

**DIALECTICS OF SPATIAL SETTINGS IN INDIAN DANCE: A STUDY BASED
ON TEXTS, NARRATIVES AND STRUCTURES IN SOUTH INDIA**

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

By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“Dialectics of Spatial Settings in Indian Dance: A Study Based on Texts, Narratives and Structures in South India”** submitted by Sampreeti Malladi bearing Reg. No. 15SNPD02 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.

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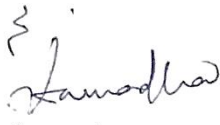
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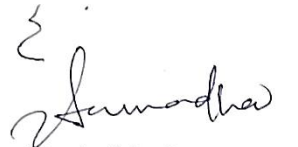
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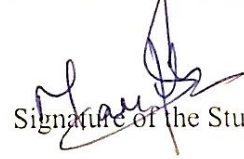
DECLARATION

I, Sampreeti Malladi, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Dialectics of Spatial Settings in Indian Dance: A Study Based on Texts, Narratives and Structures in South India**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Professor. 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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“Once upon a time, dance-related to Space - space intimate and space infinite....”

Chandralekha

Prologue

I remember the day my journey in dance began vividly. My guru taught me to do a *namaskaram* to Mother to earth and seek her blessings before I commenced dancing. It was (and continues to be) an act that I, like all other dancers, repeated every day. Back then, the manner of doing the salutation was more important than the significance of the ritual. It was also the time when small nooks and enclosed spaces in narrow drawing rooms were enough to dance and practice. When the day of my first performance arrived, it was in a temple, in front of an audience that sat just where my *performance space* ended. This space being only so big as to fit my outstretched arms, with the audience watching me from all sides. I wish I could say I wasn't concerned with where people were sitting. What made the hall my performance space? It was the *namaskaram* my guru told me. Over the years, as I eventually moved on to dancing on large stages – 'real performance spaces', I found comfort in the distance from the audience. The stage almost felt like a space of power - it simultaneously guarded me and gave me authority, and yet I still did my *namaskaram* to make the stage my performance space.

As a student of architecture, my understanding of space or built space, in particular, was a fixed sense of space - which made, changed, and participated in activities; it was integral to how I observed, responded and behaved. So, what was it about dance or rather the *namaskaram* that changed spaces? Why did the stage space feel natural? Curiously still, a few years later, the temple where it all began felt normal too. Did the built space mean nothing to dance? Although I knew and felt otherwise.

Looking for these answers as an architect, I embarked on my final year architectural thesis - a design for a 'Performing arts Centre', a house for Indian dance, or so I thought. While that project did indeed give me wonderful insights, it serendipitously opened the lid on the wonderful world of research – on space, about dance and Indian dance in space.

When I ask myself: "Why am I writing this ?" I realize that I am in a period of my life where both in my current work as a dancer and as an architect, it is a time of taking stock - of gathering my experiences and putting together readings to answer the questions that I know can be explored in many different ways and have many possibilities... and what I have explored are but a few.

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To the supreme mother

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Thanks, are also due to the librarians at the University of Hyderabad and at Berkeley campus who have assisted with this work. I cherish the time spent in the haloed halls of these spaces, for they brought joy back into the work.

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And lastly, it is my family who are the reason for this work. My parents, Girija Malladi and Lakshmana Sastry, my first and forever teachers, taught me the joy of

learning, questioning and reflecting. As I look back, the seeds of this research were probably sown by them as they chaperoned us (my siblings and I) across dilapidated archaeological ruins and inaccessible sites to reveal the wonder of history and showed me that every site, every conversation and every act was a lesson leading to another. Thanks, are also due to my sister Sarvani Malladi and brother Vishwakant Malladi, whose own attitudes and zeal toward work and life have constantly inspired me to find mine. They have always had my back. To my other family, the Devulapally's and to my mother-in-law, Sudha Devulapally, I am particularly grateful, for sustaining me in work and play. Without her belief, backing and care, my journey in dance would have been very different. Many thanks and regards are also due to Dhara Sudha and Dhara Narendra for providing me with a home away from home in San Jose, but more importantly, for their sagacious counsel on work and life.

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A Note on Text

In this work, conventional phonetic spellings are used in translations of all Sanskrit and Indian language terms. However, diacritical marks are used for words in instances when quoting specific authors or translations by authors.

Please note that all Sanskrit and Indian language words are italicised, except the terms Natya, Nritya and Nritya, which are treated as canonical terms.

Names of texts, gods and proper nouns such as names of dances are not italicized. Exceptions to this are those of rarely occurring/ uncommon gods such as *saptamatrikas*, *lingodbhavamurti* etc.

Additionally, italics are also used to highlight sections/ words critical to analysis.

In chapter three, unless specified, all photographs are from the fieldwork of the researcher. Please also note where photographs have been sourced online, the naming and citation details have been retained as is. As such, the italicising of names may vary. Also, plates and tables, unless mentioned otherwise have been developed by the researcher.

The word space is used with an upper case 'S' as Space to differentiate it from built space which is the focus of this work.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Cultures (may be said to) have overall tendencies to idealize and think in terms of either the context-free or the context-sensitive kind of rules ...Every story is encased in a meta-story. And within the text, one tale is the context for another within it; not only does the outer frame-story motivate the inner sub-story; the inner story illuminates the outer as well.”

A. K. Ramanujan (*Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?* 47)

Scenario 1: Dancing in the midst of lush green fields were rows of Kathakali dancers, swaying and displaying *hasta abhinaya* (hand gestures) to lilting music as winds gently caressed the lands. In the foreground was the female actor, apparently leading the dancers in the movements they were performing. Then, as the shot panned across the faces of the dancers, they began exhibiting exquisite eye movement.

Scenario 2: The dancer held her *kumbhaharati* (a sacred pot) and entered the proscenium stage from the left-wing. Facing the audience, she danced her ritual movements elegantly to the sounds of the *nadaswaram* (a wind instrument) as she negotiated the stage horizontally before reaching the centre. Placing the pot down, the dancer continued to present a Nritya piece paying obeisance to the gods, staring straight ahead. A sea of eyes seated in the darkened auditorium gazed at her. She exited the stage through the right-wing, still facing the audience, with the glowing pot in her hands.

Even as the dancing was gorgeous, and the scenarios were aesthetic, it was the incongruity of Kathakali¹ dancers in their entire regalia dancing in a green field and the bedecked dancer with a flaming pot dancing on the elevated proscenium stage that remained with this researcher.

Discourses on Indian dance² often trace its provenance to temples, courts and later to the proscenium stages. Implicit in these discussions is that certain spatial settings or sites of activity were central to the development of dance. Yet, scenarios of classical Indian dancers performing against monumental backdrops, on vehicular streets of New York and on desert sands, as readily as they do on proscenium stages are not uncommon today. Dancing through amorphous settings, Indian dancers seem to find or rather produce their space for performance even in conditions of contingency. The researcher's experiences as a performer and her training as an architect beseeched many questions. Of the many spaces that the Indian dancer finds herself/himself performing in, how many are appropriate or even congenial? Does the spatiality of the performance space affect the practice of dance? What, indeed, are the Spaces for Indian dance today? And does it even need one?

The roots of this research work germinated in such questions of whether Indian dance needed a specific setting, a designed, built space or if it functioned independently. This research proposes a rethinking of the impact of space in Indian dance performance through a critical examination of dances' interaction with built form. It traces these interactions through theory, representations and practices of space

¹ A theatrical classical dance tradition from Kerala, known for its elaborate costumes, make-up and masks. It was traditionally performed only by male actors/dancers.

² Throughout this work Indian dance is used interchangeably with Classical Indian dance to refer to the neoclassical dance styles. Neo-classical, as post-colonial dance scholars offer, refers to the dance traditions that were re-constructed/ assimilated in the 1930s'. The Classical styles in India today include Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathak, Odissi, Mohiniattam, Kathakali, Sattriya and Manipuri.

and suggests that throughout Indian dances changing pasts, two threads have remained constant. One, the subversive potential of Indian dance - as an artistic practice that exists outside of geography and two, its constant negotiation with sites of performance, built space and patronage, evolving as a malleable art form. The coming together of these threads' manifests in a dialectical understanding of performance space in Indian dance today. Thus, the title 'Dialectics³ of Spatial settings in Indian dance' and the work emphasise the shifting valence of performance space in Indian dance.

The research borrows the concept of spatial setting⁴ from the world of literature. This extends the discussion to consider the many spaces/places⁵ encountered before the 'space of performance' is arrived at—hinting that in the presentation of Indian dance, a dialectical identification expands even to the sites where the performance is situated.

1.1 Histories of spaces and form

As a refined form of intangible Indian culture, the story of dance ties in closely with its very tangible architectural history. Among the earliest archaeological evidence of performance spaces in the subcontinent are the theatres at Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh and the Sitabenga caves in Chhattisgarh, both dated between the 3rd - 1st centuries BCE. From the first millennium, only a few architectural remains survive. However, descriptions of professional entertainment provided in literature from around this time, such as the Buddhist Jataka Tales and Jain and Sanskrit works, suggest that makeshift structures and training halls were used for performances. Beginning in the late 3rd - 4th centuries, one finds remains of stone/brick-built structures indicating a shift

³ The term 'Dialectic' is defined in Merriam Webster as 'any systematic reasoning, exposition or argument that juxtaposes opposed or contradictory ideas and usually seeks to resolve their conflict: a method of examining and discussing opposing ideas in order to find the truth.'

⁴ Spatial setting refers to the place or the places in which action unfolds.

⁵ 'Place' as geographers Seamon and Sowers describe is a spatial condition that has the power to order and focus human intentions and experiences.

in the nature of built scape in the subcontinent. The presence of modest dolmen structures and Stupas⁶ point to the fact that temporary edifices and carved cave spaces had made way for edifices built for permanence. In the succeeding centuries, a number of shelters ordained for ceremonial usage of Brahminical faith, such as temples, are seen across the nation. That the development of these spaces was yoked to the growth of performance traditions is evident in Sanskrit treatises and librettos on drama. While these texts reveal the popularity of Natya or theatrical presentations and the heterogeneity of plays, they also provide glimpses of the many traditions of dance and other performative genres of its times. Dancers and spaces of performance appear universally in all these discourses. For example, the plays of Sanskrit playwrights such as Kalidasa (4th century), Harsha (8th -9th century), Rajasekhara (7th century) etc., are often peppered with scenes and words relating to dance and provide evidence of their familiarity with existing dance traditions. As an illustration, in the drama Karpuramanjari, Rajasekhara⁷ designs a location where the king and his jester witness a performance of Carcari (a dance of jubilation performed by women during spring), being presented on a terrace and remark on its fine *lasa (lasya)*⁸ qualities (IV. 10a). As this example shows, the specific details of the form of dance, its space of presentations and a delineation of movement of the body in dance terminology all found a place in the texts of drama.

Indian dances' connection with built form becomes obvious around 9th century in stone temples which largely replaced burnt brick and mud as the medium of construction. At this juncture, multifarious representations of dance are seen across

⁶ A Stupa is a Buddhist commemorative monument housing a sacred relic. It is a mound-like structure often enclosed within a partially raised railing.

⁷ Rajasekhara's plays mark an evolution from the earlier dramatic traditions. Many of these included generous sections in Prakrit or vernacular languages where music and dance were accorded a greater role.

⁸ *Lasya* is a form of dance or body movement itself presented with gentle and delicate gestures.

iconography and relief work in temples, often interweaving the dimensions of the sacred and the secular. By the early 12th century, dances' function in the temple seems to have been truly established, as it becomes evident even in its spatial program. Hindu temples built during this period often include spaces such as *ranga mandapa* or *sabha mandapa*, which are regarded as spaces for performance in the main structure. In the temple spaces of the succeeding centuries, independent structures such as *nritta mandapas* or pavilions for dance, separate from the main shrine, are often noticed inside the sacred precincts. Parallel to these changes at the turn of the millennia was the appearance of literature specifically dealing with dance, such as the *Sangita Ratnakara*⁹, the *Nritta Ratnavali*¹⁰ etc. Interestingly, extant structures from this period reveal that the efflorescence of dance was no longer restricted only to the temples, as dance imageries are also seen on entranceways such as *toranas* and epigraphs, which showcase its topical facets.

Following this period, representations of dance are seen in the several prominent temples built across the Deccan between the 13th and 16th centuries. They disclose that practices of dance were eclectic, vibrant and prevalent in both sacred and secular spheres. Similarly, texts such as the *Nartana Nirnaya*¹¹ written during this period and, visual imaginings of Mughal miniatures¹² indicate that along with unique cosmopolitan attitudes and practices of dance, spaces for dance too changed during the early modern period, especially in the Mughal regime¹³.

⁹ An early 13th century text on music written by Sarangadeva.

¹⁰ A mid-13th century text on dance written by Jayapa Naidu or Jayana.

¹¹ An early 16th century text on music and dance written by Pundarika Vitthala.

¹² A particular style of painting that emerged from Persian styles. These are often either book illustrations or single works of a relatively small scale.

¹³ An Islamic dynasty that ruled major parts of the sub-continent between the 15th and 18th centuries.

In the period between the 15th to 17th centuries, territories frequently changed hands between southern states and Persianate regimes¹⁴. That these exchanges gave rise to heterogeneous vocabularies is apparent in secular and sacred architecture, where new areas for performance, such as large permanent platforms and extensive *mandapas* distinguished by their relief works of dance, are seen. Native literature and travelogues such as those of Domingo Paes¹⁵ and Jacob Haafner¹⁶ confirm that during this period, besides ritual-oriented dances, new performance paradigms contingent on the new spaces of performances existed.

A period of instability marked the long 18th century, which transformed the landscape and gave rise to new urban and artistic landscapes. With the eventual imposition of British colonial practices in the 19th century, small intimate performance spaces became the mainstay of dance in the gentrified cities. And by the 1930s, public concert venues and proscenium stages proliferated the built cultural environment, which became the settings for the newly reconfigured dance traditions; settings which continue to be central to the concert culture of dance even today. The narrative that Indian Classical dance evolved in temples, courts, salons and later the proscenium is thus one that imbeds built spaces.

1.2 Space in aesthetics of Indian Dance

Postcolonial scholars argue that classical styles of dance in India are congeries of similar styles and a product of modern nationalism. However, popular narratives claim that dance traditions have unbroken histories of praxis. Despite these varying

¹⁴ The first independent Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan, were also called the Bahmani Sultanate.

¹⁵ Domingo Paes, was a Portuguese traveller/trader who visited the Vijayanagara Empire (which ruled the Deccan region between the 14th -17th century), in the early 16th century during the reign of Krishna Deva Raya (r 1509-1529).

¹⁶ Jacob Haafner was an 18th century Dutch traveller whose work in *Reize in eenen Palanquin (Travels in a palanquin)*, describes the landscape, people, religious customs, and ancient architecture in India.

stances, scholar Kapila Vatsyayan elaborates that all Indian dances stand united on the principles that anchor their movement, i.e., the ideas of the square and the circle (*The Square*). Succinctly,

- all Indian classical dances involve multiple groups of subtle gestures performed simultaneously by different parts of the body. They are rooted in certain basic stances ¹⁷ (Odissi and Kathakali in the *mandala*, Kathak in *sama* and Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi in the *vaishnava*), which lay emphasis on body positions that gravitate towards the ground rather than aim for movements of elevation.
- in the articulation of space, the dancer's movements are fuelled by the navel as weight alternately shifts to produce shapes that are both linear and curvy. The extensions of the limbs are pivoted around the spine to create distinct shapes which give each style a unique character. While Bharata Natyam is characterised by geometrical, linear, and planar movements in a frontal orientation, Kathak, Manipuri, and Odissi are characterised by spiralling, circling, and wavelike movements in peripheral parts in the movements of the limbs and torso (Coorlawala *Classical*).
- the sphere within which the dancer sculpts the performance is intimate, i.e., dancers perform movements within the close and middle ranges of their kinespheres (i.e., close to the body or comfortably within the arm's reach).

¹⁷ Theatrical and sculptural treatises prescribe six basic stances or body postures called *sthanakas* for both Indian dance and sculpture. Each of them is distinct from the other based on the distance between the feet, the turnout of the legs and the distance between the floor and the body.

(i)*sama* - feet together, (ii) *vaishnava*- turned out feet with a gap of two and a half hand-spans or *talas*, (iii) *mandala*- turned out feet with a gap of four *talas*, (iv) *vaishaka* one foot turned out and the other placed with a bent shank at a distance of two *talas*, (v) *alidha* and *pratyalidha* – feet placed with a gap of five *talas* between them.

- the movements of the body are simultaneously dynamic and static, with the principles of balance and symmetry governing them. And although geometric motifs created through movement define styles, it is the moments of repose that are established between the dynamic or *the perfect pose* that the dancer constantly tries to achieve, which characterise all Indian dances (Vatsyayan *The Theory*).
- and lastly, in the execution of movement, covering space is secondary to articulating rhythm. In other words, the exploration of temporality is considered more important than spatial conquest.

The two sections above have attempted to show that the *idea of space* in Indian dance consists within itself a central tension. As a bodily act, dance is governed by a matrix of philosophies which enable its aesthetics and, in that sense, it is mobile and unfixed, disconnected from space. And yet, the very places the dancing body performs remain outside of its control - making dance equally circumscribed by temporal and spatial circumstances.

1.3 Objectives

This dissertation aims to bring back ‘built space’ as an element of discussion in the praxis of Indian dance. By attending to aspects of theorisation, representation and built spaces themselves, it proposes to build on existing scholarship and offer fresh perspectives on the interaction between Indian dance and space. This work intends to:

- Unpack the ways in which built space participates in constructing the praxis of and conceptual ideas around Indian dance,
- Elucidate the ideas around performance space for dance by attending to its imaginations in literature,

- Distinguish the nature of the spaces for dance/ settings in which dance was presented historically - reading across representations of performance on structures (from the beginning of the early cave representations around 200 BCE to the late 18th century), epigraphs and paintings.
- Look at the reasons why the proscenium stage became integral to dance performances in India.
- Understand and analyse the relationship that Indian dancers today have with performance spaces.

1.4 Scope and limitations:

This research presents an umbrella view of the impact of space on Indian dance techniques. As such, histories and transformations of individual traditions have not been discussed. Additionally, a) although theatrical sites for performance have been mentioned in various Sanskrit and Tamil texts, in studying the features of dance spaces, this work restricts itself to five key Sanskrit treatises, which mark a critical shift in how dance was viewed and written about viz., the *Natyasastra*¹⁸, the *Sangita Ratnakara*, the *Nritya Ratnavali*, the *Nartana Nirnaya* and the *Sangita Saramrita*¹⁹, b) while several archaeological sites were part of the ethnographic study of this work, the analyses of the representations of dance are limited to the structures in peninsular India, c) even as dance literature primarily centres on its description of performance spaces in courts, the study could not dwell on these linkages owing to the lack of extant structures, d) while dance knowledge continued to be produced in regional languages and in Sanskrit even in the late 18th century, the investigation of both theorisations and representation around dance is restricted to the modern period, and lastly, e) the esoteric and conceptual

¹⁸ The *Natyasastra* (2nd century BCE – 2nd century CE) ascribed to Bharata is the earliest available text on dramaturgy in India. It also marks the beginning of the discourse on dance.

¹⁹ The author of *Sangita Saramrita* is the Tanjore king Tulaja or Tukkoji (r 1729- 1735 CE).

connect between dance and temple, both in plan and structure have not been discussed, as extensive work in this regard has already been explored by some academics such as, Stella Kramisch and Adam Hardy etc.

1.5 Hypothesis:

Based on the synergic relationship Indian dance shared with built spaces historically, this work argues that, far from being stable and immutable, Indian dance is wedged by its negotiation with space - built space in particular. It suggests that dance forms are transformed by the nature of spatial relationships between the performer and audience, which built forms engender. And consequently, that Indian dance forms today appear homogenised in part due to the lack of distinct spatial programs in the spaces they circulate in.

1.6 Sources and Literature studies:

Discussions around Indian dances' engagement with Space are particularly sparse, especially with regard to built form. As such, examining this relationship mandated engaging with different sets of literature. On the one hand were the ones studying the concepts of Space, the historiography of performance spaces and iconography in India; on the other were those which engaged with the processes of changing urban geographies. The third set of literature included works which provided insights into research from the perspective of theorisations and through contemporary dances' interaction with Space.

Falling in the first set are:

- a) Studies where enquiries are made into the interdisciplinary meanings of fundamental concepts of Space and time and their manifestations across religion, art, architecture and sculpture in India (Kalatattvakosa, Concept of Space: Ancient and Modern etc.).

As summed up by Vatsyayan, these insights were necessary because, *“...Indian dance was not a mere matter of articulating the different limbs of the human body. ... [It] was the most chiselled expression of a larger and more complex background of an Indian world-view and its distinctive speculative thought ... I have thus come to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that “dance,” especially in the Indian context, cannot be viewed in isolation from the most significant framework of the philosophic thought and psychical concerns of the Indian people. ... This in turn, has demanded an enquiry into many disciplines, some obviously related, and others, which may appear ‘distant’ but are not really so” (The Square 3).*

- b) Succeeding scholarship, which builds on the above seminal works by exploring the ideological connections between the evolution of temple spaces and dance praxis (Jayakrishnan, Kramisch *The Hindu*, Hardy etc.).
- c) Studies which articulate how iconographic representations connect with textual studies (Shimladka, Shankar, Subrahmanyam et al.).
- d) And lastly, works of Sanskrit scholars that directly deal with descriptions of built performance spaces from treatises, such as V. Raghavan in ‘Theatre Architecture in Ancient India’ or Goverdhan Panchal in the ‘The Theatres of Bharata and Some Aspects of Sanskrit Play-Production’.

The second set of articulations that this research engaged with are post-colonial dance and architectural scholarships. It draws from the works of dancers and musicologists such as Avanti Meduri, Mathew Harp Allen, Lakshmi Subramanian, Amanda Weidman etc., who address issues of textualisation, moralisation, etc., in dance and pay attention to the changes that ensued owing to shifts in patronage culture,

viewing publics during the nationalistic period. Reading these in tandem with the changing nature of built scape in colonial and post-colonial urban cities (Sengupta, Metcalf and Thomas) allowed for a closer understanding of the reasons for institutional shifts and the connected histories of marginalisation of practitioners.

The apparent connection between the evolution of artistic practices and changes in builtscape is also hinted at in works of academicians such as Daves Soneji and Margaret Walker. They make a reference to the hand in glove processes of gentrification and the rise of a distinct dance aesthetic catering to the salon spaces in late 19th and early 20th century India. However, the connections between the processes of urbanisation and art are overshadowed by sociological and aesthetic concerns that these works focus on. This research picks up on this thread as an area of examination and extends it to the late 20th century to initiate a productive dialogue between dance studies and urban/architectural studies in the Indian context. Key inputs into this area are found in Anirban Bhattacharyya's work, 'From Salon to *Sammelan* – Changes in the Contexts of Performance in Calcutta (1875-1950)'. This work considers the different parameters, including built space and discourse, that engendered aesthetic and performative changes in the world of music.

The last set of articulations examined were works that read space from outside the realm of Indian dance. These included,

a) space as discussed in theatre studies by authors like Christopher Balme, Anne Ubersfeld, Gay McAuley etc. These works centralise space in all aspects of defining and creating the theatrical performance²⁰. Engaging with these works laid the foundation for delineating the types of space in performance.

²⁰ For example, Christopher Balme outlines multiple classifications of space such as Theatrical space (referring to the architectural conditions, usually a building), Scenic space (stage space), Place or Space of performance as a wider category that includes the civic environment and the Dramatic space relating

b) scholarship that explored contemporary dances' negotiations with built spaces and sites. These works by performance and dance studies scholars like Victoria Hunter, Clare Dyson, Valerie Briginshaw, Fiona Wilkie etc., addressed myriad themes such as the production of site-specific dance works, the role of space in audience engagement, the role of space in constructing dancers' subjectivities and negotiations in transpositioning of dances to unfamiliar settings. They inspect how the design of space or site, together with social and cultural histories, are embodied and affect the emotional and sensory experiences of those present.

c) studies in architecture which concentrate on the movement of the body in contemporary dance to ideate on spatial settings (Jain; Huang and Emily Rai-Pi). These analyse the dynamic nature of movement to form impressions around energy, shape and their connection with form. By looking at how effective spaces could be designed for the dancing bodies and for the spectators, these works bring together the significance that different aspects of spatial settings have on performance. In other words, these works present ways to find a tangible outcome of theorisations around space in performance.

And lastly, this research is also inspired by the analysis of dance studies scholars such as Janet O'Shea, SanSan Kwan, Pallavi Sriram, and Priya Srinivasan who discuss dances' circulation across different socio-spatial contexts. Their works have been crucial to this study's understanding of dance at the intersection of State, urbanscape and identity.

1.7 Methodology

The propositions offered in this work are derived from a longitudinal study of textual histories, representations of dance and, the practice of dance itself. This work

to the spatial coordinates evoked by the drama and the choreography. Or Mc Auley who shares that Space is at work in every aspect of the spectator's experience of the theatre event.

progressed by taking a tangled approach of reading between archive and representation and between theory and experience. While archival material suggested the possibilities and representations added to the episteme, it was the experience of space that added to the learnings. The methods used in this research are accordingly based on a conjunction of literature study, ethnography, and historiography, discourse analysis based on written and visual sources, choreographic analysis and phenomenological enquiry. Multiple media were analysed for the study, including literature, photographs, websites, videos and religious rituals. Primary data was obtained through fieldwork, texts, interviews, epigraphic and archaeological evidence and empirical historiography. The objective was to first assess the existing corpus to propose new perspectives based on fieldwork and experience.

Exploration of archaeological sites across south India, particularly the caves at Udaygir-Khandagiri, Badami, Aihole and Mahabalipuram, and temples in Bhubaneswar, Chidambaram, Tanjore, Darasuram, Belur, Halebid, Warangal Lepakshi and Hampi provided valuable insights into this research process. Reading intertextually, this work looks at how and what elements of Space participate in dance imaginations across texts, bodies, pictures, sculptures and lastly, across builtscapes.

The methodology of experience adapted in this work was intrinsic to the researchers' training as an architect and in dance. The process of 'learning', to borrow from dance ethnographer Deidre Sklar, 'began (begins) with my body'(4). Such an approach was essential in research pivoting around Space because, as sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre suggests - 'it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived - and produced' (*The Production* 162).

Exploring dance and architecture as Phenomenological²¹ experiences, whether it was in walking through historical sites examining the traces of dance on built scapes and searching for the spaces where dance could have been performed in those sites, or dancing in proscenium stages, it was the *lived* experience of space that became integral to the process of this study. Reflexively examining the choices made with regards to the movement of the body in different spaces and of dance in them, and asking questions such as, what forces shape the dance? How does dance resist or comply with the space it is in? What does the stage space include? Etc. Extending these into freewheeling conversations, this research also immensely benefited from interviews with choreographers and practitioners²². The phenomenological experience of spaces as dancers performed or participated as an audience was crucial to understanding what truly performance space meant to the dancers and why it translated uniquely.

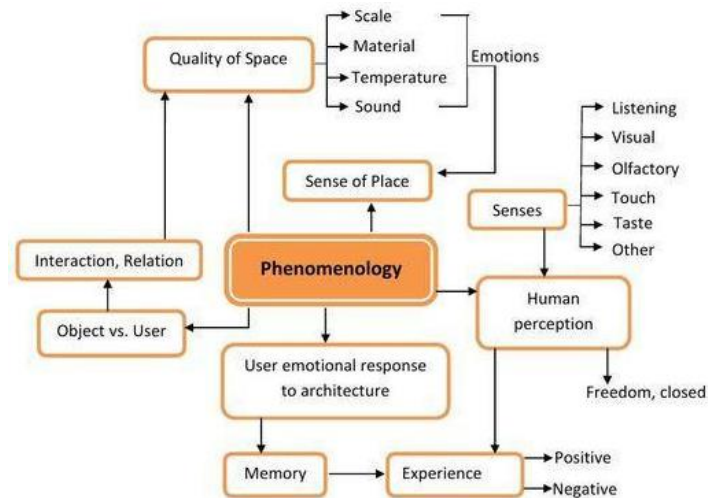


Fig 1.1 The Phenomenology of Architecture.

Ahlawat, Jyoti. <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/552183604293260348/>

²¹ Phenomenology is a method of philosophical inquiry that understands the world primarily through its encounters with a subjective agency. As scholar Max van Manen writes, “the world itself, without reference to an experiencing person or consciousness, cannot be described directly, [as] such approach would overlook that the real things of the world are always meaningfully constituted by conscious human beings” (9).

²² For questionnaire used for interviews see Appendix IV.

The experience of the body was also critical when the researcher engaged in extended periods of training in Indian martial arts, contemporary dance and Ballet techniques²³. In watching, observing in detail, but more importantly, participating in the movement, the researcher took on the position of a temporal insider, one that not only helped in the forming of a framework for investigations but also established common ground with other practitioners. These experiences provided better insights into the theoretical and bodily approaches to space and places that these forms engaged with. Significantly, it was the juxtaposing of practices with that of Indian dance that, in fact, helped the researcher be better informed about the theoretical underpinnings and praxis of Indian dance.

This research is conscious of the slippery task it undertakes by grounding a deductive hypothesis in a phenomenological methodology²⁴. However, by grounding this work in phenomenology, reading between history, theory and practice was possible, and interrelationships could be ideated to provide insights into the dialectical perception of space that this research suggests.

1.8 Framework and theories

A framework for analysis that brings together the different streams that this research tries to focus on is offered by ‘spatializing culture’²⁵. This multidimensional framework includes social production²⁶, social construction, embodied, discursive,

²³ The researcher underwent extended periods of training in the martial art form of Kalari, and contemporary dance at Attakalari centre for arts in Bangalore as well as in contemporary dance and Ballet technique at the University of California, Berkeley.

²⁴ Prof. Jitendranath Mohanty notes that phenomenology is called descriptive because it is not deductive - suggesting that if deductive, it would lose the qualities of its individuality through abstracting a concept past the point of connection.

²⁵ First proposed by anthropologist Setha Low for her work on Latin American plaza and by Deborah Pellow for her work on West African socio-spatial organization and institutions.

²⁶ Spatial turn in contemporary social theory emerged in the 1980s²⁶, offering an understanding of space as (a) socially produced, (b) historically determined, and (c) corporeally experienced. Pioneering these studies Lefebvre put forth that space cannot be taken as ‘given’ stating, ‘social space is a social product’. Lefebvre is especially keen to reveal the ways in which the force of capitalism structures the production of space.

emotive, affective, and trans-local approaches to space and place (Low). As anthropologist Setha Low offers, the term spatialize refers to the production and location or representations and practices in space historically, discursively and affectively. These practices include both social relations and institutions. As such, this broad-based conceptual framework allowed for an engagement with a wide range of social, philosophical and architectural theories in its analysis.

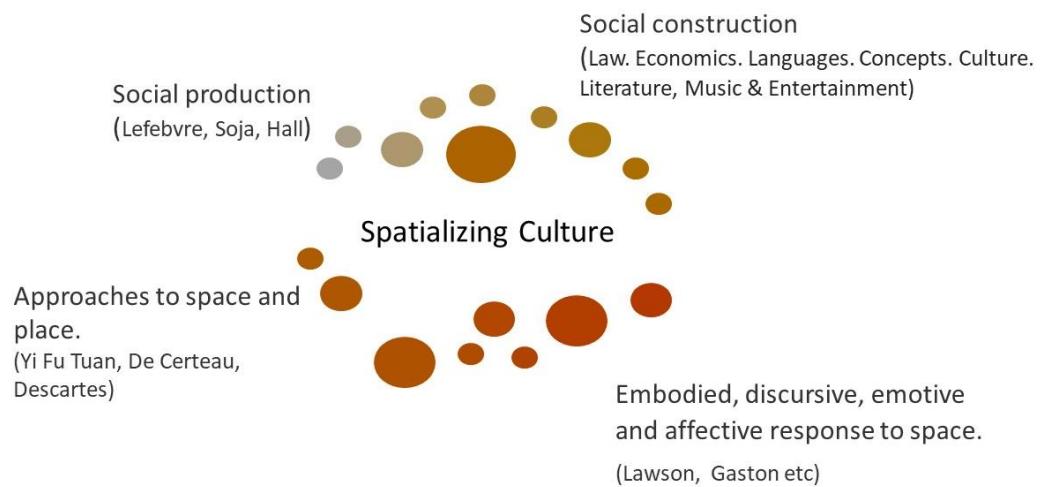


Fig 1.2. Spatializing Culture

For any study on Indian dance, an understanding of Indian aesthetic theories of corporeality are critical – as these underpin the descriptions of dance in textual studies and predictably, are foregrounded in discussions with dancers even today (detailed in chapter five). These theories envision space as the uniting element of human form on the inside and outside, and dance fashioned within these conceptions as an engagement that is simultaneously constructed in the internal and external realms of the body. These

philosophies elaborate that ‘Space’ or *akasha principle*²⁷ spans the bodily, the psychic, the natural and the transcendental elements, uniting the human form inside and outside; and these diverse levels of meanings are not understood as insulated categories. Thus, postulating that just as *akasha* denotes a movement from inside to outside, dance can be conceived as belonging both to the inside and the outside of the human body alone – absolving it of all cartesian dependencies. Tying into them are aesthetic theories which locate affect and meaning-making in the space/interaction between the viewer and the performance. A consideration of these theories was fundamental to meditate on how these translated across representations and builtscapes while also postulating why some spatial settings stood in contrast to these norms and impacted the practice of Indian dance.

For the purpose of analysis, this work takes a cue from choreographer Susan Foster in its understanding of the ‘dancing body’. Foster proposes that the ‘dancing body’ is a corporeal figure which is shaped by and “know (n) through its response to methods and techniques used to cultivate it” (235). This body, she puts forth, is produced through a convergence of power, discourse and phenomenological experience. Such a stand is critical to this study because, in the analysis of changes in Indian dance technique, the work does not give credence to individual agency and instead sees the dancing body and dance as abstract entities. Thus, this work looks at dance-making or performing not as passive acts of inheritance but as a series of decisions and orientations in a complex relationship with place (specific urban milieu/form), audience and social context.

²⁷ In theosophical view *akasha* or ‘Space Sky is the primordial substance from which the cosmos develops. It pervades the whole space and is the chief substance of the five elements viz., air, fire, water, earth and ether.

This work also draws from architectural and philosophical theorists concerned with how space is experienced, perceived and interacted with, such as Lefebvre, Bryan Lawson, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Gaston Bachelard. For example, in its reading of built space, this work relies on Lefebvre's elaborations that the experience of space is linked to both the outer shell and the internal elements and on Lawson's explanations of the impact of embedded meanings, symmetry, verticality, and context in determining how we physically engage and react to space. By building on their ideas that the external factors orient us to the experience of the space, and the internal elements add to the contextual meaning, the analysis in chapter three discusses the meanings in the placement of dance representations in built spaces. This work also takes a cue from urbanist Edward Soja, who introduces the distinction between physical space and 'spatiality' or socially produced space. Soja says, "Space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience" (79-80).

This prism allowed for a better understanding of the impact of urbanscape transformations on artistic practices, as discussed in chapter four. Similarly, Lawson's analysis of built form as "Containers to accommodate, separate, structure and organise, facilitate, heighten, and even celebrate human spatial behaviour" (4) and arguments that there exists a system of architectural control were the basis for assessing the impact of proscenium stages which are also discussed in chapter four. These theories of space and spatial interaction are placed alongside those drawn from choreographic and performance theories offered by Valerie Briginshaw and Valerie Preston-Dunlop to draw parallels between the philosophies and their application in practices of dance.

1.9 Structure of work and chapter drafts

Following this introduction, the work is conceptually divided into two sections. While chapters two and three analyse the direct correlations that this work seeks to establish between dance and built form, viz., the physical space for dance itself and dance as represented on built forms, the fourth chapter segues into looking at how transformation in the spatial culture at large and, associations with specific types of built forms, in particular, impacted the traditions of dance, performers and practice. The final chapter looks at how ideas and experiences of space are archived in the imaginations of dancers.

- *Looking at spaces through texts.*

Chapter two sets the stage, focusing on Sanskrit treatises on dance and what elements of space in connection with dance are explored in them. It looks at the details of built space, the spaces of interaction, i.e., the assemblies, and on how dance is theorized in terms of movement in space. The interpretation of the texts in this chapter is hermeneutic and moves beyond the literal descriptions of the verses by delineating the modalities of Natya (drama), Nritya (emotive dance), and Nritya (abstract dance) based on where they were performed. The texts selected for this purpose are dealt with chronologically to enable an understanding of the shifts from the canon of Natyasastra. The chapter argues, firstly, that the significance of built space in connection with dance was never cast away and that textual ideals were oriented towards new socio-cultural practices at various historical moments. And secondly, it identifies unique embodied spatial practices that these texts advocate - elements that continue to remain integral to the praxis of Indian dance today.

- *Sculptural Cartographies*

Chapter three turns to tangible connections of dance with architecture, focussing primarily on its representations on built spaces. From the earliest evidence of the *nartaki* (dancer) in Udaygiri hills in the 2nd century BCE, Orissa to *karanas* (kinetic unit of dance) in Chola temples in the 10th - 12th centuries to the dancing girls on *chatrams* in Needamangalam in the late 17th century, the focus of this chapter is on how dance is imagined and where. Multiple circulations are discussed throughout the chapter - the nature of spatial settings in the imagination of dance, the bodies in dance, and the kinesthetics of dance represented. Viewed in the context of the nature of built forms, i.e., the cave spaces, temples, *mandapas*, and other built forms, it draws attention to the shifting currency of dance and bodies engaged in dance, across different cultural regimes.

This chapter's attention across visual, spatial, and epigraphical fragments around dance makes visible the ways in which ideas about performance intersected with the interests of the State.

- *Architecture is not neutral.*

By placing the built form at the center of the many transitions that the country underwent between the 17th and the 20th centuries, the fourth chapter brings to focus the impact of changing urban geographies on the social and cultural life of people. Firstly, it looks at how architectural and urban spatial culture were used to create a distinct identity for the colonisers. Secondly, it looks at the intersections between the spatial culture²⁸ of the colonisers and that of the native peoples and the transitions that came thereafter. Lastly, it examines how performance spaces for dance and dancers became

²⁸ While Spatial culture can be principally defined at the level of architectural, it is also discernible on a more abstract, intangible and spatial level.

implicated in discursive practices around the ideas of *public* resulting in centralising of the proscenium stages as crucial to the performance of Indian dance. Examining the built culture in independent India, it contends that while dance traditions were reconstructed and assembled, taking recourse to treatises and sculptural evidence, built form in India flowered along a different trajectory, eschewing traditions and anchoring itself to modernity.

- *Fusion of Horizons*

In the concluding fifth chapter, this work presents how classical Indian dancers today approach and interpret performance spaces for dance. It brings back to focus the main questions asked in this dissertation viz., the conflicting ideas about performance spaces and the need for a specific spatial setting. Based on conversations and interviews, it reveals how theorisations, representations and cartesian ideas of the stage all become central to imaginations around performance spaces.

1.10 Relevance

This dissertation aims to make multiple interventions into the praxis of Indian dance. Firstly, it suggests that Indian dance praxis today is constructed in a relational dynamic – with form and affect produced not just in the space between performer and audience but also in its negotiations with space at large. Secondly, as Indian dance presentations increasingly find themselves located in amorphous settings with little attention paid to either the spatial or semiotic elements of the performance stage, the discussions in this dissertation, it is hoped mobilize conversations around the importance of appropriate performance space for the practice of Indian dance. Furthermore, that the perspectives offered in this work will allow architects to reconsider how spaces for performance, such as theatres, are imagined for the presentation of Indian dance. And lastly, it hopes to bring attention to the truism that

interactions with shifting urbanscapes and built forms are as much a part of the evolution of Indian dance as socio-cultural circumstances. By looking back at history, this research opens up ways to think about the hegemony of spaces in dance and take cognizance of the fact that – as Lawson suggests - there are no passive arbitrary interactions with space.

Chapter 2

Looking at Space through Texts

*“Without writing, human consciousness can never achieve its fuller potentials,
cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations.”*

Walter J Ong (*Orality and Literacy* 14)

The history of Indian dance is entwined with that of Sanskrit treatises. Early Sanskrit texts are often highly inter-textual and spread across varied fields from politics to statesmanship and medicine to astronomy, often subtending other sources such as sculpture, painting, architecture, and the performing arts. However, Sanskrit classical texts produced in the first millennia, such as the *Natyasastra*, Anandhavardhana’s *Dhvanyaloka*²⁹ and Dhananjaya’s *Dasarupaka*³⁰ address dramaturgy as a composite art and expound on its aesthetics. In the period of vernacularization, which began around the 11th century, key texts on music and dance, such as the *Sangita Samayasara*³¹, the *Sangita Ratnakara* and *Nritta Ratnavali* were produced. These texts extracted dance from the corpus of drama to discuss it as an autonomous art, laying emphasis on its communicative power - a “clear sign of its growing importance in India’s cultural life” (Bose *The Evolution* ii). Even as these texts exemplify the model presented in the *Natyasastra*, they imbue the practice of dance with contemporaneity, establishing new paradigms for analysing and understanding dance. The later texts, such as the early

²⁹ *Dhvanyaloka* (or a light on the suggestion of *dhvani*/ resonance from around the 9th century articulates the philosophy of aesthetic suggestion. It invigorated the Sanskrit literary theory through its suggestion that the main purpose of good poetry is the evocation of mood.

³⁰ The treatise of *Dasarupaka* written in the 10th century deals with the structure and rules for the presentation of topical popular theatre. It deals with ten divisions of Sanskrit drama discussing their dramaturgical principles

³¹ *Sangita Samayasara* written in the 12th century, is a text of music written by a Jain acarya Parsvadeva. The text principally discusses the regional dance and music traditions of its times.

modern Nartana Nirnaya and the Sangitamuktavali³² reorient ideas around dance by bringing together the classical conceptions of affect and eroticism with devotional movement within courtly milieus; whereas texts such as Sangita Saramrita which followed them, align themselves to courtly shifts by focusing the discourse around everyday practice. Commonly, while these texts classify and theorise the existing practices of dance and drama, they also reflect the trajectory of dance through the millennia. This chapter thus focuses on the Sanskrit literary corpus to understand the connection between space and Indian dance³³. Specifically, it looks at spaces for performance of dance as elaborated in texts.

2.1 Dances and their spaces in Early literary productions

In literary texts of India, references to the activity of dance or dancers are found quite early. From serving as inspirations to imaginative poets to symbolic personifications in mythology, the image of the dancer-both male and female- is quite ubiquitous. One finds them present in religious, theological, literary, and even sociological works, most of which often overlap. It is not surprising that ritual-religious and secular trajectories coalesce with regard to the provenance of dance – an inflexion that Indian dance continues to carry in its repertoires even to date. As Vatsyayan writes about the Natyasastra,

“ We may not regard this theory of the origin of dancing as a historical fact, but we cannot deny that it could have been conceived only in a society where dance

³² Variouslly dated between the 12th - 16th century, the text is ascribed to Devanacarya, and provides a comprehensive account of Natya. It is known for its representation of an early account of the repertoire of dance.

³³ In analysing performing spaces and dance through Sanskrit texts it is easy to assume that they represent all that existed of art, culture and history from the earliest times. However, recent archaeological and epigraphical evidence reveals that prolific knowledge production flourished in the vernacular even in the first millennia. Yet, as these resources are limited, they curtail our understanding of practices of cultural production that are represented through them. It is thus acknowledged that possibly a whole range of ideas, conditions and spaces remain outside the discussion presented here.

must have enjoyed prestige and honour. Through this theory, Bharata attributes to dancing a divine origin, a literary and religious heritage both in thought and technique, and an aesthetic, secular purpose” (Classical 142).

Spaces for performance first appear in these texts amorously and only later become more concrete as the arts become independent practices. Nonetheless, they seem to have been constructed in correlations, and the discussion of these performance spaces too follows the spiritual-sacred, religious–ritualistic and the social-secular dichotomies. This first section of the chapter traces the spaces where dance circulates, i.e., spaces where either individual performers³⁴ or groups are referenced, in early Sanskrit works, discussed in order of their chronology viz., the Vedas, the Epics, and the Puranas. Although Sanskrit librettos yield a wealth of information on dance practice, only a cursory mention of them is made as spaces of presentation are given little attention.

2.1.1 *The Vedas*

The Vedic texts are the earliest available annals of literature (1500 BCE-900 BCE). From the earliest of these - the Rig Veda to the last i.e., the Atharva Veda, the texts are decorated with descriptions of gods who are personifications of natural phenomena and their activities. These gods play myriad roles such as life-givers, and fighters, but they are also seen singing and dancing on various occasions. In the Rig Veda, gods such as Indra - usually the god of dancing, the *maruts* and *asvins*- reified as dancing and singing gods, and *nritu*, a professional dancer, are frequently mentioned. The practice of dance itself is articulated in multiple contexts. In the Rig Veda *apsaras*

³⁴ It must be noted that in the early texts the dancer is often encountered within the larger umbrella term of the actor or the *nata*; justifiably, as the *nata* or the performer was a multi-talented person well versed in the arts of acting, singing and dance.

(female spirits) who are identified as lower deities are said to dance both for weddings and deaths. In the later texts, such as the Atharva Veda, *apsaras* are described as Indra's favourite court dancers; while Indra himself renounces the position of the god of dancing and takes on the role of a King - shifts which indicate that dancing at this point was treated not just an activity but also as a profession.

Looking at the spaces and contexts for dance, while the description of dawn (*Usas*) as a brightly-clad dancer, is loaded with adjectives in the Rig Veda and has often been used to argue for the widespread prevalence of a refined practice of dance, no conclusions to associate any particular spaces may be drawn from it. The reference to the birth of Aditi, however, adds value here. Describing the joy of gods at her birth, the texts say, "*Thence as of dancers from your feet, a thickening cloud of dust arouse*" (Rig Veda, X. 72. vii)³⁵ - a description that points to collective dancing and possibly one that was situated on open grounds. Similar to it are the descriptions of dancing at the *samana* or the common folks meeting place for festivities in the Rig Veda and in the *sabha* or the assembly hall where men and women gather to sing and dance in the Atharva Veda. Occasionally, one also finds a mention of couples dancing³⁶ (Rig Veda X .94). Succinctly, the symbolic and the secular references through these texts' register;

- the prevalence of solo dance traditions and the individual/professional dancer,
- a collective form of dancing,
- dance as an art presented in courtly settings and in assembly halls,
- that dance performances occurred at multiple platforms – on open grounds and in palatial settings (of the divine) and lastly,

³⁵ All translations of Rig Veda are by Wendy Doniger.

³⁶ This description of couples dancing has often been likened to the Raasa dances.

- that dance was an attribute of the divine and was not yet a ritual act performed for the gods.

The explicatory texts of the Vedas, such as the Brahmanas (commentaries on rituals and ceremonies), and the Upanisads (discussing philosophy and spiritual knowledge)³⁷, are replete with terms linked to dance, like *nritta*, *nata* and *sabhapati*³⁸ etc. However, they do not contribute much to the episteme of performance spaces. The succeeding texts, such as Grihya sutras³⁹ (aphorisms that describe quotidian practices), attest to the ubiquity of art and performance in daily life, but little about spaces designed for performance is revealed in them.

2.1.2 Epics : *Ramayana and Mahabharata*

One finds a more evolved picture of dance in the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, which arrived at their popular versions around 300-500 C.E. Continuing with the traditions of the Vedas, in the Ramayana, comparisons of kinesthetics movement to dance are more profuse, as are the images of dance and occasions for dance. Interestingly what delineates these from the earlier references are the allusions to dance as an activity that a definite group of individuals pursued. The *nata*, *nartaka*, and the *gaayika* are all recognised as erudite scholars, called on to participate in specific occasions of royal⁴⁰ and secular life and the *ganika* or the professional dancer is anointed as an indispensable member of society. Technical terms such as a *lasya*, *nritta*, and *laya* too find a mention. But for our purpose here, the mention of a *natakashala* or

³⁷In one of the Upanisads, i.e., the Chandogya Upanisad, dance is often referred to as *devajnana vidya* or one that involved a pedagogical system of learning.

³⁸ The meanings of these terms cannot be stated with certainty in this context. As such they have not been defined.

³⁹ The rituals of everyday services offered to Hindu deities at the Hindu temples are very similar to those described in the Grihya Sutras. Thus, dance and music from everyday activities described in these texts were probably organically woven into the ritual services of the gods.

⁴⁰ Interestingly, the texts also mention that dance was an artistic practice that was taught to royalty.

a theatre hall for brides is relevant, as it establishes the existence of a built form/space specifically for the purposes of theatre/dance⁴¹. Similarly, the mention of *sailusa*, a master to impart training, tells us that a system of dance pedagogy was prevalent. In contrast to the descriptions of communal/participatory dances in earlier texts, these references hint at the popularity of codified practices of dance.

In the Mahabharata too, music and dance scenarios are described for every felicitous occasion. In these descriptions, celestial beings, princes and commoners all participate in the process of practising and enjoying dance. Like in the Ramayana, one encounters the individual dancer as well as groups of dancers. While the individual dancers, i.e., the *apsaras*, are frequently seen in the context of the court (e.g., in the chapters of *Vana Parva* and *Viraata Parva*), it is the centrality of training in dance that comes across as significant. The importance of training is particularly highlighted in the scenes between the characters of Brihannala and Uttara. In these scenes, one finds many allusions to a *nrityasala* (dance hall) or *nartanasala* (theatre hall)⁴² as spaces reserved/built for practice and not necessarily for performance.

2.1.3 Puranas

The Puranas coalesced to their mature forms towards the end of the 3rd century. The dance references in the Harivamsa Purana (1st - 3rd century) and the Vishnu Purana (3rd - 7th century) are often the most cited, for they make consistent references to the art of dancing. In these, the Raasa dances like the Hallisaka and Chalikya feature prominently. The Harivamsa Purana, in particular, presents a detailed view of Chalikya as an operatic ensemble consisting of instrumentalists, singers, and dancers. Dramatic performances such as the Ramayana and the Ramabhisara too, find a mention in the

⁴¹ For a detailed description of scenes, terms and usage see Vatsyayan *Classical*.

⁴² There exist no archaeological or epigraphical evidence that tells us about the nature or form of these spaces.

Puranas. These are staged by *natas* (actors) called to entertain *rishi's* (sages), *apsaras* and Krishna's relatives, who participate in performances, playing roles of the *nayakas* (heroes), *vidushakas* (clowns) etc.

While the Puranas develop on the ideas of the epics, the indexing of dance in terms such as *nritya*, *nritya*, *krida*, *laya*, *tala rasa* and *abhinaya* and the classifying of the types/styles of dance distinguishes them from their predecessors. Of greater significance, though, is the attention paid to dance as a choreographed art. The description of Raasa - particularly of its helical choreography, denotes a shift in the textual representation of dance, i.e., from the use of the term 'dance' as an adjective of body kinesthetic, to dance as a genre of performance - a devised and practised form.

The Puranas are also relevant for their accounts of spaces for performance. As one finds evidence in them that distinct settings were used for different kinds of performances. They disclose that communal dance genres such as the Raasa, took taking place on open grounds, while dramatic performances were held in makeshift stages and theatres. Indeed, details of built theatres too begin to appear in the Puranas; the Vishnudharmottara Purana, for example, an addendum to the Vishnu Purana, describes that theatres of a variety of shapes could be constructed⁴³.

2.1.4 Commentaries and lexicons

Non-theosophical Sanskrit texts, like commentaries and lexicons too, are replete with terms associated with dance. These texts such as the Astadhyayi⁴⁴ (5th century BCE), the Arthashastra⁴⁵ (4th - 2nd century BCE), the Kamasutra⁴⁶ (1st - 2nd century) and the

⁴³ While it extensively discusses dance and also describes theatrical spaces, the text in most cases replicates the descriptions of the Natyasastra. This work thus does not delve into it.

⁴⁴ Astadhyayi written by Panini is the oldest linguistic and grammar text on Sanskrit.

⁴⁵ Arthashastra by Kautilya is a text on statecraft, and political and economic science written during the period of the first pan Indian empire of the Mauryas.

⁴⁶ Kamasutra is a Sanskrit text on sexuality, eroticism and emotional fulfilment authored by Vatsyayana.

Prabandhakosa⁴⁷ (12th century) acquaint us not just with different genres of performance arts, artists and theorisation around the practice of arts but also throw light on the public life of artists.

The Arthashastra, dated to the late Mauryan period, stands particularly relevant to the current discussion. The texts' sanctions around the mobility of performers in multiple instances reveal that itinerant groups of performers, singers/bards/dancers existed and that the State regulated their artistic practices. At the same time, it hints that a sense of social responsibility was expected from the actors and other performers⁴⁸. And even though it does not describe theatrical spaces, it divulges that spaces built for specific purposes, such as for the performance of plays and sports, existed. More importantly, the texts' insistence that these built spaces *should not be* constructed in villages hints that the culture of building playhouses for performance was perhaps restricted to urban centres.

The period of Arthashastra predates or stands contemporaneous with that of the Natyasastra, in which the first detailed description of built theatre space is found (the focus of the next section of this chapter). It could be said that the primacy Natyasastra accords to built space as indispensable for the presentation of Natya does not come across as accidental when contrasted with the disparaging attitude towards the practices of performing arts disclosed in the Arthashastra.

⁴⁷ Prabandhakosa is a collection of biographical narratives of Sanskrit scholars and poets.

⁴⁸ The Arthashastra states,

“no guilds of any kind other than local co-operative guilds (samuttha- yikacanyassamayanubandhah) shall find entrance into the villages of the kingdom. Nor shall there be in villages buildings (ialah) intended for sports and plays. Nor, in view of procuring money, free labour, commodities, grains, and liquids in plenty, shall actors, dancers, singers, drummers, buffoons (vagjivana), and bards (kusilava) make any disturbance to the work of the villagers; for helpless villagers are always dependent and bent upon their fields” (Shamasastri 47).

A perusal of the early texts viz., the Vedas and their explicatory texts was crucial as all succeeding Sanskrit intellectual knowledge production - including that on dance - is often a palimpsest of the philosophies/paradigms revealed in these. The trajectory of dance in them shows that, firstly, even in its earliest representations, dance activity was both stylised and unmediated, and it was the particularly specialised forms that were imparted pedagogically. Secondly, it was employed on many occasions and at many sites, and whether circumscribed by sacred or secular identifications, it was performative. The progression of dance knowledge in succeeding texts reflects both the burgeoning performance traditions (as seen in the classificatory terms used to refer to them) and the changing attitudes towards dance practices. Weaved into these narratives are the spaces of performance, signaling that certain kinds of performances were associated/ performed in specific spaces. While textual production from all spheres of activities continued to make references to dance, as critical texts associated with performance traditions emerged, both aesthetics and spaces of them come to be better defined.

The following section thus steps into the world of Sanskrit treatises, which principally engage with dance as a performance genre. Following the primary text of *Natyaśāstra*, which addresses the corpus of drama, four key texts which address dance - *Sangita Ratnakara*⁴⁹, the *Nrīta Ratnavali*⁵⁰, the *Nartana Nīrṇaya*⁵¹, and the *Sangita Saramitā*⁵² are taken up for discussion.

⁴⁹ The author of *Sangita Ratnakara*, Sarangadeva was a Kashmiri scholar who was patronized by the court of Singhalā of the Seuna dynasty in the west. It is split across seven chapters or *adhyāyas* and covers a range of topics on music, with the last section *Nartanaadhyaya* being dedicated to dance.

⁵⁰ The *Nrīta Ratnavali* was written by the commander of Elephant forces Jaya Senapati of the Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva from the Telugu speaking regions of South India. The text is composed of eight chapters, with the first four devoted to the *mārga*, and the rest on its exposition of *deśi* or regional practices of dance.

2.2 Dance literature in Sanskrit

The seminal work on dramaturgy, the *Natyasastra* of Bharata, deals with dance as an element under the composite art of drama. Little is known about its author(s), but the practice it represents is viewed as a pan Indian version of the ‘*classicalised*’ form of theatre⁵³. That the paradigm of dramaturgy encompassing the many arts of dance, music, speech and even architecture presented by Bharata was accepted and popular is evident in the Sanskrit dramas of playwrights such as Kalidasa⁵⁴. For instance, in the *Malavikagnimitra*, the palace of the king is described as having many spaces for the presentation of arts such as a *chitrasala* (painting hall) and a *prekshagara* (a hall for witnessing *Natya*), displaying many of the features of the playhouse that Bharata writes about. Likewise, in the same play, the heroine, Malavika’s dance recital which is peppered with songs, *abhinaya* and poses (*sthanakas*) is described in terms which come from Bharata’s text (Ramachandran). In the post-Kalidasa period, as Vatsyayan notes, the rules of representation that Bharata lays down in the *Natyasastra* become nearly stock terminology for every subsequent author as “ *the dramatist did (does) not find it necessary to make new innovations in the technique because...the sastras fulfil his needs*” (*Classical* 246).

From the early second millennia, the discourse around dance stems away from under the umbrella of drama. For example, the text of *Sangita Ratnakara* focuses on *Sangita* - a trifecta of music, instrumental music and dance and introduces the key

⁵¹ *Nartana Nirnaya* was authored by Pundarika Vittala at Akbar’s court specifically to cater to Akbar’s taste in music and dance theory. Pundarika was a *bhagavatar* who came from a family of *haridasa* practitioners. He produced numerous works of music at the South Indian courts of Ahmednagar.

⁵² *Sangita Saramrita*, is principally a text on music and was authored by Tukkoji’ a polyglot who wrote various other texts. The dance section or *Nritta-prakarana* of the text is incomplete. Its fragments, however, provide an in-depth account of Maratha’s attempts at re-working indigenous cultural traditions.

⁵³ The *Natyasastra* certainly mentions regional variations, of the corpus of practice under *pravrittis*, viz., *pancali*, *avanti*, *dakshinatya* and *odra magadhi*.

⁵⁴ Kalidasa is often regarded as the greatest of the Sanskrit playwrights, His plays are based on Vedas, the epics and the Puranas and are known for their adherence to Bharata’s *Natya* paradigm. In contrast, the plays of pre-Bharata authors do not necessarily follow the tenets established in the *Natyasastra* (Venkatacalam).

framework of *nartana* as the overarching category under which both dance and drama are discussed. In doing so, the text reorients the understanding of knowledge systems inherited from the *Natyasastra* by suggesting that movement or rather dance must be understood through its relationship with music. At the same time, it also focuses on *desi*⁵⁵, reflecting new paradigms of art-making that highlight the aesthetic and emotive ability of the body in dance. Similarly, the text of *Nritta Ratnavali* makes seminal contributions to the study of dance through its extensive representation of *desi* dance traditions and its focus on the aesthetics of the dancing body. It remains critical to this study for its extensive and insightful details into the space for performance and its focus on the dancing body. Both these texts present reflections on the canonised *marga* (the practice discussed in the *Natyasastra*), along with contemporary *desi* practices, and often place themselves in direct conversation with the earlier texts. They also expand on the ideas around performative practices by paying attention to existing socio-religious movements. This trend continues in the *Nartana Nirnaya*, which was written at a time when distinctions between the south and north were arbitrary. The text of *Pundarika Vitthala* thus marks another shift in Sanskrit textual production as in it, ideas around dance and *rasa*⁵⁶ are brought into dialogue with devotional movements to generate new values around aesthetic production. The 18th century text of *Sangita Saramrita* is critical as it came at a juncture when the subcontinent was adjusting to the presence of colonisers. And practices around knowledge production shifted from being simply repositories of multiple inheritances to being active texts which captured the

⁵⁵ The word *desi* comes from *desa* and is etymologically connected with the region i.e., associated with specific geography. The descriptions of *desi* movements and practices in the texts are not regional variants of the canonized *marga* (encoded in the *sastra*), but rather systems of local practices that existed in parallel and in dialogue with the *marga*.

⁵⁶ *Rasa* is the aesthetic flavour of an artistic work which evokes an emotion. The *Natyasastra* declares eight *rasas* of *sringara*, *hasya*, *karuna*, *raudra*, *vira*, *bhayanak*, *bhibhatsa* and *adbhuta*.

shifting societal ethos. As Hari Krishnan notes, the Sangita Saramrita “reflects an attempt to reconcile the local traditions of dance with Sanskrit textual tradition”(73).

Throughout this journey, one notices that shifts in aesthetic representation from the older texts are acknowledged, discarded and re-presented imbued with contemporary notions. And as these later texts show us, the paradigm Natyasastra sets certainly justifies its unique position as the *Ur-text* for any study on dance and drama in the subcontinent.

In the following section, while the orientation remains – what were the spaces for dance, the idea of space for performance is examined in multiple ways. Following Balme’s delineation of performance space’, it looks at how these texts represent a) the theatre space or the building itself, b) the stage space or ideas around *ranga*⁵⁷ c) the place/context, and d) dramatic space or the space as explored in/during the choreography (47-48).

Studying the last category, viz., the exploration of space, demands an understanding of corporeal movement as articulated in these texts. Hence in the analysis that follows, the key characteristics of *angikabhinaya* (communication through gestures, postures and body movement) that each text provides are taken up for discussion. The section also uses the lens of space of performance over the modalities of Natya, Nritta, and Nritya to examine the ontological connections between them.

2.2.1 *Shifting ideas around dance and its kinaesthetic in dance treatises*⁵⁸

The Natyasastra begins with Bharata attributing a divine origin and didactic purpose to Natya. It stipulates that Natya should be witnessed on festive occasions,

⁵⁷ The term *ranga* refers to the place of performance/ the specific area where the action takes place. Although in the Natyasastra it is at times also used to refer to the entirety of the building.

⁵⁸ For a comprehensive discussion on the description of Indian dance in different treatises, see Mandakranta Bose *Movement*.

particularly by those who seek prosperity. Critically, the text states that Natya was to be showcased only in playhouses constructed for its presentation. It is apparent throughout the text that Bharata focuses on the composite art Natya alone. Consequently, the descriptions of all other elements that the text discusses, such as deportment of the body, speech, act, music, the stage etc., are geared only towards their use within the paradigm of drama⁵⁹.

With regards to Nritya, although its origin is never discussed, it is inserted into the Natya framework as a genre of performance that was already in existence. According to the text, Nritya is occasioned by many celebratory events such as childbirth, general festivities, and the attainment of prosperity. In connection with Natya, Nritya is described as an essential feature of the *purvaranga*⁶⁰ rituals and in sections of the drama where sentiments of *sringara* or erotic love are to be enacted – a manner of an application called the *sukumara*⁶¹ variety of dance (NS 4 - 314). Nritya⁶², although used interchangeably with Natya and Nritya, is not defined.

The technique of dance articulated in Natyasastra includes both gestures and coordinated movements of the limbs. In brief, it is identified in,

⁵⁹ The text justifies this approach by stating that an efficacious performance is one where all necessary elements participate in unison to create the appropriate *rasa* for the spectator.

The eleven aspects of *natya* that the text describes are *rasa* (aesthetic flavour), *bhava* (emotional states), *abhinaya* (communication through expression), *dharmi* (styles of presentation), *vrittis* (styles of depiction) *pravrtti* (regional variants), *siddhi* (success of production), *svara* (musical notes), *athodya* (musical instruments), *gana* (song) and *ranga* (stage).

⁶⁰ The *purvaranga* rituals are the preliminary rites prescribed in the Natyasastra before the presentation of Natya. These are overtures to a performance that include playing musical instruments, singing and at times dancing.

⁶¹ In the legend, *tandava* is the energetic aspect of body movement which Siva performs and ordains to be implemented during the *purvaranga*.

⁶² As Bose observes the term Nritya was first recognised as a distinct category of performance in the text of Dasarupaka. Later, the text of Manasollasa (early 12th century, written by Somesvara) uses the term to represent the whole art of dancing.

- a) the movements presented under *angikabhinaya*⁶³ or the communication through bodily deportment, in which are described the actions of *angas* (major limbs) and *upangas* (minor limbs), such as the hand, feet, stomach, eyes, eyebrows, chin etc.
- b) articulations of the legs and hands described under *tandava lakshana*⁶⁴ - which are inherently defined by how they are oriented in and explore personal space. These include the *charis*⁶⁵ (movements of one leg), *sthanakas*⁶⁶ (static poses) and others. And,
- c) groupings defined as *karanas*⁶⁷ (108) and *mandalas*⁶⁸ (20), which are additive sequences made from the individual movements of different parts. These form the basic building units of abstract dance. The text, however, stops short of discussing full dance sequences⁶⁹.

The aesthetics of dance are defined by key postulates the text presents, such as the body must first assume a *sthanaka* before beginning any movement as well that movements are defined principally through their emphasis on energy and time. At the same time as these sanctions fix the orientation of the body in space vertically, they also locate dance exclusively around the personal space of the dancer⁷⁰. Nevertheless,

⁶³ Bharata delineates four varieties of *abhinaya* or communication viz., *angika* or through bodily actions, *vachika* or speech, *aharya* or embellishment and *satvika* or innate qualities/state of mind.

⁶⁴ The chapter Tandava Lakshana in the text comprehensively deals with movement units of the body which are to be used for pure dance.

⁶⁵ The movement of the *chari* is in fact a simultaneous movement of the foot, the shank and the hip. The text enumerates 32 *charis* which are classified as both *akasiki* (aerial) and *bhaumi* (earthly).

⁶⁶ Three *sthanakas* of *ayata*, *avahitta*, and *asvagranta* are also prescribed for women.

⁶⁷ The *karana* is a movement that involves the coordinated movement of the hand, the wrists the legs and the waist. It is thus literally the elemental unit of Indian dance movement. In the text, the description of *karanas* precedes the description of *charis*, but as a movement of the body, the *karana* can only be executed after one is familiar with the *chari*.

⁶⁸ *Mandalas* are movements which are a combination of a number of *charis*.

⁶⁹ One finds in the *purvaranga* ritual a sequence of movements that need to be performed on a variety of dance songs. However, these cannot be considered choreographies, for these principally tell the number of dancers that participate and indicate the songs they dance to. See footnote 115.

⁷⁰ The vertical orientation of the body is possibly the reason why the text does not elaborate on any movements that position the body on the floor.

despite the extensive classification of the movements, by placing the technique of Nritya within the framework of Natya, the description of body movements come across as merely prescriptive. That is, in many instances, they even seem to be possibilities of movements as against elaborations of actual practice. Indeed, even as the text says that characters could finish their acts with songs and representational dance movements, (acknowledging that dance could be emotive), it stands firmly on the use of Nritya or dance within Natya as *decorative and devoid of rasa* - thus justifying the abstract manner of descriptions.

On the other hand, the text of **Sangita Ratnakara**, as mentioned, locates dance within the framework of *Sangita*- a tritecta of music, dance, and instrumentation. In the text, Sarangadeva first elaborates on various aspects of music before arriving at *nartana* - the word he uses to describe the Natya, Nritya and Nritya. At the outset, the text says Natya, Nritya and Nritya were all created by Brahma, establishing a shift away from the paradigm of Bharata. Focusing clearly on Nritya and Nritya, the text declares Nritya as a bodily practice that demonstrates *moods* exclusively through the gesture of limbs. And later even proclaims that Nritya itself is commonly understood as *marga* (SR 7: 26-27). On the other hand, Nritya is used as an umbrella term used to describe multiple body acts. These include the canon of movement in Natyasastra called *laghu*⁷¹ in this text and acrobatic movement vocabularies represented in folk and popular styles categorized as *visama*⁷² and *vikata*⁷³. The occasions for Nritya follow those seen in Vedic traditions, i.e., it is performed at the “*coronation of kings, great festivals, temple processions of gods, weddings, house warming ceremonies and the birth of a son; [it*

⁷¹ Consisting of *ancita* and minor *karanas*. Nritya is also described as one that is devoid of *rasa*.

⁷² These include dances that are performed in the round with ropes.

⁷³ These are dances which have ludicrous movements, dresses and forms and indicate that practices of bards, gymnasts and street performers are also considered under the umbrella of Nritya.

is] auspicious for all activities”⁷⁴ (SR 7: 14-16). The one new addition, i.e., the presence of Nritta as a participatory act in the temple procession of gods, acknowledges its role in the religious spectrum⁷⁵. Nritta thus is a generic term for all dance activities and was not location or place-specific. Addressing Natya and Nritya, Sarangadeva says the presence of the patron is regarded as the occasion - absolving the practices of the need for definite performance spaces and centralising the spectator-performer connection for dance. Interestingly, Sarangadeva’s imperative that ‘*it should be witnessed by one who has fulfilled his duties, during festive occasions*’ (SR 7:13-14) reiterates the onus of sustaining the artistes on the patron.

In the text, Sarangadeva borrows the framework of movement classification like *angas* and *upangas*, from the *Natyasastra* and adds the intermediary category of *pratyangas* to describe the movement of body parts that received little attention earlier, such as the shoulders, knees, elbows etc. At the same time, he greatly increases the number of movement possibilities by adding *desi* movements to the existing corpus. However, for the current discussion, it is the text’s approach to the dancing body that is important.

In line with Sarangadeva’s description of Nritya as consisting of body movements that can create *moods*, the descriptions of movements themselves are often imbued with *feelings*. For example, the seated position of *kranta* is described as,

“*When two hands are placed on the chin, the head rests on the shoulders, and there are a few tears in the eyes, that is called kranta. It is used in solitude, when under arrest, and when suffering from grief*” (SR 7: 1097-8),

⁷⁴ All translations of *Sangita Ratnakara* are by Kunjunni Raja and Radha Burnier.

⁷⁵ An earlier reference to this is made in the *Nrityadhyaya* of *Manasollasa* (951). In it splendidly dressed girls are said to be dancing Nritta, in the procession of an image of a goddess. Apart from this, while the text is randomly populated with imagery of gods and goddesses there is a definite absence of religious/ritual practice in the movement vocabulary.

drawing together the relationship between movement, and the affective and physical states, to underline the evocative power of the body. Similarly, the *kanta dristi* is defined as,

“The *kanta glance* is that which seems to drink in its object, is open, and is extremely clear. It is accompanied by movement of the brows and *kataksa* and excites the passion of love” (SR 7: 383), bringing together physicality of movement with affect.

This understanding of the body’s potential is perhaps informed by the prevalent religious *bhakti*⁷⁶ movement, which approaches the body both as a tool for experience and as an instrument of devotion. Indeed, Sarangadeva frequently uses the allegory of the *bhakti-soaked* dancing and singing body to explicate sentiments. For instance, “*devotees intoxicated with devotion towards Siva or Visnu*” are listed as the determinants who give rise to *santa rasa*⁷⁷ (SR 7: 1504-8).

As if to reiterate dances’ potential as an independent art, Sarangadeva discusses the presentation of topical *desi* dances such as Gaundalividhi or the dance of the *gaundali* and Peranipaddhati⁷⁸. Encapsulating the repertoire of Gaundalividhi by stating the assortment of songs that must be included along with their instrumentation, the corresponding movements and changes in tempo that the dancer must present in each piece, Sarangadeva paints a vivid picture of the *gaundali*’s performance (SR 7: 1272-1296), asserting the primacy of ‘dance’ as a technique and as a performance.

Nritta Ratnavali’s approach to dance is different from that of its predecessors. The text, even in its naming, centralises Nritta before Natya and Nritya. At the very

⁷⁶ The *bhakti* movement was a Hindu religious revival movement that began in the Deccan in the 7th- 9th centuries and gained considerable momentum in the mid-15th century. Engagement through vernacular literature, songs and dance was critical to its propagation.

⁷⁷ The *santa rasa* is the tranquil sentiment. It was added to the system of *rasas* post-Bharata.

⁷⁸ *Paddhati* loosely translates to modality.

beginning of the text, Jayana states, “*The learned preceptors say that the reason the formless Śiva takes forms like Sadaśiva is his passion for nṛtta. Who would not be pleased by such nṛtta?*” (NR 1: 4)⁷⁹.

Inhered in such a description is that ecstasy results from engagement in the bodily movement of Nritta. And that *pleasure* is undoubtedly derived from *seeing* such Nritta. Indeed, it is this coming together of the ocular and the experiential in connection with dance/ Nritta that permeates the descriptions of movement in all of Jayana’s text.

In his understanding of Natya and Nritta and their spaces of presentations, Jayana duplicates the specifics that Bharata lays out, while Nritya is simply defined as expressive dance. Thereafter, the text devotes itself equally to descriptions of *marga*, *i.e.*, those discussed in the Natysastra, as it does to *desi* movement vocabulary. The text adheres to describing *angikabhinaya* as Bharata does, with changes in the vocabulary over the centuries noticed in the addition of certain topical practices, such as increasing the number of foot positions or the usage of *desi* parlance for certain descriptions. Simultaneously, it offers a whole compendium of *desi charis*, *karanas*, *sthanakas*, *lasyangas* or graces prerequisite for dance, underscoring the prevalence and popularity of *desi* dances.

Jayana’s other significant contribution to dance is the manner in which the text clarifies/simplifies the movements which Bharata gives. Descriptions of movements here often capture the visual aesthetic for embodying them.; for example, clarifying the body of *saustava*⁸⁰, the text says,

⁷⁹ All translations of Nritta Ratnavali are by Venugopala Rao Pappu and Yashoda Thakore.

⁸⁰ Bharata merely describes this as the natural and aware state /posture of the body.

“Going by the taste of the patron and the system in the region, the knees and thighs can be brought down by four, eight or twelve angulas of the practitioner.

Not more than that. If exceeded, it will not be graceful in nr̥tta”⁸¹ (NR 3:102).

By introducing specific distances between the body units and prescribing how the body *should be held in space*, Jayana brings praxis closer to the text while also hinting that such prescriptions were for Nr̥tta and Nr̥tya alone and not particularly relevant to Natya. At the same time, Jayana’s descriptions are not formulaic; in describing *kesabandha hasta*, the text says, *“Keśabandha hastas begin at the height of half the face, move out from over the shoulder and go down to the original position.* (NR II:255). Such illustrations ensure that depictions of movement are clear and unambiguous and yet tell us that movement in dance is centred around the dancers’ body. Simultaneously, despite its focus on visual beauty, the text does not cast away the emotive and evocative potential of the movements. Describing the *desi lasyanga* of *dālah*, Jayana says,

“If the body moves involuntarily as a water-droplet would on a lotus leaf when a light breeze blows, it is dālah” (NR 6:125).

Or in describing *jhāṅkā* where he says,

“The body raised, shaken and cringed in astonishment, the danseuse as if deceiving the audience dances at the sides or the forefront of the stage. This is jhāṅkā.” (NR 6: 152).

These entries are not general descriptions but scenes or even choreographies. They are snapshots of graphic urgency which weave in the intended effect on the viewer in the movement itself, reinforcing that dance ought to be a feast for the eyes.

⁸¹ A unit of measure equal to the breadth of the thumb. For list of other units of measurement see footnote 102.

Throughout the text Jayana roots the notion of performance primarily in the experience it creates *for the patron*, centralising the patron as both the one who occasions the performance and constructs the aesthetic of the dance⁸². And in all these imaginings, Nritta Ratnavali changes the tenor of the purpose of performances, imbuing them with sensuousness that is not referenced thus far. This pervading of sensuousness in the descriptions circles back to Jayana's idea of Nritta or dance.

The text of **Nartana Nirnaya** focuses on the *nartaka* or the dancer. While it discusses other participants of the presentation of dance, such as the cymbal player, the *gayaka* (singer) etc., they are treated as ancillaries to the presentation of the dancer's *nartana*. In the text, Vitthala inherits ideas around dance, principally from *Natyasastra* and the *Sangita Ratnakara*. The descriptions of *nartana*, *Natya*, *Nritta* and *Nritya* and the breakdown of body parts into *anga*, *pratyanga*, and *upanga* are all modelled around Sarangadeva's text. Exceptions to this include the definition of *Nritya*, which he says is replete with all *abhinaya* except *pusta*, i.e., fixed elements for scenography- hinting that the space of performance was not necessarily a built setting. (NN IV: 4cd- 5ab).

Even though the text is popular for its study of dance under the *bandha* (structured) and *anibandha* (non-structured) classifications⁸³, the current work is more interested in how *Nartana Nirnaya* establishes a pattern of theorising the shifts in existing practices (whether in reduction of gestural vocabulary or adaption of contemporary techniques) by modifying the theoretical framework it inherited. An

⁸² The role of the patron or the king as key to the performance is described even in the many *desi* dances that Jayana describes, such as Perini, the Prekhana paddhati, Carcari, Rasaka and others.

⁸³ See Mandakranta Bose's *The evolution* for additional details.

instance of this is the delineation of modes of presentation⁸⁴ of *angikabhinaya*. While the *Natyasastra* establishes these as *lokadharmi* (realistic presentation) and *natyadharmi* (conventional representation), Vitthala⁸⁵ further classifies them into *cittavrtty-arpika* (a particular modality of the mind) and *bahyavastu-anukarini* (referring to an external object). Elaborating these differences, he says,

“When an (affective) state <*bhava*> latent in a mental modality is illuminated through the eyes, it is *cittavrtty-arpika*”⁸⁶ (NN IV: 53bcd); and

“When the meaning of [external objects such as the] moon, lotus, mace etc. is shown with hand poses, then (the Muni) declares it to be *bahyavastu-anukarini*” (NN IV: 54).

In centralising such orientations, which received little attention in earlier times, the text allows the possibility of bringing existing practices into the Sanskritic fold. The same is also observed when the many *desi* and *marga* dances of the period are placed in the new taxonomy of *bandha*⁸⁷ and *anibandha*, which the text introduces. For example, under *bandhanritya*, the text puts the traditions of dances from western India seen in the earlier texts like *Perani* and *Gaundali*, along with the *daru* traditions which have songs in Telugu, and practices that were emerging in the Mughal courts (which involved spins and turns). And under *anibandha*, it includes *desi* practices such as the Persian *Jakkadi* and *Rasa* dance (Gujrati folk dance) - bringing many of them under the Sanskrit fold for the first time.

⁸⁴ These are called *dharmi* in the *Natyasastra*. These are of two types viz., the *lokadharmi* and *natyadharmi*.

⁸⁵ The concept of *cittavrtty arpika* is also part of Sarangadeva’s delineation of *lokadharmi* (SR 7: 23, 4), but is only marginally discussed as employed in *kaiseki vrittis*.

⁸⁶ All translations are by R. Sathyanarayana.

⁸⁷ *Bandhanritya* are full dance sequences that follow the rules of *abhinaya*, *gati* (manner of walk) and *chari*. Eg. *Sabdacali*, *Svaramantha*, *Urupa* etc. While *anibandha* are those that are not bound by particular sequences or regulations (NN IV 423, 424-a).

In the elaboration of dance technique, however, Vitthala's text is concise as he defines only those movements that are useful in the production of *bandha* and *anibandha nritya*. Thus, whether it is the *charis* (where a combination of both the *marga* and *desi* are given) or the *hastas*, only those which are useful for the descriptions that follow are enumerated. As he says,

“Other hand poses, fit for abhinaya are infinite; they are not described by me here, and they should be adopted by the learned from the world” (NN IV:128).

In contrast to Sarangadeva's elaborate and mood centred movement descriptions and Jayana's technical leanings, Vitthala's text is marked by its brevity and an inclination toward the picturesque. For instance, the *citrakalasa* is presented as an element,

“wherein the dancer holds a pose as if painted in a picture at the end of a section in dance to the [continued] accompaniment of tala and accompanying instruments” (NN IV: 480ab).

By way of such entries, Vitthala recreates vivid snapshots which invoke images paralleling the miniature paintings⁸⁸. Shifting further away from his predecessors, dance as Vitthala proclaims at the very beginning is, *“that which is presented by an actor such that it has a speciality in the movement of the limbs and is appealing to the minds of people”* (NN IV: 2) i.e., that *nartana* was less about the quality of the execution and more about the elements of visual appeal like the complexion and the aesthetic presentation of the limbs.

The **Sangita Saramrita** lies at another crucial juncture in the production of textual manuals. Theoretically, the text derives primarily from the Sangita Ratnakara and Sangitmuktavali. In fact, large sections of Sarangadeva's text are inserted as-is in

⁸⁸ The production of these was underpinned by ideas around *sringara rasa* and resulted in images where stylised men and women were represented as anthropomorphic forms of *ragas*.

various instances. However, the text does not reinterpret existing vocabularies or even elaborate them in the ways of the earlier scholars, paying almost perfunctory attention to all the canonical terms. Although in its delineation of Natya, Nritya and Nritya the text follows Bharata, Tukkoji centres the entire discussion around Nritya which is described in terms of rhythm and movement qualities rather than meaning. Completely glossing over the *anga* and *upanga* sections and also the grouping of movements into sequences, to describe only what is relevant for practice. This in Tukkoji's text is a unit of feet movement called the *adavu*⁸⁹. Inserting this in place of the *chari* and *sthanaka*, the text applies itself fully to *adavu* descriptions. For example, in describing the first *adavu*, the text says,

*“Adopt suddha mandala position and then when the feet are tapped on the ground to the accompaniment of the rhythmic mnemonics “theyyathai”, it is called Tattadavu. Otherwise, it is called Samakuttana. The adavu is repeated by considering the speeds like Vilamba (slow) etc” (Nigam 43)*⁹⁰.

Here, the position of the body, the movement of the feet, the mnemonic syllables, and even the pace of execution are all combined to insert the vocabulary of practice into the Sanskrit textual world. The second level of insertion is also the intermingling of the words from Telugu and Tamil into the Sanskrit framework, making contemporary practice central to dance.

In contrast to his predecessors, Tukkoji's text focuses on training and not on aesthetics or affect. It looks at systematic instruction not just as a prelude to the discussion on the qualities of the dancer but, in fact, as the core of dance. In defining dance principally through fundamental units of practical application, the text

⁸⁹ The *adavu* is noticed in the Sangitamuktavali, which includes a line stating *karanas* are similar to *adavu* observed in South (Andra and Dravida countries).

⁹⁰ Translations taken from the work of Aditi Nigam.

circumvents theorisation to underscore that “dancers are defined by the work they do, by the training they must undergo, rather than by the finished product of the dances they perform” (Sriram 181).

2.2.2 *The natyagriha / nrittamandapa⁹¹ or the space for performance and assembly.*

In the **Natyasastra**, the built theatre space is called the *natyagriha*. The text presents them as wooden playhouses enclosed within brick walls, which like the modern theatre, have clearly demarcated areas for the stage, the audience, and the green room. As with the origin of Natya, the origin of the built structure, too, is ordained by Brahma and is occasioned to protect the performance from obstacles. As such, divine and semi-divine beings are entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the entire structure from *vighnas* or obstacles⁹². In contrast to popular opinion that the *ranga* was probably the least important aspect of Natya, the description of the playhouse and its construction find a place at the very beginning of the treatise. Indeed, the text posits that the *production of the drama begins with the construction of the playhouse*.

The text lists a possible eighteen theatres based on the shape, size and units of measurement employed. The three types or shapes of theatre are listed as the *vikrsta* - rectangular, the *caturasra*- square and the *tryasra* – triangular⁹³. Further, these vary according to the sizes viz., small or *kanista*, medium or *madhyama* and large or *jyeshtha*, respectively of 32, 64 or 108 units which are measured either in *hastas* or *dandas*⁹⁴.

⁹¹ The space for performance is called the *natyagriha* only in the *Natyasastra*. The other texts being examined in this work all deal with dance specifically and hence the performance space in them is called the *nritta mandapa*.

⁹² The understructure is guarded by the gods of the nether world while the superstructure is by benevolent spirits and other gods.

⁹³ According to the text these were premeditated by the divine architect Vishwakarma.

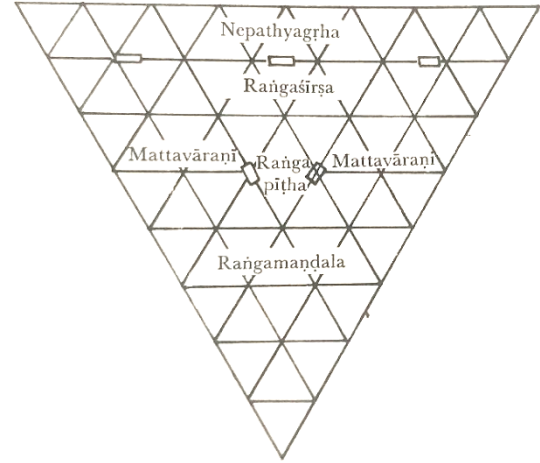
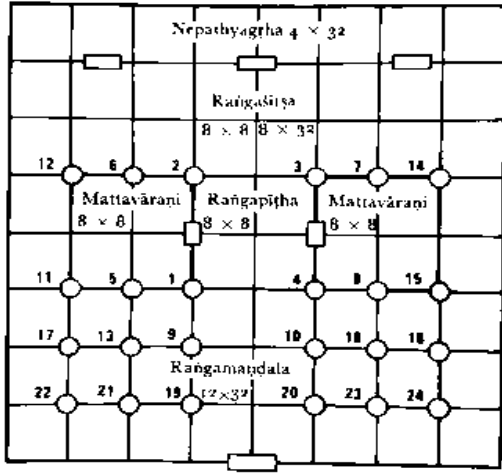
⁹⁴ 4 *hastas* equal a *danda*. The units of measurement according to *Natyasastra* and *Arthashastra* are consistent. According to *Natyasastra*, the smallest unit of measure is *anu* (atom). Eight *anus* equals one *raja*, eight *rajas* are one *bala*, eight *balas* become *liksa*, eight *liksas* one *yuka*, eight *yukas* one *yava*,

The largest of the playhouses, according to Bharata, houses the *acts of the gods*⁹⁵, while the middle-sized one was for the kings and the small one for commoners⁹⁶. The text then moves on to the construction of the *vikrsta madhya* type, or the medium-sized rectangular playhouse for the kings pronouncing it to be the most suitable for the technique of Natya codified in it (NS 2: 21). It prescribes that the playhouse was to be built following a specific grid (of 8 *hasta* x 8 *hasta*), with areas roughly corresponding to the front and backstage of the modern theatre, with each grid marked by four pillars and all the other areas derived from that single unit. As a general system of space division, the text states that the space of the playhouse has two halves, the auditorium and the composite stage area. This composite stage space includes a) the stage proper, i.e., the *rangasirsa*- the stage rear and the *ranga pitha*- the stage front, b) the *nepathya* or green room and c) areas called the *mattavaranis*, which are located on the sides of the stage; while the auditorium or the seating arrangement for the playgoers is denoted as *preksha*.

eight *yavas* make one *angula*, twenty-four *angulas* one *hasta*. (NS 2: 16) The *hasta* according to Nritta Ratnavali, is the expanse from the tip of the elbow to the tip of the middle finger of the expanded palm.

⁹⁵ Raghavan suggests that this should be read as a presentation where Gods are the audience.

⁹⁶ The smallest theatres are for the performance of men (NS 2: 12).



Pic 2.1 (On left) *Caturasra natyagriha*. Vatsyayan. *The Square* 44

Pic 2.2 (On right) *Tryasra natyagriha*. Vatsyayan. *The Square* 46

Briefly,

- the *rangapitha* - the centre of the structure i.e., the space available for action. It is accessible from the *rangasirsa* as well as the *mattavarinis*. The level of the *rangapitha* is, in all likelihood, the plinth level of 1.5 *hasta* and equal to the first row of seating. Significantly, the centre of the *rangapitha*, identified as the centre of the structure or the *Brahmasthan*, is described as the place where the consecration of deities occurs during the *puja* offered to the structure⁹⁷. The *rangapitha* of the medium-sized square *mandapa* is about 8 *hasta* x 8 *hasta*, and that of the rectangular *mandapa* is 16 *hastas* x 8 *hastas*.
- the *rangasirsa* - mentioned as the rear end of the stage that accommodates the musicians and is also the space from where actors enter and exit as it leads to the *nepathya*. This part of the stage space is higher than the *rangapitha* in the *vikrsta mandapa* and is at the same level in the *caturasra mandapa*. The

⁹⁷ In the *ranga-devata puja*, a grid of nine squares, and measuring sixteen *talas* is drawn on the *ranga*. Various deities are installed on this grid in different directions, with the centre being taken by Brahma (NS 3:21).

rangasirsa is the place that ought to be decorated with wooden figures of elephants, tigers and snakes, latticed windows and *niryuhas* (pegs on the wood members). The *rangasirsa* of the medium sized *caturasra mandapa* is 32 *hastas* x 8 *hastas*.

- the *mattavarani*⁹⁸ - additional spaces that the *Natyasastra* suggested on either side of the *rangapitha*. They are supported by four columns and are equal in length to the *rangapitha*. The *mattavarani* were probably used for certain acting scenarios, but in all likelihood, these were spaces that were provided to stabilise the *rangapitha*.
- the *nepathya* - the green room part of the main building located behind the stage. Bharata indicates that two doors from the *rangasirsa* lead to it. It is likely that certain parts of the *purvaranga* ritual were performed from the *nepathya*. The *nepathya* becomes 16 *hasta* x 32 *hastas* in the medium-sized *vikrsta mandapa* and 4 x 32 *hasta* in the *caturasra* one.
- the *preksha* - the audience's seating area. The descriptions state that the audience sits facing the stage, with the seating arranged in a raked style rising from above the level of the plinth (NS 2: 92).
- Height of the theatre: The text does not mention the height of the theatre space or even that of the stage space. However, the mention of curtain / *yavanika* both in the *Natyasastra* and Sanskrit dramas indicates that there would have been a certain limitation to the vertical frame of the structure. Bharata nevertheless states the shape of the structure was to be like that of a cave with columns supporting the roof (NS 2: 80).

⁹⁸ The etymology of the word has been often debated. The *Kalātattvakośa* describes *mattavarani* as “that which stabilises the intoxicated ones or which has intoxicated elephants”; also defined as two side corridors of the stage used for peripheral acting or partial entry/exit.



Pic 2.3 (On left) Soghaura inscription dated to 3rd century BCE contains imagery that shows a *mandapa* like structure with a vaulted roof in two levels. Asiatic Society of Bengal 1865 - Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=69258243>

Pic 2.4 (On right) Relief panel at Ranigumpha cave 2nd century BCE, showing a double-storeyed building with a vaulted roof.

<https://puratattva.in/2018/04/29/udayagiri-complex-cave-1-rani-gumpha-4727>

While the *natyagriha* has been variously been imagined as a vaulted structure with an exterior akin to the Sanchi temple (Panchal) and like the pyramidal roofs of the Kootambalams⁹⁹(Ghosh), archaeological evidence of structures from around this period, such as the images in Soghaura inscriptions or relief panels in 2nd century BCE caves point to the former.

- The Assembly - The *natyagriha* was in all likelihood, a communal gathering space. The description indicates that individuals from different castes were seated at the different coloured columns of the *preksha*¹⁰⁰. The secular nature of the seating assembly reveals that this structure could not have been relegated to only one particular setting or associated only with the palaces of the kings. At

⁹⁹ A closed theatre/hall space for staging ritual art forms like Koothu in Kerala.

¹⁰⁰ The text states that Brahmans are to be seated by the column which is white in colour, and the Kshatriya's seats were indicated by a red column; while the yellow and the blue columns in northeast and the northwest are for Vaisyas and Sudras, respectively.

the same time, the cosmopolitan nature of the participants, who are both included as necessary during the construction of the *natyagriha* and excluded, viz., the *sramanas*¹⁰¹, also indicate it may have been located only in urban centres.

The prevalence of Bharata's theatres is attested to in many Sanskrit dramas. The picture of the theatrical space that emerges here reveals that it was a modest-sized gathering space for a limited number of people. Although large-sized *natyagriha*'s were undoubtedly possible, going by Bharata's instructions that the middle-sized was most appropriate, the middle-sized rectangular theatre would measure about 100 feet x 50 feet¹⁰² (64 *hasta* x 32 *hasta*) in the metric system. This would allow a maximum of 50'x 50' for the audience seating, accommodating around 200 people. The main acting area available in this space would principally be limited to 8 *hasta* x 16 *hasta* or an acting area approximately of 12'x 24'. Even if one would add the area of the *mattavaranis* to the expanse of the stage, it would still remain reasonably modest. With the acting area being limited, it is unlikely that scenography would have played a considerable role in the production of drama. As is evident in many Sanskrit dramas, changes of scenes are represented not by acts or changing scenography but by walking around. It is also possible that owing to these restrictions, many spaces had multiple usages, and conventions of stage usage, such as *Kaksha vibhaga*, were prescribed (Vatsyayan *The Square* 45).

¹⁰¹ *Sramanas* was a term used for individuals who performed acts of austerity, such as ascetics.

¹⁰² Commonly accepted rule of thumb is 1.5 feet =1 *hasta*. If this were a *danda*, then the size would be 400 feet x 200 feet and can accommodate about 800 people.

Interestingly, even as the text principally yokes the technique of dance/movement to rhythm, tempo and music¹⁰³, the movement of bodies on stage space is choreographed within both the shape and size of the stage/ *ranga*. For example, the text states, “*In an oblong stage, the actor should make elaborate foot movement (lit. going and turning back by footsteps), but in square and in triangular stages, such movements should respectively be of the caturasra and tryasra types*”¹⁰⁴ (NS 13: 20).

In framing movement thus, Bharata prescribes that the actors organically respond to the shape and the dimensions of the performance space, explicitly in connection with covering stage space. Similarly, although the text often prescribes the number of steps to be taken in different directions during the preliminary rites, it clarifies that the measure of the *tala* or the span of the feet as they cover distance is not fixed; it is left to the discretion of the *sutradhara* or the master conductor and varies according to the stage on which the Natya is being presented. Another manner in which the text channelises the orientation of the audience into the grammar of Natya are prescriptions which state that the performer must face the audience even as he/she recedes from the stage. For instance, the texts describing the actions during *puravaranga* says,

“Afterwards, he should perform the *suci cari* by putting forward his left foot first and the right foot afterwards. (Then the director should recite a sloka with love as its subject matter.) And after reciting the sloka and performing the *cari*, the walking-around should be done following which, he (the director) should

¹⁰³ These are particularly evident in the description of the preliminary rites of *puravaranga* which are differentiated on the basis of rhythmic cycles called *caturasra* and *tryasra*. “It is said that each movement of hand and feet should be of 2 *kalas* duration (in *tryasra* preliminaries). (while) In any ‘walking - round’ in *caturasra* preliminaries, the hands and feet should be moved 16 times, they should only be moved 12 times in *tryasra* preliminaries.”

Or “The actions and the movements of persons (dancers) are to be made of two types- elaborate and abridged accordingly as the instrumental and vocal music are such” (Ch-5 141-163).

¹⁰⁴ All translations of the *Natyasastra* are by Manmohan Ghosh.

with his face forward, withdraw backwards with steps as described before” (NS 4:127).

Interestingly, it is noticed that in all instances where the text prescribes movement on stage, the number of steps taken in a particular direction is never greater than ‘five’ talas – a convention that is followed in many classical dance traditions even today¹⁰⁵.

That these theatres were real and the grammar of Natya prescribed in the text was judiciously conceived for the particular setting is revealed when the text proposes that the production must only be adjudged¹⁰⁶ by the learned who are sitting at an *ideal distance* of 12 *hastas* from the stage. i.e., from the *rangapitha*. It indicates that Bharata was well aware that the audience’s vision angle and distance from the performer while watching a performance are crucial to the appreciation of the performance. And that a significant part of the design of the theatrical space was creating conditions for the *appropriate reception* of the performance – a feat which can be achieved through spatial and semiotic elements.

In contrast to the very detailed description of the *natyagriha*, the description of the *nritya mandapa* in the **Sangita Ratnakara** is sparse – merely stating that *ranga* for performance must be in a hall inundated with flowers and bejewelled by pillars. Describing the assembly, it says the chief spectator ought to be seated at the centre, on a Lion’s throne, accompanied by his harem of women, learned scholars, treasury men

¹⁰⁵ For example, during intensive workshops in theatrical dances of Koodiattam and Nangiarkoothu that the researcher participated in, it was observed that actors cover only a maximum of 5 *talas* from the centre in any direction during the performance. This convention is maintained even when the performance space is not the Kootambalam.

¹⁰⁶ Defined as success of production or *siddi*.

and chieftains¹⁰⁷ Adding that the dancer must perform in this setting, facing the patron with the troupe standing behind her.

It must be remembered that Sarangadeva, at the very outset, states that the occasion for Nritya is the presence of the patron. As such, it is unsurprising that the description of the *sabha* in the text is given more importance than the hall itself. The specific details of the placement of the personalities in this arrangement indicate that, Sarangadeva was well aware that proximity and distance between individuals are key to performance - they engender relational dynamics between the performer and the patron and determine not just the propriety but also the aesthetics and the vocabulary of the presentation.

This brief description reinforces once again that according to Sarangadeva, the affectivity of the performance rests primarily on the technique as embodied by the performer, while the dynamics of Nritya are determined in the respectable distance (space) between the performer and the patron.

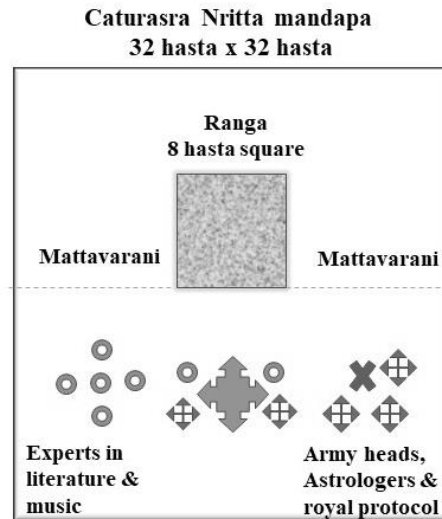
The **Nritta Ratnavali**, on the other hand, gives us key insights into the performance spaces of its time. The text reveals that theatres were built in kings' palaces and as independent civic structures. Jayana primarily repeats the three types of *mandapas* that Bharata prescribes in the text. He confirms that the *madhayama* type of stage is best suited for performances, given its acoustical suitability. The text also hints that *vikrasta* theatres were built for large assemblies where all Nritta types could be presented, including the *desi* types such as Rasakam (NR VII 89). In fact, the text also specifies the orientation of these stages as being oblong as they face the audience. Although one cannot imagine the form of the built structure from the descriptions, Jayana says that the theatre needs to be built like a temple for goddess Sarasvati and a

¹⁰⁷ It would seem easy to discard the specifics of the placement of the personalities in this arrangement as illusionary or casual, if not for the detail that Sarangadeva accords it.

playhouse for goddess Lakshmi for Natya and Nritya (NR VII: 229). Inhered in such a description is a subtle connection between the spaces of performance and the practices themselves, i.e., Nritya was possibly employed at the temple or as a ritual, while Natya and Nritya were more suitable for entertainment.

Describing the assembly of the Kings, the text recommends a *caturasra mandapa* of 32 *hasta* square with a *ranga* of 8 *hasta* square for the dancer in this space (NR VII 219). Like in Sangita Ratnakara, this text's descriptions of the nature of the *sabha* are quite elaborate - consisting of learned scholars, experts in music and dance, princes etc. And here too, the members of the orchestra are indicated as standing behind the dancer. Similar to Bharata's specifications of an appropriate distance/critical distance for viewing and appreciating the performance, Jayana too suggests that the king/patron and his entourage view the presentation seated at a distance of 8 *hastas* from the stage space.

Alongside, the descriptions also include architectural elements such as windows and doors and fixed scenography. The adorning of the columns with gems and figures of women and the surrounding walls with images of creepers and stories of the valour of the *sabhapati* (head of the assembly/ king), which the text mandates, are indicative of both the permanence of the structure and the ambience it is supposed to create. The *nritya mandapa* of Jayana comes across as both a fixed architectural unit and a theatrical space resplendent with semiotic meaning that *enables* the orientation of the patron and the performer to the place of the performance. The performance space for dance then is a confluence of all of them, the built form, the specific *ranga*, the distance between the principal viewer and the dancer, and the ideas of dance as pivoted around the spectators' preference.



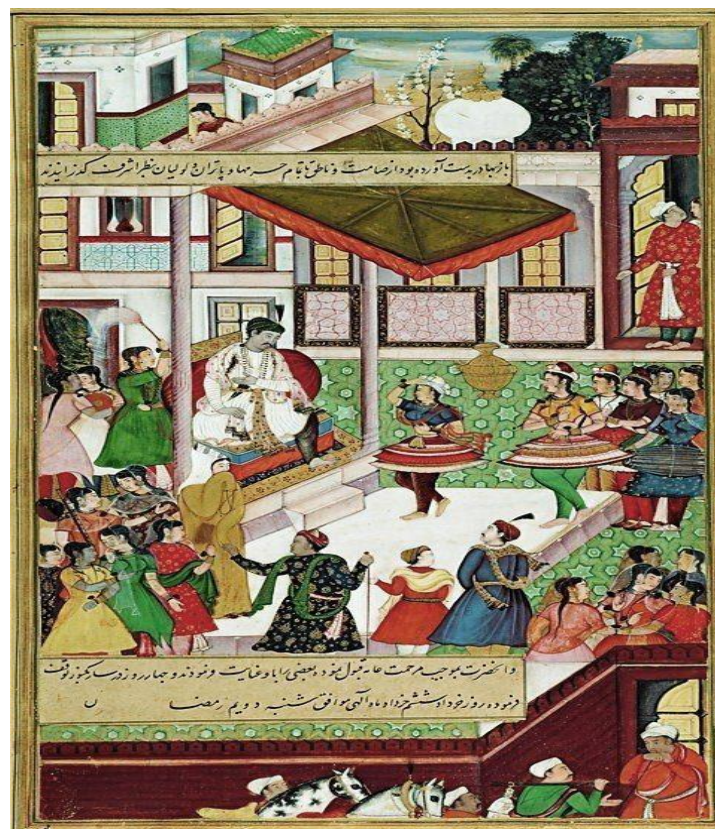
Pic 2.5 Arrangement of the assembly in a *Caturasra nritha mandapa* of Nritta Ratnavali

This approach to space for performance is best summed up by Anne Ubersfeld who says, theatrical space is constructed “based on an architecture, a (pictorial) view of the world, or a space sculpted essentially by the actors' bodies” (85). Jayana’s ideas of theatres for dance were likely popular as several later-day texts, such as *Sangitasangraha Chintamani* (a 19th century text written in archaic Tamil), confirm that the positioning of the audience and stage space ought to be as mentioned in the Nritta Ratnavali (Raghavan).

Although the *mandapa* description Vitthala provides in the **Nartana Nirnaya** is not elaborate, it is pretty significant. As with the ideas of dance that the text offers, the *mandapa* descriptions also seem like variations of Bharata’s prescriptions adapted to new systems of practices.

Vitthala perhaps is the only author after Bharata to refer to the science of architecture, i.e., *Vastuvidya*, in connection with the construction of the *nritha mandapa* - inscribing it with ritual and esoteric significance. However, he prescribes only one size of *mandapa* of 15 *hastas* N-S by 33 *hasta* E-W (NN IV 320cd - 321 ab), with a

circular *ranga* bounded by 7 *hastas* (NN IV: 422) at the centre of the pavilion¹⁰⁸. While a few other texts mention a circular theatre, Nartana Nirnaya is possibly the first to prescribe a *ranga* that is round. Likewise, the text mentions another distinct feature hitherto not mentioned, a canopy for performance - leading one to deduce that this was perhaps a temporary structure or at the very least, was not an enclosed space. It must be noted that although the sizes mentioned are close to the *kanista mandapa* of the Natyasastra, the new measures are possibly because new measurement systems were employed at this juncture.



Pic 2.6 Dancing girls taken from Baz Bahadur's palace at Malwa performing a Kathak dance before Akbar in 1561

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4e/Dancing_girls_from_Malwa_entertain_Akbar.jpg

¹⁰⁸ Amongst others, the new standard unit of measure was the *gaz*- or the length of corn. In the new system, a *hasta* even though listed as 24 *angulas*, is about 19 inches in length, as against approximately 18 inches earlier. Thus 15 x 33 *hastas* will be closer to 24' x 53' in the metric system.

The details of the ensemble in these theatres consist of the king seated on a throne with other attendant experts being similar to the ones in other texts. The setting is complete with elements such as flowers, unguents and girls waving the fly whisks. Interestingly, the miniature paintings from this period confirm the many features of the assembly described in the Nartana Nirnaya, such as the oblong *mandapa* space, the canopy, and the placement of the different members of the assembly. Most importantly, they show that the performance was not viewed from one direction alone, i.e., the audience is situated around and even next to the troupe of performers, with the king/patron placed on a level higher than the performers¹⁰⁹. Succinctly, the *ranga* as Vitthala defines it is an assemblage that has a built form of fixed dimensions (not necessarily enclosed), spectators seated around the dancer and decorative elements that enhance it.

While the **Sangita Saramrita** does not give fixed measurements for the *nritta mandapa*, the descriptions tell us that it is a built performance space with a raised platform, possibly in, but not attached to the king's palace. However, unlike the convention established in the earlier texts (particularly the Natyasastra)¹¹⁰, the text fixes the direction that the king faces to the east, i.e., it prescribes that the stage space is on the east, with the assembly positioned to the west. However, Sangita Saramritas' unique contribution to the organisation of the stage space is that it prescribes the placement of the orchestra on the sides of the main *ranga*. In this arrangement, the members of the troupe move away from being behind the dancers to the sides - leaving not just most of the stage space for the performers alone but also freeing the backdrop for the

¹⁰⁹ This arrangement as is evident is in contrast to the unidirectional setting of the *natyagriha* or even the *nritta mandapas* of Jayana, perhaps encouraging choreographies that were not necessarily only frontal.

¹¹⁰ In the earlier texts the different directions on stage are marked by convention. Bharata states that the direction in which the actors and the musicians face may be considered east.

introduction of scenography. At the same time, this shift marks a critical change in the aesthetics of the stage space from the viewpoint of the patron and the audience. Because the patron's focus in such a setting would remain on the dancer/dancers and not on what happens behind them. Interestingly this shifting of the troupe from behind the dancers to the sides is often credited to a much later date of the mid-1930s', i.e., it is regarded as an aesthetic practice conceived during the early period of the revival of Indian dance traditions when new kinds of built spaces were becoming part of dance landscape.



Fig 2.7 Sangita Mahal in the Tanjore Palace 17th century. M Srinath
https://www.thehindu.com/migration_catalog/article16678808.ece/alternates/FREE_1200/12FR-MAHAL

Another key alteration that Tukkoji's text introduces is that it forbids the presence of a door in the west, i.e., behind the king/patrons' position. What this means is that the movement of individuals into the theatrical space is restricted to the sides, leading to an experience of the space that is very nearly like that in the modern concert stages, both for the performers and the audience. Concerning the assembly, the text

replicates the placement of Sangitamuktavali¹¹¹, which again borrows from some earlier texts. The extant theatre spaces in the courts of Tanjore kings display many of these features and may be considered a good approximation of the setting described in this treatise¹¹².

2.2.3 Producing the dance space.

It is noticed that the idea of *ranga* in the texts is never taken as a given. Even as all the texts except Sangita Ratnakara mention a defined *ranga*, the space for dance is always *made* or rather *produced* within the given space. For example, in the **Natyasastra**, although Bharata mentions three stages of worship (before the construction, during the consecration of the built structure¹¹³, and the ritual of *purvaranga*) which precede the presentation of Natya, it is the ritual of the *purvaranga* which Bharata lays emphasis on. For it is this which produces and makes the *ranga* appropriate for performance.

The *purvaranga* ritual, according to the text, has eighteen or nineteen segments, with the first ten of these being acoustic procedures performed behind the curtain¹¹⁴ and the other more dramatic ones presented to the public. Concisely, the text prescribes that

¹¹¹ The description of *sabha* in Sangitamuktavali is as follows

“The king is seated in the *simhasana* in front, on his right are famous princes, great ministers, and other higher officials, on the left are the old, physicians, panditas, magadhas and other respectable persons, at the back are women adorned with many jewels, maidservants and other young women. On the south side of the stage are the vocal singers, on the north are the *mrangists*, in front are the dancers and the cymbal players. Other dancers enter the stage, at the proper time” (Rama, 304).

¹¹² Notably these spaces were designed by European architects when colonial presence was fairly common in the Deccan. Also discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

¹¹³ This is the *puja* or consecration of the built stage. During the consecration of the newly built stage, an imaginary grid on *ranga pitha* is drawn and deities are established on it on all sides, to mark the limits of sacred space. And these various gods are given the responsibility of safeguarding it. It is observed that while the procedure itself is called the *puja*. Bharata draws constant parallels to the *yagnic* ritual indexing that the practice of the offerings, *puja* was coeval but distinct from *yajna*.

“Offering worship to the Gods of the stage is as meritorious as [vedic] sacrifice” (NS II- 98).

Natalia Lidova reasons that this could be because of the emergence of Natya was coterminous with the emergence of *puja* practices. Extending it to the ideation of the temple, she argues that the *natyagriha* could be the precursors to the Hindu temple.

¹¹⁴ It could be said that these functioned both as perfunctory announcements for the spectators as also disciplinary actions for the musicians.

the *purvaranga* is of two kinds viz., the *citra purvaranga*¹¹⁵ - which includes the presence of female dancers and the *sudda purvaranga*¹¹⁶ involving only the male actors. In both these, the ritual of the *purvaranga* establishes the centre of the stage and the limits of the stage or the liminal space. The dancers/ actors perform ablutions and move to different sides of the stages by either walking or performing *charis*, marking out the place where the orchestra sits before exiting. While most of these movements are synchronised with the tune and the metrical cycles of the songs involved and occasionally include recitation, they also reveal conventions of stage space usage discussed earlier. Interestingly, this practice of producing a space by circumambulation and sprinkling water is still evident in many theatrical traditions like Chau¹¹⁷ and Koodiyattam¹¹⁸ and even indigenous practices like Oggu Katha¹¹⁹ and at times, in Kuchipudi.

The *purvaranga* rituals that Bharata prescribes serve multiple functions. Firstly, they appear to bridge the symbolic, the representational and the represented as they establish the links with the *yagnic* spaces and procedures. This is noticed in the insistence that actors move towards fixed directions on stage and the limitations on the steps as the actors complete the ritual. Secondly, they tell us that the procedures described were possibly pan India. This is noticed in its mention of different *margas*

¹¹⁵ The *citra purvaranga* ritual begins with a female dancer entering the stage to the playing of stringed instruments and drums. The dancer stands in the *vaisakha sthanaka* and with flowers in her hands and performs all 4 *recakas* (gentle wavy movements prescribed for waist, neck, feet and hands). She later goes around the stage, i.e., the *rangapitha* scattering flowers and bowing to the gods installed earlier. This is followed by a *nritya* performance to a song that is delineated with gestures to the accompaniment of drums and instrumental music. This sequence of performances is repeated by four other individual dancers. Later another set of dancers perform various *pindis* (group formations) and exit.

¹¹⁶ In the *suddha purvaranga*, the *sutradhara* (the main conductor), the *vidusaka* (the clown) and another attendant offer flowers at the *Brahma sthana*. In the next step, the deities are established in 4 corners by drawing a large circle with light movements, accompanied by vocal and instrumental music, establishing the limits of the ritual space/ limits of space on the stage.

¹¹⁷ A semi-classical tradition with significant folk and martial elements. Its three styles are named after the region they are performed in – Purulia, Seraikela and Mayurbhanj.

¹¹⁸ Sanskrit theatrical tradition practised in Kerala.

¹¹⁹ Oggu Katha is a performative tradition of the pastoral community of Telangana. See Bhikshu J *The Semiotics*.

which could be employed during the *citra purvaranga*¹²⁰. And lastly, the elaborations of *purvaranga* divulge that, a) whether as ritualistic practices associated with specific built forms, or as traditions that were peripatetic, ‘dance’ existed outside the Natya paradigm, b) that existing dance practices or even a set pattern of performatives were co-opted into the act of theatrical presentation to create scenarios or a ritualistic experience that was familiar to the audience¹²¹ i.e., *the system of space making was possibly a part of the practice of dance* even prior to its inclusion into the Natya paradigm.

Although Sarangadeva does not mention a fixed hall for a performance, he certainly does not trivialise the *ranga*. However, since **Sangita Ratnakara** primarily concerns itself with the presentation of Nritya and Nritta, no particular *purvaranga* rituals are mentioned¹²².

It says that the dancers and the accompanists must harmonise their instruments before they *stand and play* a sequence of instrumental music (including a number of songs such as *melapaka*, *prabandha* and *gajara*) and percussion. Then, at the end of *gajara* (a song accompanied by instruments) the dancer who is standing in *saushtava* all this while behind a curtain with flowers in her hand must reveal herself and offer flowers at the centre of the stage- *in a beautiful curve* (SR 7: 1260-3). Inscribing the beauty of movement with practice, it seems that Sarangadeva constantly reminds the reader that the beauty of the art form rests primarily in the dancer’s evocative movements and that the space of dance is created between the individuals.

¹²⁰ The text pronounces 3 different *margas* of viz., *Citra*, *Vartika* and *Daksina* performed to different of songs. The structure of these songs i.e, the number of stanzas, the tempo and the literature (purely pneumatic at times) and how they are performed are all different.

¹²¹ The fact that the text says when these acts of dance are mixed with the *suddha* (pure) *purvaranga*, they become *citra* shows that this scenario was optional.

¹²² At the same time that *purvaranga* rituals were essential to the presentation of Natya comes across in the descriptions of certain positions, such as the *Ayata sthanaka* (SR 7: 1057-62).

In the **Nritta Ratnavali**, Jayana writes that the system of practice mentioned in Brihaddesi (6th -8th C.E.) takes precedence over the ritual laden movement pattern of Natyasastra for *purvaranga*. Both in the *suddha* and the *vicitra paddhati* (mixed), this involves tuning and playing the percussion and the instruments. This is followed by the dancer entering the stage in *samapada*¹²³, holding the *samdamsa hasta*¹²⁴ and striking the left foot as she enters. Here too, the production of the space/ readily built space happens through the music in the presence of both patron and the dancer in an aesthetically prepared space.

The ritual process of space making in the **Nartana Nirnaya** is presented as the *mukhacali* or the *pushpanjali* - a dance described as a *bandhanritya*. The choreography of dance follows elaborate but precise sequences of movements that direct the dancer to different corners of the stage before the centre spot or *bramhassthana* is arrived at where flowers must be offered¹²⁵. This pattern of movement is presented as a sacrosanct feature of the performance. The entire system follows a pattern of approaching the eight corners of the stage space to establish the liminal space of the *ranga* through the movements and poses of the dancer. Vitthala specifies that distinct *charis* and *karanas* are to be executed as the dancer moves across the stage. And the particularities of *hastas* to be employed at each of these corners, which the text specifies, indicate that they were possibly designed to invoke the deities of different directions. This process appears to be similar to the invocation of the *astadikpalakas* (guardian deities of eight directions) and Brahma, elaborated by Bharata in the *purvaranga* (NN 427-62cd).

In what appears to be another instance of transference of earlier practice to a new modality, Nartana Nirnaya shows that the sacralising of the spaces through a

¹²³ A position of the feet, where the toes and heels of them touch.

¹²⁴ A gesture of the hand where only the tips of the forefinger and the thumb bend to touch.

¹²⁵ For detail of movement and *sloka* that follows see (NN IV :427- 462).

particular movement pattern could be achieved, leading to the creation of an *appropriate space*. At this point, this practice of producing the space through fixed movement sequences seems to have gained common acceptance as the Sangitamuktavali proclaims that '*pushpanjali* is indispensable to all *nartana*.'

Lastly, the **Sangita Saramrita** merely states that the dancer must enter the stage to offer flowers and perform the *pushpanjali* after the curtains are removed and the orchestra has been tuned to make the *ranga* pure¹²⁶. This archetype of producing appropriate space for dance, i.e., the *ranga*, through *pushpanjali* or even just the offering of flowers through *namaskaram*,¹²⁷ continues to date.

Apart from these selected texts, many other music and dance treatises like the Visnudharmottarapurana (5th - 8th century) mentioned earlier, Narada's Sangita Makaranda (12th century), Jagadekamalla's Sangita Chudamani (12th century) and Basavaraja's Sivatatattvaratnakara (18th century)¹²⁸, describe theatre spaces. And although they mention details such as the size and the placement of *yavanika* (curtains), in most cases, they simply duplicate Bharata's description, rarely adding to the ideas around *nritta mandapas*.

Built theatres are also mentioned in the treatises on architecture and sculpture. The Samaranga Sutradhara of Bhoja (11th century), the Silpa Ratna of Sri Kumara (16th century) and others mention that theatres such as *gandharva vesma*, *kshatriya vesma* and *prekshagriha* were constructed in the palaces of the kings and for the general

¹²⁶ Sangita Saramrita also pronounces that *nandi* must be performed before the presentation as per *sastra*. Tukkoji gives an elaborate list of *slokas* that must be sung for the removal of obstacles. Firstly, paying obeisance to the gods, Ganesa, Saraswati, and Siva and later pronouncing benedictions to the king.

¹²⁷ An act of greeting by folding the holds. In the realm of dance, this includes touching the floor as a mark of respect.

¹²⁸ The Sivatatattvaratnakara, is a huge encyclopaedic work of nine chapters (*kalollas*) and 108 subsections (*tarangams*) covering all fields of knowledge prevalent during his times, including a chapter on dance which draws from medieval and early modern works on *sangita*.

public. However, outside of a short note on the embellishments of these spaces, little else is described in these texts.

2.3 Drawing in shape and style.

Occasionally though, ideas around the connection of the shape of the built-form with the nature of the performance were toyed with. In the *Bhavaprakasa* (ca.12th century), Saradatanaya, the author, specifies that the palaces of kings ought to have theatres of different shapes, with different kinds of dance spectacles performed for their distinct assemblies. Doing away with the size, and laying emphases on shape, the text prescribes,

a) the *caturasra*, or the square theatres - where all sorts of *misra* dance and music could be conducted, and the audience was to consist of the king, the courtesans, ministers, merchants, commander of the army, friends and the king's sons.

b) the *vritta* or the circular theatres – in which only the *citra* variety of the *misra* dance, i.e., the style which was a mixture of both *marga* and *desi*, could be viewed. The audience in this was to be only men, having besides the king, the proprietors of other theatres -*para-mantapikas* and the chief citizens. And,

c) the *tryasra* or the triangular theatres - where only the *marga* style of dance was to be presented, to the king, the sacrificial priests, the preceptors, the king's harem and the chief queen.

Although the *Natyaśāstra* too prescribes different shapes for the *natyagriha*, Bharata proclaims that it is the *size*, not the shape of the structure, that is critical to dramatic presentations – especially for the spectator. As such, even as the text prescribes adapting movement to cover/suit the shape of the stage, it says little else about it. It is likely that Bharata does not focus on the shape as dramatic space in theatre is principally created in the interactions between actors, de-signifying the aspect

of the shape of stage space which can be altered through scenography. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that Bharata's theatres were communal centres designed to cater to a fairly significant number of people, and the shape of the theatre would undoubtedly have impacted both the vision angle and even the acoustics of the performance for the spectators.

On the other hand, the shape of the unit, especially when it is of limited dimensions, becomes critical to the individual dancer/ small groups of dancers. It determines not just the *ranga* space available for the dancer but also the distance between the dancer and the audience and the orientation of the audience. In proclaiming that *only men* ought to view the presentation of the mixed dances that should be presented in the *vritta* theatre, the text reveals that both the performatives and spatial dynamics of these dances were distinct - perhaps demanding that they be *viewed* in the round. While *marga*, perhaps less acrobatic, could be presented in *tryasra* shape spaces as they allow for greater interaction between the performer and the audience.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter was to examine the ideas around dance and its spaces as presented in Sanskrit treatises. Although early literature mentions that many performative genres and spaces existed, little about the performance spaces themselves are described. Around the beginning of the first millennia, the text of Natyasastra provides the first elaborate description of a space, the *natyagriha*, designed specifically for the presentation of drama or Natya. The text tells us that the construction of this space was imperative to the presentation of drama. This structure was likely mandated since it brought a sense of belonging, an identity, and a system of respectability to the artistic practice of drama. At the same time, the text presents dance as a subsidiary to this Sanskrit theatre it describes, making it seem like dance too was only to be

presented in the *natyagriha*. However, the other texts of this time, such as the *Puranas* and even the *purvaranga* rituals in *Natyaśāstra*, disclose that *Nrīta* and *Nrīya* were independent popular arts which were also presented at different venues.

Although Sanskrit theatre and its built form continued to flourish until the end of the first millennium, it saw a gradual decline towards the end of the first millennium, with only the indigenous folk tradition¹²⁹ prevailing in the regional languages (Karnad).

The treatises that emerged in the second millennium shifted their perspective from drama to focus on the trifecta of *Sangita* - greatly expanding the systems of knowledge around art and the practice of dance in particular. These texts, in multiple ways, foreground that the site of performance for dance, especially for *Nrīya*, is the evocative body itself. Indeed, Sarangadeva writes that the performance space and the context, especially for *Nrīya* and *Natya*, was the presence of a patron alone, hinting that for dance, space was determined by the proximity between individuals. Nevertheless, nearly all dance and music texts in this period continued to mention performance spaces for dance called *nrīta mandapas*, even if they were merely duplicating the canon established by Bharata. These inclusions tell us that although the built form for the presentation of dance was not (did not have to be) as elaborate as *natyagriha*, it was often considered a necessity for the presentation of dance. The coming together of the multiple concepts around space for dance is seen in the text of *Nrīta Ratanvali*, in which the *ranga* for the performance of dance is mentioned as a fixed measure of space inside a small *built mandapa*, and in which the patron is seated at a respectable distance. Interestingly, some texts demonstrate that occasionally diverse shapes of *ranga* were associated with distinct performance styles, reflecting an understanding

¹²⁹ These indigenous folk performance traditions such as Yakshagana, the Kathakali or the ritual traditions such as the Raslila and Ramlila shared a dialogical relationship with the Sanskrit or *sastric* practices and the paradigm of movement established in *Natyaśāstra* continues to be visible in them.

that dance shares a relationship with built forms. However, this thread of associating the spatial geometry of the built space with the practice of dance was only sporadically repeated, hinting that it was the other concepts around space that took precedence over the built form.

The texts like Nartana Nirnaya show that ideas around dance and the dancing body shifted during the early medieval period, as new performative practices became part of the social fabric. Spaces of performance too no longer followed the paradigm Bharata set, presenting instead new shapes and spatial settings, such as a circular *ranga* and even presentations in the open. Nevertheless, a designated space was still considered essential to the performance of dance. More important, however, is that at this juncture, the idea of producing the appropriate space through the movements of the body became significant. Although the system of space production or the *sacralizing of ranga* through a ritual enactment was mentioned in the Natyasastra and was possibly in existence even before dances were inserted into the Natya paradigm, the texts at the beginning of the second millennia merely gloss over them. It could be argued, that the re-emergence or rather the resignification of these processes of space production, structured and mandated as a set choreography of *pushpanjali*, was likely because of the shifting social, aesthetic and built milieus for dance. The changing built scapes and, consequently, the theatre spaces, as seen in the 18th century text, no longer enabled the proximity that Sarangadeva and Jayana deemed essential to performance.

This chapter reveals that while Bharata established the framework for movement and conventions for dance for a specific space, today, different kinds of genealogies and continuities of ideas of spaces can be found in dance. Mostly, it is the centrality of the evocative body, the appreciation of the patron, the production of space through a specific set of movements and the semiotics of space that all sediment in the *considerations of appropriate space* for classical Indian dance.

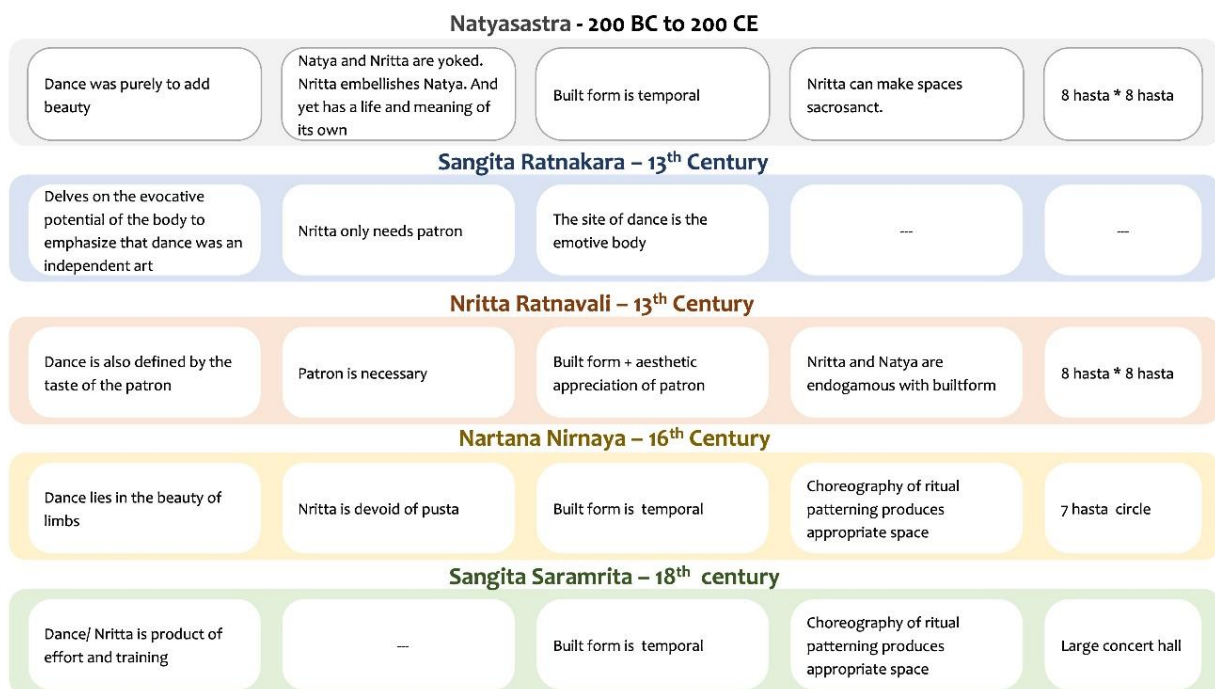


Plate I Short summary of treatises studied

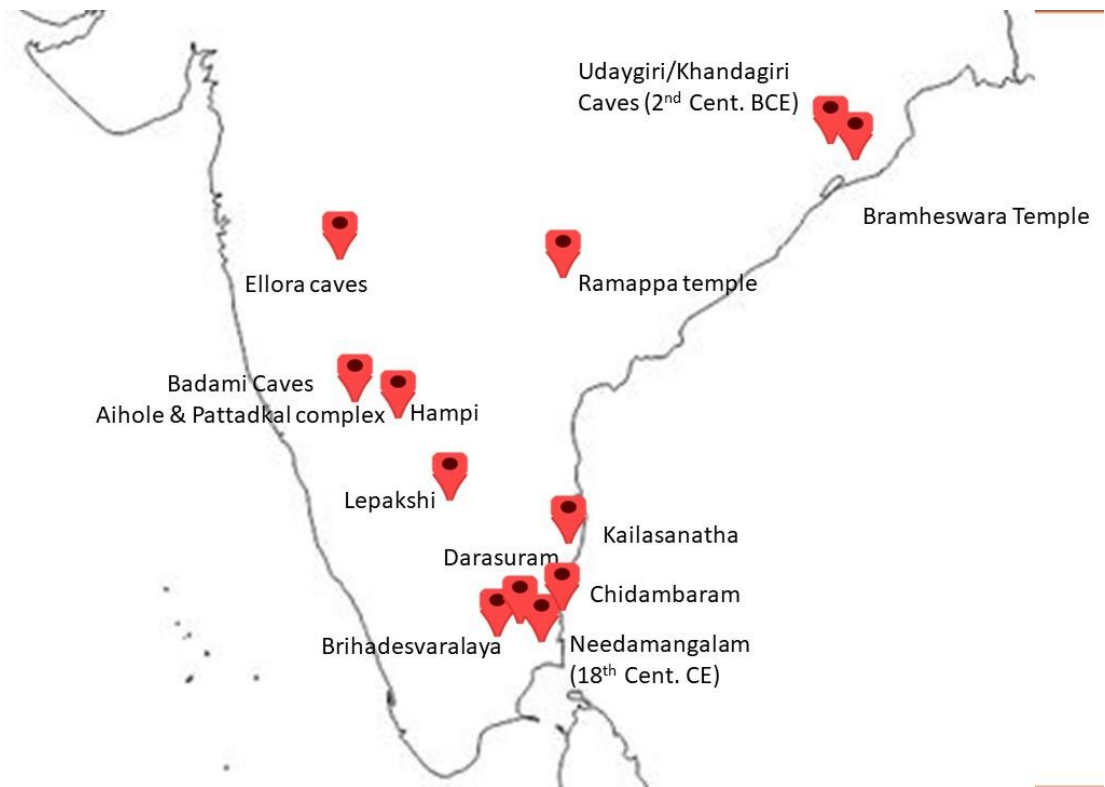


Plate II Location of archaeological sites examined

Chapter 3

Sculptural Cartographies

“.....culture is constantly mediated by performative encounters in public space. Meanings are actively contested in public space when new cultural images are legibly inscribed in the public domain, whether on the walls of temples, on the side of the street, in dance performances in the bazaar, or on the very bodies of the people who inhabit it.”

Elaine Fisher (*Mediation of Culture in Public Spheres*)

The history of Indian dance survives in fragments across multiple media. In the previous chapter, the intersection of dance with built form was examined by looking at spaces for performance as imagined/ proposed in the treatises. This chapter inspects another strikingly evident connection of dance with built forms by examining architectural edifices. Specifically, this chapter looks at where dance happened and how those spaces and the bodies associated with them appear as part of public buildings. In doing so, it takes inspiration from the works of dance scholar Alessandra Royo, who explores dance in conjunction with archaeology¹³⁰. As Royo offers, an archaeological examination of dance allows one to read representations of dance as a part of the larger cultural landscape and contextualise them to think about the changes of the past. The examples discussed in this chapter stand as critical representations in the study of dance, as well as trace the trajectory of the development of architectural spaces in the sub-continent.

¹³⁰ Alessandra examines the architecture/dance relationship through the site of Prambanan, in Central Java. For details see Royo *Embodying*.

3.1 Early dancing girls of Indus Valley and Udaygiri

3.1.1 *The dancing girl from the Indus Valley.*

The earliest imagery associated with dance from the Indian subcontinent is often that of the ‘dancing girl’ from the Indus Valley civilisation¹³¹, which British archaeologist Ernest Mackay discovered during an expedition at Mohenjo-daro in 1926. Following its discovery, this tiny yet statuesque bronze artefact has been positioned at the beginning of all discourse on the history of dance in India to argue for the antiquity of India’s ‘Classical dance’ tradition. Yet, despite this naming, there is very little other evidence from that period - iconographic or sculptural or even spaces akin to performance sites, which corroborate the prevalence of a Classical dance tradition. Interestingly, the lesser-known counterpart of the dancing girl, excavated at the same location (often called the ‘Other dancing girl’ currently located in the National Museum of Pakistan), has not inspired much historiography of dance in the country of its present location. Another popular dancing girl from a few millennia later, however, reveals a different story.

¹³¹ The Indus Valley civilisation is dated to 3300 BCE - 1300 BCE. Although there exists very little literary evidence from its times, extant structures and archaeological remains indicate that it was a highly organized urban society.



Fig.3.1. The built scape of Harappa. *The Great Bath*. Saqib Qayyum
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harappan_architecture#/media/File:Mohenjo-daro.jpg



Fig.3.2 (On Left) The Dancing Girl. Alfred Nawrath.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dancing_Girl_\(sculpture\)#/media/File:The_Dancing_Girl_in_a_photogravure_by_Alfred_Nawrath,1938.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dancing_Girl_(sculpture)#/media/File:The_Dancing_Girl_in_a_photogravure_by_Alfred_Nawrath,1938.jpg)

Fig. 3.3 (On Right) Second bronze statuette of a girl at Karachi Museum, Pakistan.
 Ernest Mackay (Lifetime: 2 October 1943) - Further Excavations at Mohenjo-Daro,
 1927-31, New Delhi (1937-38) Plate LXIII, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=116012311>

3.1.2 Dancers at Ranigumpha.

In the Udayagiri and Khandagiri (2nd century BCE)¹³² cave complex in Orissa, an elegantly carved figure of a *nartaki* or a female dancer is found nesting amongst many panels and friezes adorning the walls of a cave called the Ranigumpha (popularly known as the queen's cave). While the carvings in the other caves of this complex consist primarily of Buddhist and Jaina devotional scenes (Leoshko), the Ranigumpha plays host to scenes of dance and everyday life which are often identified as the earliest depictions of Odissi (Vatsyayan, *Indian*).



Fig 3.4 View of Ranigumpha at Udaygiri and Khandagiri, Orissa

¹³² The Udayagiri and Khandagiri monuments in Orissa are twin cave complexes consisting of natural and artificially carved out spaces. The epigraph in one of these caves, the Hatigumpha, tells us that these were ordained by a king of the Kharavela dynasty (2nd century BCE). These caves arrayed across both these hills were supposedly dwelling places for Jaina ascetics.

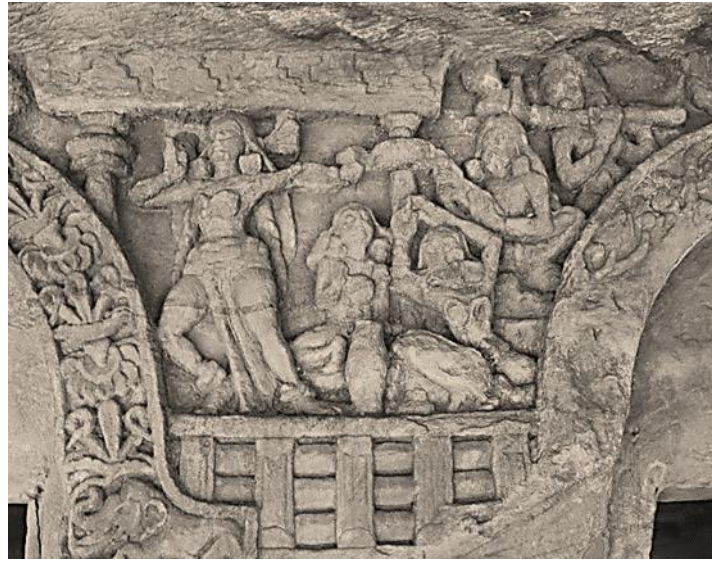


Fig. 3.5 The *nartaki* at Ranigumpha at Udaygiri and Khandagiri, Orissa.

The Ranigumpha is a double-storeyed unit shaped like a 'C' consisting of cells with openings on all sides¹³³. The spandrels to the openings of the cells of this cave on both floors depict festive, ceremonial and everyday life scenes from the life of the Kharavela king, along with depictions of animals, pastoral scenes, and imaginary winged creatures.

Carved in one of these panels, is the image of the *nartaki*, who is rendered in a dynamic pose under a canopy or a *mandapa*. With a slender figure and an alive, erect spine, she appears to be engaged in definite dance movement - one arm outstretched in a *dola hasta*¹³⁴ and the other bent to form possibly a *pataka*¹³⁵ near the face. Aligned to the position of the hands are those of the feet, with one outstretched and the other in *kuncita pada*¹³⁶. Created not as a static or flat engraving, the image of this *nartaki* give

¹³³ While the corridor spaces of the lower level do not remain standing; one can gather that they ran around the inner periphery, making provision for a terrace, which provides entry into the cells on the upper floor.

¹³⁴ A position of the arm which is described in the *Natyasastra* as hanging loosely away from the body, outstretched and free.

¹³⁵ A hand gesture where all the fingers are joined and outstretched.

¹³⁶ A foot position where the toes are bent.

the impression that it was taken from life – as she seems to step out from both under the frame and the relief she is a part of.

The frame of the *mandapa* around the *nartaki* is imagined in proportion to her and is wide enough to accommodate another singer/ accompanist. These accompanists looking at the dancer, are seen playing instruments such as a flute, a percussion instrument and cymbals and are imagined in the same proportions as the principal dancer. While the placement of the figures themselves is complete, the scenario is not inward-looking. Here, the figures' gaze is both out of the frame and unto themselves as though inviting the onlookers to participate in the performance.

Read as an artistic device, the frame of the *mandapa* around the dancer distances the subject from the viewer, and limits the focus to the dynamics of the dancer's body alone and not on what happens behind her. It removes the dancer from the scenes within the relief panel but also from the notions of space that can be attributed to it, despite the fact that it is engraved on an architectural edifice. In contrast, the other panels of dance seen in this cave which are scenes of groups of dancers engaged in recitals viewed by royalty and their attendants, contain no indications of erected space for dance. However, the presence of the patrons within their rendering tells us that the nature of these presentations was different from the one of the *nartaki*. The details in the former¹³⁷ indicate a social context/ purpose for the *nartaki*'s dance - an event perhaps staged for the public, while the latter's setting establishes the norms of proximity and intimacy in private performances.

As historian Janice Leoshko's observes, rendering of images have to be read in conjunction with their surroundings to understand their intended viewership and effect

¹³⁷ The *mandapa* seems to have a raised plinth with columns on either side. These columns have a raised pedestal and are capped by fluted capitals, while a stepped motif marks the horizontal frieze.

(10). The multiple elements on this site, i.e., inscriptions on the Hatigumpha¹³⁸ (which valorise the king's inclination for arts and mention that he promoted and organised *dapa etc.*¹³⁹), the images of dance and everyday life on Ranigumpha's walls and the seats overlooking its central atria, when read together hint that the Ranigumpha, in particular, was designed to cater to a different purpose from those of the other caves. (Dash). Perhaps as scholars Dhiren Dash and Thomas Ault, who analysed the cave's acoustical and architectural program suggest, the Ranigumpha was a theatre - a prototype for the *madhyama vikrsta* type of theatre described in the Natyasastra.

Whether or not one agrees that the provenance of Odissi lies in the image of the *nartaki* or that the Ranigumpha itself was a theatre, the images of dancers and the inscriptions in these cave spaces tell us that,

- a) artistic/highly evolved practices of dance were presented for different purposes,
- b) women dancers presented these refined practices in *distinct spatial settings* such as the *mandapas*,
- c) *staged* performances outside the Natya paradigm described in the Natyasastra existed, i.e., dance had a civic life, and lastly,
- d) dancing under makeshift *mandapas* (either of the fixed type or on makeshift stages) was popular enough to warrant its legitimising through networks promoted by the State. And that it was this refined artistic practice of dance that was part of the spatialising policies of the state (Banerji).

The *nartaki* in Ranigumpha was certainly not the only early public representation of sculptures in dance movement. Figures in dance attitudes are also seen

¹³⁸ The inscriptions on the cave of Hathigumpha are written in Pali and face an Ashokan edict. The particular inclusion of dance and entertainment in the Hatigumpha proclamation tells us that the king's involvement in the realm of arts was perhaps in contrast to Asoka's inclinations or that this involvement was considered respectable/ meritorious.

¹³⁹ *dapa* has been most commonly defined as a form of stage acting by small moving teams or when read as '*dampa*' to mean combat. For details of the Hatigumpha inscription see Appendix I

on other popular archaeological sites such as the Stupas¹⁴⁰ at Bharhut (2nd century BCE)¹⁴¹, Amaravati (1st century) and others. However, dancers are seen amid richly populated royal scenes or scenes portraying predominantly Buddhist episodic tales in these instances. And while these hint at occasions for dance and the centrality of patronage, little of the spaces that dance occupied are revealed. As such, a detailed analysis of these is not taken up here.

3.2 Dance Representations in the First Millenia.

From the dawn of the first millennia, cave spaces appear to have been the centres for exploring and representing different artistic practices – including sculptures, paintings, murals, etc.¹⁴² Religious affiliations, myths, epics, social lives of the kings or patrons, hagiographies and social sanctions are all found on the walls of these caves. By the mid-millennia, a gradual efflorescence of all forms of artistic practices, including literature, is seen across the subcontinent. Around this period, built structures made of stone (like temples) predominantly centred around Brahmanical gods are seen, with a flurry of architectural activity evidenced after the 8th – 9th centuries. Centred around these temple edifices, dance imageries also find mature representations towards the end of the first millennia and display regional affiliations and variations¹⁴³.

Some well-known centres where images of figures in dance are seen in the first millennia include the caves at Elephanta (5th century), and Ajanta and Ellora (2nd – 10th century)¹⁴⁴ in Maharashtra, the monuments at Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal (6th -

¹⁴⁰ The stupa emerged as a permanent architectural form during the Mauryan king Asoka's time in 3rd century BCE.

¹⁴¹ Of the different dance scenes in Bharhut, some represent scenes of *apsaras*.

¹⁴² These sculptures, murals, inscriptions and, paintings form the basis on which dynastic traits and historiography of the different kingdoms are deciphered.

¹⁴³ The shift from overarching generalities of *sanskrit* practice to *desi* variations or regional identities evident in literature becomes apparent in architectural structures from the 5th - 6th century.

¹⁴⁴ The Ajanta-Ellora caves are amongst the most elaborate rock-cut cave spaces in India. Built over an extended period (6th -10th century) by many rulers, they consist of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist cave spaces (Malandra).

8th century) of the Chalukyas¹⁴⁵ in Karnataka, and the caves, monoliths and temples built during the Pallava reign¹⁴⁶ (5th – 8th century) in the present day Tamilnadu. Unlike the caves at the Udaygiri complex seen earlier, the cave spaces of this era are cosmopolitan - often consisting of cells made for different faiths revealing the shifting religiosities of the patrons. Moreover, as these centres were produced over numerous centuries, the artistic techniques of different periods are also on display in them. On most occasions, these cave spaces were used not just to publicise the ruler's attitudes toward religion but also to legitimise their political presence.

3.2.1 Chalukyan caves of Badami & The Beginning of 'Siva – Natesa'¹⁴⁷.

Centred around the towns of Badami, Aihole, and Pattadakal are cave and stone temples which form the most substantial surviving body of Deccan architecture. The earliest amongst these, the Badami cave temples, are dated to the 6th century and are carved through monumental rockscapes of rugged sandstone. Consisting of both Hindu and Jaina enclosures¹⁴⁸, the iconographic program (a collection of images of a

¹⁴⁵ The early Calukyan dynasty rose to power in the Deccan region of India in the second half of the 6th century, and its reign lasted for over 200 years (ca. 540–757 CE). The dynasty not only politically unified the region but also ensured a glorious era in the field of art and architecture. While the personal religious affiliation of Calukya rulers shifted from Vaisnavism to Saivism, the rulers exhibited religious tolerance, and the eclecticism of the times is reflected in sacred architecture.

¹⁴⁶ The Pallava dynasty traces its origins to the 3rd century. Kanchipuram was the capital of the Pallavas from the 4th - 9th century and has often been described as a glorious city by travellers such as the 7th - century Chinese monk Hiuen Tsang.

¹⁴⁷ A term used to refer to the dancing form of Siva before the nomenclature Nataraja took root in around 8th century CE, and gained popularity during the Chola reign in the 10th century. For a detailed analysis of the early emergence of Siva's dancing aspect see Kaimal *The Early*.

¹⁴⁸ The Badami cave temples are a group of four caves culled out in sandstone. Cave 1 is dedicated to Siva, Cave 2 is dedicated to Vishnu, Cave 3 and Cave 4 to Jaina Tirthankara. The general choreography of the cave temples has two rows of four pillars that form the entrance, followed by the central chamber and then the sanctum, which houses the consecrated Vishnu / Siva figures. The caves present multiple images of Hindu deities such as *Anantasayana* (a sleeping form of Vishnu), Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and *ashtadikpalakas* on their ceilings.

particular subject) on the walls of these caves displays cult icons and anthropomorphic images¹⁴⁹, which lay bare the religious syncretism of that time.



Fig 3.6 View of Cave 1, Badami.

Carved just on the outside, flanking the entrance to Cave 1, is an image of Siva in a dancing attitude. This image of Siva, sculpted with eighteen arms¹⁵⁰, has often been regarded as one of the earliest imaginations of Siva as Natesa¹⁵¹, the god of dance (Nandagopal).

¹⁴⁹ These include images of gods like *Varaha* (one of the incarnations of Vishnu). Varaha was the titular deity of many dynasties including the Gupta dynasty (2nd -6th centuries) the *Saptamatrikas* (a group of seven mother-goddesses, often the female counterpart of gods), and visual manifestations of *Hari-Hara* (a Hindu deity whose form is a combination of Siva and Vishnu) and *Ardhanarisvara* (A half-female form of Siva).

¹⁵⁰ Kramisch offers that this image of Siva as the 18-armed dancing god is representative of the dance of the cosmos (Kramisch, *Manifestations*).

¹⁵¹ An even earlier image found in Orissa is often believed to be the precursor to the image of Nataraja. Dated between the 2nd - 6th centuries CE, the image is carved above an epigraph detailing the valour and ferocity of a Naga king. The position of the feet with one foot placed in *kuncita pada* certainly subscribes to the Nataraja imagination. However, the hands hold multiple weapons and none of the inscriptions reveal a connection with dance.



Fig 3.7 Siva-Natesa on the right wall of cave 1. Badami

Roughly hewn into the stone, the form of Siva-Natesa is seen lowered in the *vaishnava sthanaka*¹⁵², with one foot placed in *kuncita pada* and the other turned out. Staring out and looking straight ahead, the sculpture displays a stoic presence, stately and self-absorbed. Its figure is slender and graceful, with a sinuous spine leaning to the left. The principal hands are held out with one bent and the other held out in *dola* across the body. Although the other arms appear to be attached un-sophisticatedly, they form definite mudras and are seen holding weapons such as an axe, a trident, and a snake. As Nandagopal notes, “(t)he pose primarily represents *chatura karana* (NS Karana- 39),

¹⁵² A position of the body in which the feet are turned out, legs are firmly placed on the ground, with one slightly bent and away from the other, the body is lowered and held gracefully.

but when considered with the feet positioning and multiple hands, it signifies more than one *karana*”(42).

The image has a few ornaments and a unique headgear (perhaps characteristic of the Chalukyan times) with a halo around the head. While the allegories of Nataraja recognised today are seen in their early stages, the vibrancy and acrobatic agility associated with him are conspicuously absent. The image is supported by the partially rendered profiles of a bull, a figure of Ganesa and another figure - often read as either Parvati or Subrahmanya and a *mridangam*. Much smaller than the figure of Siva, these icons surround the central sculpture but do not participate in the representation like in the case of the *nartaki* at Ranigumpha. The image of Siva stands on a disproportionately small pedestal carved with lotus-like petals, separating the image from its accompanists. This detail is perhaps negligible, except that it betrays these imaginations as nascent and hence the dwarf of *apasmara*¹⁵³, who later becomes an integral part of the representation of Nataraja, is conspicuously absent. On the bottom frieze of this wall, separated by a band of unfinished stone¹⁵⁴, is the row of *ganas*¹⁵⁵, corpulent and rendered in merry movement. This row can be noticed even in the panels under the Vishnu iconography in the other caves. This representation of the scene of the dancing Siva being looked upon by the attendants and the row of dancing *ganas* seems like an attempt to capture the imaginings of *tandava* described in the Natyasastra, the many-armed Siva perhaps alluding to the vitality of dance.

¹⁵³ In Hindu mythology *apasmara* is an immortal dwarf demon representing spiritual ignorance and meaningless speech.

¹⁵⁴ Vidya Dehija argues that within the realm of rock-cut spaces, making the spaces available for ritual took precedence over the need for finished spaces. This unfinished state of interiors is seen in many succeeding rock-cut spaces and later day temple spaces too (Dehija).

¹⁵⁵ A body of attendants who are usually associated with a particular deity.

In this cave, as with other caves in Badami, the iconographic program shows refinement in the carving of the walls and the ceiling. Diligently marked colonnades border the entrance chamber or the *mukha mandapa* on either side. These corridor-like spaces provide frames to display the respective gods of the caves at either end. Fashioned similar to the dancing Natesa, the images in the niches are larger than life and are inscribed within a dramatic scene. However, in contrast to the Natesa seen on the facade, the images on the inside seem more consciously conceived and rendered. The Natesa, on the outside, even in its magnificence, appears like the rendering of an imagination that had not yet matured, thus seeming almost hurried. Nevertheless, this early image of the dancing god tells us,

- a) that the imaginations of dance began to be centred around figures of gods, especially Siva, i.e., dance was viewed as an attribute of the divine,
- b) that unlike in the caves of Orissa, it was these imaginations of Siva-Natesa that found themselves represented in public spaces,
- c) that dance remained crucial to how the State legitimised itself, yet the image of the dancing god itself was probably not popular enough to have a cave/ temple space dedicated exclusively to him, and,
- d) that texts on theatre¹⁵⁶ like the *Natyasastra* could not have been far from the imaginations of god-kings, even as the praxis of dance at this juncture possibly guided these representations.

¹⁵⁶ The legends of Calukyan origin often have themes that resonate with the origin stories of Natya. Like the Kalyani Calukyan (10th -12th centuries) legend which proclaims "Once when Brahma, the creator, was engaged in the performance of the *sandhya* (twilight) rituals, Indra approached and beseech him to create a hero who could put to an end the increasing evil on earth. On being thus requested, Brahma looked steadily into the *Chuluka-jala* (the water of oblation in his palm) and out sprang thence a great warrior, the progenitor of the Chalukyas" (Ramesh 14).

One wonders why the image of Siva as Natesa begins to emerge in representation at this juncture. A possible answer to this is implicit in the epigraph at the Ravana Phadi¹⁵⁷ cave at Aihole, where an even earlier manifestation of Siva seen in an attitude of dance is encountered¹⁵⁸. This cave temple is generally regarded as being decreed by the Chalukyan king Mangalesa (r 592–610 CE).

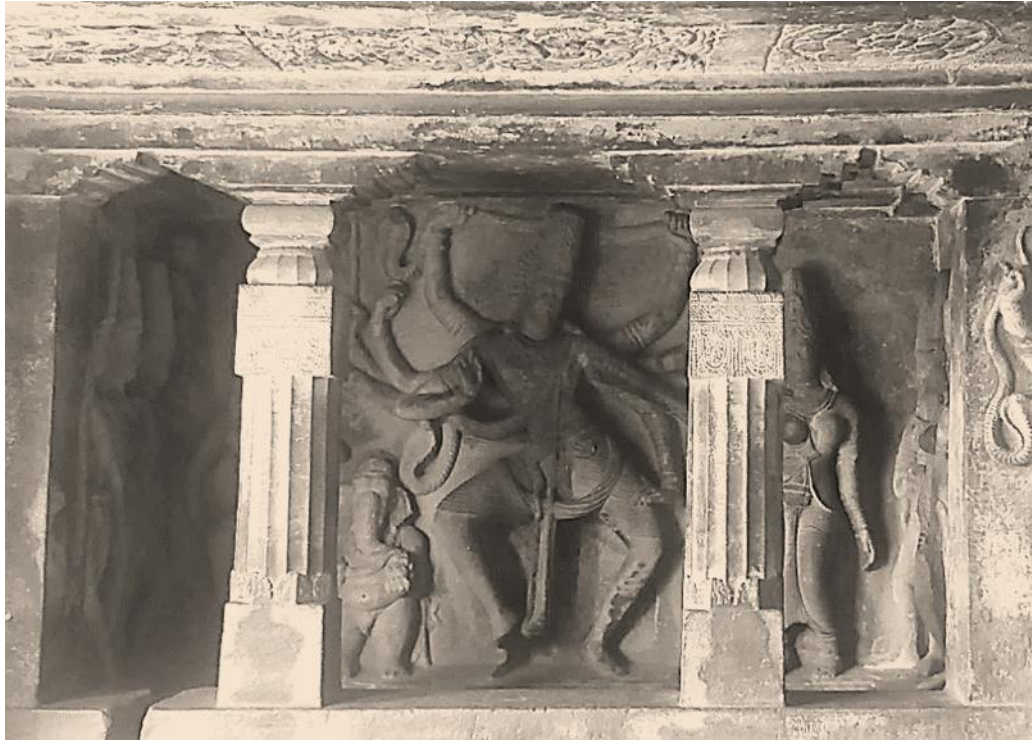


Fig 3.8 Dancing Siva flanked by *Saptamatrikas* at Ravana Phadi in Aihole

Here, a ten-armed dancing Siva is seen in the company of Ganesa and Parvati, surrounded by the *Saptamatrikas*. The two principal arms hold a *dola hasta*, with one bent towards the face (like the *nartaki*), while the other arms have an array of weapons.

The similarities tell us that these inspirations are deliberate and not accidental. By inserting the progenitor of the Chalukyan race into the same frame as the birth of Natya in *Natyasastra*, the writers seem to be drawing into familiar tropes.

¹⁵⁷ The Ravana Phadi is a cave dedicated to Siva built around 550 CE. The central cave has a *linga* (aniconic representation of Siva) and the niches on either side have the image of Siva - Natesa on one side and female goddesses on the other.

¹⁵⁸ The epigraph at the caves situated elsewhere is a perfunctory note on the donations of the king.

The inscriptions below the sculpture decree that the image is that of Ranavikranta - an epithet that Mangalesa took on. Juxtaposing this inscriptional reading with that of the image of Siva, archaeologist Michell suggests that the icon may have represented the deified image of the king himself being protected by the divine mothers (13). And thus, a triple conflation of dance+ god+ king is possibly defined in this archetype of Siva as Natesa.

Even though it can be argued that this occurrence is an outcome of creative ingenuity and the popularity of dance in general, the shift of gender from women to man and the assimilation of dance attitude into the multiple facets of the King or the god centralises it. In absolving the image of Natesa at Badami of the frame, which was used as a device to secure the *nartaki*, and more importantly, by placing the image nearly in place of an epigraph, the makers were likely using the motif of Siva- Natesa as a universalising figure, i.e., one that needed no protection¹⁵⁹. This centralising of dance around the figures of gods, in particular around that of Siva, was not unique to the Chalukyan rulers and is frequently encountered in multiple cave spaces across the Deccan.

For example, in the early Ellora caves built between the 6th and 7th centuries, images of dancing Siva nearly replicating the Chalukyan Siva- Natesa in the position of the feet, the curve of the spine and the many arms are often found¹⁶⁰. And in these representations too, the dancing Siva is depicted in the midst of a dramatic scene surrounded by other gods, accompanists and even flying spirits. This exclusive depiction of dance within the confines of drama during this period is reminiscent of

¹⁵⁹ The Natesa accompanied by Parvati is indeed used much like an emblem at the very front of the temples at the Pattadakal and Aihole sites which were built after the Badami cave endeavours.

¹⁶⁰ Built by the Kalachuri rulers, who ruled the west and central region of India in the 6th and 7th centuries.

Natyasastra's understanding of dance being but a subsidiary of Natya¹⁶¹. It establishes that ideas of the texts permeated the builtscapes, but more importantly that the social life of dance had not found its way on to the haloed spaces of the temples.



Fig 3.9 Dancing Siva Natesa at Cave 21 Ellora. Welch Sarah
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1_Dancing_Shiva,_Cave_21_at_Ellora.jpg#filelinks

The architectural activity of the Pallavas on the east evident from the late 6th and early 7th centuries, too is centred around cave spaces, although occasionally, freestanding *mandapas* and *rathas* (structures carved out of freestanding monoliths) constructed conterminously with the cave spaces are also noticed. The layout of spaces

¹⁶¹ A notable exception to this is the 'Dancing Panel' in cave 7 at a Buddhist cave in Aurangabad (ca 7th century). Here, a female dancer, dancing in an absorbed state is seen surrounded by female accompanists. For details see Qureshi and Gupte.

in both these pillared structures, i.e., the caves and the *mandapas* is similar to that seen in the Chalukyan paradigm, i.e., the pillared entrance of the *mukha mandapa* is followed by the *garbhagriha* or the sanctum sanctorum (where the figure of the deity is installed in a niche).



Fig 3.10 Early Pallava cave at Mandagapattu 6th century

R.K.Lakshmi, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=51288343>



Fig 3.11 Domain of the early Chalukya and the Pallava dynasties (6th -8th centuries)

<https://knowlegement.com/chalukya-dynasty-and-pallava-dynasty-narsimhavarma-i-vikramaditya-i/>

Similarities with the Chalukyan paradigm in the iconography of Siva at Ellora and the arrangement of caves built by the Pallavas suggest that architectural activity developed evenly across the Deccan during this period - a result of constant territorial negotiations between these kingdoms. By the early 8th century, however, coinciding with the shift from *carved cave spaces to structural rock-built temples*, a distinct native flowering is seen.

The early phase of experimentation with stone-built structures is particularly evident in the west at the Chalukyan sites of Aihole and Pattadakal, where several eclectic free-standing temple forms are seen¹⁶². While on the east, the shift is apparent in the monolithic *rathas* of the Pallavas, with the Shore temple at Mahabalipuram (ca. 725 CE)¹⁶³ and the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi (ca. 8th century)¹⁶⁴ typifying the artistic ingenuity of these rulers. However, owing to the warp and weft of both political and artistic practices across the regions mentioned earlier, the Kailasanatha at Kanchi – the earliest of the extant stone-built temples, and the Kailasa at Ellora¹⁶⁵ - the last of the monoliths, share undeniable links.

¹⁶² The precursors of both the North Indian Nagara style and the Dravida style of temples of the south and many shrines that play with the placement of entrance and sanctum are seen here.

¹⁶³ Shore temple at Mahabalipuram was built under Pallava King Narasimhavarman II (700-728 CE). It comprises granite blocks and has a distinct plan consisting of three shrine spaces dedicated to Siva and Vishnu, and a Nandi pavilion.

¹⁶⁴ The temple is dedicated to Siva and is attributed to Pallava King Narasimhavarman II, with its façade later added by Mahendravarman II. The foundations of this temple are made of granite blocks, while the superstructure is in sandstone.

¹⁶⁵ The Kailasa temple at Ellora is dedicated to Siva and was built by the Rashtrakutas who were feudatories of the Chalukyas. The temple is dated to the mid-8th century and represents the acme of rock-cut temple architecture.

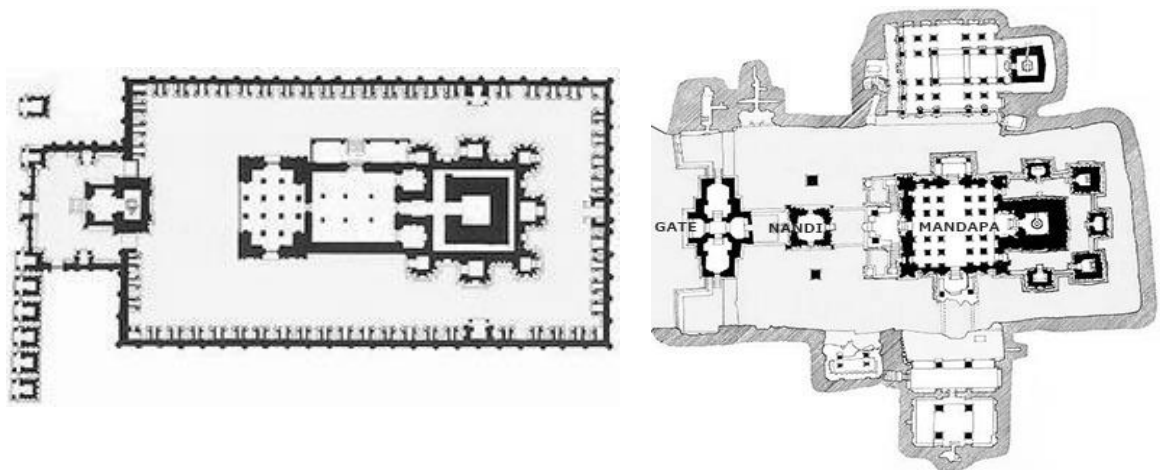


Fig 3.12 (On Left) Plan of the Kailasanatha at Kanchipuram. Early 8th century.
 Huntington, Susan L, and John C. Huntington. *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. New York: Weatherhill, 1985.

3.13 (On Right) Plan of the Kailasa Temple, Cave 16 at Ellora
 Meister, Michael W. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture I*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987



Fig 3.14 Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram, early 8th century.
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/24/Kailasanathar_Temple.jpg/640px-Kailasanathar_Temple.jpg

It is the spatial organisation of the Hindu temple that these 8th century edifices establish. Since in these the thus far discrete elements of temple spaces, i.e., the sanctum sanctorum, the entrance chamber, the pillared *mandapas* for the vehicles of gods along with the encircling wall (units which emerged with the growth of structural temples) etc.,¹⁶⁶ are all aligned on an axis leading to the single focal point (Fletcher). And it is this arrangement which later became typical of the spatial layout and experience of the Hindu temple. As several authors put forth, this conformity arose from the centralising of the *Vastupurusha* as the governing principle for the construction of the temple during this period¹⁶⁷ (Kramisch and Raymond *The Hindu*).

These temples are also critical to the study of dance as they capture the changing attitudes towards dance in their sculptural program. In the early rock-cut temples of the Pallavas, although imageries/sculptures presenting themselves in graceful attitudes are seen, Hindu gods remain conspicuously absent. As archaeometallurgist Srinivasan clarifies apropos the image of dancing Siva, even as exquisitely and creatively crafted wood and metal images of the gods were being used for processions, they were rarely captured on stone during the 6th and the 7th centuries (433-435). However, with the shift to stone-built temples, these gods finally begin to feature prominently on temples. Perhaps inspired by the fluidity and the grace of the bronze images, the Pallava gods rendered on stone are imagined in energetic movement. They have slim, artistic bodies and appear sublime as they hold graceful

¹⁶⁶ The early built temples consist of several disconnected spaces such as small shrines for Hindu deities, free-standing pavilions apart from the *mukha mandapa* and the *garbhagriha* (inherited from the Cave design), all of which are enclosed by a surrounding wall or the *prakaram*. A *vimana* or a pyramidal roof capped by a stone is often seen covering the enclosed spaces.

¹⁶⁷ The *Vastu Purusha Mandala* is a metaphysical square plan described in treatises on building technologies such as *Manasara* and *Mayamata* (ca. 7th century) It lists directive principles for the construction of buildings, including the location and sizes of different elements in a building, which it is believed became central to the temple and palatial building activity from this point onwards. However, Adam Hardy argues that strict adherence to the *Vastupurusha mandala* is noticed only in certain *nagara* temples up to the 9th century (Hardy).

shapes. The depictions of Siva at the Kailasanatha and, in turn, at Kailasa are thus dynamic and are often seen in poses of extreme agility. In contrast to the *gravitas* exemplified by the Natesa of Chalukyas, the attitude towards dance embodied in these 8th-century icons on stone is one of exuberance. And even as the icons are inscribed in scenes, the vitality of their limbs and the active demeanour disclose that this was not just a different mode of dancing, but a unique philosophy towards dance (Srinivasan 446), divulging perhaps that *dance on its own was delightful and blissful*.



Fig. 3.15 (On Left) Panel of dancing Siva in alcove 44, at Kailasanatha.
Muthusamy. R

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/muthusamy/10453913064/in/photostream/lightbox/>

Fig. 3.16 (On Right) Natesa at Kuram, 650 CE, Government Museum. Chennai
Museum, Chennai. <https://www.chennaiuseum.org/draft/gallery/01/05/053/saiv7.htm>

In the centuries that followed, the paradigm of Hindu temple space and attitude towards dance set by the Pallavas directly influenced the development of the art of

Cholas¹⁶⁸, who succeeded them. While the growth of temple construction activity during Chola's reign was aligned to the nature of the materials employed (early brick gave way to stone temples), it was the addition of spaces for dance, directly influenced by the ideas surrounding dance, that became central to the conception and function of the temple itself. Accordingly, the unfolding of spaces through a flourish of dance activity on their walls became characteristic of the Hindu temple itself.

From this point onwards built temple spaces generally follow a similar pattern. Adjoining the sanctum sanctorum of the principal deity is a small vestibule or the *artha mandapa* leading to pillared pavilion space known either as *ranga mandapa* or the *sabha mandapa/ nat mandap*. This is fronted by another (at times) semi-enclosed pavilion called the *maha mandapa*, or the main assembly space, which in turn is abutted by the pavilion that leads into it all, the *mukha mandapa*, i.e., the first *mandapa*. And all of these spaces are enclosed by the *prakaram* or the surrounding wall, which includes the entrance chamber. Additional freestanding pavilions such as *nritta mandapas*, *nandi mandapas* (pavilions for vehicles of deities), and subsidiary shrines for other gods were part of the expansions in various regions at different times.

The centrality of dance to the temple is made clear through the understanding that the place of dance in this arrangement is often the space immediately fronting the shrine of the deity. The prefixes *ranga* and *sabha*, often used interchangeably, carry forward the meanings seen in the texts on theatre and dance and advocate the function of the said space as the centre for performance within the temple context. The

¹⁶⁸ The earliest datable references to this dynasty are seen in inscriptions from the 3rd century. The dynasty governed varying territories in peninsular India, but principally from around the Kaveri and some outside of the subcontinent between the 10th and 13th centuries.

sculptures used to mark these spaces are often also semiotical in that they indicate the dynamic of dance that could be presented in these settings.

3.3 Second Millenia: Cholas, *Karanas*, and Dance representations beyond Nataraja¹⁶⁹

3.3.1 *The Karana panels at Brihadesvaralaya.*

In 1956, a series of dance movements were discovered carved on panels in the inner walls of the first tier of the *vimana* (pyramidal roof covering the sanctuary) of Brihadesvaralaya or the Rajarajesvara temple in Tanjore. These small panels, which were until then covered in centuries of dust, were identified as carvings of transitional movements during *karana* executions. This disclosure heralded a renewed interest in examining the linkages between temple architecture and sculpture and paved the way for text, sculpture, and movement studies in dance to be woven together to recover the *lost* and revitalise the existing practices of dance¹⁷⁰.

The Brihadesvaralaya (1003-1010 CE) is iconic of the second phase of Chola architecture, known for its construction of large temples. The euphemism of the ‘Big’ temple is often used to underscore the sheer monumentality of the temple. As Lefebvre describes, the temple’s monumentality is informed by “all the aspects of spatiality” - the ideological, the material, and the creative (Lefebvre, *The production* 220). The Big temple stands sixty-six meters tall and was the tallest structure of its time¹⁷¹. Dedicated

¹⁶⁹ For an extensive study of dancing Siva see Coomaraswamy, Nagaswamy, Kaimal *Shiva*, and Dehejia *Chola*.

¹⁷⁰ The work of Padma Subrahmanyam for example reconstructed the movement vocabulary of the *Karana* by correlating text to the image. See Subrahmanyam *Bharata’s Art*.

¹⁷¹ The temples built prior to the Cholas rarely exceeded ten metres in height. The largest temples built by the Pallava in the eighth century reached a height of twenty-two metres. During this period, massive temples were being built across India, such as the ones at Modhera in western India, at Khajuraho in the north and in Bhubaneshwar in Orissa.

to Siva, it was constructed to commemorate the ruler Rajaraja Chola's (r 947 -1014 CE) victories of political and geographical expansion. The magnitude of the temple founded by Rajaraja reveals that it was conceived to suit multiple ends. It was envisioned to be a remarkable centre for the piety of the king, as well as literally and symbolically be the centre of societal activity¹⁷².



Fig. 3.17 The Brihadevsaralaya. Nittavinoda
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=68115459>.

This temple is enclosed in a large rectangular enclosure measuring 241 x 121m - almost a perfect double square and is entered through two massive *gopuras*¹⁷³ (pyramidal gateways). The layout of the temple follows the sequence of successive

¹⁷² The kingship of the Chola was heroic in nature. Thus, the inscriptions on the temple also channel the casual insouciance of the ruler in the inscriptions listing his dedication.

¹⁷³ The massive gopurams as seen here paved the way for the eventual dominance of the gopurams in the South Indian temple scheme.

semi-enclosed pavilions leading into the main shrine¹⁷⁴. The central shrine is aligned on an east-west axis¹⁷⁵, and is placed at the exact centre of the rear square of the enclosure. This shrine houses the massive *linga* of Siva in his form as Rajarajesvara or ‘the Lord of Rajaraja’¹⁷⁶. Rising up fourteen tiers above the two-story base built on this shrine is the *vimana*¹⁷⁷. And carved on all the four sides of this magnificent tower are an array of Saivite forms that are forceful and vibrant such as Siva as the vanquisher, as the mendicant etc.

Along with the *linga*, the sanctum sanctorum also houses a bronze image of Nataraja and his consort Parvati, and designed around this *garbhagriha* are internal circumambulatory passages in two levels. On bottom tier are several murals displaying Siva in his various forms, episodes from the lives of *Saiva* saints and scenes of the king with his entourage¹⁷⁸. Above this very active path, shrouded away from the sights and sounds of the temple and hidden in the relatively inaccessible space of the second narrower tier, is the sculptural program of the *karanas*. The space is entered from the east, with the light coming through only small openings from the outer wall. Carved much like a scroll on the walls of this corridor, meeting the viewer at the level of the eye are eighty-one *karanas* of the 108 prescribed in the *Natyasastra*.

¹⁷⁴ In the subsequent centuries, many subsidiary shrines and *mandapas* were built inside the temple by the Pandyas, (13th -14th centuries), the Nayakas (14th -17th centuries) and the Tanjore kings (17th -19th centuries)

¹⁷⁵ The 18-degree deviation south from the exact east is often explained to be the result of the careful alignment of the temple with the rising sun on the day of the temple’s foundation.

¹⁷⁶ In naming the deity after the king, the pattern of the conflation of the king and God follows tradition as noticed earlier. It in fact also takes on an even broader aspect here. With the proclamation of the king as both a devotee/ servant and a donor, the King casts himself in a unique role. The sheer monumentality of the temple and its intended effect together with the naming of the god centralizes the king’s intention of perhaps wanting to be seen as the centre of both the ritual and social lives of his people, i.e., the donor and the devotee.

¹⁷⁷ For a detailed study of the temple, see Pichard.

¹⁷⁸ For a study of these murals see Sriraman.



Fig. 3.18 (On top) Murals on the circumambulatory passage on the lower tier of Brihadesvaralya. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=638103>

Fig 3.19 (At bottom) The *karana* panel on the second level of the circumambulatory passage at Brihadesvaralaya. www.padmamandance.com

The *karanas* are seen on the icon of Siva, rendered with four arms - carved on small panels placed sequentially. The panels themselves are unembellished and plain, with only the individual figure of Siva at times accompanied by the *ganas* carved on them.



Fig. 3.20 Detail of *karana* panel at Brihadesvaralaya

https://www.thehindu.com/migration_catalog/article16092160.ece/ALTERNATES/FR EE_960/TH01_SCULPTURE1

The representations of the dancing Siva, however, are distinguished. They embody the active movement involved in the *karana*, complete with its turned-out foot position and controlled, energetic aesthetic¹⁷⁹. And in contrast to the performative and spectacular attitude noticed on the earlier Siva-Natesa imaginations, the many Sivas' performing the *karanas* appear to be invested in the movement, displaying an introspective demeanour - reinforcing perhaps that the dynamic of the body takes precedence over the scene.

When examined from within the context of the temple, the soaring verticality and the sheer statement that the 'Big temple' epitomised in its times, the positioning of the *karana* panel hints that they were to be in the *sacred preserve*¹⁸⁰. The rendition of the divine dance of Siva in the realm above the mortals, in the sacred space of the

¹⁷⁹ The representations of *karanas* here are in contrast to the later day representations in their display of body dynamics. No extreme acrobatic agility and extensions are seen here.

¹⁸⁰ Taken from John Berger who argues that "The visual arts have always existed within a certain preserve; originally this preserve was magical or sacred" (32).

sanctum, raises several questions around these imaginations¹⁸¹. Did the *karana* on divine bodies represent a part of a larger image of the temple /*vimana* as the cosmos? Or was it meant to showcase the literal abode of Siva or even the theatre of the gods as represented in the *Natyasastra*? Was the *garbhagriha* a space akin to a museum? Was the knowledge of the *sastra* reserved for a special few who could access this, i.e., perhaps the king or the *natyacarya*¹⁸² alone? Was it the *karana* program that was sacred? Or was it dance itself?

Regardless of the reason, what can be suggested though is that,

- a) it served an esoteric purpose both in the context of the temple and in the larger scheme of how dance was perceived,
- b) there was a definite shift in the modalities of knowledge transfer, i.e., from the embodied /oral and textual to the chiselled,
- c) even within their limited accessibility, aspects of dance traditions were being preserved and were being given a form to aid in pedagogy,
- d) they had reached a point where the codified practice or *marga* system of training was becoming important in these regions, and lastly,
- e) nearly a millennia later, the text of *Natyasastra* was well embedded into the fabric of the world of art.

In the rest of the temple, although a dance-like quality is displayed in the iconographic program, dance imagery on stone or rather relief works and sculptures

¹⁸¹ Tying the exterior iconography with the articulations inside, Bindu Shankar suggests that “the iconographic selection and placement of the Saivite sculptures in the exterior of the *vimana* is deliberate and articulates key concepts that tie in with the sculptural program of the interior of the *vimana*” (79).

¹⁸² The expert tutor of *Natya*/ dance.

exclusively linked to dance are rare¹⁸³. Also conspicuous by their absence are images of women dancers, an absence that stands in contrast to the epigraphic details along the length of the main structure, noting that a number of women were dedicated to the temple. Curiously, even as the inscriptions tell us about the male dance masters and musicians employed by the temple, the images of men seen here are often of soldiers and others (Sastri). It is possible that everyday life scenes had not yet taken root on the surfaces of the temples, and hence they were not represented.

However, a marked shift is seen in the Chola temples after the 11th century, as female figures began to extensively populate the temple spaces. The Airavatesvara (ca.12th century) and the Chidambaram (10th - 13th century) temples stand as typical examples of these endeavours. The former is another temple that was established to commemorate Rajaraja II's (r 1146 -1172 CE) victories, while the latter is the oldest known seat of the god of dance.



Fig. 3.21 The temple of Airavatesvara. 12th century. Tanjore

¹⁸³ Exceptions to this are the murals works which depict dancing women and the icon of Nataraja seen carved on the *vimana* in his mature representation.



Fig. 3.22 (On left) Figures of dancers on the risers leading to the *mukha mandapa*.

Fig. 3.23 (On right) Detail of column in the *nritta mandapa* –showing a duplication of the hand position seen at the *karana* program at the Big temple.

3.3.2 Women performing *Karanas*- *Airavatesvara* and the *Chidambaram*.

In the temple of Airavatesvara dedicated to Siva, the rich iconographic program of the many Puranic gods is offset by images of dancing women at nearly every juncture. The temple of Airavatesvara was built when the Chola's reign was not looking for new conquests or acquiring new kingdoms¹⁸⁴. They were, in fact, at a juncture when attempts to keep the empire together were at their peak. This sense of inward reflection is noticed in the temple with its smaller scale, the more care given to embellishments and a general sense of tranquillity in its ambience. As against the awe-inspiring magnitude of its predecessors, the form of the temple reverts to the contained zestfulness of the early Chola times in essence. With the temple's structure resembling a chariot, the *mandapas* are carved out profusely with imagery making the temple appear like an artistic venture imagined for joy and pleasure. Indeed, the entirety of Airavatesvara is carved like a piece of art, reigning in monumentality to exhibit a quiet

¹⁸⁴ In the third phase of the Chola reign, the focus was to add *mandapas*, *prakaras*, smaller shrines and decorative features to the existing structures. For e.g. the *nritta mandapa* at the Chidambaram temple was added by Kulotunga III (r 1178-1218).

excess. The *karana* program here is, however, not marked out or secretive. It appears in a ubiquitous quality diffused across the images of the many female bodies present all over the temple - on the steps, on the carvings at the base of the *mandapas* and even at the very entrance of the temple.

At Chidambaram, the avowed seat of the god of dance, i.e., Nataraja, dance permeates almost every space within the temple. The early structure of the temple is dated to the 10th century. But the structure of the temple seen today is from the late 12th and 13th centuries. The assemblage of multiple shrines and *mandapas* and the *gopuras* are later additions made by the Pandya kings who succeeded the Cholas.

At Chidambaram, dance greets the viewers even before they enter the temple precincts. Here, accompanying the viewer as they enter the temple are female dancers carved on the walls of the large *gopuras*, which are present on all four sides of the temple. The inscriptions of *slokas* from the *Natyasastra* on two of these *gopuras* attest that the dancers are performing the *karanas*. The *karana* program is complete, i.e., with all 108 of them vertically rendered here. And although these *gopuras* were constructed at different times, the execution of the *karanas* appears remarkably uniform¹⁸⁵.

A closer look at the *karana* dancer reveals that, like the *nartaki*, she is carved into a pavilion with a roof, accompanied by two female accompanists who play the drum and cymbals within the limited sculptural area. However, in contrast to the *nartaki* panel, the figures of the accompanists in it are smaller than that of the dancer, giving the impression that the design is inspired by the *karana* renditions in the Big Temple. The dancer's space is restricted and marked by a simple frame of columns and

¹⁸⁵ The oldest *gopura* is the one constructed on the west, built around 1251 CE by Jata Varman Sundara Pandya. I. Kooperunjinga (13th century) constructed the east and south *gopuras*, and Krishnadeva Raya (16th century CE) constructed the one on the north.

a frieze embellished in the background by a row of frills. However, within this limited space, the dancer's movements seem more performative, perhaps informed by an active practice vocabulary. Yet again, the framing device tells us that these are not uninformed or casual renderings of the practice - these dancers possibly represent a *refined practice* or the practice of a professional dancer in a stage setting.

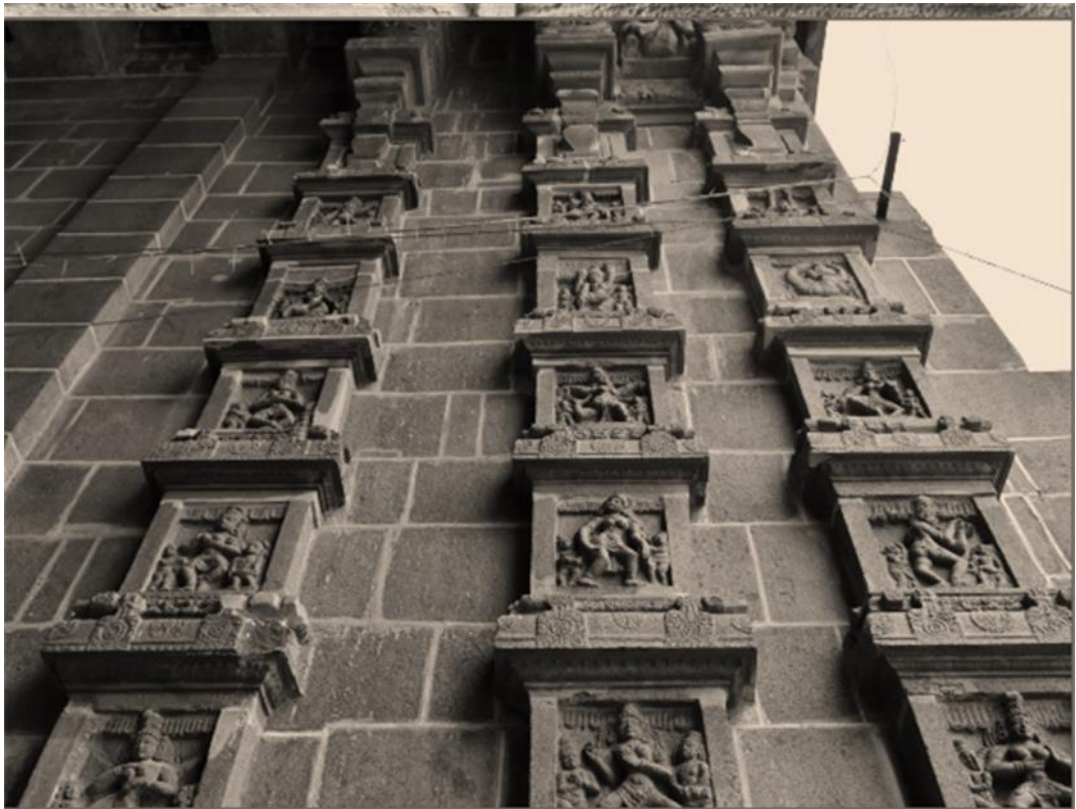


Fig. 3.24 Wall of the east *gopura* of Chidambaram temple, 13th century.
Welch. Sarah <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>.

But does this representation and use of dance images indicate that dance was not the preserve of the sacred now? Was it less esoteric? Or was dance ornamental? A possible answer to this may be gathered in the ideas of Indologist Aleksandra Wenta who posits that the expansion of the Chidambaram temple was adapted to suit the Chola rulers need for political spectacles.

Like the other monumental and sacred spaces of its times, the temple of Chidambaram was also expanded from its first rudimentary structure in the 2nd century. But unlike the concentric expansions evinced in some temples¹⁸⁶, here, the build-out off-centres the main *cit* and *kanaka sabhas*¹⁸⁷. Commenting on the design and layout of spaces Aleksandra notes that the expansion of the temple “rested on the conscious manipulation of visual perception...a part of the ruler’s tactic to create the society of spectators” (156).



Fig 3.25 Detail of dance panel on the east *gopura*. Chidambaram Dalbera. Jean-Pierre.
<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/3997/dancer-east-gopura-chidambaram/>



Fig 3.26 Bas reliefs of dancers on the Raja sabha or Thousand Pillar hall.
 Chidambaram. (12th century).
https://ic.pics.livejournal.com/nasa2000/13420754/99629/99629_original.jpg

¹⁸⁶ As seen in the temple towns of Madurai (16th -17th century) and Srirangam (14th -17th century) etc.

¹⁸⁷ The temple has five *sabha* or main spaces. *Cit sabha* refers to the main sanctum and *kanaka sabha* is the pavilion where offerings are made to the deity.

This feat was accomplished in the temples through the “*deliberate construction of gaze that reinforced the performer-spectator dialectics, in which the beholder was brought under the influence of the powers that dwelled in the auratic presences of the aesthetic objects and spectacles*” (161). Borrowing from Aleksandra it could be said that at Chidambaram the sculptural and iconographic representations of the temple and the *karana* program on the *gopurams* were deliberately designed to be a part of this larger auratic and sensorial experience of the king and the spectators as they approached the temple.

It could be argued that during Chola reign, dance was recast in various dimensions. With the temple centres themselves changing, the rendition of dance on the walls presented its many valences in society. At the same time, dance was officially integrated into the temple space by adding *nritya mandapas* either as free-standing units or extensions of the *mukha mandapa* into the architectural scheme. Evidently, the multiple facets of dance were already embodied, and these merged in the representations of kinesthetics’ of the bodies on these walls. However, they came to be diffused across the iconography of gods first and only then across the bodies of the female dancers. Simultaneously, even as dance was initially branded as the esoteric and high art of the gods represented through Siva and his *ganas*, dance also stood for the delight and quotidian excess at Airavatesvara. The acceptance and the revealing of the multiple facets of dance through their sanctioning on public institutions, i.e., the temples, is probably why the Chola regime and its patronage of arts are pivotal to the study of classical dance.

3.4 Dancing Woman: *Salabhanjikas*, *Devadasis* and *Nartakis*

The trajectory of the Hindu temple form seen in the Chola reign is typical of temple spaces across the Deccan. Even as each region developed distinct regional characteristic styles, the temple spaces all consisted of areas of dance either as the *ranga mandapa* attached to the *garbhagriha* or as additional *mandapas*. The spatiality of the different units follows the semi-enclosed to the enclosed pattern observed elsewhere.

In Orissa, where the *nartaki* was first spotted, notable temple structures are seen only after the 7th century. The style of temple architecture in Orissa is categorised as *Vesara*, and has a distinct taxonomy for the different units. The trajectory of dance representations in these temples too, follows the pattern observed in the Tamil regions i.e., through religious iconography first and only later, on the bodies of men and women¹⁸⁸. However here, though the assimilation of *natya mandapa/nat mandir* into the architectonics of the temple structure in Orissa occurred around the 12th -13th centuries¹⁸⁹, the figures of the females began to be represented on the surfaces of the temples before it (Donaldson 37). And possibly owing to the evidence of *mahari* practices in these regions, these sculptures are readily read as representations of *devadasis*¹⁹⁰. An early proof of this is seen in the inscriptions and images of the Brahmeshwar temple (Rajguru, quoted in Banerji).

¹⁸⁸ The outer walls of the temples have images of gods and goddesses, their vehicles, and other demi-gods such as *nagas* (serpents), *apsaras*, *gandharvas* and *mithunas*.

¹⁸⁹ Shobhaneshwar temple (12th -13th centuries) was probably the first time where the *nat mandir* was built at the same time as the rest of the temple. (Donaldson)

¹⁹⁰ Literally ‘Servants of gods’, *devadasis* and *maharis* are women employed in the temple in various capacities. The earliest traditions of *maharis* are known from the 11th century CE in the Ganga and Somavamsi dynasties in Orissa. The terms *devadasi* and *mahari* are used interchangeably, but *mahari* is the term used exclusively for female ritual specialists in Orissa.



Fig. 3.27 Devadasi under a *mandapa* carved on the Brahmeshwar temple ca.11th century. Saxena Saurabh. *Brahmeswara Temple – Start of Devadasi Tradition*.<https://puratattva.in/2018/11/21/brahmeswara-temple-5047>

At the Brahmeshwar temple (ca. 1058 CE), a female dancer is carved high on the walls of the *vimana*. Fixed between two panels of *mithuna*¹⁹¹ images, the dancer is seen in an extravagant pose, with the spine simultaneously curved and angular and one foot of the turned-out feet raised. One of the hands is positioned in *dola* and the other appears to reach out and touch the *temple mandapa tiers* under which she is carved – as if entrenching her role in the structure and functioning of the temple itself. A number of female dancer accompanists share the frame of this devadasi, including some flying figures. In composition of the panel, the similarities with the *nartaki* of Udaygiri are remarkable, however, this dancer is seen in a self-absorbed state, unaware of either her accompanists or even the onlookers.

That the function and space of this dancer is different from the ones seen earlier, is given currency by the specific replication of the *mandapa* – inscribing the dancers' practice into the temple.

¹⁹¹ A pair of images in erotic/ sensual poses.

In the centuries that followed, the temple spaces, the iconography, and sculpture saw further evolution reaching their apogee in structures such as the Sun Temple at Konark (13th century). The plan forms of the temples of the later dynasties usually have three centres of sanctum called the *trikuta* temples. A central mandapa separates the sanctums, which are raised on a platform (*jagati*) for circumambulation. The temples emerge as star-shaped edifices, and the resultant wall surfaces offer extensive canvases for artistic imagination. Often the representations around the *natya mandapa*/ *nat mandap* become selective, with the images of dance taking place exclusively around them. At the Sun temple, in contrast to the performative scene of the Brahmeshwar dancer, here, the lone dancers or accompanists are mounted on independent panels. And as opposed to the dynamic of extreme angularities of the *devadasi*, the imaginations of dancers are picturesque, sensual, and frozen in languid deportments.

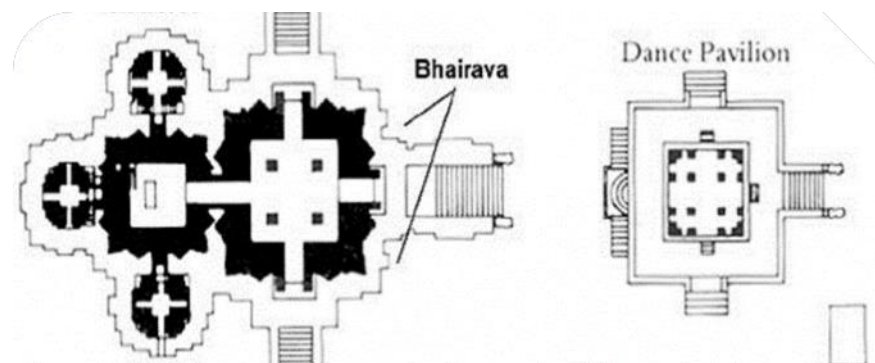


Fig. 3.28 (Top) Plan of the Sun temple. Konark. Orissa. Percy Brown. *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu period)*. Read Books, 2010



Fig. 3.29 Frames of the *natamandir* or the dance pavilion at Sun temple 13th century

Star-shaped and the stellate layout of temples are also a distinguishing feature of the architecture of the kingdoms in the west¹⁹², such as the later Chalukyas, i.e., the Kalyani Chalukyas (10th -12th Century), the Hoysalas (11th-12th century)¹⁹³ and their feudatories the Kakatiyas, who ruled the Telugu regions between the 12th and 14th centuries.

The Hoysalan temples stand as exquisite examples of ornamentation, and gave rise to a landmark form of temple architecture in southern India. These temples are marked by a profusion of sculptures and apart from the images of gods, they consist of scenes from mythology, epics, legends, and the *salabhanjikas* (women standing under trees). Carved in elaborate detail, the images of deities in these temples, appear to balance piety with the ornamental. And although exclusive representations of women dancing are limited, in the elegance of the limbs, the curve of the spine, and the

¹⁹² For a detailed discussion on the evolution of the temple plan and form in Karnataka, see Sharma and Shireesh.

¹⁹³ The Hoysalas were feudatories of the Kalyani Chalukyas.

various *hastas* that they hold, dance appears to be a part of the imagination of every icon. However, in the temples of the Kakatiyan dynasty, which were inspired by the Hoysalan artistic practices, sculptures in dance poses and women dancers, in particular, take centre stage.

3.4.1 *Sacralising the Communal - Representations in Palampet*

In the monuments of the Kakatiyan reign, the importance of dance and dancing women is evident not just in the temples but also in the plenitude of relief work displayed in the forts and the *toranas* etc. Here, the figures of dancing women, along with the regime's emblem (a *hamsa/rooster*), are found in every frame of these structures. Indeed, centralizing the role of women and dancers in the Kakatiya reign, an epigraph at the Thousand pillar temple¹⁹⁴, mentions that the beauty of the women of the city and the courtesans/ dancers share equal regard as the Vedas.



Fig 3.30 Thousand pillared temple at Palampet (1160 -1213 CE)

¹⁹⁴ One of the earliest temples of this dynasty, it was built by Kakatiya king Rudra Deva-I (r 1162-63). The temple has shrines for Rudresvara (Siva), Vasudeva (Vishnu) and Surya. The epigraph in the temple describes the capital city of the dynasty, Hanumakonda. See https://asihyderabadcircle.nic.in/warangal_monuments.html

As with other dynasties, the iconographic program in the temples in Kakatiyan regime show assimilation of many avatars of titular deities of Siva and Vishnu, and Surya. At times, Jaina Tirthankaras also make an appearance. However, these images do not glut the wall spaces as in the earlier dynastic structures.

The spaces in temples of the Kakatiyan regime are reduced to functional minima – consisting of only a single shrine and a central *sabha* space or the *ranga mandapa*, which is accessible from three sides¹⁹⁵. For example, in the 13th century temple of Ramappa (Rudreswara)¹⁹⁶, at Palampet, which supposedly inspired the Nritta Ratnavali, not only does the *ranga mandapa* of the temple nearly duplicate the dimensions mentioned in Jayana's text¹⁹⁷, but even elements such as *salabhanjikas* appear as bracket figures just as Bharata envisages them¹⁹⁸. Here, the central *mandapa* is a square area which is marked by four pillars on its corners and is slightly raised. A sloping platform for seating called the *mattavarani*, from where the *mandapa* can be seen from all three sides, runs adjoining the periphery. And engraved on all sides of these pillars supporting the roof of the *ranga mandapa* are panels consisting of groups of lithe dancers and accompanists engaged in sinuous movement. While mostly these are representations of female dancers in communal scenes, dancing with sticks and instruments, panels with dancing couples who mirror each other's movements are also seen. Similar renditions of dancers, gods and scenes from mythology are also carved on the ceiling of this *mandapa*.

¹⁹⁵ In many temples, additional spaces such as the *nandi pavilion* with a raised platform and shrines of the female consorts are seen separate from the main temple space.

¹⁹⁶ Dedicated to Siva called Rudresvara here, this temple was founded by Recherla Rudra in 1213 CE, a general of the Kakatiyan king Ganapati Deva.

¹⁹⁷ The measurement of *ranga mandapa* in this temple is around 12' square and is remarkably close to the prescriptions for *nritta mandapa* in the texts.

¹⁹⁸ The *madanikas* as these figures are referred to, are made of black basalt and are positioned in various dance attitudes.

It could be said that these representations of women and the spatial arrangements were deliberately envisaged to duplicate the theatrical effect of the performance space even in the temples. In fact, the theatricality of the entire space, and the grace of the dancers has often hastened one to imagine that the temple itself was sensual in character¹⁹⁹. These temples, indeed bring to life the prescriptions for dance pavilions in the *agamas*²⁰⁰, indicating that these sacred spaces were as much theatrical settings for the presentation of dance as they were sacred spaces for the gods.



Fig 3.31 *Rangamandapa* of the Ramappa temple (1213 CE).

¹⁹⁹ ASI, report on temples of Palampet 1922

²⁰⁰ *Īśvara saṃhitā* states that the temple premises must have a broad pavilion for dance in front of the arthmandapa, and have paths with a flight of steps on both sides



Fig 3.32 a & b Details of the pillars of the *ranga mandapa* including dance images and scenes from mythology

And in these sacred theatrical temple spaces, female dancers are chiselled with as much care and reverence as the images of gods. While the groups of female dancers seen inside the temple (on the pillars of the *ranga mandapa*) have been previously mentioned, the individual dancer, too, is seen at multiple places. Such as, a) at the base of the column of the *mandapa*, b) on the large frame around the doorway to the sanctum, and c) on the outside walls where they are framed in the familiar two-sided pillar and roof device. However, strikingly here it is not just the individual dancer who finds herself marked out, but also the ones playing instruments, as if elevating and equating the art of the accompanists to that of the performers. The movement kinesthetic of all these representations is distinct and is often considered to be that of a particular *desi* tradition called Perini²⁰¹.

The Kakatiyan temples, like the texts of this period, it could be said reorient the ideas around dance. By foregrounding the representation of the groups of performers/

²⁰¹ It is inspired by these representations that an elaborate reconstruction of Perini, was undertaken by Dr Nataraja Ramakrishna based on descriptions in the *Sangita Ratnakara* and *Nritta Ratnavali*. For a detailed reading of the movement correlations between the Kakatiyan temple images and *desi* movement, see Shimladka.

dancers inside the sacred spaces, they expand the episteme of dance. It could be put forth that by now,

- a) both the *marga* and *desi* variations were seen as possessing equivalent currency, absolving them of hierarchy.
- b) performances of groups were a common occurrence, perhaps both within and outside the temple, and,
- c) the experience of the temple was intertwined with dance, both in its spatial layout and in its representations.

Whether it was the impact of the various *bhakti* movements or the egalitarian outlook of the rulers, the archaeological and textual representations in this period indicate that dance was both esoteric and not. The dialectic of sacred and sensual visible in these temples was possibly embodied by the dancers and was thus manifested both in the structure and engraved in the representations.

3.5 Inscribing and chiselling practice embodying mobility

3.5.1 Dance in the Vijayanagara kingdom.

Domingo Paes writes in the *Chronica dos reis de Bisnaga*,

“ Thence we went up a little staircase and entered by a little door into a building This hall is where the king sends his women to be taught to dance. It is a long hall and not very wide; all of the stone sculptures on pillars... between one and another is an arm’s length and a half, perhaps a little more. These pillars stand in that manner all around the building; they are half-pillars made with other hollows (all gilt. In the supports (or pedestals) on the top 3 are many great beasts like elephants and of other shapes; it is open so that the interior is seen, and there are on the inner side of these beasts other images,

each placed according to its character; there are also figures of men turned back to back, and other beasts of different sorts ...elephants, as well as those on the panels, are all dancing women having little drums (tom-toms). ...The designs of these panels show the positions at the ends of dances in such a way that on each panel, there is a dancer in the proper position at the end of the dance; this is to teach the women so that if they forget the position in which they have to remain when the dance is done, they may look at one of the panels where is the end of that dance. By that, they keep in mind what they have to do.”

The Vijayanagara kingdom emerged in the mid-14th century following power shifts between different Southern dynasties and Islamic powers from the North. Like their predecessors, these kings first ensured that a fortified kingdom was established, following which they shifted focus from political expansion and warfare to consolidation and security - sentiments which were also reflected in the architectural practices of the state. As historian Wagnor writes, the Vijayanagara kings instrumentalised the memories of the preceding imperial rules of the Calukyan and Kakatiyan dynasties through inscriptional and architectural representations to establish their own sovereignty. As such, chariots, musical pillars, steps, and almost every aspect of the stone legacy seen in the earlier dynasties appear here. At Hampi, for example, the heart of the Vijayanagara empire, bas reliefs featuring dancers in groups reminiscent of the Ramappa temple are seen on almost every structure. At the same time, individual dancers too are carved on the pillars within the temple precincts like their Chola predecessors. And, in all of these, the kinetics of dance at this period and the settings where these were presented are evident.

During this time, despite and amidst the rising momentum of the *bhakti* movement, many smaller temples were expanded to accommodate the unique activities of *agamic* rituals, which also included dance and music. As such, spaces like the *Uyyala mandapa* (pavilion for swinging), the *Kalyana mandapa* (pavilion for conducting wedding ceremonies) etc., were incorporated into the temple spaces, even as the axial pattern of the *garbha griha* and the *ranga mandapa* of the earlier times was retained. Likewise, temple spaces were also expanded to increase public participation in temple activities. As Wagoner writes, places of pilgrimage were patronised by the kings who visibly participated in the public ceremonies. And for the public, participation in the festivals and public ceremonies was not just a marker of the religious identities but also a representation of the allegiance to the state. Thus, apart from *mandapas* mentioned earlier, colonnaded streets for the processions of *utsava murtis* (processional idols), elaborate *gopurams* and *maha ranga mandapas* were built for public performances of dance and music. The presentation of dance and music on these *maha ranga mandapas* increased their visibility and importance in the public eye. In short, the activity of temple building in the Deccan reached an apogee during the Vijayanagara dynasty, with scale, standardisation and elaboration becoming their hallmark. Within the abundance of sensorial excess of the kingdom as described by the visitors, dance and dancers were employed at various platforms and served multiple ends. In the travelogues, the inscriptional and sculptural evidence, the images of dance and dancers reflect:



Fig 3.33 a & b Mahanavamidibba at Hampi. Consecrated in 1534 CE
Sharma, Snigdha. <https://www.evolveback.com/hampi/grandeur-long-forgotten/>

- a) The essentializing of synchrony and spectacle as elemental to dance. Dance, put to use as a public performance on the *maha ranga mandapa*, was envisaged as a spectacle. It possibly demanded a sense of synchronicity from the dancers, the implementation of which was probably not left to the masters/gurus alone. Evidently, it found a place even on the walls of the training centre - or was at least so imagined by the non-natives. By carving the position of dancers on the stone, pedagogy had probably become central to the episteme of dance. Even as the treatise of *Natyasastra* had many centuries ago become an enabler, imparting the secrets of *Natya*, the chiselling of sequential movement on the walls *in a center of practice* tells us that perhaps nothing was left to chance. And also, that the freedom to interpret and imagine was being restricted. For example, in the magnificently carved *natya mandapa* of the Veerabhadra temple (1530 CE), the many impressions of standardisation and leaving nothing to chance are on display. In contrast to the early regimes where the space of the *natya mandapa* within the scheme of the temple was to be inferred, here, a full-blown scene of godly dancers, with gods as instrumentalists or as the audience, is carved on every pillar, leaving no doubt as to the purpose of this space²⁰². At the same time, in the positioning of the guru (*Bhringi*), diametrically opposite to Rambha (the celestial dancer), not only pedagogy but also gender roles are preserved for posterity. In these images too, the movement of the student Rambha is a perfect replication of the teacher's
- b) That dance for the *sabha* of the king was different from that of the ritual and again separate from the spectacle dances. The description in the travelogues and

²⁰² For details of dance in the Vijayanagara dynasty see Kanoj.

literary evidence of poets such as Devanacarya²⁰³, tell us that a delineation of different *paddhatis* was in existence.

- c) That a nascent system of institutionalisation was prevalent. The location of training spaces within the purview of the king tells us that institutionalisation was prevalent and monitored by the state.
- d) History and memory were important. The recall of historical memory was not just through polity and structure; the sculptural program too carries this legacy. For example, the walls of many of the temples at Hampi nearly replicate the group dancers/ *kolattam* patterns that were put on prominent display by the Kakatiyas. Similarly, while adding the fourth *gopuram*, i.e., the west gopuram, to the existing structure at Chidambaram, the entire *karana* program of their Chola precursors was replicated; thus, securing a continuity with the past.

3.5.2 *Changing attitudes and dance embodying trans-local mobility.*

Following the dissolution of the Vijayanagara Kingdom in the battle of Tallikota²⁰⁴ in 1565, many smaller kingdoms particularly those of Nayakas in Madurai, Ikkeri, Jinjee, etc arose in peninsular India between the 16th and 18th centuries. Simultaneously, the Sultanate kingdoms also established themselves firmly with Bijapur, Mysore, and Hyderabad as their centers. The successive battles for supremacy and the resulting territorial transfers promoted the movement of literati and artists between kingdoms, resulting in an exchange of artistic practices. The scenarios were further complicated by the presence of Europeans traders and travellers whose

²⁰³ The text mentions the prevalence of different *paddhatis* or styles of presentation of music.

²⁰⁴ The battle of Tallikota was waged between the Vijayanagara Kingdom and the five Bahmani Sultanate kingdoms in January 1565.

aesthetic, religious and moral outlook added another dimension to the already heady eclectic mix in these regions²⁰⁵.

It was these multiple inheritances informed the ideas of dance in the Nayaka period. Thus, although the Nayaka kings extensively expanded the temples, they inherited by adding long corridors, *gopuras* and *mandapas*, and uniquely contributed to the temple spaces by embellishing them with stucco work, paintings and murals, which often included scenes of dance, the ideas around dance and spaces for performance in this period are more evident in artistic practices outside of the temple. Specifically in the portrayal of kings in different media, in courtly architecture and later in the public architecture of the late 18th century.

- As Narayana Rao notes, in contrast to the more classically heroic portrayals of the Chola and Vijayanagara kings, the Nayaka kings are often depicted in a languid attitude surrounded by female dancers, particularly in tapestries and murals. While scenes of women dancing in the presence of royalty are noticed even in earlier representations, it is the depiction of the patrons within the shifting aesthetic and political worlds that sets these Nayaka kingdom works apart. As Swarnamalya notes, dancers at this juncture often embodied new literary genres written by the kings, in which they placed themselves as the *subjects / nayakas* (Swarnamalya). Accordingly, the images of dancing girls in these murals is symbolic of the fact that at this juncture, distinct from their role as ritual specialists, dance and dancers were perhaps treated as objects of luxury, and decadence.

²⁰⁵ This is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

- The theatre spaces in the courts of the Nayaka kings are a blend of indigenous, Islamic and Italian architectural vocabularies and put on display the eclecticism of their times. Unlike the sculptured saturated temple settings and even unlike the courtly settings described in the medieval dance texts (which advocated proximity with the audience), these extant theatres are often large halls with a raised dais on one end and an audience space that is distant from the performers. Indeed, these theatres are verily the *nritya mandapas* described in Sangita Saramrita, and give a glimpse of the emerging spaces where new attitudes around dance and engendered²⁰⁶.



Fig 3.34 A fresco at the Ramanathapuram palace

https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/dance/article23681248.ece/alternates/FREE_1200/27FRSETHUPATHI

In the 18th century, during the Maratha Bhonsale regime (which ruled the Tanjore region after the Nayakas), a majority of constructions were public buildings that catered to the people on the move. Constructed along highways and travel routes to

²⁰⁶ In the artistic practices of these smaller kingdoms the contemporary dance practices of Indian classical dances (specially the practices of Sadir and the Bhagavatamela traditions), are believed to have emerged.

provide spaces of rest for travellers on pilgrimages, these lodging spaces called *chatrams*, were representative of a mobile and itinerant society. Most of the *chatrams* were built in the names of the royal wives and were also places where royal wives actually stayed. As such, they often also included hall spaces for entertainment, and struck a balance between functional and recreational.



Fig. 3.35 (Top) Muktabal *chatram*, at Tanjore (1739-1763)

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/01/Muktabal_chatram.jpg



Fig 3.36 Dancers on the bottom frieze of inner courtyard in the Yamunambal *chatram*.

It is on these *chatrams* which were frequently imagined on the lines of the chariot driven temples of the Cholas, that images of female dancers are noticed during this period. Positioned at the very base of the structures, nearly hidden from the casual eye, the figures of dancers on these buildings are usually depicted in pairs or in groups, on unremarkable friezes, with their movements usually illustrated sequentially.

Typically, the dancers on these panels are seen with a wide stance, with their feet turned out and one hand in *dola* or on the thigh and the other raised slightly. While these representations are devoid of extreme angularities and the strict adherence to *sthanakas*, they do not appear leisurely and casual. Indeed, one could even say that the kinetic of dance seen on *these dancers appear to be marked by exuberance and fluidity*, reminiscent of the group dancers seen at Vijayanagara times. Read within the context of the building itself, it could be said that these images reveal that dance, although linked to both place and space was at this juncture, trans-local in concept, importance, and dynamics.

Interestingly, not just the stance, clothes and movements, but even the mobile nature of dance that these dancing girls on *chatrams* represent, are illustrated in other media such as paintings, murals and even in literature of this period. In the memoirs of the colonial Dutch and the French, and native literature like the *nonti natakams*²⁰⁷, for example, dancers are depicted as itinerant - catering to multiple patrons who themselves are on the move; this is even as the dance itself is imagined and described in terms that hark back to its ritualistic roots. The representation of dance on the *chatrams* it could be

²⁰⁷ Nonti natakams are literary genres composed in Tamil, in the 17th and 18th centuries. The themes of these plays often revolved around a travelling cripple and his encounter with dancing women.

said are symbolic of the currency of its times, i.e., the practice of dance was (is) transitory, fluid and flexible even as dancers themselves were carriers of multiple legacies.

The impressions of dance on public buildings which were seen for over eighteen centuries dwindle after this juncture. However, the attitudes towards dance and the aesthetic of dance in tandem with shifting geographies noticed in the 17th and 18th centuries carried forward into the succeeding times. And it is these woven histories which form the basis of the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter examined dance legacies captured across a variety of public buildings through two millennia. While the *nartaki* arrested in the caves at Udayagiri in 2 BCE was part of a larger landscape, embedded in a space that was a theater, the imaginations of dance on Siva's body were hidden spaces in an iconic Chola temple in 11th century and the troupes of dancers of 18th century were rendered on public lodges. These representations revealed multiple facets of dance – from the apparent gendering of dance to the transitory relationship between performer and audience and from the dynamic of dance to its relationship across many spaces.

Representations in the first millennia - barring the early cave rendering of *nartaki* - were, as Abigail puts forth, predominantly *scenes of* dramatic personae of the theatre which found their ways onto the surfaces. Thus, whether it was Siva as Natesa watched on by the *ganas* or Siva with four arms dancing the *karanas*, they were performative representations of dance principally associated with gods. As such, they were seldom represented with specific spatial settings. On the other hand, the *nartaki* at Udaygiri, or even the 11th-century *devadasi* in Brahmeshwar, were indeed associated with distinct

settings, i.e., a raised *mandapa* and the temple itself. In the succeeding millennia too, a marked-out space for the individual dancer was commonly encountered. On the other hand, troupes of dancers began to be represented in temples from around the 11th century and were associated with fixed spaces or fixed roles, as seen in temples of the Kakatiyan dynasty and in the Vijayanagara kingdom. However, over the centuries, it was aspects of dance such as its vivacity and universality that came to be underscored, establishing that both ideas around and spaces of dance were trans local.

Additionally, the examples brought in this chapter also highlighted the centrality of dance to the evolution of built spaces. The assimilation of *ranga mandapa* and *nritta mandapas* as units of the temple and the images of dancers carved extensively all across establish that dance was integral to both the evolution and the auratic and sensorial experience of the spaces. Thus, while dance was showcased in distinct spaces, in the ways it was conceived and rendered, it was the function of dance that was important, making distinctions of style and genre secondary concerns.

And lastly, this chapter has attempted to show that throughout history, not only was dance used as a spatializing tool by the State but that it was also through these representations of dance on public buildings that conceptions of dance were governed by it. However, as Berger says, “seeing comes before words... and the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled” (1).

Chapter 4

Architecture Is Not Neutral

In the previous chapter, representations of dance in public spaces were explored to reveal the practices around the production and circulation of dance. These representations were implicitly connected with the State and revealed that over the millennia, dance cut across socio-spatial contexts and was presented at multiple venues. As is commonly acknowledged, the coming of the colonisers changed the societal fabric of India, and dance and dancers, too, were embroiled in the processes of the encounter. While the social history of the artistes' post-colonisation has been discussed by several authors (Srinivasan, Walker, Subramanian, Soneji), the connections between the changes in the urban geographies and the practices of the artistes have not received much attention. This chapter thus attempts to unpack these histories to understand how the proscenium stage, a colonial construct, has become the performance space that an Indian classical dancer finds her/himself during concert.

It is this journey of the proscenium and that of the dancer that this chapter traces in three sections. The first section looks at the changing urbanscapes of India during colonisation. It points to the gradual transformations that artistic practices underwent as part of this encounter. It also addresses how post the first war of Independence, urban transformations, and laws affected not just the cityscape and marginalised the existing spaces of performance but also gave birth to the bourgeois public sphere responsible for the revival of artistic traditions.

The second section attends to the coming of the proscenium stage as a product of the success of Bengali and Parsi theatres, which evolved from interactions with colonial leisure and entertainment practices and spaces. It further reflects on some apparent transformations in performance traditions that ensued because of the shift to

proscenium spaces. The third section traces the changing nature of builtscapes post-independence and reflects on the alternate venues of performance that emerged.

4.1 Early colonial geographical manoeuvres

Beginning in the 1600s, the urban settlements of the colonisers saw three stages of development in the Indian subcontinent²⁰⁸(Desai). Early colonisers, including the English, the Dutch, the Portuguese and the French, whose businesses were focused on production and manufacturing, stayed in enclaves which were independent of indigenous towns. At this juncture, built forms were restricted to centers of production called factories or civil lines - enclosures which were usually marked by fort walls. While the Europeans themselves intermingled with Indian society, taking wives and seeking courtly positions, these early forms of colonialism had lesser impact on the urbanscapes of the subcontinent than the later periods of the British Raj. The only coloniser edifices were those of religious importance, such as the Churches, which were primarily built in a Gothic²⁰⁹ and neoclassical style²¹⁰ witnessed in the port towns today.

The second stage of colonial urban morphology²¹¹ was brought about by the shift in the nature of political investment of the many European companies, each vying for greater economic and political control of the subcontinent. With the right to collect taxes after 1757 in Bengal, the British East India Company became a political and economic power with a permanent presence in India²¹². It was this development which

²⁰⁸ For a detailed history of British architectural representations in India, see Metcalf *Architecture*.

²⁰⁹ An architectural style prevalent in Europe between the 12th - 16th centuries. It is characterised, by large stained windows, pointed arches and flying buttresses.

²¹⁰ This style is characterised by grand scale, dramatic use of columns and a preference for blank walls.

²¹¹ Urban morphology is “the study of human settlements, their structure and the process of their formation and transformation” (Kropf 9). Urban morphology is a common framework for analysing the built environment's consistent and rigorous descriptive language.

²¹² Before 1757, the British East India Company was a transnational corporation along with the French and the Portuguese who too claimed the coastlands of India. However, the Battle of Plassey tipped the scales favouring the British East India Company when the Company deposed the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj

heralded the second stage, or the suburban stage of colonial urban intervention, which happened at multiple sites, including a) the settlements outside factories or the trading posts, b) the residences of British Officers and c) the cantonments housing British militia. The opulent style of the European aesthetic became apparent in the port sites, i.e., the burgeoning Presidencies of Madras, Bengal and Bombay, where most of the buildings were made as mock replicas of the structures at Oxford. As Nilsson writes, British buildings in Calcutta and Madras were ‘projections of Greece and Rome’ (105, 162-64).

Fig 4.1 Koti Residency designed by Lieutenant Samuel Russell (Ca. 1803)



DD Abernethy <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17528127>

The residences of British Officers in India²¹³, on the other hand, were large establishments or Bungalows constructed in Princely states and were designed

Ud-Daulah. This solidified the power of British Colonialism in the subcontinent. The new Nawab of Bengal, Mir Jafar, instated by the company, allowed them to collect taxes on several administrative units. In fact, it was the exploitation of political dynamics already happening in eighteenth-century India, such as political and administrative mismanagement in the Mughal Empire led to a slow British colonial political takeover.

²¹³ The Residency system was a form of political negotiation in which subsidiary alliances were developed between native Indian princes and the British East India Company. While the Resident was technically a diplomat, he (always men) was responsible for ensuring the viability of alliances of the

according to the aesthetic principles of the colonisers. The physical structure of these residences and their locations were a metaphor for the colonial subject's position in the Prince's capital²¹⁴, i.e. central to both the economic and political activity of the State. And lastly, the cantonments were military settlements of the colonisers in the states of Princes who allied with the British Raj. These cantonments housed both European and Indian troops and were racially segregated. Although early colonial cantonments were established in only Lucknow and Hyderabad, by 1863, however, 114 cantonments were spread across India in the Northern plains alone – numbers which indicate how significant these were to urban histories of these cities as well in their impact on urban aesthetic of the country.

Distinct from the indigenous colonies, the settlements, residences and cantonments had an aesthetic and spatial quality that was intended to distinguish the British from the native peoples. The Residences, for instance, were primarily designed by the wives of the British and were a complex of many buildings and lavish gardens designed to replicate the British countryside. Land patterns which marked out both rank and distance were articulated around these buildings imposing both cultural and social segregation.

The built forms in the annexed kingdoms too, as mentioned in the previous chapter experimented with the aesthetic of the colonisers. The palaces of the Nayaka kings, the palace of the Nawab of Arcot²¹⁵ and those of the Nizams, were all designed

Princely states. This was a system of indirect rule. They first appeared in the Bengal region following the Residency system; the Native states of Arcot, Oudh and Hyderabad got into subsidiary alliances with the British East India Company.

²¹⁴ In many instances, these residences were built by the Native princes themselves to reflect their allegiance to the British. For example, the Residency at Lucknow was built by the Nawab of Oudh as part of a more comprehensive programme of civic improvements. The British Residency of Koti in Hyderabad and the Chhapauk Palace in Chennai are examples of such establishments.

²¹⁵ Muhammed Ali Wallajah, Nawab of Carnatic/Arcot (VIII), decided to build a palatial palace for his successors on Marina in 1764 around Fort St. George. Spread over an area of 117 acres, the palace,

by European architects and followed the aesthetic paradigm of Greek-inspired neoclassicism.

4.1.1 *Responses in the World of Performance*

At this juncture, the colonial state intruded little in the life of the performing artists; unless provoked by cases where the artists were involved in crime or disorder or scenarios where they were active in state politics and had to be regulated. Nevertheless, the impact of colonial intervention is seen in the financial status of the artists. Frequently, the expenditures of kings on patronising artistes were considered excesses, and correspondingly their privy purses were reduced. The colonisers also intervened when the artists were beneficiaries of wills and land grants (Schofield). The lack of financial patronage in the native cities and the drift of the elite into the developing port towns eventually encouraged a shift of artists from the native centres to the burgeoning Presidencies.

which was designed by architect Paul Benfield, was completed in 1768. Fashioned along similar lines were the palaces of the vassal kings such as the Nizams who used European design in the courtly palaces.

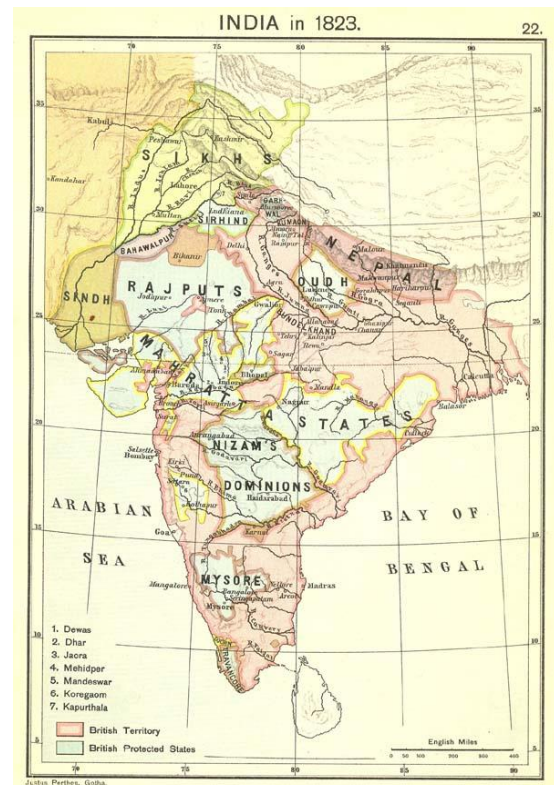
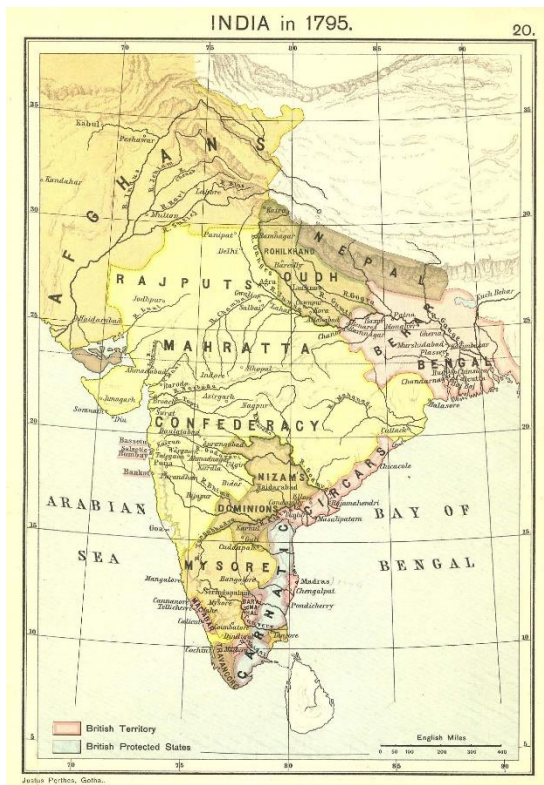


Fig 4.2 (On left) Map of India in 1795 'Historical Atlas of India'.

Charles Joppen <http://warfare.6te.net/18C/Mysore1795.htm>

Fig 4.3 (On right) Map of India in 1823 showing the extent of British territory. 'Historical Atlas of India'.

Charles Joppen

<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00maplinks/colonial/joppeneearly1800s/joppen1823max.jpg>

However, language, values, culture and artistic practices certainly evolved in response to the encounters between the colonisers and natives. The invention of hybrid vocabularies and aesthetics in existing repertoires has been documented, especially in the case of the Tanjore courts of the Marathas²¹⁶. The production of eclectic music and dance repertoire in response to the European presence in and around Tanjore is verily seen in the *nottu svaras* of Muthu Swami Dikshitar (1775-1835), the marching tunes for the Tanjore military, and even in the ideas of standardisation of music through

²¹⁶ For the production of music in Tanjore Courts, see Seetha S. For details of the role of Maratha courts in the production of Sadir repertoire, see Radhika, V.S.

notation²¹⁷. In parallel, evidence of dress codes for dancers, as well as etiquette guidelines for audiences watching performances that the Maratha king Serforji II (r. 1798-1832) imposed in his courts, provide a glimpse into the performance aesthetic and the audience decorum characteristic of ballet performances and the European theatre, respectively²¹⁸. These cultural practices point to not just the embracing of linguistic pluralism prevalent in Tanjore but also to the manner in which ideas around art were edged by the very tangible presence of Europeans and their aesthetic practices in this area (Subramanian).

As discussed in previous chapters, spaces for performances – at least those within courtly settings were designed by European architects. In contrast to intimate settings prescribed in the treatises prior to the 18th century, the palaces of the Nayaka/Tanjore Kings and the Nawab's performance halls have large spaces imitative of concert stages. At the Sangita Mahal²¹⁹ in the Tanjore Palace, a raised platform serves as the stage space with a backdrop of arched doorways. The audience space is a hall built to accommodate over 1000 people and is lined by a colonnade on either side, guiding the spectator's vision of the stage. The double storeyed space also has seating spaces on the second level and is framed by a high vaulted ceiling. The nature of presentations at these venues would undoubtedly have been different from those of the *melam* or troupes who presented at disparate sites for patrons and even from those that

²¹⁷ Subramanian posits that the establishment of a system of notation is an indicator of how tradition was being invented and re-looked at by both individuals and institutions. Standardisation became the marker of 'classical' during Nationalistic reimaginings of both dance and music.

²¹⁸ Serforji II was educated by Reverend Swartz. Several scholars, such as Sundaram, have noted that the king had a particular preference for and encouraged the presentation of Western music/dance at his court.

²¹⁹ The Tanjore Place was originally constructed by the Nayaka Kings in the 1600s. The performance hall was called 'Navaratnamanamaina Nataka Sala' and was later renamed 'Sangitha Mahal' by Maratha Bhonsale kings.

were presented at *natya mandapas* in temples²²⁰ and at makeshift stages, both in terms of the spectator – performer proximity, as well as aesthetics of presentation.

However, the reorientation of performative practices to suit a culture of concert art was probably not restricted to the courts. The reimagination/ construction of art geared towards public consumption in a concert setting was possibly already underplay. For during this phase of colonial settlement, many buildings associated with colonial leisure, such as playhouses and theatres, were beginning to be constructed (discussed in detail in the next section). Indeed, Shulman puts forth that Muttusvami Dikshitar's *Kamalamba kritis* composed during this period were designed to absolve them of any reliance on spatial contexts. He argues that through lyrical layering and investment in the aurality of *ragas*, Dikshitar's kritis were imagined to enable the invocation and reification of the image of *Devi* in any setting (Shulman *Muttusvāmi*). Such cultural and aesthetic reimagination of music and dance practices in negotiation with builtscapes were perhaps not unique to the poet.

Travelogues and paintings of Europeans are other sources that betray the transformations happening in the world of art at this juncture. Significantly, it is the spectator–performer relationship that is implicated in these artistic excursions. Whereas indigenous murals and paintings often display the centrality of the relationship between the actor/ performer and the site, European representations often portray the dancer in decontextualised settings - with the spectator remaining outside of the performance scenario²²¹.

²²⁰ Davesh Soneji notes that Serfoji had a special stage, known locally as *kuravañci metai*, built for the performance at the Brihadesvra temple. And the performances on this belonged to the public spectacle. (Soneji)

²²¹ Borrowed from the work of Pallavi Sriram. For an insightful analysis of the depiction of South Indian dancers in company paintings see Roebert.

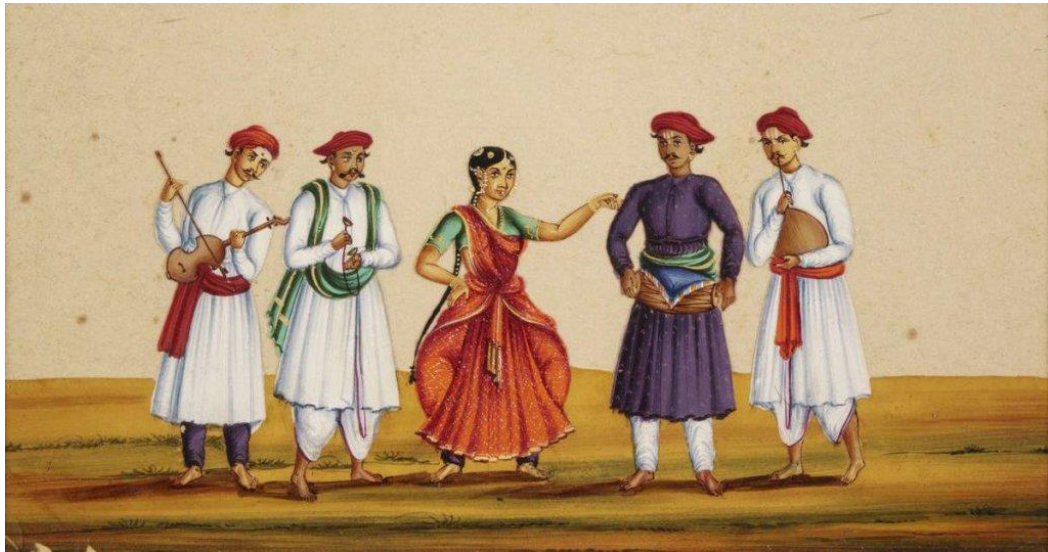


Fig 4.4 A large group of Tanjore dancers and musicians. (Victoria & Albert Museum)
<https://pictorialindiandance.wordpress.com/2021/03/05/depictions-of-south-indian-dancers-in-company-paintings-c-1785-1870/>



Fig 4.5 Dancer with accompanists and *nattuvanar*. (Victoria & Albert Museum)
<https://pictorialindiandance.wordpress.com/2021/03/05/depictions-of-south-indian-dancers-in-company-paintings-c-1785-1870/>



Fig 4.6 Company paintings portraying unaccompanied dancers. (Victoria & Albert Museum) <https://pictorialindiandance.wordpress.com/2021/03/05/depictions-of-south-indian-dancers-in-company-paintings-c-1785-1870/>

The depiction of dancers in *company paintings*²²², for example, are devoid of identifiable spatial settings. Despite what may be called voyeuristic renditions, the earlier representations of dancers, such as in the sculptures or even in the paintings, were almost always regulated by and associated with *the sources* producing them and by *their location* in the temple or the court or even the *chatram*. In other words, they were still in the purview of the patrons. The images of dancers circulated through the company paintings were free. This positioning of the spectator outside of the frame of the performance and removing the spatial contexts from these imaginations possibly set the tone for extracting the dancers from their site-specific function, paving the way for the objectification of the dancer.

²²² Company paintings refer to a variety of hybrid styles that developed between 1830 and 1850 as a result of British influence on Indian artists. These paintings were mostly painted by the members of the leather making caste.

Lastly, this phase also saw the growth of a new performance culture, often called the ‘salon performances’, which brought the performers into the spaces of the patrons (Soneji). Triggered by the decline of princely states, scholars, artistes and landed gentry began to seek permanent residence in the new urban centres of the Presidencies, where the native mercantile class and the intermediaries, along with Brahmins, became significant stakeholders of social, economic and artistic life. These new rich fashioned themselves along the ways of native kings even as they adapted to the ways of the Europeans. While on the one hand, they commissioned the construction of temples emulating practices of the courts; on the other, their domestic residences and everyday aesthetic mirrored that of the Europeans. At the same time, British administrators too were active participants in the processes as they imitated the cultural practices of the natives hosting ‘nautch’²²³ soirees and engaging dancers as part of entourages for official engagements. And it was in response to these patrons and their Bungalow spaces that a distinctly urban cosmopolitan dance aesthetic, i.e., Salon dance grew²²⁴(Soneji).

4.2 The transformation of the public space, public sphere and respectable spaces – the 3rd stage

The beginning of this phase is marked by the First War of Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny of 1858, when the British Government took over control of India from the East India Company. The new system of governance acquiesced the imperative that the British government needed the help of Indians to sustain themselves leading to a policy of consultation²²⁵(Guha). The functioning of the country following this ensued

²²³ The Nautch –disambiguation of *nach*- or dance performances

²²⁴ Sanskrit texts such as *Sarvadevavilasa* (ca.1820) capture these shifts as they occurred in around the Madras during this period.

²²⁵ In 1853, The Legislative Council contained only Europeans, while the new council of 1861 had a number of Indians. At the same time departments and societies to understand the native people were set up, and developmental works were entrusted to institutions such as the Public Works Department (estd.

through the knotting of British coloniser systems with the societal practices of India. The employment of these measures was aided by the English educated urban elite²²⁶, who were now a part of the legal, civil and administrative agencies.

While the first and second stages of colonial interventions introduced new vocabularies into the cultural and built milieu of India, the final stage of colonial urbanity was instrumental in heralding a number of urban transformations. These included,

a) establishing the aesthetic of public built form by iconizing the Indo-Saracenic style as a representative of colonial modernity. Similar to its policy of consultation, during this phase, paying heed to the climatic conditions and the needs of the land was deemed a necessity. It resulted in elements such as verandah spaces and lattice work becoming integral to British architecture in India, giving rise to a *new syncretic style* of Indian architecture called the Indo - Saracenic²²⁷. Colonial public edifices such as railway stations, guest houses were thus part Classical and part Indian in the late 19th century., and became the visual markers of the forms of power, privilege and subordination characteristic of British-Indian colonialism at this juncture²²⁸.

b) establishing the paradigm of the Indian metropolis through its implementation of urban development laws. Triggered partly by the rise in the number of English women travelling to India, division and racial distinction, which were spatially inscribed in

1854) and architects were appointed in each province. The mechanisms to understand the social and cultural dynamic of India were carried out by actions such as Nations wide census (beginning in 1872), Archaeological surveys and publications of gazettes.

²²⁶ English schools were started in India in the 1810s and centers for higher education such as the Universities of Bombay, Bengal and Madras were founded in 1857 as part of the selective fostering of English education in India.

²²⁷ The process of incorporating Indian designs and motifs into colonial practices was not devoid of consternation. These anxieties were however quelled with an imperial hand that determined that amongst many prevalent building styles, it was some Mughal and North Indian imagery that truly represented the spirit of Indian art. See Metcalf and Thomas.

²²⁸ The Secunderabad Club, the Bombay High Court in Mumbai, Rajabai Clock Tower and the grand Victoria Memorial in Kolkata mark this grand phase of the British Raj. For an insightful description of the urban transformation of Bombay from the mid-19th century see <https://www.artdecomumbai.com/research/100-years-of-bombay-1850-1950/>

early settlements, came to be clearly defined post the mutiny and social distance became a distinguishing feature of urban planning. For example, segments of cities that consisted of Indian quarters were assigned as ‘Black towns’ and were physically distanced from the ‘White towns’ where the Europeans resided.



Fig 4.7 Black town of Madras ca.1851

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Frederick_Fiebig_%E2%80%94%94_Black_Town,_Madras,_1851.jpg

The need for municipal cleansing and reform of the cities through industrialization²²⁹, was ushered by associating filth and dirt with the practices of the local people. Many of these were accomplished by the Municipal committees which were formed in the 1860s, who initiated guidelines and bye-laws to monitor the construction of new

²²⁹ From the 1830s, across India, British colonisers began constructing large scale public works projects, namely, the railways and canals, as well as a number of dispensaries and hospitals. For details on Infrastructure and public works in Colonial India, see Ramesh and Raveendranathan.

buildings, their placement and supervised the uses of new or remodelled buildings²³⁰. These legal regulations and urban reforms were derived from those established in Britain, and largely replaced the existing spatial practices. The impact of these reform practices was double edged. Whereas traditionally, the designer and builder had been the same figure, the Public Works Department set up in 1854 favoured the drawings and approaches of British architects, heralding not just the marginalisation of the Indian *sreni* (guild) system but even of traditional building practices.

c) discursive practices around public space. Integral to the idea of the colonial city was the colonial urban space which emerged within the transformed cities. As Glover argues, colonial public space was a shared public utilitarian space like the prevalent public spaces in India in both rural and urban centres. However, ‘public space’ in colonial India was not just a physical space that included built forms; it was the public space as constructed by the British in practice and in discourse. Distinct but interrelated sanctions around,

- infrastructure development which generated ‘public spaces’,
- naming of spaces as ‘public’, and
- the listing of activities that could participate in those spaces came to define it.

These are crucial to the discussion on artistic practices as it was the censure and

²³⁰ The East India Company passed the Improvement in Towns Act (Act 26 of 1850), which called for contributions to support Municipal Commissions that would introduce urban improvements. Ahmedabad adopted the act in 1856, as did some towns in the Bengal presidency in 1850, and some in Punjab in the 1860s. By the 1860s, a new regime of municipal record-keeping and control over building activity in towns and cities was inaugurated through the new Municipal Committees, (Glover13-14) which focussed largely on providing urban facilities and services and enforcing building bye laws. (Ansari) Societies such as The Calcutta Improvement trust, The Madras Trust, etc., regulated the development of land patterns firstly in the urban centres, and later in the suburban towns, expanding the colonial-built presence. The Land Acquisition Act imposed in 1894 in Bombay and other urban centres (this continues to be in implementation) cleared large tracts of land for ‘redevelopment’, which usually meant road widening works, clearing congested areas of slums, allocating land-use patterns for residential and public governance buildings and delineating open spaces for parks and leisure activities.

regulation of the usage of the public spaces that indirectly affected the performance spaces that the artistes participated in. For example,

The Bengal Act of 1933 defines public space²³¹ as

“... public place” includes the ... every place accessible to the public for purposes of recreation.. any place where music, singing, dancing..” (took place)

“... ‘place of public entertainment’ means any place, whether enclosed or open, to which the public are admitted.” [Emphasis added]

Traditional public spaces were united by religion and customs rooted in nature, such as temples and bathing ghats. By inscribing these places within regulations, most if not all built spaces, temporary or permanent, open and enclosed space, indeed any space where any kind of value exchange happened, came under the purview of the public. Amongst the most affected groups of individuals in these new urban public spaces became the artistes. As such, while in connection with buildings, it meant spaces that were accessible to all, in connection with individuals the term ‘public’ became pejorative.

4.2.1 *Status of artists in the changing urban centre*

The relocation of performing artistes to cities, which began in the early 19th century, hastened with the colonial assumption of complete rule. Artistes established small private centres in the metropolis and were patronised primarily by the rising Brahmin-educated middle class (Subramanian). Simultaneously, with the temples losing favour as sites of music and dance activity owing partly to the stigma attached

²³¹ The delineation of ‘public space’ in the act was in connection with what were seen as immoral acts by individuals. Specifically, it was addressed to tackle the issues of prostitution. However, it reveals the constitution of colonial urban ‘public’ space. For full details of the Act, See Appendix II

with female ritual dancers, and it was the large homes of the patrons and those of performers which were active centres. In the north too, the relocated performers set themselves up in centres that came to be referred to as '*Kothas*' where the wealthy elite gathered to be entertained. Performers of music especially relied on intermediaries like the few remaining princes, landlords, and merchants for their survival (Manuel *Thumri*). The system of this patronage was however markedly different from their predecessors, who valued dance and music as a ritual and participation as patrons as an honour. The artist–patron relationship was now more individualistic and was shaped not merely by the relocations.

However, in the transforming colonial urban cities, the very spaces that the artists occupied were subject to scrutiny. Reports in the late 1860s often placed the residences of artists and performers under the class of prostitutes. For example, the dancers residing in Cornwallis, in North Calcutta, were mentioned as the 4th category of prostitutes and consisting of “dancing women, Hindoo or Mussulman (Muslim) living singly or forming a kind of group or a chummery... receiving visitors without considering creed or caste” (Fabre). In Bombay, where similar shifts happened, The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island (Vol. 1) notes in the census of 1906 that many ‘dancing girls’ resided in Khetwadi, Foras Road. Many of these suburbs were subject to intense surveillance under the Contagious Diseases Act of 1866.

The middle class too, demanded segregation rules around these regions, racially and spatially restricting them. The rise of the ‘red-light enclave’ is a result of such spatial restrictions. While the British briefly tried to clean up and reclaim these zones within the cities, they later decided that segregation of the ‘red-light’ was easier to deal with than dispersion. When Gaisberg, in his diary, notes, “women who performed were from the caste of public women... it was practically impossible to record the voice of a

respectable woman” (56-7), he was reflecting a common sentiment, i.e., engagements with artistic traditions especially those of music and dance were considered disreputable with the performance of dance and music seen as a *step away from undisguised prostitution* (Farell). And any public artistic practices, especially those associated with women, were seen as signs of decadence and depravity.

Thus, the ideas of filth and dirt, which were an Oriental trope, played out in multiple spheres. While in the material - built form, it was the mud and dirt of the cities which needed to be transformed through the developmental works, in the reform debate, the metaphors of grime and disease were used to disenfranchise women practitioners of dance and music²³². The society and its spatial culture were both seen through Victorian sensibilities and the necessities of transformation were judged as imperative on both counts.

Thus, implicated within legal acts and land transformations, urban centres of India were transformed into hybrid copies of British colonial spatial aesthetics. Performing artistes both in the public spaces and those who entertained within their private sphere were subject to scrutiny and censure in processes of improving and *urbanizing* Indian society and urbanscape.

4.3 Cultural Nationalism and Divergent Practices from the 1900s

By the late 19th century, the gamut of colonial regulations, life styles, built scape and discourse changed the societal fabric of Urban India, resulting in a collapse of the internal mechanisms of Indian society. However, they gave new life to Nationalistic fervor. Instigated by anti-colonial sentiments and inspired by the rigorous perusal and

²³² The reform movement and the anti *nautch* refer to processes that stigmatised the practices of the female dancers with the intention to rescue these women. The wheels for this were set in motion even as early as the 1890s and reached a crescendo in the 1920s when the women were forced out of their homes and into rehabilitation centres to domesticate them. With their ambiguous social status, Devadasis were subject to particular scrutiny in this process. Legal regulations against the practice of dedication of women to the temples were brought in firstly in Mysore, then Bombay and later in Madras.

publication of Oriental literature, the ideas of spiritual and free nation began to emerge. The educated middle class, however, took a dialectical approach to the discourse around independent India. Whereas a section of the educated elite raised on a diet of Victorian moralities looked to embrace modernity eschewing religion, art etc., the purists resolved to resurrect and revive the pristine and spiritual ethos of ancient India. And these ideas around Nationalism found fruition in the bourgeois urban public sphere²³³. Leading the way for political agitation was 'The Indian National Congress' (1885), comprising middle-class, western-educated men²³⁴, while Brahmo Samaj and others were precursors to groups and individuals who voiced the need for social reform²³⁵.

On the other hand, the revival discourse was inspired by Orientalists such as Havel and Ananda Coomaraswamy, the Theosophical Society and the activities of international figures such as Ravindranath Tagore. The discourse highlighted the need for distinct symbols of India, symbols that could reify the Oriental imaginations of a spiritual, timeless India. Music and dance, unsurprisingly, became central to these reimaginings. To this end, artistic traditions along with handicrafts were actively promoted, delinking them from the womb of religion to frame the contours of National heritage.

Societies (also called *samajs* / *sabhas*²³⁶) consisting of the educated middle class spearheaded this revival in the urban sphere. By advocating the need for common

²³³ The assembly of the public sphere could be established in various locations where people could gather and discuss matters. For a discussion on the bourgeois public sphere see Habermas.

²³⁴ Some of the early societies that formed were political such as the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay in the 1870s by the graduates of Colonial universities. As auxiliaries to their political work, individuals of these societies many a time also established publication centres.

²³⁵ In the 19th century, a number of reform activities as a response to colonial presence were centred around the activities of women. Practices such as Sati, widow remarriage, age of Consent etc., were part of public debate, judicial process and eventually in Nation making.

²³⁶ The *sabha* as a place of assembly has been discussed earlier. But '*sabha*' as an association has been noticed going as far back as the Chola period. Brahmin villages had councils called *sabhas* which were in

symbols and standards around the production and circulation of art, many of these *sabhas* began organising festivals²³⁷ of music, drama and dance from the early 20th century, independent of temple rituals all of which were directed towards a cultural project of classicisation. Associations such as the Gayan Samaj in the North, Triplicane Parthasarathy Sabha, the Bandaru Sabha, the Suguna Vilasa Sabha, and the Madras Music Academy actively engaged in these projects. The early festivals were mostly limited to music, and it was only in 1925 that dance was included for the first time. (Sethi). As numerous post-colonial authors have suggested, the process of classicalisation was a transformation of these arts fit for the middle-class family women or the respectable women²³⁸.

Educated elite began to encourage women and girls to pursue education and also learn the arts. Musical culture became integral to the identities of the Brahmin elite, “an inflection that was encouraged by an advocacy of Hinduism by the Theosophical society” (Subramanian). Soon, organizations that provided platforms for these educated women to interact began to emerge “so that women of respectable families should have the opportunity of mixing with each other and devoting themselves to the cause of social welfare” (Chakraborti 148). The respectable woman who upheld the spiritual essence of the country and safeguarded it within the public

charge of different aspects of village life and administrations Towards the 18th century, the *sabhas* were initially religiously oriented but they soon spread outward.

²³⁷ Modelled along the lines of the conferences of the Indian National Congress, All India Music Conferences were conducted in different cities. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande’s All India Music Conferences in different cities of North India (AIMC: 1916-1926) and V. D. Paluskar’s attempt to unify musicians in Bombay through concerts of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya’s Sangeet Parishad (1918-1931) are some examples.

²³⁸ Chatterjee notes that the word ‘*Bhadramahila*’, or respectable woman, came into circulation through the nationalists encouraging English education for women in India. Following the writings of Rammohun Roy and Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya, who advocated the emancipation of women, the word came to mean a woman who was educated in the English schools but was not a ‘*memsahib*,’ i.e., a woman who engaged in the English way of life. The respectable woman was one who, through education and behaviour represented the honour and identity of the country (*Colonialism*)

One of the earliest references to public presentations of respectable women was at the proceedings of the INA in 1902, when Vidya Gauri Nilkanth and Sharda Mehta, two sisters who were the first two women graduates of Gujarat, sang the National anthem.

sphere and against Victorian moralities was one who practised art *for art's sake* and not *for money*.

The 1920s' was also a period when there was renewed interest in the dance traditions of the country with the Brahmin intelligentsia's discovery of classical European forms like Ballet. For example, pioneering dancer and theosophist Rukmini Devi's interactions with the ballerina Anna Pavlova are often cited as the reason she embraced Sadir²³⁹(Sarada). At the same time as American dancers who were fascinated by Indian dances, such as Sitara Devi and Ruth St. Dennis, toured India with their Oriental dance productions, foreign returned Indian dancer such as Uday Shankar and Ramgopal showed that dance could be respectable.

4.3.1 *Respectable Sabha Spaces*

"In order to make dancing respectable, it is necessary to encourage public performances thereof before respectable people".

(1937 resolution of the Madras Music Academy, quoted in Meduri)

Implicated in the colonial public space were traditional performance venues such as open-air settings and religious sites, as seen above. However, for the safeguarding of the artistes, *respectable spaces* were imperative. The locations of the concert stages of *sabha* venues, in some cases, were the homes of the organisers and, in others, larger hall spaces, but in all cases, they were united by a specific purpose.

As the *sabhas* navigated the idea of respectable spaces, it is not unusual that a courtyard at the Pathuriaghata Ghosh house in Kolkata became the site of the first All Bengal Music Conference (AMBC) in 1934, or the shade of the banyan tree for Rukmini Devi's first performance. It was the agenda of these get-togethers and the constitution of the *sabhas*, which were '*urban spheres of respectable educated*

²³⁹ The term Sadir is often used to describe the temple and court dance repertoire of female practitioners of dance.

Indians’, that sanctioned the presence and the acts of the performers. Underscoring these, are reflections of artists from non-urban centres. For example, that the location or the site of performance had a bearing is evident in Kuchipudi dancer Vedantam Raghavayya’s musings.

“In 1932, Nāṭyakalā Parishat (Drama Seminar) was held in Madras under the aegis of Sri Desoddharaka Nageswara Rao Pantulu and Dr. Govindarajula Subbarao..... I had performed the Balagopala Tarangam on the first day and the Usha Natakam on the second day, which was a turning point in my life”²⁴⁰(Raghavayya 3).

As Raghavayya says, the presentation in the urban centre of Madras for the particular *sabha* was a (critical) ‘*turning point*’ in his career – a sentiment that links the respectability of the *sabha* with the currency of Madras.

At the same time, respectability was also linked to aesthetics of presentation is reflected in sentiments such as those expressed by singers at Pathuriaghta Sammelan²⁴¹ in 1928, who as historian Ganguly quotes, said,

“we can’t sit down on the floor (while performing) and bring Saraswati to the feet of the nawab.” And proceeded to demand that a raised dais be provided to them during an intimate performance (Ganguly).

According to philosopher Gaston Bachelard, people make psychological associations with spaces. For example, attics relate to the ‘super ego’, while basements connect to ‘the dark’. Similarly, a raised level is indicative of a positionality of power, and therefore for the artistes participating in the Pathuriaghata Sammelan, it was imperative that in the tenacious atmospheres of the times, the artiste protected and

²⁴⁰ Translations by Katyayani Thota.

²⁴¹ The Pathuriaghata street was the seat of aristocratic Bengali families. The houses on the road were owned by several influential families, in which the first music sammelans/ conferences were held.

sanctified his art by insisting on the sitting away and at an elevation in relation to the patron. The respectability of the artiste came from the *manner in which the artiste positioned himself/herself in relation to the audience*.

And yet, Madras Music Academy's resolution is fascinating when seen in the light of the changing urban geographies. It casts the question of whether dance itself was not considered respectable or if it was only the topical status of dance which wasn't. In any case, it certainly puts forth that it could be *made respectable* by a *public performance* before *respectable people*. And that within the legal definition of public spaces, the spaces created for performance and public recreation earlier no longer continued to be respected, paving the way for *respectable sabha spaces*. And thus, whether it was the performance of the celebrated dancer Balasaraswati from the hereditary community of Sadir practitioners - a performer at the ABMC in 1934, or the pioneering Kuchipudi artiste Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry who toured South India in the 1930s and 1940s, it was the organization that promoted these *performances* which made them *respectable* (Sethi, Jonnalagadda).

As the popularity of these *sabhas* and their patrons extended, they needed larger spaces to host these occasions. In the changing urban built scapes, it was the built-for-purpose theatres which became those venues. The Suguna Vilasa Sabha, for example, was established as a theatre company in 1891 in Madras. It initially functioned out of a house in Georgetown (formerly known as the Black town discussed earlier) in Madras and moved in 1902 to the Victoria Public Hall, a built theatre space and a public assembly from where it functioned till 1945. Later, the *sabha* built its own exclusive theatre space, the New Theatre. Similarly, the Madras Music Academy, which played a pivotal role in *the classicalising of Carnatic music traditions* and in the discourse around Sadir practices, proudly proclaims (on its website) that it was established *before*

the infrastructure of spaces was critical. The Academy's engagements were played out from within the homes of its members. The move to built spaces thus was not an accident or even a casual practice. This was a move that was as much enforced as it was deliberate.

The following section looks at what these built-for-performance spaces in the transformed cities were. It looks at how indigenous theatre adapted to the playhouses of the colonisers, which eventually resulted in the proscenium arch becoming central to the built theatre forms in India.

4.4 Respectable Leisure Spaces

Colonial urban spaces, as seen earlier, consisted of multiple building typologies, including the clubs and theatre spaces which were allied with entertainment and public leisure activities. These spaces began making their appearance as early as the second phase of the colonisers' presence in the late 18th century. But it was only in the third stage, i.e., after the mid-19th century, that they became fundamental to the native theatre. Even as the colonists participated in the scenarios of indigenous entertainment, their own spaces for leisure and entertainment were separate and distinguished. In contrast to the attached to court/ temple/ zamindar (wealthy elite) homes, temporary spaces of the native peoples, and even unlike the *sabha*, the colonial playhouses were permanent spaces with definite vocabularies. These theatres and clubs represented the colonial public sphere, and the public face of these spaces for leisure too, were grand, like the Bengal Club, which was opened in 1827(Sinha). The permanency of the spaces and the ostentatious presence gave leisure and entertainment an acceptable form. And it is through these colonial spaces that the 'proscenium stage', or rather the proscenium arch, was introduced and accepted into the vocabulary of native artistic presentations.

The association of ‘respectability’ with built form is often found in discursive strategies. For example, when the purpose-built Grant Road Theatre was constructed for the performance of a Parsi theatre performance²⁴² in Bombay, the Telegraph declared,

“A Parsi Theatre will be opened before the rich, the gay, and the pleasure-loving of this island [Bombay], by a Company of respectable young men who intend to make their first appearance, on the boards of the Grant Road Theatre, about the middle of this month.... the highest wish of their hearts is to see the springing up of a taste among the Parsis for the Noble and the Beautiful, and for the enjoyment of those ethereal pleasures which the Drama is sure to provide for them, if only kept in subordination to Morality and Virtue.”

(Bombay Telegraph and Courier, Oct. 4, 1853).

As is evident, the linking of taste, respectability, morality and virtue with a built form meant for leisure all come across in these opinions.

4.4.1 *The rise of the theatres*

The antecedents of English performative theatre in India are interwoven with the colonial playhouses. The first known English theatre in Calcutta was the Old Playhouse, established around 1750²⁴³ and was located in the White Town of the settlement (Yajnik). A little while later, the New Playhouse, built in 1775, introduced

²⁴² Parsi theater was a multi-lingual, mobile enterprise with its roots in native language theatre such as Gujarati and Marathi and the scenography of the English theatre. The Parsis were descendants of the Iranian Zoroastrians who migrated to Gujarat. They relocated to Bombay in the 18th century and advanced through finance and trade. As intermediaries between the natives and mercantile, they interacted with colonial elites and were exposed to English education. In the late 19th century Parsi theatre spectacles were composed in Gujarati or Urdu, with songs in Hindi, Braj and English. Other regional languages such as Tamil, Marathi or Bengali were employed for comedic or song interludes based on the location. Parsi theatre also introduced the culture of tuning the performance content to suit the audience. For example, plays for women were designed to inculcate ‘scientific’ behaviour. Pitted against the native theatres, the new theatrical mode with its recommendation of colonial rule, reform and modernity claimed to impart good morals and taste to its spectators.

²⁴³ The Old Playhouse, established around 1750, was Calcutta’s earliest theatre and dance hall. Located in the area close to the Grand Tank (Lal Dighi), it was destroyed by Nawab Siraj-ud-daulah when he marched upon the British settlements in June 1756.

professional plays in the city²⁴⁴. However, it was the Russian adventurer Gerassim Lebadef who brought the first proscenium style production to Bengali theatre in 1795²⁴⁵. Theatre at this time was a commercial enterprise where ticketed shows were conducted. It was where the Europeans gathered for leisure, and very soon, the educated Indian elite too. This early period was followed by a lull when only private theatres or soirees in the homes of the wealthy patrons exclusively for their families continued, as seen in the previous section.

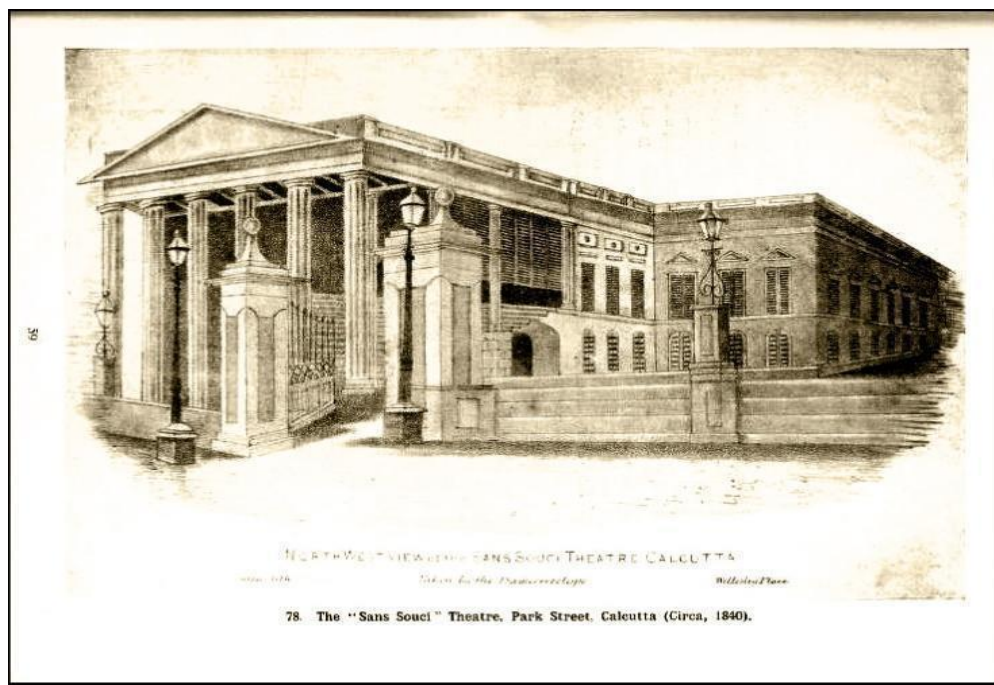


Fig 4.8 Sans Souci Theatre.

Designed by the architect J. W. Collins, imitating the Greek Parthenon
<https://puronokolkata.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/sanssoucicalcutta.jpg>

²⁴⁴ The New Playhouse was built in 1775 and was supported by the entire English community. Even though it employed only amateur artists, it was reputed for staging professional productions.

²⁴⁵ See Amal Mitra. The plays staged by Lebadef were often light-hearted and comedic in nature.

Theatre activity gained momentum again from the mid-19th century when a number of native and European theatre companies emerged, which set the precedent for urban theatre in India. They progressed by adapting English plays into native languages and reinstating the proscenium. The new theatre practice was led by the educated Bengali class and was performed in the built for purpose playhouses such as the Chowringhee, the Sans Souci²⁴⁶ (1840) and others. The performance practice itself was fundamentally different from any of the native traditions; it was the coming together of native theatrical genres such as the *Jatra*, the Sanskrit theatre, and the English theatre and came to be called the Bengali theatre and was principally fashioned around musical shows of the burlesque variety. Its success rested on its adapting to stage the *mise-en-scene* and the grandeur of the colonisers²⁴⁷. This new urban playhouse with its proscenium became the respectable space where as seen earlier, the *sammelans* soon moved to.

Concurrently, 'The Bombay Theatre' was built around 1776 to cater to the English in the Fort area of the Bombay Presidency (Yajnik). A little while later, the 'Grant Road Theatre', which opened in 1845, was sponsored by the natives and catered to a mixed audience of both the natives and the Europeans. This theatre played host to the earliest recorded performance of the Parsi theatre in October 1853, when a troupe called the Parsi Dramatic Corps performed the Gujrati play 'Rustam Zabuli and Sohrab' in it. Afterwards, numerous theatrical companies managed by Parsis, called

²⁴⁶ While the building itself was over 200 feet long and 50feet in depth, it had a stage measuring 28'x 50'.

²⁴⁷ They were also popular for their onstage actresses. Around this time across most of India, female performers were not encouraged to participate in theatre. Young men performed the roles of women. In some other cases, companies only chose to perform plays that had no female characters. And in these theatres, In line with the English actresses, the Indian actress became a 'consumerist product' for the male gaze in the colonial theatre space.

Parsi Theatre Companies, began to mushroom²⁴⁸. As scholar Nicholson writes, between 1853 and 1869, twenty drama companies were created by Parsis. And unlike local practices, which were acted out in outdoor settings, these travelling groups usually presented on the proscenium stages. Promoting a mixture of Western Naturalistic drama and local practices, the success of Parsi theatre rested on the creation of a spectacle through huge settings, colourful backdrops and music. The hugely popular play, the ‘Indar Sabha’, for example, has been described as “a pageant of song and dance connected by a thread of a story” (Hansen *The Indar* 78). The popularity of Parsi theatre and its spatial configuration of the proscenium was so extensive that built-for-performance spaces were constructed across the nation to host them. For example, even as early as 1872, the popular Parsi theatre group, Victoria Theatrical Company, was invited by Sir Salar Jang, prime minister of Hyderabad, who proposed to build a proscenium-style theatre to host them (Nicholson). The potpourri of music, dance and literature and the glamour that Parsi theatre showcased, influenced traditional theatre and led to the creation of many small theatre companies which followed its paradigm of drama and entertainment in the regional centres. The theatre became a site of merchant capital simultaneously as it was a site of cultural production. And by the 1920s’, several built playhouses emerged to cater to the rising popularity of both the regional theatres and the touring Parsi enterprises.

However, writing in the 1920s’ scholar Puranam Suri laments, “*even as the staging of dramas in the rural centres followed the standards set by the ones in the*

²⁴⁸“The theatre initially served as the location for all significant socio-cultural events for the English community as Bombay possessed no Town Hall at the time.” (Nicholson). English educated young Parsi men first took an interest in dramatics and formed amateur clubs to experiment with play-acting and the proscenium stage at the Elphinstone College (Hansen). Popular among these were ‘The Zoroastrian Theatrical Club’, ‘The Student Amateur Club’ ‘The Victoria Natak Mandali’, ‘Natak Uttejak Company’, ‘Empress Victoria Theatrical Company’ and ‘The Alfred Natak Mandali’.

cities, their success was limited".²⁴⁹ Placing the blame squarely on the unruly behaviour of the actors and even on the inherent pejorative against rural theatre, Suri says that the actors of the theatre groups at the suburban centres of Rajahmundry and Bellary greatly exaggerated overture and vulgarity they borrowed from the Parsi drama and were thus were unsuccessful. Continuing that this was in contrast to the cosmopolitan nature of urban theatre, which came with decorum and dignity²⁵⁰, Suri puts forth that the appreciation and popularity of theatre was restricted to the Presidencies—furthering the argument that changes to artistic presentations of dance and drama firstly incubated in the Presidencies and only later spread outward.



Fig. 4.9 Edward Theatre, built in 1914. Bombay.²⁵¹

<https://www.bachilleratocinefilo.com/2017/08/old-cinemas-in-mumbai-india-francisco.html>

²⁴⁹ Translated from the original Telugu text by the researcher.

²⁵⁰ Suri also links the collapse of rural theatrical ventures and *sabhas* to the expenses linked to the establishment of a regular theatrical space and the monies needed for costumes, stage props et al.

²⁵¹ Edward Theatre is named after King Edward V, who visited Mumbai in 1914. It was built in the Art Deco style. The 509-seater hall still has a music pit beneath the stage with two box seats on either side.

English theatre in the south began much later than in Calcutta and Bombay. It was in 1875 that the ‘Madras Dramatic Society’ was founded, where amateur Europeans gave performances in English (Yajnik). The audience for these plays included both the English and the natives. Influenced by the travelling theatre groups from Poona, societies for drama, such as the Oriental Dramatic Club (1882) and the Sarasa Vinodini Sabha (1890), consisting of amateur actors, were established. The performances of these groups included native plays, which were accompanied by the playing of the English harmonium, *ghazals* and farcical English songs.



Fig 4. 10 Advertisement for Parsi theatre, prominently displaying the proscenium arch.
 Hansen. [https://minio.la.utexas.edu/colaweb-prod/profile/custom_pages/0/1362/tamil drama in colonial madras the parsi theatre_connection_2021_4563f1a9-e7c0-44aa-8456-aed5112e96f.pdf](https://minio.la.utexas.edu/colaweb-prod/profile/custom_pages/0/1362/tamil_drama_in_colonial_madras_the_parsi_theatre_connection_2021_4563f1a9-e7c0-44aa-8456-aed5112e96f.pdf)

However, in contrast to the Calcutta and Bombay Presidencies, makeshift stages and *pandals* were in common use in Madras even well into the 20th century. *Pandals* were temporary thatched structures with a raised platform inside, which served as the stage for public presentations. Even as late as 1930, as compared to the eighteen or twenty well-equipped theatres in Bombay, Madras had only four or five (Yajnik). While “*small stages for English dramatics had opened earlier in College Hall and the Banqueting Hall, it was only with the completion of the Victoria Public Hall in 1887, did a purpose-built stage become available to all*” in Madras (Hansen *Tamil*)²⁵². This hall became the preferred venue for all theatre activities, for presentations of foreign touring companies and for government functions. And along with the Museum theatre constructed in 1898, it is credited with bringing in respectable audiences such as High court officials and judges to the theatre as well as introducing significant changes in the nature of presentations.

Simultaneously, inspired by the Parsi drama²⁵³, the use of proscenium arch, curtains and backdrops, footlights and stage lights all became part of even regional theatres²⁵⁴. As Kuchipudi dancer and academician Anuradha writes, “*In the early periods of Kuchipudi history (ca. eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), all-male troupes comprising a troupe leader, dancers and accompanying musicians would travel to nearby villages and towns and enact kalāpas and yakṣagānas on makeshift open-air stages*” (*Traditions* 43–46). As a result of the prevalence of Parsi theatre in Western India and the introduction of modern theatre techniques, such as lighting, sound

²⁵² Yajnik mentions that the Fort Bijour theatre was built in 1882, but no further evidence for this has been found.

²⁵³ For details of Parsi theatre’s influence on Tamil *isai natakam* see Hansen *Tamil*

²⁵⁴ Parsi theatre initially used gas lights to light up the players on the stage; these were later replaced by electrical lights. At the same time, taking a cue from European paintings, they used several backdrops.

amplification, and sets, regional theatrical traditions such as Kuchipudi migrated to proscenium theatre in the 20th century (Bhikshu *Tradition*).

The permanency of built theatres brought in a number of changes to the style of theatre presentations.

a) Viewing habits: In contrast to the all-night-long viewing habits of regional theatres, performances in built spaces had a fixed regulation of time. “*Newspapers announced that doors opened at 8 p.m., the play began at 9, and carriages arrived at 1 a.m. to take the spectators home*” (Hansen *Tamil* 26). The systems of ticketing the performances and the fixed seating too, were a novelty that guaranteed propriety as separation of class and gender could be ensured.

b) Changes in play structure: The Indian Stage in 1911, - a periodical states that plays at this juncture limited the ritual-oriented prayers at the beginning of the performance. The prayers were replaced by the performance of a song, played from behind the drops curtain’(Yagnik)²⁵⁵. The story of the plot was not narrated at the beginning, and the buffoon (*sutradhara/ vikata*) was not to be present on the stage at all times. They also regulated the formats of presentation and brought in changes to sequencing to suit the urban cosmopolitan character.

c) Respectable space for women: Another significant intervention of built theatre in the colonial public space was that it provided a respectable space for women performers to be present in public²⁵⁶. A realignment of these practices came about with the popularity

²⁵⁵ As described in The Indian theatre : its origins and its later developments under European influence with special reference to Western India.

²⁵⁶ In the early stages of Bombay Amateur Theatre and the Calcutta Theatre, women performers were often seen on stage - a practice that was discontinued as a part of a larger demographic shift when Indians began frequenting theatres. This phase also coincided with the larger regulations around female presence in colonial public spaces as seen earlier and stigmas associated with female performers. While young men’s presenting themselves as women on stage has a long history in the theatres of India, the changes in the early 19th century encouraged the practice of young men impersonating women on stage. Subsequently, ‘Cross-dressed male actors introduced fashions and deportment that set the standard for respectable appearance, enabling previously secluded women to enter public spaces and maintain their

of the theatre genres, which reintroduced women performers and actresses on the public stages. Either as part of *sabha* presentations or through theatre, respectable women could appear in public spaces of built-for-performance theatres, both as an audience and as performers.

In short, built-for-performance theatres with their proscenium arch became popular across urban India by the early decades of the 20th century. The production, practice and style of theatre circulating through professional companies of Paris and Bengali theatres engendered in these spaces came to be emulated across local traditions of drama and theatre, and these conventions of the proscenium stage continued to be employed even in the absence of built-for-performance stages. The popularity of the colonial urban theatre with its proscenium model was not incidental, given the ubiquity of the colonial-built forms in the 19th century. Several changes contributed to this. In defining the colonial public urban space, most if not all traditional sites of performance viz, the temples, the public space itself and the homes of traditional practitioners were governed and stigmatised. The exception to these were the venues which were presented by *respectable individuals* with the intention of revival. However, unique theatrical practices which developed within the folds of colonial theatre not only survived scrutiny but also thrived, encouraged by both the natives and the English. These itinerant theatre groups preferred the built-for-purpose stages that allowed for greater variety in the scenography. The viewing habits too changed from patronage to spectatorial, i.e., small groups to large gatherings of the audience. The built theatre of the colonisers as against makeshift stages became respectable by default. It was sought after by the urban elite to encourage public viewing, consequently *making dance*

reputations.’ The gap was also filled by women of non-native origins such as Anglo-Indian, Jewish and European women to take to stage, even as impersonators continued.

respectable. Theatre and *sabha* activities, as seen above, naturally progressed to these spaces.



Fig 4. 11 (Top) Victoria Memorial Hall. Madras.
L.vivian.richard <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3563947>

Fig 4.12 (Below) Interiors of Victoria Memorial Hall. Madras.
<https://static.toiimg.com/thumb/msid-85003386,imgsize-211977,width-400,resizemode-4/85003386.jpg>

4.5 The Proscenium Stage

Given the changing nature of urban cities, it is out of the scope of this project to empirically look at how many theatres with proscenium arch spaces emerged during the revival of dance traditions. However, it can be safely argued that from the 1930s, in the newly gentrified cities, the proscenium stage, along with the institutes of training²⁵⁷, became the locus of dance. The transition of dance and dance theatre to the proscenium has often been glossed over as a shift of *situation* and, at times, a shift of context. Ironically, despite the ambivalence around performance spaces that Indian dancers display, this move is often decried as one that most effected these forms. This section thus looks to address why this shift was so critical. It reflects on the challenges and the eventual resolutions that came forth, as seen by the practitioners themselves. In doing so, it juxtaposes the concepts of the spatiality of the places that engendered these arts, as seen earlier, against the new scenarios.

The paradigm in which dance-theatre genres could be modified and accommodated to function on the proscenium stages was already established by drama (displayed in the tweaking of pre-performance rituals of theatrical genres and the obligation to create a spectacle). At the same time, the archetype for presenting dance on the concert stage too was established by dance as it functioned within that theatre. Additionally, the shift was undoubtedly buttressed by the set of technological advancements such as the usage of stage lights and the systems of sound enhancements that emerged coevally with the permanency of the proscenium as the performance venue. For example, in South India, the microphone was first used by K.B.

²⁵⁷ Institutionalized spaces for training in dance such as the ones established by Rukmini Devi, the Shantiniketan, the Kerala Kalamandalam and Uday Shankars' Almora were all set up in the decades of the 1930s. Following this start an institutionalized training became integral to the sustenance of all dance traditions following Independence. They all catered to a vision of anchoring artistic practices for secular production, intended for a cosmopolitan audience in the emerging free nation.

Sundarambal in a concert setting in 1931(Weidman). This provision enabled the shift of the orchestra, who up till then used to accompany the dancer, by walking alongside them on the stage, to one side of the stage. As Balasaraswati acquiesced, this was to ensure that the dancers could hear the *nattuvanar* (playing the cymbals) as they danced. At the same time, the prevalence of concert setting had already established codes of etiquette for both the audience and the performer, as seen in the demand for a *raised dais* for the musicians performing at the *sabha*. In terms of spatial resonances, Rukmini Devi is famously credited to have introduced the image of the icon of Nataraja to ensure that the proscenium stage looked like the right setting for the dance, i.e., like a temple stage (Meduri). The seeds of this shift, as seen in the earlier chapter, were much earlier. At the same time, for the generation of dancers groomed under the institutionalised spaces beginning in the 1930s' the proscenium was possibly the most natural space for presentations. Yet, as any dancer today would vouch, a shift to an unfamiliar performance space is filled with consternation and requires specific adaptations.

4.5.1 *The proscenium arch*

The proscenium arch or picture-frame stage had its provenance in Italy in the 15th century. In the early renaissance theatres²⁵⁸, the decorated arch was part of the scenery behind the stage space and was present as an element of stage design. With the increasing use of machinery in theatre production, there emerged a need to mask the equipment onstage. The decorated arch was brought to the front, and at this juncture, it served a dual function all through the 17th century. However, when the forestage was abandoned, the arch took on the new theatrical role of framing the stage and separating

²⁵⁸ Renaissance theatre, also known as Elizabethan theatre and Renaissance English theatre, is the theatre of England between 1558 and 1642. These were raised wooden stages made of raised platforms which were set against buildings and were surrounded by the audience on the other three sides.

the audience from the stage. And it was this shift of the element of arch to the front which marked the beginning of the modern stage.

In the modern stage, the proscenium or the arch stage is framed like a painting around the stage space. With the arch usually supporting a curtain. The moniker *picture frame* serves the nature of the space well, as the elements outside of the frame remain outside the audience's view. While the arch acts as a visual barrier and separates the auditorium space from the stage, the movement onto the stage is restricted to the side, which leaves the backdrop free to use for elements of scenography and to introduce multiple backgrounds.



Fig 4.13 Interiors of Madras Music Academy showing its proscenium stage.
<https://sriramv.wordpress.com/2020/02/05/farewell-lgn-the-academy-will-miss-you/>

4.5.2 *Indian Dance on the Proscenium*

While, fundamentally, the Sanskrit stage and the proscenium stage may seem similar, as they share elements of an elevated platform (that separates the stage from the audience), the idea of enclosure and orientation of the spectators (who mostly sat on one side) towards the stage, the proscenium arch brings in the critical element of *visual and spatial barriers* which emphasises the distance between the performers and the audience. Additionally, the size of the stage space, when coupled with the previous factors, evokes a different experience of performance. And it is this *experience* of Indian dance in space that shifted with the coming of the proscenium. The reflections which follow are what artistes today see as impositions of the new space of the proscenium.

Yamini Kurati, an artiste trained in the traditional theatre of Kuchipudi Yakshagana, reminisces that the artistes were adept at orienting their performances in any direction (pers. comm). However, ruminating on the choreographic transformations that have ensued in traditional arts because of the proscenium, she writes, “*the performer used to play the same sequences, turning to three sides to face the audience sitting on the three sides of the stage*” and continues in the same tone “*but now, the performers dance facing the audience in one direction*” (Kurati 190).

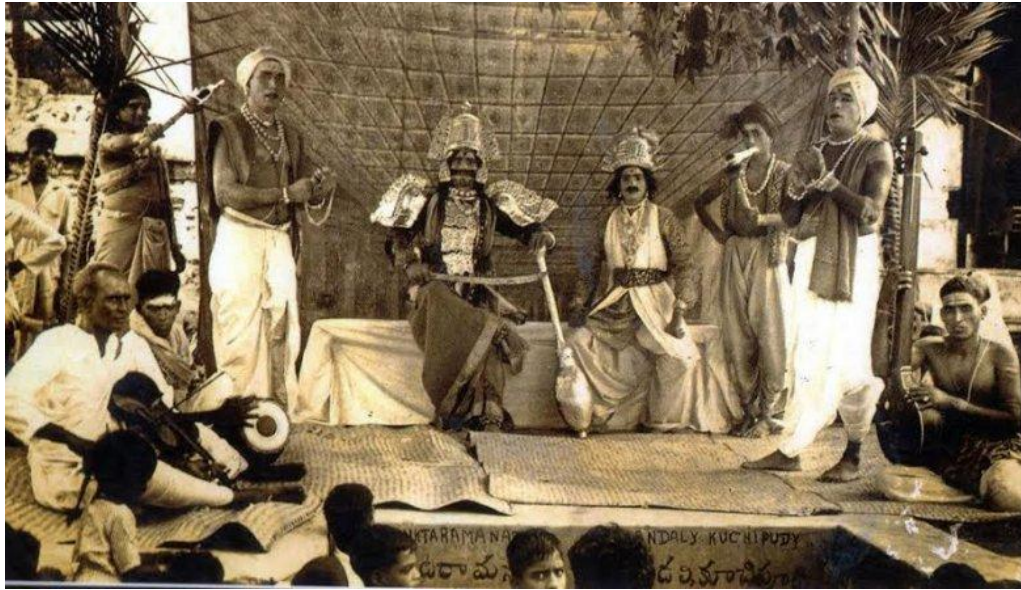


Fig 4.14 Performance of Kuchipudi Yakshagana in traditional settings.

<https://blog.kuchipudiyakshaganam.org/down-memory-lane/>

Likewise, Guru Singajit Singh and Bayanacharya Ghanakanta Bora express concerns on the performance of Sattriya on a proscenium stage, even as late as the second decade of the 21st century – as it is far removed from Sattriya’s²⁵⁹ ritualistic presentation format.

“For many centuries, the dance form was practised as a ritual, and it is not audience-centric in the Namgar (dance community hall in the monastery). When we see the dance form today on stage, there is a difference in the choreographic pattern; for instance, the repetitions have been cut down. The way we were taught, we first made the offering to the sanctum sanctorum and repeated the movements on the other three sides where the audience would be sitting. Now, it is a unidimensional setting in the proscenium” (Sahai).

²⁵⁹ Sattriya Nritya is the dance form traditionally preserved, pursued and practised in the Vaishnavite monasteries.

Traditions such as Sattriya are inherently introspective, with the energies of the dance resting between the participants of the dance and are certainly not audience-centric. For these practices, the shift to proscenium was also a shift of context and, thereby, all the more transmogrifying.

On the other hand, the transformations to make solo dance traditions fit for proscenium are succinctly summed by Guru Gajendra Panda, a disciple of the late Guru Deba Prasad Das,

“... The space available for dancing in the temple was rather small; the maharis could not perform an elaborate nritya within such constraints; thus, it was most unlikely they would have substantial nritya pieces in their repertoire which could be used outside the temple. Abhinaya pieces, when performed on the modern stage, need to be stretched and interspersed with high-wrought nritya to fill the space. Gotipuas and akhada pila on the other hand had rigorous body training involving acrobatics, which could be adapted to the new dance”

(Royo *Reconstructing*).

While Guru Gajendra Panda was speaking about the neo-classical dance of Odissi, which was reconstructed in the dance halls of Cuttack, the changes he mentioned are universal to all solo traditions adapted to the proscenium stage. The adaption of movement vocabularies from auxiliary traditions, which were acrobatic in nature, became a necessity to *fill the more expansive space* available to the dancer. Consequently, high wrought *nritya* sequences became part of all units of the repertoire.

Simultaneously, the manner of usage of the personal space of the dancer too was required to become expansive. As Kuchipudi dancer Katyayani notes about the movement vocabulary of Guru Vempati Chinna Satyam, “...the wider range of motion both in terms of space travelled and in terms of axes of movement [in Peda Satyam’s

choreography] (Putchu 2011, 136), became defining features of Chinna Satyam's style" (Thota 119). The aesthetic of Guru Chinna Satyam's Kuchipudi style is often acknowledged as distinct from the one practised in Kuchipudi village, as his was aesthetic that guided by cosmopolitan practices and developed within the urban centre of Madras populated by proscenium stages and amid a concert culture.

Indeed, some of the neo-classical practices that developed in tandem with the growing proscenium inherently embodied its geometry. As dancer choreographer Uttara Asha writes, the Bharatanatyam style taught at Kalaskhetra is a practice well suited for the proscenium stage. It "involves austere geometrical shapes and vigorous dynamics... (in which) the torso actively extends the lines of movement into space, (and) the hip deflections of Chidambaram Temple karana sculptures were purged, making way for the "pure" triangular form of the *aramandi*" (Coorlawala *The Sanskritized*).

In the above reflections, the underlying postulates remain that the space available to the dancer on the proscenium necessitated that it be exploited both by expanding corporeal extensions and by embellishing the repertoire with movements that cover the available space. Consequently, the practices that were well suited to the proscenium stage were those that achieved the expansiveness. Simultaneously, the centrality of the vertical axis was enhanced by eliminating deviations often noticed in Indian sculptures. In effect, these dances *promoted a two-dimensional aesthetic in line with the rectangular frame of the proscenium*.

Another recurring lament that dancers make about the proscenium stages are the difficulties of presenting *abhinaya* pieces. The *abhinaya* pieces such as *padams* and *javalis* are often wrapped in themes of devotion and love, and are characterized by elements of nuance and subtlety essential to Indian dances, convey little or no meaning

on the proscenium stages. As scholar Sarah quoting Kathak dancer Pandit Chitresh writes, “*Kathak’s shift from smaller salon venues to larger proscenium stages resulted in diminished ability to communicate nazākat, the subtle movements of eyes, eyebrows, neck, wrists, and breath*” (Morelli). As Uttara Asha encapsulates, prosceniums are modelled on conventional Anglo-European spaces and are designed for separation, not intimacy, and thus are particularly incongruent as settings where songs of devotion are to be performed.

While the changes in embodied aesthetic and repertoire were one side of the shift that the proscenium imposed, it is the impact of the structure and the geometry on both the dancer and the audience that this work is also interested in.

a) Aesthetic of presentation – picturesque design

Analogous to Adam Hardy’s description of the Hindu temple²⁶⁰ and much like the formations of indigenous cities, traditions of dance and theatre in India developed through a process of accretion. Along with ritual enactments, affective responses to cosmopolitan demands and regional behaviours all participated in the becoming of these artistic practices. Whether these were performed within the precincts of the temples or in the courts, or even at the *pandals* at the intersection of the street, the performances were rehearsed yet spontaneous, involving the audience in the journey of the performance. Places of performance were ‘sites’ of performance - situated, contextual and flexible.

The proscenium, on the other hand, developed within the folds of a Cartesian understanding of space, that imagined space as consisting of fixed points - a secular space synonymous with *order and clarity, in line with the imagined orderly-ness of*

²⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion on the geometry development of the Hindu temple, Hardy *The Temple*.

arrangement of the urban cities principally regulated by the design of the colonisers²⁶¹. For the geometrised proscenium space, the dynamic of the dance choreographies, too, was refined - weeding out quotidian chaos. This space thus *served to contain the transgressive energies of popular performance*²⁶². As Srividya Natarajan writes about the processes of re-imagining Bharatanatyam from the Sadir tradition by Rukmini Devi,

“(w)hat Rukmini Devi added to the material she gathered from these traditional sources was a sort of rationalizing vision. All those elements of the older styles that looked out of place on the proscenium stage were weeded out: acting in the round, with musicians walking behind the dancers, the lack of a fixed perspective that identified the space of ‘the audience’, casual, informal and interrupted presentations” (Natarajan).

The changes to suit the proscenium also included a choreography that proceeded by employing a pictorial design. This meant that all garish lighting and costuming were removed, and nothing that was deemed an excess was retained.

While how the dance looks has perhaps always been considered important, as displayed in the poses of the dancers in temple sculptures and in treatises such as Nritta Ratnavali, the new prevailing zeitgeist of opting for the picturesque, too, was a colonial and oriental project. The picturesque at this point was *a reimagining of the dancer’s body* as another element participating in the *designed frame of the proscenium*. And to that end, all the participating elements needed to acquiesce themselves to the choreographer's design. In other terms, the entirety of the performance, including the

²⁶¹ The ideas around space significantly changed during Renaissance, the period when the proscenium became popular. Significantly, the renaissance ushered an understanding of space as relatable and one that could be understood through fixed and measurable ways. The proponent of these new ideas around space was Descartes whose own imaginations around organization stemmed from the neat and orderly arrangement of town and public spaces in Europe “It was the geometrical, mechanistic clarity emanating” from these planned urban landscapes “that was also perceived as reflecting the order of the universe, and through which Descartes himself helped usher a new era of confidence in the intellectual faculty of the individual.

²⁶² Borrowed from Hansen *The Stages*

dancer's body, needed to be spatially orchestrated, subscribing to a sense of order which is deliberate, regulated and geometric in design.

b) Ideas of choreography – potency of stage

As choreographer Kamalini Dutt puts forth, “the idea of choreography is a 20th century phenomenon made for the proscenium”. The concept of choreography in Sanskrit theatre, often categorised under *kakshya vibhaga*, is the method of using certain areas of the stage for particular purposes and rarely discusses the placement of actors on stage in terms of stage front and rear. Exceptions to these are the limited sections of *purvaranga* as elaborated in the second chapter. Similarly, the texts on dance, while addressing the movement of the individual dancers, emphasise the *Brahma sthana*, or the centre stage, and seldom refer to the extremities of stage space. The elaboration of choreographies, whether for the individual dancer or groups of dancers, is limited to - from where are the dancers approaching the centre? As against how much or to where else the dancer should move on stage. In short, the idea of choreography in dance rests principally within the dancer's personal space.

On the other hand, choreographies on the proscenium rest on the idea that space on the stage is potent and bodies moving in it accrue different meanings as they occupy and traverse different positions on it. Modern dancer Doris Humphrey terms these associations as ‘*Scenic spaces*’ in her dialogue on Dance and Space. She states that designs in space should be created with the intention of representing an idea. These designs/ shapes of the bodies of the dancers she elaborates, function in tandem with the areas / position of the dancer on stage. In other words, Humphrey states that different stage positions or locations on stage support or highlight different concepts or sensations of dance movement; which although can be modified by lightning, sets and the dancer's execution, vary in what they offer to the dancer. At the same time, she

argues the stage space also denies the choreographer certain rights, and so the choreographer ought to be judicious while setting out scenes.

This manner of individual dancers using the stage space and groups of performers using the stage space are different from the traditional stages. According to set and property designer Poorna Chandrasekhar, “Even the Parsi stages of the touring companies were limited to 30’ x 15.” (pers. comm.). The *Natyasastra*’s prescriptions were probably for *ideal* scenarios, and the stages in conventional usage much smaller. On the contrary, it is likely that rules around entries and exits for characters of different regionalities (such as *dakshinatyā* from right and *avanti* from left) were fixed on different sides to negate generation of any meaning associated with usage on stage. The onus of engendering meaning rested on the potential of the actor *and not on the stage*.

In the space of the proscenium, the dancer is compelled to navigate through fixed meanings, and choreographies necessarily negotiate these assumptions, all of which come from a uni-directional orientation, the framing of the stage and the distance from the audience.

Consequently, aside from embellishing and re-orienting repetitive movement, the changes to suit the proscenium also included a choreography that was more symmetrical. And as against rehearsed spontaneity, the specifics of how and where the dancer appears on the stage and the placement of different actors in the geography of the stage became important.

C) *Proximity and distance.*

In the proscenium model, the distance between the audience and the performer is key²⁶³. Amongst other sanctions, the proscenium model prescribes that the

²⁶³ This type of orientation was also developed in nexus with the cinema industry which rose in place of theatre especially in the centres of Madras since the late 1920s. Advances in technology and inventions such as the motion pictures greatly altered the perception of the spectator. Many smaller proscenium arch

performers are able to achieve only a fixed level of intimacy with the audience. In contrast to the experiential setting where the dancer performed earlier, the frontal set-up of the proscenium arch, the distance between the audience space and the performer, and the practice of dimming the house lights leave little room for the dancer to actively engage with either the audience or the space. This is particularly challenging in performative traditions that employ *vachikaabhinaya* and thrive simultaneously on the interaction between the audience and the performers themselves. While some of these challenges are mitigated through the employment of various technologies, the degree of effectiveness of the performance still rests with the artists being able to communicate both through the gaze and through gestures and over the distance between them and the audience.

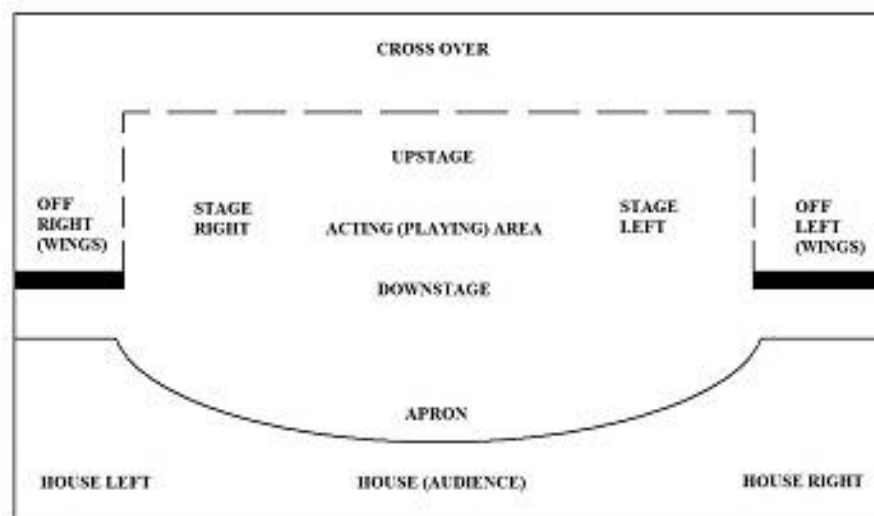


Fig 4.15 Stage geography of a proscenium

Summing up, the arch “*altered the relationship of the audience to the stage. The audience, now separated from the stage, became passive viewers rather than actively*

theatres were converted into movie theatres. Audiences were able to adapt from the front-back orientation of the proscenium stage to the front-back orientation of the picture screen. Once engaged and talkative, hierarchical seating and propriety altered the dynamics of the audience. ‘Today, audiences have a strong front-back orientation and tend to expect a certain amount of spectacle as part of being entertained.’ Becker 32-34

engaged participants” (Mendes and Janet 264). For the audience viewing the performance, the actors/ dancers are framed by the arch and distanced from the realities of space and the place.

The frame of the arch was a device seen on the *nartaki* at Udaygiri, discussed in the earlier chapter and later in multiple instances too. Yet a study of these static figures on the walls is a different phenomenon than watching the live bodies of dancers/ actors within a frame. The nature of this experience of the dance in the proscenium privileges the ocular (with appreciation usually expressed through applause). At the same time, the proscenium arch with its tormentors or the verticals that mask the stage hide the processes and labour of the bodies before they are seen on stage; unlike the temple spaces, the open *pandals* or even the theatre spaces in the courts of the kings which put on regular display the ‘coming of’ the actors and performers onto the stage.

The arch then also functions to fuel illusion and removes the dancers from everyday life. The similarities that envelop both the *nartaki* and dance within the frame of the proscenium remain that the framing isolates the figures and subjects them to scrutiny as mere bodies, absolving them of any realities except those imagined by the viewer. As Lefebvre writes, a single-point perspective vision formed by the vanishing point and the meeting of parallel lines are ideological constructs which define how space is perceived. And consequently, observing bodies on stage through these spatial relationships, which construct gaze, also constructs subjectivities (41). This image of the dancer as an object to be looked at devoid of its socio-geographical networks was a paradigm that was established even as early as the company paintings of the 18th century. The adaptation of Indian dance/theatre to suit the proscenium then is only an extension of the colonial construct. As scholar Sitara Thobani argues, ‘this dance has always been presented on the Empire’s Stage’.

4.6 Builtscapes in Independent India

“The past allows the present to pursue the future”

Ackbar Abbas (2)

The proscenium model established during the 1920s continued well after independence. The changes in the aesthetic of dances mentioned above were a process that evolved over a number of years and were certainly not instantaneous. One only has to look at the recorded performances of dancers in the early 1950s and the later interpretations of these choreographies, which mark the distinct elaborations of movement either in terms of stage space usage or the orientations to make these observations. But that the popularity of the proscenium continues is evident when nearly a century later, as the Ministry of Culture proposed to refurbish the Tagore Cultural Complexes it had sanctioned in the 1960s, recommended, the ‘proscenium stage’ with extensive guidelines for the construction of either new theatres or refurbishing existing ones²⁶⁴. The self-aware report categorically states that ‘this is a very important project of the Government and will impact (on) future generations.’

If the proscenium was a product of the colonised builtscape, independent India brought another set of ideas with it. This section thus briefly attends to how the builtscape changed post-independence and how infrastructure for culture was approached when the onus of sustaining artistic practices rested primarily with the state. It also looks at specific infrastructure projects that stand as indicators for general trends.

4.6.1 Divergent Practices

Standing at the cusp of modernity, independent India stood divided in its approach to the arts. Performing arts which by now were being incubated in the spirit of Nationalism, were already part of the revival project—this project spearheaded by the

²⁶⁴ See <https://www.indiaculture.nic.in/financial-assistance-tagore-cultural-complextcc>

urban bourgeois anchored itself to essentialising the pristine nature of the arts. On the other hand, visual arts and built forms imbricated in colonial transformation projects were caught in a more significant debate that raged between continuing with the existing Indo Saracenic style and looking at reviving the indigenous built practices (Metcalf and Thomas).

In the early years following India's independence, massive building activity was undertaken, triggered by the many relocations resulting from the processes of partition. These infrastructure projects were predominantly undertaken by the Public Works Department using whatever material was available by the handful of architects available²⁶⁵. The manuals for building execution of this department were based on the regulations set by the British. As such, even after Independence, built scape continued to follow the paradigm of spatial practices established by the colonisers.

The status quo was changed with Nehru's decision to employ Le Corbusier, a French architect known for his modern style²⁶⁶, to design the new capital of Punjab viz, the city of Chandigarh. In Nehru's words, the city "*is a new city, symbol of the freedom of India, freed from the traditions of the past, (and is an) expression of the faith of the nation in the future*" (Khosla 11). The modern style of architecture that this city presented was to express the dynamism of a free people on their way to economic development, a nation that could rise both in its own eyes and in the image it presented to the rest of the world. This modernist style foregrounded architectural symbols and spaces which were divorced from external Orientalist features and existing practices.

²⁶⁵ At independence, India had less than one architect per 1,000,000 population as against Britain's one architect per 4,000 population. More than half of the 300 or so architects were from Bombay.

²⁶⁶ A movement or architectural style based on the use of new and innovative technologies of construction, such as glass, steel, and reinforced concrete; the belief that function should follow form (functionalism); devotion to minimalism

As such, it propelled a shift far away from both the coloniser practices and any indigenous systems of built practices.

Architects who became part of the Chandigarh endeavour continued to follow the paradigm of bare buildings and the stark vocabulary of spaces that the project showcased in the years to come. While most of this was done by government architects, there were also private commissions' (Sharma *The Search*). Even as the country lacked a formal policy towards architecture, Nehru's industrial and urban policies established an archetype in Chandigarh that was soon replicated across most urban centres.



Fig 4.16 High Court designed by Le Corbusier in Chandigarh 1955.
Sanyam Bahga https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Capitol_High_Court.jpg

At the same time, in the First Five Year Plan²⁶⁷, announced in 1952, arts were perceived to be a binding site for reinforcing the idea of the nation (Cherian). And yet again, there was no formal policy governing them. Despite that, the inclusion of arts

²⁶⁷ The five-year plans were conceptualised and executed by the Planning commission to monitor the growth of the Indian economy.

under that rubric of education resulted in the setting up of cultural institutions of the state, such as the Sangeet Natak Akademi ²⁶⁸(1953) and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to preserve and promote arts. The SNA, funded by the government, promoted dance by organising seminars, festivals and dispersing scholarships. Their role also extended to the setting up of institutions to impart art training, such as the National School of Drama (1959)²⁶⁹, the documenting of existing practices, and also the recognition of dance practices as Classical. While the regulations for declaring particular traditions as classical were never made clear, in the words of Raghavan, a system of pedagogy, a connect with the sacred texts and the ability to echo a spiritual essence of ‘India’, or ‘Indian-ness’, were essentially required²⁷⁰. Consequently, dance traditions began to reinvigorate themselves through movement vocabularies from ancient texts and sculptures to gain legitimacy, which was also compelled by the need for unique regional identities.

Succinctly, it can be stated that in independent India, different arts metamorphosed differently in response to the vision of the Nation after independence. While classical dances found themselves cubby-holed to notions of a tradition stemming from an imagined past as interpreted through texts, the trends around built forms were deliberately divorced from any adherence to the past. And thus, in contrast

²⁶⁸ Anita Cheria notes that the setting up of institutes of SNA etc., in 1953 that allowed the state to shift attention from ‘a production of crafts’ to a ‘focus on arts’ are reminiscent of European guilds that marked a shift from religious affiliations to secular organisers.

²⁶⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy in Imphal and Kathak Kendra in New Delhi -1964, respectively. National Projects of Support to Kuttilyattam 2007 - Chau dances of Eastern India (1994) and Sattriya traditions of Assam (2008).

²⁷⁰ The project of recognizing dances as ‘classical’ and the ensuing debates around them have been debated by a number of authors. Bharatnatyam, the reworked name of Sadi, Kathak, Kathakali and Manipuri were initially the only recognized national /classical forms. In the following years, prolific choreographers and gurus of other traditions such as Kuchipudi and Odissi deliberately reconstructed the grammar and structure of these practices aligning them with movement vocabularies from the treatises such as *Natyasastra*, *Nritta Ratnavali* and the newly discovered *Abhinaya Chandrika* respectively. For details see Jonnalagada, Banerji.

to the contextual and contiguous evolution, performing arts and architecture followed different trajectories to serve Indian modernity post-Independence.

The proscenium stage, with its transformative potential around, which pivoted the discourse around classical dance, remained an integral aspect of cultural infrastructure. At the outset, the Nation-State itself stood ambivalent and did not enforce any regulations regarding cultural infrastructure or even on the spaces of performances. For example, the Folk Dance Festival was conducted on lawns and elevated platforms at Universities, while the landmark SNA dance festival in 1958 was conducted in the newly constructed Vigyan Bhavan. The Vigyan Bhavan was built by the Public Works Department and was a multi-utility convention centre with multiple stage spaces. However, photographic evidence from the event reveals that performances were also conducted on the lawns.

Yet, the move to the concert stage and away from temples and other sites of patronage, which began in the late 19th century, was further proscribed by,

- a) The official declaration of the Devadasi Abolition Act in Madras Presidency (1947) and, in other cases, the takeover of the functioning of temples. These legal sanctions categorically banned not just the dedication of women practitioners but also dance on temple premises.
- b) The casual attitude to cultural infrastructure, which meant that whether designed by European or American or Indian architects, the proscenium model continued to be upheld, and,
- c) The idea that the purpose of all arts was ‘to present an image of India’ - whether ritualistic or performative.

One might argue that the process of presenting the dances on proscenium stages in the 1920s itself marked this rupture. Yet, the methods and compulsions noted above that

reinforced this estrangement were possibly an outcome of the need to present a secular nation.

Towards the end of the second decade of Independence, the paradox of modernism reflected by the Chandigarh experiment with the societal functioning of the people became evident in the years to come. As Kalia puts forth, “There are two cultures in Chandigarh – the culture of buildings and monuments and the culture of the people. *The two cultures are different in content, and the monuments and buildings do not represent the spirit of the people*” (Kalia 152). Reflecting on the project in a seminar of architects in 1959, Nehru’s words²⁷¹, “*I do not like every building in Chandigarh. I like a few very much; I like the general conception of the township very much, but what I like above all is this creative approach, not being tied down to what has been done by our forefathers and the like, but thinking out in new terms,*” are indicative of the success of the project.

As such, even as the current trends of modernism continued, towards the end of the 1960s, a re-examining of indigenous practices in existing towns and villages of the nation began. However, in the changing socio-economic contexts of the country, the transition of these indigenous principles to urban complexities was fraught with anxieties. Therefore, a new “architecture of associations’ was explored. Eventually, many architects schooled²⁷² in America and influenced by the modern aesthetic foregrounded the need for cultural continuity with the past while incorporating new material technologies available at their disposal²⁷³. The emergence of a new direction

²⁷¹ For details of the speech see Appendix III

²⁷² Habib Rehman, Achyut Kanvinde and the late Durga Bajpai. In the 1950s architectural education expanded. By the end of the fifties, there were 12 schools of architecture acknowledging that economic development would require a manifold increase in the number of architects. However, these systems of education were largely imported from Britain, with a significant number of students migrating to England and America for higher education.

²⁷³ For example, Correa’s Gandhi Bhawan where one sees a return to using of indigenous material and spatial layouts.

was one that balanced the modernism and a break away from tradition foregrounded by Nehruvian vision and the search for roots approach that was being investigated by another group²⁷⁴.

These negotiations with forms and spaces are also evident in infrastructure intended for culture during this period when a number of theatres, such as the Tagore / Ravindra Theatres (marking the birth centenary of Tagore)²⁷⁵, and institutions such as the NCPA (1969) etc., were built. Most of these were executed as multipurpose and multi-venue establishments with seminar halls, libraries and theatres. Specific to performance spaces, while some of them experimented with doing away with the paradigm of the proscenium, these were anomalies.

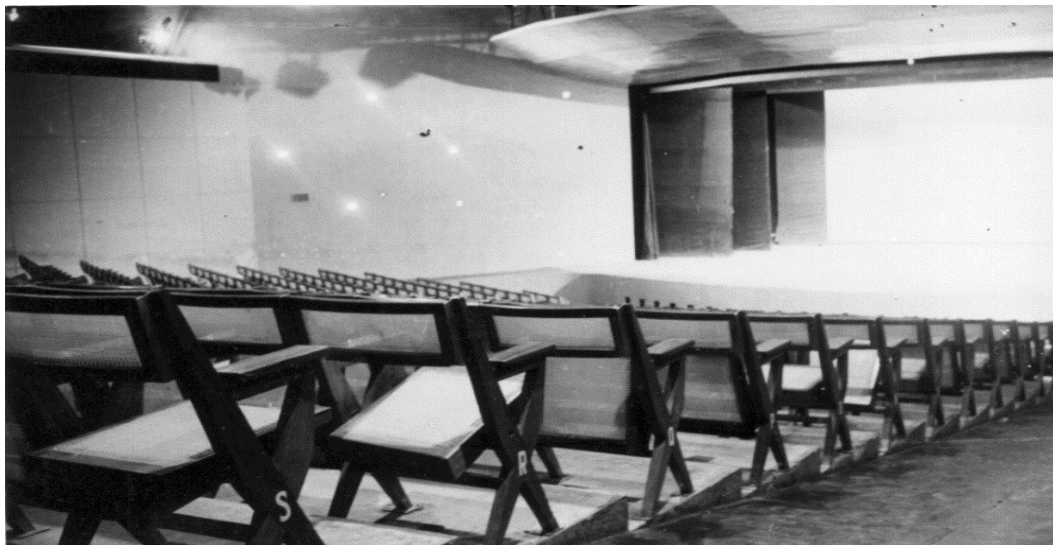


Fig 4.17 Tagore Theatre, interior.
Illustrating the relationship between the audience and the stage.
<https://architexturez.net/file/tagore-theatre-prakask-int-2-png>

²⁷⁴ For a detailed history of post-independent architectural development see <https://architexturez.net/doc/az-cf-123837>

²⁷⁵ Rabindra Bhavan, Delhi is the trinity complex of National Academies — Lalit Kala (art); Sangeet Natak (dance, drama and music) and Sahitya Akademi (literature) built by fusing modern vocabulary with traditional grammar and was designed by Habib Rehman. Ravindra Bharati in Hyderabad began to be built in 1960. The design for this was by Mohammad Fayazuddin, an alumnus of the Architectural Association School of Architecture, London.

In those cases, too, it was mostly just the proscenium arch that was discarded while the geometrical orientation, the system of masking and the distance between the artistes and the audience remained the same. As such, all along they ensured that the nature of the performer-relationship still remained that of the distant observer watching a performance.

Beginning in the 1970s, the Nation's political climate was one of transition when notions of secular nationalism gave way to growing apprehensions around the idea of secularism itself. The ripple effects of these were perhaps what prompted the surge of Dance Festivals sponsored by the State including the promotion of Dance Festivals at ancient historical sites. While this coming back of dance into the temple's precincts may seem like a return to a natural context, these events such as the Khajuraho Dance Festival (1976) and the Konark Festival were only set against historic temple sites. Organised by regional centres of SNA or the State Tourism Departments,²⁷⁶ these events, as Purnima Shah says, "reduced artistic dance and music for use as mere display devices in attracting lay tourists to the "backdrop" sites that glorify a historical past." (Shah)

Simultaneously, the intimate space as a venue for performance began to be promoted. Veteran Odissi exponent Sharon Lowen notes that in the 1970s, small gatherings called *baithaks* were often the mode through which presentations for discerning audiences were made. These became immensely popular, with even the Sangeet Natak Akademi making provisions for them (pers. comm).

²⁷⁶ "Khajuraho Dance Festival was conducted on the premises of the temples initially, but owing to logistical challenges it was shifted to a nearby open ground. See <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2021/02/19/for-the-first-time-in-44-years-khajuraho-dance-festival-to-be-held-temple-premises.html>

The 1980s marked another shift. International and national events, including the imposition of emergency, the general decay of the Indira Gandhi led the party, and secessionist claims across the nation impelled the need to present a more forward-looking dynamic nation. The new sentiments were given form in events such as the Asian Games in Delhi (1982), the Commonwealth Heads of State in Goa (1983), and the East-West Dance Encounter (1984), all of which were spectacles that enabled the promotion of a new zeitgeist of Indianness. Cultural infrastructure too acquiesced itself to reflect the new spirit. Structures that challenged the status quo and reflected both the stylistic trends and the design ideals of the architect, such as the Jawahar Kala Kendra in Rajasthan and the Bharat Bhawan, stand as illustrations. The Jawahar Kala Kendra, for example, has three performing areas, an open-air theatre designed after a traditional Rajasthan stepwell, a regular closed theatre for modern theatre and a black box where intimate performances take place. The Bharat Bhawan, on the other hand, is the only successful product of a 1970s initiative to build in every state capital an institution to celebrate the cultural and creative output of the nation. Multiple typologies of performance spaces, indicating a connection with the past and an appreciation of global practice trends that promoted a move away from the proscenium setting, are both seamlessly provided here. With the rigour of societies such as SPIC MACAY (estd. 1977), which promote informal presentations and host events across the nation at multiple locations, including educational institutions, new experiments in movement vocabularies were undertaken by prolific choreographers. These envisioned the traditional format in a new light routing them through regional vocabularies. The demand for contemporary Indian forms in the international arenas also broadened the scope of Indian dance, which now stressed internationalism and modernism over nationalism.

In the last 20 years, performance spaces have been subject to a paradigm shift. The country certainly has moved from its Nehruvian roots to a capitalist-driven liberal economy that gives agency to private enterprises. Promoted both by the State and private patrons, no setting is a taboo; from seminars in hotels to dance venues in and against temples to the prosceniums and site-specific events, all continue to exist. No longer chained to the frontal demand of the proscenium, the use of stage space by performers of both traditional genres and innovators are beginning to embrace and respond to the primacy of experiencing the image rather than seeing it/ viewing it; signaling a shift towards a Kantian²⁷⁷ understanding of Space - a trend that started in the West.

Today, a clear need for intimate theatre/ rehearsal spaces for performance of theatre and dance is clearly recognized both by the government and the individual. This is evident in plans announced by the Ministry of Culture in 2011 for the 'Studio Theatre Scheme', which states that "Under this scheme, they will provide generous support to theatre groups to address the problem of non-availability of performing spaces". This will give a much needed helping hand to our artistes and allow them to concentrate on creative expression.

As noble as the intentions of the government are, as Purnima Shah says, "The very fact that artistic dance and music in India evolved within a specific context, serving a specific purpose for a specific audience is undiscerning to the planning and organizing officials of State Tourism." This stands true even for other spaces that Indian dancers occupy today. Ironically, even as these efforts are motivated under the rubric of "preservation," "continuity" and "promotion" of traditional arts - what exactly is 'being promoted' and how is a question none has sought to ask" (Shah 92-93).

²⁷⁷ In contrast to the Cartesian understanding of Space, philosopher Kant argues that Space is merely the form of outer illusion and not a property or even a system of relations between real things.

4.7 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter was to bring to fore the understanding that built spaces do not emerge in isolation. The theatrical space/ building with the proscenium arch was part of a larger built vocabulary, making itself manifest on colonial urban Indian shores since the late 18th century. While cities were transformed in the colonial encounter, the proscenium stage was embedded into the urbanscape of the cities just like any other built form. However, the changing policies around the usage of public space, the policing of artistic practices and the rise of bourgeois public organisations that aimed at preserving arts were all processes that promoted the move of performing arts to built performance spaces. That these built theatre spaces of the colonisers and later the natives too were constructed with a proscenium arch was an outcome of the popularity of theatre, i.e., drama practices. The transformations necessitated by the proscenium arch slowly but surely entrenched themselves into dance practices of the urban and, through osmosis, into the rural settings and continue to date. Aesthetic regulation, scenography and restrictions of time all became part of the impositions that gradually but eventually transformed artistic traditions.

Even as Independent India changed its courses multiple times with regards to the built form, the proscenium model, which was the preferred venue from the 1920s, continued to be the pivot around which classical dance traditions were structured for nearly six decades. During that period, a great deal about them was modified. Inherently adapting themselves to the picture frame, the dancers' actions became two dimensional, expansive and habituated to an orientation that expects the audience to 'view' their performance only from one side and from a distance.

The revised aesthetic suited to cater to the proscenium has become so ingrained that one senior dancer remarked that she found it hard to acquiesce to the stage at Jawahar Kendra, with its audience seated in different directions. The lingering question is, where does the dancer orient oneself while dancing? It is then not odd that the proscenium still seems to be the most common form of staging a classical performance.

Fusion of Horizons

“Space dictates terms of contact in the process of communication”

Yi Fu Tuan

This work began by looking to understand the role and implications of built spaces on Indian dance. The study included examining texts, representations, regulations and prescriptions on space (in some instances), and lastly the praxis of dance itself. This journey has to lead to an understanding, as geographer Tuan offers in the lines that open this chapter - space or rather built space governs how dance /dancer communicates with its audience. In other words, it revealed that although built space is never discussed as a critical feature in the discourse of the aesthetics of Indian dance, both the performative and the aesthetic of Indian dances are determined by the interactions between performers and the audience that built spaces facilitate. And further that these connections between dance and architecture are shaped by the political, religious, and geographical projects of the State.

The second chapter shows that diverse genealogies of dance and drama and training and performance spaces were discerned even in early Sanskrit literature. While these works rarely discuss dance as being confined to specific spaces, they centralize occasions for performance and even the importance of patronage in perpetuating the arts. In addition, some texts also indicate that peripatetic actors and performers were members of society whose artistic and social practices had to be regulated. It is not surprising then that the *Natyasastra*, which follows these early works, proclaims that a fixed built space (*natyagriha*) was imperative to the presentation of *Natya* (and dance).

Besides bestowing respectability on the artists who performed there, this fixed playhouse also monitored their artistic practices.

At the same time, it is likely that this playhouse contributed to formulating the praxis of Natya as discussed in the *Natyasastra*. This playhouse, as has been elaborated, was defined by spatial properties of separation (i.e., physical barriers) between the performers and the audience and the geometry of stage space. Consequently, it is natural that the unidirectional location of the audience, together with the size of the stage, regulated not just the orientation of the performers but also proscribed their movements on stage. These sanctions (such as abridging and elongating movements depending on the shape of the stage), as seen in the *purvaranga* rituals, are described as intrinsic to the grammar of Natya. It could be said that in stating that Natya is best suited for medium-sized playhouses, Bharata himself entwined the corporeal aesthetic of Natya with the built form.

Dance's connection with built form and patronage is also evinced in early sculptural representations. This connection can be seen in the various relief works at Udaygiri viz, the *nartaki* performing on an independent stage and the dancers inscribed in the private quarters of the queen. In the former, the dancer is seen on a raised platform framed by structural members indicating perhaps a public performance, while the dancers in the presence of a patron (queen) are bereft of it. Epigraphical evidence at this site also throws light on the key role of the State in the promotion and sustenance of arts

While these imageries are articulate enough to grasp that dance was a highly technical and evolved practice, the grammar of Indian dance at this juncture can barely be comprehended in these representations or even in the early texts. It is only in

Natyasastra's detailed description of body comportment for dance that Indian dances' aesthetics are first revealed. This dissertation suggests that whatever may have been the nature of dance outside, the description of body movements in this text are possibly limited only to those which could be presented on the wooden stages of the *natyagriha* (the absence of jumps/ floor movement being a case in point). Thus, what we see today as the grammar of Nritta prescribed in Natyasastra is one that was meant to be presented only in a built form. Additionally, it is likely that by being a part of the *natyagriha*, dance perhaps also subscribed to and replicated the didactic purpose of Natya.

Towards the end of the first millennia and in the early second millennia, the associations between dance and built spaces become evident in literature as also in temples and sculptures. The absorption of *ranga mandapa* (for the presentation of dance) as a fundamental unit of the spatial layout of the early Hindu temple indexes the role of dance in the functioning of the temple as well as of society. In the later centuries, too, the expansion of the temple complex is linked to dance, as seen in the addition of *nritta mandapas* and *medai* or large platforms. Thus, within the context of the temple itself, different spaces specifically designed for the presentation of dance and catering to different functions of both entertainment and servitude/ritual to the god emerged.

Concurrent with the emergence of free-standing-built temples were treatises discussing dance independent of Natya. These texts explicate dance as a form that is evocative and complete in itself. By amassing vocabularies of *desi* in addition to *marga* (described by Natyasastra), these texts emphasize the many variations of corporeal explorations of Space in dance. It is in these texts that dances' circulations within royal

courts and the systems of patronage associated with it become evident. Unlike the *Natyaśāstra*, in which the *fixed ranga*, is one of the eleven elements that make *Natya*, dance texts establish the centrality of *context* and *audience in meaning-making* in dance. Consequently, other aspects such as the composition of the assembly, the ritual propitiation of the stage, the semiotics of the assembly hall, and notably the concepts of the visual positioning of the performer and accompanists on stage space (in relation to the patron, i.e., a raised platform/centre stage etc.) are given precedence.

While the descriptions of performance space associated with courts, in particular, echo the paradigm set by *Natyaśāstra*, it is evident that over centuries they were aligned to shifting styles of builtscapes. For example, the *Nartana Nirnaya*, which was conceived in Mughal courts, mentions the circular *ranga* and the *Sangita Saramarita*, which was produced on the heels of colonisation, describes playhouses that played host to the concert-style art presentations.

Crucial to this discussion is the awareness in some of these texts that a correlation exists between the Space of performance and the nature of dance. For example, in making declarations that certain performative genres (of dance and music) must *only* be presented in *nritta mandapas* of specific (square/ circular) size and shape, the texts reify the impact of the geometry of built Space in the presentation and appreciation of those arts²⁷⁸.

Interestingly in both texts and in temples, the dimensions of *ranga pitha/ranga mandapa* -at least until the late medieval period - remain close to the dimensions inherited from the *Natyaśāstra*, i.e., approximately 12 feet square. This commonality is perhaps not incidental but indicative of the praxis of Indian dance itself, translating into spaces designed for dance. However, presentations of dance were certainly not limited

²⁷⁸ Critically that the stage shape (square/triangular) influenced the choreographies on stage is hinted at in the *Natyaśāstra*.

to fixed spaces. And it is likely that the praxis of dance/ drama presented outside of the restrictive spaces of the *mandapas* (usually marked by four columns) would have been different in both expansiveness and orientation.

Texts indicate that allied to shifts in patronage, the ideas around the aesthetics and purpose of dance were not constant. And these shifting tendencies are noticed in the imageries of dance too. Apart from the early female dancers, most relief works till the late 9th century appear to be those of dramatic scenes. These scenes predominantly feature gods, and at times goddesses in attitudes of dance- underpinning that dance was employed as part of *Natya*. The popularity of the image of Siva as Natesa, in particular, and later that of Nataraja, indicates that dance at this period was revered perhaps only in its manifestation as an attribute of the divine. However, in tandem with literary productions which examine dance independent of *Natya*, depictions of female dancers are seen post the 10th century. These representations of female dancers and their troupes capture the role as well as occasions for dance. The kinetics of the bodies, the manner of framing, and the positioning of these representations within the temple complex all come together to direct not just at the distinction in the aesthetics of *marga* and *desi* forms of dance but also between dances' function in temples and its currency during its time. For example, in the Chola reign, images of dance are first seen only on the bodies of Siva dancing the *karanas* in the sacred Space of the *garbhagriha* and later begin to spread outward to envelop the *mandapas*, the stairways and even the *gopuras*. Mostly, it is the solo dancer who is seen on the pillars and the ceilings of the *nritta mandapas*, while troupes of dancers (at times with male accompanists) and scenes of revelry line the base of the many free-standing units in the medieval period. In both these representations, even as the turned-out position of the feet and movement of the hands

seem similar, there exist subtle variations in the body kinetics of dancers rendered in the *inner spheres* of the temple from those on the outside.

The descriptions in the texts of the *desi* aesthetic are often marked by an increase in positions of feet, the *sthanakas*, acrobatic movements such as jumps, leaps and elaborations of body attitudes. And curiously, it is this dynamic of the dancer which is represented in the *outer sphere* of the temples. Thus, it could be said that dance representations at this juncture highlight *marga* as principally employed for a specific purpose, limited to the inner domain and associated with fixed settings, and the more fluid *desi* as belonging to the open public sphere. However, these understandings were not sacrosanct and shifted with time. For instance, in the later Chola icons of female dancers performing the *karanas* of Natyasastra are seen welcoming the devotees/onlookers on the *gopuras* of the temple. Parallely, validating the popularity of *desi* dances and the sanctity of dance itself in the Kakatiyan regime, troupes of dancers engaged in *desi* practices of *rasaka* find a place in inner *mandapas* near the sanctum. These later representations signal a shift of the purpose of *marga* from being associated only with ritual to a more social purpose and the changing attitudes towards *desi* practices. The indicative nature of the dance representations, i.e., image giving meaning to the place, the place symptomatic of practice and aesthetic of representation being circumscribed by Space is a phenomenon noticed across the subcontinent. For example, in the medieval temples of Orissa, the individual female dancers framed by an aedicule become restricted to the external surfaces of *nat mandir* and dancers carved in easy, relaxed attitudes are found carved at the base of *chatrams* catering to the people on the move in the 18th century.

It is perhaps relevant to bring in that the ways of representation in a sculpture direct at the nature and status of the dance projected. Elements such as a frame around

the dancer or an elevated platform are indicative of a practice that was not quotidian. Framing as a device isolates the subject represented, i.e., the dancer here. It establishes a distinct context within the larger panorama and thus secures both the practice and the dancer. Consequently, in representations, it is likely that the frame was used as a device to designate practices that were to be guarded, revered, and kept intact. The *karanas* on the *gopurams* of Chidambaram, the devadasi of Brahmeshwar temple, amongst other representations discussed in chapter three stand testimony to it.

Suggesting that *desi practices too are contiguous with builtspaces*, texts such as Nritta Ratnavali mention that *nritta mandapas* of *jyestha* type were suitable for hosting performances involving a large number of dancers (often categorized as *desi practices*). Accordingly, the descriptions of some *desi* dances like Rasakam (involving groups of female dancers, often numbering 16-32) are even characterised by the choreography of dancers on stage, such as the manner of entries and exits. Significantly, these descriptions focus on the collective aesthetics of the group and not on the individual dancer. The depiction of dancers performing Kolattam on a raised platform devoid of a frame in the Ramappa temple and the built evidence of the *Mahanavamidibba*, which hosted choreographed dances performed by groups in the Vijayanagara period, stand testimony to these associations.

Indeed, groups of dancers presenting on the fixed stage are also seen in the Natyasastra. In that text, choreographed dances are called *pindibandhas*, and involve comparatively smaller numbers of female dancers. They describe various manners of clustering and dispersing of dancers on stage to highlight the aesthetic of formations, indicating that *pindibandhas* were possibly employed for symbolic and aesthetic purposes, as against emotive communication through the abhinaya of the individual.

Succinctly, this work puts forth that association with a physical setting is characteristic of *marga*. It is defined not just by vocabularies envisaged in texts but is also regulated by the limitations of the structures it flowered in. It is important to note that the individual dancer remains at the center of the exposition of *marga*. The descriptions of *Desi dances* in the texts, on the other hand, tell us that they may also be read as performative practices that are responsive to shifts in geographies, as well as free from dependencies on physical structures. It can be said that this lack of limitation both allows and demands aesthetics that can also be imagined through collective bodies. It is then not surprising that an aspersion often cast on the contemporary dance presentations which surrender to the demands of large platform stages is that they deviate from the *essence of marga*.

The impact of Space on the praxis of Indian dance is not limited to those ensuing because of interactions with individual built forms /frames. As seen in chapter four, other manners of governing Space, such as the imposing of urban laws along with the European inspired architecture and spatial aesthetic of the urbanscapes of the colonisers too played a pernicious role during the revival of Indian dance traditions.

Following the advent of the colonial rule, the dwindling patronage for performances at traditional venues such as temples and courts of kings as well regulations on the use of public spaces mandated that the pluralistic public/ concert venues in the newly gentrified cities became the inevitable spaces for artistic performances.²⁷⁹ Simultaneously, the proscenium arch first appeared in the subcontinent in the 18th century (as an element of the playhouses constructed by the colonisers). However, its popularity with the emerging cosmopolitan and itinerant

²⁷⁹ The foundations for concert-style trends in presentations and audience seating were laid out even as early as the 17th century in India, however, the proscenium arch becoming the mainstay for all performance spaces was certainly a colonial enterprise that continued well into the 20th century.

indigenous theatre groups (who favoured it for ease of presentation) made it an indispensable element of stage space. These coinciding with other imperatives, such as the necessity to provide a *respectable space* for artistic performances and changes in the attitude of the viewing public (which grew increasingly accustomed to a front-back orientation of the cinema), made the theatre houses built in colonial aesthetics and their proscenium stages sought after for presentations.

The process of reconfiguration of dance traditions to suit the proscenium was one that was *limited/affected* by structural elements of the form of the stage space. This relegation has been particularly highlighted as critical to the changes in Indian dance. In contrast to the traditional *experiential and contextual spaces*, the spatial setting of the proscenium theatre space is static and fixed. It demands distance between the audience and stage Space and is characterised by the presence of the visual barrier, i.e., the picture frame of the arch around the stage space. However, here, the frame not just contains and secures artistic practices but obscures the elements outside of the frame making the bodies in the performance *observable*. At the same time, it also imposes a corporeal movement that is more two-dimensional. The raised, framed and distant stage viewed from a unidirectional perspective promotes a cartesian reading of the stage. It endorses a shift of the locus of power away from the kinesthetic potential of the dancer²⁸⁰ to the dancers positioning on stage.

Simultaneously, this also marks a shift from bodies producing the stage space and imbuing it with significance through dance to the stage space carrying meaning and therefore making the choreography of dance on stage a critical aspect of the presentation. The influence of architecture/urbanscape on dance is evident in other ways too. Similar to the processes of exchange in the Renaissance period (where the

²⁸⁰ With dancers accruing meaning based on their position (i.e., center, up /down etc.).

aesthetics of the built environment inspired new trends in plastic and performative arts), it was the principles of order, symmetry and the like evident in colonial urban planning which inspired the visual aesthetics of dance as it was reconfigured for the proscenium. These influences are reflected in the eschewing of organic performative elements such as the orchestra accompanying the artiste as he/she moved across the stage, repetitive movements of moving forward and retreating etc., and in favour of the ones which contributed to the performance of dance as an organized spectacle. And it is this grammar of dance established in the proscenium that continues to date.

Following independence, as discussed in chapter four, urbanscape and artistic practices were channelled across different trajectories to serve the nation. While trends in architecture were pivoted around modernism, theatrical and solo dance traditions were clothed in oriental narratives even as artistic practices continued to be reconfigured to suit the proscenium.

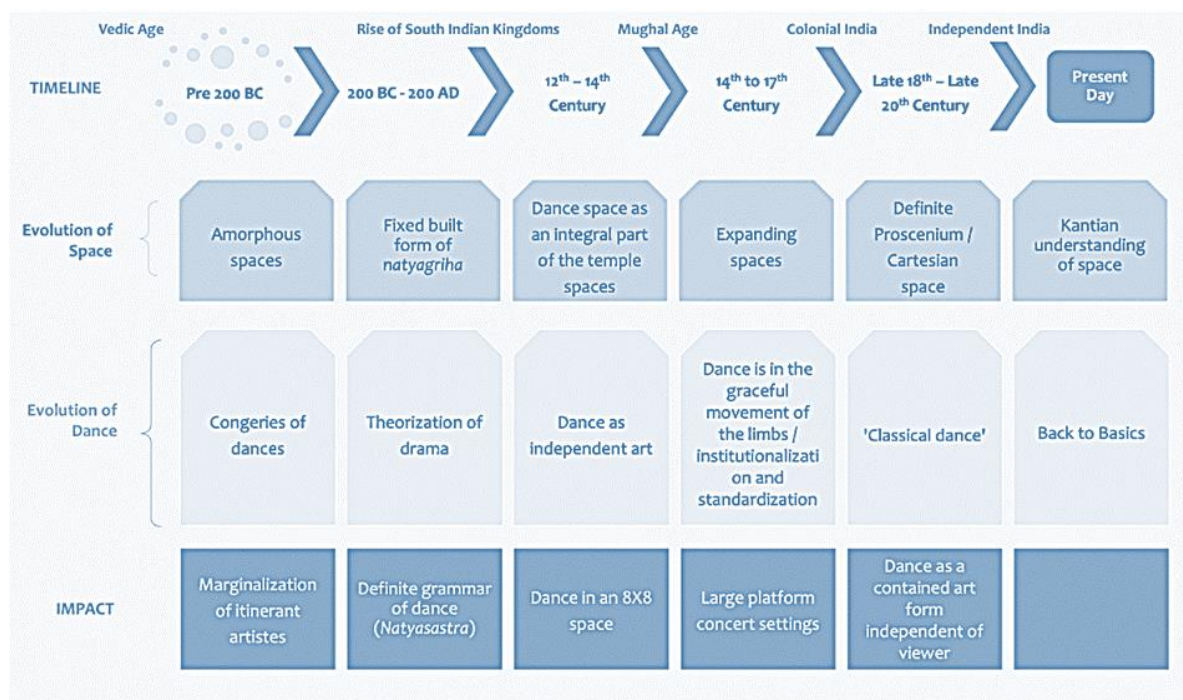


Plate III Evolution of concepts around space and dance

As this work draws to a close, it warrants one last stop, i.e., at the *dancers themselves* - the ruminations presented thus far are based on evidence from the past, where neither the representations nor the texts examined engaged with the experiences of the dancers. And as dancers today no longer remain confined to the traditional / fixed spaces, this last section attends to their voice.

It matters, and yet it does not:

In line with postmodern scholarship, the considerations around Space for Indian dancers seem to exist between the real and the imagined (De Certeau, Soja, Hall, Goldman). While for some, associations between dance and Space are fueled by metaphoric and even esoteric descriptions, for others, Space is an immediate reality with perceptible elements. This real Space imposes restrictions; it is a field of vision that directs their energies and tells them how they need to manoeuvre through it.

Bharatanatyam exponent Malavika Sarukkai, known for her thematic solos, proclaims, “*Space is silent, holding potential. The dancer enters, gives birth to movement, and the magic begins. Space is sculpted, energised and redesigned. Imagination takes flight, and hitherto unknown worlds come into being as the dancing body takes us into the inner spaces of the heart and mind*” (Sarukkai). To which another Bharatanatyam exponent Alarmel Valli adds equally, “*Speaking of spaces in performance, a complete dancer sculpts not just the physical, but equally, the psychological and spiritual spaces, too. How meaningfully this is achieved depends on the depth and richness of the dancer’s art*” (Jafa).

Space, as these artists articulate, is an abstract entity - neither infinite nor immediate or even material. It is akin to a vessel that exists in the same realm as the dancer but remains a passive participant, which conveys no meaning until the dancer enters. These sentiments align conceptually with the thoughts of contemporary

architects such as Tschumi²⁸¹, who advocate that architecture only comes into being when something happens in it. And that there is no architecture without events or actions. In other words, Space for dance is constructed by the event of the dance and one which participates in the event of dance after it has been *redesigned* by the presence of the dancer.

Even as Space remains malleable, allowing that *Space* has a real component, Kuchipudi exponent Jai Kishore Mosalikanti says, “*One forgets where I am dancing either (in) a temple, stage or a linoleum floor; unless it hits me hard, to bring me out of the trance*” (pers. comm.).

The idea then that dance or movement could be impacted by the Space too is not given much credence by these artists. As Mosalikanti adds, “*...it (movement) originates in the mind, (and) will manifest as a movement not because there is space available.*” (pers. comm.) On similar lines, Bharatanatyam artiste Kamalini Dutt (quoting the Siva Sutras) says, “*The antaratma is your ranga. (It is) the inner Space itself...The dance is happening inside of you first; you are only giving an expression outside.*” (pers. comm.) In centralizing the potential of dancers as key to performance, the musings of these artists are reminiscent of Sarangadeva’s prescriptions on dance which declare that the efficacy of performance and of movement rest with the artiste.

This centralising of the body as the repository of movement is noticed even when stage/ space is not as an abstract entity but spoken of in concrete, measurable terms. As Kathak artiste Aditi Mangaldas muses while discussing her training with Kathak exponent late Birju Maharaj, “*(f)rom Maharaj ji, ... I learnt the connection of the centre of my body to the rest of my body. So, it doesn’t matter if there is 2ft of Space*

²⁸¹ A proponent of deconstructivism. Deconstructivism is a movement of postmodern architecture which appeared in the 1980s. It gives the impression of the fragmentation of the constructed building, commonly characterised by an absence of obvious harmony, continuity, or symmetry.

or 25 metres of space. It is the connection that is the inner engineering of the body.”
(Sahasrabudhe).

Yet, interestingly, these sentiments do not indicate a total disregard for the significance of Space in dance and of the dancer *in* Space for artists. As she continues to talk of her training under Kumudini Lakhia, “*(f)rom Kumiben one learns a sense of ‘horizontal’ where you reach out and connect – my little, tiny body in connection to the Space around me, in connection to the height, width and breadth of the stage, my connectivity ... (with the) idea of the light – to the stage and the presentation.... With Kumiben, every detail was looked into the stagecraft, costumes, lights, entry, exits, the stance*” (Sahasrabudhe).

Mangaldas’s reflections stand testimony to the implicit dialectics around Space in Indian dance. At the outset, they reveal that Space in Indian dance is explored as an extension of the body itself, and thus the dancing body is unconcerned by the limits of stage space (a sentiment shared by dancers discussed earlier). At the same time, it also tells us that dancers are mindful of dance as happening *in* Space, that they are cognizant of Space as an element that exists outside of the dancer and that the onus of connecting with the constituents of Space rests with the dancer. A closer look at Mangaldas’ statements also divulges that the significance of Space, in particular, stage space is different for the individual dancer and for groups of dancers. Choreographer Kumudini Lakhia’s works are often thematic productions involving a number of dancers, while Maharaj’s exposition focused on the individual dancer. Implicit in the attention to detail in Kumudini Lakhia’s works is an awareness that the nature of the work being

performed/created is imagined around an architecture defined by the separation between the performer and audience²⁸².

This envisioning of the distance between the dancers and the audience as integral to the process of choreography today is also attested to by acclaimed Bharatanatyam choreographer Sheela Unnikrishnan, who says, “*the audience has to be at a particular distance to view the stage, to get a view(of) the complete picture.*” And adds in the same breath, “... *but this (imagining the distance) does not matter in solos.*” (pers. comm.) – an assertion that ties in with Maharaj’s words.

Indeed, that distance between the performers and the audience is critical for the experience of Natya was established in the Natyasastra (a distance which Edward Hall discussing human proxemics categorises as *social far /public close*)²⁸³; while such prescriptions are seldom made in the texts which deal with dance alone²⁸⁴. However, the architecture of spaces where *marga* flourished, i.e., the *mandapas* in temples or even the salon spaces, tells us that the dancer and the spectator were situated in close proximity.

Reflecting on the thoughts of different artists, it is likely that the ambiguity around the *Space of performance* for the individual dancers is because the idea of Space is a palimpsest of contradictions. For, even with a given setting, Space for Indian dance came to be identified by *the distance between the audience and the performer*. And proximity/distance became not just natural but *necessary* for its praxis (especially for Nritya). While on the other hand, the performances of ensembles were/are akin to

²⁸² This paradigm of separation as seen earlier established by the proscenium stages.

²⁸³ Edward Hall defines human proxemic as intimate (6 inches to 8 inches), personal (Close phase – 1.5 to 2.5 feet, Far phase – 2.5 to 4 feet) social (Close phase – 4 to 7 feet, Far phase – 7 to 12 feet) and public distances (Close phase – 12 to 25 feet, Far phase – 25 feet).

²⁸⁴ except Nritya Ratnavali, which prescribes a distance of 12 feet and falls under *social far*.

Natya, demanding a certain distance for appreciation of the presentation. However, in the period when dance moved into the proscenium, “*the idea of space...*” as art curator Sadanand Menon puts forth, “*was imposed upon dance*” (pers. comm). The architecture of the new Space, with its seemingly innocuous frame, augmented not just the *public far* distance but also visually isolated the performers from the audience. Consequently, the writing of this new Space on the praxis of Indian dance, as it is known, manifested itself not just as frontality but also enforced on the dancer the need to disengage from the audience²⁸⁵.

Sympathetic audience:

This sense of detachment, however, does not absolve the dancer from the need to perform for a sympathetic audience. For example, centralizing that the body is sentient, Kuchipudi dancer Sindhuja says, “*but of course the Space I am dancing in matters. It is not always the stage space; it is also where the audience is ... it promotes a shift in the energy I bring to the dance.*” Continuing in a similar vein, Kuchipudi dancer Katyayani says, “*I definitely think that Space and its environs have an impact on how I dance... Before I begin, I check out the Space, the provisions for entry, all of which add up to how I perform. But equally, it is the audience, personally, the moment you step onto the stage, you feel a surge of energy that hits you. It certainly does not happen with an unsympathetic audience or an empty hall*” (pers. comm).

While latent again in such observations is that for a generation of dancers’ performance space often conjures up images consisting of tangible elements; for them, too, it is the position and the presence of a sympathetic audience that is important- even as

²⁸⁵ As Benjamin writes with regards to aura, the closer one is to a piece of art/work, the greater the engagement with it.

contingent conditions are acknowledged as commonplace. And the onus of transcending the contradictions and finding means to connect with the audience rests with the dancer. As Kuchipudi and Vilasini Natyam dancer Anupama Kylash rues, “*Dance forms and dancers have always lent themselves to different spaces. They have no control over what Space they dance in, but they have control over how to make that Space conducive to them.*” (pers. comm.)

In a performance by dancer Nartaki Natraj which the researcher witnessed, the auditorium was modest-sized, seating not more than 200 people. The dancer’s presentation of *varnam* and a *tandava* delighted the audience as they sat back and watched her dance. Yet, halfway through the next piece, ‘*chinna chiru keliye*’, a lilting lullaby to a child, she requested that the house lights be turned on. Now seemingly even more comfortable, she continued to rock the little baby she (imagined) had back to sleep gesturing for the audience to be quiet as she went on - a sign that first elicited a laugh and then a hushed silence from the audience, which was no longer passive. The Space of the performance was the same, the dancer was the very same person too, and yet it changed when the lights turned on, making it open to communication, forcing the audience to become more than just passive observers. This reworking of the performance space was reminiscent of many others that the researcher partook in, whether it was turning the house lights on or using props to minimize the expansive stage to better *frame* the performance for the audience. All of which stand as pointers that dancers remain aware and cognizant that Space can be used/modified to the advantage of the performer. As Odissi and Manipuri exponent Sharon Lowen reminisces of her Guru Kelucaran performance, “*Whether Kelu babu was on a proscenium or anywhere else, he was absolutely, totally aware of everything in his environment. If he had a tree, he used it as a prop - to integrate it into the dance. It was*

never like I am in a void and I will create it. He would use everything that is available.”
(pers. comm.).

Before one can begin to conclude that imaginations of Space differ for young dancers and for exponents or even that the presence of an audience is necessary, Alarmel Valli confesses, *“I have always felt that the level of energy and involvement in my performance is not entirely dictated by the size of the audience. It was a joy to be back dancing on the Music Academy stage even without an audience, for it is a space that is charged with music and the collective energy of thousands of rasikas over the decades”* (Jafa). Or, as Kamalini Dutt reiterates, *“the ideal dimension of a ranga can be recreated even for a reality show. But what about the energy of Space? Spaces become what they are because of the performances that have previously happened there.”* (pers. comm.).

Layering the idea of Space with memory and energy, the idea of performance space and its effect on performance becomes even more complicated. As dancers reflect, performance space can be defined neither by a distinct setting nor in architectural terms. It is neither the context nor distance nor even an audience. The spaces are often created in the minds of the dancers and in the process of the performance. As Sharon Lowen poignantly states, *“Space is what the dancer makes of it... in terms of an artist using the space, both are true, the space is very significant and yet the artiste can make it insignificant by what you do”* (Lowen).

What could, however, be said is that Space leaves its traces. The understanding of Space for Indian dance is produced in relationality and in mind. Whether it is in the manner in which dancers unconsciously respond to physical Space by taking recourse to the flexibility of their techniques or at the level of context and purpose, where they

seemingly distance themselves from the necessity of engagement with the audience by performing for their inner *rasikas*, the spaces where dance has been, leave their imprints - even as that *Space* no longer exists (Coorlawala, *It Matters* 113). As Alessandra states, for Indian dance, *there is not one Space, but Multiple Spaces*.

Conclusion

This work presented that, connections may certainly be drawn between the praxis of Indian dance and material spaces. Although these relations cannot be simplified into a simple cause and effect scenario that this work first envisaged, *they exist*. It offers that with every significant intervention of the built form, a foundational transformation occurred in the practice and purpose of art. It has come to understand that the simple statement that Indian classical dance was performed in the temples, court, and later the proscenium indeed represents three distinct understandings of Space in performance, i.e., Space as context, Space as a relation and Space as geometry, respectively. While the significance of the first two has been well recognized, the effect of geometry cannot be side-lined. For, architecture becomes the catalyst through which distances and proximities, absences and presences, and order and disorder are created. And consequently, promote certain forms of disposition of both the performers and the audience while preventing others. In conclusion, it suggests that even as dancers seem nonchalant about the impact of architectural space on dance, the praxis of dance is indeed a consequence of it. And as Foucault warns, the effects of materiality and Space cannot be ignored, even if they are not deterministic.

At the same time, through its study of sculpture, it puts forth that the State has always been paramount in dance's past and present. The attitudes of diverse regimes to dance came to find their manifestations in the temples and other built forms. Whether it

was the godly images in dance attitude in Brihadesvaralaya or the female dancer in Ramappa, or even the mobile troupes on choultries, the relief works were indeed a product of governmental attitude, and they, in turn, were governed by the nature of dance. And thus, the images of dance *hastas* as seen today in the airports, devoid of their bodies, is perhaps an indication of how the State views dance today-detached from the bodies, dance serves the function of being a representation of the Nation-state with no association with either its multifarious part or even its dynamic present.

The research, however, takes heart in the fact that despite the many changes around the ideas of Space, despite the sanctions around it and even despite the powers that govern it, Indian dance continues to negotiate spaces reinventing itself uniquely even as at its core it remains the same.

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Glossary of Terms

Adavu - A unit of feet movement.

Agamas – Scriptures dated to 8th century conveying ritual knowledge.

Alidha - *Sthanaka* in which the feet are placed with a gap of five *talas* between them

Angika abhinaya - Communication through gestures, postures and body movement

Angula – Unit of measure equal to breadth of the thumb

Anibandhanritya – Dances that are not bound by particular sequences or regulations according to Nartana Nirnaya

Anu - The smallest unit of measure is *anu* (atom)

Apasmara – An immortal dwarf demon representing spiritual ignorance and meaningless speech.

Apsaras - Female Spirits

Artha mandapa – Semi enclosed pavilions in a temple

Asvins – Singing gods

Athodya - Musical instruments

Bahyavastu-anukarini - Referring to an external object

Baithaks – Small gatherings of people

Bandhanritya - Full dance sequences that follow the rules of *abhinaya*, *gati* and *chari*.

Bhava - Emotional states

Brahmasthan - The centre of the structure.

Carcari - A dance of jubilation performed by women during spring.

Charis - Movements of one leg - a simultaneous movement of the foot, the shank and the hip.

Caturasra – Square theatre

Chatrams - Spaces that represented and catered to the mobile and itinerant society particularly in Maratha kingdom 18th century.

Chitrasala – Painting hall

Chuluka-jala - The water of oblation in his palm.

Citrakalasa - The dancer holds a pose as if painted in a picture at the end of a section in dance to.

Cittavrtty-arpika - A particular modality of the mind

Danda – A measure equal to 4 *hastas*

Dapa – Combat

Devadasis – Literally ‘Servants of gods’

Dharmi - Styles of presentation

Dola hasta - A position of the arm which is described in the *Natyasastra* as hanging loosely away from the body, outstretched and free

Gaayika – Singer

Gana - Song

Ganas - A body of attendants who are usually associated with a particular deity.

Ganika - Professional dancer

Garbhagriha - The sanctum sanctorum where the figure of the deity is installed in a niche.

Gopuras - Pyramidal gateways to temples.

Jagati – Platform.

Jatra - Native theatrical genres.

Jyeshtha – Large theatre

Kaksha vibhaga Conventions of stage usage according to *Natyasastra*

Kalyana mandapa - Pavilion for conducting wedding ceremonies.

Kanaka sabha - The pavilion where offerings are made to the deity.

Kanista – Small theatre

Karanas - A unit of dance that includes the coordinated movement of the hand, the wrists the legs and the waist.

Kumbhakarati - The sacred pot.

Kuncita pada - A foot position where the toes are bent.

Lasya - A form of dance or body movement itself presented with gentle and delicate gets.

Lasyangas – A feminine, luscious dance or a gentle form of dance for its representation

Lokadharmi - Realistic presentation

Madhyama vikrsta – Medium sized theatre

Maha mandapa - This is fronted by another (at times) semi-enclosed pavilion or the main assembly space.

Mandala- A *sthanaka* with a turned-out feet with a gap of four *talas*,

Mandalas - Movements which are a combination of a number of *caris*.

Mandapas - Pillared Hall or pavilion for public rituals.

Maruts – Storm deities

Mattavaranis – Areas adjoining the principal stage

Melams - Troupes who presented at disparate sites for patrons and even from those that were presented at *Natya mandapas* in temples.

Mithuna - A pair of images in erotic/ sensual poses

Mukha mandapa - The first *mandapa* or the entrance chamber of the temple

Nadaswaram - A wind instrument.

Namaskaram - An act of greeting by folding the holds. In the realm of dance, this includes touching the floor as a mark of respect.

Nandi mandapas - Pavilions for vehicles of deities

Nartaka - Dancer

Nartaki – A female dancer

Nartanasala - Theatre hall

Nata – Actor

Natakashala – A theatre hall

Nattuvanar - Playing the cymbals.

Natyadharmi - Conventional representation.

Natyagriha The space for performance and assembly in *Natyasastra*

Nayakas – Heroes

Nepathya - Green room

Nritta mandapa - Pavilions for dance

Nritya - A bodily practice that demonstrates *moods* exclusively through the gesture of limbs.

Paddathi – Modality

Pandals - Temporary thatched structures with a raised platform inside, which served as the stage for public presentations

Pataka - A hand gesture where all the fingers are joined and outstretched

Pindibandhas - Groups of dancers presenting on the fixed stage.

Prakaram – The enclosing wall

Pravrtti - Regional variants

Preksha - Seating arrangement for the playgoers in a theater

Prekshagara - A hall for witnessing Natya.

Purvaranga - The *purvaranga* rituals are the preliminary rites prescribed in the Natyasastra before the presentation of Natya. These are overtures to a performance that include playing musical instruments, singing and at times dancing.

Ranga - Stage

Ranga - The place of performance/ the specific area where the action takes place. Although in the Natyasastra it is at times also used to refer to the entirety of the building.

Ranga mandapa or *Sabha mandapa* - Spaces marked out for performance in temple

Ranga pitha- The stage front according to Natyasastra

Rangasirsa - The stage rear according to Natyasastra

Rasa - *Rasa* is the aesthetic flavour of an artistic work which evokes an emotion. The Natyasastra declares eight *rasas* of *sringara*, *hasya*, *karuna*, *raudra*, *vira*, *bhayanak*, *bhibhatsa* and *adbhuta*.

Rathas - Structures carved out of freestanding monoliths.

Rishi's – Sages

Sabha - The assembly hall

Sabhapati – Head of the assembly/king.

Sailusa - A master to impart training

Salabhanjikas - Women standing under trees

Sama – A *sthanaka* where the feet are placed together

Samana - The common folks meeting place for festivities in the Rig Veda

Samapada - A position of the feet, where the toes and heels touch

Samdamsa hasta - A gesture of the hand where only the tips of the forefinger and the thumb bend to touch

Sandhya – Twilight

Santa rasa – Tranquil sentiment added to the system of *rasas* post Bharata

Saustava – Natural position of the body

Siddi - Success of production

Sramanas – Term used for individuals who performed acts of austerity, such as ascetics

Sreni – Guild

Sthanakas – Static poses of the body

Suddha purvaranga - Involving only the male actors

Sukumara Delicate dance movements

Sutradhara - The master conductor

Svara - Musical notes

Taala - Cyclic rhythms of beats

Tandava - The energetic aspect of the body movement which Siva performs and ordains to be implemented during the *purvaranga*

Theyyathai – Rhythmic mnemonics

Toranas – Ornamental canopy set at the entrance

Trikuta temples - Temples with three centres of sanctum

Tryasra – Triangular theatre

Utsava murtis - Processional idols

Uyyala mandapa - Pavilion for swinging

Vachikaabhinaya – Expression through speech

Vaishaka – A *sthanaka* in which one foot is turned out and the other placed with a bent shank at a distance of two *talas*

Vaishnava sthanaka - A position of the body in which the feet are turned out, legs are firmly placed on the ground, with one slightly bent and away from the other, the body is lowered and held gracefully

Vastupurusha - A metaphysical square plan described in treatises on building technologies

Vastuvidya - The science of architecture

Vesara - The style of temple architecture in Orissa

Vidushakas – Clowns

Vighnas – Obstacles

Vikata - Dances which have ludicrous movements, dresses and forms and indicate that practices of bards, gymnasts and street performers are also considered under the umbrella of *Nritta*

Vikrsta Madhya - Medium-sized rectangular playhouse

Vilamba – Slow

Vimana - Pyramidal roof covering the sanctuary

Visama - Dances that are performed in the round with ropes

Vrittis - Styles of depiction

Zamindar – Wealthy elite

Appendices

Appendix I
Translation of epigraph at Hathigumpha



Hathigumpha inscription

Lines	Translation (Jayaswal and Banerji)	Notes
L1	Salutation to the Arhats [Jinas]. Salutation to all the Siddhas. By illustrious Kharavela, the Aira (Aila), the Great King, the descendant of Mahameghavahana, the increaser (of the glory) of the Cheti (Chedi) dynasty, (endowed) with excellent and auspicious marks and features, possessed of virtues which have reached (the ends of) the four quarters, overlord of Kalinga,	The opening dedication (Namokar Mantra) and other lines confirm that Jainism was well established in Kalinga, and that this is a Jaina inscription. It mentions the ancient Chedi dynasty of Greater India. Barua interprets the lengths of lines differently; to him, L1 and L2 are the first line.
L2	for fifteen years, with a body ruddy and handsome were played youthsomeness sport; after that (by him who) had mastered (royal) correspondence, currency,	This corresponds to the stages of life described in <i>Brihaspati Sutra</i> , where first 25 years are student's youthful life, thereafter comes manhood with household-social responsibilities. Barua translates the five

	finance, civil and religious laws (and) who had become well-versed in all (branches) of learning, for nine years (the office of) Yuvaraja (heir apparent) was administered. Having completed the twenty-fourth year, at that time, (he) who had been prosperous (vardhamana) since his infancy(?) and who (was destined) to have wide conquests as those of Vena,	skills learnt by the crown prince as "writing, coinage, account, administration and procedures".
L3	then in the state of manhood, obtains the imperial (maharajya) coronation in the dynasty of Kalinga. As soon as he is anointed, in the first (regnal) year (he) causes repairs of the gates, the walls and the buildings (of the city), (which had been) damaged by storm; in the city of Kalinga (he) causes the erection of the embankments of the lake (called after) Khibira Rishi, (and) of (other) tanks and cisterns, (also) the restoration of all the gardens (he) causes to be	A list of public works and infrastructure projects completed at state's expense (see Line 4).
L4	done at (the cost of) thirty-five-hundred-thousands, and (he) gratifies the People. And in the second year (he), disregarding Satakamni, despatches to the western regions an army strong in cavalry, elephants, infantry (nara) and chariots (ratha) and by that army having reached the Kanha-bemna, he throws the city of the Musikas into consternation. Again in the third year,	The first war with Satakamni, with a list of military regiments in ancient India
L5	(he) versed in the science of the Gandharvas (i.e., music), entertains the capital with the exhibition of dapa, dancing, singing and instrumental music and by causing to be held festivities and assemblies (samajas); similarly in the fourth year, 'the Abode of Vidyadharas' built by the former Kalingan king(s), which had not been damaged before (...lost...) with their coronets rendered meaningless, with their helmets (?) (bilma) cut in twain (?), and with their umbrellas and	A list of arts and culture in ancient India; it is unclear what <i>dapa</i> was, but much later texts suggest a form of stage acting by small moving teams. However, Barua reads "dampa", and translates it to "combat" (sort of wrestling).
L6	bhingaras cast away, deprived of their jewels (i.e., ratana, Skt. ratna, precious objects) all the Rathikas and Bhojakas (he) causes to bow down at his feet. Now in the fifth year he brings into the capital from the road of Tansauliya the canal excavated in the year one hundred-and-three of King Nanda (...lost...) Having been (re-)anointed (he while) celebrating the Rajasuya, remits all tithes and cesses,	Another major public water infrastructure project, plus tax exemptions: According to Barua, this water canal project extended a previously dug canal; it brought water to Kalinga capital, and helps date king Nanda to 103 years before the fifth year of Kharavela reign. He adds that it can also be read a bit differently and then it would be 300 years earlier. Sircar agrees with Barua, then adds that it must be 300 years as the Nanda dynasty was overthrown by 326 BCE, and Kharavela is definitely not from the 3rd-

		century BCE.
L7	bestows many privileges (amounting to) hundreds of thousands or the City-Corporation and the Realm-Corporation. In the seventh year of his reign, his famous wife of Vajiraghara obtained the dignity of auspicious motherhood (... lost ...). Then in the eighth year, (he) with a large army having sacked Goradthagiri	a child is born to his wife and him; According to Sircar, this ink impression and reading is doubtful and Kharavela's wife from Vajiragraha family is problematic and unlikely. Similarly the alleged achievements of Kharavela here are problematic and doubtful, states Sircar.
L8	causes pressure on Rajagaha (Rajagriha). On account of the loud report of this act of valour, the Yavana (Greek) King Dimi[ta] retreated to Mathura having extricated his demoralized army and transport (... lost ...). He gives (... lost ...) with foliage	a mention of Greek rule and claims of their retreat to Mathura; According to Barua, this should instead be read as a war with Gorathagiri and Rajagaha, whose troops then retreated to Mathura. It cannot be the Greek ruler Demetrios, even if this part of the inscription is being correctly read from the wall.
L9	Kalpa (wish-fulfilling) trees, elephants, chariots with their drivers, houses, residences and resthouses. And to make all these acceptable (he) gives at a fire sacrifice (?) exemption (from taxes) to the caste of Brahmins. Of Arhat (... lost ...)	mention he performing a yajna ritual from the Vedas, in the context of Brahmins Barua also reads Brahmins, and interprets this portion as Kharavela showing equal respect and favors to Jain monks and Brahmins. According to Sircar, the word varna here was incorrectly translated as caste, because given the context, it is a form of description for recluses and teacher (Barua's monks and Brahmins). He also adds that a Jain king would not be expected to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, and assumes that the scribe must have intended a different similar word with the meaning "royal fortune". ^[28]
L10	(... lost ...)(He) causes to be built . . . a royal residence (called) the Palace of Great Victory (Mahavijaya) at the cost of thirty-eight hundred thousands. And in the tenth year (he), following (the threefold policy) of chastisement, alliance and conciliation sends out an expedition against Bharatavasa (and) brings about the conquest of the land (or, country) (... lost ...) and obtains jewels and precious things of the (kings) attacked.	another claim of war and conquest. However, Sircar doubts that this part is being accurately read.
L11	(... lost ...) And the market-town (?) Pithumda founded by the Ava King he ploughs down with a plough of asses; and (he) thoroughly breaks up the confederacy of the T[r]amira (Dramira) countries of one hundred and thirteen years, which has been a source of danger to (his) Country (Janapada). And in the twelfth year he terrifies the kings of the Utarapatha with (... lost ...) thousands of	breaks up a confederacy of kings, later a victory over Utarapatha (northwest);

L12	(... lost ...) And causing panic amongst the people of Magadha (he) drives (his) elephants into the Sugamgiya (Palace), and (he) makes the King of Magadha, Bahasatimita, bow at his feet. And (he) sets up (the image) the Jina of Kalinga' which had been taken away by King Nanda (... lost ...) and causes to be brought home the riches of Amga and Magadha along with the keepers of the family jewels of (... lost ...)	Victory over Magadha, sets up an image of Jina of Kalinga, previously taken away by King Nanda Barua reads the "honored seat of Jina" which was taken away by king Nanda to be brought back to Kalinga in a royal procession. According to Sircar, the readings here linking to Purhyamitra Sunga is doubtful and chronologically not possible.
L13	(... lost ...) (He) builds excellent towers with carved interiors and creates a settlement of a hundred masons, giving them exemption from land revenue. And a wonderful and marvellous enclosure of stockade for driving in the elephants (he)(... lost ...) and horses, elephants, jewels and rubies as well as numerous pearls in hundreds (he) causes to be brought here from the Pandya King.	sets up a school of masons (artisans and architects) and builds carved towers, gains wealth from the Pandyas. According to Barua, this portion states that Kharavela set up streets, gates and temples, and "one hundred Vasukis (dragon chiefs) sent him precious stones, rare and wonderful elephants, horses and such animals". Pandya king sent him gifts of clothes and ornaments. ^[33]
L14	(... lost ...).(he) subjugates. In the thirteenth year, on the Kumari Hill where the Wheel of Conquest had been well-revolved (i.e., the religion of Jina had been preached), (he) offers respectfully royal maintenances, China clothes (silks) and white clothes to (the monks) who (by their austerities) have extinguished the round of lives, the preachers on the religious life and conduct at the Relic Memorial. By Kharavela, the illustrious, a layman devoted to worship, is realised (the nature of) jiva and deha	donations to monks and preachers in pursuit of soul and body
L15	(... lost ...)bringing about a Council of the wise ascetics and sages, from hundred (i.e., all) quarters, the monks (samanas) of good deeds and who have fully followed (the injunctions) (... lost ...) near the Relic Depository of the Arhat, on the top of the hill, (... lost ...) with stones (... lost ...) brought from many miles (yojanas) quarried from excellent mines (he builds) shelters for the Sinhapatha Queen Sindhula. (... lost ...)	sets up a council of advisors consisting of ascetics and sages from different parts of ancient India
L16	(... lost ...)Patalaka(?).(he) sets up four columns inlaid with beryl (... lost ...) at the cost of twenty-five hundred thousands; (he) causes to be compiled expeditiously the (text) of the seven-fold Angas of the sixty-four (letters). He is the King of Peace, the King of Prosperity, the King of Monks (bhikshus), the King of Religion (Dharma), who has been seeing, hearing and realising blessings (kalyanas)-	mentions 7 <i>angas</i> and 64 <i>lipis</i>

L17	(... lost ...) accomplished in extraordinary virtues, respector of every sect, the repairer of all temples, one whose chariot and army are irresistible, one whose empire is protected by the chief of the empire (himself), descended from the family of the Royal Sage Vasu the Great conqueror, the King, the illustrious Kharavela.	mention of respect for all religions, patron of all temples, and the closing praise of the king.
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Appendix II
The Bengal Suppression Of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933.
Bengal Act 6 of 1933

Bengal Act VI of 1933¹

[THE BENGAL SUPPRESSION OF IMMORAL TRAFFIC ACT, 1933.]²

REPEALED IN PART	Ben. Act I of 1939.
AMENDED	Ben. Act V of 1945. West Ben. Act XII of 1947.
ADAPTED	The Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937. The Indian Independence (Adaptation of Bengal and Punjab Acts) Order, 1948. The Adaptation of Laws Order, 1950.

[22nd June, 1933.]

An Act for the suppression of [brothels and] immoral traffic in Bengal.

WHEREAS it is expedient to make better provision for the suppression of [brothels and of] traffic in women and girls for immoral purposes;

AND WHEREAS the previous sanction of the Governor General has been obtained under sub-section (3) of section 80A of the Government of India Act to the passing of this Act;

It is hereby enacted as follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933.
- (2) It extends to the whole of [West Bengal].
- (3) This section shall come into force at once and the remaining provisions of this Act, in whole or in part, shall come into force in such areas and on such dates as the [State Government] may, by notification in the [Official Gazette], specify and for this purpose different dates may be specified for different provisions of this Act and for different areas.

Short title,
commence-
ment and
extent.

S & 6 Geo.
V, c. 51;
6 & 7 Geo.
V, c. 37;
9 & 10 Geo.
V, c. 101.

¹This Act may be read along with the provision of section 25 of the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, 1956 (104 of 1956).

²For Statement of Objects and Reasons, see the *Calcutta Gazette* of 1932, Pt. IV, page 66, and for report of the Select Committee, see *ibid.* 1933, Pt. IV, page 32, and for Proceedings of the Council, see the Proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3, page 49, and *ibid.* Vol. XXXIX, No. 1, pages 703 and 233 and *ibid.* Vol. XL, No. 3, pages 22, 102 and 149.

The words within square brackets were inserted by s. 2 of, and the First Schedule to, the West Bengal Laws (Amendment and Repeal) Act, 1947 (West Ben. Act XI of 1947).

The words within square brackets were inserted, *ibid.*

The words within square brackets were substituted for the word "Bengal" by Article 3(2) of the Indian Independence (Bengal and Punjab Acts) Order, 1948.

The words "Provincial Government" were originally substituted for the words "Local Government" by para. 4(1) of the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937, and thereafter, the word "State" was substituted for the word "Provincial" by para. 4(1) of the Adaptation of Laws Order, 1950.

The words within square brackets were substituted for the words "*Calcutta Gazette*" by para. 4(1) of the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.

(Sections 2, 3.)

2. The enactments specified in the Schedule are hereby repealed to the extent noted against each.

3. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,—

- (1) "brothel" means any house, part of a house, room or place in which two or more females carry on prostitution or in which any girl under the age of eighteen years is kept with intent that she shall at any age be employed or used for any immoral purpose.

Explanation.—Where a girl under the age of eighteen years is for the time being resident in any house or place used by one or more females for the purpose of prostitution and is being maintained by or associating with any prostitute, it shall, unless such girl is the daughter of an inmate of such house or place, be presumed until the contrary is proved that she is being kept with intent that she shall be employed or used for an immoral purpose.

- (2) "Commissioner of Police" means the Commissioner of Police for the town and suburbs of Calcutta, and includes a Deputy Commissioner of Police of Calcutta;
- (3) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (4) "prostitution" means promiscuous sexual intercourse for hire, whether in money or kind;
- (5) "prostitute" means any female available for the purpose of prostitution;
- (6) "public place" includes the site of any *hat, bazar or melā*, the banks of any river and any docks, jetties and ware-houses to which the public have access, every public building, garden, monument, and the precincts thereof, every place of public amusement, every place of public entertainment and every place accessible to the public for drawing water, washing or bathing, or for purposes of recreation.

Explanation.—(a) The expression "place of public amusement" means any place, enclosure, building, tent, booth or other erection, whether permanent or temporary, where music, singing, dancing, or any diversion or game, or the means of carrying on the same, is provided, and to which the public are admitted either on payment of money, or with the intention that money may be collected from those admitted, and includes a race-course, carnival, circus, cinema, theatre, music hall, billiard-room, bagatelle-room, gymnasium and fencing school.

¹The words "or amended" were repealed by s. 3 and the Second Sch. of the Bengal Repealing and Amending Act, 1938 (Ben. Act I of 1938).

²The words "for the gain of any other person" were omitted by s. 2 of, and the First Schedule to, the West Bengal Laws (Amendment and Repeal) Act, 1947 (West Ben. Act XI of 1947).

of 1933.]

(Section 4.)

(b) The expression "place of public entertainment" means any place, whether enclosed or open, to which the public are admitted and where any kind of food or drink is supplied for consumption on the premises for the profit or gain of any person owning or having an interest in or managing such place and includes a refreshment-room, eating-house, coffee-house, liquor-house, boarding-house, lodging-house, hotel, tea-shop, tavern and a wine, beer, spirit, arrack, toddy, ganja, bhang or opium shop.

(7) "Superintendent of Police" includes any Assistant Superintendent of Police or other person appointed by general or special order of the [State Government] to perform all or any of the duties of a Superintendent of Police under this Act in any district.

4. (1) Any person who—
 (a) keeps or manages or acts or assists in the management of a brothel, or
 (b) being the tenant, lessee, occupier, or person in charge of any premises, knowingly permits such premises or any part thereof to be used as a brothel, or
 (c) being the lessor or landlord, of any premises or the agent of such lessor or landlord, lets the same, or any part thereof, with the knowledge that the same, or any part thereof, is intended to be used as a brothel,

Punishment for keeping a brothel or allowing premises to be used as a brothel.

shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

(2) Any person who, having been convicted of an offence punishable under sub-section (1) is convicted of a subsequent offence punishable under the said sub-section shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both, and may in addition be ordered by the Court convicting him to execute a bond for a sum proportionate to his means, with or without sureties, to be of good behaviour for such period not exceeding three years as it thinks fit.

(3) If a conviction under sub-section (2) is set aside on appeal or otherwise the bond so executed shall be void.

(4) An order for the execution of a bond in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (2) may also be made by an Appellate Court or by the High Court when exercising its powers of revision.

(5) The provisions of Chapter VIII of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, shall apply to orders made for the execution of bonds under this section, and imprisonment for failure to give security shall be rigorous or simple as the Court may direct.

¹See foot-note 6 on page 223, ante.

Act V of 1933.

[Ben. Act VI]

(Section 5.)

(6) In a prosecution under this section if it is found that any premises or part thereof have been used as a brothel it shall be presumed until the contrary is proved that the manager, tenant, lessee, occupier or person in charge of such premises or part knew that the premises or part thereof were being used as a brothel.

(7) No Court shall take cognizance of any offence punishable under this section except on the complaint of—

- (a) (i) the Corporation of Calcutta, if the premises are situated within its jurisdiction, or
 (ii) if the premises are situated elsewhere, the Chairman of the Municipality, District Board or Local Board, or the President of the Union Board within the jurisdiction of which the premises are situated, made in pursuance of a resolution of the Commissioners of the Municipality or of the Members of the Board as the case may be; or
 (b) three or more persons occupying separate premises or holdings and resident in the vicinity of the premises or holdings to which the complaint relates; or
 (c) a representative of any society recognised by the [State Government] in this behalf who has been authorised by the society to institute prosecutions under this section.

(8) No complaint shall be instituted under this section in respect of any brothel with reference to which proceedings are pending under section 6.

Determination of tenancy of premises in the case of a conviction under section 4.

5. (1) On conviction of the tenant, lessee or occupier of any premises of any offence under section 4 in respect of such premises, the landlord or lessor of such premises shall be entitled to require the person so convicted to surrender the lease or other contract under which the said premises are held by him, or to assign the said lease or contract to some person approved by the landlord or lessor which approval shall not be unreasonably withheld, and, in the event of the person so convicted falling within three months to surrender or assign the lease or contract as aforesaid, the landlord or lessor shall be entitled to determine the lease or other contract, but without prejudice to the rights or remedies of any party to such lease accruing before the date of such determination.

(2) If the landlord or lessor determines a lease or contract of tenancy under the provisions of sub-section (1), the Court which convicted the tenant, lessee, or occupier of the premises may make an order for delivery of possession by such tenant, lessee, or occupier to the landlord or lessor within such time, not being less than seven days, as the Court may direct. A copy of the order shall be served on the person against whom it is made. If such person fails to comply with the order, he shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one month or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees or with both, and the Court may take such steps as it considers necessary to put the landlord or lessor in actual possession of the premises.

¹See foot-note 6 on page 223, ante.

1933.]

(Section 6.)

(3) The Court convicting any tenant, lessee or occupier of an offence punishable under section 4 in respect of any premises may give notice in writing of such conviction to the landlord or lessor of such premises, and if the landlord or lessor after service of the notice does not exercise his rights under sub-section (1) and subsequently during the subsistence of the lease or contract an offence under section 4 is again committed in respect of the premises, the landlord or lessor shall be deemed to have abetted such offence, unless he proves that he has taken all reasonable steps to prevent the recurrence of the offence.

(4) Where a landlord or lessor determines a lease or other contract under sub-section (1), and subsequently grants another lease or enters into another contract of tenancy in respect of the same premises to, with or for the benefit of the same person he shall be deemed to have failed to exercise his rights under sub-section (1) and any offence under section 4 committed during the subsistence of the subsequent lease or contract shall be deemed for the purposes of this section to have been committed during the subsistence of the previous lease or contract unless such landlord or lessor satisfies the Court that he made reasonable inquiries to justify a *bona fide* belief that such tenant, lessee or occupier did not intend to use the premises as a brothel or to allow them to be so used.

(5) No action taken by any landlord or lessor under the provisions of this section shall be called in question in any Civil Court.

6. (1) If the Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police receives information that any house, room or place—

- (a) is being used as a brothel or disorderly house, or for purpose of carrying on prostitution, in the vicinity of any educational institution or of any boarding house, hostel or mess used or occupied by students, or of any place of public worship or recreation, or
- (b) is used as, or for the purpose, aforesaid to the annoyance of inhabitants of the vicinity, or
- (c) is used, as, or for the purpose, aforesaid on any main thoroughfare which has been notified as such in this behalf by the [State Government] on the recommendation of—
 - (i) the Corporation of Calcutta, if the thoroughfare is situated within its jurisdiction, or
 - (ii) the Commissioners of any Municipality, within whose jurisdiction the thoroughfare is situated, made in pursuance of a resolution of the Commissioners of the Municipality, or
- (d) is used as a common place of assignation,

Power to order discontinuance of house, room or place as brothel, etc.

[Ben. Act]

(Section 6.)

he may cause a notice to be served on the owner, lessor, manager, lessee, tenant or occupier of the house, room or place or all of them, to appear before him, either in person or by agent, on a date to be fixed in such notice, and to show cause why, on the grounds to be stated in the notice, an order should not be made for the discontinuance of such use of such house, room or place.

(2) If, on the date fixed, or on any subsequent date to which the hearing may be adjourned, the Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police is satisfied after making such inquiry as he thinks fit, that the house, room or place is used as described in clauses (a), (b), (c) or (d) of sub-section (1), as the case may be, he may direct by order in writing to be served on such owner, lessor, manager, lessee, tenant or occupier, that the use as so described of the house, room or place be discontinued from a date not less than fifteen days from the date of the said order and be not thereafter resumed.

(3) No house, room or place, concerning which an order has been made under sub-section (2), shall again be used or be allowed to be used, in any manner described in clauses (a), (b), (c) or (d) of sub-section (1), as the case may be, and the Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police, if he is satisfied that such house, room or place is again used in such manner, may by order in writing to be served on the owner, lessor, manager, lessee, tenant or occupier of such house, room or place direct that the use as so described of such house, room or place be discontinued within a period of seven days and be not thereafter resumed.

(4) For the purposes of this section the decision of the Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police that a house, room or place is used in any manner, or for any purpose, described in clauses (a), (b), (c) or (d) of sub-section (1) shall be final, and the legality or propriety thereof shall not be questioned in any trial or judicial proceeding in any Court.

(5) Whoever, after an order has been made by the Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police under sub-section (2) or sub-section (3) in respect of any house, room or place, uses, or allows to be used, such house, room or place in a manner which contravenes such order after the period stated therein, shall be punished with fine which may extend to fifty rupees for every day after the expiration of the said period during which the breach continues, and shall, on a second conviction for the same offence, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months in addition to, or in lieu of, any fine imposed.

(6) For the purpose of an inquiry under this section the Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police may depute any police officer not below the rank of an Inspector to make a local investigation, and may take into consideration his report thereon.

(7) The Commissioner of Police and the Superintendent of Police shall maintain a register in which shall be entered a description of all houses, rooms and places in respect of which an order has been made under this section. Such register shall be open to inspection by the public on payment of the prescribed fee.

1933.]

(Sections 7-9.)

(8) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the owner or lessor of any house, room or place, in respect of which an order has been made on the lessee, tenant or occupier thereof directing the discontinuance of the use thereof as a brothel or disorderly house or for the purpose of carrying on prostitution, or as a common place of assignation, shall be entitled forthwith to determine such lease, tenancy or occupation.

(9) No proceedings shall be taken under this section in respect of premises which are the subject of any proceedings under section 4 or within six months of the termination of such proceedings.

7. (1) Any person who in any street or public place or within sight of, and in such manner as to be seen or heard from any street or public place, whether from within any house or building or not—

(a) by words, gestures, or indecent personal exposure attracts or endeavours to attract attention for the purposes of prostitution; or

(b) solicits or molests any person for the purposes of prostitution;

shall be punished with imprisonment of either description which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to one hundred rupees, or with both.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in section 65 of the Indian Penal Code, imprisonment in default of fine imposed under sub-section (1) may extend to one month.

See XLV of 1940.

8. (1) Any person over the age of eighteen years who knowingly lives, wholly or in part, on the earnings of the prostitution of another person shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both, and, if a male person, shall also be liable to whipping.

(2) Where a person is proved to be living with, or to be habitually in the company of a prostitute, or to have exercised control, direction or influence over the movements of a prostitute, in such a manner as to show that he is aiding, abetting or compelling her prostitution, it shall be presumed until the contrary is proved, that he is living on the earnings of prostitution.

Provided that the mother, or a son or daughter, of a prostitute, shall not be punished under this section for living on the earnings of such prostitute unless the Court is satisfied that such mother, son or daughter is aiding, abetting or compelling her prostitution.

9. (1) Any person who induces a female to go from any place with intent that she may, for the purposes of prostitution, become the inmate of or frequent a brothel, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both, and, if a male person, shall also be liable to whipping.

Soliciting for purposes of prostitution.

Punishment for living on the earnings of prostitution.

Procurator.

[Ben. Act V

(Sections 10-13.)

(2) An offence under this section shall be triable in the place from which the female was induced to go, or in any place to which she may have gone as a result of such inducement.

10. (1) Any person who brings or attempts to bring or causes to be brought into any place in which this Act is in force any female with a view to her earning hire, or being brought up to earn hire as a prostitute, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both, and, if a male person, shall also be liable to whipping.

(2) An offence under this section may be tried in any place to which the female is brought or caused to be brought, or in which an attempt to bring her is made, or in any place from which she is brought or caused to be brought, or from which an attempt to bring her is made.

Punishment for importing a female for prostitution.

Punishment for detention as prostitute or in brothels, etc.

11. Any person who detains—

(a) any female under the age of eighteen years, against her will in any house, room or place in which prostitution is carried on, or

(b) any female against her will in or upon any premises with intent that she may have sexual intercourse with any man other than her lawful husband, whether with any particular man or generally,

shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.

12. If any person having the custody, charge or care of any girl under the age of eighteen years causes or encourages or abets the seduction or prostitution of that girl, he shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees or with both, and, if a male person, shall be liable also to whipping.

Punishment for causing or encouraging or abetting seduction or prostitution of girl.

Removal of minor girls from premises in certain cases.

13. The Commissioner of Police, Superintendent of Police, or a police officer not below the rank of a Sub-inspector specially authorised in writing in this behalf by the Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police, may enter any premises if he has reason to believe—

(a) that an offence punishable under section 4 has been committed or is being committed in respect of the premises; or

(b) that a female in respect of whom an offence punishable under sections 8, 9, 10, 11 or 12 has been committed is to be found therein;

and may remove any girl who appears to him to be under the age of eighteen years, if he is satisfied—

(a) that an offence punishable under section 4 has been or is being committed in respect of the premises; or

(b) that an offence punishable under sections 8, 9, 10, 11 or 12 has been committed in respect of the girl.

of 1933.]

(Sections 14-17.)

Ben. Act II
of 1922.

14. (1) A girl who has been removed from any premises under section 13 and who appears to be under the age of sixteen years shall be brought before a Juvenile Court as defined in clause (3a) of section 3 of the Bengal Children Act, 1922, having jurisdiction over the place where the premises are situated. The Court shall make such inquiry as it thinks fit and, if satisfied that the girl is under the age of sixteen years and that she should be dealt with as hereinafter provided, may pass an order that she be placed in suitable custody in the prescribed manner until she attains the age of eighteen years or for any shorter period, or make her over to the care of a suitable person under such conditions as may be prescribed and may in addition make an order that she be placed under the supervision of a person to be named by the Court.

(2) Where a girl has been removed from any premises under section 13 and there is no Juvenile Court having jurisdiction over the place where the premises are situated or the girl appears to be above the age of sixteen years, she shall be brought before a Magistrate of the first class having jurisdiction over such place. The Magistrate shall make such inquiry as he thinks fit and, if satisfied that the girl is under the age of eighteen years and that she should be dealt with as hereinafter provided, may pass an order that she be placed in suitable custody in the prescribed manner until she attains the age of eighteen years or for any shorter period, or make her over to the care of a suitable person under such conditions as may be prescribed and may in addition make an order that she be placed under the supervision of a person to be named by the Magistrate.

15. No order made by a Juvenile Court or a Magistrate under section 14 shall be invalidated by any subsequent proof that the age of the girl has not been correctly determined by the Court or the Magistrate.

16. Where any girl is produced before a Juvenile Court or a Magistrate under section 14 and any person has been tried by any Court on a charge under section 8, 9, 10, 11 or 12 in respect of such girl or under section 4 in respect of the premises from which she has been removed, the record of such trial may be called for by the Juvenile Court or the Magistrate and the record of evidence given in such trial may be used by such Juvenile Court or Magistrate for the purposes of the inquiry under section 14, as if recorded by such Court or Magistrate respectively.

Nothing in this section shall prevent any Juvenile Court or Magistrate hearing and recording the evidence of any witness if such Court or Magistrate thinks fit.

17. (1) When a girl has been removed from premises under the provisions of section 13, the officer carrying out the removal shall, until such girl can be brought before a Juvenile Court or Magistrate of the first class, cause her to be detained in such place as may be prescribed in this behalf by the [State Government].

Disposal of
minor girls
removed
from
premises
under
section 13.Validity of
determination
of age
by Juvenile
Court or
Magistrate.Power to
call for
record.Intermediate
custody of
girls
removed
from
premises
under
section 13.¹See foot-note 6 on page 223, ante.

[Ben. Act VI.]

(Sections 18-21.)

(2) When such girl is produced, the Juvenile Court or the Magistrate, as the case may be, may order her to be detained until the disposal of her case in such place as may be prescribed in this behalf by the [State Government] or may make her over to the care of a suitable person and may order such person to execute a bond for her production.

18. (1) When an order has been passed by a Juvenile Court or a Magistrate under section 14 for the custody of a girl, such Court or Magistrate may order the parent or other person liable to maintain the girl to contribute to her maintenance, if able to do so, in the prescribed manner.

(2) The Court or Magistrate, before making an order under subsection (1), shall inquire into the circumstances of the parent or other person liable to maintain the girl and shall record the evidence, if any, in the presence of the parent or such other person, as the case may be, if he appears or, when his personal attendance is dispensed with, in the presence of his pleader.

(3) Any order made under this section may be enforced in the same manner as an order under section 488 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

19. Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law, any person to whose custody a girl is committed by an order made under section 14 shall, while the order is in force, have the like control over the girl as if he were her parent and shall be responsible for her maintenance and protection and the girl shall continue in his custody notwithstanding that she is claimed by her parent or any other person.

20. The [State Government] may cause any institution in which any girl is kept for the time being in pursuance of an order made under section 14 and which is supported wholly or partly by voluntary contributions, and is not liable to be inspected by or under the authority of [any Government] to be visited and inspected from time to time by persons appointed by the [State Government] for the purpose.

21. An appeal shall lie from any order passed under section 14 or section 18 by a Juvenile Court or by a Magistrate—

- (a) if the Juvenile Court or the Court of the Magistrate is situated within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Chief Presidency Magistrate, to the Chief Presidency Magistrate; and
- (b) in any other case, to the District Magistrate of the district within which such Juvenile Court or the Court of such Magistrate is situated.

¹See foot-note 6 on page 223, ante.²The words within square brackets were substituted for the words "the Government" by para. 3 and Sch. IV to the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.Contribution
of parent.Authority of
persons
having
custody of
girl.Inspection of
institutions
where girls
are kept.Appeal from
orders by
Juvenile
Court or
Magistrate.Act V of
1898.

Appendix –III

Inaugural address by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister.

in Seminar on Architecture

Edited by Achyut Kanvinde, 5-9. New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1959.

“Mr. Chairman and friends, I have come here for a brief while this morning just to wish those people attending this Seminar and specially our younger architects, success in their talks here, meaning thereby a new fermentation taking place in the minds of this generation leading to more suitable types of architecture which fit in with conditions today and yet are things of beauty.

Mr. Humayun Kabir referred to the great temples of the South and the Taj Mahal. Well, they are beautiful. Some of the temples of the South, however, repel me in spite of their beauty. I just can't stand them. Why? I do not know. I cannot explain that, but they are oppressive, they suppress my spirit. They do not allow me to rise, they keep me down. The dark corridors—I like the sun and air and not dark corridors.

However, architecture today can hardly be thought of, well, broadly speaking, in terms of the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is, of course, one of the most beautiful things anywhere and it is a delight to the eye and to the spirit to see it. It represented, as all architecture represents to a large extent, the age in which it grew. You cannot isolate architecture from the age, from the social conditions, from the thinking, from the objectives and ideals of that particular age. In an age which is rapidly changing, like our present age, in fact since the industrial revolution came, that necessarily has a powerful effect on architecture.

Mr. Kabir referred to the static condition in regard to architecture in India during the last two, three hundred years. That really was a reflex of the static condition of the Indian mind or Indian conditions. Everything was static, not a

question of architecture alone being static. Of course, that does not mean a country can ever be completely static—there are bright individuals and bright movements but taken as a whole India was static. In fact, India was static before that. Without being very accurate or precise, architecturally, for the last few hundred years, India was static, and the great buildings really date back to a considerable time. Even before the British came, we had become static. The British came because we were static. A society which ceases to change, ceases to go ahead, necessarily becomes weak and it is an extraordinary thing how that weakness comes out in all forms of creative activity. You see that weakness in our literature during this period. That again does not mean that big books were not written. Certainly some very fine books were written, but generally the Sanskrit language began to seed; a magnificent language, gradually it has become more and more repetitive: long sentences, ornate, lifeless except tingling songs and rhymes and all that. Take the early period of Sanskrit. It is a thing which strikes you in the head with its vigour and strength, its brevity; and then it becomes long winded, sometimes sentences going over two pages.

I think Milton once said that “Show me the language of a people and if I do not know anything about that people, I will tell you what they are, whether they are brave, or timid or adventurous, creative or not”. The language, of course, is the most subtle medium of a people’s thinking. So also architecture, and all the creative arts. They really are not something outside yourself, they something that is inside us. Either we have that in us or we have not. If we have not, well, you produce the copy of what other people have done. Architecture is influenced by a number of considerations but apart from those considerations, architecture like all creative arts is influenced, if I may use the word—it is often

used and misused—by the life forces of a people. If they have that vitality in them it comes out in painting, in architecture, in poetry, in literature, in everything that they do, in life itself. If they have not got it then they are just pale copies of human beings, without the vitality of human beings and naturally their arts are pale copies too. And that is basic. You cannot produce by any school course or college course life forces in a people. That is there or it is not there or it may gradually grow. And quite apart from that basic consideration, architecture depends certainly on climate; it depends on functions: the functions the people living in those buildings or looking at them have to perform. It depends on the state of technological growth, that is to say on the material we use and obviously on the state of scientific and technological growth and on other factors too. Climate more or less is a permanent factor though even there to some extent, it can be overcome—not to a very large extent but internally, there has been always an attempt to overcome climate even in the olden days and those methods of overcoming it or, well, minimising the effect of climate have always been there. You may become more adept in doing it. The other factors, I said,—the function which a building is supposed to serve obviously has to govern it and the function a building serves depends to a large extent on the functions that society is serving. There is often a lag between, as always in architectural designs or indeed the social framework, it lags behind the changes taking place in the technological field. There is an attempt to copy. Mr. Kabir referred to the great Gothic cathedrals which, in many ways were truly representative of the age in which they grew up. But in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, an age when the steam engine came and railway came and, when railway stations had to be built in later years, the architects of the day

tried to make some of the big railway stations look as if these were Gothic cathedrals, which was perfectly ridiculous. They did not serve that function. They are not getting out of the clutches of the past.

The past was good when it was the present, but you cannot bring it forward when the world has changed into a technological period and put a Gothic cathedral and call it a railway terminus. It is ridiculous. I gave that example because there is always that tendency to do that and there is likely to be more of the tendency in a country like India where we hold fast to traditions more than in other countries. Now, traditions are good and specially when traditions are something unique and something elevating, but no tradition which makes you a prisoner of your mind or body is ever good, however good that tradition may be; you must accept tradition and not be coerced into it because every element of coercion, mental coercion ultimately, I am quite sure, comes in the way of development of the creative arts and virtues. Sometimes, coercion may be helpful in a small degree. If you press a boy to send him to school and all that, it is a different matter. But otherwise, this kind of development of the individual suffers by coercion, traditional or modern.

Then, function governs. Of course, function has to. But perhaps the most important governing factor depends on technological advance in the material you use. Obviously you are limited by your materials. If technology goes on opening out new avenues and gives you more and more materials or gives you more and more power to mould those materials, and to use them, obviously all kinds of new avenues appear before you. And it is the use again of these new materials in forms, which were used when the elasticity of the materials was not available to people. This does not seem to me to be quite right. It is trying to copy some

thing, some form, some design which was suited to a particular material and which may be suited to that still but is not suited to the new material. It becomes out of place and disjointed. The main thing—and I am glad that you have met here in this Seminar—is to look at all these aspects, changing aspects with a mind that is open and adventurous and seeking and creative, because today I do believe very good work is being done all over the world by creative architects. It is a delight to see plans and designs and pictures of this new work being done by architects all over the world.

At the same time, of course, there is another aspect of it which is rather painful to see,—of pictures, designs of other works done by architects who seem to think that beauty can come only by mere size which, of course, is not at all a correct notion. So, it is good to discuss these matters and it would be good if you are not afraid of innovations. Therein you have to come across solid thought in front of you and that is the PWD which has its own specification, its own ways. It is not the fault of the PWD. It is quite inevitable when this kind of thing is done by any official department on a large scale. They have to have specifications; they cannot possibly let loose everybody to do what they like. The result may be exceedingly good occasionally and exceedingly bad some times. Anyway the poor PWD has to answer in Parliament. But even the PWD can do two things: one is, of course, to revise the antiquated rules and bring them up-to-date. I use the word “antiquated” in the sense that they were drawn up when they dealt with not exactly the materials we use today or, even if they did, they dealt with them in a different sense; secondly, it is not necessary always to aim at putting up well, a normal building to last a hundred years. It is not necessary at all. In fact, it will be better for them to be knocked down and

after a few years a better one to be put up. Anyhow it is desirable, that new rules and regulations should be framed. It surprises me, for instance, why some people go on putting up enormously thick walls when all over the world partitions are much thinner and stronger. In the old days of course—I have lived in houses in Uttar Pradesh built about 100 years ago—walls were 13ft. thick, *kacha* walls.

Now I have welcomed very greatly one great experiment in India, which you know very well, Chandigarh. Many people argue about it, some like it, some dislike it. It is totally immaterial, whether you like it or not; it is the biggest job of its kind in India. That is why I welcome it. It is the biggest because it hits you on the head, because it makes you think. You may squirm at the impact but it makes you think and imbibe new ideas and, the one thing that India requires in so many fields is to be hit on the head so that you may think. I do not like every building in Chandigarh. I like a few very much, I like the general conception of the township very much, but what I like above all is this creative approach, not being tied down to what has been done by our forefathers and the like, but thinking out in new terms, try to think in terms of light and air and ground and water and human beings, not in terms of rules and regulations laid down by our ancestors. Therefore, Chandigarh is of enormous importance regardless of whether something in it succeeds or something in it does not succeed. As a matter of fact, even now many things in Chandigarh have spread, many ideas, in small ways and big ways. Chandigarh, as you well know, is more famous in the world than most Indian towns or cities excepting the well-known three or four, simply because it is a thing coming out, it is a thing of power coming out of a powerful mind and if you want anything of power, it must come out of a power-

ful mind, not a flat mind or a mind which is a mirror, and that too not a very clear mirror, reflecting somebody else's mind. There is no doubt that Le Corbusier is a man with a powerful creative type of mind. Because he has that, he may become extravagant occasionally. He can produce extravaganzas occasionally, but it is better to have that than to have a swelled head with no mind at all. Mr. Winston Churchill was once accused of having a swelled head. His answer was "It is better to have a swelled head than no head at all".

So I hope that your deliberations will not only profit by the experience of the past but rather be guided in terms of the present, the social functions of today, and of what we have to do. We cannot obviously, even if we have the capacity, build Taj Mahals now. It does not fit in with the society today. You make something lovely to look at, but just can't do it if it won't fit in. It must have to do with function. Anything you build must be full of the beauty that useful things have. I do not suggest that all things that are useful are necessarily beautiful, not at any rate in the ordinary sense of the term. They may be ugly, but in the ultimate analysis a thing that fits in with its functions is beautiful whether it is a human being or whether it is a house. Human beings today, for instance—I do not want to be personal—but let us take some of our princes or lords and ladies and the like. They performed some function, a couple of hundred years ago, which fitted them in society. Today they are functionless, they float about. And so long as they do not find some function as individuals, they float about and gradually become more and more, shall I say, ghost-like. So, in the same way, you can't have buildings, ghost-like buildings because they resemble some past period. They have to fit in with the work and functions of today and have, of course, such features which may be called representative of

India's background also. But remember that this business of European or Indian or Iranian and American architecture has certainly some substance in it but not so much as is made out. A modern European building, as you may call it, is a building coming out of industrialism. You may call it a building of the industrial age. If the industrial age comes to India, it will bring something like that but it will have to fit in with our function, climate, etc. So it is not European or Indian but something fitting in with the general structure of society, technological advance, climate, function, etc. The main thing today is that a tremendous deal of building is taking place in India and an attempt should be made to give it a right direction and to encourage creative minds to function with a measure of freedom so that new types may come out, new designs, new ideas, and out of that amalgam something new and good will emerge."

March 17, 1959

New Delhi.

Appendix IV
Pilot Questionnaire

Research Scholar: Sampreeti Malladi

Supervisor: Prof. Anuradha. J.

Research Area: Role of Space in Indian Dance

Respondent Details _____

Performer- Audience.

1. What does space, particularly in the context of dance mean to you?
2. As a performer when do you take cognizance of space? During or before the performance.
3. How do you think the spatial quality of your performance space and space as your immediate surrounding affects your performance. In solo works and in group performances.
4. Do you think the space of performance and its environs has an impact on how your performance is received.
5. Is it only a physical space that affects your performance, what other components of space do you consider as impacting your performance.
6. Between the proscenium, the open air theatre, the temple stage and the make shift stage, which performance space most suits your performance. Does this vary according to the chosen repertoire. What kind of spatial setting are you most comfortable performing in. Why?
7. Does the presence of certain props like images of Gods, lamps etc, change the stage for you?
8. How do you think spatial elements manifest in your performance?
9. Do you think Indian dances are structured in a manner that makes them oblivious to spatial settings and their surroundings. Why.
10. What do you think is the ideal capacity of the auditorium for your performance? Is there anything that as a viewer that you deem as a suitable setting.

Dancing For Camera

1. A significant portion of dancing today involves dancing for the camera, when dancing for the camera, are you aware of it and how it captures your emotions.
2. Is your performance affected by the presence or absence of camera.
3. What do you think is the role of camera in changes of technique notice today across different dance styles.

Choreography.

1. Does space play a role when you are choreographing a piece? Is space here the space between performers that you consider or the patterns in space that can be created.
2. Does vision angle play a role in this ? What happens when your choreography set to a particular space, is staged in completely different spatial settings?
3. Contemporary dancers talk of the potency of space and challenging set spatial ideas with their movements, what are your thoughts on it
4. What role does the utilisation of space play in group choreographies. How have you explored or choreographed your work in this regard
5. In your experience has the understanding of space and its utilization changed in the recent times. Do attach any significance apart from visual appeal to how you situate a particular piece or a movement.

Dialectics of Spatial Settings in Indian Dance : A Study based on Texts, Narratives and Structures in South India

by Sampreeti Malladi

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