixed thoughts. Chandrasekhar Kambar, a *littérateur*, gave an example of how a narrative changes based on the space and audience- the case of refinement when formalisation occurs (113). When addressing a larger, unknown or formal group, it is natural that the thoughts are streamlined and structured for better comprehension. This consolidation conceivably occurs in writing and print, where the receivers are unknown, and there is a conscious positioning of views. So, it is audience participation that could change the progression of accounts. There is an immediate response from a proactive listener in oral, while there is a sense of detachment in writing and print- the reader is isolated. Oral is intrinsically synchronic. Writing allows a historical enquiry making it diachronic. At the same time, oral versions are alterable at each instance of engagement while there is a benefit or peril of permanence with the publications. There is an argument that print enabled fostering of communities of hitherto unknown people (Anderson). This is a humble advantage of print, where the knowledge has spread way beyond the oral scenario. It is pertinent to quote Lisa Mitchell¹³ here to

¹³ Lisa Mitchell is an anthropologist and historian of Southern India. She is Associate Professor at Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

underpin that print (alongside patronage) has rationalised the entire cultural ecosystem¹⁴(61). Print would have aided in cross-cultural exchanges of data in a more secular atmosphere. Additionally, the print had the advantage of being inclusive-irrespective of class, creed, gender and other segregations, individuals could voice their opinions without apparent apprehensions.

1.2 Print and publishing history in India

The term print stands for a tangible recording of ideas for the purpose best suited in this situation. However, pictorial representations were the first known clue (Crawford 96). When understood as making an impression, the print was found in India in the 3rd century BCE, evidenced by the steatite seals (Chhabra 214). Printing in this thesis refers to the published material on paper. In 1440, Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable printing press. The first English printing in India, a century after Europe, was in 1559 in the coastal areas by the Portuguese. The East Indian Government recognised the need to know the local languages to gain command over the place for administrative purposes. It had set up printing presses regionally, marking a milestone in the historical turn of incidents. Religious texts like the Bible were first published, followed by accounts of missionary activities and dictionaries. The first printing press was in Goa, and Tamil was the first provincial language to be printed.

Alongside English, the published material in the Telugu language is studied in this dissertation. In Telugu, as early as 1746, prayer books were printed, but the printing of these books took place in Germany. In India, the advent of print in the Telugu language occurred in the late 19th century, with the Government reports and the reports of

¹⁴ It includes the complete entities of traditions, life functioning, education, and formation of new ideas.

missionaries. The printing of gazettes, dictionaries and literature followed (Kesavan). The first book to be published in Telugu, in Madras, was *A Grammar of the Teloogoo Language* by A. D. Campbell (Mitchell 139), in 1816.

1.3 Works in English and Telugu

English was an alien language in ancient India until the 17th century until East India set foot (Ferrier-Reid, Robert and Joel 1). From the 19th century, English education commenced in India¹⁵, which by the 20th century became the norm. The opening point would be to see why the Indian writers on dance started publishing widely in English. Firstly, because the generation was getting an English education. It facilitated the writers' possibility of writing in a common language- English rather than a native (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and others.). It helped them, apart from modifying their expression to suit the idiom of the new language, resulting in a renewed approach to the subject. Secondly, the common language would benefit widespread readership to the world about their tradition and systems that existed for centuries. They had created a new set of global readers, and English served as a standard mode of communication in contrast to the varied regional languages. Because of this, native and rural arts of India were introduced to connoisseurs within various regions of the country and abroad.

Interestingly, the first of the authors on Indian dance in English majorly consisted of those from outside India. This inspired or propelled the natives to come up with their own writings in English. The English books on dance indeed form the core of the study and are referred to and constantly elaborated in this thesis's various segments. For the

¹⁵ In 1835, the English Education Act was passed, and English was advocated to be the medium of instruction (Gupta, *Decoding*). However, during the pre-independence period (and later, up to the 1970s), the medium of instruction was regional language in most parts of the country.

record about the history of native dialect usage in dance, the first published book on dance was *Abhinayasarasamputa* in 1886 in Tamil, authored by Chetlur Narayana Ayyangar, covering the theory and practice related aspects of *abhinaya* (Peterson et al. 77). There were two more books in the late 1800s, again published in Tamil. In English, the leading publication traced was *Nrityankura* in 1888 (Tagore). Published in Calcutta, this work has a label as a treatise on Indian dance compiled from various Sanskrit and other sources¹⁶. It is a small book that delineated some terms like *nāṭya*, *nṛtta*, *nṛtya*, *hastas*, feet movements and the like from treatises, and about the dances of various nations. From India, the *nautch*, Baul, Jatra and few Bengali dances were mentioned, adding that the European dances may have an Indian origin. An appendix attached has about the construction of an auditorium and characteristics of the performers.

In Telugu, the other language considered for this thesis, *Abhinaya Swayambodhini* in 1915, was the first published work on dance¹⁷. This and the *Abhinayasarasamputa* were about the repertoire of *devadāsī*¹⁸ dancers who were 'the dancers' of that time. *Abhinayasarasamputa* was based on *Abhinaya Darpana* and dealt with the necessary topics for performing *abhinaya*. It also includes the word to word meaning and performance guidance for twenty *padams*¹⁹ (Peterson et al. 77-79). Likewise, *Abhinaya Swayambodhini* has the documentation of original performance compositions of the Andhra *devadāsīs*. The purpose of the work was to safeguard them from turning obsolete,

¹⁶ This book was under the restricted access section at the British Library, London, as it was in a dilapidated condition. See Appendix-3 for images of the book.

¹⁷ Though the work *Sabharanjani* by Velugoti Sarvajna Kumaraya Chendrabahadur was written in 1890, it got published in 1948. In 1905, *Abhinaya Darpana* was published with Telugu meaning.

¹⁸ It may be noted that throughout this dissertation, names of individuals, books and places are not in diacritics. Similarly, the names of Indian classical dances are not in diacritics, but the commonly followed spellings are followed. However, other non-English words are transliterated.

¹⁹ *Padam* is a slow tempo composition usually depicting love or longing.

owing to the then socio-political conditions. It is like a performance manual that guides the performers and provided access to textual content in a native language.

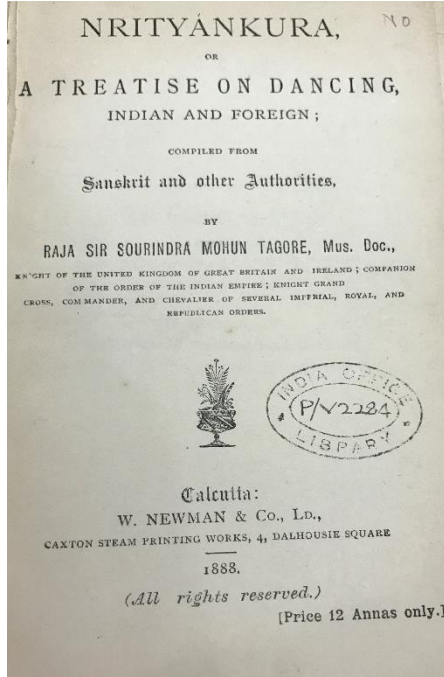


Fig. 1.1. (Left) Cover of *Nrityankura*: *Nrityankura*, British Library, 2017

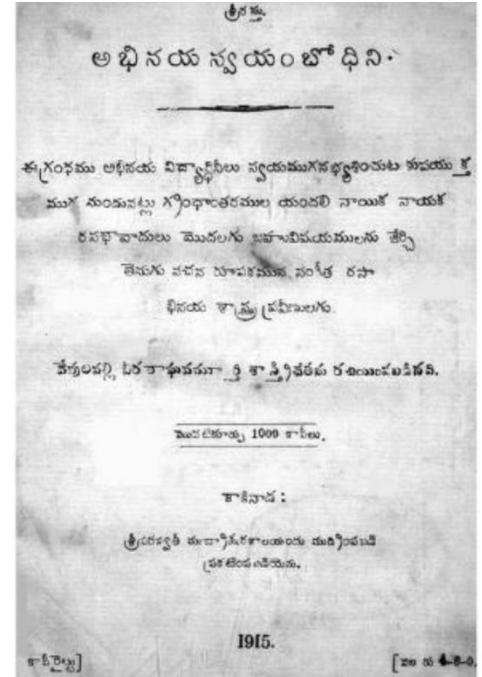


Fig. 1.2. (Right) Cover of *Abhinaya Swayambodhini*: *Abhinaya Swayambodhini*, 2016

Telugu being the natural language of Kuchipudi practitioners, it is but expected for them to write in that. However, it is pertinent to note that there are not many works on Kuchipudi precisely till the mid-20th century. It is indeed startling that dance in Andhra being so long-standing – as gathered from these very writings and belonging to the Telugu region itself finding such rare mentions in the written word in the Telugu language. While the likes of *kaḷāvāntula*²⁰ dances had some documentation in print (like the aforementioned *Abhinaya Swayambodhini*), it is worth noting that Kuchipudi has none till around 1930-40s. Lack of such documentation also had led to various stories and apprehensions about

²⁰ A word to refer to the female dancers of Andhra.

the actual history of the form. By the 1950s, momentum gained. Books/articles on dance in general and on Kuchipudi predominantly have come to the fore highlighting the art form of the Telugus. The magazines explicitly had a wider reach than exclusive books on dance and usually engaged in a dialogue with its readers.

1.4 Writings on dance and the contributing factors

Writings are exciting and challenging because when something is under review, the tendency is to relate it to future events. After all, the reader usually possesses knowledge of circumstances that dates later to the period of work. This tends to modify the reader's insight of the work more often than not. As an illustration, when Bharata wrote about *karaṇa*, he would not have necessarily meant readers to assume them as any sculptural representations or as performed in diverse styles in the present situation²¹. However, the readers with their bandwidth of information tend to associate meanings to the text. In reading and analysing for this thesis, an attempt is to assume a diachronic system. The ideas are approached concerning their histories. In this connection, four courses aided the understanding:

- a. the circumstances in which a text was written,
- b. the previous and prevailing conditions of the period of the work,
- c. how the material is/was deliberated years later due to unearthing more material through research, and
- d. different perspectives projected after careful consideration of the written material.

Thus, this dissertation examines the relationship between what was written about dance and dance itself and the socio-political, economic, linguistic, cultural aspects

²¹ *Karaṇa*, according to *Natyasastra* is an individual unit involving movements of hands and feet in dance.

that impacted the perception of dance as documented in published works.

Writings are considered as provenance to appreciate the past practices through the perspicacity of the writers. The texts are supposed to be 'quantifiable markers of sense-making' (Mckee). The multiple viewpoints combine to give a structure of the then existing phenomena. Some of the questions in this context are: What does the author intend to convey- is it to portray a graph of existing practices? Did he/she question or respond? How is dance represented? What is the engagement of the author with his/her work? What are the different categories of authors? What are their contributions? All these find explanations in the course of this work.

At the outset, the writings on dance for this dissertation are divided as:

- A. Those penned by practising dancers and in the case of Kuchipudi by hereditary family practitioners falling under primary sources, and,
- B. Those by all others, including scholars and critics, bracketed under the secondary sources.

These written works could base on the following prototypes. In the traditional model- access to the tradition (gathering information) and acknowledgement (documentation) were foci. Whereas in the future models, the voice of the individual self-came to the fore (Bazerman 656,657). Similar patterns are traceable in the books on dance. The first-generation books dealt with assembling information about dance and tracing roots to the treatises. Subsequently, the interrogative mode became the norm.

Language is another significant concern that defines the expression and reach of the subject. The languages considered for this work are English, for being an internationally common idiom and Telugu, as it principally pertains to the Kuchipudi dance form. As a

first step, all the published works on Indian classical dances in English and Telugu languages are catalogued and categorised based on their content. Following this is the discourse analysis of select works that were popular and relevant to the subject. These were selected to look at the projection of Kuchipudi.

Further, the representations of Kuchipudi in the 20th century published works are focused. Besides, the interventions of post-2000 scholarship through a few unpublished academic theses were taken into account to learn the dichotomies and vicissitudes in the research arena. The approach is akin to an inverted pyramid, starting with all the classical Indian dances before narrowing down to the specifics of Kuchipudi. The purpose is to delve into the print's impact and how effectively it had succeeded in writing, rewriting, establishing and debating the essentiality of the Indian classical dances. In doing so, the focus is on the historical backdrop, myths associated, social history, the identity struggle, technical aspects, their changes and the whole gamut of belief systems associated with Kuchipudi as a dance form.

Discourses of this kind yield a meaning within set parameters consisting of the texts available; the social, cultural and political conditions of the time of writing, thus reflecting all these and construct an identity for dance. It is a baffling mission to unearth the realities especially with a field like a dance where the evidence is elusive.

"History-writing in India, in its modern sense, emerged from an imperialist tradition of hero-making biography and a subsequent Nationalist defense." (Siddiqi 184). The writings on dance in India fall in the post-colonial segment based on the following parameters observed in writing content. In post-colonial and common-wealth countries, writers had a shared agenda to establish a national identity with language representing their

thought process (McLeod 12,13). This includes the extreme- glorification, establishing something as age-old and authentic. Such aspects and the shared history of dance in the 20th century are identifiable through the first-generation writings in India. In the subsequent times, a more rational style is discernable. Bearing that there is no proper evidence in most of the works, a range of writings on the subject from a period give justifiable information on how much of the written is factual or a figment of imagination. With the production of such information over decades, owing to multiple, subjective realities, reading the same 'idea' in multiple sources influences a reader of the probable 'truth'²². On that account, this dissertation strives to study the positioning of writings and observe to what extent the initial impressions were enhanced or challenged.

With a wealth of material available, a study of this kind is obligatory to witness what and why something was written. This makes it appropriate to catch a glimpse of the vast but perplexing history of Indian dance. It is fascinating to note the changes that have occurred in the transmission processes in the contexts of teaching or knowledge transference to posterity. This can be broadly categorised as the historical, thematic, and epistemological significance. Under these broad groupings, the texts are further divided and analysed to gather a comprehensive insight into how dance discourses got constructed. This dissertation considers the historical and legendary narratives, personal vantage points on the form and the academic research spheres.

²² Truth, as in referring to the actual happening of an event or phenomenon.

1.5 Objectives of the study

- To develop an exhaustive bibliography of published books relating to Indian classical dance between 1900 and 2000 in English, and published books and articles on Kuchipudi between 1900 and 2000 in English and Telugu languages.
- To explore the types of writings, analyse them contextually, examine the changes that transpired in content during the mentioned time frame in available published works, and select unpublished thesis works.
- To inquire if performative aspects of dance reflect in writings and if writings guided the practice.
- To look into the authorial voice, reflected through the works of some prominent Indian contributors in the field of Indian dance-writing.
- To trace the odyssey of Kuchipudi form through writings in the context of its history, technique, hagiography, and related content.

1.6 Scope of the study

The scope of the dissertation is limited to published books and articles on Indian Classical Dances and specifically on Kuchipudi from art/dance magazines in English and Telugu languages between 1900-2000 in India, as the printing of material on dance gained momentum only after the second decade of 20th century in India. After 2000, the electronic media exerted a dominant influence on the content of published works, which makes it difficult to examine their validity. Hence, the post-2000 published works are not in consideration. However, to note the various new standpoints emerging in dance scholarship, especially in the Indian diaspora, some 21st works were considered to highlight these pointers.

1.7 Importance and relevance of the present study

Writings could be a tangible expression of the intangible and ephemeral art of dance. Writing is a way to access knowledge and build an image. Since there are various dimensions and multiple standpoints and opinions about Indian dances, there is a necessity to examine the validity, if not the facts. It is imperative to understand the contributing elements that led to the evolution of Indian classical dances and their histories. This work is an endeavour in these directions, identifying the path-breaking or path creating versions and their rationale.

There is a possibility of some constructed histories becoming established and believed as the only version. There is a need to realise what propelled such narratives to appear and their repercussions. Narratives here refer to the published accounts on Indian dances and especially those on Kuchipudi. They include oral variants that got textualised and fabricated in print. To understand these dynamics, there is a necessity to:

- a. break the myth that all written material is factual, and
- b. relate the writings on dance to those of other spheres and also with the historical and social conditions. With particular reference to Kuchipudi, where history is shrouded within legends, there is an additional responsibility to assess how history was consciously constructed and how in the late 20th century, evidence-based questioning looked to demystify those fabrications, if any. That dance is in insulation from the political bearings is an ostensible misconception. So is the case with writings. It is essential to learn the underlying relationships between these parameters and arrive at a well-rounded account of the incidents acknowledging the multiple factors that produce a narrative.

1.8 Hypothesis

By looking at the vast material, the following hypothesis are arrived at:

1. That writings have constructed the idea of dance.
2. The publications had an influence (on the perception and practice) on the dance/dancer/reader.
3. That the publications played a pivotal role in establishing the position of Kuchipudi as a classical dance form, which got eventually popularised.

1.9 Methodology

The first task was to collect the books and articles on dance published in India, segregate, read, and analyse. Owing to the nature of the research area, principally, it is a qualitative inquiry. The major operation involved was the library method for data collection, cataloguing and literature study. Another crucial means was personal interviews/interaction with select writers, dancers and scholars. This facilitated in knowing more about past and present writers, their background, experiences, engagement with dance and what propelled them to write. A pilot questionnaire with few common questions is developed for this purpose²³. Essentially, the interviews were open-ended.

1.10 Theoretical framework

For analysing the collected material, different theoretical frameworks from various interrelated areas are adapted. Since there is a seeming overlap of notions in various theories, either one or a combination is considered based on necessity. The approaches used in this work are as follows.

²³ See Appendix-4, Pilot Questionnaire.

The central frame of reference is the Discourse²⁴ Analysis, which directs at a deeper understanding of texts and their meanings (Paltridge 2,3). Discourse Analysis focuses on pragmatics, which is the study of meaning with the context²⁵. The texts are not detachable from the social entities in which they emerge: Hence, the interpretations of the texts could arise from the following parameters (Paltridge 2):

- a. The framing of context and standpoint of the author
- b. What are in highlight and what is not
- c. What are assumptions in the text

The second parameter of emphasis in any given text is assessable through a thorough reading. Examining the prevalent social and cultural conditions helps unravel what needs to be discarded and therefore help understand the context in which an impression crops up and the assumptions underlying the text. This relation between the written word, its interpretation and the surroundings are demonstrated in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model by Norman Fairclough. Critical Discourse Analysis aims to prob deeper, rather than a descriptive approximation, through a transdisciplinary approach and helps arrive at explanations.

²⁴ Discourse here refers to formally treating a subject in writing.

²⁵ rather than the literal meaning, semantics.

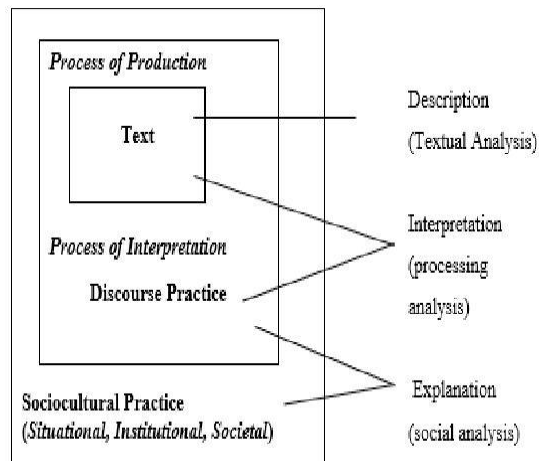


Fig. 1.3. Diagrammatic representation of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework: Setiawan, Heri. "Diagrammatic Representation of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework, Adapted from Fairclough." <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id>, 2018, jurnal.ugm.ac.id/jurnal-humaniora/article/view/26991/20127.

The works considered for analysis fall under the post-colonial period, and the relation between language and power is a vital notion (McLeod 18). The role of a dominant cluster and creating the content to suit the day's requirement is dealt with in the paradigm of Nationalism. Here, Colonial Discourse Analysis, a reading approach that situates literary texts in history and how the historical contexts influence the production of meanings at a particular point in time, is applied in studying about the authors (38).

A theory closely related to these is Genealogy by Michel Foucault. Here, how the discourse surfaces in a set of conditions associated with power are examined (Barker 192,193). Foucault expounds that the discourse is always dependent on historical roots but not necessarily in a linear fashion. Instead, the contradictory pasts put forward a new dimension based on the power operations- the truths are not universal but fabricated thus as part of particular historical agendas (Saukko 21). The crux of motives, in preference to

the individual's impressions, are debated. As comprehended by using these schemes, the power and social dynamics are used in the study of Kuchipudi in the fourth chapter.

Another system utilised for reading and analysis purposes is Post-structuralism (Barker 17-83). This relies on the principle that meaning is always under construction, that in the absence of definite relation between other texts, meanings emerge in between them. Meaning is the outcome of a relationship between various texts and not claiming a singular text as accurate. As nothing lies in isolation, the ideas or arguments are comparable and discussed based on different works: the Intertextuality. The post-structuralist methodological approach also subscribes to deconstructive validity. In this, the tropes accepted as truth are open to question, as noted in the Genealogical method of Michel Foucault (Saukko 19,20). The two phenomena deal with how the historical and social standing position themselves in deriving an explanation. This is an intrinsic concept applied for studying published works from a broader world view with the backdrop of culture and language and how they impact a meaning.

Deconstruction, as propounded by Jacques Derrida primarily, is adopted as a lens for critical analysis of writings. It dissects a text and seeks to expose the blind spots and the multiple interpretations that lay behind it (Barker 36). The implied and the intended meanings are in perusal for exploration, and the naturalised concepts are challenged (36). This work dwells on the characteristic that the components or instances arising in the written words are not treated as individual, independent occurrences but as a response to a much broader context, including the social, political, cultural and economic forces that are at play.

1.11 Literature review

The studies on the *writings* in the dance domain are far and few, especially where the focus is on intertextual and contextual analysis, which led to the descriptions in publications. A lacuna noticed in earlier works is a comparative critical study, which this research proposes to accomplish. An article, *Dance Research in India*, by Ananya Chatterjea²⁶ provided a path on which this dissertation's content classifications are built (Chatterjea). The said article deals with how the themes about Indian dance have changed during different periods, providing causes for the same. This article has been utilised as a reference point to develop a chronological and conceptual base for various groupings of the published material.

Another article by Kapila Vatsyayan, *Dance Scholarship and its Future: Indian Context*, was instrumental in gathering the profundity of the scholarship on Indian dance and the various approaches for researching dance from oral to print traditions (Vatsyayan et al. *Dance Scholarship*). This article provided a comprehensive overview and scope for the inquiry ahead.

Some bibliographies formed a significant part of the initial inquiry to fathom the subject's width and depth. Though numerous books found a place in the bibliographies, sourcing them was a herculean task as many were either unavailable or relatively difficult to source. Nevertheless, they helped to formulate a primary working bibliography for further compilations and study. A work that this researcher gathered relatively late in the research period but one that is in a closely related area of interest is an annotated

²⁶ Ananya Chatterjea is a dancer, choreographer and scholar. She is a Professor of Dance at the University of Minnesota.

bibliography by Rajyalakshmi Seth²⁷ covering the published books and articles in Telugu²⁸. The significance of this dissertation is that it tries to compile bibliographies (including an annotated) that cover the published books on all Indian classical dances and another exclusively with the published books in Telugu, including books that deal solely with Kuchipudi²⁹.

1.12 Chapter briefs

Beginning with the objectives, literature review and methodology assumed for the dissertation, this chapter tries to justify why the writings are examined and its position as a discourse discipline. It defends the necessity of writing and communication in a printed format. It broadly deals with the writing and print history in India. The transition of the knowledge transmission from oral to print is discussed, with the abstraction of writing being the linking parameter.

Taking forward from the foundation given in this first chapter, the second chapter deals with the documentation of dance in the written structure and how the socio-cultural milieu with its distinctive markers set forth an imprint on dances. This chapter begins with tracing the written indications of dance in India in varied literary genres. Based on the Annotated Bibliography³⁰, the content-based division and what constituted the subject matter in various periods are arranged. The various concepts and theories that are pertinent and those that help read and review a written piece of work are overviewed alongside those

²⁷ Rajyalakshmi Seth is a Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi teacher, choreographer and scholar. She is a doctorate holder on the topic, 'The Changing contours of Kuchipudi dance: A Sociological study', submitted to Mumbai University in 2005.

²⁸ Rajyalakshmi Seth translated the Telugu works into English (for study purposes) and did the annotated bibliography for the same (Seth, *Annotated*)

²⁹ See Appendices I and II.

³⁰ See Appendix-II.

notions that defined the writings in particular periods. Finally, the frames of reference adopted to classify and analyse the selected works are derived, leading to the detailed analysis worked out in the next chapter.

The third chapter navigates through the realm of books that encompass multiple dance styles. The motive is to know how the writer's dimensionality deals with the Indian dance as a whole and in parts- the diverse forms, wherever appropriate, with a brief coverage on the readers. Out of the vast collection of writings and writers, based on their reach and range, select works and authors are probed deeper while referring to the significant contributions by a broad spectrum of authors from different backgrounds.

The fourth chapter deals exclusively with the representation of Kuchipudi as traced through the writings in English, also naturally and particularly in Telugu. The study constitutes the following areas: the beginnings of Kuchipudi and how imaginations around it emerged; the modifications and socio-political and economic conditions it strived in. It unpacks how coming from an oral background practised in a specific area, Kuchipudi came to be a text-bound, widespread classical art, and from being a male, caste-centric dance to how it is now open to different groups. All of these are examined through the lens of writings. A section discourses briefly the academic work in Kuchipudi (including post-2000, when a new wave in scholarly writing has risen) and the insights it had brought in. The approach is not limited to a few authors and focuses on the trajectory of ideas and the factors behind Kuchipudi as a dance form adapted, developed and metamorphosed and evolved into, with the published works as a foundational element. The fifth chapter which is the conclusion, elucidates the findings of analysis from the numerous readings, the striking arguments, and the excluded elements of this thesis that take the work ahead.

Chapter 2

Textualising the Dance: A Historical Overview and Contemplations

The former chapter detailed out 'writings' as a phenomenon along with a glimpse into dance-writings. Taking this forward, the present chapter delves into the various written sources on dance before the 20th century, which is the period focused in this thesis. The chapter has three segments. The first broadly covers pre-1900 literary sources that mentioned dance/dancer, including the *Vedas*, epics, treatises and travelogues. The second part comprises the predominant concepts found in the 20th-century writings on dance and the contexts from which they stem. The last portion of the chapter deals with various parameters designed for analysing the text. This exercise provides a framework for comprehending the domain of the written word in India, concerning dance and also dance as a thought, in the writings.

2.1. Documentation in writing and its historical growth: pre-1900

To begin with, the literary sources on the dance form a strong foundation in revealing the historiography of dance³¹. This includes rudimentary known mentions of dance in *Vedas*, followed by various epics, *purāṇas* and others in the form of poems, plays, and the like. In the *Rig Veda* (1500 BCE), Indra was described as a dancer in many hymns (Team 120, 158,876). There was also mention of the dancing dawn, Ushas and slave girls dancing around the fire with water pots on their heads and stamping their feet (Team 99, 850). During the time of *Ramayana* (7-4 BCE), dancing and singing were an integral part

³¹ The numerous sources and historiography on dance have been dealt with by other authors (Nandagopal and Sathyanarayana 137-145).

of education and entertainment. It indicated how the princes learnt these arts and how dance was part of every celebration or a joyous event of commoners, alongside professional dancers. *Mahabharata* (3 BCE-3 CE) has key characters like Krishna and Brihannala (Arjuna) as dancers apart from others like Uttara. Further to that, Kalidasa (5 CE) has written about dances in his plays³². As an example, in the play *Malavikagnimitram*, there is a description of a dance competition in the king's court. It is worth noting that both in Prakrit and Sanskrit sources, dance and dancers find mentions.

Dance was a well-established art by the Buddhist times, and Amrapali (around 500 BCE) was a celebrated dancer. She was more than a court dancer, and, being the bride of the Vaishali kingdom, she was respected for her magnanimity and commanded a treasury (Sengupta 4-6). This was one of the few instances where beyond practising art, the role of a dancer got revealed. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (4 BCE), a treatise on civil administration, military and economics amongst many others, has information about how dancers were part of the espionage. It indicated that dancers, actors and other women of harlotry were well-versed in acting. They were knowledgeable in multiple languages to know secrets of enemies, diverting and even assassinating them (Sriramachandrudu 262-264).

Likewise, there are suggestions of dance and dancers during the patronage of various kings throughout history, spreading across the length and breadth of the country. In a more recent past, there is evidence of training and performances from the Vijayanagara period (14th - 17th century), as discoursed in the travelogues section of this thesis. This

³² It is to be noted that the periods of Vedas, epics and Kalidasa are not indeed established but run through a broad range. The ones given here are indicative. (Britannica; Gerow)

briefing is to present an overview of the topic already dealt with by other scholars³³. A mention of these is brought here only for the purpose of reference. Besides these, manuscripts of treatises, accounts by individuals (letters, biographies, amongst others), archival records also constitute the literary sources. Apart from the manuscripts, others are brief, and at times, vague. However, they depict the situation of dancing girls rather than the technique. As the purpose here is to see how the idea of dance finds representation in writing; the ensuing section is split into two parts: premiering with treatises and then, travelogues.

Dance in India was part of broader theatrical performance as referred to in the likes of the treatise, *Natyasastra*, the earliest treatise to be discovered. In the medieval period, *saṅgīta* was the canopy encompassing vocal, instrumental and dance³⁴. Thus, in treatises of music literature, the technique of dance was mentioned as seen in *Sangita Ratnakara*, *Manasollasa*, etc. Then there were exclusive works only on dance, its grammar, technique and/or *abhinaya* like *Nritta Ratnavali*.

A treatise is defined as a lengthy, formal and structured exposition on a subject, carrying principles ("treatise"). The treatises on dance make a full-bodied contribution in understanding dance as an art, in relation to the other forms and principally about the technical aspects. They, also at times, furnish the details of patronage and status of dance in society. The treatises written in India are fundamentally divided into two categories- the ones written in Sanskrit and others in regional languages.

³³ For example, Kapila Vatsyayan has written extensively about the dance in literary sources (Vatsyayan, *Classical Indian*).

³⁴ Comprising *gīta* (vocal music), *vādyā* (instrumental music) and *nṛtya* (dance) as defined in Sarṅgdeva's *Sangita Ratnakara*.

The Sanskrit texts, owing to their legibility by a wider population, are accepted and followed in multiple styles³⁵. The most-known, revered and followed treatise is undoubtedly *Natyasastra*, about which there is a discussion further in this chapter. Similarly, there are *Abhinaya Darpana*³⁶, *Sangita Ratnakara*³⁷, etc that are adopted by more than one style. The ones in vernacular languages, for instance, the *Hastalakshana Deepika*³⁸ or *Balaramabharatam*³⁹, written in Malayalam were followed in the reconstructed practices of Kerala like Kathakali and Mohiniattam. Similarly, *Govinda Sangita Lila Vilas*⁴⁰ was embraced by Manipuri and *Abhinaya Chandrika*⁴¹ by Odissi practitioners. The regional treatises, customarily, were written considering the various forms practised locally and conceivably suitable for the forms they were written for or adapted by their latter-day manifestations. However, some works like *Nritta Ratnavali*, though written in Southern India in Sanskrit, include dances and movement patterns of a broad geographical area spreading through central India. The adaption of treatises here means that the codified principles or precepts laid out in those are moulded to suit the native practical demonstration.

These treatises support by providing formidable antiquity, ethnicity, and a flavour to the dance forms that adopt their grammar. At a point in time, the commentaries and translations of these treatises became a crucial phenomenon. They aided a vast populace of

³⁵ For more on the numerous treatises, refer to works by Mandakranta Bose's that have an extensive study on treatises (*Movement*).

³⁶ *Abhinaya Darpana* by Nandikesvara, medieval period.

³⁷ *Sangita Ratnakara* by Sarngadeva, 13th century.

³⁸ *Hastalakshana Deepika*, unknown author.

³⁹ *Balarama Bharatam* by Karthika Thirunal Bala Rama Varma, 18th century.

⁴⁰ *Govinda Sangita Lila Vilas* by Bhagyachandra, 18th century.

⁴¹ *Abhinaya Chandrika* by Maheswar Mahopatra. The existence of this work is contentious, though it is often mentioned (Lowen).

dance and interrelated fields like music and drama to understand, deliberate, reflect and implement some of the tenets prescribed in treatises. Of all the treatises, *Natyasastra* is placed at a pedestal and adopted at a pan-Indian level. What takes it to an illustrious position is that apart from being the oldest available treatise, it is believed to represent Indian theatrical philosophy, which continued until colonial modernity set in (Rajendran). Though it is assumable that past masters owned the treatises, in the publishing sector, it was only in the late 19th century that the manuscripts got traced, following which the translations and critical editions came to the fore. The finding of manuscripts and the ensuing publications kindled a great deal of interest and research into the Sanskrit works, paving the way for abundant study and successive remodelling of existing dance forms. The following layout is the timeline⁴² of *Natyasastra*'s appearance in public or academic discourse, plotting the central or pioneering works on the monumental treatise that charted the way for further research on the magnum opus in English and Telugu.

Natyasastra was available in fragments, and the premiering work began overseas and a few decades later in the country of its origin, India. The initial publications sparked global and local curiosity to trace, compile, and bring out critical editions and translations of what was considered the primal treatise on dramaturgy from India.

⁴² This is a compilation from multiple sources. The names and particulars change slightly in different sources. (Rangacharya; Bhāratamuni and scholars; Rao, *Bharatha*; Belvalkar).

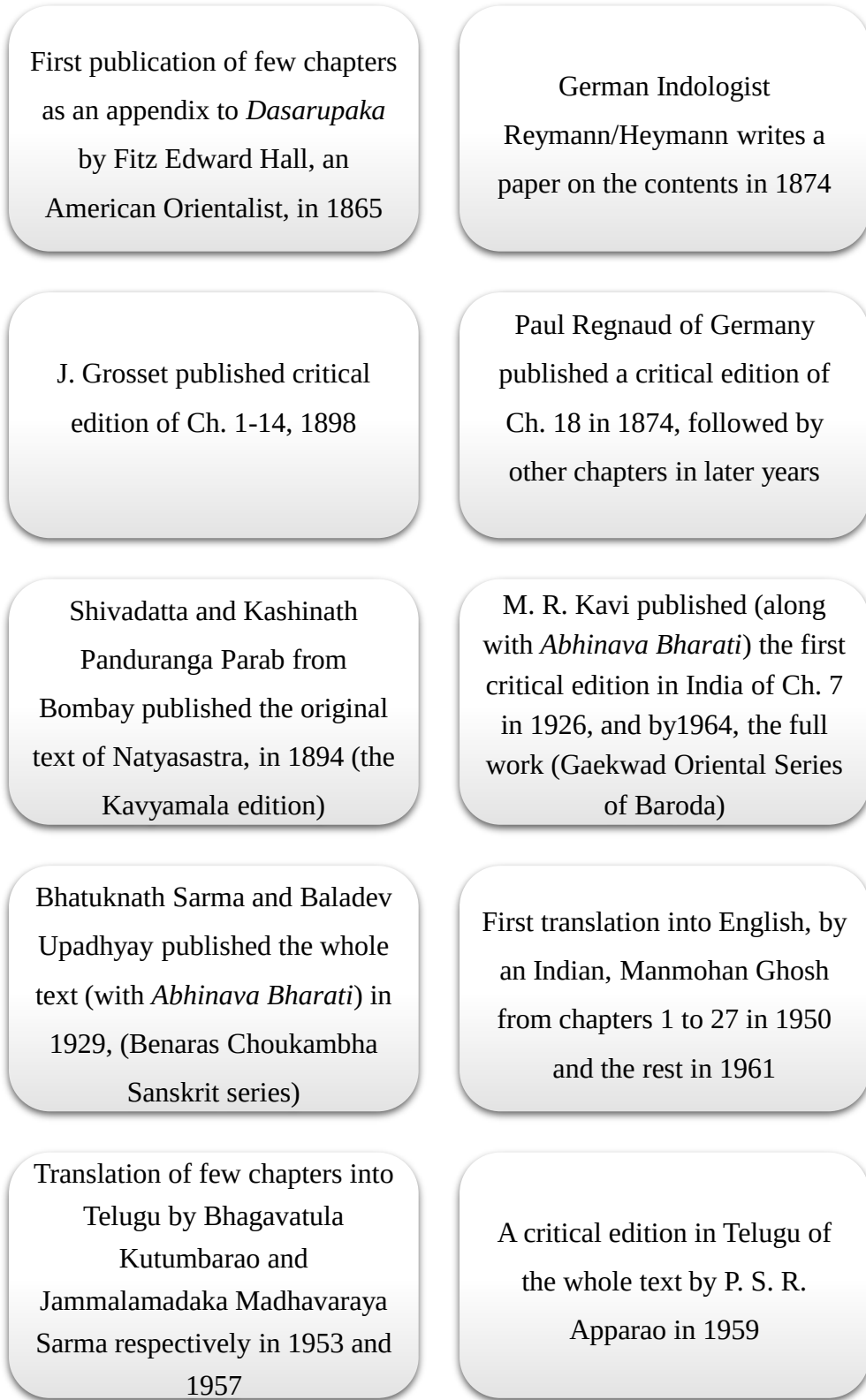


Fig. 2.1. *Natyasastra* - publications timeline

Another treatise that is most-cited and followed is the *Abhinaya Darpana*⁴³. Attributed to Nandikesvara, this is said to be 13th-century work. A Telugu edition was published in 1887, edited by Nidamangalam Tiruvenkatacharyulu/Madabhushi Tiruvenkatachari of Nidamangalam. The first Telugu interpretation by him was in 1874 from the Vyavahara Tarangini press, Madras. Based on the 1887 edition, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Gopala Krishnayya Duggirala published *The Mirror of Gesture*, the translation of *Abhinaya Darpana* in 1917 (Coomaraswamy and Duggirala). The manuscripts were found in Telugu script in the Telugu region, resulting in the first publications being in Telugu. This could well be because it was traced locally and the script being in Telugu (as opposed to the *Natyasastra* being in Sanskrit and traced in foreign locales), making *Abhinaya Darpana*, a more followed work by artistes of south India, precisely in Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi.

Following the treatises, significant sources that support situating dance position in those precise times are travelogues or accounts by travellers. Megasthenes⁴⁴, Marco Polo⁴⁵, Abdur Razzaq⁴⁶, Duarte Barbosa⁴⁷, Domingo Paes⁴⁸, Abul Fazl⁴⁹, etc. were some important

⁴³ The techniques, especially the *hastas* of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, follow the *Abhinaya Darpana*. Interaction with hereditary artistes of Kuchipudi also reveals that the *ślokas* handed down by their gurus were from the *Abhinaya Darpana* and not *Natyasastra* as popularly proclaimed.

⁴⁴ Megasthenes was a Greek historian and explorer who possibly visited the North of India between 302-288 BCE wrote on India in his work *Indika*. He mentioned Indians being skilled in art. (Khokar, *Traditions* 41).

⁴⁵ Marco Polo was a famed 13th century Venetian traveller, who wrote on temple dancers of India in his work, *The Travels of Marco Polo*.

⁴⁶ Abdur Razzaq was a Persian ambassador to India and chronicler who visited the Calicut and Hampi regions in the 15th century and wrote accounts of what he observed in his book *Matla-us-Sadain wa Majma-ul-Bahrain* (Dawson and Elliot).

⁴⁷ Duarte Barbosa was a Portuguese officer and writer. He travelled to the Kerala region in 1515 and penned his travel manuscript *Livre de Duarte Barbosa* (Barbosa and Stanley of Alderley, Henry Edward John, 3rd baron).

⁴⁸ Domingo Paes was a 16th-century Portuguese traveler who visited the kingdom of Vijayanagara and wrote about it in his *Chronica dos reis de Bisnaga*.

⁴⁹ Abul Fazl was a Persian traveller who visited India during Akbar's reign and mentioned types of dances and instruments in his *Ain-i-Akbari* (Allami and Jarrett).

travellers who wrote or mentioned about dance, dancing women, dancing halls, dance training, etc., in their descriptions of the places they travelled in India (Khokar, *Traditions*). It is pertinent to note that though writings covered entire India geographically, no single dance style finds an indication (names as classified now) in these chronicles. Since the travellers were seemingly uninformed about local customs and cultures, their descriptions range from providing information to awe about the temple and court dancers and how dance was part of everyday life (Khokar, *Traditions* 41-53). It is gathered from these that those dancers were usually women and, trained in arts irrespective of caste. There is also a mention of a dancing hall where women learnt, which had stone pillars with a panel representing the end positions of dancers to aid the memory, lest the dancer forgets (Paes et al.). There is also a note on public dancing halls where dancing professionals entertained, and a separate retinue of dancers was in service to the kings. Additionally, there is a suggestion of a "*private session of dancing and singing*" for the wealthy, akin to a chamber concert with musicians and dancers (Khokar, *Traditions* 50). The courtesans, both the ones attached to temple or independent, were well versed in Sanskrit, music and dance, amongst other knowledge systems (Ramanayya 403, 404). A remark has to be made here about the alien male gaze dominantly (there were instances of women writers as seen below) on the dancing women. It is through their eyes that the information was processed and transferred to the subsequent generations.

"On a sudden the curtain was raised and again fell, and the damsels arranged themselves for the dance, with a grace calculated to seduce every sense and captivate every mind." -Abdur Razzaq on dancing-girls in the 15th century (Major).

"...she advanced, retreated, swam around, the while making frightful contortions with her arms and hands, head and eyes. This was her 'Poetry of motion': I could not even laugh at it." -Mrs. Fenton⁵⁰ on a *nautch*⁵¹ performance she watched while in India in the early 19th century (Fenton 243).

The difference in how the dancing finds mention is evident from the above two quotations belonging to distinct contexts and time periods. As mentioned by previous travellers, the graceful and beautiful Indian dancing turned into a somewhat derogatory sense, as seen in the 18th-19th century mentions of dance. Earlier chronicles do talk about the character of dancers as perceived by their comprehension, but not about the dance itself⁵². Fenton, as quoted above and Jemima Kinderley⁵³'s impressions show their disinclination towards the *nautch* witnessed by them. Whether the dance itself has changed or if it was the English sensibility that was prevalently attributed to this change in view regarding Indian dances is beyond the scope of this work. The fact that the Indian nationals' Anti-Nautch movement against the *devadāsi* dancers activated as early as 1892, a few decades after the remarks by Fenton and others of that time, is an indication for the altering outlook (Srinivasan, *Reform* 1873). However, there were exceptions like those by Jacob Haafner⁵⁴ who praised the technique and mime of the Indian dancing girls (Soneji and Bor 13-49⁵⁵). Nevertheless, it suffices to note that the narratives on female dancers continued

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Fenton travelled to India and journaled her experiences (Fenton).

⁵¹ *Nautch*, literally meaning dance, corrupted version of *nāc*, was the term used in North India, to indicate the dances by professional dancing girls.

⁵² Domingo Paes wrote about the dancers at pagodas being of loose character yet esteemed. (Paes et al. 241)

⁵³ Jemima Kindersley is an English travel writer and in 1977, wrote *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope and the East Indies*.

⁵⁴ Jacob Haafner, a Dutch was in India for thirteen years in the 18th century. He wrote about temple dancers in his 1808 work *Reize in eenen Palanquin*.

⁵⁵ This article has interesting pointers on how the *devadāsīs* were understood by numerous travellers to India. It also has a fascinating narrative of the reception received abroad when the female dancers who were called

to be in a negative vein, as observed in most writings. This, as understood by the foreign writers got reflected on similar narratives documented in Indian history.

These records cover a broad description of dance and dancer in writings before the dawn of the 20th century. The following century witnessed a radical revolution, with numerosity in print and publication sectors and overall public responsiveness towards arts.

2.2 The published works on Indian classical dances between 1900 to 2000- a glimpse

The mammoth task of collecting the wide-ranging written material of the 20th century commenced by initially collating a working bibliography⁵⁶. The final list counted up to a total of 292 books on or related to Indian classical dance in the 20th century, published in English (192 books) and Telugu (100 books). Owing to the various library visits and personal collections, this research scholar could refer to 195 books (English-129, Telugu-66) and prepare an Annotated Bibliography⁵⁷.

bayadères travelled to Europe during 1838. *Bayadère*, a Latin derivative was used to address the professional female dancer of India.

⁵⁶ See Appendix-I, Exhaustive list of published books on Indian dances.

⁵⁷ See Appendix-II, Annotated Bibliography.

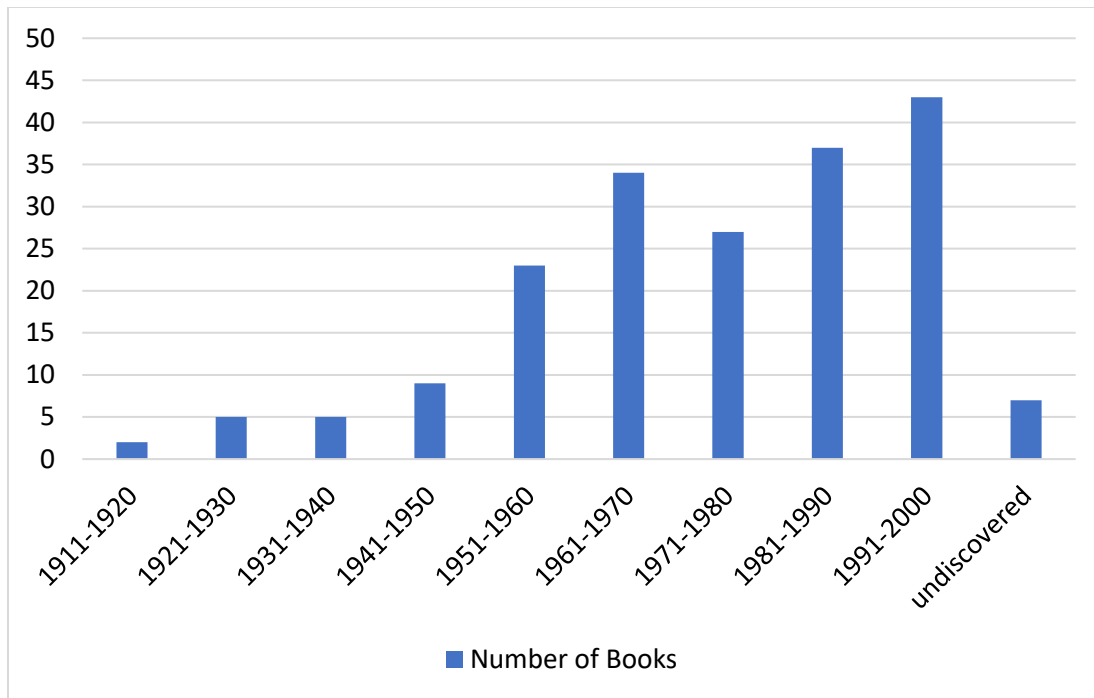


Fig. 2.2. Decade-wise breakup of published books on/related to Indian dances, in English
– Bar graph

The bibliography of the collected books has a decade-based catalogue for ease of access, shown in a chart form above. This is limited to books in the English language. The Telugu books, listed separately, are utilised in the fourth chapter on Kuchipudi. This helps in determining:

- a. the reasons for writing on Indian dance,
- b. the time frame of these writings and
- c. their subsequent projection as 'the arts' of the country.

From the above chart, it is apparent that the publication was meagre in the first half of the century when the nation was grappling with British rule and the independence movement. Also, this was the period when revival in dance fields was initiated. Clearly, the post-independent period had seen a rise in the volume of publications. Particularly, the

decade between 1960 and 1970 when the seven⁵⁸ styles gained classical status, a surge in the published books is noticeable. This might mean growing awareness, increased interest and investment in classical dances.

Style/form specific books are not included in this, except for Kuchipudi⁵⁹. The field of the books covers:

- i. treatise-based works (inclusive of commentaries, English translations, critical editions and some that detail out select chapters of the treatises on dance),
- ii. books covering at least four or more Indian classical dances;
- iii. books on dance enveloping the history of dance in the sub-continent;
- iv. books dealing with technical aspects or movement patterns- corresponding to a style or general;
- v. those dealing with inter-relationship between arts;
- vi. biographies;
- vii. bibliographies.

As the content overlaps and some of the books carry more than one topic from the list above, five major groupings are arrived at, as depicted in the pie-chart⁶⁰ below. They include the treatise-related books; those that focus on four or more Indian classical dances; composite publications on or related to Indian dances that cover generic history, inter-disciplinary aspects, and the like, with examples from any of the dance styles at times;

⁵⁸ Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Manipuri, Kathakali, Manipuri, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi and Odissi were the seven to get recognition from Sangeet Natak Akademi. Sattriya, though included in some books, gained classical status in the year 2000. Similarly, there were inclusions of forms like Chhau, Bhagavata Mela Natakam and others too.

⁵⁹ The books relating to Kuchipudi are included in the bibliography and discussed in the fourth chapter.

⁶⁰ The content is gathered from the Annotated Bibliography, see Appendix-II. This does not include exclusive Kuchipudi books.

books on personages who were famed beyond a single dance-style; and the bibliographies. The chart shows that works on treatises and on various dance forms are the majority. Bibliographies, though small in number, were an exciting addition that served as a guide to the numerous works in dance. Biographies, however, were far and few considering the growing status of dancers and teachers as a celebrated community. This dissertation considered the biographies of masters who were not associated with any one exact style besides Kuchipudi⁶¹. On the other hand, it is worth noticing that there are a sizable number of books that carried about the practitioners of various Indian classical dances.

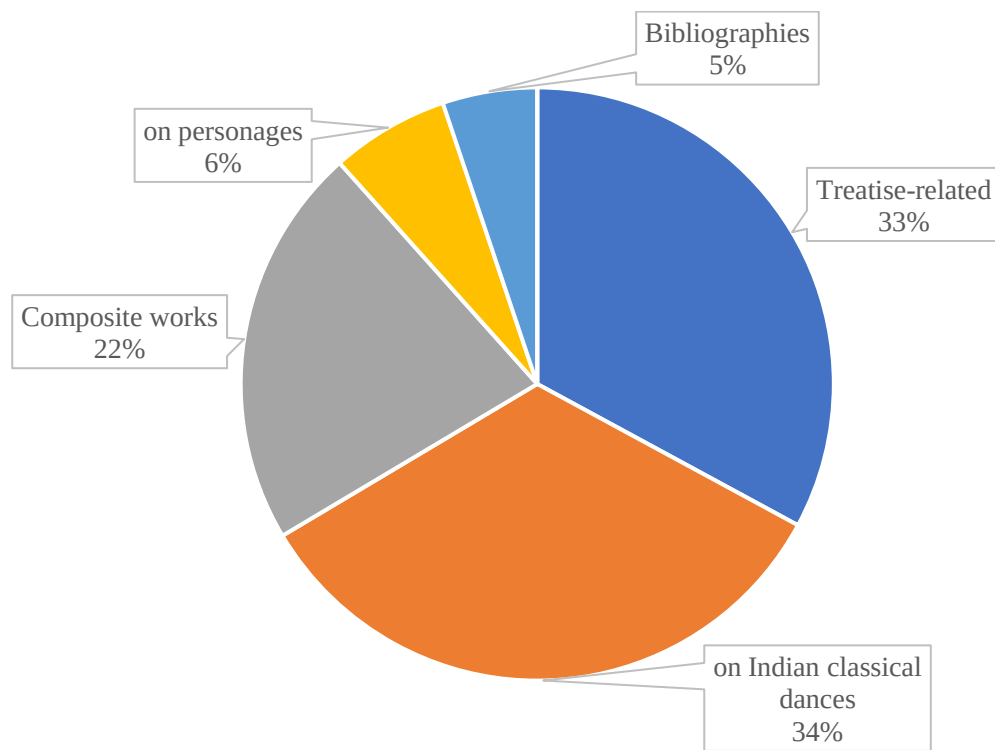


Fig. 2.3. Subject-wise division of published books on/related to Indian dances, in English
– Pie chart

⁶¹ Biographies of dancers like Uday Shankar and Ram Gopal are included as they did not get associated to a single classical style and were also crucial for projection of Indian dance.

2.3 Phases/Approaches in Writings in the period 1900-2000

Gathering from a survey of all the available books, a broad overview of the content gets surmised as below. A stage-wise division with the dominant theme in subject matter gets highlighted in the following sections. This, however, does not restrict or cover all the writings during a precise period into one category. There are diversions, more than one focal point and the like, but the common areas and the most far-reaching stances taken up are amassed below.

Phase 1- Reinforcing the position of Indian dances.

The period when this segment of writings strived may be placed from 1940 to the mid-1950s. This was plausibly a leading step meant to educate the general public about the vast heritage that India possessed. Dance was seemingly precarious, with many threats leading to its extinction due to colonial rule. Few who understood the importance of art have taken up the responsibility of writing about Indian dance and making connoisseurs aware of the traditional systems that have been inherent to the nation and, thus, an impending necessity to safeguard them. The writings undertook the cause of re-introducing dance unique to India to all sections of society and a need to establish a long-standing tradition of dance, which was sabotaged.

The books of this segment talk of dance as an age-old art handed down in its pristine form but now losing charm due to the contemporaneous conditions. While lamenting it not returning to the precious pious position, there is a bid to sustain at least what was existing (Venkatachalam). Indian dance was eulogised and considered sacred rather than being mere entertainment. The situation of the degenerating *devadāsi* system and their dances find a place, as this was a crucial period where the hereditary female dancers got totally

disengaged from the history of dance. It would not be an overstatement to note that any writing that came after, carry on this idea of the wealthy historical institution that the country had experienced and nurtured, whilst ignoring the factual tradition of *devadāsīs*, which rather did not fit into the respectable nationalist narrative⁶².

Phase 2- To assert a solid basis to dance through treatises.

Kapila Vatsyayan posited that "*The period between 1935 and 1950 may today be called a period of evolution of neoclassical dance forms in India. In each case a textual base was adopted to reconstruct a medieval or ancient form.*" (Vatsyayan et al. *Dance Scholarship* 6). While expressing about antiquity for a specific culture, as spoken in the previous phase, there was a necessity to provide proper validation. For this, the treatises of yore, which were probably in the knowledge of few scholars, were unearthed and studied thoroughly. The practical had to be backed by a theory. Each dance style attributed itself as a manifestation of the principles propounded in texts, regional or pan-Indian. However, there was an exclusive agenda to get associated and thus legitimised with the *Natyasastra*⁶³. This is because *Natyasastra* is the oldest available and comprehensive work, and any association with it would prove the antiquity and authenticity of that school of dance. This is one notion started in the 1950s that still holds strong. There is a constant and continuous leaning back to treatises. With translations available in multiple languages, practitioners and scholars are reaching out more to render the grammar prescribed in treatises into practice. With the increasing research gateways and rising enquiries in recent times, the

⁶² The topic of *devadāsīs* and nationalism is discussed in other parts of this dissertation.

⁶³ Apart from the books by Kapila Vatsyayan, which talk about *Natyasastra*'s association to a great extent, as discussed in the next chapter, other works in this category refer to *Natyasastra* as the source of Indian classical dances. Some of those are identified in the further chapters and also in the Annotated Bibliography, see Appendix-II.

need to uphold a tradition and seek legitimacy has become a norm of sorts.

The Indian dance training system was essentially an oral tradition, as noted in the previous chapter. The concept of treatises and an academically methodical approach as deemed fit now was in a different mould back then. This is not to counter the fact that few might have had knowledge of treatises or, more precisely put, knew parts of a treatise within their purview. But, essentially taking forms like Kuchipudi or Bharatanatyam, there is meagre evidence of them following a treatise before the dawn of 19th century⁶⁴. It is notable here that Harikrishnan, a dancer-scholar opines that this process of textualisation, where the native dances seek legitimacy in Sanskrit works, is not a 20th-century phenomenon but noticed as early as the 18th century itself. He cites the example of adopting Sanskrit terminology for describing the Thanjavur court dance tradition in the Sanskrit text *Sangita Saramrita*⁶⁵ (Peterson et al. 72). This could be the known beginning of Sanskritisation⁶⁶ in textual parlance.

Phase 3- The reconstruction phase.

When the association with a treatise is natural, the form might not undergo substantial transformations. But, if there is enforcement, the structure of the dance changes⁶⁷. This is, in a way, noticed in some of the Indian classical dances. Another prime purpose for the restructuring of dances might be the contemporary social acceptance and changing preferences that led to modifications in both technique and presentation. This

⁶⁴ The fourth chapter of this dissertation deliberates the links between treatises and dances, with Kuchipudi as a case study.

⁶⁵ *Sangita Saramrita*, attributed to Tulajaji (1729-35) is a Sanskrit work on music and dance. Recorded in the text are local practices, including the basics of Bharatanatyam/Sadir.

⁶⁶ Sanskritisation is deliberated further in this chapter.

⁶⁷ About how Kuchipudi is affected due to the treatise intervention is discussed in the fourth chapter. A similar exposition about Odissi was noted (Lowen).

happened significantly in the 1950s, with exceptions like Bharatanatyam that started transfiguring as early as the 1930s. Bharatanatyam was foremost 'sanitised' and removed from its traditional practitioners and context. It became so popular and almost an icon for the nation that it affected Mohiniattam, Odissi and Kuchipudi. It is interesting that some of the writers did not succumb to the thought that what was thriving (for instance, the remodelling of Bharatanatyam was not accepted by early writers, about the 1940-50s) is correct and that which is perishing is wrong (the fall of temple dancers) (Venkatachalam; Iyengar). Termed as the revival period, it is a crucial stage as most of the dances practised in the present times were formulated then (Allen). The same thought process continued into further decades and post reconstruction of dances, the new structure was criticised as usurping or deviating from the 'original' forms, yet was the catalyst for a form's sustenance.

Talking about the changes in arts, it is appropriate to quote Tapti Guha Thakurta. While this was in the arts sphere, it is accountable for in dance. "*...colonialism imposed and Nationalism appropriated certain aspects and the result was emergence of a legitimate 'national art' of modern India.*" (3). Initially, colonialism had set in some ideas that got cemented when the Nationalist ideologies sought to produce an ideal representation for India. Apart from the two factors responsible for changing styles in the art are, interacting or even possessing knowledge about other forms and, secondly, a need to establish an identity on its own. Almost all the styles have undergone a transformation owing to manifold justifications. The outcome of this renovation was attributed to suit the contemporary aesthetic and sensibilities. Traditionalists claimed loss in the essence and originality, but it has to be accepted that, in some arrangement, the dances have raised from

a near collapse during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and are still thriving⁶⁸.

Some writings dealt with the technique in detail and how the reconstruction emerged depending on texts, sculptures, or other factors. While most works describe the various forms in vogue, the focus is on establishing a technique, repertoire, music, costume and the paraphernalia that came to define an exact style of dance⁶⁹. Numerous books have appeared in this framework through a period of about three decades, starting in the 1950s that on the one hand asserted their archaic development and on the other went on to incorporate the fresh changes and inclusions, nourishing the dances into wholesome entities. The masters and central practitioners of the art also find a place in these discourses.

Phase 4- Questioning or critically examining the facts and notions.

Whereas the previous stages focused on establishing the uniqueness, authenticity and greatness of Indian dance, this phase, around the late 1980s, began questioning/challenging existing and accepted notions. Scholars and the diaspora took up a thorough, research-based work. There was a conscious attempt to bring out facts and break the myths associated with Indian dances. A new approach and perspective to look at the critical history seemingly lacking until then began from the late 20th century onwards (Erdman 292, 294). The western methodologies, availability and exposure to more material led to this method.

Simultaneously, alongside the characteristics mentioned above, in almost all the phases, the writings encompassed:

⁶⁸ This is notable concerning Kerala Kalamandalam and Kalakshetra, which were responsible for the survival of Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Bharatanatyam, respectively. Nevertheless, a dip in the graph of most dance styles is decipherable before they gained recognition as either classical or popular forms.

⁶⁹ Some examples of this could be the works by Mohan Khokar, Enakshi Bhavnani and others. See Appendix-II, Annotated Bibliography.

- Documenting/Analyzing/ Critiquing the existing practices, techniques and history
- Reviewing of performances
- Agenda to popularise dances
- Additionally, there was also a concept of drawing comparisons between Western and Eastern practices and appreciating the dances established on indigenous circumstances rather than an alien standpoint.

On the whole, four crucial abstractions direct the writing sphere. These, as denoted in the figure below, are not water-tight compartments but rather fluid and instigated one another with Nationalism as one of the determining umbrellas. The theories were, at the outset, posited and then, at a later stage, questioned. The onus on the initial writers was divided between tracing back to anthropological and historical evidence or establishing legitimisation through treatises. The other is to suit the changing times and demands and each style for its own purposes, aimed at reconstructing or modifying its structure and subject elements. Once the dances were accepted and established themselves as cultural representatives, the investigative side came to light. The preconceived notions were probed into and explored for factual narratives, an ongoing situation to date.

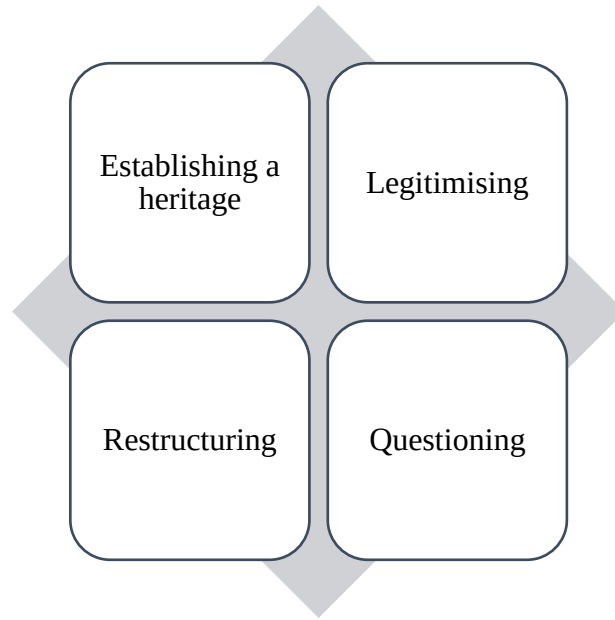


Fig. 2.4. The chief constituents that guided the written works

Depending on these phases and further understanding the writings that perhaps reflected the actual occurrences, it is imperative to identify the guidelines that root its domain and circumstances. Accordingly, the following section aids in comprehending how the socio-cultural-political milieu reflected the text.

2.4 Socio-cultural milieu, dance and the construction of text

The societal and temporal influences are vital factors for the functioning of a society and the lifestyle of the people. Dance being a part of society is no exception. In the pre-independent period from the late 19th century, the Nationalist movement took over the Indian sub-continent, and its import on dance was significant. The noteworthy revolutions in the arts sphere occurred during the Nationalist period (the late 1800s to independence and often, to years much later). Accordingly, the concept of Nationalism is in discussion here, emphasising its meaning, role and consequences.

Nationalism, as a concept, is considered differently by various scholars. It was essentially voiced in the areas of religion, polity or fine arts and a few thoughts or theories are adapted to hold relevance to the then happenings in dance. Correspondingly, the approaches postulated for post-colonial studies deemed appropriate are also in operation for this discussion.

A nation is defined as a representation that promotes unity in time and space and as a conscious collective project (McLeod 74-85; Ram, *Being* S168). While some scholars opine it as people coming together owing to certain commonalities, most believe it as an imagined community. A community is an assemblage of people with shared interests and heritage and usually follow the same rules ("Community"). Nevertheless, in the case of Indian nationalism, the members were unaware of each other, making it a believed abstraction (Anderson 15,16).

Building on these observations, when the agenda of nationalism was in vogue, it was necessary to produce something unique to the nation and establish its rich cultural heritage. In this course, dance got projected as one of the identity markers, with unified features across India. While there are many surfaces for the Colonial-Nationalist debate, recurring aspects of that time (concerning dance) include (Zavos and McLeod):

- An objective is to project Indianness in terms of culture as something unique, ancient and continuous.
- In India, with numerous traditions spread across a broad geographical realm, certain identity factors of those multiple cultures could have been handpicked to represent and justify the aims and claims of the Nationalist project. In an effort to homogenise a wide spectrum, dance, an essential part

of almost all cultures and being a visual art, emerged as archetypal, as discussed in the following sections.

- An effort to appeal to western sensibilities⁷⁰, yet rooted in Indian culture.
- This resulted in a "conscious attempt to redefine the existing structures and further receive global recognition" (Suryadevara). The reconstruction of the Indian classical dances falls under this bracket, where there was a need for legitimisation and acceptance from a wider public.
- In the process, certain religious and political ideologies of individuals have flown into the Nationalist discourse. It is also notable that a "dominant elite section of people exerted influence on shaping these different spheres", be it dance or any other art (Suryadevara).
- The ideas and ideologies of an influential person or that which has spread to a group, in turn becoming overriding principles, is a common phenomenon. Be it the projection of certain dance forms as the ideal cultural representative or the taboos associated with certain dancing communities, are but a result of such thought processes.

"National identity is a form of identification with representations of shared experiences and history. These are told through stories, literature, popular culture and media." (Barker 253). This concept of national identity was opined as an invented attribute that relies on historically shared experiences of a clan, embodied through media (Barker 252, 253). Pavan K. Varma asserts that nations indulge in myth-making to unite people,

⁷⁰ Since western education has impacted a considerable populace of India, this impression of western aesthetics has crept in. This could also be about the Anti-Nautch movement as an example.

and India needed it (5, 149). A pan-Indian culture that was unique yet established and archaic had to be evolved. As a result, the dancing figures were sought after as representative elements of national identity (Chakravorty and Gupta). The idea that the culture was India's strength had to be stressed and displayed.

At a broad level, there are two ways of showcasing the spirit of a nation, one being the materialism that gets projected through fabric, food and such corporeal matter. The other is the intangible heritage, and dance probably was the most noticeable and attractive of all arts. This very notion altered the course of the dance, its form and structure. "The ancient practices were modified to suit agendas of the time and popular choices. This phenomenon of how socio-political ideologies have affected Indian classical dance forms is a crucial narrative in the history of dance" (Suryadevara). The nationalist agenda propagated that dance was in turmoil after foreign rule and was then in the process of regaining its Hindu spirit. This coalition between culture and religion associated with Indian-ness gathered impetus.

Benedict Anderson proposed about religion paving the way for a notion of 'nation' (28). This, mainly, can be traced in Indian history. An ideology called 'Hindu-Nationalism' had certain fixed canons and how a mighty Hindu nation could get projected (Zavos 75-215). Artistic endeavours rooted in religion came to be archetypal of Hindu-ness. The performance of national traditions keeps in place an essential sense of continuity between the nation's present and past. It helps concoct a unique sense of shared history and common origins of people (McLeod 69). Janet O'Shea opined that nationalism and regionalism, both as noticed in the exemplification of Indian dances, shared common ideas of native culture as the quintessential and stimulating component against colonial interventions (Peterson et

al. 165-196). This is decipherable at two planes. The primary instance is during the Nationalist movement, and then later, during the formation of states, they sought a representative art form. Dance acted as one of those- an imaginative credential marker of a state. A Telugu work of 1956 mentioned how during '*jāṭīya caitanyaṃ*', literally translated as national consciousness (or the purported nationalism dealt here), the educated got attracted to dance and music (Seetaramarao 212).

The nationalist narrative shrouds the history, be it of Sadir transforming to Bharatanatyam or the classical status aspired by all forms of dances (Srinivasan, *Reform*). In a different context, Padma Subrahmanyam remarked that exaltation of certain regional styles was also a derivative of this national standpoint⁷¹ (Subrahmanyam, *Indian Dance* 1). Nationalist ideologies got transmitted by taking forms like dance that have a religious orientation. Except for Kathak, where there is an evident Islamic impact, the rest of the dance forms have roots in the Hindu religious context and content is from the accredited mythological epics.

It is apt mentioning Rukmini Devi Arundale in this context where she writes, "*Dance is a way of nation-building*" (*Indian Dance* 40). This very statement gives an ideology, approach and the intent that eventually transpired- the projection of Bharatanatyam as 'The' cultural representative/ dance of India. Though she is not the only one to have worked in that direction, Rukmini Devi Arundale features prominently in the list. And it was the social milieu of the period that prompted the Indian thinkers and scholars to associate everything with the concept of nation that guided the state of affairs.

Further to this, another dominant idea was the westerner's impression of the Indian,

⁷¹ This, in a way, is explained by taking the illustration of Kuchipudi in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

termed as the 'Orient'. The westerners arrived with a mindset about India and associated orient with India and its neighbouring countries. They dictated how they thought the region's civilisation would be (McLeod 40-44). A fantasised imagination was noticed through the words like exotic, mysterious tagged to India and its dances found in the early writings, especially by foreign authors. According to Edward Said, orient is the unaccustomed, unknown sphere that the Europeans tried to decipher (Donzé--Magnier). It expresses the West's superiority and led to the erection of several myths that resulted in the post-colonial discourse. The West employed orientalism as something that is unlike their culture. It is a concocted construct to make themselves feel superior and the 'Orient' as a minoritised, exotic feminine model (McLeod 44,45). The Indian dances and the culture as a whole got viewed through Victorian moralities. As a consequence, the Indians themselves happened to undermine their aesthetics and practices⁷².

Joan Erdman proposed various meanings to orient (289-292). To the western world, it meant a couple of South Asian countries, including India. To the Indians, orient meant dances from Europe, but with Indian themes. She argued that there was an exchange of ideas between the Indian native dancers and foreign-based artistes working on Indian motifs, and that the concept of orient influenced the revival of Indian dances during the 1930s. Joan Erdman also penned on how overseas dancers kindled interest in the local, educated elite to look back into their roots and alter the stage performance structure (290). It is too well-known a history to be repeated about how the foreigners were responsible for igniting an interest in Indians in the native dances. Nonetheless, the following example is cited to situate the position and relation between Indian dances and elite performers. Anna

⁷² As written earlier in this chapter, this idea of changing mindsets was reflected in female dancers' practices.

Pavlova⁷³ was the stimulus as to why dancers like Rukmini Devi Arundale and Uday Shankar turned towards Indian dances and resulted in some sort of exploration and reclaiming in the province of Indian dances. While this seems to comply that the natives turned to some long-existing traditions, it also points out that Western ideas got imposed on Indian thought processes. The dancers in question had more exposure to dances abroad than of their own. Thus, stirred by experiences, they structured their dances⁷⁴. This could also be in corroboration with the idea that there were instances of traditional artistes of regional forms watching Uday Shankar's performances and following a similar pattern in their styles, leading to a new treatment of the local forms⁷⁵.

About the usage of orient in dance terminology, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's pivotal work *The Mirror of Gesture* also used the word orient to describe Indian dance. La Meri pointed out that the kind of dance termed orient differs from occident (4, 5). As she refers to the Indian dances, the orient is inward in expression, rule-bound, born in a temple and soothing. Whereas, she uses occident to describe the western dances that are contrary - outward in expression and exciting, amongst others. This kind of terminology brackets the numerous styles and forms under a single head, at times, inaccurately.

⁷³ Anna Pavlova (1881-1931) was a famed Russian ballerina. It is also believed that performances by Denishawn (Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, an American dancing couple) group in India acted as an impetus for natives to reclaim their art. The purpose here is to reiterate that the foreigner's interest led to locals probing into their ancestry with a renewed sense of interest in the early 20th century.

⁷⁴ Examples of this are Uday Shankar's works in theme, style and presentation were heavily influenced by western dances and Rukmini Devi Arundale's stagecraft and technicalities had an impact of ballet. (Allen; Rao, *Legacy*)

⁷⁵ For example, Vempati Pedda Satyam, Vempati Chinna Satyam were said to have been inspired/influenced by Ramgopal and Uday Shankar during 1940-the 50s (Jonnalagadda, *Tradition* 134, 143). Similarly, Ramya Putcha posits that Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry watched and was influenced by Uday Shankar's programs (Putcha, *Revisiting* 96-99).

Relating these ideas with publishing, the deliberations were facilitated and accelerated due to putting them in writing and, more discernibly, due to print. Print becomes an effective medium in spreading information over time and space. In India, in Bengal, Indian nationalism found its early expression in print and spread to the rest of the country (Ghosh 3). Somewhere along the course, this relation where print became the communicative voice encompassed other spheres of everyday life and culture. The readings of the early period on dance reveal a vantage point from the Nationalist course that profoundly impacted the responsiveness to dance, culture, tradition, and the like.

On a similar note, looking at an earlier period, say the 19th century, according to Kapila Vatsyayan, the British rule had the most profound and complex implications on the ecosystem of a nation (Vatsyayan, *Indian* 7). "While the western model, or specifically the British model of education, altered the ethos and understanding of Indian culture, it is the same instruction that stimulated and modelled the thought processes"⁷⁶ (Suryadevara). The very concept of historical writings is located on the Western system's ideological lens (Thapar 157,158). "A need to systematise everything and to confer a spiritual association was evident. This is best demonstrated with the illustration of Sadir from Tamil Nadu, where the authentic *śṛṅgāra* (the sentiment of erotic/love) content getting significantly replaced with *bhakti* (devotion) dominant matter, in its latter-day rechristened version, Bharatanatyam" (Suryadevara).

The abolition of the *devadāsi* system was the other instance as scholars opine, where the intent, content, and context of the dance got misunderstood by the Britishers, which in turn reflected on the Indian elite. Mohan Khokar gives information through

⁷⁶ The British missionary schools were established in India as early as 1820.

extracts on how various foreigners valued Indian dances, and it is evident that by the time of British, the notions have changed⁷⁷ (Khokar, *Traditions*). "This phase of re-scripting history resulted in attaining at what got accepted as dialogical truths"⁷⁸ (Suryadevara). The writings themselves, a product of the nationalist purview, continued as what has now become common sense in the Indian dance world, an oft-mentioned and explored trope in this dissertation (Ram et al. 3-x).

Another implication of the effect of Nationalist ideology on dance is the sidelining of specific arts, called the non-dominant (Peterson and Soneji 2). The power (politics) and caste ideologies were overriding in deciding the forms chosen to represent the nation, making it a rather dogmatic model (Subramanian, *Master* 2,3). The circumstance where Kuchipudi got chosen from the then Andhra region or the Bharatanatyam as a prototype for Indian culture are examples.

An indispensable motif of the Nationalist agenda should be Sanskritisation⁷⁹. Sanskrit has been a language in which India's ancient scriptures, treatises were written in, in almost all fields of knowledge. Historically speaking, during Ashoka's rule, Sanskrit or its derivatives became the language that "*have been most civilised and potent*" and hence propagated (Crawford 100). Sanskrit was also considered one of the oldest languages and the spoken language in India, though there are not many conducive proofs of the same. Scholars like Max Mueller, who believed so, were responsible for the international awareness about Sanskrit and later, in India⁸⁰. This acceptance of Sanskrit as the primal

⁷⁷ However, it could also be arguable that the dance presentations themselves have undergone changes, but there were no proofs as such available in the readings to substantiate or validate it.

⁷⁸ Dialogical truth refers to no finalised truth, and it depends on each person's outlook (Norris 76).

⁷⁹ The term 'Sanskritization,' was introduced by M.N. Srinivas in 1952 (Staal; Singer 44).

⁸⁰ Many had a profound interest and worked on Sanskrit as the ones mentioned for *Natyasastra* earlier. The justification for foreigners, mainly British taking an interest in Sanskrit, was the similarities between that and

language might be the basis for the first works on *Natyasastra* undertaken abroad by foreign scholars.

On the other hand, while having so many native languages that were more familiar, Sanskrit probably worked as a unifying, pan-Indian common language. Sanskrit played a profound role as the binding factor for being native, revered and paramount at the same time (Ramaswamy). But the issue or argument arises when there is a forceful or deliberate attempt to push something that is not associated with these discourses to Sanskrit. Milton Singer stated that Sanskritisation was a product of the spread of Hinduism. It refers to adopting habits of higher castes by the lower caste to raise their status. V. Raghavan saw it as 'consolidating and systematising' and universalising local and regional elements. It is referred to as a "*model style of life, embodying a complex of practices and values associated with Brahmans and with the Sanskrit scriptures*" (Singer 261). John Zavos recorded that a key feature in the Aryan ideology was establishing the precepts of certain texts for the Hindu faith (213). Likewise, in the history of dance, some texts are adopted and anchored as the ultimate yardsticks, if not authorities. Lisa Mitchell opined that Sanskrit, more than being a discreet language, is codified and standardised by rules, making it intelligible over space and time, thus gaining the epithet of being refined and prestigious (102).

This brings the attention to dance, where the reigns of the art were transferred exactly to these two parameters. Taking the example of Bharatanatyam⁸¹, the initial point gets established. Originally called Sadir, the dance practised by a designated community of traditional artistes got disconnected from them and appropriated by the Brahmin

Latin (considered the ancient). Max Mueller's name is in usage for reference here, and for the work done in India. Max Mueller was a German scholar interested in Indian religions and Sanskrit (Müller, *Lectures*).

⁸¹ For Sanskritisation in Bharatanatyam, see Uttarasha Coorlawala's article (*Sanskritized*).

establishment. Talking of the Sanskrit textual dependence- all dance forms at varied levels resorted to tenets prescribed in the Sanskrit treatises, as examined previously in this chapter. Sanskrit as a language and classical dances also share the commonality of abiding by rules and structure and ultimately being superlative.

Further, an influential dimension during the Nationalist project was the rise of a class of people. Due to socio-economic conditions, a section of people called middle class became dominant and imposed their views, as the general, majority community. It was postulated that the British dominion resulted in the birth of a derivative class of educated and salaried professionals who were at once frustrated with the rules imposed and at the same time imitative of the colonial rule (Subramaniam and Subramaniam 16). Kalpana Ram, an anthropologist called this sector a gendered middle-class, that is, men; Brahminic, modern and westernised in sensibilities (Ram et al. 5). It may be that the middle class or elite (as they were addressed) were considered the ones who tried to garner power in available circumstances amongst the natives rather than their claimed equality (McLeod 89,106). The so-called popularly termed 'elite' from the statement by John Zavos are the middle class consisting of "*lawyers, public servants, doctors, teachers, writers, scholars and members of other recognised professions who developed a common interest and outlook, a common language and behavior pattern.*" (9).

Applicable here is that the initial authors on dance primarily belonged to this category of lawyers or scholars, and not dancers. They had to write to inform the public that Indian customs and culture were tremendous and deemed themselves responsible for that cause. They had supremacy of English-language, owing to their convent-schooling, which aided them in expressing in English to reach a wider public- both in India and those

who read about India abroad. This finds a place here to give a framework about authors and their attributes that determined the passage of dance, as elaborated in the succeeding chapters.

Moving ahead, an important fact is that the terms/words used in common parlance taking multiple, if not, complex connotations. So, when the word classical dances are in use in this dissertation, it means the ones that have recognition by the authorities. There are certain discrepancies in this sort of recognition too. Sangeet Natak Akademi, an autonomous body of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, supposedly recognised eight styles called classical. However, the organisation itself is apparently reconsidering the terminologies, and there is no mention of the word classical on its official website⁸² (Samson, *Classical*). The Ministry of Culture itself, however, places nine forms comprising Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Odissi, Manipuri, Chhau and Sattriya in the classical bracket⁸³.

'Classical' is defined in dictionaries in multiple ways, popular being the associations with ancient Greek and Roman art. Relating to the context here, the definitions appropriate are that classical is something grounded on methods developed over a long period, a traditional idea and of a lasting value ("Classical"; "CLASSICAL"). Another relevant definition is that it is conforming to a pattern of usage sanctioned by a body of literature rather than by everyday speech ("Classical"). Taking these explanations as a source gives a better understanding of the term used repeatedly, signifying the arts in India, especially

⁸² As to when the word classical came up appears dubious, Kapila Vatsyayan writes that Sangeet Natak Akademi has recognised Sattriya as classical (*Traditional* 189). For details, see the website of Sangeet Natak Akademi (*Sangeet*).

⁸³ Though the term 'Classical' was not mentioned for each of the forms, in the Sattriya section, it is mentioned as "It is a distinct genre within the fold of classical Indian dance...." ("Dance.").

the dances in question. The Indian dances stand on the prerogative to be in vogue for centuries, have a documented pedestal, and demand specialist usage. So, the dictionary criteria for the word classical are satisfied in a rudimentary capacity.

James I. Porter, in his article said "*Looking at the history of classics, one is tempted to conclude that the idea of the classical is an ideal that is at most suggested but not confirmed by concrete objects.*"(30). He argued that there are no fixed criteria for something to be called classical. He rooted that with Greek Parthenon, though some elements got replaced in the recent past, the structure yet stands as an epitome of classicality (31). He added that classical connotes to something inarticulate and of high order (39). These fit the attributions to the Indian dances, termed as classical from the constructed history. In Indian conscience, classical arts are associated with something respectful and of high value, beyond the reach of mere masses. Additionally, they have undergone considerable changes yet claim to retain their ethnicity. Also pointing at the temporality, taking a cue from James I. Porter, classical is understood as something present at the moment yet not wholly present. It emanates from the past and relates to fantasy. In such circumstances, history gives an idea of what classical would and should constitute.

Classical art, though the term is rather introspective, taking a popular opinion into consideration, could mean something that is refined and aesthetic. K. S. Srinivasan, in his article, writes that there is something more to what meets the eye and ear to the classical dances (Srinivasan, *Mystique* 19-22). His title itself, with the usage of the word 'mystique', suggests the fascinating nature of the Indian dance, one that incidentally or purposefully succumbs to the notion of orient. Though using mystique appears slightly misleading, his explanation suggests that classical dances need a heightened level of comprehension as it

reaches the cultural consciousness of a viewer. The viewership angle is beyond this work, but it is deductible that he means that a classical dance needs a different set of abilities to appreciate, referring to a connoisseur and not a general viewer.

Kapila Vatsyayan was the first to call so-called Indian classical dances as neo-classical, a spin-off classical⁸⁴. Neo-classical makes the dances ancient yet modernised. As fittingly mentioned by Vatsyayan in her later day interviews, it is for the lack of a better term in English parlance, the connotation of classical got adopted to represent the styles⁸⁵ popular as the Indian classical dances (Muthukumaraswamy and Venu). She stated that both *mārgi* and *deśi*⁸⁶ are the forms relying on temporality and not as distinct sociological categories, as loosely translated in general parlance as classical and folk and added elsewhere that classical and folk may become interchangeable (Kishen). Citing Mayurbhanj Chhau as an example, she voiced that it was highly evolved though with a folk-like appearance. However, it lacks a literary basis, the chief criteria applied for judging classicality. This is an interesting insight into the classical debate that ran and or running for decades now. In a 2014 article, Leela Samson observed that the terminology is transitory, and the definitions of, say, classical keep changing (Samson, *Classical Dance* 3-4). Other terms refer to the styles in vogue as principal forms and major traditions, but classical dance is the oft-used connotation (Khokar, *Splendors*).

⁸⁴ The neo-classical was classified as “*young revivals, reconstructions or rediscoveries*” (Kapila, *Traditions* 10).

⁸⁵ As early as pre-independence, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Manipuri, and Kathak were the first four to gain popular recognition as main/key dance forms. In the mid-20th century, Odissi, Kuchipudi and Mohiniattam were recognised and Sattriya in the 21st century.

⁸⁶ *Mārgi* broadly refers to the standardised form following the precepts of a treatise, *deśi* on the other hand, means regional variations and not necessarily following a treatise or a singularity.

Adding another dimension to the classical issue is the socio-political situation. Kalpana Ram postulated that, "*The nationalist discourse defined the classical as 'adherence to a specific set of defined principles' and that the tradition/parampara as an unbroken chain thus overruling tradition and favoring the shastra.*" (Being S166). As per this, the word *śāstra* is key to delegate classicality. In regional languages, *śāstrīya* denotes classical dances. Though not a literal translation, *śāstrīya nṛtyam* refers to classical dance in the mainstream phrasing. *Śāstrīya*, a Sanskrit word means, based on the *śāstras*, as in agreeable to the *śāstras* or conformable to the precepts (Monier-Williams 1069). The case of abiding by treatises and reliance on Sanskrit plays a defining role in labelling classical. *Śāstrīya* in the Indian context also refers that the dance/theatrical form constitutes *nṛtta*, *nṛtya* and *nāṭya* ("*Indian Classical Dance*"). However, there is no necessity for all the arts to conform to *Natyasastra*, and texts would act as a guideline and not be blindly followed (Varma, *Natya*; Khokar, *Traditions* 71).

Harshita Mruthinti Kamath, in her thesis on south Indian performing traditions, called the idea of 'classical' as a constructed category that has a complex past rooted in the nationalist moorings of power (*Aesthetics*). Janaki Bhakle, whose book is on the Indian musical systems, enunciated that system, order, discipline, theory, the antiquity of national origin are the dominant forces in classicising (124). All these parameters integrated with the socio-political situation in India when the whole classical deliberation came to the forefront. Nevertheless, it is prevalent that classical forms are rigid, rule-abiding and antique, a notion that got heightened during the Nationalist period.

2.5 Landmark events in Indian Classical Dance history

The idea of classical dance and styles in that grouping underwent some critical oscillations in their journey to become a dominant practising art. Few key events had a bearing, and this is an effort to trace such defining moments relating to the writings in particular. To give a rationale to the classifications and get clarity for analysis, and markedly to get a sense of the timeline, the following are identifiable as chief markers in the history of dance writing in India.

To begin with, two Sanskritists, Shivadatta and Kashinath Panduranga Parab from Bombay, published the original text of *Natyasastra*, the Kavyamala edition in 1894. This is the first recorded attempt in India regarding treatises. Next is the translation of the full text of *Abhinaya Darpana* into English in 1917 (Coomaraswamy and Gopalakrishnayya). The English translation proved to be a major contribution in reviving interest and acquaintance with Sanskrit treatises in the sub-continent. Apart from the treatise oriented in English, the foremost popular published work of the 20th century was by a non-Indian Ragini Devi in 1928, called *Nritanjali*, published in the USA.

The first public institution to introduce dance was Visva-Bharati of West Bengal in 1927⁸⁷. This was a stepping stone in the direction of formal education for dance and the ensuing academic pursuits in dance much later. The establishment of Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1953, the autonomous body for arts, established by the Government, contributed immensely by organising seminars, dance festivals and publishing on dance. It provided for rich documentation- visual, aural and written in the performing arts scenario.

⁸⁷ The first university to have a Department of Dance was The Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda in 1950.

The first conference on dance in India, the All-India Dance Seminar and Dance Festival, New Delhi, was also by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1958. It was a pioneering event that set forth a possibility for discussing, performing and writing about Indian dances. Another influential conference was the East-West Dance Encounter conducted at Max Mueller Bhavan with NCPA in Mumbai in 1984. It was an opening to the dialogue between Indian and foreign dances and outsiders' perspectives on a public forum.

About Kuchipudi, the conferences of 1958 and 1959, where the form was professed classical⁸⁸ were major incidents. They triggered the need for writing, publicising and also thinking about the form. Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy jointly with Ravindra Bharati⁸⁹ conducted the 'Akhila Bharata Nrityotsavalu' in 1964. This showcased and debated Kuchipudi and, at times, other Telugu dance forms. Regarding the publications, the inclusion of Kuchipudi as a preeminent style in books on Indian classical dances was somewhat late and yet a crucial step⁹⁰.

2.6 Classifications for analysis

This dissertation focuses on what kind of literature emerged on Indian dances and exclusively about published articles in Kuchipudi. It further goes into a representation of dances in these writings and the related discourses. In addition, the origin and idea behind such discourses, roots from which they emerged, what was to be established and brought forth, artistes and readers, are explored. Essentially, the cause and implications created by the writings are investigated.

⁸⁸ Kuchipudi attained the classical status on Feb 28, 1959 (Seth, *Development* 62).

⁸⁹ An auditorium at Hyderabad, managed by the state Government- erstwhile combined state of Andhra Pradesh and presently by Telangana.

⁹⁰ The details about all these, on Kuchipudi, are elaborated in the fourth chapter.

For that, one of the primary objectives of this thesis is to dwell on the vast gamut of published books and articles (unpublished thesis included for study on Kuchipudi) and learn the representations and various discourses on dance. The following classifications are arrived at from the gathered material to simplify and make it expedient for referring, reading and analysis. This exercise breaks down the colossal data into manageable parts, which would aid in further analysing the *raison d'être* behind the selected material. The data is under three principal heads corresponding to what is in writing, who is the writer and, why is something written. Under those, there are further minute classifications to cover the nuances that form a whole.

2.6.1 What is written- based on the content

1. Writings built on treatises:

- a. Translations- direct translations of treatises.
- b. Critical works- where the text is interpreted and, on some occasions, compared to other works or with the existing styles of dance.
- c. Associating Indian dances with the treatises and thus, legitimising.

2. Interdisciplinary writings:

The links between dance to sculpture, theatre, painting, music, architecture, literature, etc., are explored. It includes investigation and interpretation of such representations of dance. This aided in giving a composite history of the evolution of dance.

3. Writings on history and technique:

Here, the origins and anecdotes connected to styles or people associated, costumes, music, repertoire, prominent teachers and dancers and the like get included. The

technique was described broadly as given in the treatises and rarely the execution as followed in individual styles.

4. Biographies:

a. Autobiographies

b. By others

5. Bibliographies:

A collation of titles on or related to dance and occasionally annotated bibliographies.

6. Booklets on a performance: about a definite production/ a group that has travelled extensively⁹¹.

2.6.2 *Who wrote- the authors*

Considerably, the most significant criterion is authorship. It is categorised as writings by dancers and then by non-dancers which include scholars⁹² in: Dance studies, Sanskrit, Anthropology, Art Historians, Thinkers, Literati from other fields and Critics. Critics are a decisive section of writers, few of who apart from reviewing performances have written volumes on dances and dancers. Other categories include Compilers, Editors and Publishers.

An important observation regarding the writers is their Nationality- be it Indian, foreign or diaspora (as the cultural differences have a say in the thought processes). The point of interest here is the etic and emic prospects. On one level, the dancers are the emic

⁹¹ E.g., Uday Shankar's by Haren Ghosh.

⁹² The word 'Scholar' explicitly does not mean those who studied dance as a subject or had an academic engagement with dance in an institutionalised system, though in most cases, that is so. She/he might be highly knowledgeable outside the academic setting.

and non-dancers are the etic. Alternatively, the hereditary practitioners are emic, and all non-traditional backgrounders are considered etic.

2.6.3 *Where did they arrive at*

While the aforesaid is a broad classification relying on the subject overview, the profundity of text is not in consideration. For that purpose, an analysis of select works (in the next chapter) is taken up deliberating on the following parameters:

- The author's intention in writing be:
 - a. To report an occurrence
 - b. To impart knowledge
 - c. To present facts pertaining to a phenomenon
 - d. To question the established norms
 - e. To seek attention
- Target readers- who are the intended readers for whom the text is for
- The genre of the work- which is,
 - a. Academic
 - b. Scholarly
 - c. Coffee-table
- Lexicon- to help determine the genre
- References to the past scholarship- to recognise prior opinions, conclusions and lacuna
- Context of the work- to understand why something is in a particular manner
- Focus argument, if any
- Substantiating the argument, if at all

- Validity sought by the author, in closing any argument
- The impact created by the work, if any

The research modes, citation practice, or even writing style is unlike the research criteria adopted today. So, to strictly compartmentalise or assess the validity of statements or sources was a challenge. However, as per the latter-day scholarship, occasional remarks or clarifications were attempted in this direction.

After sieving through the bulk of the material, these components are arrived at as a foundation for clarifying concepts (as discussed earlier in this chapter) and content in a comprehensive manner. This operation supported reading and earmark for analysis, when needed, as noticed in the consequent chapter/s.

Chapter 3

Indian 'Classical' Dances: Conceptualising and Publishing

Having identified the key and recurring concepts in the discourse on Indian dance and developing a detailed outline for analysis as delineated in the previous chapter, this chapter tries to apply those ideas and study select works in English. The objective is not to analyse a book or an author but to instead: a. observe the vital concepts, b. the conclusions drawn, if at all and c. how crucial thoughts, if any, got altered over time, in the publications and the basis for the same. This analysis will be on the idea of Intertextuality, considering multiple texts of the same author or different authors in a similar setting to see how they 'respond'⁹³. Essentially, the author (producer) and the reader (consumer) form the core stakeholders for any published work. Hence, a broad overview of reader groups and writer categories will be illustrated in this chapter. However, a few pioneering works and authors will be studied in-depth from the numerous publications in this chapter.

Primarily, writings on performing arts, compared to other subjects, are constructed more on individual contributions. A performing art form lives and thrives with individual practitioners. Thus, artistes become carriers of a legacy, especially in ephemeral art like a dance. Here, the experiences of artistes become imperative in the production of art. The artistes and their output become referral points for delineation of the dance technique. It was already established that dance gets majorly handed over through oral tradition, where the performer and teacher become significant in its documentation. Hence, the works on

⁹³ Respond here means the relation between texts: if they agree or disagree, seek inspiration, or derive from each other.

Indian dance included historicity as well as the biography of dancers, as these biographies support history and facilitate connections between various events⁹⁴. Therefore, recording of personal accounts become crucial for further investigation.

The dancer might be a performer, teacher or student, who are a subject of reference for the author. The dancer could also be the object of interest for the reader, who intends to discern dance by watching them. A performance genre intends to enjoy through witnessing and attaining *rasānubhūti*⁹⁵. Some dance performances include aspects for lay viewers, and others are for the delight of both learned and laity. The classical forms are among the few that cater to *sahṛdayas* or connoisseurs, who have training in the consumption of such arts. Similarly, writings on dance are for dancers and those who are interested in knowing about dance.

3.1 The readership

In a dance performance, there is a scope for viewers to meet and clarify with the artist/s if they want to know more about something that interests or puzzles them. A reader of dance works, though, does not have that advantage, it is her/his interpretation of the text that is of consequence. The text becomes a mediator in the physical absence of a writer. The reader's age, gender, level of education, experience with the subject of study, known languages, and other such parameters reflect text comprehension. This factor of the same message with multiple interpretations is central to the Reception theory,⁹⁶ where the readers' involvement is most crucial, thus making them an essential part of publishing

⁹⁴ Biographies are acknowledged to be valuable in understanding history. (Banner; Warren)

⁹⁵ Refers to the heightened state of realisation in the connoisseur.

⁹⁶ Audience theory or Readers Reception theory propounded by Stuart Hall - a sociologist, cultural theorist and activist in 1973, and deliberated in the final chapter of this dissertation.

dynamics.

In the field of dance, the readers primarily comprise students, teachers, and performers of dance. In addition, there are viewers, academicians, critics and scholars related to dance or auxiliary fields. Both these together form the ideal target group. The first group has an orientation towards the subject, whose knowledge may range from vaguely acquainted to highly informed. The second group is lay, not related to dance. Therefore, the writings cater to this broad consumer base unless drafted explicitly for a target cluster.

Looking at the publications, there are few where the author leaves a clue or specifies about her/his intended receivers, while others are open and general. In the instance of articles, commonly, there is a demarcated sect for their perusal, like the exclusive dance magazines are for the dancing fraternity. In contrast, a cultural magazine, at large, caters to the art and literature group who would have some awareness about the core and related subjects.

Depending on their style, the books are classifiable into two categories, scholarly and glossy. This categorisation depends on the book's depth and quantum of information, the kind of language used, and the visuals. Scholarly works generally have dense data, formal vocabulary and minimal yet relevant imagery. These cater to the serious or evolved readers or the academia. Glossy or coffee-table books usually serve to feed information to the laity regarding the seemingly complex dances. Their content and style are to impress the reader and tend to have more visuals. The design of these books is such that the layout is preset, and there is a designated space for description (Venkatraman; Khokar, *Splendors*; Venkatraman, *Tradition*). Though often researched, they largely cater to famous stories

and attractive trivia while peeking into technicalities.

There is an additional typology, the hybrid, where text and images are ostensibly proportional or designed such that the images do not dominate the written. These cater to a broad range of readers. Regarding the visuals, especially in a field like dance, they become crucial in explaining certain situations. The visuals are images, pictographs, line drawings and the like, and are helpful to delineate the dance technique. Similarly, the imagery becomes indispensable to show the differences in the costuming, makeup, and other paraphernalia of different types of dances⁹⁷. The purpose of illustrations in such cases cannot be termed conspicuous, and instead, they are an imperative aid for the demonstration to any level of reader.

Apart from these intended readers, the qualifications of the author guide the nature of the book. Their experiences also reflect in the production of output and thus deserves appreciation.

3.2 Authorial dimensions in constructing a text

On pursuing the idea of what should be a writer's aim or agenda, Leela Venkatraman⁹⁸ commented that one has to be sure of what information to convey to their readers and that the books on dance cannot be like novels (Venkatraman). This might mean that the writer should have clarity of content, which cannot be opinionated on myths or concocted stories. Undoubtedly, it is the writer whose perspective comes forth through the writings. The writer's upbringing, education, exposure to arts, training in arts/dance, and

⁹⁷ Photographers like Avinash Pasricha and Gurmeet Thukral were renowned for capturing Indian classical dances and dancers. Their names feature alongside the writer, as their contribution was significant for that particular book (*Dance. s.l. Festival of India; Splendours*).

⁹⁸ Leela Venkatraman is a dance critic and writer. Her work is discussed later in this chapter.

such parameters have a predominant bearing on what and how they express through words.

The purpose here is to appreciate various categories of authors and their contributions to the field of knowledge. For any author, the primary trigger point to write on dance is their engagement with the dance itself. The chart below shows a broad background of authors who wrote on Indian dances, to identify this relation between author and dance⁹⁹. The categories of writers deduced from that are primarily non-dancers and then dancers themselves. Even in dancers, some active performers write. There are also those who had appropriate training and did not choose to be performers but write. Few non-performing dancers, occasionally, at a juncture, turned into academics or moved ahead to produce scholarly work outside the traditional academic systems¹⁰⁰. The non-dancers include scholars from associated fields or those interested in dance. This categorisation of authors is necessary to know their engagement with dance and their level of knowledge, and how these factors played a role in what they wrote. The figure excludes treatise-related works as those were written predominantly by non-dancers.

⁹⁹ Also, some authors who wrote on Indian dances were not trained in Indian dances. For example, Beryl De Zoete, and Xenia Zarina, were trained in ballet and American dances respectively.

¹⁰⁰ For instance, Kapila Vatsyayan is a trained dancer but functioned outside the educational system. She worked with the Government of India. On the other spectrum, someone like Mandakranta Bose is a trained dancer again but is associated with the university system, albeit with abroad universities. Both of them were not performers.

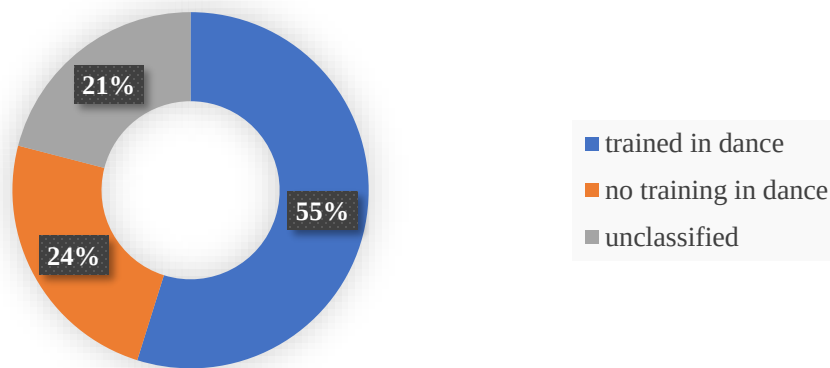


Fig. 3.1. Author's dance credentials - Pie chart

In addition to the above, other factors guided in segregating the authors depending on the nativity of the author, and professional engagement (scholars, critics and dancers) that plays a crucial role in the production of writings. Before proceeding to the detailed study of chosen works, the author's viewpoints founded on these parameters are reviewed with few examples.

3.3 Authors of non-Indian origin

The origin of a writer reflects her/his approach towards dance, whether it is writing about dance as an independent dance form or looking at dance as part of a complete cultural ecosystem. This section comprises a few crucial nonnative writers on Indian dance, some of whose works got published in India and few elsewhere. Their beliefs and traditions arise from an unfamiliar entity, lending a distinct insight while comprehending and addressing Indian dances. It is both astonishing and paradoxically expected that the first writers on Indian dance in English are not of Indian origin.

It is surprising as, for the regional dances, it is common to expect that the insiders

write. If questioned about English being a non-regional language, the statistics reveal that the English education system was already in place by the 20th century. However, other causes possibly led to writings not getting considered necessary. The said period was a testing time for dance in India, as the status of dance was precarious. For instance, the Anti-nautch movement threatened the existence of art. The topic of dance was taboo, leading to the literate's disinclination. In such a situation, the focus was on removing stigma by working practically in the field through dancing. In addition, the publication and its reach, especially in the English language, were meagre, at least till the first two decades of the previous century.

At the same time, it was also expected that foreigners write because, in that time frame, it was their interest that led to multiple repercussions in the Indian dance, including a new-felt responsibility and love towards indigenous arts¹⁰¹. It may also be that their responses acted as a thrust to Indian writers and later as a point of reference or departure in certain representations.

Narrowing down to the publications in English, it was Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, a Sri Lankan by birth, that first published a translation of *Abhinaya Darpana* in India (Coomaraswamy and Gopala Krishnayya). Ragini Devi, an American, published the first book about Indian dance outside of India (Devi, *Nritanjali*).

¹⁰¹ As discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation.

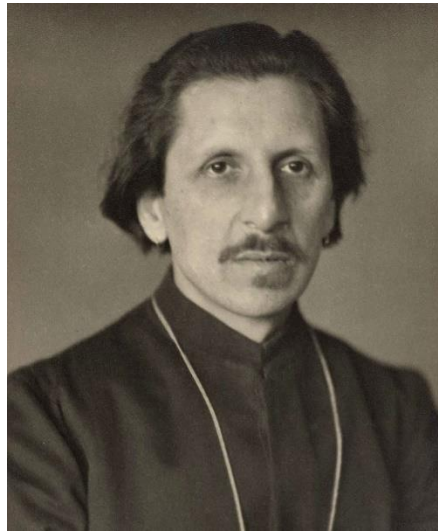


Fig. 3.2. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy:

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coomaraswamy.jpg>

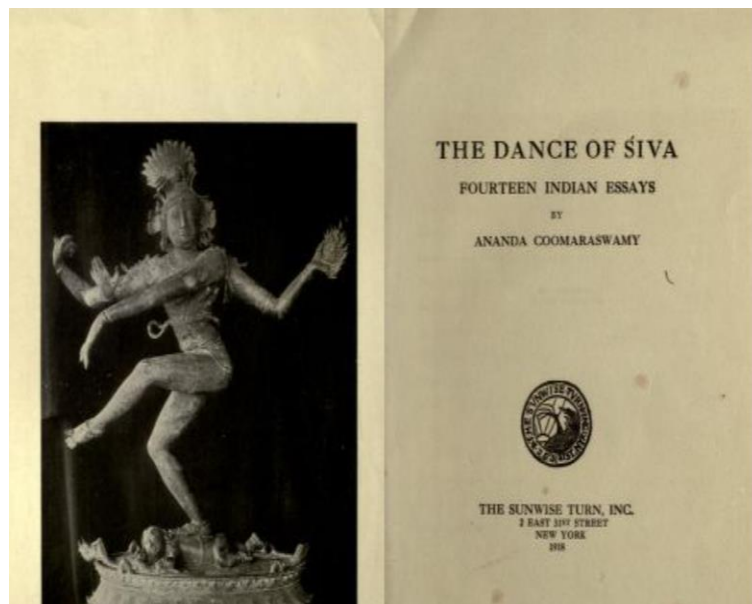


Fig. 3.3. From Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy's book *The Dance of Siva*: Coomaraswamy, Ananda. *The Dance of Siva*. The Sunwise Turn, Inc., 1918.

<https://archive.org/details/danceofsivafourt00coomiala/page/n7/mode/2up->



Fig. 3.4. Ragini Devi: Rahman, Sukanya. *Dancing in the Family: The Extraordinary Story of the First Family of Indian Dance*. Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 2019.

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) was a multifaceted personality who wrote on a vast range of subjects ranging from religion to metaphysics¹⁰². He was a popular art historian and voiced widely about Indian culture. He co-founded the Traditionalist school, an apparent motive behind his philosophy and prerogative for the archaism and authenticity of arts (Encyclopedia). His expositions acted as a pedestal to present Indian dances to the West. His genius lies in connecting the various art forms, looking at aesthetics from a native-stand point and a methodical approach, which undoubtedly led to future scholarship on dance. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy's earlier works include those on paintings, architecture and crafts and other visual arts, appreciating the Indian approach to arts rather than from a western outlook (Sarma, *Ananda*). Though he translated *Abhinaya Darpana* first, his impressions towards dance got activated with the seminal compilation work entitled *The Dance of Siva* in 1918.

¹⁰² For more on Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, read the special issue in *Nartanam* (Sarma, *Ananda*).

In that, the namesake essay places Indian dance as illustrated by Lord Siva (Coomaraswamy, *Dance*). Mathew Harp Allen places this essay as a principal source behind Nataraja becoming a symbol of Indian art, if not culture (83). It paved the way for the bronze statues of Nataraja adorning homes and offices of the Indian elite and its placement on the performance stage of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi. Like others in that volume, the essay is philosophical and sensitive to accentuate Indian art from an Indian perspective.

His translation of *Abhinaya Darpana- The Mirror of Gesture* had a major impact on the practice of dance with its wide circulation and subsequent translation endeavours by other scholars¹⁰³. While most hail Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was a pioneer in writing and presenting Indian dances to the West, Anne Marie Gaston writes that he excluded actual exponents of dance, traditional temple dancers (Subramaniam and Gaston 63). Here, it is noticeable that he focused on the philosophy of dance rather than bringing in individual style and its custodians. Also, the context in which he wrote was when the Nationalist fervour was at its peak, and his association with religious studies would have resulted in his positioning of dances (Srinivasan, *Reform* 1874). Nonetheless, being a non-dancer, Coomaraswamy propelled a legacy in both theoretical and practical studies of Indian dance.

Ragini Devi, aka Esther Luella Sherman (1896-1982), was an American born artist interested in Indian dance. She penned her first work *Nritanjali* in 1928, which is also the first published work on Indian dance in English in the previous century. Fascinating is that

¹⁰³ Though *Abhinaya Darpana* was available in Telugu, both Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam masters claim to follow the treatise from centuries earlier. The English translation made a wider appearance, and what followed was translations and commentaries in other languages.

she wrote it by deciphering what she could from the copies she possessed of *Natyasastra* and *Abhinaya Darpana* (Ragini). She even performed Indian or Hindu (as she called them) themed dances with the aid of Indian musicians at her place. It was later that she came to India, trained herself in Kathakali, Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi¹⁰⁴. She spent many years in India and published on dance.

Her works are important because they come from a very involved yet non-traditional space. What makes her stand apart is that she is a foreigner, from a non-hereditary tradition, and foremost to venture into some of the dance styles. She included her impressions of these and the status quo of dancers and the student-teacher relationship of that times.

Further, there are authors like Kay Ambrose¹⁰⁵, Faubion Bowers¹⁰⁶, David Waterhouse¹⁰⁷, and dancers like La Meri¹⁰⁸, Saskia Kersenboom¹⁰⁹, Roxanne Gupta Kamayani¹¹⁰ who trained themselves in one or more Indian dance schools and wrote on Indian dances¹¹¹. What follows are the mentions of some crucial ideas postulated by a few of these authors.

La Meri's article appeared as early as 1939 (Meri). From an etic angle, she

¹⁰⁴ Ragini Devi was the foremost outsider-lady to have trained in Kathakali and Kuchipudi. Her daughter, Indrani, was the first to learn Odissi. Ragini Devi's granddaughter Sukanya Rahman, also a dancer, has written about their family's association and contribution to Indian dance (Rahman).

¹⁰⁵ Katherine Ambrose (1914-1971) from England is an artist and illustrator involved with ballet. She travelled with Ramgopal and company and wrote on Indian dance (Robertson).

¹⁰⁶ Faubion Bowers (1917-1999) is an American critic and writer interested in Asian and especially Japanese theatre (Tee)

¹⁰⁷ David Boyer Waterhouse (1936-2017) is from England (Mackay).

¹⁰⁸ Russell Meriwether Hughes, United States, 1899-1988.

¹⁰⁹ Saskia Kersenboom (1953) is from the Netherlands and had her training in Bharatanatyam. Her pathbreaking work is *Nityasumangali* on the *devadāsi* dancers. She continues to write and teach on the South Asian traditions.

¹¹⁰ Roxanne Gupta Kamayani is an American trained in Kuchipudi and yoga and completed her PhD dissertation covering those two aspects (Gupta).

¹¹¹ For their writings, see Appendices I and II.

succinctly mentioned that India has engaged with a consciousness about its art rather suddenly. Following this, the renaissance had resulted in one form claiming antiquity and superiority over the other (7). She added that the result was advantageous, for the art was no more in the hands of the uninformed. Her opinion that art was in uninformed assembly seems to come from a deep understanding or a take-off on hearsay during her relatively brief travels and training periods in India.

Acknowledging that the origin of Indian dance is often divine, with its first incorporation found in the *Natyasastra*, she asserted that any formal dance has its origins in folk. Such comments were seldom written about at that period but found in future day researched writings¹¹². For example, Mohan Khokar, much in future, writes about this Indian singularity of attaching every phenomenon to the divine, including the dance. The second thought-provoking point that La Meri wrote about the formal dances having a foundation in the folk got expounded by Kapila Vatsyayan and discussed in other parts of this dissertation.

La Meri's perception as a complete stranger to the customs and practices of India got reflected frequently in how she compared the western thought of dance as different from Indian. She said she attempted to understand and present Indian dance, about which even the locals have no clear-cut demarcations yet (9). This is a relevant point as by the time she wrote, classical dances were not yet termed thus. The multifarious dance systems were still at regional precincts and not substantiated at the national level, as post-independence. In a single article, her investigative abilities and interest are revealed,

¹¹² There are illustrations from the social or anthropological outlook about the roots of dance at later times (Blacking).

leaving relevant pointers about the disquisition on dance.

Another writer, Faubion Bowers, voiced in the introduction that his book was for Americans/Westerners, who lack a shared context, and that this will lead them to a better awareness while watching an Indian dance performance (4,5). He covered the technical, historical, geographical, ethnological, sociological, spiritual or mystical aspects, which more or less gives a broad and exhaustive backdrop to the dances in a subjective fashion. He made an acute and thought-provoking observation that the films led to the vulgarisation of dance. This angle about the film and dance relation was not oft-mentioned in the dance writings of that period.

While these were writings from an early period, much later, some works looked at the rationale behind the events related to Indian dances¹¹³. Though not a book, Matthew Harp Allen's article deserves a special mention here. It is a comprehensive piece that looks at not only Bharatanatyam but also at what happened to Indian dance during the so-called 'revival'¹¹⁴(Allen). He posits that there are many more 'r's'¹¹⁵ involved in what is a whole complex process glaringly glorifying or even simplifying actualities for common consumption. In addition, his article dissects the potential causes behind critical events on Indian dances from a socio-political perspective.

Besides, another significant article is by Joan Erdman¹¹⁶, in which she made several

¹¹³ There are writings- both books and articles in the in-between time frame. Some of them got referred to in the other sections of this dissertation. For more on books, see Appendices I and II.

¹¹⁴ Mathew Harp Allen is a musicologist from the USA.

¹¹⁵ Including re-vivification, re-population, re-construction, re-naming, re-situation and re-storation. These got elaborated in Allen's article, and it is interesting to note how many art forms in India have faced these stages in their evolution. (63-64)

¹¹⁶ Joan L. Erdman is an American scholar with a specialisation in South Asian and mainly Indian cultural studies.

interesting findings in an article on the history of oriental dance. It also focused on the advent of Uday Shankar and his role in developing Indian dance. She built her observations on several primary source materials that she could access. She noted that Uday Shankar's debut in India was received with much awe, but his later performances did not receive such enthusiasm. The reason was the exposure as they started digging into the traditional practitioners and realised Uday Shankar's was not authentic (295). John Erdman made another observation on the growing tribe of women in the Indian dance world. She commented that for women to survive and continue dancing, being professional performers was not as much accepted. To continue in the dance, they had the options of either academics or teaching. The status of dance appears to be at once metaphysical yet tabooed. It was appropriate to be taught and pursued, yet not befitting for women to perform. When studied chronologically and compared with contemporary occurrences, such insights bring forth the position of dance in society and growing interest and awareness towards dance.

Accordingly, the nonnatives' writings are considered as the best etic examples in writing or thinking about Indian dances. These writings mentioned performances or techniques as witnessed by the authors, and brought about the historical and contemporary reflections. The cause and effect were pursued by comprehensively appreciating the dance, culture, traditions and all other trappings attached, making them reliable material sources for additional exploration.

3.4 The natives

Being in an atmosphere where dance is part of a familiar culture plays a role in shaping the ideas. The subsequent set of writers considered are thus the natives of the land, with some of them educated abroad. While discussing the early writers on dance from

India, the middle-class, educated professionals emerged as key contributors in the previous chapters. Though they came from other professions, these writers had a genuine interest coupled with a meticulous observation and experience, which led to a frame of reference, reflected in their writings on dance. Then some individuals, influenced by the 'revival movement', got involved with one exclusive dance form and worked for its cause. These could again be non-dancers or those who particularly learnt dance during the revival period and wrote about dance forms they embraced¹¹⁷.

These writers are divided into three categories. First are the scholars who primarily worked on treatises. They focused on decoding precepts of the treatises, along with establishing a past to the arts. Then, the second are dancers themselves, who, owing to their training and practice in the chosen dance style, possessed the necessary writing equipment. The critics are third, who, with their knowledge or experience, gain authorisation to write. The purpose here is to examine these categories of native writers, their style and stance, supported by their primary occupation and connection with the dance field.

3.4.1 The scholar, the dancer, and the critic

In a book review section of the Sangeet Natak Akademi journal, a comment by a reviewer caught the attention of this researcher. It was pronounced that most dancers find it difficult to articulate and analyse what they are doing, while scholars who write on dance lack the feel of dancing while analysing (Malik 65). Though this cannot be a generalisation, some examples would aid in appreciating the outlook of the contributors. It is noticeable

¹¹⁷ Kalki. R. Krishnamurthy was a prolific writer, music and dance critic whose name features in the revival period of the mid-20th century. Similarly, there is E. Krishna Iyer, a lawyer, learnt dance, performed and wrote, to support the cause of Sadir. Likewise, Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao was instrumental in Kuchipudi's rise, as elaborated in the next chapter.

that the scholars of Sanskrit or even students of Sanskrit have done extensive work on treatises, whereas predominantly dancers wrote in a different vein. The treatises provide testimony for an age-old practice of art covering versions and variations of the country, which these scholars brought into the public domain.

Scholars who were non-dancers include the revered names of Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi and V. Raghavan. Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi (1866-1957), a Sanskrit scholar himself, wrote on treatises related to *saṅgīta*. He contributed immensely to the arts field through his critical edition of *Natyasastra* and commentary of *Abhinava Bharati* as early as 1926 and later the mammoth work, *Bharatakosa*. Being a polyglot and a manuscriptologist, he brought forth rare works in Sanskrit and Telugu and works by lesser-known authors. He had physically copied from hitherto unknown, unpublished palm-leaf manuscripts, thus bringing valuable literary material into public.

Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi's magnum opus *Bharatakosa* is a dictionary of the technical terms and explanations of the words found in treatises relevant to dance, music, rhetoric, and drama. Collected from a wide range of sources covering various periods, it is an encyclopedia for grasping the treatise terminology. With thousands of terms and added words in the appendix, *Bharatakosa* classifies as one of its kind, landmark work on Indian dance, drama and music.

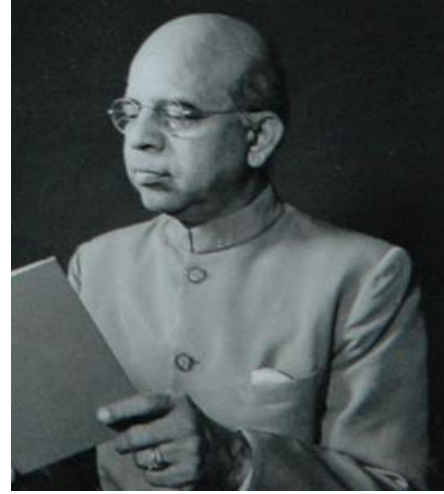
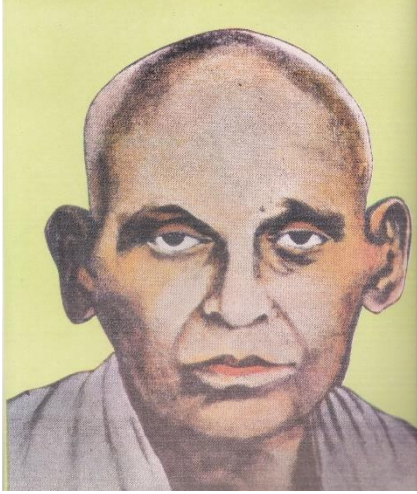


Fig. 3.5. (Left) Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manavalli_Rama_Krishna_Kavi.jpg mrkavi

Fig. 3.6. (Right) V. Raghavan: <https://www.drvraghavancentre.com/gallery/>

Venkatraman Raghavan (1908-1979) was another scholar of Sanskrit, with innumerable publications to his acclaim¹¹⁸. Few of his books that focused only on dance include the critical edition of *Nrittaratnavali*, a book on Indian dances in English and one more on Bharatanatyam in Tamil. He contributed to the Madras Music Academy Journal and was prominently associated with the revival of Bharatanatyam. He also wrote on the *Vīṭhi Bhāgavtam* of Andhra, which will be elucidated in the next chapter. His body of work and well-researched output has inspired next-generation scholars on Indian dance, including Kapila Vatsyayan, a scholar of merit herself. Referring to his efforts in including both *Natyasastra* and *devadāsi* versions into the history of Bharatanatyam, Avanthi Meduri remarked, "Raghavan did not just compose the first English language historiography for the dance in the 1930s, but he also provided a double-sided textual and anthropological

¹¹⁸ There is an intensive list of V.Raghavan's publications and other details on his contribution (Drvraghavancenter).

historiography for the representation" (Peterson and Meduri 133-164). She added that his education, outlook and Nationalist prospects helped him project Bharatanatyam as a global representative. This, seen in retrospection, has spread to other dance styles as well, albeit in spirit, making this a commonly followed phenomenon in the modern history of dance.

Within this categorisation of scholars, another sub-category is a cross-classification¹¹⁹ of dancers and writers. Though students of dance, they were not as actively involved in performance or teaching dance as in research, and eventually became scholars who wrote extensively on dance. In this sub-category, apart from the eminent Kapila Vatsyayan, another scholar that entitles mention is Mandakranta Bose¹²⁰. Mandakranta Bose had training in Kathakali and Manipuri and is a Sanskrit scholar herself. She pursued doctoral research from Oxford University in *The Evolution of Classical Indian Dance Literature: A Study of the Sanskritic Tradition*. Her work involved exploring manuscripts and collecting rare manuscripts of treatises from across the globe. She wrote synthesising text and practice, making it a valuable contribution to not divorce theory from practice. Her principal emphasis was the construction of dance through treatises. The tracing of similarities in movement vocabulary of Odissi and Kathak to the ones postulated in the seventeenth-century treatise, *Nartananirnaya*¹²¹ is an example of this (Bose, *Movement*).

¹¹⁹ The term cross-classification is used as the authors of this category have more than one qualification to write on dance- they were students of dance and had an academic research-oriented background.

¹²⁰ Mandakranta Bose is presently Professor Emerita, Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia. She continues to pursue her work on the treatises actively. For the works by Mandakranta Bose, refer to bibliographies in the Appendices.

Kapila Vatsyayan's work is analysed later in this chapter.

¹²¹ By Pandarika Vitthala

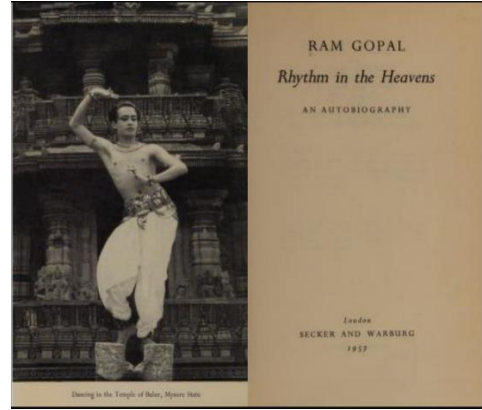


Fig. 3.7. (Left) Mandakranta Bose:

https://pwias.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/styles/370x208_2x/public/profile/mandakranta-bose.jpg?itok=hN9Dqaox&timestamp=1471625243

Fig. 3.8. (Right) Ram Gopal in a dance pose from his autobiography: Gopal, Ram. *Rhythm in the Heavens: An Autobiography*. Secker & Warburg, 1957.



Fig. 3.9. (Left) Padma Subrahmanyam in a dance pose: [Picture Gallery | Indian classical dancer, Dance of india, Indian classical dance \(pinterest.com\)](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/244444444444444444/)

Fig. 3.10. (Right) Leela Venkatraman:

<http://niyogibooksindia.com/images/authors/20188914312611.jpg>

Proceeding, the second category of writers are the dancers themselves. Beginning with Ragini Devi, the other renowned performer-writers include Ram Gopal, Padma Subrahmanyam, Leela Samson, Kanak Rele, Mrinalini Sarabhai, to name a few. They cut

across diverse styles of Indian dance. Commenting upon these writings by dancers, anthropologist Kalpana Ram opined that the self and body became important, leaving out the social history (Ram et al. 1). Though it is accurate in some instances, the dancer and the dance need not be demarcated as two distinct entities. Consequently, in their writings, the artistes tend to emphasise performative components of dance as they live those experiences. In addition, though not explicitly mentioned, there is a huge prospective in their writings, where the circumstances in which they learnt or performed direct towards the social history¹²². Thus, these recorded documents become essential aspects in revealing lived experiences of artistes. Based on these observations, select topics from what dancers published are taken up for deliberation in the following section¹²³.

Ram Gopal¹²⁴ is one of the foremost amongst the reputed performers to write on dance. He travelled and performed globally and subscribed to the Marxian idea of art as a social product (*Rhythm* 107). A striking comment he made in his book that artistes reckon themselves as special entities, whereas in reality, they have to merge with the society is indicative of this (*Rhythm* 108, 109). This remark of artistes being a 'special entity,' coming from a widely celebrated artist like Ram Gopal, reveals the 'conditioning' of artistes of that time. It, in fact, points at a gap that existed between performers and the community at large. Throughout his writings, Ram Gopal's social acuity and also his commitment to take art closer to the audiences are palpable.

¹²² For instance, the autobiography of Yamini Krishnamurthy displays the socio-political circumstances in which she danced, as mentioned in the fourth chapter.

¹²³ The dancers who wrote about generic history, technique and other accoutrements of all the Indian dance styles are not included in this segment. See Appendix-II, Annotated Bibliography.

¹²⁴ Ramgopal (1912-2003) is a trained dancer in Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri and Kathak. He performed in a distinctive style combining elements of all there and the western dances.

Another prominent exponent of dance who may be labelled as the first active performer and an academic is Padma Subrahmanyam¹²⁵. She pursued research on *Karaṇas in Indian Dance and Sculpture*, earning a doctorate in 1978. Her work focused on text-practice nexus with text reconstruction and translation of the text into a performance. Her work extended to identifying the shared associations between Indian and Southeast Asian cultures through *Natyasastra* and other literature. She has numerous publications to her credit in the form of books, articles and research papers, alongside practical demonstrations that establish her scholarship.

Padma Subrahmanyam's keynote address on the past, present and future of Indian dances delivered at the Natyakala conference, Madras, resonates with the contemporary problems faced by dance and dancers (*Indian Dance* 1-5). Right from the state of artistes, teaching centres, plagiarism in dance, the fiscal issues and many such were deliberated in that keynote address, with few added solutions to make the situation healthier¹²⁶. About the dance, potentially drawing from her core work on *Natyasastra*, Padma Subrahmanyam proposed that the *mārgi*- as postulated in the exalted treatise should be made compulsory in an anticipated National School of Dance¹²⁷ (*Indian Dance* 2). It denotes to some kind of structuring that she deemed crucial to be incorporated into the training system. With such illustrations, it is appropriate to note that the technique, pedagogy and monetary factors are a few of a practitioner's matters of concern. This is not to discard that the other categories

¹²⁵ Padma Subrahmanyam (1943-) had training in Bharatanatyam. Her methodical research on the *karaṇas* and *Natyasastra* led her to formulate a unique dance style called Bharatha nrityam.

¹²⁶ Likewise, another dancer-writer, a couple, U S Krishnarao (1912-2005) and Chandrabhaga Devi's (-1997) book, carries an explication about the condition of arts, where they discuss the qualification of teachers and financial aspects (Krishnarao and Chandrabhaga Devi 330). They were Bharatanatyam performers and teachers.

¹²⁷ There is no mention of this school elsewhere, and it seems to have not turned into a reality.

of writers did not write about the performative outlook. However, performers being direct participants in the field, are certainly more involved and aware of the issues faced by practising artistes.

Moving ahead, a different approach, yet from the artiste's point of view, are biographies or works on their performance or experiments. There are both biographies and autobiographies on various dancers from across the forms. The autobiographies by Ram Gopal and Yamini Krishnamurthy, for instance, fall under this segment. They reveal in great detail not only about the artiste's personal life, struggles, training, etc. but also throw adequate light on the dance/s they had training in, the receptivity of the audience, the changes in style and other such appropriate details from a first-person view (Gopal, *Rhythm*; Krishnamurthy and Renuka, *Passion*).

Coming to creative works of individuals, either written by self or others, mention-worthy is the book by Mrinalini Sarabhai¹²⁸ (*Creations*). In that, she documented her ventures and experiments as a choreographer. Such works are not often published, making them advantageous for prospective choreographers and dancers and dance historians. Such documentation, with the journey and experiences of the artistes, considerably aid in tracing the evolution of the dance form/s.

The next category of writers identified is the critics. It is beyond the scope of this work to include critics who reviewed, reported or wrote columns for the newspapers and magazines. Hence, only the critics who also penned books are under consideration. Sunil Kothari, Shanta Sharabjeet Singh, Leela Venkatraman are a few who fall under this

¹²⁸ Mrinalini Sarabhai (1918-2016) is a Bharatanatyam and Kathakali artist and founder of Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad set up in 1949.

category.

Sunil Kothari (1933-2020) was a practising Chartered Accountant who had training in Kathak before becoming a prolific writer and critic. His 1977 doctoral research¹²⁹ was on *The Dance-Drama Tradition of Kuchipudi, Bhagavata Mela Nataka and Kuravanji with Special Reference to Rasa Theory as Expounded in Bharata's Natyasastra*. With his grasp on Sanskrit, which he believed led him to dance, he wrote extensively and profoundly about multiple dance styles backed by thorough research (Kothari). Though he did not write about multiple dances under one cover, he published individual volumes on Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Chhau, and Sattriya. He designed all his books in such a way that they were a mix of scholarly and coffee-table, catering to both academia and casual readers.

Shanta Sharabjeet Singh (1936-2017) had a Master's degree in international relations and started by writing comments in a daily. Though she had not had any training in dance, she became a noted critic and writer on arts, with one published book on dance (Venkatraman, *Farewell*). Another critic-writer, Leela Venkatraman (1936-), had initial training in Kathak, and her entry into dance writing has been somewhat unplanned (Venkatraman). She started as an announcer for dance programs on All India Radio and later started writing for newspapers and continues to critique dance performances across various media. She has to her credit three books on Indian dances. Works of these critics certainly give an impression of their stance, with some appropriate and critical observations

¹²⁹ The foremost academic research on dance in India that got traced was by Bushkar Nath Srivastava, titled *A Study of Ancient Indian Dances*, submitted to Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya in 1965. It covered origin of Indian dances, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak, relations between folk dances, art and architecture (Srivastava, *Ancient*). This research scholar could also find the name of Shankarlal Mukherjee who submitted his Ph.D dissertation on *Historical Development of Indian Dance*, to Rabindra Bharati University in 1976.

from their long career of watching and reviewing performances¹³⁰.

These are chiefly the categories accounted for to place the writers, based on their primary profession and specific relation with dance. The next part of the chapter delves into the particulars of select authors and their select works. The authors elected for in-depth study are either pioneers or most-cited in the field or have multiple works to their credit or satisfy all of these criteria. The objective is to comprehend their viewpoints building on their biographical sketch and credentials. Comments by other scholars on the works of these select authors were also taken into consideration while analysing.

3.4.2 *Kapila Vatsyayan*

Unarguably, one of the towering personalities in Indian dance scholarship, Kapila Vatsyayan (1928-2020) was a scholar in Sanskrit and Indology, a linguist and an art historian¹³¹. Most significantly, she was a thinker, administrator, and inspiring force who charted a path for studies on Indian art. She served in numerous positions with the Government of India as a bureaucrat and was a Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha). She was the founding director of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. This establishment looks at both the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of arts, a thought that is noticeable in her work.

Kapila Vatsyayan had training in Oriental dance, Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri, Odissi, Kathakali and the Laban movement (Coomaraswamy, *Kapila*). This tutelage in multiple styles and at various junctures of her life supplements the profound grasp and exploration of the technical aspects in her works. Her training abroad added to her rationale

¹³⁰ As Leela Venkatraman's books fall under the post-2000 period are not included for analysis. Sunil Kothari's publications on Kuchipudi are elaborated in the next chapter of this dissertation.

¹³¹ She completed her doctoral research at the Benaras Hindu University.

and approach to the subject. As Sunil Kothari observed, she brought in a western methodology to dance in terms of the body's geometry and body as an instrument for dance (Kothari). This got reflected in her works on technique, about which she wrote methodically.

One of the significant contributions of Kapila Vatsyayan in this body-movement analysis is that she addressed the relation of a dancing body with space and gravity. She emphasised the grounded nature of Indian dances, as opposed to the western. Similarly, she postulated that Indian dance was built upon the possibilities of joints¹³², while western dance relies primarily on the musculature. By doing so, she essentially advocated a vocabulary to describe the dances grounded on cadences of movements. While dealing with technique in terms of geometry, she brought in a system of articulating the exploratory potential of movements, as postulated in treatises and as evolved in practice. This is evident in the illustration of Bharatanatyam's technique as straight lines and triangles, and Kathakali as squares and rectangles (Vatsyayan, *Indian*). This analysis of movement patterns, founded on text and iconography, gave visual imagery of how to read the dance technique. This ideation is attributable to her knowledge of Sanskrit treatises, sculptures and Laban movement analysis.

A striking component, beholding Kapila Vatsyayan's vast domain of work, was her take on the inter-disciplinary nature of Indian arts. Her published works aimed at establishing the history of dance through numerous sources, exploring the associations of dance with painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, etc., and also the inter-relationships between various dance forms within India and those of Asia.

¹³² Except for Kathakali, where muscles also play a key role. (Vatsyayan, *Indian* 37).

With such a broad knowledge basis, Kapila Vatsyayan has an overwhelming influence on art writers, dancers, and thinkers. Leela Venkatraman mentioned that Kapila Vatsyayan's was the only reference material she possessed when she ventured into dance writing (Venkatraman). A seldom few achieve the profundity and massive expanse of her work. Parul Shah remarked that Kapila Vatsyayan's language, grasp, depth and analysis on the subject were extensive, and it is a trying task for anyone to comprehend her writings (Shah). It implies that her writings are dense and layered, and that multiple readings are required to apprehend them.

Kapila Vatsyayan's objectivity got displayed in her ability to talk about her shortcomings. An instance was noted in an interview, where she questions her usage of the term classical¹³³ (Muthukumaraswamy and Venu 58,59). To get an insight into her method, multiple works of hers were studied by this research scholar. From her vast expanse of published works, for a detailed study, *Indian Classical Dance* (1974) and *Traditional Indian Theatre* (1980) are undertaken, for they fit into the scope of this dissertation.

Indian Classical Dance comprises the history, theory and technique of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Odissi, Manipuri and Kathak. In a chronological mode, the book portrayed the progression of dance with evidence and analysis based on architecture, music, painting, and the like. It endeavoured to historically arrive at how different styles linked to past, yet contemporary (7). She stated that "*all schools subscribed to the basic principles of the Natyasastra tradition*", where the fundamentals like *nāṭya*, *nṛtta*, *tāṇḍava* and *lāsya* get followed. She further explained how divergences at the regional level led to the development of "*distinctive regional styles*", few of which later became the classical

¹³³ This was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

styles (6). These seemingly paradoxical accounts define the complexity of Indian dances, their need to legitimise having a uniform authority through treatises, nonetheless, independent in their disposition.

This is evident in dealing with individual styles, where the writer makes certain pointers. In the context of Bharatanatyam or Odissi, while discoursing technique, there was a conscious effort to link the vocabulary of those styles to *Natyasastra* or some other text. Gathering from these and other illustrations from the book, there seems to be a continuous, conscious attempt to indicate a source for the form, technique, history, and other facets. The proof was presented from literature to sculpture, technique to treatises, making the work exhaustive and authoritative. The comparative analysis between dance schools reinforced the fact that she was a student of multiple styles. Alongside, the book examined anthropological and sociological angles for the emergence of dance, like in the narrative on Manipuri.

In the other book *Traditional Indian Theatre*, Kapila Vatsyayan indicated commonalities and common elements between various performing art forms in India and interrelationships between them rather than a stringent division into folk, classical and others. Forms like Kutiyattam, Chhau, Ramlila, Bhavai, and Tamasa were deliberated based on literary, regional, caste, and multi-layered indications. Talking about the book *Traditional Indian Theatre*, Kapila Vatsyayan commented that her work acted as a bridge between past and present, referring to drama and dance, respectively (*Critical*). She called the period between the 10th and the 19th century a "*dark period*", with meagre information available on Indian history, adding that another of her massive work *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and Arts* dwells on the performing arts until the 11th century

(*Traditional ix*). The dark period was called so not because of the absence or development of arts but due to lack of appropriate documentation or availability of the same. With numerous regional literature to be accounted for across the multiple art streams, she placed the Sanskrit language as a binding factor at the pan-Indian level. The treatises on arts, mostly in Sanskrit, provide testimony for this during the said time frame. This gives an impression that she had the vision to present the theatrical system in its entirety and depict a continuance through her stream of thoughts/writings over the years.

Looking at the key pointers from *Traditional Indian Theatre*¹³⁴, an overarching idea established is that theatre is all-encompassing. Akin to her *Indian Classical Dance*, in this book, there is a constant seeking of connection with *Natyasastra*. Her introduction to the book itself is treasured. It gives a new dimensionality in dividing India, with its various characteristics like geography, lifestyle and most significantly, identifying the shared traits. The crucial component is where she described the unifying elements of multiple traditions and the relationship between numerous provinces of the country, all carrying a common binding thread (9). Her agenda was to identify the "...universality of cultural traditions of Asia, particularly of the performing arts of Asia, with special reference to India" (2). This forms a vast canvas considering the abundance of both the arts and the geographical expanse. While the Indian part got covered in this book, the broader links with Asia were explored in her later works (*Asian*).

There are a few shared elements perceived from the works of Kapila Vatsyayan. They were either repeatedly said, explicitly emphasised or sometimes gathered from the

¹³⁴ She classified the theatrical forms owing to certain traits in *Traditional Indian Theatre*, of which few concerning Kuchipudi will be elucidated in the next chapter of this dissertation.

sub-text. First is the interconnectedness between various art forms. Ananya Chatterjea expressed that Kapila Vatsyayan shunned the separations between dance, music and drama (*Dance* 121). She also tried to dwindle the rigid geographical boundaries and establish arts as part of shared consciousness, if not culture. There is an emphasis on the shared patterns. She also disregarded the hierarchies of classical and folk or textual and oral, considering them all under the same league, albeit with variations. She stressed the integrated study of forms rather than segregating them as fragments. This all-inclusive approach portrays the complementary nature of arts stemming from a shared culture and the body as a tool to showcase diverse presentation techniques.

To the minutest level, she could point out the frequent technical errors committed by dancers in Bharatanatyam, Manipuri, Odissi and Kathak prove her profound knowledge and calibre (*Common* 24-60). Her underlying concept was to write about the principles that guide various forms. Kapila Vatsyayan also stressed of dilution in the quality of the technique in dances. This particular comment on quality is seen frequently, beginning from initial writings to present times by various writers¹³⁵.

The idea of quality is somewhat subjective. Nevertheless, it is commonly presumable that what was transferred unchanged through generations is accepted as authentic. In retrospect, the new ramifications need to grow, perhaps old, to gain acceptance from a broader assembly. It is well-known that technique in Indian dances has transformed over ages. For instance, Bharatanatyam's central turning point was with its

¹³⁵ Venkatachalam, Mohan Khokar, Kapila Vatsyayan are but a few authors to write about this phenomenon. While there are numerous reasons for a form to transform, some of those were mentioned above. In the present day, for example, the advent of social media be considered a chief impetus for changing patterns in the technique and presentation of dances.

period of a shift from Sadir and furthered by the establishment of Kalakshetra¹³⁶ (Allen; Peterson and Meduri). For Kuchipudi¹³⁷, it was the turn of a drama into solo and inclusion of women, and for Odissi, it was the streamlining by Jayantika¹³⁸ and so on (Sikand). The forms were possibly undergoing a continuous flux, with significant deviations at some points of time. The rationale comprises an individual or a group's efforts or to gain contemporary acceptance from its viewers. That does not mean that the changes were/are fashionable or occurred arbitrarily. There is a social, political, economic context to the happenings (Allen). What is crucial is the changes spoken about and a general acceptance level of those in the dancing communities, about which authors like Kapila Vatsyayan, Mohan Khokar (see later sections of this chapter) and others have written.

Another key postulation in multiple books of Kapila Vatsyayan is linkages to the ancient treatise, *Natyasastra*. Arguably, the treatise being so exhaustive invariably finds similarities to the practicable movement vocabularies. Alternatively, it gets hypothesised that due to cultural similarities in the sub-continent, commonality in the movement patterns exists at some level. Nonetheless, this repeated adherence to treatises, claiming a linear history for dances and giving in to the primordialism of Sanskrit, was the very argument why later day scholar Dवेश Soneji¹³⁹ believed that her work suited the nationalistic line, and there was no addressing of social history (Soneji). Despite certain remarks, it is mainly acceptable that her approach was systematic, and she is a force to reckon with her massive

¹³⁶ Kalakshetra foundation was founded in Chennai in 1936 by Rukmini Devi Arundale to preserve traditional Indian arts and crafts and is renowned for Bharatanatyam.

¹³⁷ See the next chapter for more about Kuchipudi.

¹³⁸ Jayantika is a name for the group of individuals responsible for formulating the present Odissi dance and working for its classical status in the 1950s.

¹³⁹ Dवेश Soneji is a social historian and is an Associate Professor in the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

gamut of writings on Indian dance.



Fig. 3.11. Kapila Vatsyayan:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/05/Kapilavatsyayan_%28cropped%29.jpg

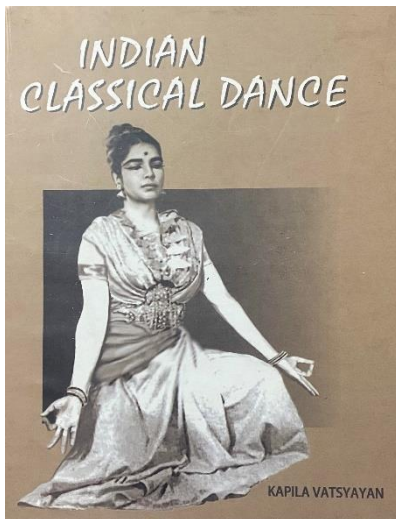


Fig. 3.12. (Left) Cover of Kapila Vatsyayan's *Indian Classical Dance*: Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Indian Classical Dance*. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1974.

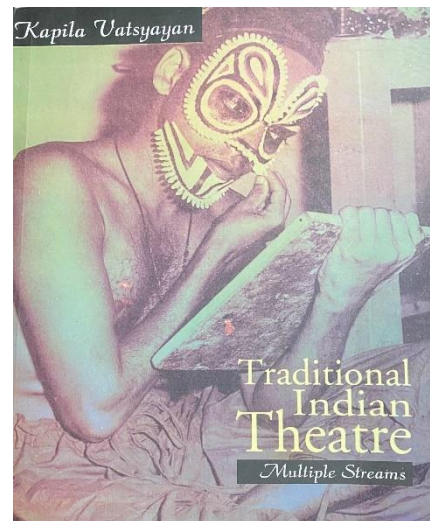


Fig. 3.13. (Right) Cover of Kapila Vatsyayan's *Traditional Indian Theatre*: Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Traditional Indian Theatre*. National Book Trust, 1980.

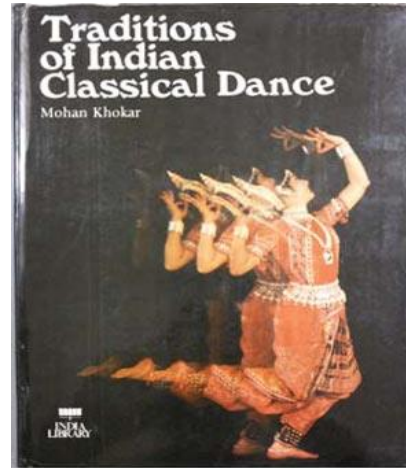


Fig. 3.14. (Left) Mohan Khokar:

https://www.sruti.com/index.php?route=archives/artist_details&artId=223

Fig. 3.15. (Right) Cover of Mohan Khokar's *Traditions of Classical Indian Dance*:

https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=30752552019&searchurl=kn%3Dmohan%2Bkhokar%26sortby%3D17&cm_sp=snippet-_srp1-_image18#&gid=1&pid=1

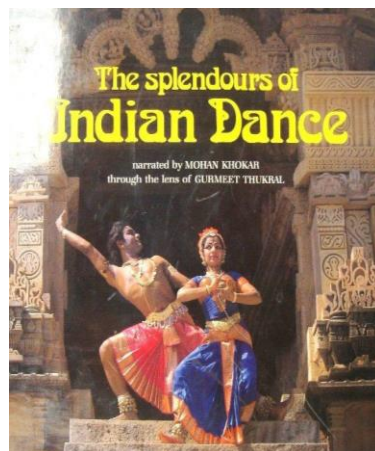


Fig. 3.16. Cover of Mohan Khokar's *The Splendours of Indian Dance*:

https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=30552494927&searchurl=kn%3Dmohan%2Bkhokar%26sortby%3D17&cm_sp=snippet-_srp1-_image11#&gid=1&pid=1



Fig. 3.17. Photographs of the classical dances elaborated in the book *The Splendours of Indian Dance* by Mohan Khokar: Khokar, Mohan and Gurmeet Thukral. *Splendours of Indian Dance*. Himalayan Books, 1985, pp. 22, 23.

3.4.3 Mohan Khokar

Mohan Khokar (1924-1999) is a well-known writer, critic, historian and above all, a collector of massive material on dance¹⁴⁰. He had initial training in Kathak, followed by Uday Shankar's dance and Bharatanatyam. He served as Head, Dept. of Dance, University of Baroda, followed by the role of Special Officer for dance with the Government of India, and later with the Sangeet Natak Akademi. As mentioned by Kapila Vatsyayan, his work is noteworthy in that he tried to work on the socio-cultural milieu of the forms (Vatsyayan et al., *Dance Scholarship* 11). He is lauded as one of the prolific writers to write vastly and critique the Indian dances. He penned five books related to dance and numerous articles in journals and magazines of repute.

For the analysis here, *Traditions of Indian Classical Dance* (1979) and *Splendours of Indian Dance* (1985) are considered to arrive at the ensuing derivations. From his own words, as mentioned in the prologue, Mohan Khokar started writing on dance as there was hardly any material for commoners to appreciate dance (*Traditions*). Kapila Vatsyayan also

¹⁴⁰ He collected books, personal letters, audio recordings and many more related to dance ("The Mohan")

commented while reviewing the *Dance Dialects of India* by Ragini Devi that there is "meagre literature on Indian dance" (Book 65). This reveals that there were even less for the masses amongst the smaller volume of dance works, as Mohan Khokar specifies. This fact, writing for the general audience was why his writing style, though significant in content, has a rather glossy texture. As his target group of readers were the uninitiated into dance, he appears to be trying to impress upon intricacies of dance without overwhelming them.

Coming to the content of both the books, there are certain common vital indicators. First of all, it appears as if he tried to take the reader through a process of understanding and then cherish dance. The discourse progressed from mythology to the elements of dance in general and then to respective schools of dance. Both these works start with the divine/*Natyasastric* story about the origin of dance and how the deities of the Hindu pantheon like Siva, Krishna, etc., are related to dance. He posited the possibility of a pan-Indian dance style in the past, with slight differences in costume and presentation that had later, when the variances amplified, resulted in the development of full-scale regional styles that are seen now (*Traditions* 59). To substantiate his argument of a single dance style, he cited the example of treatises, not mentioning individual dance schools.

Padma Subrahmanyam concurred with this idea of a pan-Indian dance that followed *Natyasastra* (*Indian Dance* 1-6). It was called *mārgi* and existed alongside regional forms, the *deśi*. Rukmini Devi Arundale¹⁴¹ also supported the notion of a single dance idiom that later developed into local variations (*Indian Dance* 6). Nataraj Ramakrishna¹⁴² gave a

¹⁴¹ Rukmini Devi Arundale is a Bharatanatyam exponent and founder of Kalakshetra.

¹⁴² Nataraj Ramakrishna is an exponent of Telugu dances. More on him is dealt in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

different explanation to a prevailing pan-India common dance style, relating it to language (*Andhrula Natyakala* 9). He expressed that as long as Sanskrit was *rājabhāṣa* (an official royal language), the same style of dance developed and with the growth of regional languages, regional dances grew. There is no supporting evidence as Sanskrit was never a pan-Indian official or even the common spoken language (Ramaswamy). Daves Soneji asserted that Sanskrit and regional languages coexisted, and the latter are not derivatives (Soneji). Though this negates the position of language as a cause for the development of local styles, the core idea here is the conceivable existence of a standard dance.

Shifting back to Mohan Khokar's *Traditions of Indian Dance*, it gives a wide-ranging overview of Indian classical dances. It is mentioned in the book itself that it was meant for a lay audience- the subject matter is in simple words yet comprehensive. After the introduction, specifics of various kings and benefaction extended, technical facets like *abhinaya*, a thorough account of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Chhau, Yakshagana, Sattriya and Free dance were given. The detailed outline he gives on the gods and goddesses and their connection with dance makes it effortlessly intelligible even for unaccustomed to the Indian culture.

Mohan Khokar's historical references of dance are voluminous. He covered literature from native records to those by foreign travellers. He is one of the few to write in detail and give a clear insight into how dance and dancer got treated in history, the journey of dance, its ebbs and rises. He proposed a seldom found indicator that Indians offered dancing girls to westerners as entertainment and that the locals were responsible for the exploitation of female dancers¹⁴³.

¹⁴³ The topic of female dancers is deliberated in other parts of this dissertation.

He proposed another valuable insight that treatises only act as guides and are not the ultimate authorities in dictating practical work. This is a departure from the usual norm, considering that most scholars pursue an inseparable link with treatises. Also, by this works' time, there was a solid drive to associate all dances to treatises or modify dances centring on the precepts from treatises. Mohan Khokar, through his observation, might mean that the regional forms have a flavour and grammar of their own, and a forceful intrusion of treatises is not warranted.

In the third edition of *Traditions of Indian Dance* in 1985, Mohan Khokar recorded an overwhelming response for his book. He commented that there was a surge in readership and that the readers extrinsic to dance showed an increased interest in understanding dance. This gives us two insights into the readership. One being the comparatively growing volume of readers for dance books and next, general inflation in dance awareness. This is a rarely found indication, suggesting the readership and response for a published book on dance.

Mohan Khokar's other publication, *Splendours of Indian Dance* was made into a coffee-table work on purpose¹⁴⁴, with a profusion of images and nature of vocabulary. This, essentially is a compilation of photographs around which the narrative got woven. At large, the book covers the relation between Indian dance and Gods, elementary technical terms like *abhinaya*, *rasa* and audience type, and a section each on Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam and folk dances. There is a conscious effort not to include detailed technical details as mentioned by the author himself as to "*not to overburden the readers*" (9). He picked up one crucial element related to that style for

¹⁴⁴ As per the 'focus', which is like a preface for the book (*Splendours*).

each dance typology and devised anecdotally, drawing in the reader's interest.

The book, though not pedantic, has some worthy indicators. Of those, the portion on spectators is significant, for it suggests to the viewers what core components are expectable while watching a performance. A point of attention is the term 'principal forms' while referring to what was commonly called the Indian classical dances. Principal forms' could mean the popular forms that were well-received or recognised¹⁴⁵. An interesting argument arises in this book when comparing various dance forms. While writing on Kuchipudi¹⁴⁶ and Mohiniattam, he commented that the changes that came about in the presentation of the forms diminished their beauty. In contrast, while talking of Bharatanatyam, he remarked that no art could remain static, and new additions made it more appealing. This kind of different viewpoints projected in the same context of change in different styles sounds problematic. He may mean that keeping core elements intact, there are modifications to enhance the form. It could also be that as a student of Kalakshetra, he found the changes in Bharatanatyam to be pleasing as against other forms. Although the exact import of his opinion is contentious, it suggests a subjective perception, and notably, a novice reader might assess the forms as guided by such depictions.

Both of Mohan Khokar's books are essentially descriptive and inclusive of his observations from the performances he watched. They serve as a good passage to comprehend, appreciate, and for a serious reader to dig deeper into the realms of Indian dance. However, he does not write about the practitioners or teachers of dance. Also, there are no references (as in Bibliography, like some other books of similar style carry), and it

¹⁴⁵ For more on the term 'classical', see the second chapter of this thesis.

¹⁴⁶, some of his views on Kuchipudi are elaborated in the fourth chapter.

can be a void in terms of marking the authority of the work, for there is no concrete evidence from where the information was gathered.

3.4.4 Projesh Banerjee¹⁴⁷

The next author whose works are taken up for analysis is Projesh Banerjee. He has the distinction of being one of the earliest writers on Indian dance, from as early as 1942 and continued for more than four decades. He authored about ten books on dance. He ventured into uncharted territories hitherto in the realm of Indian dance like the ones on erotica in Indian dance and on the *apsaras*¹⁴⁸. From his books, it gets gathered that he was a lawyer by education, and deeply involved with Indian dances¹⁴⁹. He proclaimed in the prefaces of his publications that he assumed the responsibility to educate the masses about the dances and unearth all the information he could about the tradition of dances in India.

Though there is a repetition of content in parts of his various works over the years, two wide-ranging books that suit this dissertation's purpose are studied. They are *Illustrated Basic Concepts of Indian Dance* (1984) and *Art of Indian Dancing* (1985). In the first book, he began with a prologue that the basic principles of dance, though clear, were either oblivious or misconstrued by its viewers. So, he proposed to provide the scholars, connoisseurs, artistes and art-lovers with an appropriate image. This reveals his target audience, covering all the categories.

In the *Illustrated Basic Concepts of Indian Dance*, the *devadāsi* dances, Kathaka (Kathak) and the dances of Rabindranath Tagore and Uday Shankar were elaborated, while

¹⁴⁷ The spelling Banerji was used in the author's earlier works, and as Banerjee in later works. Hence, Banerjee is used throughout this work for consistency.

¹⁴⁸ See Appendices I and II.

¹⁴⁹ He was described as a balletomane of the country on the dust jacket of *Indian Ballet Dancing*.

the likes of Odissi, Manipuri, Bharatanatyam and Kathakali got briefed. In small but tightly-knit chapters, Projesh Banerjee furnished many details and his impressions on dance, relating it with sociology, religion and others. He opined that dance, which is considered the highest form of beauty, manifested itself in the form of deities in the Hindu religion. He emphasised the cultural values and how dance, being "*sacred*" yet "*dynamic*", has to keep in stride with the passing times. This talks about the relevance of dance in contemporary times, a question posed by many artistes and viewers.

Another attractive proposition in this book is corresponding the seven music notes to seven joints of the body line both in horizontal and vertical directions (*Illustrated 20*). This relation is seldom found and could mean seeking a relationship to how integral arts are to the human body. He also expounded the patronage offered by kings from the earliest times to the later periods covering all parts of the country. In a similar fashion, he delineated the *devadāsi* tradition in various parts of the country. These serve to establish the role and position of dance in societies throughout India, which was one of his objectives in writing about Indian dances. Remarkably, while writing about classical dance forms, he communicated about what he thinks are pleasant and not so enjoyable qualities for each dance style! Though categorically subjective, it shows his conviction and assertive approach. This characteristic also got reflected when he questions the division of classical dances and the awards bestowed by Sangeet Natak Akademi. He concludes that Sangeet Natak Akademi 's propositions can be respected but need not be considered as a final word.

Relevant parts from his other books were also made into chapters in this book of Projesh Banerjee. They include writings on the Indian idea of ballet, folk dances and the *apsaras*. In addition, some topics like lighting, music for dance, qualities of a dancer were

dealt with in this, and the second book under dialogue- *Art of Indian Dancing*. The preface for *Art of Indian Dancing* gives information regarding the status of dance in Indian society. Projesh Banerjee recorded that his first publication of 1942, *Dance of India* was to explain to the public the wealth of dance, which was unfortunately looked down on at that time. He deplored, adding that rich and middle-class girls were reluctant to appear on stage as dancers because of the stigma attached to dance. After almost forty years, in this 1985 publication, he commented that dance became like a marriage permit for girls and was yet not a subject in schools or colleges¹⁵⁰. Thus, what Projesh Banerjee tried through his contribution was to create awareness amongst the public about this art of dance and raise certain questions. His writings also indicated that dance has come a long way from being a stigma to an asset.

Divided into three parts, *Art of Indian Dancing* covers history, various dance schools, and presentational aspects, respectively. The first part is about dance history, Krishna's dance, classifications of *rasa*, *bhāva*, gestures and postures. There is a definitive structure in how the subject got approached, from both theoretical and practical facets. The book proceeds to individual forms, beginning with meaning and features of dance, through references from literary sources and explaining technical terms with illustrations. The second part covers Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Odissi, Manipuri, Kathak, Yakshagana of Karnataka, Tagore school, Uday Shankar, folk dances and Kuchipudi, referred to as the temple dance of Andhra. While some styles got elaborated, others were just briefed. The emphasis, although, is on establishing the ancient dancing tradition of India. For example,

¹⁵⁰ By then, dance got institutionalised. Universities like that in Baroda had a Department of Dance, established in 1950, offering dance as a course. About the schools, presently, few schools have it in syllabus as an elective.

in the section on Odissi, the form is traced to the one practised during Mahabharata. This could also serve the need to establish a long history of Odissi, which was at that time steeped in uncertainty. The third portion of the book touches on some unmapped topics like the importance of the appearance of a dancer, stagecraft, role and status of Impresario in the Indian dance scenario. These were some features relatively new in the performance structure at that time.

In both books undertaken for study here (as in the other books by the same author), the shared aims are authenticating Indian dances and looking at all the associated facets required for a dance performance. The historical details and technical characteristics from various sources were corroborated with the author's experiences. In fact, his observations played a leading role in validating any argument. He cited Kathak as an example in most cases and wrote elaborately about the dance styles.

Whilst Projesh Banerjee comes across as an ardent supporter of the ancient arts; he equally respected the creative forms devised by Rabindranath Tagore and Uday Shankar. He argued for their status in the then dance field and supported them as contemporary representatives for Indian dance. In addition, the portions on music especially and other technicalities of stage reveal his keen perception and the need for different facilities to come together for proper production. His vision for writing comes across clearly: It is to educate typical audiences, create awareness amongst dancers and present a comprehensive picture of dance from numerous angles and sources to all the readers.

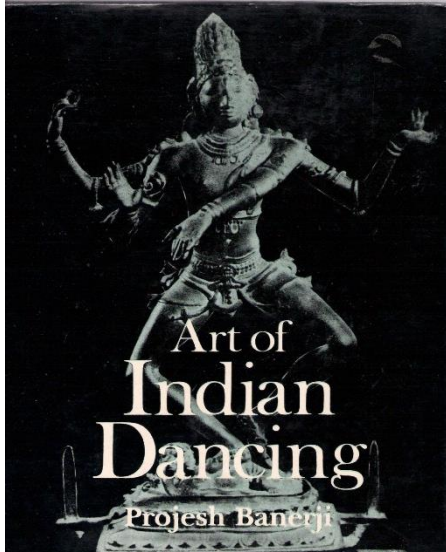


Fig. 3.18. (Left) Cover of Projesh Banerjee's *Art of Indian Dancing*:

https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=4435396787&searchurl=an%3Dprojesh%2Bbanerji%26sortby%3D17&cm_sp=snippet--srp1--title12#&gid=1&pid=1

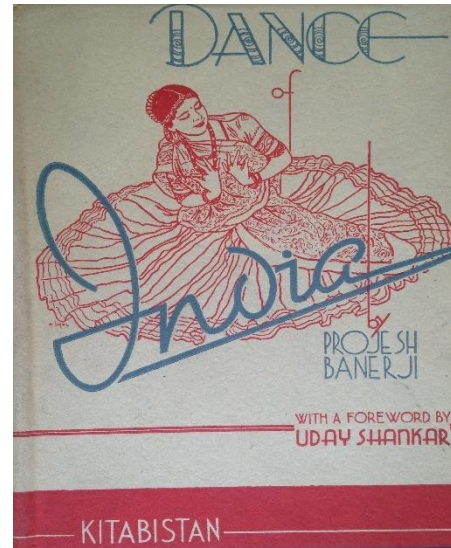


Fig. 3.19. (Right) Cover of Projesh Banerjee's *Dance of India*:

https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=30723445642&searchurl=an%3Dprojesh%2Bbanerji%26sortby%3D17&cm_sp=snippet--srp1--title18#&gid=1&pid=1

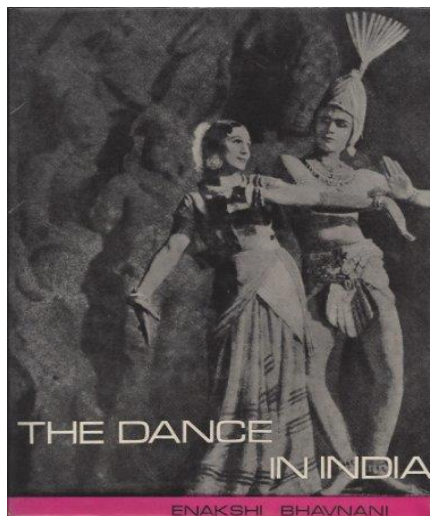


Fig. 3.20. Cover of Enakshi Bhavnani's *The Dance in India*:

https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=30051481530&cm_sp=SEARCH

[REC- -WIDGET-L- -BDP-](#)

<H&searchurl=kn%3Denakshi%2Bbhavnani%26sortby%3D17#&gid=1&pid=1>

Further, a unique book selected for in-depth study is *The Dance of India* (1965) by Enakshi Bhavnani. The author was a student of dance, performer and writer¹⁵¹. Though it is the only work by the author, this book is exclusively chosen because apart from what Enakshi Bhavnani writes, viewpoints of the practitioners from each style of dance are included in the long prefaces, making it an etic and emic combination. This is also one of the first books by a native dancer-writer to cover numerous forms of dance under a single cover.

The initial chapters delineate the relation between Gods and the origin of dance and establish the intimate relationship of Indian arts with nature. Then the content proceeds into the divine prospect of Indian dance, detailing the various dances performed by Gods like Siva (Tandava) and Krishna (Raas-leela), reinforcing them with sculptural evidence. A multidisciplinary projection is notable in a systematic fashion, conceivably for the first time, as it deals with imageries as in the sculptures, frescos and paintings and their connection to dance. It was followed by explaining the basic components of dance, including hand, head and facial movements. Then each dance style was elaborated over the following few chapters with their background, technique, costumes, musical, rhythmical ingredients, and the experts of the form. The forms covered are Bharatanatyam, Kuravanji, Kathak, Kathakali, Kummi, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Dances of Manipur, Chhau, Mohiniattam, Krishna Attam, Bhagavata Mela dance-dramas and Yakshagana alongside folk and tribal dances, divided geographically.

The last section of the book handles the revival of dance. In this, referring to various rulers and periods, a detailed history of the stature of dance in India got expounded. Talking

¹⁵¹ As gathered from the references in the book itself.

about the fall and revival, Enakshi stated that the styles that got safeguarded in villages thrived, whereas those at urban centres faced a setback. This, perhaps, was true in some cases as the pre-independence period's political turmoil had impacted certain areas lesser than the other. Likewise, the rural atmosphere and community spaces would have aided in continuing arts with lesser instabilities. She proceeded to cite examples of the revivalists like Rabindranath Tagore for Manipuri, Madame Menaka for Kathak, and the crucial personalities responsible for the sustenance and acclaim of various forms. Talking about the developments and future of arts, she suggested increasing the number of theatre spaces and endowments.

The book is easy to read and expansive. A lay reader can almost start doing something that is similar to any of the styles reading the descriptions and looking at the images! For example, a vivid description of how to perform *karaṇas* in one segment and explain how to use the head, eye, and other gestures to portray an emotion, all guided by relevant images and line drawings. There is reasoning provided for each of the elements, explaining what they imply and their intrinsic association with dance in general or in the context of a definite form. Whilst some parts appear well-researched, like on the general technique, the details about a few like Kuchipudi¹⁵² are not so. The subtitle of the book "The Origin and History, Foundations, the Art and Science of the Dance in India- Classical, Folk and Tribal" is interesting for signalling at the dance as a science, containing a systematic knowledge alongside being an art, the usual and obvious description given to the dances. In a crux, Enakshi Bhavnani's *The Dance of India* covers the entire gamut from history, through the various stratum, progressing to contemporary issues.

¹⁵² Refer to the fourth chapter of this dissertation for more on Enakshi Bhavnani's views on Kuchipudi.

3.5 Observations

This chapter essentially tried to look into the writer's notion of dance. A marked difference in the writing style apparently stems from the elementary knowledge of dance and the various cultural facets associated with it. Concerning the nonnative writers, it ranged from being a cultural shock to sometimes a deep discernment of the fabric of Indian society. For someone unacquainted with Indian culture, the concept of divinity was the first distinguishing factor.

The comment by Ragini Devi that "*Indian dancing was evolved and developed as an expression of the divine spirit in man.*", resonates with popular conception on dance in the subcontinent (*Kathakali* 57). The origin and evolution of dance are closely related to the supernatural and certainly far from socio-anthropological reasoning. This is a recurring phenomenon in many books and the generally accepted history of dance, which Rukmini Devi Arundale called the "*traditional history*" (*Indian Dance* 5). Oopalee Operajita¹⁵³ wrote on how worship or pseudo-orthodoxy overcasts dance as against its spiritualist nature, asserting that dance being a human urge "*it marks the union of visible appearance and invisible significance*" (16,17). This is seen in the representational dances in most classical dance styles, with the stories from epics and mythology rather than social motifs.

While writing about the transcendental nature of Indian dance, a categoric legendary status was ascribed by overseas writers like La Meri, as expressed in the previous sections of this chapter. Additionally, their views appear more objective as the foreigners writing on dance usually have no trappings or emotional attachments with the subject,

¹⁵³ Oopalee Operajita is a Bharatanatyam and Odissi artiste. She is an adviser on international relations, communications, and public policy to leaders worldwide.

mostly like natives do. Furthermore, while talking about native writers, an imperative reflection is that the narrative rests on power dynamics¹⁵⁴ within the episteme of dance literature. Power here is a hegemonic structure in the construction of dance discourses. Personalities like Kapila Vatsyayan, who come from a position of privilege, exercised influence and determined the paradigm of dance scholarship.

Logically, the style of writing sees a marked difference depending on the writer's qualification. Though not to generalise, an observation is that the scholars produced an analytical output, while performers leaned towards the practical issues rather than historical or sociological matters. For instance, the course chartered by Ragini Devi in *Dances of India* is markedly different from the one, say, Kapila Vatsyayan in *Indian Classical Dance*. Ragini Devi, being a performer, focused on her own experiences as a student/dancer and the accounts gathered from her readings and not necessarily as a meticulous study. Kapila Vatsyayan's, which is more from an academic standpoint, is investigative. There are exceptions like Padma Subrahmanyam, who is equally a scholar and a performer, making her work comprehensive, covering both the academic and practical features of dance. This is not to compare the quality of work but to apprehend the writer's stance while expressing through words, founded on their multi-dimensional association with dance.

This chapter discussed books that covered Indian classical dances in general. The next chapter is specifically on Kuchipudi, including the Kuchipudi chapters or ideas from these books and others, in Telugu and English. The metanarrative on that school, comprising versions of both regional and national level writers, are brought together in the ensuing chapter.

¹⁵⁴ As per Colonial Discourse Analysis and Genealogy explained in the first chapter.

Chapter 4

Representation and Construction of Kuchipudi as a Dance Form

This chapter analyses Kuchipudi as represented in the published books and articles in English and Telugu languages, one of the foci of this research work. Kuchipudi is an art form practised by Telugu speaking people of Southern India. Though this work considers the 20th-century publications with regards to writings on Indian classical dances in general, in the context of Kuchipudi, the unpublished theses and the those of diaspora that came up at a later date are also included at relevant junctures to make it comprehensive. In addition to that, a lot of publications emerged in Telugu, the native language where the form flourished. It is appropriate to look into these to sense when Kuchipudi appeared in print and how it got described. Additional to the books and articles, opinions from the personal interviews of hereditary artistes are included wherever necessary to get a coherent view. Beginning with Kuchipudi's position and depiction in published works, the chapter proceeds to its historicity, various genres, hagiography, the village of Kuchipudi and its hereditary practitioners. Further, the struggle for classical status, the evolution of new genres, repertoire, technique, comparisons with other styles, performance space and associated equipment, music, treatises, experts, concerns and errors published about Kuchipudi, the crucial writers on the form get delineated, culminating with a brief on the diasporic and 21st-century scholarship.

4.1 Kuchipudi in publications

4.1.1 Kuchipudi in English works

Taking forward from the discussions in the previous chapters, it was much later to the other forms that Kuchipudi found itself mentioned in print. While looking at the publications on dance, until 1930-40s, only Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri and Kathak were considered leading dance forms. Hence, dance writings did not focus much on Kuchipudi. It was only after the 1940s that mention of Kuchipudi got noticed. At the national level, between the years 1940 and 1980, there were twenty-four published books in English that were traceable by this research scholar, which covered four or more styles of Indian dances. Out of those, about five mentioned Kuchipudi as a major or classical tradition. Eight others placed it under various categories like dance-drama, Bhagavata Mela Nataka of Andhra, Bharatanatyam, folk and traditional theatre¹⁵⁵.

"The absence of vachika in some forms results in their classicity being marginal such as the Chhau forms and the use of the vachika by the actor rather than the musician as in Kuchipudi or Yakṣagāna makes them more drama than dance. In recent years in Kuchipudi alone a clearly identifiable repertoire of solo/duet dance has emerged. In spite of this, the individual numbers have not yet reached a stage of art dance where a full-fledged body of technique and kinetics can be discussed without reference to the basic narrative and dramatic theme." and that "...the scope of ekaharya variety of abhinaya by the dancer is limited". - Kapila Vatsyayan (*Indian Classical Dance* vii)

Kapila Vatsyayan voiced this and did not consider Kuchipudi a dance as late as 1974, because the solo system did not develop sufficiently well. Yet, in her other book,

¹⁵⁵ For details, refer to the Appendix-II, Annotated Bibliography.

Kuchipudi got placed under theatrical tradition (*Traditional*). It is startling to note this labelling, as, by 1959, Kuchipudi got recognised by Sangeet Natak Akademi, and by 1974, a popular dance form. Citing Kapila Vatsyayan here is purely for illustrating the opinion of a highly renowned and quoted writer, and the position of Kuchipudi beyond the precincts of Telugu regions¹⁵⁶. A pretext for this was that during the 1950-60s, when artistes like Indrani Rehman or Yamini Krishnamurthy performed Kuchipudi at the national capital, it was majorly in conjunction with other forms. As those artistes were proficient in more than one dance form, they performed Kuchipudi alongside Bharatanatyam and Odissi. This might have resulted the impression that the solo system was not full-fledged. Nevertheless, even in a 1987 publication by another renowned artiste Leela Samson, *Rhythm in Joy* had nothing about Kuchipudi while writing about the dominant dance forms. This does not justify the presence of a form, which by then was widespread. Why did it take so long for the form to create a niche or a place for itself in the realm of Indian dances?

Carrying this thought forward, some potential reasons inform about the nominal exposure of Kuchipudi at the national stage. Kuchipudi school of art, to begin with, was one amongst the many local forms practised in Andhra until at least the 1950s when it became significant and archetypal of Telugus. As a result, like all those numerous performance systems, meagre literature is available on Kuchipudi. Another course of thought contemplated by Rajyalakshmi Seth was that because the writings on Kuchipudi initially (till the 1950s) were in Telugu, the non-Telugus had little knowledge about it (*Annotated* 209). This could stem from the hereditary practitioners' belief that Kuchipudi

¹⁵⁶ More about Kapila Vatsyayan's views on Kuchipudi and other national writers to be found later in this chapter.

got geographically constrained because of their unfamiliarity with languages except for Telugu. Nevertheless, even until the 1980s, when Kuchipudi got practised by non-Telugus, it remained lesser-acknowledged as gathered from the above examples.

4.1.2 Kuchipudi in Telugu works

Talking about Telugu writings in specific, after Kuchipudi got recognised as a classical art in 1959, many publications of that time described Kuchipudi as an ancient art with significant binding to *Natyasastra*. As noted in the previous chapters, the scholars or elite and then the dancers themselves wrote about dance. Similarly, hereditary *gurus* of Kuchipudi started writing after the outsiders wrote about it.

The first accessible writing on Kuchipudi was by Divakarla Ramamurthy in 1937 published in the Bharati magazine¹⁵⁷. Titled *Kuchipudivari Rangamu*, it detailed the stage of Kuchipudi performers. Below the author's name, it was mentioned that this portion was extracted from another article by him. This research scholar could not locate that article, written prior to the available one, but a compilation called *Vyasamala* containing this information by the same author got published in 1946 (Ramamurthy, *Kuchipudi*). Then there were other publications in the 1940s by Ayyanki Thandava Krishna¹⁵⁸ and others on dance and drama in Telugu magazines, but not specifically on Kuchipudi.

¹⁵⁷ *Natyambujam* by Puranam Suri Sastri published in 1923 has mentions about the Kuchipudi artistes (41-43). The work is about the theatrical performances watched by the author, and he wrote of *Prahlāda nāṭakam* and *Rāma nāṭakam* by Kuchipudi people as his earliest memories of drama. Tadepalli Vissayya gets mentioned as a popular *pagaṭi veṣam* artiste from the Brahmin family of Kuchipudi, during the author's father's time in the latter part of the 19th century. Fictitious works like *Veyi Padagalu* written in 1937 by Viswanatha Satyanarayana have a description about *Bhāmākalāpam* (Satyanārāyaṇa).

¹⁵⁸ Ayyanki Thandava Krishna (1915-1991) was a disciple of Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry. His contribution is mentioned in the Exponents section of this chapter.

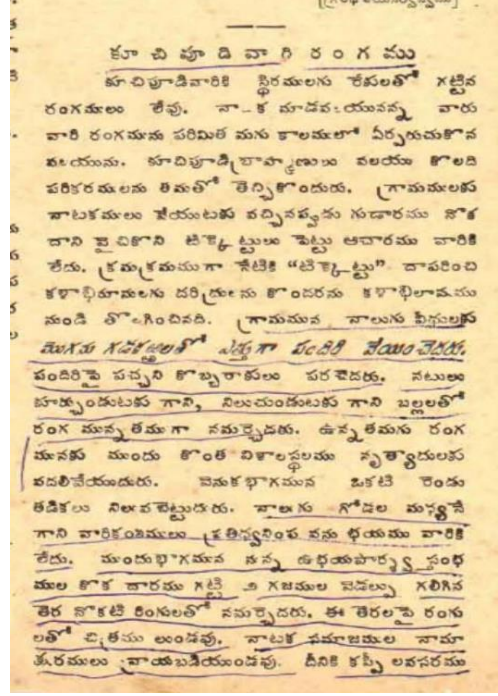


Fig. 4.1. 1937 article by Divakarla Ramamurthy on Kuchipudi:
 Ramamurthy, Divakarla. "Kuchipudivari Rangamu." *Bharati*, vol. 14, no.9. Sep. 1937, p.
 386. www.archive.org

From the hereditary families, Vedantam Parvateesam (1920-2005), was the foremost to publish a book in 1952. It kindles the introspection if the erstwhile practitioners were not concerned or had the cognisance about publicising their art through print. Considering that they were well-versed in Sanskrit, along with the native Telugu, they did maintain handwritten notes, probably for their personal reference and not for public consumption. On questioning the hereditary family members of Kuchipudi about the same, the responses were mixed. Few think that the artistes thought of their art as divine, and it was like a service, an offering by them, and thus no efforts were made to commercialise. Some others opined that the past performers did try to spread and travelled to places like

Kerala. Nonetheless, in either scenario, writings were not part of the agenda¹⁵⁹. Probing further, Rajyalakshmi Seth added that maybe they did not want their art to be generalised and performed by other clusters, as it was putatively practised by a particular community (Seth). It could also be that their conservative nature, owing to the oral traditions, deterred them from venturing into print. This is in concordance with what historian Lokita Varadarajan described as how knowledge transmission remained in the oral sector due to the fear of being distorted by falling into the wrong hands when left open in public (1010). In this context, the same thought is extendable to publications. Above all these, Kuchipudi Brahmins were essentially performers. With all their scholarship in dance and rhetoric, they were not academic thinkers, which made writing a less privileged prerogative.

Looking at the active phases for the published books in Telugu, the figure below shows the categorisation of the number of books published in the 20th century. From the middle of the century, there is an increasing trend in writing about the Telugu dance traditions. The books dedicated only to Kuchipudi were not significant in number, and it is only as late as the 1980s that there is a surge notable in Kuchipudi exclusive books.

¹⁵⁹ The points on notes and their agenda behind the dance are from the data gathered from the traditional family respondents in personal interviews by this research scholar (Radhesyam; Sarma; Sastry; Kesavaprasad; Srinivas; Krishna)

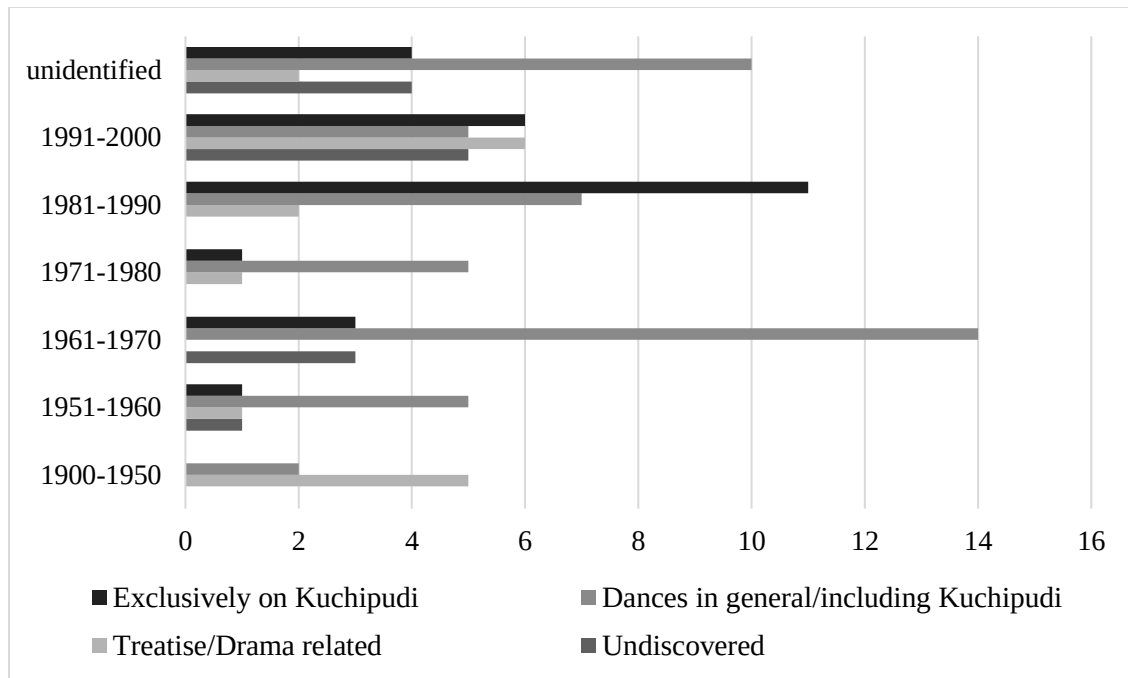


Fig. 4.2. Subject-wise division of Telugu books on dance – Bar graph

The growth of expression through Telugu publications gets connected to the linguistic division of states and the resulting awareness and drive for an identity of the Telugus. Concerning print, Benedict Anderson, an Anglo-Irish political scientist and historian, proposed the links between print and nation, and print fostering the seeds of nationalism (41, 47). Within this backdrop, print capitalism strengthened the domain of languages at the regional level (Anderson 47). In a similar vein, Indian political scientist and historian Partha Chatterjee noted that the print, in combination with capitalism, standardised vernacular popular cultures circulated in oral and promoted by devotional movements like the Bhakti movement (Chatterjee, *Relativist*). Kuchipudi falls into this same bracket of regional, oral culture, rooted in Telugu, stemmed during the Bhakti movement and got subsequently homogenised during the Nationalist period.

In relation to this, referring to the print revolution in Europe, Elizabeth Eisenstein

proposed that the print preserved and codified, sometimes even created the vernacular (82). The vernacular print led to revolutionising the public, and parallels were identifiable in the context of Kuchipudi, where the printed word aided in disseminating information and challenging ideas when needed. Historian Anindita Ghosh proposed that "*print proved a veritable battleground for contending meanings and identities*" (297). The local language writings entered the public scene as a dominant mode of correspondence. In this framework of language and print determining the destiny of Kuchipudi, before books, the magazines played a formidable role in the Telugu region.

4.1.3 Kuchipudi in Telugu magazines-an outline

Magazines were the firsts to publish about Kuchipudi and disquisitions surrounding the art. Speaking about the format, magazines are periodical publications with an assorted subject matter or limited to a specific field. The second typology generally has a definitive expression and purpose for an intended audience. Similarly, the presentation would be in any format like poems, articles, stories, snippets, etc., and illustrations. The content in these ranges from crisp to elaborate and well-researched. Though not as expanded as a book, they are often more profound than a newspaper but temporally less frequent. In the specific case of Kuchipudi here, magazines specifically on dance and on literature acted as conversational platforms with an exchange of ideas or arguments between the contributors, keeping abreast with the contemporary changes and developments.

The first of the articles in magazines on Telugu dance traditions were generic and consisted about the performance traditions in vogue, various treatises, and technique related divisions like *nṛtta*, *nāṭya* and *nṛtya*. Some of the magazines like *Andhrapatrika*, which was an illustrated magazine had images of dancers as cover pages or in the inside,

with no dance form mentioned or as Bharatanatyam in some instances. There was one article available from *Andhrapatrika* of 1948¹⁶⁰, that had about a brief history and the importance of Kuchipudi art (Venkatrao 8). In the post-1955 period, though Kuchipudi's spread in visibility and practice augmented, not many writings came up. The subject was primarily descriptive of the traditions but not focused on inquiry. They largely carried out aspects that were already in circulation and added consensual agreement as tradition. The effort was on establishing dance as ancient, divine and prescribing to a *śāstra*. Perhaps, the need of the day demanded such narratives and impressed the fact that Kuchipudi was an age-old dance and a legacy of the Telugus, comprising the geographical expanse of the former Andhra Pradesh (formed in 1956) as elaborated hereafter.

Two magazines deserve a special mention for fostering the community of dance¹⁶¹. The initial and the most important is *Natyakala*¹⁶², an exclusive initiative of the Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy¹⁶³ covered dance, specifically Kuchipudi, to a great extent. The other is *Bharati*¹⁶⁴, a literary magazine that carried a few articles on Kuchipudi. The early issues of both the magazines dealt with the importance of dance in general, history, antiquity of a dance tradition in Andhra from Hala's *Gathasaptasati* to Vijayanagara and Kakatiya times; patronage and references to a range of dances that existed across Telugu speaking areas of Andhra and Telangana; various treatises that

¹⁶⁰ The first traced article is from *Bharati*, 1937 as seen earlier in this chapter.

¹⁶¹ Other magazines like *Andhrapatrika*, *Navabharati*, *Andhra Pradesh*, *Telugu Vani*, and *Sruti* carried few articles on Kuchipudi. Articles from *Andhra Pradesh*, an official magazine of the state of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh and *Sruti*, published by Sruti foundation of Madras, are referred to in this chapter.

¹⁶² *Natyakala* was a bi-monthly, first published in 1963, by Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy. Prior to that, the magazine was under the Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat, run by Venkata Seshayya, Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao, Kothapalli Laxmayya, Govind Rao and others. From 1957, Srinivasa Chakravarty led it before the takeover by Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy (Suryachandrarao).

¹⁶³ The regional wing of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, established in 1957.

¹⁶⁴ *Bharati* was a monthly magazine published from Madras.

mentioned dance; technical terminology- descriptive as per the *Natyasastra* or occasionally analysing their origin, etymology and treatment from various sources. Also, though the word *nāṭya* finds place in many titles, it was used for drama and not dance in all the writings.

Whilst looking at the writers of these articles, significant are Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao¹⁶⁵, Nataraj Ramakrishna¹⁶⁶, C. R. Acharyulu¹⁶⁷, P. S. R. Apparao¹⁶⁸, to name a few. Nataraj Ramakrishna and C. R. Acharyulu were dance masters themselves. Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao and P. S. R. Apparao were scholars from the non-dance background. Writers from the hereditary families were limited to a few like Vedantam Parvateesam, Chinta Krishnamurti and Bhagavatula Ramakotayya, who wrote frequently.

¹⁶⁵ Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao (1907-1968) was an advocate by profession and later became an actor in theatre. He was friends with Chinta Krishnamurthy of Kuchipudi and worked for Kuchipudi's recognition along with him and Vedantam Parvateesam. His contribution towards Kuchipudi is discussed further in this chapter.

¹⁶⁶ Nataraj Ramakrishna (1923-2011) had training in Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi from Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry and the female dance forms from the *devadāsīs*. His views get elaborated in other portions of this chapter.

¹⁶⁷ Chilakamarri Ramacharyulu, known as C. R. Acharyulu or C. R. Acharya, was a renowned Kuchipudi *guru*. Apart from writing on Kuchipudi and temple dances of Andhra, he got credited for bringing *Simhanandini* and the like, where figures are traced on the floor through movements into the Kuchipudi repertoire.

¹⁶⁸ Ponangi Sri Rama Apparao (1923-2005) was a Telugu writer with numerous publications to his credit. His work on dance, apart from articles, include published books relating the precepts of treatises to the actual practice. See Appendices I and II for his books.



Fig. 4.3. (Left) Cover of Andhrapatrika, with dancers portraying Radha and Krishna:
Andhrapatrika, vol. 14, no. 8, Jan. 1948.



Fig. 4.4. (Right) A write-up on Kuchipudi featuring the photograph of Vedantam
Lakshminarayana Sastry: Venkatrao, Kala. "Kuchipudi Natyakala." *Andhrapatrika*, vol. 40, no.
51, Sep. 1948, p. 8.



Fig. 4.5. (Left) P. S. R. Apparao: https://te.wikipedia.org/wiki/P.S.R._Apparao.



Fig. 4.6. (Right) Nataraj Ramakrishna¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ This is part of a photograph (with Challa Bharatam-edited) sourced from Sangeet Natak Akademi by Anuradha Jonnalagadda.



Fig. 4.7. Logo and design of *Natyakala* cover, reflecting music and dance:

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/76/cd/d7/76cdd7c9dc9ea7d14125221143f58e19--telugu-lettering.jpg>

Natyakala contributed distinctively to the literature used in Kuchipudi and the personalities/*gurus*. The articles on artistes or teachers created awareness about their work. The libretto of *kalāpaṃs* and *yakṣagānās* and other genres were compiled by practising artistes and masters and published in this magazine. Along with that, compositions practised or written by masters of Kuchipudi, for instance, the *nṛtya nāṭikās* by Vedantam Parvateesam, got published in full (Parvateesam, *Kuchipudi Nritya Natika* 1967). Similarly, the *veṣa kathalu* got featured in their entirety. These may well have been open to choreography by other artistes as such performance texts were published for the first time and were made accessible to non-hereditary artistes.

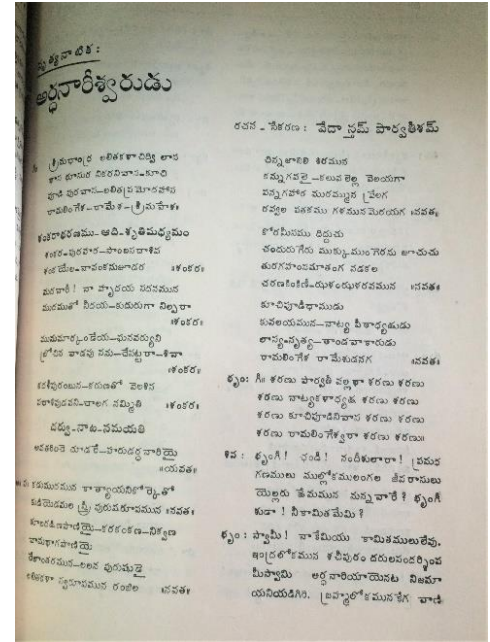
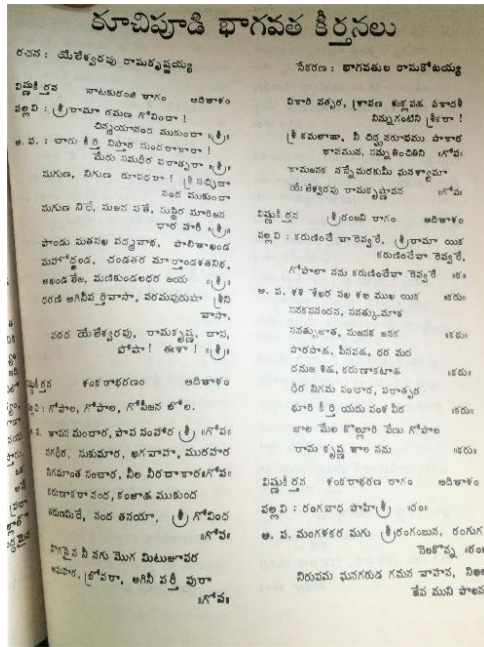


Fig. 4.8. (Left) Lyrics of the compositions by Kuchipudi hereditary artistes, compiled by Bhagavatula Ramakotayya: Ramakotayya, Bhagavatula. "Kuchipudi Bhagavata Keertanalu." *Natyakala*, vol. 4, no.12, Sep. 1969, p. 62.

Fig. 4.9. (Right) Script of *Arthanārīśvarudu nṛtyāṇīka* written by Vedantam Parvateesam: Parvateesam, Vedantam. "Arthanarisvarudu." *Natyakala*, vol. 4, no.12, Sep. 1969, p. 55.

Natyakala also published a translation of treatises as a series. For instance, the *Hastadhyayam* in 1963, the chapter on dance *Nartanadhyaya* from *Sangita Ratnakara* in 1973 got featured. The public was asked to respond, and based on that, Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy brought out the individual publications of those translations. This would have provided access and understanding of those texts to the native readers and artistes in particular.

Further, articles based on conference proceedings¹⁷⁰ threw light on the then-current

¹⁷⁰ For example, the issues of the *Natyakala* magazine carried details about the conference on dance in Hyderabad, 1959 and Vijayanagaram, 1966. Likewise, the articles from *Kuchipudi Mahotsav* held at Bombay during 1993, 1996, 1999 and other similar festivals contributed immensely by publishing souvenirs.

trends and opinions of contemporary practitioners. In fact, the seminars and conferences were one of the chief incentives for the increase in writing about the various characteristics of dance. As gathered from multiple articles, the general opinion was that the art that had been facing downfall in the previous years was reaching new heights with encouragement and exposure from the Government, although there is a lacuna in specific directions that needed addressal¹⁷¹.

In *Bharati*, the primary writings about *nāṭya* explicitly refer to it in the sense of theatre/drama and not dance. In 1959, an article on Kathakali literature by Puttaparti Narayanacharyulu made its presence in *Bharati* but not on Kuchipudi. In 1960 though, articles related to Kuchipudi got published. Nonetheless, the magazine always covered *sāhitya*-literature as its prime foci, landmark issues like the *Rajatotsava/Svarṇotsava* (silver and golden jubilee) editions do not find a single article on dance, which is closely related or dependent on the lyric. The dance texts like the versions and variations of *Natyasastra*, predominantly by Pothukuchi Subrahmanya Sastry, were the only link to dance. The importance of textual traditions appears to be a convention of that time. The early writings were in the direction of projecting Kuchipudi as a classical dance that followed the tenets prescribed in *Natyasastra*.

Talking about the English articles on Kuchipudi, there were few in the *Natyakala* magazine¹⁷². But, the majority contribution about Kuchipudi in English articles was during 1980-90s, especially in the *Sruti* magazine¹⁷³. The interviews, reviews and articles featured

¹⁷¹ Dealt later in this chapter.

¹⁷² For instance, there were four articles in the Jan.-Feb. 1969 edition of *Natyakala*.

¹⁷³ A few arguments were traceable from the available articles in English from the *Illustrated Weekly of India* magazine.

in that discoursed on how Kuchipudi morphed from dance-dramas to the solos formed an imperative source material on the events and elements that defined the course of the art.

With this background, the remaining part of this chapter tries to elaborate obligatory notions and components on Kuchipudi, as collated from the publications. Although scholars have already detailed most of the topics previously, their mention here would be for analysing alternate opinions, if any, on the same topic and as a recollection or cross-reference. The effort is also to find any missing historical links or details.

4.2 History and the performative genres

4.2.1 The Beginnings

As gathered from the previous chapter, one of the deliberated topics in dance research is establishing antiquity of the form and the discourses surrounding its origin. Similarly, for Kuchipudi, the following are the various disquisitions that look at the origin and evolution of the form. In this regard, a recurring subject is the existence of a dance or theatrical art before the present known versions of Kuchipudi. Andhra, like other parts, particularly those of Southern India, has a history of both female dancers and male dancers or actors¹⁷⁴.

The idea that surfaces from the numerous published accounts is that dance was the baton of *devadāsis*, whose decline resulted in Kuchipudi men taking up the cause for the resurrection of art (Apparao, *Kuchipudi* 2). There are multiple opinions as to when the waning of female dance traditions started. La Meri proposed that by Bharata's time itself,

¹⁷⁴ The troupes of dancers were called *Meḷas/Melas*. *Meḷam* means a travelling troupe of artistes and the female and male traditions diversified as *naṭṭuva* and *nāṭya meḷas* respectively. *Naṭṭuva meḷa* had a solo female as a chief dancer, with the accompanists being men mostly. The *nāṭya meḷa* was usually a dramatic performance by men.

the art has turned discourteous (19). Vissa Appa Rao opined that the *devadāsi* art deterioration was noted in *Kuttanimata* by Damodara Gupta about 1000 years ago (*Kuchipudi School* 1). In his monograph on Kuchipudi, M. A. Naidu also hypothesised Kuchipudi as one of the centres that sprung up to restore the losing spirituality of Indian dance as early as 1000AD (3). Patrayani Sangeetha Rao, an eminent musician, attributed the downfall of the *devadāsi* system to a general decline in music and dance spheres, post which the revival happened (71-76). The restoration of Sadir as Bharatanatyam in the early 20th century could also be an example of this. From these examples, it is also possible that the decadence occurred gradually or multiple times over centuries and the expanse of the sub-continent.

Regarding this matter, a categorical logic was offered by anthropologist and scholar Judith Lynne Hanna. She cited economic stress as the logic behind the diminishing of temple dances and that many groups organised themselves to preserve it, with the Brahmin Kuchipudi *meḷas* being one among those (65). Contrastingly, P. S. R. Apparao, talking about the genesis of Kuchipudi, asserts that Kuchipudi *bhāgavatars*¹⁷⁵ did not venture to safeguard any dance from *devadāsis* as such.

Another contention was that to propagate their religion, the Jain rulers exploited dances patronising both the classical or *mārgi* and the *desi*. Moreover, about the same period of the 12th century, the *devadāsis* degenerated into *rājanartakis* or court-dancers, thus changing the content and presentation in dances (Satyam and Murthy, *Birth* 61; Rao,

¹⁷⁵ The word *Bhāgavatam* gets usually ascribed to the stories connected to Lord Krishna. The performers narrating or enacting those were called *Bhāgavatars*. Kuchipudi Brahmins mostly performed these stories and hence called Kuchipudi *Bhāgavatars* or *Bhāgavatulu*. It was stated that ‘*bhāgavatulu*’ was used to address any performer/group who portrayed stories from the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* (Rao and Arundale 16). Nevertheless, it was not restricted as *Bhāmākalāpam* itself does not fall under that category. Thus, it may be apt to bracket it as the Vaishnava or Krishna stories.

Kuchipudi Dance; Yesterday 15). Nevertheless, others believe that the *devadāsis* and *rājanartakis* coexisted and did not follow a chronological order of sorts (Soneji).

An alternative narrative for the rise of Kuchipudi was that the dominance of *āṅgikābhinaya* and losing of *vācikābhinaya*¹⁷⁶ led to a revolt in India, and Kuchipudi people were one of the few who protected the latter with their art (Naidu 3). The common notion is that, to whatever reasons ascribed, the Kuchipudi community was assumed to have safeguarded the art of dance and thus the tradition.

A significant indication from the above opinions is that of the female and male dance institutions. The topic of *devadāsi* dancing is dealt with at length by numerous scholars (Soneji; Srinivasan; Kersenboom). It would suffice to note here that taboos were associated with the female dancers, and any association with them was shunned, predominantly from the 20th century. The link between Kuchipudi and these female dancers is a contentious topic. As remarked earlier, the decline of female dancers and the rise of Kuchipudi got equated by a portion of writers. Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao affirmed that dances by *devadāsis* needed a revival as early as the 14th century and that it was then Siddhendra initiated Kuchipudi men into dance, who till then were teachers and untainted (*Kuchipudi Dance-Drama* 20). Sunil Kothari's thesis¹⁷⁷ noted that Siddhendra bestowed *kalāpaṃ* to male dancers as the dance was already degraded by the courtesans (292).

Another accepted view is that the male brahmins like that of Kuchipudi *bhāgavatulu* were the *gurus* and the female dancers, their students¹⁷⁸. A related insight is

¹⁷⁶ *āṅgikābhinaya* and *vācikābhinaya* are the expressions through body and voice respectively.

¹⁷⁷ Sunil Kothari's was one of the first extensive research on Kuchipudi. He tried to compare it with the *Natyasastra* (apart from the Bhagavata Mela Natakam and Kuravanji) and touched each of these in-depth-like each element mentioned in the *Natyasastra* how it finds examples in Kuchipudi or vice-versa (*Dance-Drama*).

¹⁷⁸ See the "Exponents" section of this chapter that refers to Kuchipudi masters teaching *devadāsis*.

that the Brahmins, with their knowledge, instructed the *devadāsis* and in return, expanded their own insights. As Enakshi Bhavnani noted, three dance traditions that cohabited Andhra, those by the *devadāsis*, *rājanartakis* and Brahmins, borrowed from each other. Out of the rather sporadic indications, Vissa Appa Rao noted about touring brahmins (referring to Kuchipudi artistes) who came in contact and thus interchange dance techniques with *rājanartakis* and *devadāsis* (*Kuchipudi* 11). An illustration of this was the repertoire Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry¹⁷⁹ adapted to solo Kuchipudi presentation. It was stated that his solo repertoire was that of the *kaḷāvantulu*¹⁸⁰ and not men of his fraternity (Putcha, *Dancing* 20; Soneji, *Performing* 86)¹⁸¹. Daves Soneji's thesis pointed that Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry had tutelage under female *kaḷāvantulu* teachers and adapted the aspects like Munipalle Subrahmanya Kavi's *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa kīrtanas*, which were a speciality of one particular Saride lineage of female dancers, into Kuchipudi (*Performing* 167).

The traditional Kuchipudi artistes disagree with any kind of relationship as such except that few masters trained the *devadāsis*¹⁸². It was also mentioned that *devadāsis* got instruction in *Sangitanatyalankarasastra* from the Kuchipudi *bhāgavatulu* at a village Salapet, near Movva (Seetaramarao 169). Divakarla Ramamurthy expressed that the dance imparted by Kuchipudi *bhāgavatulu* to *bhogaṃ* people was called '*Bhāgavatam*'¹⁸³ (108).

¹⁷⁹ Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry (1875-1957) from the hereditary Kuchipudi family was a renowned *guru* and architect of the solo tradition. More about him is disclosed later in this chapter.

¹⁸⁰ This term indicates both the temple and hereditary court dancers.

¹⁸¹ See the solo's section of this chapter for more.

¹⁸² As gathered from personal interviews and Vempati Chinna Satyam in the article, there is no instance of a Kuchipudi performer learning from the *devadāsis* (Rao, *Transformation* 58). However, especially with Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry, it was agreed that he actively interacted with the female performers (Sarma, *Vedantam*).

¹⁸³ *bhogaṃ* was used to refer to the *devadāsi* dancers.

This might be with reference to the theatrical presentations by *devadāsis* that were called *Bhāgavatam*¹⁸⁴, though it is not clear as to who taught this genre to the female dancers.

Keeping in sight these earlier recorded ideas about the decline of *devadāsis* and the rise of Kuchipudi, none of the works details out a relation between Kuchipudi and *devadāsi* dancers, apart from a handful (especially by Nataraj Ramakrishna, who wrote expansively about the female dances and sought to bring their art to the forefront) that indicate a parallel or prior *devadāsi* tradition to Kuchipudi. On the same lines, Arudra¹⁸⁵ referred to a dominant *devadāsi* tradition that is on par with Kuchipudi tradition (Art 8,9). In lieu of the above observations, Edwina Ranganath, in a comprehensive article on Kuchipudi in 1984, penned, "*A solo dance form of Kuchipudi sometimes referred to as the Devadasi tradition of Kuchipudi is very popular with dancers today*" (45). This kind of relation is neither mentioned in any other work nor accepted in popular conception, as both are considered two distinct traditions. Or, that the author was trying to comment that women performed solo dances and that Kuchipudi was shifting to that system.

One related argument here that contemplated gender is of Kuchipudi being a male-specific art. Again here, the often-recorded version is that the art was already in a precarious position due to the falling ways of *devadāsis* and hence, to shield the chastity of the divine content Kuchipudi offers, Siddhendra ordained only boys learn the art. Contemplating why Siddhendra chose Brahmin boys, Pappu Venugopala Rao, a musicologist and associated with Kuchipudi, speculated that it was in line with the quest

¹⁸⁴ Involving dialogues and drama and not the ritualistic temple dances. *Āṭa* means play, and to differentiate the performative genre from the text, the word *āṭa bhāgavatam* was used infrequently to the dramas and specifically *kalāpams* by different troupes.

¹⁸⁵ About Arudra, see the section on writers in this chapter.

to elevate and spread religious values through dance (*Kuchipudi* 47-48). For that, Sanskrit scholarship was mandatory, and the Brahmin men possessed that kind of knowledge. He also posited the existence of a female impersonation before Siddhendra, possibly referring to the *pagaṭi veṣams*. However, the point about knowledge of Sanskrit is questionable as there are references to *devadāsīs* being proficient in Sanskrit from the 15th century (Ramanayya 403, 404).

Rarely though, alternate possibilities were offered like that by Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma¹⁸⁶ as to why men, called *Bhṛkuṇṣulu*, donned the female roles (*Bhrukunṣuvu* 42). He rationalised that the exclusion of women and insistence on male impersonation was not due to the incapability of females or that the *śāstras* forbade them. Rather, the travel and subsequent hardships involved would turn burdensome for women. Alongside, staying away from home for so many days was why they did not participate in this dance. Additionally, the social conditions restricted female presence in public spheres. The last detail about social conditions might be referring to females from castes other than the *devadāsīs*- who had no such reservations in the public arena. The existence of child marriages got cited as another claim for women's exclusion (Sastri and Murthy 166).

Thinking further, it could also be that as there were female and male traditions in vogue and Siddhendra came from a male performing background and thus introduced his art to the boys¹⁸⁷. Vempati Chinna Satyam¹⁸⁸ commented that there is no confirmation or convincing evidence that women in the pre-Siddhendra years were disallowed to perform

¹⁸⁶ Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma (1935-2012), an illustrious Kuchipudi practitioner, is especially acclaimed for female impersonation.

¹⁸⁷ See the section on Siddhendra of this chapter, where there is a mention of *Gita Govinda* and boys dancing.

¹⁸⁸ Vempati Chinna Satyam (1929-2012) is a doyen and innovator of Kuchipudi. More on his work gets elaborated through the various sections of this chapter.

Kuchipudi (*Birth* 65). In this connection, a clash of views got indicated in an article by K. N. T. Sastry. Critiquing the modern amendments in Kuchipudi, the article provides diverse pretexts by the *gurus* of hereditary families for women not performing. Vempati Chinna Satyam opined that discrimination and limitations resulted in women not performing, and since the times changed, it was no more an issue. Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma supported this view. Disagreeing with that was Pasumarthi Venugopala Krishna Sarma¹⁸⁹, who opposed it indicating certain postures in Kuchipudi makes it look vulgar on a female dancer and hence it is not proper for women performing. Nonetheless, the form evolved and continues to thrive on the female body, expressly due to efforts of masters like Vempati Chinna Satyam¹⁹⁰.

Indicating the status of the specific case of women of hereditary families, Akella Shanti Sastri, grand-daughter of Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry, penned that even in the 1990s, the village frowned upon their women dancing. Though her father, the renowned Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma, taught her and made her perform, she could not continue as a performer. The idea of purity was associated with dance, and even if someone attempted, the lack of encouragement held them back. She added that non-hereditary women thriving for Kuchipudi was admirable (Sastri and Murthy 166).

¹⁸⁹ Well-known as P. V. G. Krishna Sarma (1929-2012) is a *guru*, musician and acclaimed for *yakṣagānas*.

¹⁹⁰ As discussed in other sections of this work.



Fig. 4.10. (Left) Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma as Satyabhama- female impersonation: Khokar, Mohan and Gurmeet Thukral. *Splendours of Indian Dance*. Himalayan Books, 1985, p. 81.

Fig. 4.11. (Right) Female dancer Sumathy Kaushal as Satyabhama: Seth, Rajyalakshmi. "Aharyam in Kuchipudi Dance-Changing Trends" *Kuchipudi Mahotsav'93, Kuchipudi Mahotsav'99*, Edited by K. Subadra Murthy, 1999, p. 60.

Before venturing into these changes that happened to the form, it is imminent to know what existed. Besides the female dance systems, the *nāṭya mela* also comprised of numerous traditions in the Andhra area. Going back to how Kuchipudi originated and what it consists of, the following section discusses the predecessors and various influences that Kuchipudi had.

4.2.2 The genres

To go into the roots of the form, widely accepted belief is that it was only with Siddhendra yogi's *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*¹⁹¹ that Kuchipudi started, though there are other performative traditions in vogue previously. There is a possibility for the name 'Kuchipudi'

¹⁹¹ The details of *Bhamakalāpaṃ* are discussed in other portions of this chapter.

to not be in usage, but some kind of dance and drama existed for centuries. N. S. Dakshinamurti, a historian, stated that performances of Kuchipudi *bhāgavatulu* were divided into two: the *vīthi nāṭakas* or *yakṣagāna* segment, including the dramas like *Prahlāda Caritaṃ*, *Uṣā Pariṇayaṃ* and the other being *kalāpa* segment with *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* and *Gollakalāpaṃ* (40-44). Nataraj Ramakrishna classified it into three different forms: *yakṣagāna* under the *nāṭyameḷa*, *kalāpa* under the *prabandha* genre and solo dance belonging to the *naṭṭuvameḷa* traditions (20th century 69-70). Aruna Bhikshu, a Kuchipudi artiste and scholar, classified it into a fourfold system as the *pagaṭi veṣa*, *kalāpa*, *yakṣagāna* and solo dances, as they have evolved (*Tradition* 254). Another genre, adding to all these, is the *nṛtya nāṭika* or dance-drama¹⁹², that came into existence from the 1970s. Thus, the four-fold division that is currently in practice is the *kalāpa*, *yakṣagāna*, *nṛtya nāṭika* and the solo systems. The ensuing discussion is about these facets associated with Kuchipudi and their interrelationships.

Coming to what each of the genres named above constitutes, an overview of common and accepted features is as follows. *Kalāpa* is marked by two or three characters presenting one episode of a story. *Yakṣagāna* is a complete story, presented as a drama, with multiple characters¹⁹³. Vissa Appa Rao noted that a single character initially did *yakṣagāna*, it got later modified into multiple characters and then embellished by the Kuchipudi artistes (*Kuchipudi* 13). *Pagaṭi veṣaṃ* is "impersonation of stock characters to the accompaniment of humorous discourses" performed in the offseason (from

¹⁹² The term dance-drama was used for *yakṣagāna* and *kalāpa* also by Sunil Kothari (*Dance-Drama* 277). Here, it means *nṛtya nāṭikas*.

¹⁹³ For more on these genres, see Daves Soneji's dissertation (Performing). For the characters and their role in the *yakṣagānas*, see an article by Bhagavatula Lakshmi Narasimham (*Kuchipudi Yakshagana*).

agriculture), travelling in the villages (Banda *Kuchipudi* 30-36). A peculiar feature of *pagaṭi veṣaṁ* was showing all phases of life in a fancy dress, in the daytime only (Apparao, *Kuchipudi* 19). *Vīthi nāṭaka*, literally translated as street play, was performed on the village streets, as the name advocates¹⁹⁴. *Nṛtya nāṭika* or dance-drama was a comparatively modern technique, which trails the pattern of story-telling like the *yakṣagāna*, and in a format envisioned by Vempati Chinna Satyam¹⁹⁵.

There is a conceivable debate about which genre came up initially, what was actively practised and what was derived from what. Arudra noted that "...while the dance drama forms presented by other bhagavatulu are called Bhagavatam-s and Veedhinatakam-s, those performed by Kuchipudi Bhagavatulu and the devadasis are called Kalapamulu." (Art 18). As Sunil Kothari recorded, *yakṣagāna* performed by Yakkula and the courtesan communities was first, and from that, Siddhendra conceived his *Bhāmākalāpam* conforming with *Natyasastra* (Dance-Drama 277). That the itinerant actors and actresses of courtesan families performed (with dance and song) *yakṣagāna* was corroborated in N. Venkata Ramanayya's book on the Vijayanagara empire during which time there was a mention of such art in practice (413-415).

Mohan Khokar stated that Kuchipudi evolved out of *vīthi nāṭaka*, (which he called as simple and vulgar) and *yakṣagānas* that were prevalent all-over South India (*Bhagavata* 28). He added that the first *yakṣagāna*¹⁹⁶ was written in 1570, on which, Siddhendra modelled his *Bhāmākalāpam* in the 17th century (*Degeneration* 24). Sunil Kothari, in his

¹⁹⁴ For more on *vīthi nāṭakas*, refer to Sunil Kothari's dissertation (*Dance-Drama*).

¹⁹⁵ For more, see Pappu Venugopala Rao's article on the evolution of dance-drama from *yakṣagāna* (Rao and Murthy, *Yakshagana* 51-56).

¹⁹⁶ In Telugu literature, the first *yakṣagāna* was *Saubhari Caritam* by Proluganti Chenna Sauri of the late 15th century, but unavailable. The earliest available is *Sugrīva Vijayam* by Kandukoori Rudrakavi of the late 16th century (Rao and Murthy, *Yakshagana* 51).

dissertation, pointed out that *kalāpa* was a new kind of *yakṣagāna*, as devised by Kuchipudi practitioners (*Dance-Drama* 277). Vempati Chinna Satyam conflicted with this idea of *yakṣagāna* being a predecessor of Kuchipudi, and that some critics misread that Kuchipudi grew from *yakṣagāna*, which he called a folk drama (Satyam and Murthy, *Birth* 61-68).

Patrayani Sangeetha Rao professed a timeline for these genres, placing the form of *yakṣagāna*, as seen in the 20th century having roots in the 16th-century versions (*Kuchipudi Yakshagana* 71-76). The 17th-century *yakṣagānas* were said to possess *prabandha* and drama features, especially during the reign of Raghunatha and Vijayaraghava Nayaka. In the late 19th century, the drama got lost to the Dharwad theatre, thus not mentioned in any records. Anuradha Jonnalagadda, in her thesis, placed the entry of *yakṣagānas* into Kuchipudi repertoire in 1875, under the influence of professional drama companies from Maharashtra (*Tradition* 115). Nevertheless, Kuchipudi hereditary artistes place *yakṣagānas* as their prime performative aspect, next to the *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*.

Proceeding to other genres, Sunil Kothari spoke of few migrants from Kuchipudi taught to courtesans, and that was called *vīthi bhāgavataṃ* (*Dance-Drama* 327). He also added that *vīthi nāṭaka* was a simplified version of the *yakṣagāna* targeting the masses, usually in the local language. V. Raghavan posited Kuchipudi as one amongst the known forms of Telugu dance-drama, and that *vīthi bhāgavataṃ* or *Gollakalāpaṃ* is a derivative solo of Kuchipudi *bhāgavata* tradition (Raghavan and Mukhopadhyay 34-37). He opined that Kuchipudi masters taught to female dancers what was conceived by them as the women did not dance in Kuchipudi tradition. He said the result was a combination of both the *nāṭya* and *naṭṭuva meḷas*, where females did a solo recital of not disconnected pieces but a single story that is not a love song but with a philosophical base. He added the form

as having *nṛtta*, *nṛtya* and *abhinaya* and that a knowledge of Sanskrit was necessary for *kaḷāvaṇṭula* performers. This reasoning for having Sanskrit knowledge, as discussed earlier, was professed as the student-teacher relationship between female dancers and Kuchipudi scholars.

However, V. Raghavan combined *vīthi bhāgavatam* and *kalāpam*, generally understood as two distinct traditions performed at different times of the day and in different spaces. It is notable here that the words *vīthi bhāgavatam* and *vīthi nāṭaka* got used interchangeably. On those, Arudra noted that there were various kinds of *bhāgavatulu* in Andhra, and the performance of *bhāgavata* stories in streets was called *vīthi bhāgavatams* (Art 18). In the context of dramatic traditions, Kapila Vatsyayan elaborated upon the itinerant groups of vocational performers who were the bridge between the urban and rural centres and resulted in the formation of styles (*Traditional* 3,4). These groups were into reform movements, protests through art and acted for a change when necessary. She placed *vīthi nāṭaka* in this set, as dance and dialogues were part of the technique. It may be inferable that Kuchipudi drama adopted these features, basing on the characteristics discussed later in this chapter.

The next critical genre that surfaces on many accounts is *pagaṭi veṣam*. A neighbouring village of Kuchipudi, Gaddipadu, was referred to as the place of *pagaṭi veṣam* artistes (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 4-7). Kuchipudi Brahmins used to perform along with them until bifurcating and performing on their own. Till the 1930s, around fifty-five Kuchipudi artistes performed *pagaṭi veṣams* in conjunction with Kuchipudi (Art 8,9). In *pagaṭi veṣams*, with their wit, the artistes reflected the mishappenings in the social order and contributed to society growth (Lakshminarasimham, *Pagativeshamulu* 95-98).

Pagaṭi veṣaṃ was referred to as a special feature in dance-dramas for relief as that was not part of the original text but an improvisation without any rules (Khokar, *Natya* 32). This is one genre, closely allied yet had a significant inferior label attached to it. Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry was said to have insisted that only *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* was the *bhāgavata* tradition and not *pagaṭi veṣa* or even *yakṣagāna* (Rao, *Choreography Sanchari* 22). Yet another remark was that *pagaṭi veṣaṃs* were a 'lower order presentation' to inspire people and that a number of these daytime performances got included in Kuchipudi repertoire later, such as the *Arthanārīśvara nṛtya* (Naidu 25). Some scholars opined that the *pagaṭi veṣaṃ* was practised by those no longer into the regular performance (Jonnalagadda, *Tradition* 42).

On the other hand, hereditary artiste Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma¹⁹⁷ informed that *pagaṭi veṣaṃ* was entertainment and livelihood of the Kuchipudi artistes (his father was a *pagaṭi veṣaṃ* artist alongside *kalāpa* and *yakṣagāna*) and that like in *yakṣagāna*, the artistes used to sing for themselves and dance in *pagaṭi veṣaṃ* too¹⁹⁸ (Sarma). Nonetheless, it is surprising that mentions or details of *pagaṭi veṣaṃs* were meagre in writings, and the form apparently disappeared out of the public eye in the second part of the 20th century. Hereditary artiste Vedantam Radhesyam shared that *pagaṭi veṣaṃs* lost their place as none were watching, though presently other castes are still performing the form (Radhesyam).

The most prominent identity marker for Kuchipudi is the genre of *kalāpaṃ*. In a

¹⁹⁷ Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma is one of the oldest surviving hereditary masters adept in Kuchipudi *yakṣagāna*.

¹⁹⁸ *Pagaṭi veṣaṃ* was generally considered a primarily verbal expression, performed impromptu in front of households, only during the day. This differentiates it majorly from the *kalāpa* and *yakṣagāna*, which were staged performances during nights. For more on Kuchipudi artistes and *pagaṭi veṣaṃ*, see the sections on repertoire and exponents of this chapter.

book published on the folk dances, while expressing about folk and tribal dances of Andhra, Kapila Vatsyayan proclaimed that "*The sophisticated form of dance-drama which has connections with all these is the Bhamakalapam, which gave rise to the classical form known as the Kuchipudi school of dancing.*" (Traditions 256). She wrote that the *uparūpaka* of Sanskrit drama gave rise to dance-dramas and *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* is an example (Traditions 15). Kapila Vatsyayan opined that village participation is a key to the theatrical forms as opposed to the stylised classical that have a relatively urban base (Traditional 9). She placed *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* as a sophisticated drama and improvised street theatre (*vīthi nāṭaka* - as a structure departing from the main epic) that is closely related to a literary, dramatic piece, less rigorous and performed at the temple or village courtyard. According to her, owing to their commonalities, *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, Kudiyaṭṭam and Bhagavata Mela Natakam are a close category. It is a relatively singular instance where Kudiyaṭṭam and *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* were linked.

Adding to her analysis, Kapila Vatsyayan befittingly registered caste as an indicator for some performative traditions, like the Brahmins for *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*¹⁹⁹. Those communities acted as repositories for art forms. Relating Kuchipudi and *vīthi nāṭaka*, she observed that the *vidūṣaka* (jester) character is absent in *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, owing to Vaishnava import and the devotional aspect associated, but he is present in *vīthi nāṭaka*, that is laced with sarcasm (Traditional). About the connection, Mohan Khokar called *vīthi nāṭaka* a staged entertainment for the masses that was at once simple and unrefined and that Kuchipudi evolved from the existing traditions (Natya 28). On the contrary, P. S. R. Apparao affirmed that there was no mention of Kuchipudi in any text before the 13th

¹⁹⁹ The other caste-art nexus is found in Kathakali, where the Nair community traditionally performed it.

century, and there was no evidence that *vīthi nāṭaka* was performed by Kuchipudi *bhāgavatulu* before Siddhendra²⁰⁰ (80-84). Vempati Chinna Satyam opined that though there were arts that followed *śāstras* existed before Kuchipudi by both male and female dancers, it was with Siddhendra that a crowd-pleasing holistic art with both *lāsya* and *tāṇḍava*²⁰¹ elements got formulated (G.V.G 69).

From all these records, the order or the genesis of the numerous structures is ambivalent. It is deductible that though there were structural and presentational changes, dance, drama, and impersonation existed in the Andhra region and Kuchipudi was purportedly formulated by including features from the above-discussed genres. Despite all contentions, it is prevalent that the format of *kalāpa* and precisely *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* is brandable as the essence of Kuchipudi. The ensuing segment thus goes into the details of the attributed originator of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, Siddhendra and his creation.



Fig. 4.12. Sculpture of Siddhendra yogi: <https://andragreatness.blogspot.com/2012/11/kuchipudi-dance.html>

²⁰⁰ Siddhendra, or Siddhendra yogi as often labelled, is considered the founder-father of Kuchipudi. He is the attributed author of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*.

²⁰¹ As per *Natyasastra*, *lāsya* refers to the gentle form of dance, and *tāṇḍava* is the virulent aspect of dance, as taught by Tandu on the advice of Siva. *Tāṇḍava* in general parlance refers to the dance performed by Lord Siva.

4.2.3 Siddhendra and Kalāpaṃ

Siddhendra gets considered to be the founder figure for Kuchipudi and credited with the formulation of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*. Numerous legends and beliefs surround him, and a considerable study about his life is noticeable. The antiquity of Siddhendra/Siddhendra *yogi*- the saint figure, is somewhat vague, but recognising it gives a better picture of the philosophies related to *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, and thus about Kuchipudi itself.

The widely circulated account about Siddhendra was he renouncing worldly life and having a vision of Lord Krishna, resulting in the composition of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*. To elaborate, Siddhendra was believed to be an orphan, who at a young age was performed the *upanayana*²⁰² and marriage rites by charitable villagers. On reaching the age, while on a journey to reach his wife, he was struck in a storm in river Krishna, where he took an oath of celibacy, lest he is safe. Saved thus, he becomes Siddhendra *yogi*, and his devotion led him to write the *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*. Divakarla Ramamurthy referred to Siddhendra as Siddha Sastry and added that he taught *Bharata śāstra* (probably referring to *Natyasastra*) to the men, made them do *āṅgikābhinaya* and laid a path for a new school (97). The new school referred to here could be Kuchipudi. Another episode noted was that Siddhendra, being disgraced by his wife for being ill-educated, travelled to Varanasi and learnt *śāstras*, Sanskrit, and literature (Naidu 8, 9). The rest of the story follows as above.

Out of the other narratives, Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao postulated that Siddhendra founded the village of Kuchipudi as a hamlet for dancers (*Krishna* 65). This was not substantiated elsewhere. His version of Siddhendra's saga goes that Siddappa, identified as an orphan-Brahmin, got married to a six-month-old baby (*Kuchipudi Dance-*

²⁰² *Upanayana* is a rite of passage in Hindu culture where a boy gets initiated into formal education.

Drama 33). He was interested in dance and accompanied the dancing girls but was reprimanded for his fallen status by priests. He then enters the Math at Srikakula and one night dreamt Krishna dancing on him. At that point, he was sent to Udipi by the Math head, where he learnt the *Vedas* and *śāstras*, of which *Natyasastra* was a part. After that, he started singing and composing. Then the story of his returning and taking an oath of celibacy proceeds as revealed above. Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao supplemented that channelling the sensuous kind of love, hitherto unexplored by poets in case of Krishna, Siddhendra composed *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* and thus invented the concept of *madhura bhakti*. He did not teach the *devadāsi* girls because the *kalāpa* he created was already sensuous, and they, apparently demoralised. Teaching them would reduce the worth of his composition that was laced with devotion. He set off to teach the hesitant boys, as dancing men were infrequent at that time. To serve his purpose and gain credibility, Siddhendra obtained a letter from Udipi, taught boys who came to be known as *bhāgavatars*, for presenting the content on *Bhagavān*- God. Since they did not gain respect in their land, they moved away and the place of *kūcīlu* that became Kuchelapuri and later, Kuchipudi.

That Siddhendra was inspired by the dances of temple dancers and when devising his *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* drew elements from other practices is found in some writings (Ranganath 43, 44). This can be as a linking element between the temple dancers and Kuchipudi through Siddhendra. If it was true, it is strange that he refrained from teaching those he sought inspiration from.

On the other end of the spectrum, numerous discourses do not mention female dancers. Another chronicle goes that Siddhendra travelled and met Ananda Teertha of Udipi Math. Still, Balantrapu Rajanikanta Rao shunned that saying Anandateertha

belonged to the 12th century and very likely that Siddhendra belongs to that early a time, and that the Madhava *saṃpradāya* does not reflect in his songs (*Andhri* 96). He believed Siddhendra must have visited the Shankaracharya of Sringeri, Vidyananya Svami and had the influence of *advaita* principles propounded by them in his work. The *yogis* between the 14th-17th century undertook the task upon them to propagate *bhakti* through song and dance. This forms an imperative link between Kuchipudi adopting the *Bhakti* cult²⁰³ and the concept of *madhura bhakti*. *Madhura bhakti* dwells on the principle of *jīvātma* (individual soul) striving to reach the *paramātmā* (supreme soul) with the aid of a medium. These three characters get represented as Satyabhama, Lord Krishna and Madhavi, the *sakhi* or confidante in Siddhendra's *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*.

Prior to the Krishna cult sweeping over, it was reckoned that *Śiva līlā nāṭyaṃ* predated in Telugu culture (Rao and Arundale)²⁰⁴. Thus, the spread of Vaishnavism was considered a pivoting influence in the formation and development of Kuchipudi. When *Gita Govinda* and Krishna cult became popular, the boys of Divi Seema must have taken up dance. P. S. R. Apparao posited that male dancers like *goṭīpuas* (associated with Odisha) existed before Siddhendra and that Jayasenapati, the author of *Nritta Ratnavali*, might be one of them (*Kuchipudi Natyam* 33). These act as a backgrounder for Siddhendra's approach and the idea behind only boys dancing.

²⁰³ The *Bhakti* cult had a profound impact on entire India and so in Andhra. It was believed that Vaishnavite themes replaced the earlier Saivaite themes as a result in the arts (*Khokar Natya* 28)

²⁰⁴ It was written that during the Kakatiya period, they must have done *Śiva Līlā Nāṭyaṃ* and with Vaishnavism, the subject shifted to *Bhagavatam* stories or the tales of Krishna.

In association with this, Sunil Kothari, in his dissertation, apart from giving the legendary stories about Siddhendra, tried to establish certain links (*Dance-Drama* 30, 285-289). He pondered if there were two Siddhendras! While talking of the Vaishnava cult spreading across the South, he mentioned Madhvacharya building a temple in Udipi, the very place where Siddhendra purportedly studied. He also remarked that *Bhāmākalāpam* had influences of *Gita Govinda* and the Narahari Tirtha's work at Srikakulam (near Kuchipudi village). Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao also wrote that Narahari Tirtha visited the Srikakula area, introduced and urged local artistes to learn *Gita Govinda*, thus spreading the Krishna cult spread rapidly in the 14th century (*Kuchipudi Dance-Drama* 32).

Alternatively, Sunil Kothari speculated Siddhendra being a disciple of Narayana Tirtha, as the *taraṅgaṃs*²⁰⁵ were part of the Kuchipudi repertoire (*Dance-drama* 287, 424). If so, Kuchipudi belonged to much later than the 17th century as Narayana Tirtha's was established as seventeenth. Yet, it did not get ascertained as to when exactly *taraṅgaṃs* became part of the repertoire. It is supposedly in the first half of the 20th century that *taraṅgaṃs* found a place in the Kuchipudi repertoire, before which they were either performed with small steps while singing or were part of the *bhajana sampradāya*.

Discussing the hagiography surrounding Siddhendra and criticising the numerous sketches, Arudra claimed that he found a *mudra*²⁰⁶ of Siddhendra in a composition of

²⁰⁵ Narayana Tirtha's *Sri Krishnaleela Tarangini* is a Sanskrit opera on the stories of Lord Krishna, based on *Srimad Bhagavatam*. It has 12 *taraṅgaṃs* that include numerous songs, poems and other structures. In common parlance, though, each of the songs gets addressed to as *taraṅgaṃs*. *Taraṅgaṃs* in Kuchipudi are discussed later in this chapter.

²⁰⁶ The composer's signature or pen name included in the composition serves as an identity marker for that composer. In this instance, it serves as evidence for the reality that Siddhendra, a composer existed. However, Vankayala Balarama Bhukta, Cevuri Erakaya Dasu, Saraswathula Dasu, Teneti Venkata Dasu,

Bhāmākalāpaṃ, thus confirming the existence of a person named Siddhendra (*Lingering* 29-31). It could also be a later-day interpolation as many scripts of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* are in circulation. An instance of a critical engagement appeared in *Bharati* magazine about Siddhendra. P. S. R. Apparao expressed that there was no evidence about Siddhendra *yogi* and that the periods and narratives were based on conjectures (*Siddhendra* 80-84). Contesting that and other theories proposed by him is an article by Sishta Ramakrishna Sastry. He tried to arrive at a more specific and well-proofed timeline for the events surrounding Siddhendra and Kuchipudi (37-41). He also claimed that few scholars' opinions were false and that he restored to facts. These appear to be a dialogue between the writers to research, compare facts/figures, and arrive at particulars.

Yet another elaborate passage dedicated to Siddhendra, by Gangappa, gives about seven stories related to Siddhendra's life (37-45). The first goes that an uneducated Siddhendra had some association with the already existing Kuchipudi practitioners. Then after his marriage, he was reproached in his in-law's place that led him to pursue knowledge and, on return follows the story of the flooding river and his oath as described in the above paragraphs. The next goes that Siddhendra or Siddhapa belonged to Kuchipudi, and his parents were blind. He sought to beg for their sustenance, and that once when Shankaracharya visited Kuchipudi, bestowed upon him the Krishna *mantra*, appreciating Siddhendra's concern towards his parents. Following that, Lord Krishna used to come and play with Siddhendra. As his parents could not see, they requested him to get a vision of Krishna. So, the Lord suggested three children get dressed as Krishna, Rukmini and

Bonthalakodu Kesava Dasu, Mutnuri Narasimha Sastry, Mangu Jagannatham are the other names given as *mudra* in different texts of the songs of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* (Rao, *Kuchipudi Dance; Yesterday* 22).

Satyabhama. His parents received their vision and also attained *siddhi*. Thus, as he was responsible for showing a path for attaining *siddhi*, he became Siddhendra *yogi*, wrote the *Bhāmākalāpaṃ/Parijatham* and started performing. This is a rather rare tale where he was neither an orphan nor was, he married. Also, this gives a more philosophical angle to Siddhendra, and the form in particular, as a vehicle for enlightenment.

The third story is that of an orphan, Siddhendra, who was at the Srikakula Andhra Maha Vishnu temple. A poor man got his daughter married to him. He went to Srikakula Math to get an education so as to have a suitable impression at his in-law's place. An impressed *Maṭhādhipati*, chief of the monastery, sent him to Udipi where he learnt to dance, music and other *śāstras*. Further, this account also concluded with the Krishna flood episode on his return journey. Following it is another version where Suvvanam Kuchayya's daughter Kameswaramma was the wife of Siddhendra- a hopeless boy. She was well-educated, and so a shameful Siddhendra went to Srikakula Math for gaining instruction. Then on return, he stayed at the Srikakula temple and saw *devadāsīs* dance. However, he was dissatisfied as the dancers infused a romantic angle instead of serving God and were serving the king. Thus, he felt only men should dance and at the Rajagopala temple, and he started to dance. This anecdote tries to serve the popular opinion on the *devadāśī* dancers.

Yet another tale goes that Siddhendra was a bachelor at Rayalaseema. Suvanam Jogavadhanulu of Kuchipudi, a scholar, was his father-in-law. Following his wedding, Siddhendra settled in Kuchipudi and learnt art from him. This gives an impression of a performing tradition in Kuchipudi village before Siddhendra and that he was a carrier. Gangappa notes that a *vīthi nāṭaka* called *keḷika*, the *yakṣagāna*, *pagaṭi veṣaṃ* and *vīthi*

bhāgavatam all existed before Siddhendra, who shaped the *kalāpa*. In the succeeding anecdote, Narayana Teertha was Siddhendra's teacher. Lord Krishna danced on Teertha's stomach, and he could only feel the presence of Lord, whereas Siddhendra could also see Krishna. On requesting Krishna through Siddhendra, the Lord suggests that he get *abhinaya* done and that Teertha would get liberation only in the next life.

The subsequent theory was that Narayana Teertha composed *Parijatapaharanam* in Sanskrit, and it was not very well-known in Andhra. Hence, Siddhendra took it upon him to popularise his teacher's manuscript and penned the *kalāpa* in Telugu, drawing from the Sanskrit text. However, there is no definite relation between both *pārijātas*- neither in story nor structure. Kapila Vatsyayan also wrote that Tirthanarayana *yogi* of *Krishnaleelatarangani* was the father of theatre forms of Bhagavata Mela, *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* and Kuchipudi and that he migrated to Melattur. Siddhendra is said to have learnt from Narayana Teertha and returned to Kuchipudi village (*Traditional* 56). This is an infrequent inference, especially the portion of Narayana Teertha being the spearhead of the said forms in Andhra.

The last speculation noted by Gangappa was that in 1678, ruler Tana Shah witnessed the performance in the Kuchipudi temple. Here, Siddhendra himself was getting *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* performed, and an impressed ruler granted the land for the artistes. Gangappa alluded that these were to be hearsay theories in the absence of proofs for any of these. Still, he gave sufficient weightage to the character of Siddhendra. He indicated that forms like *Jakkula* and *Kuravaṇji* were for educating and entertaining but had neither royal patronage nor stamp of authentication by scholars nor did they have any stickling to

sāhitya or even respect before the 16th century. Only after Siddhendra's intervention, the art form achieved all of those.

Besides, an exclusive narrative behind Siddhendra got inferred by Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma (*Bhamane* 38). He wrote that a scholar of *Bharata śāstra* and the greatest dance *guru* named Josyula Kuchela Sastri lived around the 13th century, after whom the village got named. His wife Annapurnamma, after a long wait, by the grace of Lord Krishna on Krishnashtami gave birth to a male child named Siddha Gopala. He learnt to dance from his father, became an expert and married Kameswari, daughter of his maternal uncle Chinta Ramanatha Dikshit. Siddha, who wanted to become a poet, ventured to bathe before the temple visit. The river was in full spate, and a crocodile gripped his leg and pulled him in. Fearing death, he chanted Gopala *mantra* and took the oath of celibacy and got miraculously released. His wife recognised the *sanyāsi* during the consummation of marriage, and he eventually took up residency in the Gopalaswamy temple built by his father before his birth. His pangs of separation from his wife got mentioned to have taken the creative shape as *Bhāmākalāpam*. Others also write of the elevated romantic feelings taking the divine manifestation as *kalāpa* (Ramamurty; Naidu; Kanakalingeshwara Rao and others). Keeping aside the actualities, this episode authorises Siddhendra as a part of Kuchipudi traditional families and that this form of art existed much before him.

There are related stories where Siddhendra belonged to Kuchipudi lineage as per various oral-lore documented by Chintalapati Lakshminarasimha Sastri (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 81-95). Siddhendra gets placed in the Chinta family and gets wedded into the Bhagavatula family (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 81-95). An uneducated, working as a herdsman, he travelled to Kasi to gain knowledge. The rest of

the story is akin to the river Krishna episode and he becoming a *yogi*. The second gave him the name of Chinta Sridharudu. On the way from Kasi to his hometown, he spent few years in Assam serving the saints and gaining knowledge of *nāṭya*²⁰⁷. Thinking of that as a way to spread the *dharma*, he executed the same in Andhra. Yet another narrative gave him the name of Indra Sastri before turning into a *sanyāsi*, belonging to Kuchipudi. As per another, Siddhendra's background is unknown, but he came and settled in Kuchipudi during his travels, impressed by the village boys to whom he taught his *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*.

From all the speculations, it gets construed that Siddhendra got elevated as the intellect behind *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* of Kuchipudi and responsible for either formation or refinement of art in that region. The numerous narratives tried to place the purportedly legendary figure as having strong knowledge of the *śāstras* and the art of dance. Some of the anecdotes touch on the philosophical aspects and the influences Siddhendra had when creating his version of *kalāpa*. The next portion thus is about the *kalāpa* tradition, which literally became a synonym for Kuchipudi.

Bhāmākalāpaṃ's storyline is that of a pining and repentant Satyabhama seeking her confidante Madhavi's assistance to reunite with her husband, Lord Krishna. Whereas *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* was apparently the first written and oft-cited, there is another *kalāpa* called the *Gollakalāpaṃ*. It is a conversation between a cowherd woman and a brahmin, involving matters of philosophy. There is a rare mention of a third *kalāpaṃ* called *Coḍigāni kalāpaṃ* with two characters, Singadu/Chodigadu and his wife, Singi. The couple's argument, separation, and union form the storyline, with some mythological stories interjected in

²⁰⁷ The aspects of male dancers and the portrayal of *Parijatam* story are reckoned similar to both Sattriya of Assam and Kuchipudi.

between (Sangamesam and Salva). Here, it is to be noticed that *kalāpa* is the genre's name, and the lead character's name gets suffixed for the respective storylines.

Enakshi Bhavnani, in her chapter on Kuchipudi, seemed to seek a logical explanation for the genesis of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, unlike the divine intervention theory postulated by many writers (57, 58). Siddhendra was called a composer who got inspired by *Parijatapaharanam* of Narayana Teertha and an earlier *Parijatham* by Umapathi of Bharhut belonging to the 14th century. This relation to Umapathi was not voiced elsewhere. Adding to that is the explanation that *Parijatham* of Kuchipudi got remodeled with additions of *nṛtta* and elaboration of Satyabhama character, thus metamorphosing into *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* of Kuchipudi. This, in turn, is said to have inspired composers from other regions to come up with their own versions. This was not acceptable to scholars like Daves Soneji, who believe in the co-existence of *Bhāmākalāpaṃs* by different groups in Andhra (Soneji).

Some writers like C. R. Acharyulu noted the fact that there are many versions of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*- that of Kuchipudi *Bhāgavatulu* and of Pendyala Satyabhama and Marampalli Chitti etc., who belonged to the female dancing traditions²⁰⁸. Nataraj Ramakrishna placed four types of *kalāpaṃs* as done by the Kuchipudi group, *devadāsi*, Turpu/Bobbili and Kotakonda traditions and except for *devadāsi*, others were all performed by men (*Bhamakalapam* 46). While the storyline is more or less identical, the written

²⁰⁸ Although the story was the same in female dancing traditions, the poets' scripted versions to suit a particular dancer, which gets further performed by her lineage. For example, the *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* performed by Annabathula Bulivenkataratnam was by Atkuri Subbarao, continued by her descendent Annabathula Mangatayaru. Likewise, the script of the version performed by Maddula Lakshminarayana was by Gaddam Subbarayadu.

The other groups that perform *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* are *Tūrpu Bhāgavatulu*, from the Eastern Andhra-Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram, belonging to the *kammari*- goldsmith caste, and *Cinḍu Bhāgavatulu*, the *mādiga*- Dalit community, predominantly from Telangana.

expression and presentation differs due to regional tastes²⁰⁹ (Acharyulu, *Natyakala* 5-8). Balantrapu Rajanikanta Rao wrote that *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* was devised under the model of a form called *pāvai kūtu*, performed by women during 1 CE and described it as a *deśi* variety of showcasing divine love (*Andhri* 95). It was also hypothesised that Kuchipudi texts add episodes in *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, owing to it being a *nāṭyameḷa* tradition²¹⁰. The features of multiple characters (like Rukmini²¹¹) adding variety and completeness to the story and secondly, the exaggerated, comic movements and thirdly, the attire of Madhavi is seen only in the Kuchipudi tradition (Anuradha, *Bhamakalapam*)²¹².

Out of the unique features of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, the *jaḍa* or braid of the lead character Bhama or Satyabhama was considered necessary in the oral lore. The braid was believed to describe the entire cosmos and had a lineage of the celebrated mythological characters who possessed it. *Jaḍa /vēṇī vṛttāntaṃ*, the tale of the braid, was a crucial piece in the performance of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*. It was a practice that the best performer owned the valuable braid²¹³ and anyone who dares challenge him/her had the braid at stake²¹⁴. Over time, though, the prominence associated with the braid diminished and the episode's length reduced. This was owing to performing the condensed version of *kalāpa* and a general

²⁰⁹ For instance, in the *Tūrpu* tradition, the presentation is only with singing. There is no dance (Ramakrishna, *Bhamakalapam*).

²¹⁰ Daves Soneji gives three major publications of the script of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, as performed by Kuchipudi artistes. First was an edition in 1913 by Mangu Jagannatha Rao, second edited by Vedantam Parvateesam in 1946 and then by Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy in 1967, with the aid of Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao. It also got documented that there were many manuscripts possessed by various masters and dancers, with variations (*Performing* 169, 170).

²¹¹ A piece called *savatula kayyam* gets performed in Kuchipudi *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*. It shows the quarrel between the co-wives Satyabhama and Rukmini.

²¹² For more on *kalāpa* and impersonation in Telugu regions, see Harshita Mruthinti Kamath's dissertation (*Aesthetics*).

²¹³ For example, Sumathy Kaushal was bestowed with the "Satyabhama Jada" by Padmasri Vedantham Satyanarayana Sharma for her excellent presentation as Satyabhama (*Sumathy*).

²¹⁴ For history and symbolism on *jaḍa*, see the article by Chaganti Kapaleswara Rao (*Jada*).

reduction of the performance duration. The protagonist Bhama, who possessed that glorious braid, is usually shown as a proud and assertive woman. The presentation involves fun elements interjected through her conversations with Madhavi, portrayed by the *sūtradhāra*²¹⁵ typically. The conversations and compositions included knowledge on medicine to philosophy and incorporating the local legends, at times. Though the performance span reduced over the years, the inclusion of local issues and general knowledge into performance came to be identified with Kuchipudi.

4.3 The place and people

4.3.1 Nomenclature and location

Kuchipudi practitioners were appreciated as socially driven and for including snippets from current affairs by intelligently weaving into their dialogue and dance in either their *kalāpas/yakṣagānas*. A prevalent incident in relation was 'Machupalli Kaifiat', an oft-quoted, foremost recorded narrative in the year 1502, about the presence and position of Kuchipudi. The episode goes that during the 16th century, Vijayanagara kingdom reigned the present Andhra region. Sammeta Guruvaraju, a local chieftain, humiliated woman about which the ruler Veera Narasimha/Narasimharaya²¹⁶ was unaware. The *bhāgavatars* sought an audience and performed the chieftain's atrocities before the ruler, resulting in the chieftain getting punished and therefore ending the atrocities. As sourced from *The Local records* by C.P. Brown, evidence of the same were included in the appendix of a history book (Ramanayya 462, 463). As per that, Kuchipudi *bhāgavatars* from Koomchipoomdi

²¹⁵ *Sūtradhāra* is the story's narrator in Kuchipudi dramas and was considered the critical artiste running the whole show. He is generally well-versed in music and dance. He introduces the characters and known for interjecting the social aspects into the play.

²¹⁶ The name of the ruler was also given as Immadi Narasa nayaka (Khokar, *Natya* 27).

village near Vinukonda Bellamkonda witnessed the atrocities of Guravaraju. They requested that they would present a *keḷika* in front of the ruler in Vijayanagara. Because of their famed *vidya* (knowledge/art), the women also got summoned by Rayalu to witness this performance. It was probably custom of that time that women were invited only for the presentations by distinguished individuals/groups, as were the Kuchipudi *bhāgavatars*.

Two facets of curiosity in this instance are the nature of the presentation and the geographical location. Firstly, by the time of this incident (16 CE), the *bhāgavatars* of Kuchipudi were already acclaimed for what was called a *keḷika*. The labels, *kalāpa* or *yakṣagāna*, were not used in this context, as seen in the previous section's segregation of Kuchipudi genres. It was *keḷika*, a short dance performance, similar to *erukula* or *bālīnta veṣam*. (Parvateesam and Murthy 83). Secondly, regarding the location, the places Vinukonda (119 km) and Bellamkonda (86 km) are about 100 km away from the present Kuchipudi, and it could have been that the entire area had *bhāgavatulu* practising a similar art form.

About the village of Kuchipudi, its location and name were much-debated topics. Kuchipudi conventionally was the name of the village where Brahmin performing troupes resided. Historically, it is common to note the association of a place name with either groups or individuals for identity purposes. It was also as a means of distinguishing one from the other, should there be resemblance in names²¹⁷. Different troupes perform the

²¹⁷ For example, in the dance fields, the Bharatanatyam masters from Thanjavur have that prefixed before their actual names- Thanjavur Kittappa Pillai, while his birth name is K.P. Kittappa Pillai. The place here signifies the lineage and dance style he practices. Similarly, multiple groups perform the *yakṣagāna*, and they get called Karnataka Yakshagana or Kuchipudi Yakshagana, based on location.

Bhāgavata tales. For example, the artistes from the Eastern part of Andhra get addressed as *Tūṛpu bhāgavatulu* and the group from Kuchipudi as the Kuchipudi *bhāgavatulu*.

Furthermore, the word Kuchipudi itself has numerous connotations. One was that it is a colloquialised form of the Sanskrit term, Kuseelavapuri. *Sabdaratnakara* gives *kuśīlavas* as wandering bands of actors (Misra, *Invitation*). Then, in Andhra, *kuśīlavas* become colloquially known as *kūcigāllu*; therefore, the place became Kuchelapuram or Kuseelavapuri-the village of actors (Raman). Another explanation given was that *pūḍi* refers to a waterlog and *kūci*, small (Apparao, *Kuchipudi Natyam* 34). Thus, relating it with river Krishna in the vicinity, the village got its name as a place beside a water body. Deliberating on the name Kuchipudi, Arudra wrote that *kūci* means female dancer and *kūcanna* or *kūcigāllu* refers to a band of male dancers. *Pūḍi* is a term for the village and hence the name Kuchipudi- a village for the band of dancers (*Art* 17-19). He insisted that it was inappropriate that Kuseelavapuri referred to Lord Rama's sons or Kuchela (or Sudhama, Lord Krishna's friend) discovering the village.

Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma posited a different story in this regard. According to him, wandering brahmins called *kuśīlavas*, descendants of *Kuśa*, belonged to Bharata's lineage of students who came and settled in the village, Kuchannapudi, which later became Kuchipudi (Rao and Sarma 37). They performed Sanskrit compositions and later in Telugu. They also taught the art to local boys with Chinta, Bhagavatula and Vedantam surnames, thereby continuing the art form. He wrote that he heard this story from his grandparents, parents and teachers. This was the case of many stories gathered from oral tradition, regardless of those being fabricated or accurate!

Further, about the location of the village, there were diverse opinions. Arudra argued that another Kuchipudi near Vinukonda (near Guntur, Andhra Pradesh) had *bhāgavatulu* who toured and performed, the same name noted above in the Machupalli Kaifiat incident (Art 17-19). Though deserted later, he asserted that these from Vinukonda were the initial dancers or troupes on who there is documented evidence. Apart from that, there is yet another Kuchipudi near Tenali (Andhra Pradesh), albeit with no records on Brahmin performers. There are other village locations by the same name Kuchipudi near Repalli, Tenali and Kodhada (Arudra, *Kuchipudi* 236-244).

Yet, according to other scholars, the present location of Kuchipudi, near Vijayawada, was the only place having relation with the history of the performing arts. The vicinity of Srikakulam (the capital of early Satavahanas) and Movva (the place where poet Kshetrappa resided) also possess an artistic past, adding to its credibility (Apparao, *Kuchipudi Natyam*). Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao added about a hundred *devadāsi* dancers in the Chebrole temple in the Guntur district to prove that the area was culturally inclined (*Kuchipudi Dance- Drama* 30).

Reviewing the exact evidence for the village and its inhabitants, Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao opined that it was in 1678 that Tanashah gifted the land, and due to some quarrels, a partition deed dated 1763 came up, drafted by Mosalikanti Kamoji Pantulu and Kandragula Jogi Pantulu. They were the agents of Nizam of Hyderabad (*Kuchipudi Dance- Drama* 34). Arudra, nevertheless, questioned this claim since the copper plate of the land agreement of 1675 is unavailable, suspecting that such a valuable document cannot be lost (*Lingering* 29-31). It is usual practice that places of importance get mentioned in local documents and records. Arudra added that the Kuchipudi of Divi

Taluq was not of any exceptional worth and thus did not find a mention in Colin Mckenzie's 1812 documentation. On the contrary, mention of Kuchipudi villagers (the present location) seeking rights over the village, which was gifted to them, was found in Gordon Meckenzie's 1883 documentation²¹⁸. As per that, at least by the mid-18th century, the present location of Kuchipudi village was occupied by these artistes.

Notwithstanding the discrepancies, the available deed of 1763 was considered a vital indicator regarding the distinction of Kuchipudi artistes. Names of fifteen families with surnames Bhagavatula, Bokka, Darbha, Eleswarapu, Hari, Josyula, Mahankali, Pasumarti, Peddibhatla, Polepeddi, Vallabhajosyula, Vedantam, Vempati, Vemu and Venukunti were given as residents of the village. Another scholar, Chintalapati Lakshminarasimha Sastri, mentioned that by 1667, there were nineteen families, including Challa, Kanupuru, Tadepalli, and, Vonukarti (*Kuchipudi* 232). Out of these, there are active dance practitioners from few families to date.

4.3.2 *The hereditary artistes*

As per the aforementioned testimonies, the early practitioners were from those families inhabiting the Kuchipudi village. There were legends about how it was mandatory for men of those families to practise dance as ordained by Siddhendra. Vempati Chinna Satyam clarified in an interview that the obligatory belief that every Brahmin boy of Kuchipudi families should have their ears pierced and perform *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* before marriage existed before his generation (Rao, *Transformation* 57). This means that by the early 20th century itself, only a few from those traditional families took up the art.

²¹⁸ Anuradha Jonnalagadda's dissertation has a detailed account of this and copies of the deeds and agreements as an appendix (*Tradition*).

Besides some cursory indications on what they did otherwise, there is very little written about their livelihood and their socio-communal standing as a performing tribe. Divakarla Ramamurthy proclaimed that the greatness of Kuchipudi traditional artistes was because of their regulations and described the village thus (89-126). The masters trained students in front of their houses, and visitors could see an overall pleasant atmosphere with melodious singing that swept the streets. As most of the village folk, called the *agrahārikulu*²¹⁹ were trained in Sanskrit and related texts, their spoken language was also *prācīna* (ancient) style and not colloquial Telugu (Rao, *Kuchipudi School* 14). Kocherlakota Suryaprakasa Rao noted that hereditary performers were well-versed in music and sang with their own voice while performing (59). Furthermore, he mentioned that they sang in high pitches due to the absence of a microphone in those days and also owing to their sturdy built. This is a rare signifier about their physical stature. It was also added that the women, though not formally educated and never had any musical training outside their own houses, could sing as well because of their acquaintance through constant listening. Regarding their livelihood, Kuchipudi dancer-residents were farmers in rainy and other related seasons and performers for the rest of the time. Denying some presumptions, Vempati Chinna Satyam asserted that they were never into *arcakatvam* or priesthood but were always into cultivation (Rao, *Transformation* 57).

One fascinating reference about Kuchipudi artistes, alongside their art and agriculture, was their knowledge of *mantra śāstra* or esoteric practices (Ramamurthy; Rao, *Kuchipudi School*; Sastry *Kuchipudi-Classical* 14). There were two instances both relating

²¹⁹ *Agrahāraṃ* is a land granted to the Brahmins usually, and *agrahārikulu* are its residents. Kuchipudi village was granted by a ruler and thus the name *agrahāraṃ*.

to the fame of Kuchipudi and its artistes. The first was about the rivalry between artistes to play the role of Bhama where one tried *cētabaḍi*- black magic on his competitor, and the latter retaliated (Venkatrao). The second was an incident between Bhagavatula/Peddibhatla Dasaratha Ramayya of Kuchipudi and a Malayali Brahmin. The latter, out of professional rivalry, tried to sabotage the performance of Kuchipudi artistes in Kerala, and Ramayya saved the day with his forte of *mañtras* (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi*; Radhakrishnamurthy, *Dakshinadiki*; Gangappa).

Remarking about the nature of these artistes, Mohan Khokar voiced that the *bhāgavatulu* performed not as entertainment or for livelihood but as a divine offering (*Splendours* 76). Rather, looking at the performance structure and the space of performance, it is the contrary that seems factual. The venue was in front of a social gathering, at the village crossroads, generally outside the temple precincts and content though majorly *bhakti*-related was not entirely devotional. As dealt with in the other sections of this chapter, it was a didactic medium, including the societal happenings. These hint that the performance was more of a profession.

4.3.3 Patronage

Despite the definite motive, their art strived and survived for centuries. That leads to the next crucial historical fragment, patronage, which always played a vital role in the sustenance of any art. The rulers, either kings or zamindars in the later day, were the key patrons. In fact, the political conditions had its repercussions on the art and practitioners so much that few families from Kuchipudi immigrated to Tamil Nadu after the fall of the Vijayanagara empire around the 16th-17th centuries. The Bhāgavata Mela Nāṭakaṃ was

considered an off-shoot of that lineage²²⁰.

Pertaining to the village, there is a reference about village-land being gifted by King Tanashah of Qutb Shahi dynasty when he chanced upon the performance of Kuchipudi *Bhāgavatars* in 1675. The available evidence was the agreement deed of 1763, and Arudra propounded that the local zamindars were the actual ones to endow the village and not the ruler (*Lingering* 29-31). Either way, it was the rulers in some position that were the benefactors. According to a Revenue order, the village of Kuchipudi was bestowed to Bhagavatula Lingayya, Vedantam Ramesam, Gopal and Peddibhotla Gurulingam as a permanent authority- *stotrīya dharmāsana*. This was issued by the Zamindar of Bezawada- Kalvakolanu Buchanna Choudhary and E. Timmana Rao (Jonnalagadda, *Tradition* 41).

Adding to that thought, Ayyanki Thandava Krishna posited that Kuchipudi did not enjoy royal patronage before the 17th century from Telugu rulers (60). An illustration noted was that Sri Krishnadevaraya impressed by Kuchipudi artistes, especially one Kesvabhattu, took some artistes along with him and built a theatre for them at Hampi (G. V. G 69). Later, the Zamindars funded and also the public support helped in the sustenance of the art till late 19th or even early 20th centuries.

From the 1940s, Kuchipudi got supported in the motion picture industry, about which there is meagre documentation in the 20th century²²¹. Post-independence, the newly formed Indian Government launched the Sangeet Natak Akademi, to support and patronise music and dance. Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, the regional wing

²²⁰ Bhagavata Mela Natakam is a theatrical performance based in Melattur, Tamil Nadu that is thought to be similar to Kuchipudi. There are various opinions about their relation. (Kothari, *Dance-Drama*; Parthasarathy and Murthy, *Kuchipudi Yakshagana*)

²²¹ Some changes related to association with movies will be discussed in the technique section of this chapter. For more on movies and Kuchipudi, refer to Katyayani Thota's thesis (*Stage*).

organised seminars and meetings (apart from the publications as discussed in the beginning of this chapter) for about two decades, and acted for the upliftment of Kuchipudi in its crucial period.

To a certain extent, the *sabhas*²²², corporate sector and individual patrons contributed to the flourishing of art and the survival of artistes, though the reliance on the Government for grants and funds persists. In the Kuchipudi village itself, attempts were made to showcase Kuchipudi in its birthplace and introduce other dance forms to the village and its neighbouring places. Under the banner of Akhila Bharata Kuchipudi Natya Kala Mandali, an annual Siddhendra Jayanti festival is conducted in the months of February-March, led by members of the hereditary families. With meagre funds and donations, this event is functioning since the late 1980s. The issue of funding and sponsorships might well be one of the factors behind the struggle for classical status, apart from the identity struggle, that gets further deliberated.

4.4 Kuchipudi and the Classical status debate

In this regard, the primary question was why Kuchipudi, which was one of the diverse forms practised in Andhra, got nominated as archetypal of Telugu culture. In the earlier period, the practitioners themselves did not really try to showcase theirs as the prime form representing a state. It was the scholars who worked on it and propelled the form. As deliberated in the previous chapters, the rise of the middle-class and their social outlook resulted in what got featured and promoted. This concept of the elite being assertive of what they viewed as most important is notable in the case of Kuchipudi. The proponents

²²² *Sabha* means an assembly. In this context, it refers to the organisations that conduct and run the music and dance performances.

who pushed Kuchipudi into the limelight belonged to Brahmin-scholar-educated class, be it Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao or Vissa Appa Rao. Till the latter mentioned it at the Sangeet Natak Akademi seminar of 1958, as Rumya Putcha pointed, the disquisition on Kuchipudi's classicity was meagre (*Between* 95). In fact, he also spoke about Bhagavata Mela Natakam as an equivalent to Kuchipudi and that both the forms be deemed classical (*Kuchipudi School* 15). Though both forms often get compared, there is no correspondence in any of the writings about the claim for the classical status of the Bhagavata Mela Natakam, along with Kuchipudi.

Another prerequisite for choosing Kuchipudi could be the upper-caste inclination. Kuchipudi was practised by male Brahmins, who were considered respected authorities in the field of knowledge, which would have reflected on the art. A minor category like Nataraj Ramakrishna questioned if other art forms also had to be brought forth and sought representation. Yet, there was no further probing on these other styles, and it is clear that only Kuchipudi got preferred as the representative of Telugus²²³.

At a point, the Kuchipudi fraternity believed they faced discrimination for being adept only in Telugu. The lack of practitioners' fluency in English or Hindi and the performance lyric being exclusively in Telugu was thought as the excuse for the lesser visibility of Kuchipudi at the national level. Ironically, it was the same language that became a defining factor in forefronting their cultural ethos²²⁴. As Rumya Putcha posited, "...if Kuchipudi was not classical, then the Telugu-speaking people were not considered representative citizens of the emerging Indian nation-state." (*Between* 91). The language,

²²³ As gathered from multiple articles in the *Natyakala* magazines.

²²⁴ The present-day experts from hereditary families like Vedantam Radhesyam believe that the problem persists to date (Radhesyam).

its cultural representation, and the Nationalistic ideologies worked together to create an identity for the newly formed state.

Prior to any further discussion on Kuchipudi as a state symbol of Telugu speaking areas, the idea of state reorganisation founded on language needs consideration. Though there were other reasons²²⁵, one of the primary roots for separation from the multi-lingual Madras Presidency was language. This notion advanced rampantly, subsuming everything that epitomised Telugus. Telugu²²⁶, the language had to gain distinctiveness from Tamil, thus creating the same for its speakers. Telugu was once in history, characteristic for music, literature and poetry and held a distinguished stature in the linguistic domain (Mitchell 69). It is commonplace to resort to different languages for different purposes like conversing at home, at the workplace, for education, for formal tasks, and the like. But, with the foray of translations and the growth of regional language composers, Telugu became one amongst the myriad languages. Expressly, the contention with Tamil led to a struggle for individuality, as both were spoken in the same geographical expanse.

Regarding this, Romila Thapar theorised that the states adopt a particular culture as mainstream for ease of operation, coinciding with the culture of the dominant social group in that region (1079, 1080). This can be connected with both the dialect and the art. Relating, Lisa Mitchell opined that the dialect spoken in the Krishna-Godavari belt region was treated as standard, and therefore the art form of that area could have been deemed sophisticated, leading those to become the representatives (24). Thus, as a cultural

²²⁵ The separate Andhra movement began in the early 19th century but gathered momentum close to Indian independence. The background for that ranged from trading difficulty, financial stability, employment opportunities, a common culture and overall development in education, agriculture and industrial sectors. It came under the canopy of a linguist-based provenance for the ease in administration as against the British geographical division depending on the trade (Mantena; Rao, *Case*).

²²⁶ There are also arguments about the words Andhra and Telugu and what they represent (Keiko).

endorsement, Kuchipudi by the learned Brahmins had the lead. When Sadir of Tamil Nadu assumed the form of Bharatanatyam became synonymous as the dance of India, the Telugu counterparts would have sought a depiction for their culture as well. The village of Kuchipudi situated in the epicentre of Andhra, and the practitioners being erudite and from the Brahmin caste, this exact form was preferred against the several others practised by different groups. Under these circumstances, Kuchipudi became the physical, cultural manifestation of the Telugu speaking populace once the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh state formed. Several indications by regional writers referred to a lack of a distinct state and thus a distinct identity²²⁷.

Rumya Putcha stated that "*Though the stated purpose for the 1959 Seminar was to establish Kuchipudi's Classicism, at its core, this event was primarily an exercise in establishing the authority of Andhra Pradesh and its state-level government organisations.*" (Between 102). Once the state got formed, the Telugu clan needed an image to ascertain their position. It raises doubt if the move was just to demonstrate their sovereignty or genuine bidding for the art. The arguments centring around the 'classicality' for Kuchipudi reinstate the cause for a Telugu representation at the national forefront²²⁸. But then, the primary question would be what was the insistent necessity to attain classical status for an art form. Classical was synonymous with respectable and having antiquity, as discussed in the preceding chapters. Thus, it was imaginably for a distinguished profile by the Telugus, or the many benefits consequential to recognition or the reverence associated

²²⁷ This can be referred to in the numerous issues of Telugu magazine *Natyakala*, published by Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy. In addition, the role of cinema and identity of Telugus, with Kuchipudi as the representative art form were explained by Rumya Putcha and Katyayani Thota in their respective dissertations (Putcha, *Revisiting*; Thota, *Stage*)

²²⁸ Interestingly, Telugu gained a place in the 'classical languages of India' in 2008.

with anything 'classical'. For all those, the prerequisite was Government acceptance and legitimisation, the process of propelling Kuchipudi as a mainstream, classical dance was yet challenging.

As identified earlier, Kuchipudi got restricted to the Telugu areas and parts of southern India till the 1940s. The first presentation of Kuchipudi at the National level was in the Jaipur National Congress at Jaipur in 1948, where the troupe from Kuchipudi performed *Prahlāda Caritaṃ*. A decade later was the crucial time in Kuchipudi's history where the following showcases occurred in 1958. Kuchipudi was part of both the All-India Dance Seminar, 1958 at Delhi organised by Sangeet Natak Akademi ²²⁹ and as a performance at a national-level science conference.

The 1958 conference, especially, was an important event in the struggle for classicity for Kuchipudi. Vissa Appa Rao, a speaker at that seminar, wrote about how Kuchipudi, an ancient drama, was not recognised as an "*important classical style*" while "*secular- solo*" dances like Bharatanatyam and Kathak were identified. He also added that in the last hundred years, *nāṭya* got ignored in favour of *rāja-nartakis* (*Kuchipudi School* 23). He might mean that the dramatic tradition, which conformed to *Natyasastra*, was sidelined, and the female dancing was encouraged. For all that was alleged about male, hereditary artistes perpetuating the art, the representatives surprisingly do not fall under that category. It was Vissa Appa Rao, a non-dancer, scholar and advocate, who presented a paper and Mariganti Kanchanamala²³⁰, a female disciple of Vedantam Lakshminarayana

²²⁹ The conference took place between 31st March and 7th April. A detailed account of the conference proceedings involving Kuchipudi was analysed by Rumya Putcha (*Revisiting*)

²³⁰ Mariganti Kanchanamala had the distinction of being the first scholarship holder for dance granted by the Department of Culture, Government of India.

Sastry who went as delegates ²³¹. Nevertheless, this seminar did not aid in the Telugus motive to gain national level acceptance.

Another interesting anecdote of bearing and that displayed the power play occurred in the same year, 1958. Yamini Krishnamurthy (1940-), a famed dancer, was prohibited to perform Kuchipudi at the first Science Conference in independent India as the form was deemed ineligible due to a folk labelling. In correspondence with the then Vice President of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishna, Yamini Krishnamurthy succeeded in performing at the said event in front of the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and other luminaries (Suryadevara). She called it "*a dramatic launch for Kuchipudi on the national stage*" (*Passion* 58, 59). Through the hands of influence, perceived from all the above names, this incident boosted awareness on Kuchipudi at the national front.

The following year, in 1959, another seminar was organised by Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy in Hyderabad, specifically for getting classical recognition to Kuchipudi, and the purpose was achieved. In this, Vaidehi and Induvadana of the *devadāsi* families performed *Gollakalāpaṃ*, which, as claimed by later scholars, was instrumental in Kuchipudi achieving classical status (*Putcha History* 91-110). However, to counter this exclusive emphasis on the women dancer's accountability, during the same seminar, *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* and *Prahlāda Caritaṃ* were performed by Kuchipudi men. Though the

²³¹ In personal interview with Vedantam Ramalinga Sastry, when this research scholar asked why they were sent as representatives for Kuchipudi in the 1958 seminar, he replied thus: It was Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma who was supposed to go but could not due to his other commitments. The others who went did not showcase authentic Kuchipudi and thus resulted in presenting an erroneous impression (Sastry). Rumya Putcha gave an account of her personal communication with Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma that Vissa Appa Rao and Kanchanamala were sent because of their abilities to communicate in English. She posited that it was an intentional move to send non-hereditary representatives to portray the changing dynamics of the form and entry of women (*History* 101 and *Revisiting*).

opinions differ as to who the 'real representatives' were, Kuchipudi got declared as classical in 1959.

Despite accomplishing the much-desired status, almost an entire decade post that focused on establishing the classical nature of Kuchipudi, particularly in *Natyakala* magazine. Since Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy was instrumental in Kuchipudi achieving status, it took upon the task to stress the rationale behind that move. In the native Telugu language, this magazine typically read by the Telugus would enable them to accept and embrace a sense of their own style of dance²³². There was a pressing need to imprint in the minds of locals about Kuchipudi as a *Natyasastra* abiding, authentic art and not just a regional variation.

*"Kuchipudi was performed mostly in villages and not in cities, so maybe it was thought of as a rural art. Now that under the leadership of Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao, it has spread up to Delhi, and the practitioners have received Government awards and that while Kuchipudi belongs to the 14th-15th centuries, and others post 16th, to say such ancient art is not classical is not fair!"*²³³ -Vedantam Raghavayya (*Nrityotsavalu* 168).

Vedantam Raghavayya²³⁴, expressed thus in the All-India Dance Festival-1964 at Hyderabad, for which he was the chairperson. It is indeed startling that almost five years post the achievement of classical status, artistes still remonstrated the outlook of Kuchipudi. In an equivalent vein, E. Krishna Iyer lamented that Kuchipudi was not accepted as classical (*Nrityotsavalu* 167). He noted that the style might sound folk-ish due

²³² There were few articles in some of the issues that were published in English in *Natyakala*.

²³³ This is a translation from the original article written in Telugu.

²³⁴ Vedantam Raghavayya (1919-1971) was an exponent from the hereditary Kuchipudi family. He was a prominent movie director in the Telugu film industry.

to the *saṃpradāya* of it thriving in villages as in the above quote. E. Krishna Iyer added that music laden with *gāṃbhīrya* (sobriety) was comparable to Carnatic, unlike folk, and so had to be classical. This debate on Kuchipudi's musical style was equivocal, though most artistes of the hereditary family believe it is in Carnatic style²³⁵. Another writer, K.N.T. Sastry, in a national magazine, opined that it was only after the All-India Dance Festival of 1964 that Kuchipudi gained fame as a "*scientific and classical performance*" due to the efforts of Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao and the support of other luminaries like E. Krishna Iyer and Damayanti Joshi, a Manipuri artist.

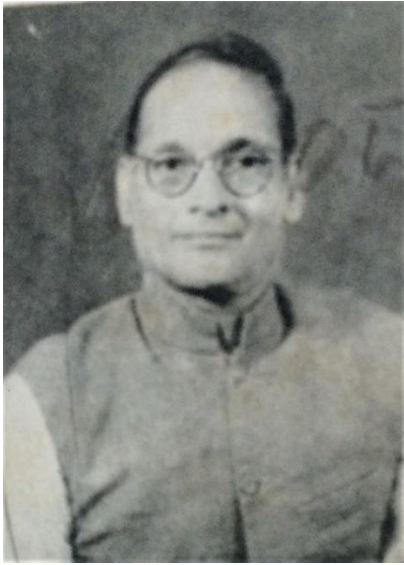


Fig. 4.13. (Left) Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao: *Natyakala*, vol. 4, no. 1&2, Jan. and Feb. 1969.

Fig. 4.14. (Right) Vissa Apparao: Sarma, M. Nagabhushana., editor. Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry special issue. *Nartanam*, 2002, p. 49.

One name that surfaces in both the above accounts is that of Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao. He was the intellect and apostle behind the classical movement

²³⁵ The music of Kuchipudi is discussed in other sections in this chapter.

of Kuchipudi. He contributed relentlessly to put Kuchipudi on the national map through his publications, arranging performances of hereditary artistes, pursuing grants, and establishing Siddhendra Kalakshetra, an institute for systematised training in Kuchipudi village (Chakravarty, *Banda* 39-42).

One of his crucial postulations, in his words, was, "... *Kuchipudi dance does not fall short of any other type enlisted by the Academies as classical.*" (*The Kuchipudi Dance-Drama* 36). While arguing about the position of Kuchipudi, amongst the other forms, he asserted that any dance or dance-drama structure, which relied on the principles of Bharata's *Natyasastra*, was definitely classical. He professed that *pūrvaraṅga/raṅgapūja*²³⁶ of Kuchipudi followed what was stated in the treatise, unlike most other forms, and thus classical. That it was Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao who incorporated *nāṇḍi ślokās*²³⁷ into the Kuchipudi preliminaries is a prevalent conjecture. However, the traditional family members believe that the preliminary rituals were always present. It was feasible that Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao made the artistes showcase on open stage (as they were done behind the closed curtain) or condensed or assisted in streamlining the format of the presentation. Chinta Ravi Bala Krishna, a hereditary artiste, cited the example of a book on *Prahlāda Yakṣagāna* belonging to Chinta Venkatramayya having *nāṇḍi ślokās*. He argued that Chinta Venkatramayya belonged to a much earlier period than Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao, thus proving that the rites existed over time (Krishna).

About these connections with treatises and his association with Kuchipudi itself, later day scholars like Daves Soneji opined it was a conscious attempt as part of the

²³⁶ According to *Natyasastra*, *pūrvaraṅga/raṅgapūja* refers to a series of rites to be performed at the beginning of any performance.

²³⁷ The rendering of verses and other rituals during *pūrvaraṅga*.

Nationalist agenda. Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao has re-scripted the cultural history of Andhra, sidelining the female traditions and highlighting the Kuchipudi tradition (*Performing* 169). Despite these differences in opinion, it is acceptable to all quarters that Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao was instrumental in Kuchipudi's popularity and stabilisation. Adding to that, Edwina Ranganath suggested that Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao getting an aid post the fallback of Kuchipudi was essential for its revival (45). That was probably an imperative parameter also in striving for the classical status, as the funding helped in stabilisation and spread of Kuchipudi.

Taking a cue from the instances of Kanchanamala and Yamini Krishnamurthy representing Kuchipudi, it was during this same time as classical status was pursued that Kuchipudi emerged as a solo from its dramatic past. The succeeding section thus deals with how a theatrical tradition transmuted into predominantly solo performance and the intensification of women practitioners.

4.5 The formats

4.5.1 The upsurge of solo

As noted earlier, two systems flourished in the Andhra region by the female and male troupes called *naṭṭuva meḷa* and *nāṭya meḷa*, respectively. It is clear that the solo system of dancing was attached to the former. Kuchipudi was in the drama system with *kalāpa* and *yakṣagāna* formats. But the major breakthrough occurred when the solos of Kuchipudi took mainstage. How a principally dramatic system moulded itself into a solo need to be understood.

Solos, termed as *ekapātra keḷika*- performed by a single artiste, or *vystanṛttāṃśaṃ*- separate dance pieces, were not entirely new for the Kuchipudi structure. A sole performer

performed few compositions of the *kalāpaṃ*. More pronouncedly, in the *yakṣagāna*s, solos were presented as divertissements (Khokar, *Natya* 29). Sometimes, they got presented in suitable situations like dancers performing at court or as a soliloquy. Pasumarthy Kesavaprasad, a hereditary master and scholar, explained that irrespective of context, the characters of *yakṣagāna* performed solos. He gave the example of Leelavati doing *Daśāvatāra śabda* in front of Hiranyakasipu in *Prahlāda yakṣagāna*. Solos moreover showcased the dancing prowess of artistes²³⁸ (Kesavaprasad).

From that position to a radical shift to the solo system had a connection with the entry of female dancers into the all-male tradition. Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry was credited as the first *guru* to teach solos and actively made his students perform as early as the 1930s. He supposedly frequently interacted with women performers and was affected by their dances as well. Also, he got influenced by Bharatanatyam and Uday Shankar's style of dance and borrowed that style into solo presentational items (Putcha, *Dancing* 14). Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry transformed the *ekārtha* style (a single-story structure for the entire performance) to *prithagārtha* (presenting independent and disconnected numbers in one performance). Not only that, but he also taught extensively to women from other castes²³⁹.

It is fascinating to see why Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry chose solos as a way forward for Kuchipudi. Vedantam Parvateesam noted that due to Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry's voice, he was given minor roles in the *yakṣagāna* as the lead

²³⁸ There is another version that when the same artiste portrayed multiple characters, during his costume change time or to give him rest time, solos by youngsters were utilised as fillers. This was also one way to introduce youngsters into the performance circuit (Sarma, *Vedantam* 29).

²³⁹ It is also interesting that his granddaughter Akella Shanti Sastri claimed to be the first female from a hereditary family to perform Kuchipudi (Sastri and Murthy 166).

roles required the characters to sing and deliver dialogues effectively. For that, he set out searching for a niche for himself (*Solo* 82-84). The Zamindars were impressed with his solo dancing and thus paved a path for Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry's creative explorations²⁴⁰. Also, by the 1920-30s, Bharatanatyam, a solo female dance, was on its ascent and acted as an impetus for Kuchipudi.

Regarding female artistes in Kuchipudi, Mohan Khokar mentioned an incident as a turning point leading to women dominance. He noted an event at Madras in 1948. It was the felicitation of Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry, and though no play got staged, a dancer Samrajyam²⁴¹ presented a *tarāṅgam* (*Degeneration* 26). It was entitled the first public performance by a female dancer in Kuchipudi style. It was also noted that a Telugu Minister at this event urged that Kuchipudi will be doomed if limited to men, and hence, beautiful women should get initiated to enliven the form! Though the comment appears to be sensualising Kuchipudi for captivating viewers, it is relevant to observe that the form was transitioning from a drama to dance. The movement was an integral part of the drama but never considered a separate and vital entity until the solos emerged as an isolated stream. That the female embodiment makes the dance pleasing reflects the ideas postulated in *Natyasastra*, referring to the creation of *apsaras*, who manifest the *Kaiśiki vṛtti*, adept in *Nṛtta* and enhance the presentation (Kumar 20-23). The above statement by the Minister mirrors this same ethos that involving women would vitalise Kuchipudi. Though by that time, Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry was already teaching women, such statements

²⁴⁰ Daves Soneji's thesis pointed that Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry had tutelage under female *kaḷāvaṇṭulu* teachers and adapted the aspects like Munipalle Subrahmanya Kavi's *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa kīrtanas*, which were a speciality of one particular Saride lineage of female dancers, into Kuchipudi (Performing).

²⁴¹ Samrajyam was part of the troupe run by Vedantam Raghavayya and Vempati Pedda Satyam (Rao, *Transformation* 56).

from people in authority would have impacted the practitioners.

Vedantam Parvateesam furthermore commented that it was a welcoming change as solo required lesser logistics and acted as a solution to the temperamental issues of artistes that were difficult to handle and sort out (*Solo* 82-84). This seems to be a way to clear up problems and focus on performance rather than handling the management work for artistes. He also remarked that teaching solo dances had emerged as a method in demand, giving the teacher necessary financial sustenance. Explicably, there were more takers for the solo system given that gender and caste intolerances were weakening, enabling Kuchipudi to amplify its presence.

Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry was the pioneer to experiment with solos, building a solid repertoire and including newer aspects. His disciple Vempati Chinna Satyam²⁴² later had significantly remodelled the dance to suit female body kinetics (Bhikshu, *Tradition* 258). He also conceded that the act by men resulted in the lack of public appeal for Kuchipudi (Satyam, *Birth* 66). Vempati Chinna Satyam tried to get perfection into Kuchipudi, adopting the *śāstric* knowledge (Rao, *Transformation* 57). He believed that Kuchipudi was based on *Natyasastra* and referred to the treatise throughout his career to implement the precepts practically (Satyam, *Experiments* 63). It was probably when the treatises became available, and other styles like Bharatanatyam got streamlined, relying on the Sanskrit works (especially Kalakshetra, where Sanskrit education was mandatory, and treatises intended approval from all quarters). By doing so, Vempati Chinna Satyam revamped the form to retain its *aṅgaśuddhi* (immaculacy of movements), suit both female and male bodies, streamlined the pedagogy and expanded the repertoire.

²⁴² Vempati Chinna Satyam had his fundamental training from Tadeipalli Perayya Sastri.

The formative influences included his brush with the motion picture industry and the performances of Bharatanatyam and Ramgopal that he watched. All these resulted in what got defined as Kuchipudi in the future.

4.5.2 *The dance-drama*

Another crucial innovation by Vempati Chinna Satyam was the *nṛtya nāṭika*. On asking about this genre, he replied that that in his childhood, the dance-dramas became dialogue dramas and that he only sought to put back dance into it. The resulting presentation that came as a diversification from *yakṣagāna* was the *nṛtya nāṭika* (Rao, *Transformation* 56). His versions got characterised with emphasis on *nṛtta* or abstract dance interwoven into the narrative. A primary difference from *yakṣagāna* was the exclusion of dialogues by performers. This erasure of *vācikābhinaya* in the form of dialogue, which was the trademark of Kuchipudi until then, earned him much reproach from the traditionalists. On the contrary, these changes enabled non-Telugu dancers to participate actively and to expand the scope of Kuchipudi, which was until then limited to Telugus. Like from the *yakṣagānas*, compositions from his *nṛtya nāṭikas* are performable as individual numbers in a recital.

He also introduced reforms in the usage of stage properties, costumes, and lighting to enhance the appeal of a performance. These increased the production values in Kuchipudi, aiding immensely in placing the form on par with others on the global map. Likewise, prominent changes got introduced in music where, by adopting Hindustani *rāgas*, the musical scope got intensified from traditional *rāgas*²⁴³. Some of his extremely popular *nṛtya nāṭikas* that acquired a name for Kuchipudi include *Kṣīrasāgara Mathanaṃ*,

²⁴³ The music of Kuchipudi gets discussed in other sections of this chapter.

Padmāvati Śrīnivāsa Kalyāṇa, Vipranārāyaṇa, Caṇḍālīka, Arthanārīśvaram, Haravilāsaṃ to name a few.

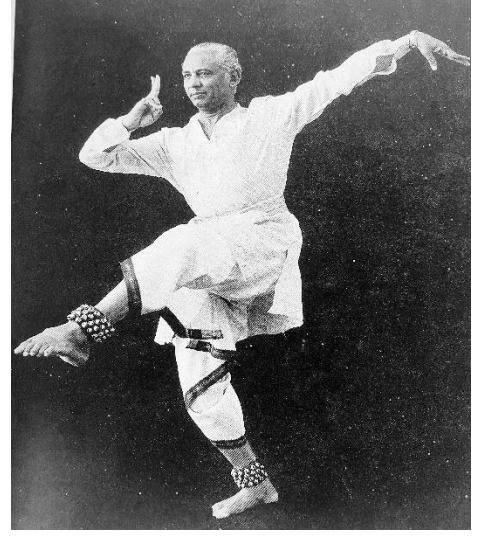
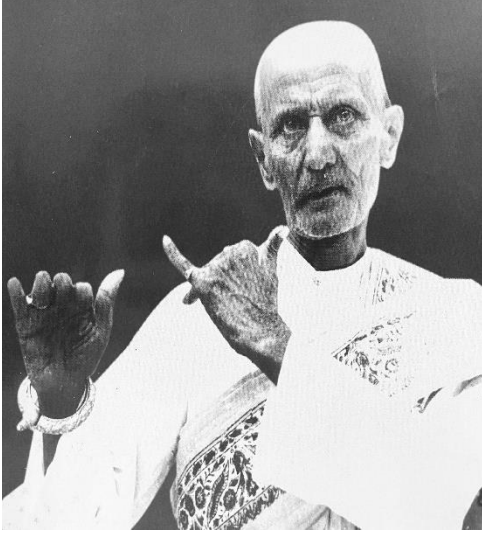


Fig. 4.15. (Left) Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry depicting Krishna: Sarma, M. Nagabhushana., editor. Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry special issue. *Nartanam*, 2002.

Fig. 4.16. (Right) Vempati Chinna Satyam showing *Trinetram*: Sambasiva, Munukuntla. *Kuchipudi Natyamanjari*. Nishumbitha publications, 1991, p. 99.

4.6 Repertoire

Due to the advent of solos and dance-dramas, the repertoire of Kuchipudi that was reckoned meagre, broadened. While writing about the Kuchipudi repertoire, most authors mentioned the names of the compositions and, at times, authors. Out of the numerous components, *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* was named as the principal constituent, followed by *Gollakalāpaṃ* and *yakṣagānas*. *Gollakalāpaṃ*, as performed by Kuchipudi artistes gets attributed to Bhagavatula Ramayya as its composer²⁴⁴. Also called *Gopika Vipra*

²⁴⁴ The original story and script of *Gollakalāpaṃ* were by Tarigonda Vengamamba of the 18th century.

Samvādam/Sambhāṣaṇa, it presents the dialogue between a cow-herd woman and the Brahmin.

*Yakṣagānas*²⁴⁵ predominantly featured *Prahlāda Caritaṃ* and *Uṣa Parīṇayaṃ* with other being *Rāma Nāṭakaṃ*, *Śaṣirekha Parīṇayaṃ*, *Mohini Rukmāṅgada*, *Gayopākhyānaṃ*²⁴⁶, to name a few (Dakshinamurti; Rao, *Kuchipudi Yakshagana*). The authorship of *Uṣa Parīṇayaṃ* got often attributed to Rentichinthala/Renduchintala Chidambara Deekshitulu. However, Kapila Vatsyayan pens an unfamiliar name, Pasupuleti Rangajamma as its writer and that though her script is unavailable, that was believed to have formed a base for later works ²⁴⁷ (Rao, *Kuchipudi Yakshagana*; Vatsyayan, *Traditional* 55).

Looking at the content of these dramas, it was usually culled out from epics and *purāṇas*, especially the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. It seldom included exclusive social themes. An illustration of social responsibility featuring Kuchipudi with evidence of unique productions got noticed during the freedom struggle. *Shimla Bhāgavatam* on the India-Pakistan partition and artistes involved in the freedom struggle, and another production titled *Hitler Patanaṃ*, meaning the downfall of Hitler fall under this type (Jonnalagadda, *Tradition* 47). These were produced by Darbha Venkateswarlu of Kuchipudi, who was

²⁴⁵ Anuradha Jonnalagadda's unpublished thesis has more information on different *yakṣagānas* and their evolution (*Tradition*).

²⁴⁶ The authorship of these *Yakṣagānas*: *Prahlāda Caritaṃ* by Vedala Tirunarayanacharyulu (and Tiruvalikkeli Ramanujacharyulu); *Śaṣirekha Parīṇayaṃ* and *Gayopākhyānaṃ* by Vallabhaneni Ramakrishna Chowdary of Golivepalli, Gudivada; *Mohini Rukmāṅgada* by Enuguluri Paparaju or Beta Bhagavanta Rao of Nujiveedu (Banerjee, *Art of Indian Dancing* 107).

²⁴⁷ There were many versions of *Uṣa Parīṇayaṃ*, from which Kuchipudi artistes performed for the Rentichinthala/Renduchintala Chidambara Deekshitulu's libretto (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 274). Another version is that the *yakṣagāna* was penned by Srinivasakavi, Ankabhupaludu and Ramajogi (Seetaramarao 214).

involved with the Andhra Praja Natyamandali, a cultural organisation with Marxist propensities.

Alongside, the dialogues in their *yakṣagānas* and *kalāpas* included native stories or anecdotes or any message they wanted to convey, usually through the *sūtradhara* and at times as conversations between characters. For example, *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, in its full version, had the dissemination of medical knowledge through a composition called *maṇḍula paṭṭu*. Likewise, *Gollakalāpaṃ*, which is a philosophical subject, as part of its story, explains foetal development through a piece called *pinḍotpatti*. Apart from a few like these that impart knowledge, the rest of the content was mythological or *bhakti* oriented. Sumathy Kaushal²⁴⁸ in a conference presentation during the 1960s mentioned that previously social issues and current affairs were part of Kuchipudi performances, and even in contemporary times, such things should be adopted as themes without diluting the tradition (*Kuchipudi* 5-8). The emphasis here seems to be both on not weakening tradition and also incorporating the social themes. This is because, generally, the inclusion of non-devotional themes meant digression from the art. By that time, numerous schools within Kuchipudi got developed, and the writer appears to be cautious in her expression. It is also pertinent to note that only a minority productions with such exclusive social subjects continue to be part of the Kuchipudi repertoire²⁴⁹.

Continuing to the period where solos dominated, the key compositions that formed part of the solo repertoire as noted by Ragini Devi were mainly *śabdās- Maṇḍūka*,

²⁴⁸ Sumathy Kaushal (1940-2019) was one of the first-generation non-hereditary Kuchipudi performers responsible for the form's visibility.

²⁴⁹ *Caṇḍālīka* by Vempati Chinna Satyam, *Landscape of Emotions* by Vasantalakshmi Narasimhachary, are few that come under the examples of non-religious, social themes (*Tradition* 146). Even in the present context, there are a handful of such works outside the mythological framework.

Daśāvatāra, *Jakkula purāṇdari*, *Cāmuṇḍeśvari*, *Arthanārīśvara*. Then she wrote of the *taraṅgaṃs* by Narayana Teertha, *Śiva līlā nāṭyaṃ* – ten *tāṇḍava* modes that she specified as still being done by Kuchipudi artistes (during the period of her book), alongside *padamṣ*, *kṛtis*, *jāvaḷis*²⁵⁰ (*Kuchipudi Dance-Drama; Revival*). She added *Kuravaṇji* too as part of the performance, though others did not mention it. *Kuravaṇji*, by then was part of Bharatanatyam, as designed by Rukmini Devi Arundale. As Ragini Devi was the foremost outsider to learn Kuchipudi, this list that she mentioned as repertoire could have been in vogue²⁵¹. *Śabdamṣ* appear to be the most prominent part of the repertoire, as Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao named about twenty *śabdamṣ* that were part of the performance collection (*Kuchipudi Dance-Drama*).

The excerpts from *yakṣagānas* and *kalāpas* like the *praveśa daruvu* of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* and *svapna vṛttāntaṃ* from *Uṣa Parīṇayaṃ* were part of the solo performances. Apart from those, facets of *pagaṭi veṣaṃs* were suggested as part of the standard repertoire. Of those, *Gāraḍi veṣaṃ* (magician) got remarked as an interesting item. The *Śiva līlā nāṭyaṃ* may be from the *pagaṭi veṣaṃ* traditions too. There were compositions considered as *avāntara veṣaṃ*, one performed in-between and not part of the *pagaṭi veṣaṃs*. *Dādinamma veṣaṃ* that required great physical skill and especially *bālīnta veṣaṃ*, a tough one to be performed by artistes, for which some Kuchipudi masters were adept belong to this group (Rao, *Kuchipudi School* 17-19; Ramakrishna, 20th 70). Others

²⁵⁰ *Padamṣ* is a slow tempo composition usually depicting love or longing under the notion of *Madhura bhakti*. Though the compositions of Annamacharya are the first of *padamṣ*, in dance, the love songs by Kshetranya are called so. *Kṛti* is Carnatic music composition, usually devotional, with a *pallavi*- refrain, *anupallavi*- the optional second section and the *carana*- one or more stanzas. *Jāvaḷis* are love songs, faster in tempo than the *padamṣ*.

²⁵¹ By the 1940s at least, a whole system comprising of about 150 items/compositions including *padamṣ*, *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa kīrtanas*, *varṇamṣ*, *tillānas*, *ślokaṣ*, *svarajatis*, and others got formulated and taught by Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry (Sarma, *Vedantam*).

documented names of about 35 *veṣaṃs* including *dādinamma*, *bāliṇta*, *arthanārīśvara*, and *śārada* under the *pagaṭi veṣaṃs* as performed by Kuchipudi *bhāgavatars* (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi*; Ramanatham, *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula*).

Few others added *vināyaka tāla* and *siṃhanaṇḍini* as part of repertoire (Rama Sastry 12; Naidu 16). *Siṃhanaṇḍini* and the like²⁵², where the feet movements trace figures on the ground to complex rhythmic structures, were believed to be inclusion by C. R. Acharyulu, based on the temple dancers²⁵³. However, some scholars mentioned *vināyaka tāla* and *siṃhanaṇḍini* as a peculiar feature by Kuchipudi masters of yore (Rao, *Kuchipudi Dance; Yesterday* 25). Contrastingly, Vempati Chinna Satyam opined that few were in the practice of drawing deities like Ganesha with feet and that Hindus do not touch any God or God-related objects with feet (Satyam, *Birth* 61-68). He thus negated the representation of those practices as Kuchipudi.

Further, *taraṅgaṃ*, as referred to the compositions of Narayana Tirtha continues as a major aspect in the repertoire because of their suitability to dance. As pointed earlier, their inclusion into Kuchipudi solos occurred during the 1930s. What made them extremely popular was their association with the unique feature of dancing on the edges of a brass plate. Vempati Chinna Satyam opined it as an innovation by Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry as doing on a vessel would give special recognition, apart from attracting viewers. He also said it was in concordance with the *śāstras* that mentioned similar patterns (Rao, *Transformation* 55-62).

²⁵² Others of that kind include *Mayūra Kautam*, *Mahālakṣmi Udbhavaṃ* and *Gaṇeśa Kautam*.

²⁵³ Till date, it gets performed by a few dancers from his student lineage.

Negating the first presence of such a feat, it got documented as Chinta Venkatramayya's idea before Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry. Chinta Ramanatham documented that Chinta Venkatramayya made Vedantam Raghavayya perform with a *cēmbu*-a bowl or pot on the head, and *paḷḷēm*-with feet on the edges of a brass plate (*Kuchipudi Natyacharyula* 88). Like Vempati Chinna Satyam, Chinta Ravibalakrishna mentioned a *śloka*-verse in *Varahopaniṣat* gave this kind of an act on *cēmbu paḷḷēm*, thus making it *śāstra* conformable. It was also done with the pot on the head filled with water and standing on the surface of an earthen pot (Rao, *Kuchipudi Dance-Drama* 36). Pasumarthy Kesavaprasad added that Chinta Venkatramayya was inspired by the *dommari* doing acrobatics on a rope, which is an activity of gaining attention from the viewers and also as an act of concentration for the performer²⁵⁴ (Kesavaprasad).

Overall, to add to the mass appeal in Kuchipudi, these aspects were included in '*taraṅgam*' in common parlance. To look into why this particular composition of Narayana Tirtha got chosen was their lyric. Some of the *taraṅgams* describe how Lord Krishna's feet were placed (Jonnalagada and Murthy, *Taraṅgams* 92). These acrobatics were interweaved, taking choreographic liberties, both with the dancer's feet and on the plate or pot. Some of the earliest *taraṅgams* performed were *Bālagopāla*, *Nīlamegha śarīra*, *Govardhana*, to name a few. It must be ascertained here that compositions of Narayana Tirtha are performable without such acrobatics too. Additionally, Vempati Chinna Satyam

²⁵⁴ *Dommari* is a wandering tribe of ropewalkers, magicians and others. Dancing or moving on the plate is found in various regional traditions, like in Rajasthani folk dance.

had incorporated this aspect of dancing on the plate into other compositions by Oothukkad Venkata Subbayar like the popular *kīrtana*, *Marakatamaṇimaya*²⁵⁵.

Moving to the other compositions of solo repertoire, *Gita Govinda/Aṣṭapadi*²⁵⁶, *padams*, *jāvaḷis*, and occasionally Tyagaraja *kṛtis* were mentioned as part of repertoire by multiple writers. A rare indication of Tunguturi Krishnadasu Krishnaleelalu and Simhapuri *padams*, got included in the performance repertoire (Radhakrishnamurty, *Vamsa* 62). Mohan Khokar divided the performance items as *nṛtya* or *abhinaya* part and the *nṛtta* segment (*Natya* 29-32). The former comprised of *śabdās*, *ślokās*, *padams*, *varṇams*²⁵⁷, including a particular variety of *śabdās* called *abhiṣekaṃs* such as *Rama paṭṭābhiṣeka* and *Prahlāda paṭṭābhiṣeka*. *Abhiṣekaṃs* are like the *śabdās* that have a storyline from birth to coronation of the protagonist. He reckoned another type of *śabdās* called the *kavitās* citing *vināyaka kavita* as an example, which may mean the usually referred *kautvaṃ*²⁵⁸ in practise. In the *nṛtta* category, he included *pūja nṛtya*, *jatisvaram* and *tillāna* which was like *alarimpu* of Sadir²⁵⁹. He then added *kannakole* as a footwork-based item²⁶⁰. Sunil Kothari also wrote about *kanakkole* and another *saptatāḷaḍavu*, which are found only in Kuchipudi, unique to the form. *Saptatāḷaḍavu* usually is doing primary steps in seven modes of musical measure. He added that the repertoire was more on Bharatanatyam lines,

²⁵⁵ Though works of these two authors remain famous for incorporating acrobatics, other compositions may also have these features depending on the lyric and context.

²⁵⁶ *Gita Govinda* is a love poem on Lord Krishna in Sanskrit by Jayadeva. It has 24 *Aṣṭapadis*.

²⁵⁷ *Varṇam* is a Carnatic music composition with two parts and short metric pieces that encapsulate the features of a *raga*. *Varṇams* were performed in female dancing traditions and are a central feature in Bharatanatyam. In Kuchipudi, there are only a handful performed that too after the 1970s. Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry's repertoire in the 1940s had a few *varṇams*.

²⁵⁸ *Kautvaṃ* or *kautam* are introductory devotional pieces performed in both Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi.

²⁵⁹ *Alarimpu*, *jatisvaram* and *tillāna* are compositions where *nṛtta* is predominant. While the former consists of only syllables or *svaras* and does not have any lyrics, *tillāna* is a mix of both syllables and a lyric in praise of God or patron.

²⁶⁰ *Kanakkole* or *Konakkole* or *Konagolu* in Telugu is the format where *jati* gets superimposed on the song, to which *nṛtta* gets performed.

with peculiar structures like *abhiṣekaṃs* and tracing outlines, parallel to that is found in Kathak²⁶¹.

The most common criticism faced about the solo repertoire is the absence of set presentation order and a meagre repertoire (Srihari 46, 47). The usual solo collection is designed to cover the *nṛtta*, *nāṭya* and *nṛtya*, from the abovementioned assortment of compositions. Other compositions, specially written for dance or other musical genres, also find a place. The order, however, finds similarities with the already established Bharatanatyam's solo repertoire. As observed from some examples above, this repeated indication to Bharatanatyam is especially considering compositions like *jatisvara*, *tillāna*, and others, common in both forms. Looking at Kuchipudi's journey, the period between 1930-60 was decisive as there was increased awareness about other forms and the exchange of ideas that modified the structure of Kuchipudi. Out of all those facets, Bharatanatyam was considered the prime impetus and contender for Kuchipudi.

4.7 Comparison with Bharatanatyam

Bharatanatyam by the mid-1950s was established and popularised as the face of Indian culture. A comparison was inevitable due to modelling a dance-drama genre like Kuchipudi into a solo arrangement and considering the shared pasts from which both styles emerged. Despite that most agreed upon an identical *śāstra* for both and variation in presentation, major arguments persisted. First was that Bharatanatyam was the prototype of Indian dance, as claimed by its votaries. Next, advocates of Kuchipudi contended that

²⁶¹ The comparison here might mean the *savāl-javāb* pattern of Kathak, where the footwork gets demonstrated in varied rhythmical patterns with the percussion instruments *tabla* or *pakhāwaj*.

Kuchipudi being older, and a drama, as per *Natyasastra*, was more classical (Sarma, *Bharatiya*). Yet, Kuchipudi remained a concomitant to Bharatanatyam for many years.

The indication began with the form's name itself. Even as late as 1964, in a Telugu article, the form was entitled Kuchipudi Bharatanatyam as against the Thanjavur Bharatanatyam or just Bharatanatyam to indicate the style from Tamil Nadu (Radhakrishnamurty, *Vamsa* 59). For such a phrasing, there are two potential reasons. Firstly, taking after Bharata, the author of *Natyasastra*, the arts that follow precepts of his work were called Bharatanatyam, and that would have become the widely used term for dance in general. As early as 1941, La Meri indicated that by calling all Indian dances 'Bharatanatyam', it was a claim impressing that only their style was in line with *Natyasastra* (14). Secondly, the renamed style of Sadir- Bharatanatyam was immensely celebrated by then and identifying with its place of origin, Kuchipudi was called Kuchipudi Bharatanatyam²⁶². Authors like E. Krishna Iyer maintained that Bharatanatyam was an umbrella term for Sadir, Bhagavata Mela Natakam, Kuchipudi Dance-drama, Kuravanji Natakam and Navasandhi Alaya Nrityam, whilst Mohan Khokar asserted that Bharatanatyam was hyponym for all those, except Navasandhi Alaya Nrityam (Iyer, *Tamilnadu*; Khokar, *Natya* 27).

Going beyond the name, some writers gave definite differences and similarities between the styles in terms of technique and costume. La Meri posited that a dance school called Kuchipudi was similar to Sadir *nautch* (she did not call it Bharatanatyam) but "*more vigorous and fewer complications in the floor contact*". She might have referred to the abstract dance movements that were interwoven into the narrative of Kuchipudi, as emotion

²⁶² See the concluding chapter for more on the naming of the art from Kuchipudi.

was the overriding aspect (Raman). Bharatanatyam, on the contrary, had distinguishing *nṛtta* compositions and elements, like elaborate *jatis*²⁶³. Then the resemblances pointed by La Meri between Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi were in "*movements, beauty and clarity of hastas*" (*Gesture* 18). On the other hand, Ragini Devi professed that Kuchipudi's gestural vocabulary was elaborative than Bharatanatyam (*Revival* 37-41). Though both styles claimed to follow *Abhinaya Darpana* for gestures, Kuchipudi traditional artistes revealed that their masters adopted few more gestures from the physical world, alongside those prescribed in treatises, making the *hastas* distinguished²⁶⁴.

M. A. Naidu gave an analysis of the styles depending on the space. He indicated that Kuchipudi was "*elaborate, flowy, free and delicate, for it was performed in gay abandon in the open*" (13, 14). The unrestrained movements by Kuchipudi artistes were feasible as they performed for huge audiences in open areas. Contrastingly, Bharatanatyam was "*precise, angular and delicate involving specialisation in 'Dristis' or slants of the eye, because it was performed in the courts of kings which had limited dance movements*" (Naidu 13, 14). Though it does not write about temple dancers, suggests that the royal courts had intimate spaces for restricted spectators.

In the same way, building on the site and gender, Janardhana Sarma indicated few differences (15). Bharatanatyam was under the baton of Thanjavur kings and evolved with women, while Kuchipudi flourished due to Siddhendra, on men in a Brahmin village. The gender aspect existed till Kuchipudi developed into a solo in the mid-20th century. Another

²⁶³ *Jati* is a string of steps, with a defined finishing, set to mnemonic syllables in a rhythm. *Jatis* are learnt either as part of fundamental lessons or as segments of items.

²⁶⁴ Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma insisted that Kuchipudi in terms of gestures imitate as seen in *loka dharmi*, rather than mere following of treatises, thus making the *hastas* more relevant (Sarma).

crucial distinguishing element was the *vācīkābhinaya* of Kuchipudi that made it a drama and not dance, a feature that gradually depreciated with the rise of the solo system, thus minimising the difference between the forms (Swarup 182).

Regarding the repertoire, Enakshi Bhavnani made a fascinating comparison about the main items of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi. She tried to fix an appropriate equivalent from *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* to the *mārgaṃ* or the standard repertoire of Bharatanatyam (62, 63). She corresponded the idea of looking over the curtain and following portions of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* to *alarimpu*- the *nṛtta* dominated portion in both the styles; the *praveśa daru* (entrance song) to *jatisvaram*; Satyabhama pleading Madhavi to *varṇaṃ*- where there are both *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*; *viraha* (separation from the beloved) episode to *padam*, wherein *abhinaya* leads and *savatula kayyam* (the quarrel between co-wives performed by some artistes) to *tillāna*. This is a rare reflection as the compositions are not precisely comparable but conceptually relatable. On another spectrum, though, the comparison appears forced as the genre is different- one being a *kalāpa* and the other, a series of disconnected, isolated compositions.

A glimpse and a co-relation of practicality in a composition noticed were where Sri Vatsava commented Tamil Nadu Bharatanatyam has the rendering of *padams* in *cauka kāla* although Kuchipudi has it in *madhyama kāla*, owing to their tradition of including *jatis* and *gatis*²⁶⁵ (65-70). Kuchipudi, in general, was treated as fast-paced and fluid than Bharatanatyam (Raman).

²⁶⁵ *cauka kāla* and *madhyama kāla* correspond to the slow and medium tempos. *Jati* is the abstract dance segment, and *gati* refers to the gait of the composition.

Moving on to ancillary aspects, Mohan Khokar observed that the sari type costume of Kuchipudi got modified to a Sadir-like one. The female costume for Kuchipudi traditionally was a draped sari. It was during Vempati Chinna Satyam's time that the present style of *kaccham*²⁶⁶ costume came into existence. Vempati Chinna Satyam disclosed that for him, the inspiration was from Vijayanagara sculptures, though the Bharatanatyam costume developed by Rukmini Devi was very similar (Rao, *Transformation* 60). In fact, the entire dance-drama of Vempati Chinna Satyam was remarked to be inspired by Rukmini Devi Arundale's work (Rao, *Legacy*). Vempati Chinna Satyam, a teacher and choreographer par excellence and the face of modern Kuchipudi technique, on questioning about the influences of other styles into Kuchipudi responded that mixing components from other styles was acceptable as long as the individuality of each style is maintained.

Apart from Bharatanatyam, there are minor instances of Kuchipudi being compared with styles other than with which it shared a joint development, as deliberated above. Reginald Massey speculated that *ślokās* were done like *thumri andāz* of Kathak, calling it a north Indian influence on Kuchipudi. He remarked that Kuchipudi "*absorbed these influences*" during the Mughal rule and *konakkole*, which was a Kuchipudi speciality, but again an influence of Kathak (Massey, *Dances* 29). This influence of Kathak is questionable as there are no other evidences, except the one about tracing patterns noted in the repertoire section. Or, the author being more familiar with Kathak sought to trace parallels when writing on Kuchipudi.

²⁶⁶ *Kaccham* here refers to the stitched 5/6 pieced costume worn by Kuchipudi female dancers.

4.8 Technique

Talking about the actual practicalities, Kuchipudi was often referred to as energetic, uninhibited, spontaneous and fluid as gathered from the above examples. These aspects are attributable to the male, hereditary performers that embodied Kuchipudi through their constant training from a young age. Though not structured as in vogue now, the training systems followed an order of exercises, then *aḍavus*- basic steps to *tīrikalu* (*tīrmāṇas* where a step is done thrice) to advanced lessons till the middle of last century (Seetaramarao 175).

In this regard, publications by Kuchipudi masters like Vedantam Parvateesam and C. R. Acharyulu furnished details of all the *aḍavus*, mnemonic syllables, the *jati* patterns and lyrics of the compositions performed (Parvateesam, *Nritya*; Acharyulu, *Kuchipudi Natyam-Cari* and *Kuchipudi Aradhana*). A book by Hemadri Chidambara Deekshitulu, apart from those, described how each step gets executed (*Kuchipudi Kalasagaramu*). About the generic style of Kuchipudi, Kapila Vatsyayan wrote about the curve and circular patterns in the *ṇṛtta* of Kuchipudi, alongside hip deflexed *arthamaṇḍali*²⁶⁷ (*Traditional* 62). Most works, however, gave a glimpse or the names of the movements in usage or the *bhedhas* as postulated in the treatises and exercised in Kuchipudi. The *hastās*, *cāris*²⁶⁸, *tāṇḍava* and *lāsya* and so on were said to be practised as per the *Natyasastra*. A guru-performer postulated about *pūrvaraṅga vidhi*, *recakas*²⁶⁹, *vyāyāma*-exercise, and stated those as a distinguishing feature for Kuchipudi and hence followers of the form were suggested to do that exact order (Sarma, *Natyodayamu* 1-5).

²⁶⁷ Generally called *aramaṇḍi*, it is the knees half-bent position with heels almost touching and feet turned out.

²⁶⁸ As per *Natyasastra*, *cāris* are movements involving the exercise of feet.

²⁶⁹ According to *Natyasastra*, *recakas* are gentle movements executed by foot, waist, hand and neck.

An exclusive effort delineating the exact technique was in the unpublished dissertation by Anuradha Jonnalagadda. The work has a complete chapter on technique, beginning with elaborating the physical exercises that were imperative in the Kuchipudi training. The traditional exercises comprised of *danḍālu*, *baskīlu*, *kālisāmu*, *maṇḍe koppu*, and the others²⁷⁰. It was followed by delineating each of the elementary steps with illustrations and pointing out the differences as followed by diverse masters. Next, the systematisation and order of *jatis* and repertoire items were explained. She also included the Kuchipudi typical and unique patterns in footwork and expression, as gathered from the repertoire pieces.

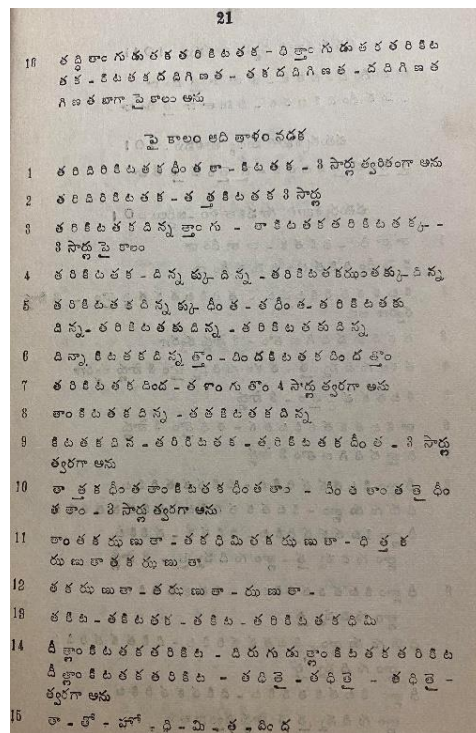


Fig. 4.17. Mnemonic syllables for various movements as documented by Vedantam Parvateesam: Parvateesam, Vedantam. *Nritya Tarangini*. Author, 1988, p. 21.

²⁷⁰ These are the traditional terms for sit-ups, push-ups, jumps, and so on.

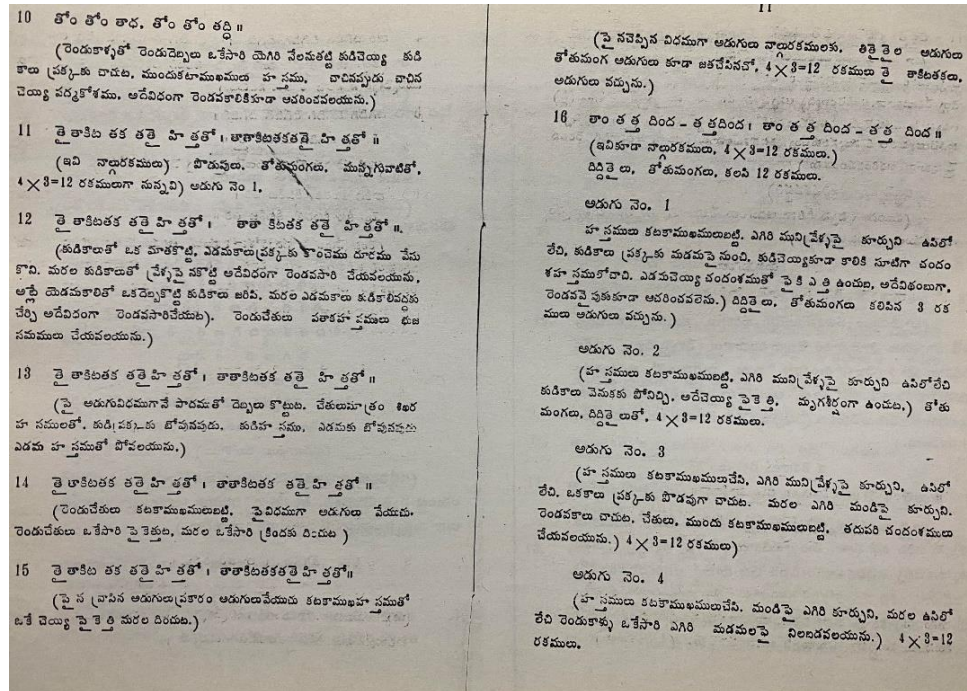


Fig. 4.18. Mnemonic syllables and the procedure for executing basic steps as written by Hemadri Chidambara Deekshitulu: Deekshitulu, Hemadri Chidambara. *Kuchipudi Kalasagaramu (Natya Sastramu)*. Sri Rajarajeswari Kuchipudi Nritya Kalasala, 1989, pp. 10, 11.

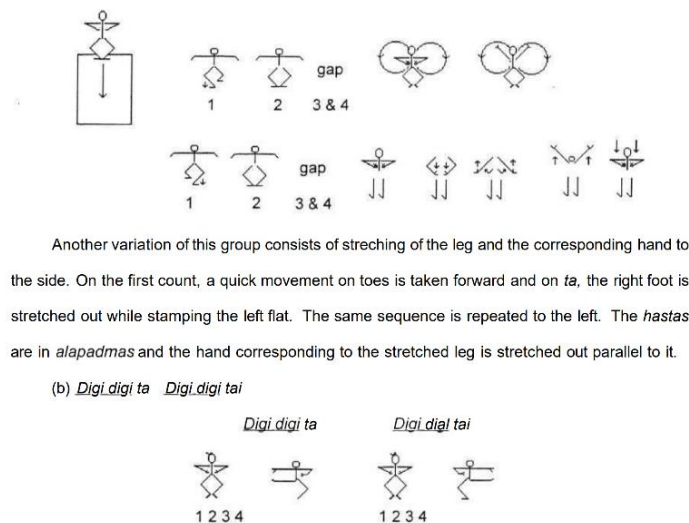


Fig. 4.19. Mnemonic syllables, procedure for executing basic steps with illustrations and variations, as analysed by Jonnalagadda Anuradha in her unpublished thesis:

Jonnalagadda, Anuradha. "Tradition and Innovations in Kuchipudi Dance." *University of Hyderabad*, 1996, p. 71.

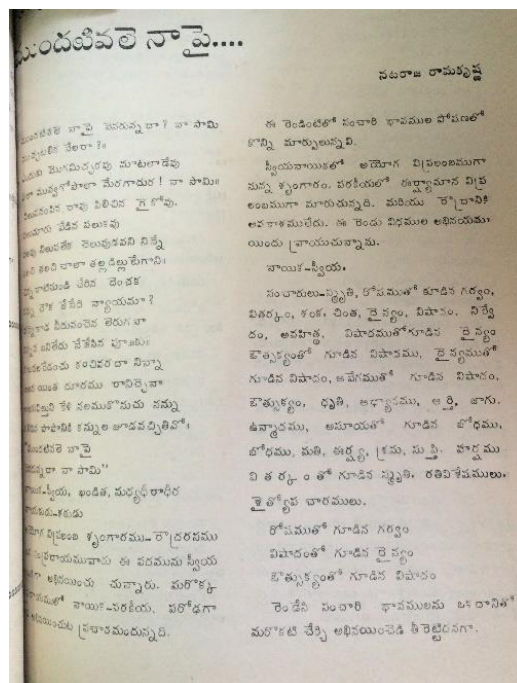


Fig. 4.20. Lyrics, meaning and the elements to be employed while expressing the *padam-Mundaṭivale nāpai*, as explained by Nataraj Ramakrishna: Ramakrishna, Nataraj. "Mundativalale napai." *Natyakala*, May. 1968, p. 19.

In some instances, especially magazines, parts of repertoire like *padam* were detailed, elaborating on which *sthāyi bhāva* (enduring emotions) to employ and other aspects relating to the *abhinaya* exposition (Acharyulu, *Padabhinaya*; Ramakrishna, *Kshetravya*). On those lines, Vempati Chinna Satyam expressed about the interpretations that help enact a line (Rao, *Choreography* 20-23).

Apart from those, an article by scholar, historian and critic V. A. K. Ranga Rao remarked on the Kuchipudi technique from the choreographies of Telugu movies between 1939-1983 (Rao and Murthy, *Kuchipudi Dance and the Telugu Cinema* 187, 188). He made some interesting comments in this unique article about the relation between Kuchipudi and Telugu feature films. He placed a 1939 choreography under the 'pristine form' and some of

the later ones ranging from non-Kuchipudi to semi-Kuchipudi to absolutely adhering to Kuchipudi technique, based on the cinematic requirements. What is imperative here are the records of Kuchipudi as depicted on screen, which provide a perspective in comprehending the progression of Kuchipudi²⁷¹. The screen being a two-dimensional frame as opposed to the three-dimensional view of the stage would have led to particular transformations.

4.9 The performance arena, music, and textual association

The alterations in both technique and presentation could thus be attributed to the changes in performance spaces and embracing modern procedures for technical support. The performances of Kuchipudi *bhāgavatars* prior to the 1950s, considering the *kalāpa* or *yakṣagāna*, usually happened at the spaces outside village temple or at the crossroads, with a makeshift stage. The stage itself was simple, usually a raised platform with views from three sides. No draperies were used, except for cloth as a backdrop. At times, two boys would hold a curtain for the entry and exit of performers, and the stage had a painted cloth for the frontal pillars on either side. The duration of performance lasted almost an entire night from 10 PM to 4 AM or 6 AM²⁷². *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* used to get performed for three nights. As per the village customs, other castes like *maṅgaḷi* and *cākali*²⁷³ provided *kāgaḍas* (lamps) and helped artistes get ready. The lamps were held by two persons on either side of the stage through the performance duration. The *kāgaḍas* gave way to gas lights, and this was pronounced as an unwelcoming change. The reasons cited were either that *kāgaḍas* help prevents some diseases or that the vintage effect *diyas* offered was lost

²⁷¹ For a detailed association between movies and Kuchipudi, refer to Katyayani Thota's thesis (*Stage*).

²⁷² These aspects regarding stage set-up were gathered from various writings (Ramamurthy; Dakshinamurti; Massey, *Dances*; Rao, *Kuchipudi School*; *Kuchipudi Dance*; *Yesterday* 24).

²⁷³ The barber and washerman communities, respectively.

with gas lights. Occasionally, a sudden flash of light called the '*guggilam*', inflammable resin powder, was used for special effects during important scenes (Radhakrishnamurty, *Vamsa*).



Fig. 4.21. Kuchipudi Yakshaganam: <https://blog.kuchipudiyakshaganam.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Chinta-Venkatramayya-Kuchipudi-Yakshaganam-Natyamandali-Kuchipudi2-1024x594.jpg>

It was also remarked that the idea of ticketed performances entered Kuchipudi by the 1930s (Ramamurty, *Kuchipudi*). This could be a result of the Parsi theatre influence, which had such ticketed shows. Theatre influences were also noted in the stage settings and properties in Kuchipudi performances (Jonnalagadda, *Tradition* 132). The stage sets, if any, and properties, costumes, accessories, makeup and jewellery were all prepared by the artistes themselves. A mandatory property used by the narrator or conductor in the traditional drama was *kuṭṭilakam*, a curved stick to ward off evil, as mentioned in *Natyasastra*. Rarely, properties like a throne for king or columns made of cardboard came into usage in the 20th century.

Moving ahead, the costumes and jewellery were noteworthy as they aided in demarcating various characters of the drama. The costumes were character-specific,

comprising primarily of a shawl, *dhoti* and *aṅgavastra* for men. At times, long coats were also used. A cloth turban was adorned by few characters, like the narrator and his assistants. The lead female character had a draped silk sari, and the secondary characters, like her friends, wore half-sari or skirts. Traditionally, jewellery was made of light wood and covered with natural paints or decorated with paper and tinted stones. The makeup also consisted of natural pigments extracted from plants. The masks, as used by characters like Hanuma or Narasimha, the crown adorned by kings, and any other additional embellishments were also specially made by the artistes themselves²⁷⁴. Vempati Chinna Satyam commented that the drapery and ornaments, especially on the shoulders called the *bhujakīrtulu* were restricting for dancing and hence required alteration (Rao, *Transformation* 60).

In all these spheres, after about the 1950s, changes cropped up. The performance location shifted to proscenium and the duration, reduced to a few hours. This resulted in changes in the narratives and movement vocabulary. The stories got condensed to fit into the two- or three-hour-time frame, resulting in the desertion of many compositions. For instance, in *Bhāmākalāpam*, the details of some episodes and embellishments besides the primary storyline, like *jaḍa vṛttāntam*, *mūrcha paṭṭu*, *maṇḍula paṭṭu*, *marmāla paṭṭu*²⁷⁵, and others got excluded. The movements had to suit the frontal view of proscenium stages, unlike the earlier three-sided view. Also, this was the time when solos claimed the spotlight, which also resulted in amplifying the changes in content and technique. The

²⁷⁴ The details on costumes were gathered from numerous articles, elaborated by other scholars (Seth, *Aharyam* 55-60; Rao, *Kuchipudi Dance-Drama* 33).

²⁷⁵ *jaḍa vṛttāntam* is the narration of the history of the braid adorned by Satyabhama, *mūrcha paṭṭu* is the description of how Satyabhama fainted suffering the pangs of separation from her husband, *maṇḍula paṭṭu* is about the native medicines administered to the sick- here to the fainted Satyabhama, *marmāla paṭṭu* refers to the secretive affairs.

jewellery was no longer handmade or custom-made. The material switched to metal, especially the temple jewellery as used in Bharatanatyam. Stitched costumes replaced draped versions, and specialised agencies were hired for each of the tasks involved (makeup, stitching costumes, stage properties, lighting, etc.), restricting the artist just to dance.

Along with these changes, the crucial aspect of music, a significant indicator for the form, also transformed. Traditionally, any Kuchipudi performance begins with the customary *Aṃba prārthana*, sung in praise of the village goddess Bala Tripura Sundari. For the *yakṣagānas* and *kalāpaṃs*, it was followed by another composition on Lord Ganesha and the narrator's entry. *Praveśa daru*, the entry part of the characters, was a central feature. Most of the *darus* were either in medium or fast tempo as is the tempo of most songs in this style. This was followed by dialogues, verses and more compositions in various rhythmic patterns and ended with a benediction- *maṅgalaṃ*. In some compositions, the *gati bhedaṃs*- a shift in the gait of the song became a trademark feature of Kuchipudi.

The meters of both Sanskrit and desi styles were adopted for the musical compositions. Some like *Cūrṇika*, *Dvipada* and *Kandārtha* gained popularity and association with Kuchipudi (Parthasarathy and Murthy, *Evolution* 17). Often used *rāgas* included *Ānaṇḍabhairavi*, *Mohana*, *Suraṭi*, *Mukhāri*, *Kāmbhoji*, *Varāḷi*, *Kedāragauḷa* to name a few. Though the *rāgas* are based on the Carnatic system, the emphasis was more on the feel and mood of the song than on the *rāga*'s musical peculiarities²⁷⁶. This was cited as one of the reasons why the music was not reckoned classical or even flawed by a few (Rao and Murthy, *Kuchipudi Sangitha* 21).

²⁷⁶ See Anuradha Jonnalagadda's dissertation for analysis on Kuchipudi music style (*Tradition* 123-127).

Regarding this peculiar way of singing in Kuchipudi, there are a few probable clarifications. The change of *rāga* structure over a period, or two, lack of Kuchipudi artistes' command over classical music. A counter-argument was that drama is essential, and to make it appealing and suit the context, certain deviations were permissible. This was claimed to support how the music of Kuchipudi evolved in the drama genre. However, many opined it was a shortcoming of the artistes' that diluted the music of Kuchipudi. Kocherlakota Suryaprakasha Rao observed that after 1934-35, the singing in pure, classical style- the *śāstrīya paddhati*, by Kuchipudi artistes received a setback and declined (59). He cited that the artistes taking part in stage-plays (as distinct from Kuchipudi dramas) led to hybridisation of music and systematic learning of the art took a subordinate status. He called this period as the outside singers singing for Kuchipudi in contradiction to the hereditary artistes themselves.

Nevertheless, with the influx of dance-dramas and solos, the scope of music expanded, and there is total adherence to the Carnatic system. This was both due to Carnatic-trained singers composing and singing and the increased awareness and inclusion of tunes from other genres. Apart from the regularly used *rāgas*, new *rāgas* from both Carnatic and Hindustani styles were incorporated to suit the themes. Some of those include *Āhiri*, *Saiṇdhavi*, *Jhanjhūṭi*, *Madhuvānti*, *Pahāḍi*, *Siṇdhubhairavi* and *deśi rāgas* like *Punnāgavarāḷi*. In the sphere of *tālas* too, alongside regular ones like *Ādi* and *Rūpaka* and *Cāpu*, *Jhampe* and *Eka* in different *jātis* were incorporated (Rao and Murthy, *Evolution*; Rao and Murthy, *Kuchipudi Sangitha*). These happened mainly in the *nṛtya nāṭikas* and then in solos.

On the instruments, those used in the early period were harmonium, *tālās* (cymbals- to mark rhythm), *mṛdaṅgam* (percussion) and flute. The accompanists stood behind artistes, as was common practice then. Later by the middle of the last century, the standard instruments of Carnatic concerts like violin and also *vīṇa* came to be majorly in use. Harmonium departed, and there is occasional use of *kañjīra*, *morsīngi*, and others for special effects. The *sūtradhāra* used to conduct the program with the cymbals, accompanied by two assistants called *Vanta*. The accompanists used to stand close to the actors on the stage. The idea of accompanists sitting to one side is attributed to Rukmini Devi Arundale's transformations in Sadir that were most likely adopted into Kuchipudi. Across the genres, *yakṣagānas*, *kalāpams*, *nṛtya nāṭikas*, or solos, these were some standard features regarding accompaniments that got established by the 1960s.

Continuing to the next feature, as noticed in many of the topics above, one constant parameter was linking Kuchipudi to the treatises, specifically *Natyasastra*. Nonetheless, there were other treatises, mainly in Sanskrit, cited as references by Kuchipudi practitioners of yore (Khokar, *Natya* and others). The treatises that find mention were *Abhinaya Swayambodhini*, *Rasamanjari*, *Rasikapriya*, *Sahitya Darpana*, *Bharatarasaprakarana*, *Sabharanjani*, *Bharatasutram*, *Bhavaprakasam* and *Bharatakalpalatamanjari*, apart from the expectable *Natyasastra* and *Abhinaya Darpana*. When so many treatises were identifiable with Kuchipudi, given that the practitioners were scholars in Sanskrit, it is surprising that connecting to *Natyasastra* preceded over all others. It might be the prevalent Nationalist trend and *Natyasastra* being the oldest that encouraged such an association. Considering the present situation or even a decade or two earlier, none of the treatises aforementioned except for *Natyasastra*, *Abhinaya Darpana* and occasionally *Nritta*

Ratnavali got consulted in the popular domain.

From when Kuchipudi performers referred to treatises could not be arrived at, although Vempati Chinna Satyam explicitly stated that his teachers never read any books (Rao, *Transformation* 57)²⁷⁷. About this, there was a contradictory response from personal interviews conducted at the village by this research scholar. Some hereditary artistes asserted that their ancestors had access to treatises. Few said there were fragments of books in their elder's possession and that too of the *Abhinaya Darpana*, before 1930. The accent is on *Abhinaya Darpana* as traditionally handed over gestures or *ślokās* that are in usage in the traditional style were from that treatise²⁷⁸. Likewise, Harikrishnan cited that Chinnayya of Tanjore quartet was the author of a Telugu work *Abhinaya Lakshanamu* based on *Abhinaya Darpanam* (Peterson et al. 74). This goes on to support that *Abhinaya Darpana* was in circulation in the Tamil-Telugu regions. Going back to the topic of treatise possession, it cannot be entirely ruled out as being Sanskrit scholars, Kuchipudi Brahmins having Sanskrit works on dance/drama was a possibility. They may not have emphasised on referring to those works in application.

In the 1960s, though, there was repeated stress on the treatises in publications, owing to the legitimisation of the form. One article on Kshetrappa mentioned that Kuchipudi *bhāgavatulu* had knowledge of *Natyasastra*, *Abhinaya Darpana*, etc., and young Varadappa (Kshetrappa) was imparted dance by them (Vatsava 65-70). Another, to defend her point as stated in title *Bharatamuni Natyame- Kuchipudi Natyam*, Vedantam

²⁷⁷ Personal interviews of hereditary artistes conducted by this research scholar at Kuchipudi village.

²⁷⁸ Pasumarthi Rattai Sarma informed that they used the *hastas* only from *Abhinaya Darpana* as instructed by his ancestors, including their own versions and variations to suit the *lokadharmi* or generic representation (Sarma).

Nagalakshmi concluded that before Siddhendra itself, there was a dance, and it was someone from the disciples of Bharatamuni that established such a typology in Kuchipudi (64-67). These illustrations appear to push arguments to create a link with *Natyasastra* and portray Kuchipudi as archaic.

While these changes were a continuous process for over a century, the artistes were regularly engaged in performance and teaching, attempting to incorporate the contemporary changes to establish the form. This leads to the next subject, where branching off from the native artistes, the role of migrants and non-hereditary artistes resulting in a proliferation of art get examined subsequently.

4.10 Exponents: Residents, Migrants and Others

The hereditary artistes, majorly, till the mid-20th century, were residents of the Kuchipudi village. Being an ambulatory group, they travelled either for performance or later for teaching thus spreading the art, but stayed in the village environs. This segment delineates those exponents, who either migrated or resided in Kuchipudi village, their expertise and contributions alongside the non-hereditary artistes.

The first instance of relocation from Kuchipudi village was noted around the mid-18th century. On the Nawab's invitation, one of the traditional families headed by Challa Bhagavatam Vasambhotlu got recorded to travel to Kotakonda of Pattikonda taluq at Kurnool. His successor Challa Bharatasastram Lakshmayya performed *Bhāma* and others like *padam* and *tarangam*, although, with differences (Rao, *Kuchipudi School* 10; Vatsyayan, *Tradition* 58; Bhavnani 232). It is to be observed that this is the version of Kotakonda *kalāpam* that developed as a distinct tradition from Kuchipudi, as mentioned earlier. The differences remarked here give the spatial and temporal variations in

presentation. It was this diversity, intermingling with varied local cultures, that led to the expansion of Kuchipudi.

There is a rare mention about how 250 years ago, a family "*was inducted*" to Kaptralla near Alampur by Banaganapalli Nawab, who also granted land for them and that their successors performed *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* in Hyderabad (Banerjee, *Art* 107). Whilst not substantiated elsewhere, few places like Banaganapalli, Alampur, Srisailam got enlisted as places where Kuchipudi existed (Khokar, *Splendours* 77). In addition, there were indications about Kuchipudi Bhagavatars teaching *devadāsīs* in various places like Eluru, Mandapeta, etc. (Kothari, *Dance-Drama*). As they were itinerant groups, there were instances of masters going on performances or instructing, staying in other places for a few weeks, and returning.

Though the contributions of all the exponents were not described in most publications, they informed about the numerous artistes who were noteworthy in the history of Kuchipudi. Nevertheless, the books published by Chinta Ramanatham, *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula Charitra Putalu* (written in 1975 and published in 1988) and Chintalapati Lakshminarasimha Sastri, *Kuchipudi-Bhagavatulu* (1983), furnished a detailed account of all the masters, including their area of expertise, students and contributions. The following portion was gathered mainly from these two publications.

Going into the details, Hari Madhavayya was the first known, celebrated Kuchipudi artist from the late 18th or early 19th century, who travelled all over Telugu areas and as far as Thanjavur (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 274; Arudra, *Art* 17-19). He was believed to have learnt *yakṣagānas* and *śabdās* of Melattur and included them for the first time in Kuchipudi repertoire. This becomes a significant occurrence, as both the genres, he adapted

proved vital to Kuchipudi for the times to come. He was proficient in music and worked closely with the brothers Chinta Venkataratnam and Chinta Venkatramayya in adding new elements to the *yakṣagānas*. He was called as *Yakshagana Prapitamaha* for such contribution (Ramanatham, *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula* 102).

Another artiste, Vempati Paradesi (1880-unknown), was eminent for his *abhinaya* and majestic roles alike, taught the *Harijans* (outcaste groups) around Kuchipudi village, like Meduru (Ramanatham 72). Bhagavatula Sriramayya/ Ramayya, of the early 18th century, resided at Ghantasala near Kuchipudi and trained *devadāsīs* Kumari Narahari, Kumari Venkataratnam, and others (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 233). He was an expert in *yoga* and singing, and is prominently known as the author of *Gollakalāpaṃ*. Tadepalli Perayya Sastry (1886-1942) trained *devadāsīs* of Medur, Nangegadda in both the *kalāpas* and also took part in their performances as *sūtradhāra* or *vidūṣaka* (the narrator and jester respectively). He was as well a teacher to many hereditary artistes like Vempati Chinna Satyam (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 296-298; Ramanatham, *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula* 36). Bhagavatula Vissayya, famed for *bālīnta veṣaṃ*, also trained *devadāsīs* at neighbouring villages of Ghantasala and Nandigadda (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 254; Ramanatham, *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula* 49). These examples provide insight into how Kuchipudi expanded to other castes in the initial years of the last century.

Further, Vissa Appa Rao noted some lesser documented and eminent authorities as cited here (*Kuchipudi School* 21-22). Pasumarti Sitayya was a scholar, *guru*, known for his depiction of *sūtradhāra*, and also the teacher of Chinta Venkatramayya. Peddibhotla Dasaradharamayya (1850 AD) was a *pagaṭiveṣaṃ* pioneer alongside *mantravidya*, and Chinta Narayanamurthy was the finest for enacting the role of Bhama. Others added

Vedantam Sambayya, Bokka/Bukka Parvateesam, Bukka Ramabrahmam, Inguva Pattabhiramayya as the "*Masters of last century*" (Rao, *Kuchipudi Dance-Drama* 35; Radhakrishnamurty, *Vamsa* 62).

Srinivasa Chakravarty in 1946 stated that *meḷas* or troupes of only three family names as performers in Kuchipudi *agrahāra*. The Vempati, Chinta and Vedantam families were identified by him, most probably referring to the surnames of 20th century Kuchipudi trinity. Chinta Venkatramayya (1860-1949), the eldest in the trinity, is hailed as *Yakshagana Pitamaha*. He was responsible not only for the structure of the Kuchipudi *yakṣagānas* but also for expanding its repertoire. He was credited for including *Prahlāda Nāṭaka* and *Mohini Rukmāṅgada* and others, and also for establishing *śabdās* in Kuchipudi (Rao, *Kuchipudi* 48; Rao, *Kuchipudi School* 21). He established 'Venkatrama Natyamandali' in 1875 (under the guidance of his elder brother and teacher, Chinta Venkataratnam) and performed widely. He was also a *guru* for numerous hereditary artistes like Mahankali Sriramulu, Chinta Krishnamurti, Vedantam Raghavayya, Vempati Satyanarayana, P. V. G. Krishna Sarma, amongst others.

Another of triumvirate, Vempati Venkatanarayana (1871-1932/35), was famed for his portrayal of Satyabhama. Known as *Laya Brahma* for his rhythmical prowess, he was an expert in *abhinaya* and singing. He supposedly performed a thousand times, gaining the epithet *Abhinava Satyabhama* (Ramanatham, *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula* 72-74). He also played the roles of *Dādinamma*, *Bālīnta* and Leelavati, with aplomb. The third, Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry (1875-1957), was undoubtedly influential in shaping Kuchipudi's future. He had foreseen changes and introduced progressive reforms like expanding the repertoire to include *ślokās* from *Pushpabana Vilapam* and *Sri Krishna Karanamrutam*,

aṣṭapadis, *tarāṅgās* and *padams*. He was adept at female roles and acclaimed for *abhinaya*. His speciality was improvising and multiple interpretations through hand gestures for any given line.

Yeleswarapu Ramakrishnayya (1849-1909) was a performer, student and friend of Chinta Venktramayya and a *vāggeyakara* ²⁷⁹ (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 133). Bhagavatula Ramadasu was renowned for both the *kalāpaṃs*, *yakṣagānas* (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 241), Bhagavatula Ramayya ²⁸⁰ was famous as *Balintaramayya* for his excellent portrayal of *bālīnta veṣaṃ* and also *dādinamma veṣaṃ*. Bhagavatula Subrahmanyam was known for female roles, and his uncle, Bhagavatula Nagalingayya, was an skilled in *mantraśāstra*. Mahankali Satyanarayana was popular for kings' roles, especially Hiranyakasipu (Ramanatham, *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula* 55-63). Hari Venkata Chalapati (19th century) was proficient in male roles, kings with solid presence and *abhinaya*. Vempati Kodandaramayya was titled *Abhinava Satyabhama* for his portrayal (Seetaramarao 214). Vedantam Ramakrishnayya (1919-1971) did stage programs playing the lead male roles like Harischandra. He transformed the *vīthi nāṭaka* into a stage show (Rao, *Kuchipudi Dance-Drama* 35). Some called these changes a "*saṃskaraṇa*" reformation while others indicated it as a "*patanaṃ*" downfall, as it is common for any such new modifications.

There were others from Kuchipudi who were not dancers but contributed to the art. Yeleswarapu Sitaramanjaneyulu (1890-1979) was a proficient Carnatic music teacher for most practitioners of his time. His students were Chinta Krishnamurti, Vedantam

²⁷⁹ Someone who writes the lyric and composes music for the same.

²⁸⁰ This is another Bhagavatula Ramayya, and not the author of *Gollakalāpaṃ* as mentioned before.

Raghavayya, P. V. G. Krishna Sarma, amongst many. Bokka Kumaraswamy was an expert violinist who, with a grasp of rhythm, helped immensely in the musical passages and *jati* construction in *yakṣagānas*. Hari Punneya, apart from male characters in *yakṣagānas*, was known for innovativeness and making jewellery. Chinta Ramanatham also lists names of exponents of Sanskrit and Telugu, violin, *mṛdaṅgam*, harmonists, jewellery makers, *pagaṭi veṣams*, *siddhāntulu*, and *mantraśāstravettalu*.



Fig. 4.22. (Left) Ayyanki Thandava Krishna in a dance pose: Krishna, Thandava. "Natyakala." *Bharati*, vol. 22, no. 5, May. 1960, p. 439.

Fig. 4.23. (Right) Mahankali Satyanarayana as Banasura: Acharya. C. R. *Kuchipudi Aradhana Nrityamulu*. Pattabhirama Press, 1969.



Fig. 4.24. (Left) Chinta Krishnamurti as *sūtradhāra* : "Nrityotsavalu-Viseshalu." *Natyakala*, Apr. 1964, p. 161.



Fig. 4.25. (Right) Vedantam Raghavayya (right), chairperson, with the then Chief Minister Kasu Brahmananda Reddy at the All-India Dance Festival-1964: "Nrityotsavalu-Viseshalu." *Natyakala*, Apr. 1964, p. 167.

In the subsequent decades, Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma gained immense popularity in India and abroad for his female impersonation (Sondak; Dunning). He was the foremost hereditary performer to travel widely and create a reputation for Kuchipudi. Chinta Krishnamurti (1912-1969), son of Chinta Venkatramayya was addressed as the soul of Kuchipudi (Rao, *Kuchipudi School* 21; Rao, *Kuchipudi Dance-Drama* 35). He consolidated many *yakṣagānas*, performed them and was renowned as *sūtradhāra* (Ramanatham, *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula* 23-31). Chinta Krishnamurti, along with Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao, was instrumental in establishing the Siddhendra Kalakshetra at Kuchipudi. P.V.G. Krishna Sarma was well-known for his musical capabilities and conducting the performance as *sūtradhāra*. The role of *sūtradhāra* was paramount in the Kuchipudi *yakṣagānas*, and that role required musical, literature and dance proficiency

alongside being witty. Thus, these artistes who donned those roles got famed as outstanding authorities in that genre.

While Kuchipudi village and its surroundings served as a pedestal, in the 1920-50s, masters travelled to other parts, especially Southern India and started teaching Kuchipudi. Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry was a travelling teacher, and he has the distinction of staging the first performances as early as 1942-43 in the then Nizam area (Telangana) with his son Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma (1922-1982) and Ayyanki Thandava Krishna. The latter was also the organiser of the troupe. Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma, apart from performing, trained dancers like Sumathy Kaushal, thereby enabling Kuchipudi's popularity, apart from personal fame.

Vedantam Raghavayya, a celebrated director, and Vempati Satyanarayana (1922/23-1979, known as Pedda Satyam) were the foremost to go to Madras (Chennai) and establish a career in movies. They were followed by Pasumarthy Krishnamurti (1927-2004), again a well-known name for choreographing in movies, Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma, and Vempati Chinna Satyam. Vempati Satyanarayana learnt Kathakali, Bharatanatyam and Kathak apart from Kuchipudi and was an expert in presenting different facets of his expertise in those styles (Seetaramarao). He also travelled with Ramgopal, a renowned international performer (Ramakrishna, *Andhrula* 55). Though the details of places of travel and roles he played were indistinct, what is essential is that it would have given him ample exposure to a wide range of performance styles and techniques. Those experiences, when adopted into Kuchipudi, resulted in the extension of presentation styles and movement vocabulary.

From interviews of hereditary artistes at the village, it was gathered that Bhagavatula Ramakotayya (in 1961) and Vedantam Jagannatha Sharma were the first migrants to Hyderabad. Bhagavatula Ramakotayya first established a school Siddhendra Natyamandali, in Kuchipudi in 1947. Vedantam Prahlada Sarma shifted base to Eluru, Josyula Sitarama Sastri and Bhagavatula Yajnanarayana Sarma to Vijayawada, Hemadri Chidambara Dikshitulu to Rajamundry, Pasumarti Sitaramayya to Visakhapatnam and Yeleswarapu Suryaprakasa Sarma to Hyderabad (Bhikshu, *Tradition*). Vempati Chinna Satyam established his institute in Madras, and his exemplary role was dealt with in other sections of this chapter.

Speaking of the non-hereditary dancers, Ragini Devi was the foremost non-native and a woman to learn Kuchipudi. Ayyanki Thandava Krishna and Kanchanamala were both disciples of Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry and one of the initial practitioners of the art (*Kuchipudi School* 21-22). Ayyanki Thandava Krishna contributed through his writings, performances, organising dance tours, and, lecture-demonstrations.

Yamini Krishnamurthy and Sumanthy Kaushal, natives of Telugu land but from non-hereditary family were renowned performers who popularised Kuchipudi. C. R. Acharyulu first taught at Nellore and then at Darpana, Ahmedabad. Korada Narasimha Rao, a performer and teacher, set up his school in Eluru. Indrani Rehman, daughter of Ragini Devi, was the earliest active and prominent non-Telugu performer. Korada Narasimha Rao and Indrani Rehman travelled together and played a noteworthy role in spreading Kuchipudi (Ramakrishna, *Andhrula* 55). There was also mention about B. R. Mohana Rao in Visakhapatnam, who set up his institute and imparted training (Ramakrishna, *Andhrula* 57). Nataraj Ramakrishna went first to Nellore, Guntur,

Visakhapatnam and then settled in Hyderabad; Uma Rama Rao²⁸¹ and Sumathy Kaushal got stationed in Hyderabad (before the latter shifted to USA); Though the exponents who travelled were responsible for the form to flourish in those regions, not much was written about them, except for places like Chennai and Hyderabad.



Fig. 4.26. (Left) Yamini Krishnamurthy: Sambasiva, Munukuntla. *Kuchipudi Natyamanjari*. Nishumbitha publications, 1991.

Fig. 4.27. (Right) Korada Narasimha Rao and Indrani Rehman: Sukanya, Rahman. *Mothers by Daughters and Others*, Narthaki, 2009, www.narthaki.com/info/mbyd/mbyd5.html.

Then, during the late 1960s artistes like Jayaramarao, followed by Raja-Radha Reddy and later Swapna Sundari, made Delhi their home. Their efforts resulted in widening the geographical expanse of Kuchipudi. Parallely, numerous schools were set up abroad, especially in the United States of America by students of Vempati Chinna Satyam largely, at least till the last leg of the 20th century. Each of these artistes has contributed to introducing and eventually creating a niche for Kuchipudi at a global level.

²⁸¹ Uma Rama Rao (1938-2016) was a teacher and founded a dance institute in Hyderabad that produced numerous students in Kuchipudi. She also pursued research related to dance and wrote on dance, apart from choreographing and presenting fresh dramas.

Other names got associated with Kuchipudi in the writings. Enakshi Bhavnani wrote that "*Pendala Satyabhama of Pithapuram and Chittajallu Venkataramam of Marempalli, were women dancers of distinction and the very best exponents of the Kuchipudi school*" (232). They were all well-known *devadāsi* dancers and nowhere else mentioned as Kuchipudi dancers. Details about these particular women training or interacting with Kuchipudi artistes were not substantiated either. The same holds true where another writer Gangappa penned that after 18th century, the families of Duggirala, Koneru, Pendyala from Mandapeta and Pithapuram villages²⁸² were famed for Kuchipudi, adding Vaidehi and Induvadana (who performed *Gollakalāpam* at the 1959 conference) as Kuchipudi dancers (44). This leads to the next segment where Kuchipudi was misrepresented at various degrees in the writings.

4.11 Concerns and misconceptions

While the form underwent transformations and popularity post the 1960s, several assorted matters of disagreement propped up. One recurrent problem was about 'proper Kuchipudi', a question that unfortunately carries on to date. Concerning that, E. Krishna Iyer in 1964 pointed out specific problems faced by Kuchipudi back then, like lack of proper teachers and false publicising of other dances as Kuchipudi (*Tamilnadu* 103-109). This opinion was echoed by Sumathi Kaushal two years later in a 1966 article, at a paper she presented for a conference in Vijayanagaram (*Kuchipudi* 5-8). She suggested that despite numerous institutions teaching Kuchipudi, the standard and method were contentious. Hence, the institutions should get recognised by Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha

²⁸² Artistes from some of these places, like Duggirala Jagadamba and Pandiri Venkataratnamma, were trained in *abhinaya* from Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry (Sarma, *Vedantam*). Likewise, there could have been other instances of interaction. Nevertheless, the women were not called as Kuchipudi dancers.

Nataka Academy and also that some syllabus formulated.

The case of syllabus preparation came up in the next year's article by Nataraj Ramakrishna (*Kuchipudi Bhagavatakala* 11-16). In the context of framing the syllabus for Kuchipudi, as discussed in the first meeting of scholars back then, he raised the following concerns/suggestions:

- a. As Kuchipudi is only a part of Andhra *nṛtyakala*, should the syllabus be only for that style?
- b. Kuchipudi essentially is a male-performing art. So, when formulating, should it be for both male and female bodies or only male?
- c. A separate system for teaching solos to the interested learners, as basically, Kuchipudi is a multi-character *yakṣagāna* or *kalāpa* format.
- d. The solo performances in Kuchipudi being practically non-existent; there should be a format. Similar to *devadāsi* tradition and Kathak, the dancer should start with *nṛtta*, then *nṛtya* and finally *nṛtta* for a complete *rasānubhuti*.
- e. To call *bhāgavatars* from other parts like Turpu, Telangana, Rayalaseema and incorporating it or else it would end up exclusive to the Kuchipudi area.
- f. First, to train the teachers, who would then impart to students adequately.
- g. Decide on what roles to teach male and female artistes so that there is development in art.
- h. Instead of thriving as traditional, it should be famed as a classical art!

Though it appears to be rooting for a Kuchipudi-specific training and presentation, Nataraj Ramakrishna questioned the exclusion of other comparable forms. The discussion also called for new thoughts in Kuchipudi's development. That which was performed

exclusively by males had to be modified to accommodate both genders. While most of these seem common knowledge now, they got propounded initially then.

About the teaching systems, despite fleeting mentions of a Kuchipudi college in Eluru, Kuchipudi village and the Kalakshetra in particular, were considered an authentic storehouse of the dance of Telugus. Around that stretch, Vempati Chinna Satyam developed a system, introduced fresh dynamics and established an academy in Madras (Chennai) in 1963. However, these do not find good mention in the publications. These contributions got placed in some books of later periods and the post-1980 articles, probably when they gained abundant capacity as a major league in Kuchipudi.

Concerning the same topic of style and pedagogy, there was another claim. In Enakshi Bhavnani's publication, *The Dance in India*, prefaces for each style were written by virtuosos of that field, and Kuchipudi's preface was by Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao and Chinta Krishnamurti. It was evident that the writers claimed the authenticity of Kuchipudi and that it follows *Natyasastra*. They add that "*spurious styles*" were being showcased as Kuchipudi and that only Siddhendra Kalakshetra- institute for imparting training in Kuchipudi located at Kuchipudi village, teaches the original form (xv). It is of pertinence here that these two writers were responsible for establishing Kalakshetra at Kuchipudi village and thus made a pitch for it. Alternatively, the form was diversifying, with Vempati Chinna Satyam establishing his troupe in the then Madras and gaining popularity as the 'Kuchipudi'. The duo had to bring the focus back to the village.

A direct critique about the style or mode of presentation of Kuchipudi was an article by K. N. T. Sastry, which stated about the "*commercialisation*". He commented on the entry of commercial and cinematic elements into Kuchipudi, citing the example of a

renowned dance-drama by Vempati Chinna Satyam. In yet another article, Mohan Khokar expressed extreme dissent towards women dancers, dramas and all the changes that were happening at that moment in Kuchipudi, again referring to Vempati Chinna Satyam (*Degeneration*). As noted earlier, Vempati Chinna Satyam's innovations were distinctive from what existed till then as Kuchipudi and garnered as much praise and criticism. However, his presence and influence were experienced by all quarters. Teacher training camps were organised in the Kuchipudi village in the 1980s under the direction of Vempati Chinna Satyam, and most of the masters narrated this as a turning point. Several participants, irrespective of their 'style' attended and had an encounter with the Vempati Chinna Satyam's mode of teaching and structure²⁸³. While some followed it, few have stayed on with what they had learnt prior. But this exercise served as a mode of standardising and circulating the 'Vempati' style/*bāṇi*.

However, it is worth observing that it was not only outsiders, but inside the hereditary families itself, there was a difference of opinion, and accordingly a division of schools of thought. Vempati Chinna Satyam explicitly stated that he never took up the scripts done by the "Kuchipudi" people (Rao, *Transformation* 60). This reveals that he was differentiating himself from the practitioners inhabiting Kuchipudi village. Edwina Ranganath, in her article, clearly demarcated between Madras style and orthodox Kuchipudi style, referring to the practice observed in the village (47). It has been an ongoing debate ever since as to which is the authentic, if not the acceptable style.

²⁸³ As gathered from the personal interviews at Kuchipudi village.

Vedantam Ramalinga Sastry, present Principal of Siddhendra Kalakshetra²⁸⁴, scholar and teacher from the hereditary families opined that rather than discriminating as *bāṇis* or schools, it is appropriate to identify them as styles developed by individuals, showcasing their talent and originality (Sastry). A related example to this opinion cited was that Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma mentioned that he added *jatis* in his rendition of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* as a modification from what he learnt from his masters. Now, this cannot be Sarma's *bāṇi*. Instead, he attempted to add an element showcasing his competence. It could also be that by then, the *ṇṛtta* part has gained fondness by audiences, and Sarma tried to incorporate more of it to attract his viewers.

On similar lines, Vempati Chinna Satyam propounded that art should evolve and not be bound to what elders taught, as what was imparted at a point in time is suitable as per the then standards (Rao, *Transformation* 57-60). This was an overriding factor that guided his vision and subsequent modifications. Until then, most of the movements/narratives were transferred through the "*sampradāya*", or following what past masters taught unquestioningly. Reading an article on *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, two words kindled a special interest that routed the debate surrounding the designations- *sāṃpradāyaṃ* and *śāstrīyaṃ* (Krishnamurty 24-28). The author of that piece suggested some aspects of Kuchipudi were by *sāṃpradāyaṃ* and that they are now abiding by *śāstrīyaṃ*. *Śāstrīyaṃ* usually refers to the text-based practice, following the precepts propounded in the treatises. *Sāṃpradāyaṃ* gets loosely translated as traditional that is like a convention, practised and

²⁸⁴ Also referred to as Sri Siddhendra Yogi Pranganamu, a campus under the Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University.

repeated as accepted by majority²⁸⁵. 'Tradition' has come to be used when there is no substantial validity to defend any argument or for which there is no known history. This is what presumably Vempati Chinna Satyam was trying to respond to when he meant that tradition gets created, but *śāstra* is eternal (Rao, *Transformation* 60).

Though there were inclusions and modifications, the conventional routine in Kuchipudi was what got handed over by earlier masters. In 1993, Uma Rama Rao remarked that choreography is a hallmark of teachers, and students must get trained in it, and also by including in the university system (*Art* 99-101). This was one of the rare instances where choreography as a designation got mentioned as part of pedagogy. Otherwise, the choreography was not conversed much, apart from those primarily of Vempati Chinna Satyam.

Talking here of the personal aesthetic, Yamini Krishnamurthy's writings reveal a nonconformist approach to Kuchipudi. In an article written by herself, Yamini Krishnamurthy, a popular performer, outrightly disapproved how Satyabhama gets depicted in certain parts of *Bhāmākalāpam* by Kuchipudi practitioners and gives an account of how she portrayed the character in her version (*Satya* 19-25). She was hailed as a great dancer, but it is surprising to note that the traditional masters acquiesced with changes portrayed by an outsider woman. In her biography, too, she declared that the dialogues of Kuchipudi turned obscene and that with the help of her scholar-father and her *guru* P.V.G. Krishna Sarma, she brought back the classical dignity for the art (*Passion* 65, 66). Adding to that, she proposed that Kuchipudi belonged to women dancers as the braid

²⁸⁵ Another version of *śāstra* and *sāṃpradāya* was given by P. S. R. Apparao referring to a pan-Indian style that *śāstra* is almost the same, but the *sāṃpradāya* may differ (*Kuchipudi Natyam* 29).

represents female honour, and male impersonation is deceit. Though this sounds similar to what scholars like Daves Soneji believe about *kalāpa* being the mantle of *devadāsis*, it was unusual for a woman in the 1970s to counter over traditionalists and still retain her capacity as a prime dancer!

Taking Suseela Misra's remark, "*the special charm of Kuchipudi combines the directness and shades of the folk-traditions with the sculpturesque serenity and poise of the classical*" (30), an issue that bothered Kuchipudi was the ambiguous and wrongful depiction. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Kuchipudi got placed under dance, drama, folk and theatre. The association of Kuchipudi with folk was apparently a hindrance to the form's recognition as note. It was called rustic, not in a positive sense but to signify it as crude and unrefined. There is no explanation as to why were rustic forms not considered beautiful or unique. Even Vempati Chinna Satyam, in an article, called the folk dances "*degenerated*" and by "*uncultured people*" (Birth 67). A possible explanation must be the comparisons with the other popular forms of the time called refined and classical. Alternatively, the then situations drove general aesthetics to appreciate what was in a structured format.

In that regard, Sunil Kothari professed on how Kuchipudi was compliant to new approaches and capable of absorbing modifications that arrived with talented masters (Stock 44-46). He added that Vempati Chinna Satyam's style stands out for refining and removing the "*rusticity*" and "*crudity*" of the previous style, which was also "*delicious*". Similarly, another critic, Gudipoodi Srihari, opined that Kuchipudi was refined compared to fifty years ago, but some think that the old flavour and rough edges must have been retained (46, 47). Yet, he made a valid comment that no one can judge the perceived

degradation of standards. This appears as a dichotomy of what elements to retain and discard, which hinges on the individual sensibilities and capacities.

There were other issues mentioned that interfered with the progress of Kuchipudi. Nataraj Ramakrishna stressed the efforts taken up by other dancers and himself to popularise Kuchipudi. He documented performances, talks and lecture demonstrations in educational institutions and other means and ways, which seems more like a necessity to take Kuchipudi into the public (*Andhrula* 54, 63). From this, the efforts poured in to propagate Kuchipudi become evident. Intriguingly, he wrote about Kuchipudi not gaining fame due to the mentalities of Telugus not encouraging their own clan! This comes across as a rather personal remark, with no definitive responses.

Furthering, the inconsistencies on Kuchipudi were published in prevalently circulated books. Vempati Chinna Satyam pointed at one such in the Ministry of Culture's book titled *Indian dance*, wherein a wrong photograph got published as Kuchipudi, but none bothered to correct it (Satyam, *Birth* 61-68). To add to such misnomers are the following illustrations, which are neither alone nor striking but serve to indicate how even eminent names in the field have overlooked the accounts of Kuchipudi.

In a 1963 article, Ragini Devi wrote that Kuchipudi *bhāgavatars* were custodians of the entire dance tradition of Andhra, which comes across either as hyperbole or misinformation (*Kuchipudi* 37-41). In the same way, in Kapila Vatsyayan's chronicling of Kuchipudi components, a part of the seemingly erroneous representations was that Narayanateertha got attributed as the father of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, Bhagavata Mela and Kuchipudi (*Traditional* 56). In the same work, the famed practitioner of Kuchipudi, Chinta Krishnamurti, was named Chintamani Krishnamurti, a lapse considering the author's

stature. She also wrote that Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma was responsible for extracting *nṛtta* from dramas and the evolution of a distinct structure with the same name as Kuchipudi. It must be a reference to Vempati Chinna Satyam and not Sarma, as reckoned from Vempati Chinna Satyam's contributions.

Another major concern noted in the afterword for the reprinted editions²⁸⁶ of *Traditional Indian Theatre* wherein Kapila Vatsyayan wrote that Kuchipudi was a recognised-independent classical dance style with branches like the Bhamakalapa, Perini Nritta and Vilasini Nritta (188). It is an unexpected association, considering that Perani and Vilasini²⁸⁷ were never part of Kuchipudi. They, in fact, developed and contested as distinct genres. Though they belong to the erstwhile Andhra region, and present *Bhāmākalāpam* with variations, they were never under the solitary generic name of Kuchipudi.

Looking at the responses to writers on others' works, it was usually the book reviews by critics and scholars that are one of the crucial parameters for knowing the content and sometimes standard of a work and pointing out the errors. The writings collected for this dissertation seldom carried book reviews or analyses. One such instance was in a *Sruti* magazine about the books on Kuchipudi. Pappu Venugopala Rao, referring to the period between 1983-1993, noted that "*...while very little was written on Kuchipudi until 1983, by the end of 1990, there were at least 15 to 20 books available on the subject.*" (*Kuchipudi during* 21-28). He went on to critically review some of the works of that period. He commented that the book by Uma Rama Rao is "*unfortunately it is very badly written*

²⁸⁶ This research scholar has considered the 2007 edition.

²⁸⁷ *Perini/Perani* is a product of Nataraj Ramakrishna's efforts from the descriptions in *Nrīttaratnavali*, and *Vilasini natyam* is a reconstruction of the female dances of the *devadāsīs* by Swapna Sundari. They are generally not mentioned as *nṛtta*.

and has attracted the wrath of almost every critic or reviewer", referring likely to *Kuchipudi Bharatam*, published in 1992. He responded positively to Anuradha Jonnalagadda's book of 1993, *Kuchipudi Dance: Who is Who* as including the biographical details and accomplishments of about a hundred Kuchipudi dancers.

4.12 The writers and the written

Some of the concerns and errors as pointed above were by both the native and national-level writers. However, as they had more access and better awareness, regional writers could point at the specific issues faced by the form. This section thus focuses exclusively on writers who published exclusively or focused significantly on Kuchipudi. The period of the 1960s saw a formidable rise in the writings on Kuchipudi. Lisa Mitchell observed that people started adopting newly available media and technology to concatenate the new knowledge systems under construction (63)²⁸⁸. The stream of articles published on Kuchipudi conceivably fall under this attempt to mediate with prevailing circumstances. The first-generation scholars like Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao and Vissa Appa Rao feature prominently in this category, deliberating about their viewpoints, as seen in the classical section of this chapter. Though both were non-practitioners and from non-hereditary families, their agenda was literally to prove the classicity of Kuchipudi.

Vedantam Parvateesam was foremost from the Kuchipudi clan to write and publish his own books. He also appears to be the only one to do so for years and on most topics embedded in the practice of Kuchipudi- theory and practical. He was also credited for streamlining the structure of Kuchipudi. It was done through his teachings at Lalitha Kalakshetram that he established at the village around 1940. The idea for the present

²⁸⁸ Though she talks about this in a purely literary context, the concept holds suitable for dance.

Siddhendra Kalakshetra supposedly evolved from this school²⁸⁹. His books and articles are a significant resource and reference for the purported traditional style, with details of fundamentals and other practical elements. His writings included the compilation of numerous scripts from the traditional repertoire and the ones scripted by him. He was also responsible for filling the missing elements of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ* that formed a base for other versions in vogue (Radhesyam). However, their reach remained limited. The explanations were that the language being in Telugu and thus readable by a limited populace, and the unfamiliarity of proper marketing channels for enhancing the readership of his books. These made the valuable books confined to specific sections of literati.

The next author to contribute enormously through publications was Nataraj Ramakrishna. He was a prolific writer and scholar in the realm of Andhra dances. He was also a teacher and formulator of a dance form that he named *Perini/Perani*. He was interested in the female dance traditions of Andhra and sought to bring those to the forefront by learning from and working with hereditary female dancers. He imparted the same and propagated it under the name Andhranatyam. With such a broad frame, his articles reflected this schema of portraying a comprehensive picture of Telugu/Andhra dances. He wrote over thirty books and several articles and contributed immensely in bringing out the historical aspect of Andhra dances. A fascinating diversity is noticed in his writing style. His books predominantly were in a lucid, amusing style, yet dense with information and personal anecdotes. Nevertheless, in a few of his articles, there is an

²⁸⁹ However, the alternative theory was that Bhagavatula Ramakotayya established Siddhendra Natyamandali in 1947, in which Vedantam Sambayya was music director. They organised yearly dance festivals. Next, there was an intention to establish a dance school called Lalitha Kalakshetram, but it did not take off. Then, Chinta Krishnamurti got all the existing troupes together and registered Venkatrama Natyamandali. Later, with Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao's assistance, Siddhendra Kalakshetram was established (Lakshminarasimha, *Kuchipudi* 138).

apparent critical approach where he questioned, argued, compared and raised points of relevance.

A non-practitioner but deeply involved with dances of Andhra was Bhagavatula Sadasiva Sankara Sastry (1925-1998), popular by his pen-name Arudra. He was an eminent poet, lyricist, author and playwright. He was one of the first to inquire and contradict the established tales surrounding Kuchipudi and an important figure in the debates surrounding Telugu dances. He questioned the facts and critically analysed the legends surrounding Kuchipudi.

Proceeding to the academic approach, the prime PhD thesis in English connected to Kuchipudi was by Sunil Kothari in 1977. It was a leading, systematic, academic study on Kuchipudi that focused on the similarities between Kuchipudi's technique, music, *abhinaya*, and others had with the prescriptions of *Natyasastra*. Apart from that, Sunil Kothari was continually engaged with the form, wrote numerous articles, and also published a book post-2000 on Kuchipudi.

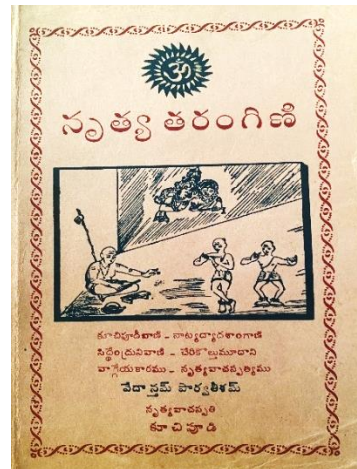


Fig. 4.28. (Left) Vedantam Parvateesam: Personal Collection of Anuradha Jonnalagadda

Fig. 4.29. (Right) Cover of the book *Nritya Tarangini* by Vedantam Parvateesam: Parvateesam, Vedantam. *Nritya Tarangini*. Author, 1988.

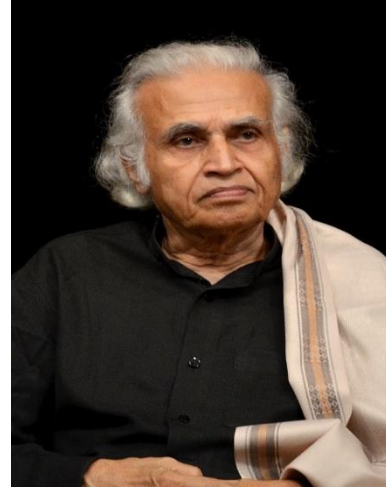


Fig. 4.30. (Left) Arudra: Arudra "Gallery." <https://rajamusicbank.com/Gallery.php?n=Arudra>

Fig. 4.31. (Right) Sunil Kothari

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=sunil+kothari&title=Special:MediaSearch&go=Go&type=image> –

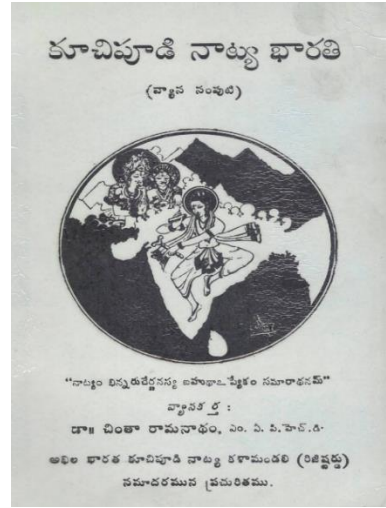


Fig. 4.32. (Left) Chinta Ramanatham: Ramanatham, Chinta. *Kuchipudi Natya Visishtata*. Sahitisudha, 2013.

Fig. 4.33. (Right) Cover of the book, *Kuchipudi Natyabharati* by Chinta Ramanatham: Ramanatham, Chinta. *Kuchipudi Natya Bharati*. 1988.

Shortly after, Chinta Ramanatham was the first hereditary artist to pursue research on Kuchipudi in 1979. His thesis, submitted in Telugu, alongside a host of other

publications, give an emic vantage point and a detailed approach to what he has imbibed as a traditional practitioner of the art (*Kuchipudi Yakshagana*). His dissertation tried to connect the missing dots in Kuchipudi's history and give an eclectic portrayal of the form. It included textual relations, history and received wisdom of the form, evolution, the music of Kuchipudi and its exponents, the practical elements, mnemonics and lyrics of some compositions, and the then-contemporary changes the form faced.

Amongst the practising artistes from non-hereditary families, Sumathy Kaushal, Uma Rama Rao, Swapna Sundari, Anuradha Jonnalagadda, to name a few who have written widely in the second half of the twentieth century, by publishing books and also contributing expansively through articles, alongside teaching and performing. From the 1990s till date, several research works on Kuchipudi and associated fields provided hugely for the scholarship on Kuchipudi.

A native, non-hereditary artist who researched Kuchipudi in English was Anuradha Jonnalagadda, who submitted her dissertation in 1996 (*Tradition*). Her work takes a scientific, evidence-based approach to the legends and also the foremost work to talk in-depth about the technique of Kuchipudi. Her work has extensive information and has set a benchmark for further research on Kuchipudi. These were followed by more research works mainly by students of dance, in both English and Telugu from the University of Hyderabad and Potti Sriramulu Telugu universities, which constituted the dance departments. Apart from these, there are limited research works on Kuchipudi submitted at other universities across India.

4.12.1 Post 2000 scholarship

The 21st century witnessed substantial progress in research on different aspects of Kuchipudi and concerning Kuchipudi. It is more discernable from the diaspora- scholars and students of Indian origin and settled abroad. They brought in a critical approach, questioning every aspect hitherto accepted, and sought to probe deeper and from a multi-dimensional approach, encompassing social history, in particular. They adopted western methodologies to study art, culture and the entire phenomenon related to Kuchipudi. As noted in this and previous chapters, their insights have revealed a novel dimension and perspective. Some of the crucial thinkers and researchers on Kuchipudi are Daves Soneji, Rumya Putcha, and Harshita Mruthinti Kamath.

Daves Soneji's and Harshita Mruthinti Kamath's thesis include Kuchipudi in the larger schema of their research area. Daves Soneji's writings focused on social history in the context of women dancers, throwing light on some hitherto undiscussed topics²⁹⁰. His dissertation was on Satyabhama as depicted in the Telugu traditions, of which Kuchipudi formed a part. Rumya Putcha's writings were an important indicator in guiding through identity issues for Kuchipudi and her analysis on the classical status²⁹¹. Her thesis, which was directly on Kuchipudi, opened up a new thought process on the deliberations surrounding Kuchipudi (*Revisiting*). Harshita Mruthinti Kamath's thesis about

²⁹⁰ Daves Soneji is an Associate Professor in the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

²⁹¹ Rumya S. Putcha works as an Assistant Professor in Hugh Hodgson School of Music and the Institute for Women's Studies, University of Georgia.

impersonation provided an insight into gender concerns in a male-dominated form like Kuchipudi²⁹².

Looking at the Indian scenario, research works exploring various dimensions of Kuchipudi developed in this century. Some of the topics were looking at Kuchipudi from a sociological viewpoint, on the characters and genres typical in Kuchipudi dramas, pedagogy, interdisciplinary studies and the like. A mention here about these is to give a glimpse of the profundity and diversification of the study related to Kuchipudi to fathom the form.

4.13 Chapter summary

This chapter attempted to collate and appreciate various opinions and narratives on historical and technical aspects of Kuchipudi. Beginning with antecedents of the form, the village, the transformations in edifice and technique, the training systems, the debates, the artistes and the research scenario got ascertained from the publications. The writings based on time and necessity focused on different aspects ranging from antiquity of Kuchipudi to exigency involving classical status and to technical elements. An effort was also made to look at how regional and national writers wrote about the form through both articles in reputed magazines, and published books.

From these, some thought-provoking challenges and dichotomies as commented under various heads were identified. Based on the Discourse Analysis and Genealogy frameworks, the notions of how the authors and texts participated in constructing the narrative around dance, what was addressed, and how some of the histories got validated

²⁹² Harshita Mruthinti Kamath is an Assistant Professor in Telugu Culture, Literature and History at the Emory College of Arts and Sciences, Atlanta.

were studied. "The truth here is debatable as various scholars have done extensive work on history, resulting in sometimes contrasting ideas" (Suryadevara). Yet, it is appropriate to note that the 'constructed history' of Kuchipudi was out of a necessity to suit contemporary sensibilities and to make it iconic and befitting for Telugus. While there were financial grants and benefits by becoming a classical style, as late as 1969, there is a lament that the Government did not realise Kuchipudi dance's impact (Rao and Murthy 4).

The form shortly received acclaim and spread worldwide. "Nevertheless, from being a male-dominated dramatic art, it is more practised as a solo performance by women, notwithstanding caste and creed" (Suryadevara). The orally transmitted arrangement was established as a *śāstra* bound, whilst some poignant issues got sidelined. Considering the contemporary conditions and pressures to propel Kuchipudi, a conscious attempt to assign a structure to Kuchipudi abiding by the traditional practices were perceived.

The study on Kuchipudi increased manifold in the last two decades, with both dancers and non-dancers actively undertaking research. Many practitioners have pursued research, traversing the dual paths of theory and practice. Aside from academic research, the last decade has seen a rise in dance expression through social media and personal blogs. While most resort to expressing their receptivity of assimilated knowledge, a few get considered as independent researchers outside the university systems, contributing to the field through their findings²⁹³.

²⁹³ This is not elaborated as it is beyond the scope of this work

Chapter 5

Documentation, Consumption and Beyond

"Arts are but products of contemporary societies and circumstances. They reflect the then societal needs, accumulated tastes, and collective experiences, and writings are a way to realise these processes, albeit in a linear fashion" (Suryadevara). Beginning with the active profusion of print and publishing on dance in India in the mid-20th century, to its dominance in the next few decades and the eventual thrust of a new kind of media- the web, this thesis tried to place and find the representation of Indian dances in published works. The discourse and written word are powerful and dynamic agencies that continue to provide a direction to the abundant matters of contention.

A study synergising the written word and the historical documentation, relevance and negotiations between the oral and written cultures formed the crux of the thesis. To give a deeper appreciation, these were discoursed in the first chapter. The second chapter is followed by a wide-ranging discussion on the documented sources of the 19th century, including treatises and travelogues, to get a grasp of the writings on Indian dances before the focal period of this dissertation. Further, from the available books between 1900-2000, certain phases were identified to give an overview of the purpose of those times and how they got revealed through writings. The phases include conversations on antiquating and legitimising dance in India, restructuring the forms and ultimately, questioning. Correspondingly, certain recurring concepts like Nationalism, Sanskritisation, terming Indian dances as oriental and classical were explained from a larger socio-political milieu with their repercussions on dances. With these as a base, venturing into analysis, some

classifications were arrived at. These include the vital parameters of what exists in writing, who was the writer, and the purpose of writings.

The third chapter delved into the particulars of writers as there is a definitive relation between who the writers are what they wrote. Based on their background, education, interest and engagement with dance, the writers' perspectives get reflected in their words and content. For this purpose, three authors whose works covered more than four classical dances in one book and significantly impacted the dance scholarship were selected. This analysis was limited to two books of each of these authors- Kapila Vatsyayan, Mohan Khokar and Projesh Banerjee, wherein the idea was to look at the leading arguments and the emphasis they intended to create through their works.

The next chapter focused exclusively on Kuchipudi. Concerning Kuchipudi, articles published in magazines in studying and popularising the style were examined as the books in English and Telugu were far and few and more material appeared in the articles. Besides, the personal interviews were also considered to bring a broader and deeper awareness of the published works. The focus for elaboration and examination was the history of Kuchipudi, the various genres and evolution of the form, hagiography, the place of its origin, its struggle for classical status, the technique, repertoire, other related elements, exponents, their contributions, and the research and scholarship in the field.

As part of the work, specific questions were raised and addressed. They connect to how and why certain historical paradigms got produced, and their impact on dance. It also considered how performance gets textualised, what relationship dynamics exist between writer and reader, and what repercussions dances faced due to published content.

5.1 How does a dance get textualised

Most often than not, the history- be it the constructed version or the believed or the hearsay- as perceived by the author gets documented. Then there are works on the repertoire, costume, makeup, the lyric or libretto in some cases, the popular performers, teachers, and the like. The major challenge, however, was capturing the performance. Dance, as echoed multiple times, is ephemeral, and transferred through oral tradition. It is an execution, be it the physicality processed through the various body parts or the deeper emotive content expressed through mime. The first task for the authors was how such a physical activity be put into text and given a framework.

The treatises have a prominent role here, as they have given a framework and vocabulary, allowing the explanation of these very actions of an individual. Thus, something extremely abstract got concretised by developing a frame of reference. While approaching the distinct forms of dance, two things are considered here. One explains a movement in general terms, and the other is to capture the technique specific to that form and explicate it. For instance, *Utplavana* is a leap in simple terms. The usage of energy, the height of the jump, how other parts should coordinate with that jump differ with both the style and the individual dancer in each performance. Capturing these differences where *sāttvika* adds to the flexibility of the movement and inherent improvisational nature of Indian dances makes it impractical to notate. One way of securing technique is employing notation, as in the western systems of dance. Unlike those, Indian dances are multilayered, with the *sāttvika* playing a crucial role in translating meanings, rather than bodily expression contests the design of notation.

Borrowing from *Natyasastra*, the Indian concept of *nāṭya* is ever-evolving based on imitative practices of the people, which naturally keeps changing based on time, culture and context (Kumar 1860). From that vantage point, though there were few attempts, the possibility of a conventional notation system for Indian dances even in future is unpredictable (Vēṇu; Rele, *Mohinī*). Though there was a success in bringing out the performance using vocabulary, the problem lies with the intricacies. Thus, a broad movement range can be written about but not the essence of the performance of each form.

As discussed in preceding chapters, the oral tradition was the way of disseminating art for centuries before the advent of modern technology. The oral is bisected into two: the likes of hymns where mispronunciation was a complication and the epics- with their interpolations that gradually transformed into literate form (Thapar 197, 198). The history of dance is akin to the second case, where the original gets majorly interpolated over time. On the other hand, writing being less challenging to tamper with, became historical (Thapar 203)!

The oral tradition was non-questioning or rather non-investigative to a significant degree. In dance, learning was chiefly by observation, more of a skill acquisition where reproduction was vital. However, once the system changed to institutionalisation or text reading, the concept of inquiry entered, and the skill systems have changed from memory-based to research grounded. Structured learning of texts became more conventional with the establishment of institutes of learning. It is in the formal education system that texts get prescribed, and a research-oriented perusal began. Interviews in the Kuchipudi village revealed that the hereditary practitioners did have in their possession texts or fragments. However, when they started appearing for a degree-oriented course like certificate and

diploma, they first read them. The concept of referring to books does not appear integral in Indian dance pedagogy. Dance is considered performative, and the *ślokas* get recited or few concepts elucidated in class as part of the practice but not for analysis or a formal study till the mid-20th century at least. There was an extended time gap between their discovery and the textual precepts to concretise.

Lisa Mitchell opined that the printed textbooks, instead of the manuscripts, restructured the meanings and practices of being educated rather than literate (113). Memory, which was a dominant skill in the oral tradition, got reduced to repetition due to the vast availability of printed texts, another response to the impact of print. It is here that the writer's provenance comes forth. Fundamentally, to put a word in print requires immense knowledge and conviction from the writer. Referring to multiple sources (and multiple manuscripts in the earlier days) to prepare an authoritative printed version makes a work substantiate for years (Mitchell 145). The first-generation writers tried to balance between the oral narratives and material from varied sources to validate their work. As pointed earlier, though the technique could not get exactly represented, most accomplished in bringing out the history.

5.2 The writer and the written

The central character behind the creation of the writing, the writer and her/his background are further deliberated. The observations mentioned here are not generalisations, but are an overview of sorts based on frequently occurring parameters. Depending on their place of origin, the distinction between native and foreign writers and the difference in their way of writing is quite evident. The non-natives who came from a diverse culture vis-à-vis the natives with more exposure had varied purposes and priorities

in writing about Indian dances.

Sunil Kothari opined that when writers like him, as in the foremost generation natives wrote, the onus was on them to unearth the basis of these dance forms and present them to the world (Kothari). Whereas for the diaspora, their system of education allowed for alternative addressing. Parul Shah stated that their handling of the subject matter differs as non-natives project for a heterogeneous culture and sensibility (Shah). G. Venu added that older day writers wanted the information to pass on to the next generation, not necessarily a personal gain (Venu). It comes across as a contestable comment suggesting the latter-day writers as attention mongers, while every generation would have an assorted category.

Taking leads from the writings, the native writers mostly leaned towards historicising the antiquity of Indian culture and dance. In lieu of certain concepts, especially those related to history and its apparent myths, it is like the authors borrowed from earlier texts/ what is popular rather than probing why or what the idea is actually. This certainly was one kind of writing which may be considered unidimensional. One prominent example that surfaces here concerning Kuchipudi is about its origins. The hereditary artistes, labelled as emic, asserted Siddhendra as the progenitor of Kuchipudi. Other writers, however, considered added possibilities in arriving at the genesis of the form. This can be termed as the celebratory vis-à-vis critical methods to examine any aspect.

There is a minority representing the converse or challenging the established. The initial foreign writers ranged from acknowledging the Indian culture and dances, to mentioning them as apparent myths nonetheless appreciating dance's aesthetic. The claim to go back to the original roots and practitioners is noticeable in the post-2000 writers,

predominantly due to Western methodologies. The diasporic writers form a crucial sect attributable to their academic approach to the subject and, on a broader plane, engagement with dance and the whole spirit of Indian culture.

Looking at the style of writing, the style itself conveys some impressions without explicitly putting it out. In few works, there was a tendency to put it across as 'like Bharatanatyam' or 'like Kathak' while talking about some other styles (Bhavnani; Vatsyayan, *Indian*). This may be because of

- a. the popularity of the forms leading them to be reference points, or
- b. the author explaining about these forms in the beginning chapters, making it convenient for reference, or
- c. to establish a common origin between the different forms and hence write about the invariable commonalities.

Due to this kind of comparison and reference, over time, the outcome has come across as if those specific styles were older and original. The form under discussion was successional, whatever the actual intention of the author was.

An argument on the work's credibility, particularly books, arises from the way sources were handled. If citing sources is taken, some books have citation lists as early as the 1940s (those by Projesh Banerjee) whereas, a few in the 1980s (by Mohan Khokar) contain no such to evaluate the validity. Though that is not a single point of contention, it aids in lending authority to the work in an academic sense.

There are sporadic illustrations of authors, who wrote extensively, but their purpose differed in different modes of writings. Authors like Kapila Vatsyayan, Mohan Khokar or concerning Kuchipudi, one like Arudra, have written both books and articles and their

agenda, phraseology was the same through both the mediums. On the contrary, there was Nataraj Ramakrishna, a prolific writer about Telugu dances, including Kuchipudi. In his books, the language was facile, and the subject ranged from introductory to eulogising dances or relying on his personal experiences. In the articles, though, his style changed to a severe tone wherein he raised questions and arguments or issues that the forms in question confronted. This is a unique case, and the reasons for the same could be that there was both a need to reinforce the position of dances amongst the general public and also to have a deliberation to fortify the choices made for the forms. He could accomplish the former through books intended for all readers and the latter through exclusive articles published in magazines, which invited the exchange of ideas from scholars and practitioners of the field.

Summarising, the difference in approaches by the early writers or the hereditary artistes vis-à-vis the post-20th-century scholars fall under the school of faith²⁹⁴ vs the hermeneutics of suspicion²⁹⁵ respectively. A few, particularly trained dancers (for instance, Kapila Vatsyayan, who articulated profoundly on technique) could bring out the intricacies of the dance in writing. This depended on the dance training of the author or if they relied more on viewing than the experience. The backdrop, context, and motives to write differ, and so does the author's handling of the subject and presentation of arguments.

²⁹⁴ This means that without looking for a rationale, believing the symbols and surrendering to a text (Josselson).

²⁹⁵ As coined by Paul Ricoeur, where nothing is believed at face-value but rather look into the conceptual or hidden meaning as followed by the philosophers Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche (Ricoeur).

5.2.1 *Who is the reader*

The writing process and its essential components can be structured as a cyclic arrangement between the author, reader and the art itself (the other components include the publishers, artistes, and others). The author initially writes out of his own interest inspired by watching performances/learning a dance form besides necessary preparation or background scholarship about the subject. The reader gathers the information by reading, gets familiarised with the nuances and legacy and applies that knowledge while watching the art form. Alternatively, even the vice-versa occurs in the majority of scenarios where reading happens after watching.

Art inspires one to write, another to read, and another to appreciate. That which is in writing, on art gives back to art, through the reader. The primary purpose of any writing is consumption by the readers. The reader often makes their own meanings out of these readings and imagines a connection between the various elements and narratives of the dances. This is vital as writings often create a more profound interest in watching more and appreciating it better. In this context, the Reception theory developed by Stuart Hall becomes appropriate²⁹⁶.

According to this theory, there are three possible positions of readers. The first is the Dominant or Preferred reading, where the reader agrees to the producer or writer's proposed meaning. In other words, the text gets decoded in a way its creator envisioned. This can also be called the author-oriented response. Next is the Negotiated, where there is both agreement and disagreement. The situation where some parts of the texts are accepted

²⁹⁶ This is one model taken up for explanation. There are other receptivity theories like transactional reader response and others (Farhadipour; Mambrol; "Reception").

while some are opposed is the Negotiated reading. Finally, the Oppositional, wherein there is a total disagreement of the text by the reader. The reader understands the encoded meaning but would not concur with it.

The first category may not need to be experienced or knowledgeable in the subject, and are the lay readers who just accept what is in writing. For the other two, the readers possess prior information. They already have some amount of knowledge to negotiate, to express their agreement or disagreement. Those initiated into the art form, practitioners and scholars are the ones who usually come under this segment. Under the third category, where there is opposition, the informed scholars generally have adequate facts to disagree with. Also, depending on the authentication of the writing, the opinions may change. When the validation is strong, there is less chance for negotiation or opposition. As a researcher grappling between the three categories, this dissertation is the outcome of being primarily the negotiated reader, giving rise to few arguments and searching for counter-points.

There are two categories in the books themselves: the scholarly and the glossy, catering to different target groups. There are few books in the former intended for serious readers. Though in a few books, the author says that the intention is to reach the laity, the content is an admixture (like the works of Mohan Khokar and Projesh Banerjee analysed in third chapter of this dissertation). The design and presentation may appear casual, and the laity can consume them. Nevertheless, they also have the depth of material that can raise discussions or questions. The technique and analysis fall under the introductory level, but the historicity is usually profound.

The consumers of dance publications are the connoisseurs, who read to become appreciators, and the dancers- students of dance, seasoned performers, *gurus*, or even

scholars from dance or allied fields. The purpose of dancer-readers is three-fold. The first is to become better-informed or thinking practitioners or even hone a niche for themselves. The second is to substantiate their knowledge and teaching activities. The third is the scholastic pursuit, where they delve deeper into the subtleties and critical inquiries. The writings become referral points to understand their art for any of these stages of dancers.

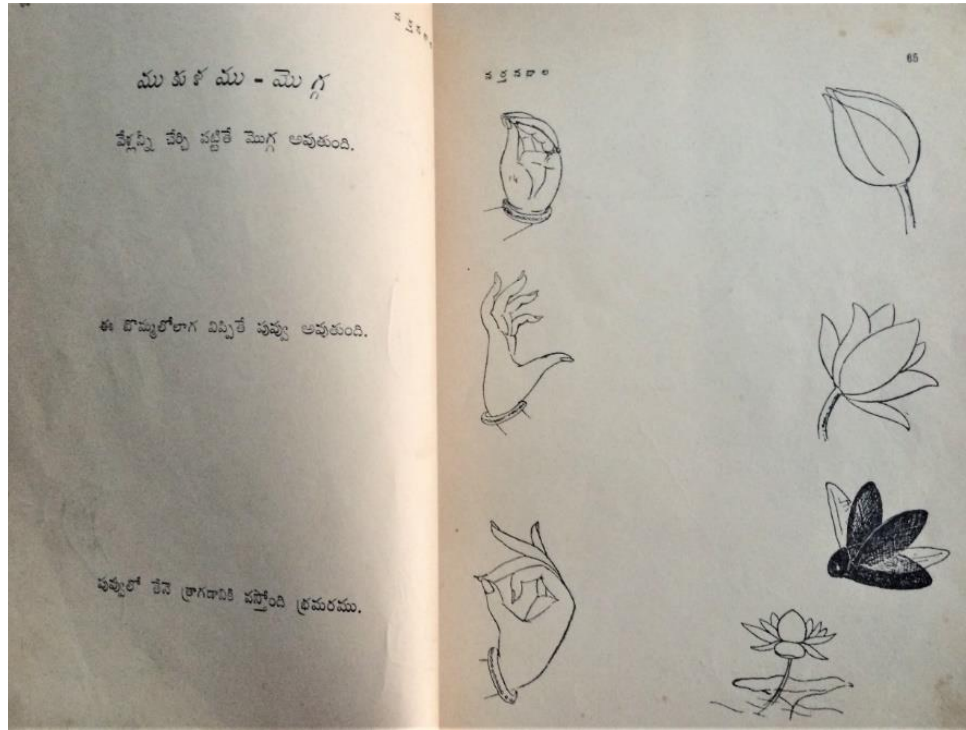


Fig. 5.1. The hand gestures with images from how the actual object/element is found in nature from the book *Nartanabala* written by Nataraj Ramakrishna for the young: Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nartanabala*. Visalandhra, 1957, pp. 64-65.

To draw attention towards one particular target group mentioned scarcely are, the children. There are meagre books specifically written for them, of the ones traced were by Nataraj Ramakrishna and Mrinalini Sarabhai. Both wrote in a simple, informal language, to introduce the world of dance to children. It is worth mentioning Nataraj Ramakrishna's

efforts here as his books in Telugu are lucid and as if dance is communicating with the kids with its own stories, which catch a child's interest. For instance, he said *Abhinaya Darpana* is like a "pocket dictionary" for a rather massive *Bharatarnava*. Such words are easily comprehensible and strike a chord with children. In one of his books, Nataraj Ramakrishna mentioned that writing for children is a difficult task that requires expertise and experience (*Nartanakatha*). In addition, a suitable language and expression are another skill set that might have resulted in only a handful of books for kids. This is one seemingly important yet neglected segment.

The scholars perhaps opine that the theoretical aspect comes after the experiential training and a level of proficiency. This might be a reason for the handful of works intended to be read by young. Apart from the elementary theory imparted by the teachers, writings would add to their enthusiasm and help inculcate a sense and knowledge that might help them later in serious dance studies. It could also be because the concept of reading is not integrated into the everyday practical class, as the natural intent of a regular dance class is to produce performers. With dance established as part of higher learning centres, in the last decade of the 20th century, several performers and teachers are making books part of the training.

5.3 Kuchipudi

Arriving at one of the foci, the objective was to look at the writings on Kuchipudi and how these works dealt with

- a. historicity,
- b. evolution of the dance form from multiple genres,
- c. nationalist positioning and the subsequent changes,

- d. identity issues based on caste, language, political and economic factors, and
- e. construction of dance from dance-drama tradition.

The first observation formed from the reading material is the scarce documentation about Kuchipudi in the first half of the 20th century. There are numerous performing arts in India, and the documentation is inadequate unless particular exponents rose to exceptional fame or the form itself has attained a status of sorts. Kuchipudi could fall into this category as it was one amongst the multiple art forms that dotted the Andhra region. As discussed in the earlier chapter, only in the 1950s period there was a sudden interest and the form elevated to the classical status, resulting in the surge of writings and an apparent attempt at popularising it.

In the light of writings as a source and resource from Kuchipudi's recognition as classical to the structuring of the form itself, the consequences of the publishing sector are categorised into three major segments:

- A. Visibility: Kuchipudi's reach into the public domain are attributable to publications. Art became more accessible to people.
- B. Content development: With the publishing of performance texts, with many masters compiling earlier works or publishing fresh libretto, the repertoire expanded.
- C. Institutionalisation and Professionalism: The transfer of oral tradition to written and institutionalisation instilled a sense of professionalism into the art. The art, which was limited in scope and reach, was considered with a rather severe approach, and deeper research and scholarship have developed.

With the increase of writings, few concerns emerged as well. Out of the persistent matter of contentions related to Kuchipudi is its typification. Drawing from the point posited by Rajyalakshmi Seth²⁹⁷, the recurring nomenclature used to address Kuchipudi as a performing art (possibly as a distinction from its namesake village) is Kuchipudi suffixed by *nāṭyaṃ*, *nṛtyaṃ*, *bhāgavataṃ*, *bharataṃ*, *yakṣagānaṃ*, *nartanaṃ*, *naṭanaṃ* or simply dance giving rise to the confusion of its form and structure. Vedantam Parvateesam maintained that it was a *nṛtyaṃ* and not *nāṭyaṃ* as it has *nṛtta*, *nāṭya* and *lāsya* and also that it falls under the *yakṣagāna* where music, dance and *abhinaya* exist (Solo 82-84). As explained in the fourth chapter, Kuchipudi evolved, borrowing elements from various genres predating it, but was considered a dramatic form before turning into a predominantly solo presentation in the late 20th century. Interestingly, though *kalāpaṃ* was considered as the chief and original constituent, none called it Kuchipudi *kalāpaṃ*! Instead, the debate was about the terms *nāṭya* and *nṛtya* or even *nartana* later, all of which loosely translate as dance in English parlance. However, like Bharatanatyam that got renamed from Sadir, there was never a name change considered for the form. It may be so as Bharatanatyam got more or less detached and replaced from the hereditary artistes, Kuchipudi still manages to tread both paths as the hereditary artistes and outsiders, with both actively engaging in the practice of the form.

The technique of Kuchipudi has indirectly undergone much change under the influence of various writings. For instance, the treatises on dance and their translations expanded the scope of movements. Secondly, new ideas got incorporated into the practice

²⁹⁷ It is built on the idea proposed by Rajyalakshmi Seth in her research synopsis (*Changing 4*). The thesis copy was unfortunately not available for further references.

and presentation during the attempt to make it 'classical'. Another impacting factor was making the form stand on par with the other classical dances that already gained recognition, particularly with the neighbouring Bharatanatyam. The published material of that period from the 1950s played a major role in disseminating the information and reinforcing these ideas. Additionally, the fundamental shift of a drama into dance, from a male to a female body, the space of performance, alongside the intellectual contribution of individual *gurus*, gave Kuchipudi a distinct flavour.

A shortcoming noted in Kuchipudi, where an explicit community was the custodian, is a chronicling of the traditional families itself. Apart from an occasional brief overview, a sociological study of how these families survived, their systems functioned, their life patterns, and such details, is not sufficiently archived. Additionally, lack of documentation resulted in some missing links or discontinues in the history of how the dance journeyed. For instance, what happened between the Machupalli Kaifiat and the subsequent written evidence is not registered. Similar are the points regarding the female dancing tradition, the influence of theatre, the missing links with *pagaṭi veṣams* and other dancing traditions. Though there were illustrations of interactions and mostly that Kuchipudi Brahmins were teachers of the *devadāsīs*, what exactly they instructed was not given. Only with Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry, as late as 1930s, it was explicitly known that he taught *abhinaya* to the female dancers.

The result relies on oral histories and hearsay as an essential source for historical investigation (Varadarajan 1009). Interviewing Kuchipudi traditional practitioners reveal that everything cannot be proven and that rather than questioning, it is best to accept the knowledge elders have imparted. While it sounds accurate for certain aspects of

knowledge, the authentication process remains incomplete without a basis. Nevertheless, there also arises a query if actualities get brushed under the mask of tradition without an attempt to find rationale or evolve with expanded awareness.

What Romila Thapar postulated *"In speaking of tradition, we should perhaps keep in mind that although it appears to be a process of deliberate continuity, in fact, it is a continual election of desired elements, often arising out of contemporary concerns and defined by existing social relations."* (195) is appropriate in this situation. Accordingly, what was traceable in most writings is what was nominated to be projected at that time. The same holds good for the changes in the form, in this case, Kuchipudi. While designing the solo repertoire, the elements of drama were retained at times intact or in a modified version, and other fresh elements were incorporated. This means that certain elements handed down as traditional to the form became alterable.

On a similar note, the cause or struggle of identity continues irrespective of the period and purpose in Telugu states. Just as Kuchipudi strived for a special status during the formation of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, decades later, a similar phenomenon is noticed. During the separation of present states, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in 2014, Kuchipudi was considered as the dance of Andhra Pradesh by both Governments. This resulted in Telangana reaching out to Perani as its representative and also formulating Perani lasyam as a female dance, as Perani at that time was limited to male artistes. Though the authenticity of Perani gets reckoned with its name or mentions of a tradition called Perani in treatises like *Sangita Ratnakara* and *Nritta Ratnavali*, the form in practice in Telugu regions now is a construction of Nataraj Ramakrishna during the early 1970s. Now, Perani

lasyam is in the process of being developed into a full-fledged form, yet again drawing elements from corresponding practices.

5.4 Observations on what was published and its impact

The content of what gets written and presented is relevant to gather their bearing, if at all. On a broad level, the discourse on dance is divisible as

- A. Mythical- where everything is considered cosmic and fabulous.
- B. Historical- where the approach followed in archaeology is adapted.
- C. Mixed- where rationality is applied in arriving at outcomes considering both the above methods.

Irrespective of the approach, the agenda of the early writings was to find the glorious past borrowing from available evidence in literature or other data and the folklore in vogue. The initial publications on dance had a purpose to:

- a. establish the histories of hand-picked Indian dances as having centuries of continuous existence, and stabilise the forms, and
- b. legitimise the same through the reliance on treatises

These are the objectives that got realised through writings. Most of the published works seem to give linear, singular or identical narratives based on popular ideas in contemporary circulation. The trajectory of writings over some time, beginning in the last years of the 20th century, gradually revealed a consciousness to probe, question, and enhance an understanding of the form in focus and extend to the associated fields.

About the subject matter that is published, Daves Soneji noticed a shift (Soneji). He suggested that before the revival, it was all about the reliance of dances on Sanskrit and post, the focus was on people or specific individual contributors to dance. It is worth

considering this in light of the names associated with various schools of dance. As dealt with in previous chapters of this dissertation, the revival occurred under a complex series of happenings. Nevertheless, almost every form has few names permanently associated with the modifications and uplifting the form. Vempati Chinna Satyam for Kuchipudi or Rukmini Devi Arundale for Bharatanatyam are examples that turned synonymous for the styles they represent. The importance given to such personages and publishing of biographies and autobiographies of dancers describes individuals' roles after the 1960s.

Taking a cue from Walter J. Ong that "*Most textualities show little concern with historical continuities (which are also psychological continuities)*" (162), accentuating and reiterating certain aspects of the constructed history and most often parting with the social history is observed in the writings. The theories or ideas postulated during the period of 1930-the 1980s gained acceptance for the next few decades till the late 1990s when the interrogative modes and in-depth research of the turnout of the events came up. It is fascinating that some misconceptions propounded in the initial stages gained trust for decades without question. Some facts got ascertained later, some legends are still in vogue, and some stereotypes were created and cultivated. The choice of words used by the authors and the word usage played a crucial role to elevate/degrade/stress a particular point. An example citable in this context is the naming of Sadi as Bharatanatyam and propagating it as the authentic and direct descendant of *Natyasastra*. Other forms get often referred to with respect to Bharatanatyam. This kind of reiteration of some concepts over time and in multiple sources gave the notions a sort of permanence and acceptance in collective cognizance.

The recurring concept in most of the writings includes the association with *Natyasastra*. This can be called a purist view, wherein the onus lies in the legitimisation of dances. The other is the localist view, where local traditions are the foundations. However, the former gained prominence. Later day scholars like Daves Soneji argue that repurposing of texts occurred for the Nationalist project (Soneji). Departing from the then need for strengthening dances employing a reliance on texts, it is imperative to see what the treatises have done to dance.

Dance is an art that grows by accumulation, observation and ultimately practice. Reading the written word comes in as an advancement that fills in the lacuna of knowing the vast subject first hand. History and technical requirements are graspable from writings. The actual practice and aesthetic are through observation and physical learning from the teacher. Talking solely from a dancer's position, the revival of texts brought about a strength, a base and a change in the movement vocabulary. When print was not rampant in the field of dance, improvisation was crucial, and that is how the forms possibly flowered. The masters had the advantage of not succumbing to a text but had scope for adding their inputs. Over time, prescribing to *Natyasastra* or some other treatise, the translation of movement from text to practice, and excessive reliance on these treatises amplified, leaving little room for improvisation. This was due to the fear of being labelled non-adherents to classical vocabulary. By classicising or standardising any form based on specific parameters and aesthetics, there is a risk of losing the original flavour of the form that has roots in a particular region and culture. As an antithesis, when there was a need for a form to be alive and fit into the current conditions, the treatises paved a safe path. The treatises also added immensely to the existing movement vocabulary and expanded the scope of

regional forms. While stringent adherence of treatises to every little aspect is questionable, they provided a sense of clarity when needed.

Moreover, a few concerns seem to continue after these concerns were first pointed out in the writings. Madame Simkie expressed that the dance exponents of one style should stop disregard for other styles and see dance as one whole (Arundale, *Indian Dance*). This was written when the numerous forms claimed their space through the second half of the last century. Despite better awareness that all are restructured forms and have their own space, the claim for authenticity and that one style is superior over the other exists to date.

Occasionally, the turn of events proved otherwise than those written, in an optimistic sense. In 1984, Ragini Devi anticipated that Kuchipudi and Bhagavata Mela Natakam would end in the next ten years as the next generation has not taken to the art (*Dances*). She was specific in mentioning that the hereditary arts were on the verge of extinction. While the number of traditional practitioners depreciated, the arts survived because the outsiders have taken up to a large extent, at least in the case of Kuchipudi.

Another noteworthy notion that surfaces in various accounts is lamenting the loss of tradition in lieu of newer developments. Nevertheless, this is accepted as an unavoidable aspect as it happens in any field of knowledge. The attempt was to understand the actualities of past traditions and build upon them. Some points appear to be left somewhat ambiguously or directly, depending on the context and purpose of the writing. Rare were the instances where writings invited a seed of thought, triggered questions, initiated a dialogue or engagement with the reader rather than disseminating cursory information from hearsay or fundamental data. There is another intriguing factor where the same idea or

argument was dealt with and presented by different authors in different methods, as explained in the previous chapters of this work.

Some of the topics that find infrequent mentions in the published works include the economic status of the native practitioners and their lives. The effects and implications of finances are not dealt with in detail. This is considering both the history, survival of artistes, and teaching or performance dynamics concerning funds. Another aspect is what was the status of dancers in society. There are examples like Rukmini Devi Arundale, who got nominated for the presidential post or others who received awards, but seldom about the lives of other dancers/teachers.

It is only the form and few exceptional artistes that were endorsed. For instance, while talking about exponents in Kuchipudi, only the eminent artistes like Chinta Venkatramayya for *yakṣagānas* were highlighted. The musicians, other lead actors, or even the details about the scriptwriters did not get appropriately documented²⁹⁸. Artistes as a community- not as individuals but as a group, are crucial for the sustenance of art. This is a significant omission where the support systems and the contributors for the art do not find mention. Likewise, regarding patronage, apart from prominent kings, the micro-history of subsidising forms through the Zamindars predominantly, and who the other benefactors were are missing. Similarly, even a glimpse of what commoners think of dance and dancers, at least about the ones exalted as stars in the field, is not found.

There is a pronounced repetition of the known historical aspects, but probing into the unidentified territories was seldom. On the same lines, evidence for all that got published and a critical enquiry was deficient. It is of accent here that more access to

²⁹⁸ As elaborated in the fourth chapter, very few works chronicled the details of these.

material and manuscripts did not exist in the initial days of writings. Institutionalisation and the introduction of dance in the formal education systems increased the study of treatises and analysis of movements in a structured fashion. The oral history was juxtaposed with evidence to evaluate the past, strengthen the narratives or deconstruct myths. The increased knowledge base benefited from looking from a third person's view and tying up loose ends. In this regard, it is worth observing if the present scholarship is still dwelling in the colonial or postcolonial sensibilities in looking at an art that is rooted in a different cultural entity. With the British education system, certain sensibilities have seeped into Indian consciousness and changed the way of discerning Indian aesthetics. Correspondingly, in the present times, with an influx of western methodologies into the education and research arena and the diasporic views, there arises a question if, yet again, the indigenous culture is viewed through a polarised lens.

5.5 Impending labour

This dissertation undertook the task to comprehend the representation of dance through the published material. However, as it is limited to the 20th century, it falls short as post-2000, a distinct wave of scholarship incorporating the western ideologies, theories, and frameworks dominantly hit the shore. Some new schools of thought in the research idiom entered like studying the relation of dance with movies, pedagogy related studies, cross-cultural studies, and the ones that emphasise sociological backdrop amongst many others. These give a more comprehensive picture and new directions to investigations, leading to a further comprehensive picture.

Since this dissertation limits itself to books and published articles of the 20th century and does not include the newspapers and electronic media, it can become a separate topic,

and further probe can be made in that direction. Perhaps this material may throw light on the role of dancers in society, which was noted as a lacuna in the considered material. Further, the other areas that are up for scrutiny include an approach from Indian aesthetics and the gender perspectives in these writings.

5.6 The culmination

The statement by Joan Erdman that *"a dancer can no longer blindly accept the myths, nor the writer give generalised descriptions. A critical inquiry and an acknowledgement of history helps in moving forward."* (299) substantiates what this dissertation had tried to bring out. There is no attempt to find out the 'truth' with multi-dimensional approaches to some eminent and pertinent myths. Instead, the different positions taken in different periods by different writers are juxtaposed to arrive at possible narratives for any occurrence. Truth is again a point of contention considered ambiguous or non-existent or a matter of fact²⁹⁹.

Though the initial intent was to discover the impact of writings on the dance or vice versa, it resulted in probing into the history, the sources and how they shaped the course of the dance. The interest and idea were to explore how texts represent the domain of dance. This work realised the purposes of exhuming the diverse narratives and, in the process, brought forth a few overlooked aspects and inquired into some endorsed positionings. However, the analysis did not or rather does not lead to closure but opened more avenues for exploration. The multiple forces directly or indirectly bearing on arts opened up a more expansive worldview involving politics and society. Such diverse material (included in the

²⁹⁹ In the positivist view, truth is singular. As per Anti-essentialism, truth is non-universal but a product of culture-specific place and time. Post-modernism says there are multiple truths. Post-structuralism says there is no truth (Barker; Saukko 19,20).

appendices I and II), with several dots to connect, revealed a colossal and composite fabric. While the attempt was to interpret a work from a synchronic view, it was inevitable to compare and question based on this researcher's personal engagement and interactions. This exploratory study reasserts the hypothetical claims of the role of publications in constructing the narrative around Indian dances and establishing Kuchipudi as a classical dance. The definitive inferences on the influence of publications on the perception and practice on the dancers and readers is a complex task that needs further investigation in laboratory conditions.

To sum up, it would be relevant to quote Leela Samson that "*Words have the capacity to travel time, they can evoke memories and they also constantly alter. The words are the same, however the meaning changes...The idea of course is to transcend meaning. It is necessary to get over the words and transfer them.*" (Classical 12). Already many books are unfound or lost or out of print causing a loss to the body of knowledge on Indian dance. The writings resulted in creating what could be best called the "public memory"³⁰⁰. Here, it is relevant to understand the impact the chronicles found in these writings had on the minds of public- commoners and students of dance. At times, the whole community shared a conception (like the story of Siddhendra, which is usually called a belief by outsiders, nevertheless succumbing to the accepted ideas). And then comes a state where this shared bank of ideas got questioned, proven, dispelled or otherwise. The present work forms part of this crucial documentation that looked into formulation of a critical narrative on dance. It would be uncanny, but during the Covid-19 pandemic circumstances, the numerous talks and lecture demonstrations on dance on the various online platforms often

³⁰⁰ This term is borrowed from an article by Anandi Salinas on *Natyasastra* (73, 74).

cited phrases and ideas from the published material. Moreover, in the case of a debate, it was again the written sources that most speakers referred back to prove a point, affirming the possibilities of future academic analytical work in the area.

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Appendix-I

Exhaustive list of published books on Indian dances¹

¹ The titles are divided decade-wise, arranged chronologically, and then in alphabetical order. The first available versions or editions only got cited here. It may be observed that the list is not exhaustive of all the published books, and also this research scholar could not trace all the mentioned books.

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Appendix-II

Annotated Bibliography

The purpose of working on this Annotated Bibliography:

There are many published books with titles including words associated with dance, like the *nāṭya* or Indian dance, but not all of these actually dealt or delved into the subject. So, this Annotated Bibliography is formulated to list the content of available books on or related to dance in English between 1900-2000 in a chronological fashion, as gathered from the Exhaustive list published books on Indian dances. The books covered or are associated with Indian classical dances. Also, Kuchipudi being the area of emphasis, the agenda is to find the representation of Kuchipudi in the vast gamut of Indian classical dances in the said books. The second section of this bibliography covers the gist of the books exclusively in Telugu, as the works on Kuchipudi are more in Telugu.

Books in English

1. Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., and G. K. Duggirala. *The Mirror of Gesture: Being the Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikesvara*. Harvard University Press, 1917.

This book begins with an elaborate introduction discussing the concept of drama/dance in India with relation to texts and literature, followed by the translation of *Abhinaya Darpana* into English.

2. Coomaraswamy, Ananda. *The Dance of Siva*. The Sunwise Turn, Inc., 1918.

This pioneering work is an assemblage of essays by the author meant for westerners to know about Indian culture. It talks about India through the aspects of nationalism, arts, beauty-*rasa*, Buddha and his philosophy, Lord Siva as the dancer in the titular essay, the musical system, role and position of Indian women and the like.

3. Devi, Ragini. *Nritanjali: An Introduction to HINDU DANCING*. Hari G. Govil, 1928.

This book begins with the spiritual nature of Indian dances, relation of various dancer-deities like Siva, Krishna, and the various terms like *nṛtta*, *nṛtya*, *mārgi*, *desi*, etc. The focus is on symbolism with few illustrated hand gestures. Her idea of how Indian dances are and present them to American readers.

4. Shawn, Ted. *Gods Who Dance*. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1929.

This book, with the cover page of Nataraja describes through the travelling eyes of Ted Shawn and his company of dancers the dances of Asia, including India.

5. Nandikeśvara, and Manmohan Ghosh. *Nandikeśvara's Abhinaya-Darpanam: A Manual of Gestures and Postures Used in HINDU Dance and Drama*. Calcutta University, 1934.

This work has the titular treatise under the following sections: The earlier study on the work and meaning; critical apparatus and reconstruction; *Abhinaya*: it's meaning and history; the scope of *Abhinaya Darpana*, correspondence between *Abhinaya Darpana* with *Natyasastra*,

Bharatarnava, Sangita Ratnakara; about the language, author, antiquity.
Then is translation and notes followed by the original Sanskrit text¹.

6. Ghosh, Haren. *Haren Ghosh Presents Uday Shankar & His Company of Hindu Dancers and Musicians*. Provita Press, 1935.

This is about Uday Shankar and the artistes who worked with him, penned by Uday Shankar's Indian impresario Haren Ghosh.

7. Magriel, Paul David. *A Bibliography of Dancing*. Wilson Comp, 1936.

This has a page on Indian dancing in the second part of the book. There are 24 works (books and articles) relating to dances of *nautch*, Uday Shankar, one on Kathakali and treatises are included, mostly written by non-Indian authors.

8. Naidu, Bijayeti Venkata Narayanaswami., et al. *Tandava Laksanam: or the Fundamentals of Ancient Hindu Dancing: Being a Translation into English of the Fourth Chapter of the Natya Sastra of Bharata and Containing Special Appendices of Aesthetic and Archeological Interest*. Munshiram Manoharlal, 1936.

This is principally a publication of the fourth chapter of *Natyasastra*. This includes an introduction to *Natyasastra*; the Chidambaram temple-correlating the *karaṇa* sculptures at the temple with the descriptions mentioned in the *Natyasastra*; the explanations of *aṅgahāras* and *recakās* in detail with sketches; and about musical accompaniments of dance. A glossary includes inputs on dance poses from other chapters of *Natyasastra* as well².

9. Banerji, Projesh. *Dance of India*. Kitabistan, 1942.

One of the foremost books to write about multiple styles, covers the following topics: The first section has the origin and history of Indian dance; the ideas of *rasa* and *bhāva*; hand gestures; Hindu aesthetics and spiritualism. The second section has the dancing styles of Uday Shankar, Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri, Bharatanatyam, Tagore's dances, Cinema and

¹ This is written from Ghosh, Manmohan. *Nandikesvara's Abhinayadarpanam*. Third ed. Manisha Granthalaya, 1981.

² This is written from the 1971 edition.

Folk dances; Music and rhythm; stage and costuming; and influence of Ballet. (Parts of the content are the same as the author's 1985 work, *The Art of Indian Dancing*.)

10. Banerji, Projesh. *The Folk-Dance of India*. Kitabistan, 1944.

The book gives the meaning and diversity of the word folk and consciously includes only the 'important' folk dances of Indian in explanations. The second edition includes a few folk dances from Ceylon and Pakistan. The dances are divided into sections based on their geographical locations. Kuchipudi is included as a folk dance of the Deccan³.

11. Bhaduri, Manjulika and Santosh Chatterjee. *The Art of Hindu Dance etc. with Plates*. S. K. Chatterjee, 1945.

This book gives the divine origin of dance as mentioned in treatises; what dance means; the Hindu concept of art and aesthetic; what dance and drama were to the ancient Greeks and other civilisations; ancient women dancers in history and literature, examples of Kathakali, Manipuri, Chchow (Chhau) and the associations with Ramayana and Mahabharata.

12. Venkatachalam, Govindaraj. *Dance in India*. Nalanda Publications, 1945.

Divided into two parts, the first part of the book features Balasaraswati, Rukmini Devi, Shanta Rao, Menaka, Gopinath, Uday Shankar, Ramgopal and Sadhana Bose. Part two is on Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Manipuri, Kathak; *mudras* in Indian dance; and finally addresses the contemporary trends like publicity and frenzy playing a constraint for the dance itself.

13. Iyengar, Srinivas C R. *Indian Dance (Natya and Nritya)*. Blaze Publications, 1948.

This book reveals the misconceptions surrounding dance; dance in Sanskrit and Dravidian literature, some treatises like *Sangita Ratnakara*, *Rasamanjari*; the characteristics of dance as seen in the *Gita Govinda*, *padams*, in works of dramatists like Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti; and the love and separational aspects of dance.

³ This is written from the 1959 edition.

14. Ambrose, Kay. *Classical Dances and Costumes of India*. Adam and Charles Black, 1950.

This covers the mystical aspects of Indian culture, the music and on Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak, with ample illustrations and technical sketches. A chapter focuses on the costumes of various styles. The folk dances and the dances of Ceylon are also part of this.

15. *Bharatakosa*. Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Series, 1951. (English and Sanskrit)

This is a dictionary of the technical terms and explanations of the words found in treatises relevant to dance, music, rhetoric, and drama. Collected from a wide range of sources covering various periods, it is an encyclopedia for understanding the treatise terminology, with thousands of terms and added words in the appendix.

16. Ghosh, Manmohan. *The Natyasastra of Bharata Muni*. Asiatic Society, 1951.

This is an English translation of chapters 1-27 from the magnum-opus, with additional notes.

17. Gopal, Ram and Serosh Dadachanji. *Indian Dancing*. Asia Publishing House, 1951.

This work has information about the origin and history of Indian dances, divine connections, poets like Kalidasa; *hasta* and *rasa*; lighting and ornaments; and on the forms Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri. One segment compares the Eastern and Western thoughts/philosophies on dance forms followed by the revival in Bharatanatyam and Kathakali and on Uday Shankar.

18. Bowers, Faubion. *The Dance in India*. Columbia University Press, 1953.

This was written primarily for American audiences to get familiar with the Indian dances and not intended to be a scholarly work (as noted in the author's introduction). It writes about dance from the spiritual and sociological angles; a historical perspective from Muslim and Christian influences on Indian dances; the contributions of Uday Shankar, Anna Pavlova, Rabindranath Tagore and Rukmini Devi. Then Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, Folk dances, including technical and ethnological orientations.

19. Devi, Ragini. *Dances of India: with an Appendix on Indian Music*. Sushil Gupta, 1953.

This work has a brief on the relation between dance and Gods, drama of *Natyasastra* and expansion of few terms from the treatises and *hastas* in detail. Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Saraikela Chhau, Manipuri, Kathak and renaissance in dance and music find place in this book. In the section on Bhagavata Mela dance-drama- Yakshagana: there is a mention of Kuchipudi, *bhāgavatars* and a few repertoire pieces and the relation between Kuchipudi and *devadāsi* dances⁴.

20. Devi, Rukmini. *Indian Dance*. Publications Division, 1954.

This work consists of an introduction on Indian dances with essays dedicated to Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Kathak, Modern trends and the future of dances.

21. Gopinath and S V Ramana Rao. *The Classical Dance Poses of India*. Natana Niketan, 1955.

Beginning with a brief introduction about dance, it has information about *Natyasastra*, terms like *abhinaya*, *lāsya*, etc., and has picture-descriptions of *karaṇas*. It also has material about Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri and Kathak. A mention about Kuchipudi is noted in the context that there are dances like *devadāsi* dance and Kuchipudi, the latter being a village name and a dance-drama, in which, like Kathakali there are vigorous dance movements.

22. Ghosh, K. L. Manmohan. *Abhinayadarpanam: A Manual of Gesture and Posture Used in Hindu Dance and Drama* (ed. 2). Mukhopadhyay, 1957.

This is another revised edition with text, English translation, notes and critical commentary.

23. Gopal, Ram. *Rhythm in the Heavens: An Autobiography*. Secker & Warburg, 1957.

This is an autobiography where the author, one of India's foremost and famed dancers, writes about his early days, curiosity towards dance, training, struggles, influences, travels for dance and contribution towards

⁴ This is written from the 1984 edition.

dance.

24. Gopinath Natanakalānidhi. *Abhinaya Prakāsikā*. Natana Niketan Publications, 1957.

This work pertains to the theory of dance with *ślokas* and what they mean under different heads.

25. Sarabhai, Mrinalini. *Indian Dancing for the Young*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957.

This is a work intended for children discussing the different dance forms, how to train eyes, *rasas*, the dances of abroad like Noh, Kandyan dances, etc., apart from Bharatanatyam.

26. Varma, K. M. *Natya, Nritya and Nritya*. Orient Longmans, 1957.

This book elucidates the titular terms, all known representations, origin, relationships, applicability from *Natyasastra*, *Bhavaprakasa*, *Amarakosa*, to *Bharatakosa* of M.R. Kavi. It adds that the theories postulated should be understood based on the time and perspective, citing examples as to how those terms and definitions are considered in different modes of Indian dance.

27. Ghurye, G. S. *Bhāratānāṭya and its Costume*. Popular Book Depot, 1958.

This book discusses how the name *Bharatanatyam* is restricted to a specific style. It has references of dances from *Vedas* and other literature, including the meanings of various terms found in the treatises. It also discusses painting and sculpture in relation to costuming in dance and the history of male dancing.

28. Gupta, Dependra Chandra Das. *Psycho-analysis of Dancing: Based in Bharata's Natyasastra*. 1958.

It has an analysis of *karaṇas*, the emotions they convey, what skills the dancer needs to possess to execute *karaṇas* and what effects are seen on the dancer after performing them.

29. Multiple Authors. *Sangeet Natak Akademi Dance Seminar papers. Part I and II*. Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1958.

This is a compilation of papers by various authors in two parts. The first part consists of articles on Bharatanatyam, Bhagavatamela Natakam and Kuchipudi. The second part comprises the Indian classical dance literature

and treatises like *Hastamukatavali*, *Natyasastra*, *Abhinaya Darpana*, etc with hand gestures given importance. It also covers the religious aspects, literary and other sources and sculptural references regarding Indian classical dances.

30. Various. *The Dance in India*. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958.

This is a small book about tribal, folk and classical dances of India. It has an expanded write-up on Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, and briefly on Bharatanatyam and revivalist period.

31. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Dancing Bells*. Visalaandhra Publishing House, 1959.

This is a book intended to introduce Indian dances with illustrations of the deities related to dance, various styles, hand gestures and the like.

32. Bowers, Faubion. *Theatre in the East: A Survey of Asian Dance and Drama*. Grove Press Inc., 1960.

This work is on the traditions of many Asian countries, including a chapter on India that relates Indian mythology with Sanskrit drama and dance. It includes the music, emotive and mime aspects and how dance derived elements from drama and the details of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri.

33. Anand, Mulk Raj., editor. *Classical and Folk Dances of India*. Marg, 1963.

This is an illustrated book with articles written by Ragini Devi, Rukmini Devi, E. Krishna Iyer, Mohan Khokar, and others on various dances styles of India.

34. Kavi, M. Ramakrishna., editor. *Natyasastra of Bharata*. Oriental Institute, 1964.
(English and Sanskrit)

This has an introduction in English by Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi, followed by the Sanskrit text of *Natyasastra*.

35. Meri, La (pseudo. Of Russell Meriwether Hughes). *The Gesture Language of Hindu Dance*. Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1964.

The first edition of this work was published in 1941 (from the foreword). The book encompasses the religious background and history of Indian dance; on Kathakali, Sadir, Kathak and other schools; and a section called

the new dance of India. It also includes a pictorial and written description of the *hasta prāṇas*, 34 *asamyuta* and 200 *samyuta hastas* with usages. It mentions Kuchipudi as similar but with certain differences from Sadir.

36. Sarabhai, Nawab Vidya. *419 illustrations of Indian music and Dance in Western Style*. Sarabhai Manilal Nawab, 1964.

This work is based on *Natyasastra*- the kinds of dance mentioned in it and the various *bhedas* like that of *hastas*, eyebrows, shoulder movements, *abhinayas* and so on. Photographs support *hastas* and *cāris*.

37. Bhavnani, Enakshi. *The Dance in India*. Taraporevala Sons and Co., 1965.

This is an exhaustive work that clarifies many topics from the God and dance relation to dance in sculptures and paintings and the basic components that make up dance including hand, head, facial movements. The forms covered are Bharatanatyam, Kuravanji, Kathak, Kathakali, Kummī, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Dances of Manipur, Chhau, Mohiniattam, Krishna attam, Bhagavata mela dance-dramas and Yakshagana apart from folk and tribal dances that are divided geographically. It also covers the music, rhythm, and costuming of various dance styles. The last section handles the revival of dance⁵.

38. Raghavan. V., editor. *Nrttaratnavali of Jaya Senapati*. Govt Oriental Manuscripts Library, 1965. (English and Sanskrit)

This has a rich critical introduction in English by V. Raghavan followed by the text.

39. Apparao, P. S. R and P. Sri Rama Sastry. *A Monograph on Bharata's Naatya Saastra (Indian Dramatology)*. Naatya Maala Publication, 1967.

The 36 chapters of *Natyasastra* are condensed into 16 parts dealing with the crucial aspects of the treatise in this English translation of the original Telugu work by P. S. R. Apparao published in 1959.

⁵ Select content of this work got analysed in chapters 3 and 4.

40. Massey, Reginald and Rina Singha. *Indian Dances. Their history and growth*. Faber and Faber Limited, 1967.

This book writes about the following forms: Dasi attam (including Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and Bhagavata Mela Natakam), Kathakali, Ottan Tullal, Yakshagana Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi and others like the ones by Uday Shankar, Shanti Niketan and the Sattras. It gives details of the history, technical terms used in each mode, the technique, makeup, costume and repertoire. An appendix included gives names of the masters and dancers of all the styles.

41. Menon, Balakrishna. *Indian Classical Dances*. Rabindra Bharathi, 1967.

This work commences with the origin of dance as per *Natyasastra* and forwards to the particulars of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri.

42. *The Dance in India (second edition)*. Publications Division, 1967.

This is a book on the dance traditions in India with numerous images, including tribal, folk, classical and with a section on *mudras*. The classical styles that it talks about are Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Manipuri.

43. Zarina, Xenia. *Classical Dances of the Orient*. Crown, 1967.

This book is about the origin of dance based on the *Natyasastra* and the relation to divinity. It describes training, technique, makeup, music and costume of Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Manipuri and on *devadāsīs*. There is a section on the technical aspects, and especially *hastas* are elaborated. Since the author is trained in Bharatanatyam, most examples of that style are cited in the technique part.

44. Swarup, Shanti. *500 Years of Arts and Crafts in India and Pakistan: A survey of Sculpture, Architecture, Dance and Music, Handicrafts and Ritual Decorations from the earliest times to present day*. D. B. Taraporewala Sons and Co., 1968.

This is not entirely a book on dance but has a chapter entitled 'Dance' (pages 170-190). It has details encompassing dance history during various rulers, the transformations from *devadāsī* to devotional cults, the impact of Muslim

rule, transitions during the 20th century, and the prescriptions in texts like *Natyasastra* and *Abhinaya Darpana*. The dance forms included are Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Odissi, Manipuri, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi, Bhagavata Mela Natakam and folk forms, out of which few are elaborated and rest are dealt in brief.

45. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*. Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1968.

A path-breaking work, it includes the aesthetic and spiritual background of Indian art and the idea of aesthetics in Indian arts like sculpture, music, theatre, painting and dance. It has an overview of technique, inclusive of the classifications delineated in *Natyasastra* like the *aṅgas*, *upāṅgas*, *hastas*, *sthanās*, *cāris*, with an analysis and comparison of the *karaṇas* with sculptures at Chidambaram temple. A chapter discusses mentions of dance from the *Vedas* to epics to *purāṇas* and the later volumes of the Buddhist and Jain periods and Sanskrit dramas. A chapter is dedicated to the common musical elements and the accompaniments used in Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak and Odissi.

46. Bose, Mandakranta. *Classical Indian Dancing. A Glossary*. General Printers, 1970.

This has the glossary of Sanskrit terms from treatises, and notes of the concepts that are used in Indian dances.

47. Satyanarayana, R. *Studies in Indian Dance*. Sri Varalakshmi Academies of Fine Arts, 1970.

This is a critical work on the various facets, including practicality of the Indian dances. It discusses the need for conferences and new approaches; dance traditions of Karnataka; *tāṇḍava*, *lāsya*; *gauṇḍali*; the authenticity of *Bharatarnava*; underlying aspects of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri; and the last portion has the author's comments and how dance is considered by practitioners, a comment on connoisseurs and the factor of quality vs quantity in dances.

48. Devi, Ragini. *Dance Dialects of India*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1972.

This volume comprises data on dance in ancient India- *Vedas*, *purāṇas* etc.,; *tāṇḍava*; the gestures and their representation; *devadāsīs* of South India; and a delineation of Bharatanatyam, dance-drama of Andhra and Tamil Nadu, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Krishnattam and some other dances of Kerala, Yakshagana, Odissi, Saraikela Chhau, Kathak, Manipuri and the folk dances of India⁶.

49. Singer, Milton. *When a Great Tradition Modernizes*. Praeger, 1972.

Though not directly on dance, this work is about the cultural scene in Madras, relating to the traditional systems like music, dance, etc. This is included in this bibliography as it aids in a better understanding of the social history of dance.

50. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Indian Classical Dance*. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1974.

This book contains the history, theory and technique of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Odissi, Manipuri and Kathak; the 1990 edition has an extra chapter on modern dance that is missing in 2015, about mainly Uday Shankar and Tagore's schools of dance.

51. Zile, Judy Van. *Dance in India-An Annotated Guide to Source Materials*. Asian Music Publications, 1973.

This is a detailed annotated bibliography with heads like reference; history and theory; dance forms; films; recordings; labanotation; resource organisations, comprising a brief one-two line description of what the book/article comprises.

52. Krishnamurti, N. S. *Andhra Dance Sculpture*. A.P Sangeet Natak Akademi and A.P. Lalit Kala Akademi, 1975.

A book chiefly concerning the technical aspects and not style-specific. It covers *Natyasastra*, *Abhinava Bharati*, *Abhinaya Darpana*, *Bharatarnava*, *Bharatasara*, *Hastamuktavali* and other texts alongside some epics. The

⁶ This is written from the 1990 edition.

concepts of *nāṭya*, playhouse, *rasa*, *bhāva*, gesticulations, *cāri* , *gati*, all *abhinayas* and *bhedas* are expounded.

53. Naidu, M. A. *Kuchipudi Classical Dance*. Andhra Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1975.

This is a monograph on Kuchipudi, including history of dance forms of Andhra, the village of Kuchipudi and a few compositions of Kuchipudi repertoire.

54. Tarlekar, G. H. *Studies in Natyasastra*. Motilal Banarasidass, 1975.

This volume deals *nāṭya*- origin and evolution; the purpose of *nāṭya*; *bhāva*, *vibhāva*; *abhinaya*- in detail like *sañcāri bhāvas*, *cāris*, *gatis*, *vācika*, *āhārya*, the eight *nāyika avasthas* ; music and dance as per *Natyasastra*; theatre, troupe and spectators; performance-oriented preliminaries, role of *sūtradhāra*, etc., with examples of Sanskrit plays; about Kutiyattam; and concluding with the idea of a Sanskrit play.

55. Banerji, Suresh Chandra. *Fundamentals of Ancient Indian Music and Dance*. Institute of Indology, 1976.

This work carries a section on dance based on the treatises, delineating a few each in *cāris*, *sthānas*, *hastas*, dancer, assembly and others.

56. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Traditions of Indian Folk Dance*. Indian Book Company, 1976.

This book discourses the folk forms of all the states in India based on geographical division and categorising based on their performability, context of performance and content. The crux of folk as a genre is elaborated while linking it with the so-called classical dances, with relevant examples. References are made to epic literature and treatises in explaining ideas. Kuchipudi finds mention as a developed form from theatre.

57. Mukhopadhyay, Durgadas., editor. *Lesser Known Forms of Performing Arts in India*. Sterling Publishers, 1978.

This is a compilation of essays about styles across India, including Mohiniattam and Chhau, as lesser famed arts. *Veethi Bhagavatam of Andhra* is one of the essays by V. Raghavan, having linkages to Kuchipudi.

58. Varadpande, M. L. *Traditions of Indian Theatre*. Abhinava Prakashan, 1978.

This is about the various theatre forms of India. Kuchipudi is mentioned as an operatic dance-drama and in the context of Yakshaganas. It is written as an offshoot of *Preshanaka* tradition that flourished in temples.

59. Chatterji, Ashoke and Sunil Janah. *Dances of the Golden Hall*. Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1979.

This is a biographical work on danseuse Shanta Rao, covering her lifestyle, dance experiences and philosophies. It gives information about the styles Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Bharatanatyam she had learnt, her *Gurus* and their methods. Though she learnt Kuchipudi, it is not elaborated except that she had a brief training at Chennai Kuchipudi Art Academy and that the repertoire of Kuchipudi is minimal. There is a linkage to Andhra region though, from where she learnt the Bhama Sutram and formulated her dance form, Bhama Nrityam.

60. Khokar, Mohan. *Traditions of Indian Classical Dance*. Clarion Books, 1979.

This book has the origin of dance as per *Natyasastra*, the association between dance and various deities, textual history, *purāṇic* references, kings and patronage, technical details like *abhinaya* and other; and a detailed account of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Chhau, Yakshagana, Sattriya and Free dance⁷.

61. Kuppuswamy, Gowri and M. Hariharan., editors. *Readings on Music and Dance*. B. R. Publishers, 1979.

This is a collection of articles on music and dance, with sections on Kathakali, Bhagavata Mela and Yakshagana- this has references to Kuchipudi.

62. Ratnam, Anita. *Natya Brahman (A concept of ancient Indian Theatre)*. Saher, 1979.

This book, primarily based on the *Natyasastra*, delineates the concepts of *rasa*, *abhinaya*, *play-hall*, the artistes and the audiences.

⁷ Select content of this work got analysed in chapters 3 and 4. The observations made here are from the third, revised and modified edition published by Clarion Books, in 2010.

63. Sarabhai, Mrinalini. *The Sacred Dance of India*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1979.

This work covers the greatness of Indian dance as an ancient art, Gods Siva and Krishna's relation with dance; the Cholas and their reign in South India in association with the dance. It has information about Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi as Bhagavata Mela Natakam of Andhra and also on Bhagavata Mela Natakam of Tamil Nadu, Yakshagana, Chhau and folk dances.

64. Subramanyam, Padma. *Bharata's Art, Then and Now*. Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, 1979.

This is a compilation of lectures delivered by the author about *nāṭya*, *nṛtta*, *karaṇas* and Sadir based on the texts, history and her experience as a dancer. It has detailed, research-based analysis in a lucid manner but profound with suitable examples. For example, in a chapter on *karaṇas*, the author points out errors in other books like the *Tandava Lakshana*.

65. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Traditional Indian Theatre*. National Book Trust, 1980.

In this book, the author indicates commonalities and common elements between various performing art forms in India and interrelationships between them rather than a stringent division into folk, classical and others. Forms like Kutiyattam, Chhau, Ramlila, Bhavai, Tamasa are deliberated based on literary, regional, caste and such multi-layered indications. Kuchipudi finds a place in this as a theatre rather than a classical dance⁸.

66. Kuppaswamy, Gowry and M. Hariharan. *Indian Dance and Music Literature - A Select Bibliography*. Bibila Imprex Private Limited, 1981.

This is a bibliography on the various dance and music forms of India, with 800 books, and 300 articles from more than 250 journals.

67. Nagar, R. S., editor. *Natya Sastra of Bharatamuni. 4 volumes*. Parimal Publications, 1981. (English and Sanskrit)

This has an introduction in English with comparative critical analysis from various texts, followed by the Sanskrit versions of *Natyasastra* and

⁸ Select content of this work got analysed in chapters 3 and 4.

Abhinava Bharati.

68. Banerjee, Projesh. *Apsaras in Indian Dance*. Cosmo Publications, 1982.

This work is an attempt to locate Indian dances in ancient scripture rather than treatises, through the dancing female, *apsara*. The origin, meanings and variations of the word *apsara* and the history of dancing *apsaras* are derived interestingly from Indian literature, sculpture and painting. The *devadāsīs*, who are called the daughters (descendants) of *apsaras* owing to their commonalities, the folk dances originating from the *apsaras* and the impact of *apsara's* dance are delineated in this unique book.

69. Banerjee, Projesh. *Uday Shankar and his Art*. B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1982.

This is a biography on Uday Shankar, talking about his early life, dance, productions, popularity and his style of dance.

70. Gatson, Anne Marie. *Siva in Dance, Myth and Iconography*. Oxford University Press, 1982.

This volume has about: dance in Indian society- *mārga*, *deśi*; Bharatanatyam and Odissi; the *devadāsīs*, temple history and *purāṇa* references; formalisation of Indian dance- *bhāvas*; depicting the temple and dance relation via sculptures- *karaṇas*; classification and components of Nataraja images and other dancing images of Siva; and decorative dancing figures. The illustrations are cited through *mudras* and from the examples of Bharatanatyam and Odissi, in which the author is trained.

71. *Guru-Sishya Parampara: the Master Disciples Tradition in Classical Indian Dance and Music*. Arts Council of Greater Britain, 1982.

As the title suggests, the book elucidates how the student-teacher relationship existed from the Vedic period, the Vedic stories on that tradition, followed by examples from Kudiattam, Kathakali, Odissi, Kathak and music fields with descriptions about those art forms.

72. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple*. Society for Archaeological Historical and Epigraphical Research, 1982.

This work focuses on the sculptural material in connection to dance, and the interpretations gathered from the sculptures. It also deals with the *karaṇas* of *Natyasastra* as seen in the sculptures.

73. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Dancing in Indian Painting*. Abhinav Publications, 1982.

In this book, based on pictorial evidence, the author tries to analyse the technicalities of dance. There is an attempt to trace the history and development of dance through the paintings as paintings depicted dancers. The huge volume is divided into pre-historical, proto-historical, medieval, mural traditions, Moghul school, Rajasthani style, Pahari style and geographically into Eastern, Western and Southern Indian schools of painting. There are extensive references to literature and a wealth of images to supplement and compare existing dance schools with the ones depicted in paintings.

74. Vir, Ram Avtar. *Natraj: Indian Dance through Ages*. Pankaj Publications, 1982.

This book commences with the evolution of dance, the state of arts in Buddhist and Islamic periods, followed by the Classical dances Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi; the international dances, and the technical aspects like *tāla*, makeup, etc.

75. Banerjee, Projesh. *Erotica in Indian Dance*. Cosmo Publications, 1983.

This book attempts to amplify the connections between religion and art, focusing on the fundamental aspect of Hindu life, the sexual practices. The links between various deities, sexuality and art are established, with descriptions from *Vedas* and treatises. The work explains how the act of love-making is an embedded idea in the Indian culture as opposed to the Christian faith, travelling through various periods in history.

76. Banerjee, Projesh. *Indian Ballet Dancing*. Abhinav Publ., 1983.

This work regards to dance and drama as synonymous in India. It traces the journey of the dramatic presentational form that is referred to as ballet, from *Natyasastra* to contemporary styles covering various geographical locations

of the country. It describes in detail the drama as elucidated by Bharata and the meaning of ballet in Western parlance. Dramatical forms of Kathakali, Ras lila, Yakshaganam, Bhaona, the works of Uday Shankar and Rabindranath Tagore, are few amongst the numerous dramatical forms described. Kuchipudi is mentioned in the Bhagavata Mela Nataka category.

77. Khokar, Mohan. *His Dance, His Life- A Portrait of Uday Shankar*. Himalayan Books, 1983.

This is a biographical work on Uday Shankar- his childhood, career in dance, influences, rises and falls, experiments, teaching endeavours and personal accounts with plenty of photographs.

78. Banerjee, Projesh. *Illustrated Basic Concepts of Indian Dance*. Chaukambha Oriental, 1984.

This is a comprehensive work covering numerous aspects related to dance including origin, the myths associated and the rationale behind; music for dance; the dancing body; qualities of a dancer; the patronage for dance through history; the technicalities and the lighting; the folk dances; the concept of ballet and aesthetics in Indian context and some technical aspects from treatises. The *devadāsi* dances, Kathaka (Kathak) and the dances of Rabindranath Tagore and Uday Shankar are elaborated, while the likes of Odissi, Manipuri, Bharatanatyam and Kathakali are briefed⁹.

79. Dhanunjayan, V. P. *A Dancer on Dance*. B. R. Rhythms, 1984.

This book is from a dancer's perspective and includes impressions on *nāṭya*; a male dancer; a comparative study between Kathakali and Bharatanatyam; *śṛṅgāra* and *bhakti* in dance; interface of traditional arts and contemporary audiences; adoption of innovative techniques and concludes with the author-dancer answering few questions on dance.

80. Vir, Ram Avtar. *Indian Dances, History and Technique*. Pankaj Publications, 1984.

This work has about the dances from Vedic to Ramayana to Buddhist, Muslim, British to Modern epochs; the tenets of *Natyaśāstra* and *Abhinaya*

⁹ Select content of this work got analysed in chapters 3 and 4.

Darpana; folk and classical dances, their form and technique. It has occasional mentions about Kuchipudi, with images of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastri and Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma.

81. Banerjee, Projesh. *Art of Indian Dancing*. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985.

This is a three-part book with the first part talking about dance history, Krishna's dance, classifications of *rasa*, *bhāva*, gestures and postures. The second part covers Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Odissi, Manipuri, Kathak, Yakshagana of Karnataka, Tagore school, Uday Shankar, folk dances and Kuchipudi, which is referred to as the temple dance of Andhra. The third part is about presentation and stagecraft, music, rhythm, costumes, lighting, and the influence of ballet¹⁰.

82. Khokar, Mohan and Gurmeet Thukral. *Splendours of Indian Dance*. Himalayan Books, 1985.

The book covers the following aspects: the relation between Indian dance and gods; some basic technical terms like *abhinaya*, *rasa* and types of audience; a section each on Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam and folk dances¹¹.

83. Samson, Leela and Avinash Pasricha. *Dance. s.l. Festival of India*. 1985.

This is more like a coffee table book, with about twenty pages of images. There are brief descriptions about dance; the relation of Indian dances to *Natyasastra*; basic terms like *nṛtya*, *bhāva*, and others; a paragraph or two each on Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri and Kuchipudi.

84. Sangeetha Natya Kala Sangraham: a *Compendium of Articles on Different Styles of Indian Classical Dance and Music by Experts*. Kalasadan Cultural Society, 1985.

This has articles on various Indian classical dances and music by experts. There are three articles on Kuchipudi: *The Roots of Kuchipudi Art* by Vempati Chinna Satyam, *Kuchipudi and Ritual dances* by C. R. Acharya.

¹⁰ Select content of this work got analysed in chapters 3 and 4.

¹¹ Select content of this work got analysed in chapters 3 and 4.

There is another one comparing *Dhruva gāna* in various drama forms by Sunil Kothari.

85. Kendadamath, G. C. *Indian Music and Dance: A Select Bibliography*. Indian Bibliographic Centre, 1986.

This has 2434 entries on books, monographs, doctoral dissertations, up to 1984 and articles from periodicals, magazines and newspapers between 1970 and 1984 on music, and dance covering Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniattam, and Odissi.

86. Rangacharya, Adya. *The Natyasastra-English Translation with Critical Notes*. IBH Prakashana, 1986.

This volume is a translation of *Natyasastra*, and at the end, gives a critical epilogue; thoughts on the theory of *rasa*; a note on 'some details' given as appendices¹².

87. Kersenboom, Saskia. *Nityasumangali*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1987.

This work, a first of its kind, covers a detailed cultural history of *devadāsīs* of South India with particular emphasis on Tamil Nadu. It includes the data on the patronage from medieval times to the oral structure to the ritual performances and rites of passages of the Tamil *devadāsīs*.

88. Misra, Susheela. *Invitation to Indian Dances*. Arnold Heinemann, 1987.

This work has a description of the dance styles Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri, Kathakali, Chhau, Yakshaganam Baayalata, Mohiniattam, and modern dances.

89. Samson, Leela. *Rhythm in Joy*. South Asia Books, 1987.

This work has about the myths and legends associated with the dance and the affiliation with gods; the ancient texts on dance; and a unit each on Bharatanatyam, Manipuri, Kathak, Odissi and Kathakali.

90. Kishore, B. R. *Dances of India*. Diamond pocket books, 1988.

This work has three segments. First is on the philosophy of Indian dance; the second on Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Bhagavata Mela,

¹² The observations made here are from the 1996 edition.

Mohiniattam, Odissi, Manipuri, Kuchipudi; and the third on tribal and folk dances divided geographically.

91. *Classical Music and Dance Fraternity of India: Report of the Steering Group. June 1989.* Sangeet Research Academy, 1989.

This is a report essentially that touches on issues bothering dance and music and possible suggestive solutions.

92. Massey, Reginald and Jamila Massey. *The Dances of India.* Abhinav Publications, 1989.

This book has an introduction on the dance in India, the caste system and its repercussions and the role and continuity of elements of treatises like the *Natyasastra*. It has a chapter each on Indian classical dances, including one on Kuchipudi.

93. Banerji, Sures Chandra. *A Companion to Indian Music and Dance.* Sri Satguru Publications, 1990.

This has an introduction on the importance of Indian music and dance, the origin and development of those two arts from various literary sources, and on terms used in music. It has names and details of many treatises related to dance and music- both published and unpublished.

94. Barboza, Francis Peter. *Christianity in Indian Dance Forms.* Sri Satguru Publications, 1990.

This is one of its kind books that deals with Christianity and arts; Kerala and Goan Christian dances; Christian themes in Gumta nach, Bethlehem Kuravanji; Biblical themes in Yakshagana, Burrakatha of Andhra Pradesh. It focuses on experiencing Christianity in and through the idiom of Bharatanatyam, deriving *hastas* for Jesus, Madonna and concepts like soul, devotion, etc.

95. Nandagopal, Choodamani. *Dance and Music in Temple Architecture.* Agam Kala Prakashan, 1990.

This is a dense work covering the technical terms, *hastas* in detail, the many *bhedas*, *rasas*, *karanas* as mentioned in the treatises like *Natyasastra* and

specifically about the dance sculptures and epigraphical sources in Karnataka temples and literature.

96. Bose, Mandakranta. *Movement and Mimesis: The Idea of Dance in Sanskrit Tradition*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991.

This work traces the evolution of Indian dances based on all the available Sanskrit treatises. It sees how the technique of various traditions of dances has developed, built on the textual practice.

97. Gargi, Balwant. *Folk Theater of India*. Rupa Publications, 1991.

In a chapter titled 'Glimpses of other forms', there is data about *vīthi nāṭakam* and *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*.

98. Neog, Maheswar. *Srihastamuktavali*. IGNCA, 1991.

This work begins with Indian dance treatises like *Natyasastra*, *Abhinaya Darpana*, *Sangita Ratnakara*, and mention of many other texts, *mudras* in *Kalika purana*, about Subhankara and scope of *Hastamuktavali* before proceeding to the actual translation of the titular treatise.

99. Acharya, C. R. and Mallika Sarabhai. *Understanding Kuchipudi*. IGNCA with Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, 1992.

This comprises a broad sketch about the origin and history of Kuchipudi including its relation with the Bhagavata Mela Nataka; *hastas*, *sthānakas*, *cāris*, *karaṇas*, etc are delineated from the author's perspective. It then has about music of Kuchipudi and repertoire with brief writeup on repertoire pieces like *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, *taraṅgam*, *śabdam*; the stage and costuming for Kuchipudi.

100. Misra, Susheela. *Some Dancers of India*. Harman Publishing House, 1992.

This is a compilation of photographic and (few) interview information of around twenty famed dances of the Indian classical dances including the likes of Ragini Devi, Rukmini Devi, Vempati Chinna Satyam, Sharon Lowen and Mallika Sarabhai. Though not an individual, Kerala Kalamandalam is written about. This is an interesting work that gives a biographical sketch, their training systems and contributions. It is like tracing a history of dance from these individual artists encompassing

economic, social, and at times, political angles.

101. Rao, Uma Rama. *Kuchipudi Bharatam or Kuchipudi Dance: A South Indian Classical Dance Tradition (Raga Nritya Series No 5)*. Sri Satguru Publications, 1992.

This book examines the components of Kuchipudi, the process of its transformation from the traditional structure to revival in the 1950s and the role of *nāṭya*, *nṛtya*, *nṛtta* in Kuchipudi repertoire.

102. Rele, Kanak, Agneswaran, Malati, et al. *Hand Book of Indian Classical Dance Terminology*. Nalanda Dance Research Centre, 1992.

This has an introduction about the oral and textual traditions. The main subject is the style-wise delineation of the terminology categorised as general, technical, costume and make-up and musical as used in the styles of Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri, Mohiniattam, Odissi and Kuchipudi.

103. Sakakibara, Kiitsu. *Dances of Asia*. Abhishek Publications, 1992.

This book has one chapter on dances of India comprising of the myth and Gods associated; origin of dance and other stories like that of Urvashi and Usha; on aesthetics including *nāṭya*, *nṛtya*, *nṛtta* and *lāsya*; *mudras-asamyuta* and *samyuta*; classical dances of India- Kathak, Manipuri, Kathakali and Bharatanatyam providing for their origin, characteristics, costume, make-up, repertoire, some performers from each style; and folk dances.

104. Govindarajan, Hema. *Dance Terminologies: Their Epigraphical Interpretations*. Harman Publishing House, 1993.

This has listings of dance-related terms, the patron kings, dancers as sourced from the epigraphical references, for example, 'Bharata' and '*nṛtta*' in various works, sculptures and stone engravings.

105. Jonnalagadda, Anuradha. *Kuchipudi Dance: Who is Who*. Kuchipudi Mahotsava Committee and Nehru Centre, 1993.

This book has profiles and achievements of various Kuchipudi artists, with an introduction about the transformation of the Kuchipudi form. This is first of its kind works to collate details of so many artists, including performers

and gurus.

106. Rao, Krishna and Devi Chandrabhaga. *Panorama of Indian Dances (Raga Nrtya Series; No. 6)*. South Asia Books, 1993.

This book covers: the birth of arts, different fine arts and their relation, dance and the ancient Hindu society, about Nataraja and the origin of Bharatanatya (as in Indian dance and not the specific form of Bharatanatyam as understood now) and historical development, the association between Indian dance with sculpture, painting, music and instruments, literature, drama and culture, are incorporated. It also includes an introduction to the books written on Indian dance, right from *Natyasastra* to the recent ones in English and Kannada; Historical development of Indian dances- Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi and Bhagavatha Melam; elaboration on the repertoire and makeup of Bharatanatyam; the idea of theatres, *tālas*, folk dances of all states and the tradition and innovation, are part of this voluminous work.

107. Kanaka Sudhakar. *Indian Classical Dancing: The Therapeutic Advantages*. Sterling Publishers, 1994.

This book commences with general information about dance, and it has a paragraph on Kathak, Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Kathakali and Mohiniattam.

108. Satyanarayana, Andavilli and Pemmaraju Surya Rao. *Dr.Vempati: Maestro with a Mission*. S. S. V. Associates, 1994.

This is a biographical account of Vempati Chinna Satyam- his struggles, achievements, training system, dance-dramas, benefactors, his team and students. A significant portion is dedicated to the contribution of his numerous disciples.

109. Krishnamurti, Yamini and Renuka Khandekar. *A Passion for Dance: My Autobiography*. Viking, 1995.

This is an autobiography of Yamini Krishnamurthy¹³'s dance journey, her

¹³ Though the book carries the spelling of Krishnamurti, in most other places, it was Krishnamurthy.

training, teachers, the styles she learnt, and experiences.

110. Mukherjee, Bimal and Sunil Kothari., editors. *Rasa-The Indian Performing Arts in the last 25 years. Vol 1: Music and Dance*. Anamika Kala Sangham,1995.

The section on dance has about 30 articles on dance by various writers on *rasa*, poetry, issues on dance, notation, criticism; comparisons between media, western dances to Indian dances; cinema dances; and on Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Chhau, Manipuri, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, and contemporary dances of India.

111. Kanak, Rele. *Bhaava Niroopanna*. Nalanda Dance Research Centre, 1996.

This work reveals *abhinaya* in Indian dance, its four-fold manifestation, aesthetics, *rasa* and related concepts in detail.

112. Pande, Anup. *Historical and Cultural Study of the Natya Shastra of Bharata*. Kusumanjali Prakashan. 1996.

This book begins with *Natyasastra* and the location of its time; theory and practice of drama; aspects of life; development of gesture language; music; *rasa* and the like.

113. Smith, David. *Dance of Siva: Religion, Art, and Poetry in South India*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

This work covers mainly the legends, imagery and iconography surrounding Siva in his Nataraja form and in other manifestations; the rituals in a Chidambaram temple; and the dancing girls of the temple.

114. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Bharata: The Natyasastra*. Sahitya Akademi, 1996.

This is a review of *Natyasastra* in the totality of its structure, content, authorship, text and creativity, interpreters and the treatise's pretext and context.

115. Apparao, P. S. R. *Abhinayadarpana of Nandikeswara*. P. V. R. K. Prasad, 1997.

This is an English translation of the titular treatise with word to word meaning and comments. It also includes additional details from other treatises.

116. Bharucha, Rustom. *Chandralekha: Woman, Dance, Resistance*. Harper Collins Publ, 1997.

This is a biographical account of the life, dance journey and challenges faced by dancer, choreographer, and activist, Chandralekha.

117. Pal, Pratapaditya. Ed. *Dancing to the Flute. Music and Dance in Indian Art*. The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997.

This is a collection of articles on arts, the ones on Indian dance are, '*The arrested movement of the dance*' by Kapila Vatsyayan; '*Indian Dance in the temple context*' by John Guy; '*Images of musician and dancers*' by Jackies Menzies; '*Music and dance for all occasions*' by Jim Masselos; and '*Music and dance as entertainment*' by Jackies Menzies.

118. Sathyanarayana, R., editor. *Historiography of Indian Arts: Music and Dance Insights*. Pratibha Prakashan, 1997.

The articles related to dance in this compilation include Bharata's *rasa* theory, the historiography of dance, Kathak, Bharatanatyam and methodology for Indian dance history.

119. Subramaniam, Padma. *Natyasastra and National Unity*. Sri Rama Varma Government Sanskrit College, 1997.

This work reckons *Natyasastra* as the authoritative work and gives the specifics of the treatise and links to Silappadikaram, Yoga, western music, and other allied fields.

120. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts*. Abhinav Publications, 1997.

An interdisciplinary work, this delves into the imagery and *vedic* rituals as per the ancient texts. It correlates the fields of drama, architecture, sculpture and music with relevant examples. The idea is to understand time, space, body, and movement through the inter-relationship between these fields.

121. Annapoorna, Lanka. *New Dimensions in Indian Music, Dance and Drama*. Sandeep Prakashan, 1998.

The book focuses on music, and dance finds a place in one article related to inscriptions and the other about the music of Mohiniattam. Otherwise, it is

majorly concepts based on music that find relevance in dance that are documented.

122. Waterhouse, David., editor. *Dance of India*. Popular Prakashan Private Limited, 1998.

This is a selection of articles divided into three parts. The first part is about the history, sources and aspects of Kathak, Chhau, Uday Shankar's dance, Bharatanatyam and Odissi; the caste impact in Indian music and dance. The second comments on *tāntric*, feminist angles in Indian classical dances; on *rasa* and *bhāva*; and Kathakali in the western world. The third section is about the state of Indian dance abroad, covering choreography, pedagogy and the state of the arts in general.

123. Khanna, Sucharita. *Dancing Divinities in Indian Art*. Sharada Publishing House, 1999.

This is a book exclusively on treatises, covering the textual backdrop and dance in classical texts, not relating to any particular style. It also includes dance in early art; dancing figures in temples; the dancing Saiva and Vaishnava images.

124. Board of Scholars. *Natyasastra of Bharatamuni*. Sadguru Publications, 2000.

This is a translation with an index of the seminal work, *Natysastra*.

125. Annapoorna, Lanka. *Documentation of Performing Arts*. Sundeep Prakashan. 2000.

This is a bibliographical account with articles, books, essays, book reviews on music, dance and related arts.

126. Goswami, Kali Prasad. *Devadasi Dancing Damsel*. A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 2000.

This work begins with an introduction to Indian classical dance from the God-related, *Natyasastra* and historical angles, followed by the culture and dance in Assam, the spread of Saivism and dance link with Siva and then the dance of *devadāsīs* in Assam.

127. Gupta, Roxanne. Kamayani. *A Yoga of Indian Classical Dance: A Yogini's Mirror*. Simon & Schuster, 2000.

This work has about the spirituality of Indian dances; on the author's gurus Nataraj Ramakrishna and Balasaraswati; the difference between Yoga and

dance; some *āsanas* (yogic postures) and their benefits; ways to execute them and relating a few postures to dance.

128. Singh, Shanta Serbjeet. *Indian Dance*. Artemisia Bookwise, 2000.

This work carries the form of dance; the concepts of *maṇḍala* and time; about the styles of Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Mohiniattam, Kalaripayattu and Kathakali; Kuchipudi; Odissi; Manipuri; Masks; about dances in stone and manuscript; and the last unit is about the art of *tabla*.

129. Srinivasan, R. *Indian Classical Dances*. I. D. Publications, year not given.

This is a very small book of eight pages, and it discusses dances in the context of *devadāsi* and Rukmini Devi Arundale; how dance in India was regarded; the greatness of Kathakali and Bharatanatyam. It also talks about exhibitionism in the arts, the performability of songs, and the kind of songs to teach children.

Books in Telugu

1. Tiruvenkatacharyulu, Nidamangalam. *Abhinaya Darpananam*. Sastra Sanjeevini Press, 1905.

This is a third reprint of the 1887 work by Nidamangalam Tiruvenkatacharyulu. It is the first available work of the treatise with Telugu translation and expansion.

2. Sastri, Vedam Venkataraya. *Rasamanjari*. 1909.

This is a translation of the treatise *Rasamanjari* with word to word meaning and commentary.

3. Shastri, Devulapalli Viraraghavamurti. *Abhinaya Swayambodhini*. Sarasvati Mudrakshara Shala, 1915.

This work is a documentation of the then existing performance compositions of *devadāsis*. It is like a performance manual, including the types of *nāyika*, *nāyaka*, *hastas*, etc., from the treatises and as used in dance practice.

4. Tiruvenkatacharyulu, Nidamangalam., editor. *Bharatarasaprakarana. Sanndhrataatparyam*. Vavilla Ramaswamisastrulu and sons, 1932.

This is compiled by Tiruvenkatacharyulu and has *ślokas* from *Natyasastra* and its meaning in Telugu.

5. Sri Nandikesvaraproktam Abhinaya Darpanam. Vavilla Ramaswamisastrulu and sons, 1932.

This is a translation of the treatise into Telugu.

6. Chakravarty, Srinivasa. *Naatyasaala*. Author, 1946.

This work has about the birth of *nāṭya* as per *Natyasastra*; historical characters like Krishnadevaraya's daughter being part of dramas; characteristics of an actor; different types of *abhinaya*; *yakṣagāna*; Kuchipudi and brief accounts on Siddhendra, *Gollakalāpam* and *Bhāmākalāpam*.

7. Chendrabahadur, Sarvajna Kumaraya, Velugoti. *Sabharanjani*. Chedalavada Sundararamasastrula vari Saradambavilasa Mudrakshala, 1948.

This work explains the qualities of *nayaka-nāyika*; *rasa*; *bhedas* like *śiro*, *grīva*, *cāri*, *karaṇa*, etc.; music; Hindustani music; *tāla*; mnemonics of *aḍavus*; scholarship of musicians, dancers and conductors, as gathered from the practice and treatises. This was written in 1890 but published in 1948.

8. Subbarao T. V., editor. *Abhinaya Darpanam of Matrubhutayya Kavi*. Govt. Oriental Manuscript Library, 1951.

As per the Foreword, this is a rare Telugu treatise in *padyakāvya* format by Kavi Matrubhutayya, who existed between the middle of 18th to the middle of 19th century. It is added that this work has similarities with *Abhinaya Darpana* of Nandikesvara, owing to a common original source.

9. Parvateesam, Vedantam. *Bhagavatula Kuchipudi*. Author, 1952¹⁴.

In a poetry form (*khaṇḍa kāyaṃ*), there is information about the practitioners from hereditary families of Kuchipudi- their training and related accounts. It also includes Siddhendra and the village of Kuchipudi.

¹⁴ The year of publication was given as 1964 in some places.

10. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nrityanjali*. Venkataramana Power Press, 1956.

It has a brief about all Indian dance forms.

11. Seetaramarao, Tummalapalli. *Dakshinadesamu-Natyamu*. Uma Publishers, 1956 (Durmukhi Chaitram).

The book is divided in a chronological sequence on the state of affairs of dance in southern India. Beginning with the dance in India till 9th century, including *Natyasastra* and the circumstances of dances in southern India; till 13th century comprising the treatises, *devadāsi* system, and the conditions in four southern states; *abhinaya* format and lyrics of few compositions; 18th century Nayaka king's art patronage; Kuchipudi- called as Kuchipudi Bharatanatyam; *yakṣagāna* and Kathakali; and till early 20th century, including the situations before Muslim rule, during British rule, Zamindari benefaction, and Indian independence period; .

12. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nartanabala*. Visalandhra, 1957.

This is a book written for introducing the subject of dance to children. It has various dance forms; poets and patrons; basic technical terms; and *hastas* with images to show how a particular gesture is depicted.

13. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nrityarekha*. Visalandhra, 1957.

This work details out how to dance a repertoire. The compositions covered are *alarimpu*, *padam*, *taraṅgam*, to name a few.

14. Apparao, P. S. R. *Natyasastramu*. Guptabhavaprakasasahitamu. 1959.

This is a Telugu translation of *Natyasastra* with commentary where the author compares other sources to arrive at some opinions. The 36 chapters of the original *Natyasastra* are divided into 16, dealing with the crucial aspects. The foreword by V. Raghavan is thought-provoking, and it says that though the work is comprehensive, it carries some inaccurate views.

15. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nartanamurali*. Nrityaniketanam, 1959.

This is a historical account about dance; dancers; *ślokābhinaya*; *Gollakalāpaṃ* and *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*.

16. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nritya Manjari*. Andhra Book House, 1961.

This work is more like a personal chronicle of the author with friends and

dancers regarding dance and music. It includes about *nāyikāvasthas* and examples from his experiences; about *daruvus*, *śabdās*, and the like.

17. Kanakadurga. Translator. *Pillalaku Natyavidya (Eng: Mrinalini Sarabhai)*. Southern Languages Boom Trust, 1962.

This is a translation of the *Indian Dancing for the Young* by Mrinalini Sarabhai¹⁵. A work intended for children discussing the different dance forms; how to train eyes; *rasas*; the dances of abroad like Noh, Kandyan dances, etc., apart from Bharatanatyam.

18. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nartanaseema*. Andhra Book House, 1962.

This is akin to a children's book and has about Natyam; Nandikesvarudu, Brahma, Ravana, Hanuma in dance; on Jayasenapati and his work; the genres of *vīthi bhāgavatam*, *devadāsis*, *yakṣagāna* and about dance in Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari and other districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states.

19. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nartanabhoomi*. Author, 1963.

This is a book written for youngsters about various dance styles from different states of India.

20. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Natyarani*. Srimukha Publications, 1966.

This is a compilation of articles on the history of dance in Andhra, in different traditions like Buddhist, Saiva, Vaishnava; about the *devadāsi* dancers, Kuchipudi *bhāgavatars*. It focuses more on *devadāsi* structures and includes about two *varṇams*.

21. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Pasidi Muvvalu-Paarani*. Adarsha, 1967.

This is a *kalpita gātha*, an imagined tale about a certain dance set in the Satavahana period.

22. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nartanakatha*. Adarsha, 1967.

This is a book written to introduce dance for children and has data about the dances, patronage and various styles. The language thus is simple for the

¹⁵ Sarabhai, Mrinalini. *Indian Dancing for the Young*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957.

benefit of self-reading for children.

23. Rao, Kanakalingeshwara. Banda. *Siddhendrayogikruta Bhamakalapam*. Natyakala Press, Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, 1967.

This book has an introduction to Kuchipudi by P.S.R. Apparao and text as compiled and edited by Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao.

24. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Dakshinatyula Natyakala Caritra*. Adarsha, 1968.

This is an exhaustive work, with broad and profound information on what the Indian dances constitute. There are details about the musical aspects and the dancing traditions from earlier to medieval to modern periods; the terminology and their meanings as per context; the types of dances in south India focusing on *ālaya nr̥tyālu* and *ārādhana nr̥tyālu*; dances from other southern state dances and some of the northern Indian dances; and a thorough discussion on Andhra dances, covering literary sources and historical information.

25. Acharya. C. R. *Kuchipudi Aradhana Nrityamulu*. Pattabhirama Press, 1969.

This book is divided into two sections broadly, providing for Kuchipudi and temple dances. The first part covers the *bhedas* like *bhāva*, *rasa*, *hastas*, *cāris*, and the like; about Kuchipudi- its specialities, training systems, music, and range with the likes of *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, *yakṣagānas*, some unusual items like *alamelu maṅga vilāsaṃ* and the solo repertoire like *jatisvara*, *tillāna*, etc. The historical background commences from the Vijayanagara period to the *bhāgavata meḷams*. The second part is inclusive of *karaṇas*, *sthānakas*, *śivasapta tāṇḍavas*, sculptures in olden day temples, *pagaṇi veṣālu*, etc. and about temple ritual and repertoire items like *pūja nr̥tyālu*, *ṣoḍasopachāramulu*, *navasaṅdhi nr̥tyaṃ*, *amṛta mathanaṃ* and concludes with *tolubommālāṭa*.

26. Ananta Krishna Sharma, Rallapalli. *Nrutta Ratnavali*. Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, 1969.

This is a Telugu translation of the treatise *Nrutta Ratnavali*. It has an introduction in Telugu, including a detailed *pīṭhika*, covering history, technical terms, other writers like Sarngadeva, to name a few.

27. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nartanavani*. Natyakala Press, Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, 1970.

This is a work penned from the author's experiences, comprising diverse topics including sculpture; on Uday Shankar; Pandanallur style; Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry, etc.

28. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Nrityajyoti* (Articles). Natyakala Press, Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, 1970.

This is a compilation suitable for a practical oriented study. It is about Bharatanatyam, types of Andhra dances, *kalāpas*, *śabdas*, with lyrics for few compositions. It also has chronicles about local dance forms, *devadāsi*, other dancers and their status across Andhra Pradesh.

29. Madhavasarma, Jammalamadaka. *Nrittaratnavali*. Sri Narendra Sahitya Mandali, 1971.

This is part one of the translation of *Nrittaratnavali*. The second part was published in 1972.

30. Murti, Mikkilineni Radhakrishna. *Andhrula Nrityakala Vikasam*. 1972.

The author presented the contents of this book in "Andhra's contribution to Indian culture" seminar. It has about the origin of dance; how tribal dance was born; the imitation dances; *purāṇa puruṣulu* (Siva, Mohini, Arjuna); Nāṭyam; references of dance in temple, sculpture and literature; tracing the dances to the periods of various rulers and travelogues and on how the British rule has led to descent of dance.

31. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Telugunadu-Nrityakala*. Natyakala Press, Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, 1973.

This work is written to inform about dance and drama systems in the Telugu regions- Andhra and Telangana, comprising of the *naṭṭuva* and *nāṭya melas* and the different varieties of Telugu dances, with examples and images.

32. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Abhinayam-Andhra Natakam*. Natyakala Press, Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, 1974.

This is on the *lāsya* forms of South India; why should those be called

Andhra Natyam and the discussions surrounding it. It is mostly on *devadāsis*, the histrionics and patronage.

33. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Andhrula Natyakala*. Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, 1975.

This work has about the history of dance evolution; language-related development; status of dance during Saiva and Buddhist periods; patronage under various kings; *naṭṭuva* and *nāṭya melas* and the various types of dance traditions post the eleventh century; folk and tribal dances; and about the dance styles in Andhra, Seema and Telangana regions.

34. Parvateesam, Vedantam. *Kuchipudi Nritya Darpanam*. Author, 1979.

This is a book for the aid of practical applications for both music and dance composers. It is a documentation of the syllables used for the basic units-*aḍavus*, and *jatis*, lyrics for *śabdās* and others that form the repertoire.

35. Sangamesam, Mutnuri. *Daakshinatya Natyam*. T. V. Press, 1981.

This work begins with the origin of dance; history of *nāṭya*; all *abhinayas* in detail; folk dances, *vīthi nāṭakas*, Kathakali, Bharatanatyam; and analysis of *kalāpa* and its characters.

36. Parvateesam, Vedantam. *Kuchipudi Bhamakalapam*. Sri Balaji Printers, 1982.

This is a script of the entire *Bhāmākalāpaṃ*, a version followed or compiled by the author. It also has an introduction about *kalāpaṃ*, the format and the history of Siddhendra.

37. Lakshminarasimha Sastri, Chintalapati. *Kuchipudi-Bhagavatulu*. Triveni Press, 1983.

This work has a detailed account of Kuchipudi. It has differences in the kinds of *pagaṭi veṣaṃs*; the temple and *devadāsi* culture; Kuchipudi from Siddhendra to later times; the specialties of Kuchipudi style; the *bhāgavatars* of then and now, their family histories; details of Akhila Bharata Nrityotsavalu conducted by Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy and Ravindra Bharati, Kuchipudi *nritya sadassu* of 1959; and how the classical status for Kuchipudi issue was dealt.

38. Arudra. *Prajakalalu-Pragativadulu*. Prajasakti, 1984.

This has an essay each on: Andhranatyam and its specialties; Kuchipudi's history, music; and the research done by Sunil Kothari; diverse texts of *Bhāmākalāpam*; and the difference between Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi in the context of *Dāmera śabdaṃ*.

39. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Navajanardhanam*. Perani International, 1984.

This book majorly elaborates the *Navajanārdhana* as performed in female dancing and Toorpu traditions, with lyrics and mentions about Kuchipudi *Bhāmākalāpam*.

40. Parvateesam, Vedantam. *Kuchipudi Samputi: Gollakalapam*, 1986.

This is a script of the entire *Gollakalāpam*, the version followed or compiled by the author.

41. Sastry, Chintalapati Lakshminarasimha., editor. *Atmayagnamu gollakalapamu*. Triveni press, 1986.

This is the libretto of *Gollakalāpam*, as written by Bhagavatula Ramakotayya.

42. Sharma, Srirama Venkata Bhujangaraya. *Kuchipudi Nrutya Rupakamulu*. Swadharma Swarjya Sangham, 1986.

This has five dance-dramas written by the author Bhujangaraya Sarma for Vempati Chinna Satyam. It has *rāgas* and libretto of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Pārijātaṃ*, *Abhijñāna Śakuntalaṃ*, *Caṇḍālīka*, *Kalyāna Rukmiṇi* and *Padmāvati Śrīnivāsaṃ*.

43. Apparao, P. S. R. *Abhinaya Darpanam*. Author, 1987.

This is a translation of the treatise into Telugu, with additional information in the form of comments.

44. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Andhranatyam-Kuchipudinatyam*. Perini International, 1987.

This has about history, hagiography, hereditary families, eminent compositions, and exponents of Kuchipudi, including a portion on the author's contribution towards the form. It asserts the difference between Kuchipudi as *Andhrula nāṭyaṃ* and not Andhranatyam that the author attributes to the female dancing traditions of Andhra.

45. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Andhranatyam*. Perini International, 1993.

This is mainly about the temple and court dances by female dancers, with references to other dance forms of Andhra, including Kuchipudi.

46. Sarma, Janardhana. D (Kamath). *Nrityasastra Prayoga Darsini*. Author, 1987-88.

This work begins with a narrative on Bharatanatyam and proceeds to the technical terms, *hastas*, *rasa*, all *bhedas* as delineated from *Natyasastra*, with illustrations. A few examples from Kuchipudi are included.

47. Ramakrishna, Nataraj. *Bharatasastram:Prasnalu Samadhanalu*. Perini International, 1988.

The entire book, as the title suggests, is in a question-and-answer format on dance theory (and practical) on all Indian dances.

48. Apparao, P. S. R. *Bharatamuni Praneethamina Natyasastramu (Visleshanatmaka Adhyayanam)*. Nagarjuna printing works, 1988.

This is a critical edition of the *Natyasastra* with comments by the author.

49. Parvateesam, Vedantam. *Nritya Tarangini*. Author, 1988.

This is a one of its kind, practical oriented book with variations and syllables given each for the *naḍakalu*, footwork, *salāṁ daruvu*, and lyrics of many compositions to be performed in the Kuchipudi style. The works include those by the author and also older and traditional compositions.

50. Ramanatham, Chinta. *Kuchipudi Natya Bharati*. 1988.

This has about *nāṭya*; Kuchipudi- the village and its surroundings; history of Kuchipudi; Siddhendra yogi and *Bhāmākalāpam*; personages of the style; Kuchipudi as perceived then and now and finally about the importance of preserving our arts.

51. Ramanatham, Chinta. *Kuchipudi Natyacharyula Charitra Putalu*. Akhila Bharata Kuchipudi Natya Kalamandali, 1988.

This is a compilation of performers, teachers, musicians and scholars from the hereditary Kuchipudi families. It includes their family details, training and their area of proficiency like *pagaṭi veṣams* or ornament making or any particular genre in dance. It also has a section on the surrounding cultural centres around Kuchipudi village. Out of these, some are elaborated, while

others are brief.

52. Deekshitulu, Hemadri Chidambara. *Kuchipudi Kalasagaramu (Natya Sastramu)*. Sri Rajarajeswari Kuchipudi Nritya Kalasala, 1989 (Prajotpattinama samvatsara).

This is a comprehensive volume comprising of history of Kuchipudi, various *bhedas* like *hastas*, *pādas*, *tālas*, *recaka*, *cāri*, covering *āṅgika* and *sāttvikābhinayas* used in Kuchipudi- all these have Sanskrit *ślokas* and their Telugu translation; mnemonics of basic steps and *jatis*; costuming; the exercises; scripts of few *yakṣagānas*; repertoire items; and biographies of dancers and composers. The foreword mentions it is intended for the exam-appearing students of dance.

53. Parvateesam, Vedantam. *Kuchipudi Melakartalu*. Author, 1990.

This has the script of *melakartalu*- some mnemonics and those of the numerous *aḍavulu*, *sūtradhāri vidhāna*- a guide to the narration of the drama and the script of *Lava-Kuśa*, a dramatic genre by the author.

54. Sambasiva, Munukuntla. *Kuchipudi Natyamanjari*. Nishumbitha publications, 1991.

This volume includes the Kuchipudi *aḍavu* and *jati* syllables; the music and the *kalāpas*; the various *tāṇḍvas*; the various *bhedas* as per the *Natyasastra* like the *grīva*, *śiro* to *karaṇas*; an overview of all the Indian classical dances; and about the composers. The book is replete with photographs for all the above-mentioned and a special section of images from popular Kuchipudi dance-dramas.

55. Durgaprasad, Sappa. *Andhrulu-Nrityakala*. Nataraja Nrityaniketan, 1992.

This work begins with the interconnectedness of nature and art; deities involved with dance; Buddhist dances; development of arts in Andhra region during various kings rule from Pallava to Gajapatis followed by Zamindari patronage; the various kinds of dances like the temple and *śāstrīya* dances, propagation dances, folk and tribal, Kuchipudi, Perini; and the relation between master and student.

56. Koteswara Rao, Polavarapu. *Manamu-Mana Nrityalu*. Prajasakti, 1992.

This book is on the lines of a personal narrative. It covers: the origin as per *Natyasastra*; all forms of Andhra Pradesh arts like the *Chindu Bhagavatam*,

Nakka Bhagavatam; about Kakatiyas; *navarasas*; Potana, Annamayya, etc., and famous *gurus*.

57. Apparao, P. S. R. *Satvikabhinayamu*. P. S. T. U., 1993.

This, as the title suggests, the aspects of *sāttvikābhinaya*; all the *bhāvas* and their categories; *nāyika*, *nāyaka* concept; and *rasa* in detail, as gathered from various sources.

58. Apparao, P. S. R. *Uttamangabhinayam*. P. V. R. K. Raviprasad, 1993.

In this work, the *abhinaya* of the face is elaborated with possibilities in variations of *tāra*, *puṭa*, *bhrū*, etc., based on the various Sanskrit treatises citing Sanskrit *ślokas* and translations.

59. Ramanatham, Chinta. *Kuchipudi Natya Visishtata*. T. T. D., 1993.

This has about Kuchipudi- the village; its surrounding areas of artistic importance; history and evolution of the form; *Bhāmākalāpam*; details of *yakṣagāna*; syllabus of the form; hereditary practitioners branched on their family names.

60. Apparao, P. S. R and Uma Rama Rao. *B A Kuchipudi Nrityam*. P. S. T. U., 1994.

A first of its kind, this is a textbook for the prescribed syllabus formulated for a formal Bachelor's degree in Kuchipudi. The material is compiled to provide reference material about the features, terminologies, biographies, and also on practical aspects.

61. Apparao, P. S. R. *Cheshtakrutabhinayam*. P. V. R. K Raviprasad, 1994.

This work is about *cāris*, *maṇḍalas*, *aṅgaḥāras*, *karaṇas* and *sthānakas* with their classifications, explained based on various treatises citing Sanskrit *ślokas* and translations.

62. Apparao, P. S. R. *Hastabhinayamu*. P. S. T. U., 1995.

The *Aasaṃyuta*, *saṃyuta*, *nṛtta hastas*, *hasta prāṇas*, *karmas*, etc and the additional *hastas* from various texts like *Natyasastra*, *Abhinaya Darpana*, *Nritta Ratnavali*, *Hastamuktavali* and others are discussed in detail. The Sanskrit *ślokas* and translations are included.

63. Apparao, P. S. R. *Sareerabhinayam*. Andhra Pradesh Theatre, 1995.

This work explicates *śarīra*, *citra*, *āhārya* and *vācikābhinayas* with their

sub-parts like the *pāda*, *jānu*, *gulpha bhedas*; *bhāva*, *rasa*, *gati pracāras*; *alāṅkāra*, *aṅgaracana*; and the *caṇḍas*, *alāṅkāra*, etc., based on multiple treatises alongside the Sanskrit *śloka*s and translations.

64. Prasad, Vijaya. G. *Kuchipudi Natyasangraha*. Kuchipudi Dance Academy, 1995.

This is a small handbook with brief answers about technique, costume, some images to represent the performance items and sketches of *hastas*.

65. Baburao, Yaddanapudi. *Kuchipudi Charitra*. Offset Press, 1999.

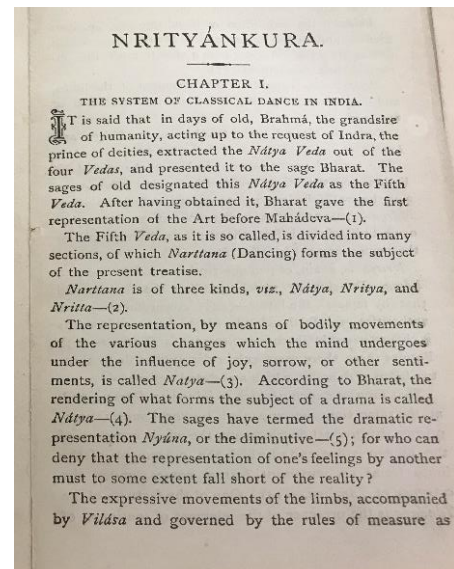
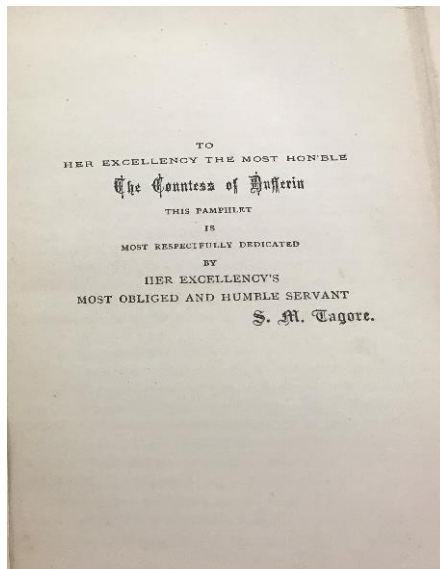
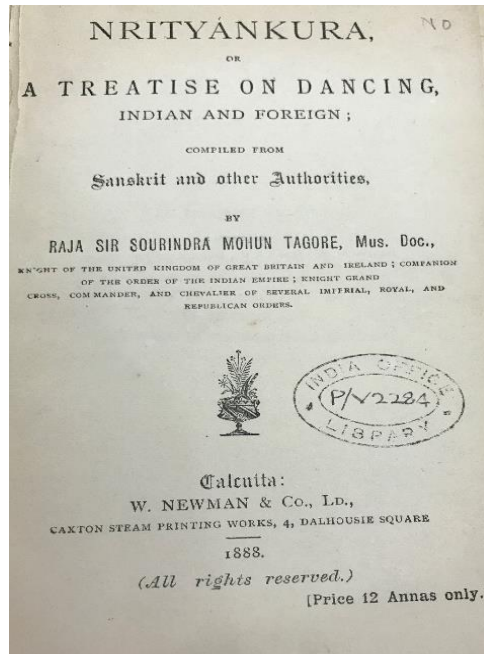
This has a detailed account of the village of Kuchipudi, neighbouring areas with art and artists, the state of arts under various rulers from Reddy's to Vijayanagara, Moghul, Nizam, Zamindars and British. It also covers the key persons and aspects related to Kuchipudi.

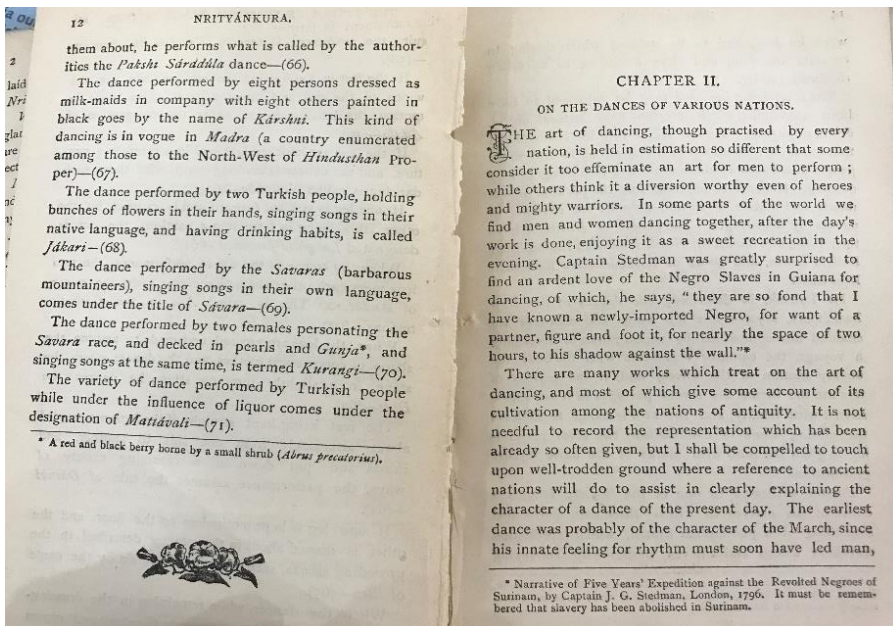
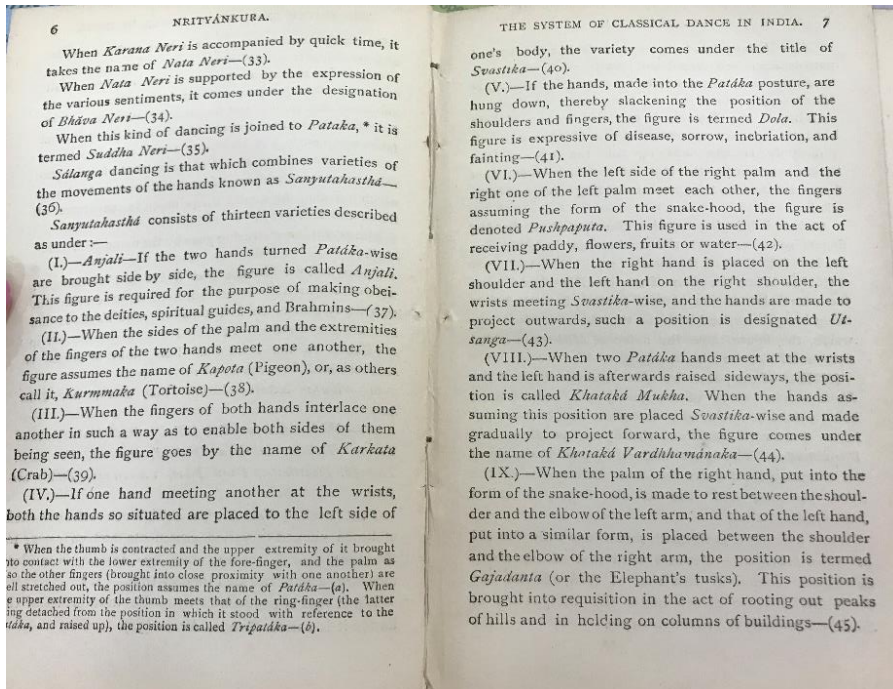
66. Bhikshu, Aruna. *Bharatiya Sastriya Nrityalu*. Natyaveda, 1999.

This work commences with a brief introduction on dance and the important *bhedas* of *āṅgikābhinaya*. It delineates the following styles: Mohiniattam, Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Andhranatyam, Odissi, Kathak, Chhau, Manipuri. The last section talks about the important masters, works and institutes that made a mark in the field of dance.

Appendix-III

Select images of the 1888 publication *Nrityankura*





In Italy, a man bitten by the dangerous spider (Tarantula) is said to recover from the effects of the poison only by dancing the Tarantella and eminent medical authorities agree as to the curative properties of the dance. There is a charming movement in one of the Sonatas of Weber (I disremember which) written in the style of Tarantella.

The fanatic effect produced in the middle ages, by the St. John's Dance, is too well-known to be mentioned here. It is a matter of congratulation that this dance has fallen into disuse.

The modern *Nautch* girl dances of India are, in my opinion, of Persian origin; their spirit is so different from that of our ancient classical dances, that we cannot rationally infer that their system of dancing is of Indian origin. The *Nautch* Girls of the present day, with their artificial grace (if we are allowed to use such a word) and covered feet, have, in my opinion, no true classical grace in them, and I think it would not be out of place here to mention, that the present system of our *Nautches* has always a very tedious effect on one with a refined taste.

Those who remember having witnessed the performance of the *Jātrā** Company of Govinda Adhikārī, must have noticed the graceful dance performed by the boy who represented *Krishna*, and I am almost certain it is of indigenous origin.

The dancing still practised in the modern *Jātrās*, and the ballets of the Theatres of Calcutta, has

* A primitive sort of Opera performed without a Stage.

something European in them, and I refrain from giving my opinion on it, unless it attains a maturer state.

The *Baul* dance* is purely Bengali in its origin, though rude and primitive in its character; it is, at least to a true Bengali, something national.

The *Khemtā* dance is not identical with that of *Bāī*, or the dance of the *Nautch* Girl above mentioned. It is not of foreign origin; and although one cannot but remark that there are some indecent gestures in the movement of the dancers, it is, it must be admitted less studied and formal than the *Nautch* which is more fashionable than anything else.

There are several other Bengali dances, but they are too numerous to be mentioned in so small a book as this; still the *Jhumur* and the *Nera-Neri* dances by male and female mendicants are worth mentioning.

At the time of the *Holi*, or the spring festival of the Hindus, the people of the North-Western Provinces of India have a sort of dance accompanied with songs for the occasion. The people of Orissa, at that time, I have seen several times, perform a sort of male dance, when they throw the red powder, called *Abir*, on each other. The *Holi* festival was first celebrated by the Hindu God *Krishna*, with his numberless paramours.

Krishna also used to dance, in the stilly moonlight nights, by the bank of the blue *Jumuna* with his *Gopinis*, to the charming accompaniment of his magic flute, and when the sun's rays prevailed, the cowherd boys of

* Dance performed by *Baul*, or religious mendicants, to a sort of peculiar song, accompanied by the *Ananda Lahari*.

Gobal flocked round him to hear him play his tuneful pipe and dance around him with rural mirth.

These are rather mythological, and I think I am tiring my readers; but I may here say that the modern graceful European dances might be of Indian or at least of Eastern origin. The dances of *Krishna*, and his charming spouse, the lotus-eyed *Rādhā*, might be reasonably called the remote ancestors of the modern Valse, Polka, Mazurka, and other European dances. This assertion is, I know, too bold, but is there any thing European without Eastern origin?

In conclusion, I beg leave to mention that the systems of dancing that prevail in my own country and others require to be treated in a more exhaustive treatise than this little work of mine, and I most humbly beg to let my readers know that the present work is intended simply to give them a bare idea of the noble art of dancing as practised in India and other countries.



APPENDIX.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PAVILION—(1).

Opinions differ as to how the pavilion is to be constructed. The direction given as under have the sanction of *Kohala* and other authorities—(A):

The first step to be taken is to purify the ground by means of incantations. The deities are then to be worshipped and other auspicious ceremonies gone through, and then the foundations should be laid. After fasting three days, the *Guru* (Spiritual Guide) should plant the pillars thereupon, selecting for the ceremony an auspicious moment and an auspicious conjunction of the planets. These pillars should be made of one of the following trees—viz., *Khadiro**, *Nāgakesara*^b, *Panasa*^c, or *Rakta Chandana*^d—should be well polished, and have their tops made thick and sufficiently hollow—(B).

The following is the invocation which the sages of old recited while the pillars were being planted:—

“Be thou fixed and immovable like Sumeru, the Himalayas, and Mohendra, the Princes of Mountains.”

One-half of the entire length of the pillar is to be planted underground, the holes being carefully filled up with sand. The dimensions of the stage should depend on the requirements of the play intended to be enacted thereupon—(C).

According to Dāmodara, the stage should measure 20 cubits in length, be charmingly constructed, and have no pillars put in within it. The platform should be made of wood and have windows of variegated colors and wooden figures put up about it. The top should be decorated with a series of cupolas, with flags flying in

(a) *Mimosa Catechu*. (b) *Mou ferrea*. (c) *Artocarpus Mitrifolia*. (d) *Red Sandal (Santalum myristicifolium)*.

Appendix-IV

Pilot Questionnaire

Research Scholar: Sindhuja. S.

Supervisor: Prof. Anuradha. J.

Research Area: Writings on Indian Classical Dances in the 20th century, with specific focus on Kuchipudi

Respondent details: _____

1. Would you brief me about your dance training?
2. How important do you think are the writings on dance?
3. When did you first encounter books/articles on dance?
4. What were the books/authors you initially referred to on Indian dances? What was your approach and thoughts towards them?
5. What are your views on the writers in the field, especially from the 20th century?
6. Is there any difference that you observed in the content and style of writings over the years? Are there any trends that you have noticed?
7. What do you think about the representation of Kuchipudi in publications?
8. What were the resources/reference materials you possessed when you commenced writing on Indian dances? Did you follow any research strategies?
9. Could you elaborate on your work, particularly research or publications on Kuchipudi?
10. Did you come across any of the oral narratives? If so, how were they validated? How could you co-relate with the varied forms, and what was the response from the practitioners/masters?
11. In which ways do you think your work contributed to both theoretical and practical fields?
12. Was there any specific target reader group that you intended to write? What was the response- from artists/ reviewers/ commoners?
13. Do you agree that by reading the books, people get an impression of dance? How do you think a commoner perceived Indian classical dance during the pre-2000 period? Did anyone- be it, dancers/lay readers- read books on dance (excluding the newspapers and popular magazines)?
14. In the current scenario where there is a plethora of material on dance available online- what is the status of books and readers according to you?

Narratives on Indian 'Classical' Dances: Analysing Discursive Practices in the Printed Texts of 20th Century, Focusing on Kuchipudi

by Suryadevara Sindhuja

Submission date: 27-Sep-2021 04:17PM (UTC+0530)

Submission ID: 1658645521

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