

# Uparupakas and Nritya-Prabandhas

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A study of this subject, Uparupakas and Nitya-prabandhas, is necessary for the light it could throw on the history and development of many a dance-form prevalent in different parts of the country.

The ancient Indian stage was a growing one and at one point in its growth it was considered useful to classify the performances into two kinds, the *rupakas* and the *uparupakas*. Broadly speaking, the *rupakas* are major forms of drama and the *uparupakas* minor forms of drama in which music and dance predominated and most of which were forms of dance-drama or regular dances. This distinction cannot however be strictly enforced because in the *rupaka* class, considered to comprise the ten forms—*dasa rupaka*—not all could be entitled to be characterised as regular or major dramatic types. Barring the two leading types, the heroic *nataka* and the social *prakarana* with their derivative product the *natika* and the farce, *prahasana*, in one or two Acts, the others were lesser or irregular forms. Except probably in the case of the *vyayoga*, we have no survivals of early specimens to know what exactly the ancient forms of *dima*, *anka*, *samavakara* and *ihamriga* were like. The *veethi* and the *bhana*, of which latter we have some definite idea from descriptions and old specimens, were not examples of drama proper and could legitimately be classified among the *uparupakas*.

The technical distinction which *Natya Sastra* works make between *rupakas* and *uparupakas* is that while the former present a full *rasa* with other *rasas* as accessories, the latter could only present a *bhava* or *bhavas*; the former were accordingly referred to as *yakyartha-abhinaya* and the latter as *padartha-abhinaya*. That is, in the *rupaka* a full story was presented through all the dramatic requirements and resources fully employed but in the *uparupaka* only a fragment was depicted and even when a full theme was handled, all the complements of the stage were not present; the *uparupaka* lacked one or other or more of the four *abhinayas*, thus minimising the scope for naturalistic features—*lokadharmi*—and resorting increasingly to the resources of *natyadharmi*. Thus in some the element of speech,

*vachikabhinaya*, was omitted, as in Kathakali, though the representation included a continuous theme and the portrayal of different characters by different actors or dancers. Often, the reduction of the *lokadharmi* element of each character being played by a separate actor or dancer formed the chief feature which made for the performance being classed as an *uparupaka*. The *bhāna* among the *rupakās* negotiated the theme through a single actor through the device of the 'talk in the air', *akashabhashita*, or imaginary conversation. This reduction of dramatis personae took with it the elimination of one whole *abhinaya*, the *aharya*. *Aharya* included also the use of a few stage properties whose renunciation threw the burden of interpretation exclusively on the solo artiste and his or her ability to expound and exploit to the full the possibilities of *angika abhinaya*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Natya* and *Alankara Shastra* texts in Sanskrit had to codify the *uparupakas* that were growing and compelling recognition at a particular stage and the texts simply drew a line, which was somewhat historical, though, as explained already, having an artistic and technical basis. Just as there were *bhāna* and other irregular types in the *rupaka*-class, the *uparupaka*-class too had larger dramatic forms which were placed there on historical grounds, but with this justification for inclusion among them, namely that music and dance dominated in them. Such a type was *sattaka*, exemplified by Rajasekhara's *Karpuramanjari*, a complete Prakrit counterpart of the *natika*. In the ancient and traditional technique of production, music and dance formed an integral part of drama, but what is meant here specially with reference to the *uparupakas* is that these elements played a greater part here, as thematic features and motifs too; often, the *vachika*, the spoken dialogue, took a musical form, the story having been composed in songs.

How early do we hear of these lesser varieties of the ancient Indian stage? In the *Kama Sūtras* of Vatsyayana, we already hear of the men and women of taste witnessing or taking part in *hallisaka*, *natyarasaka* and *prekshanaka*. Bhamaha and Dandin, who were primarily rhetoricians concerned with 'read poetry', mention by the way that there were *dvipadi*, *rasaka*, *skandhaka*, *lasya*, *chhalika* and *samya*—all of these intended to be 'seen'. These were compositions set to music and dance. As these names come up in regular treatises on *Natya Sastra*, we shall come later to the consideration of what these actually were. Some of these appear also in descriptions in literature, for example, Kumarila, the great Mimamsaka, speaks of

*dvipadi* and *rasaka* in his *Tantravarttika*, and the *chhalika*, or *chalikya*, occurs as a dance in the *Harivamsa* and is mentioned by Kalidasa as being learnt by Malavika.

As already explained, Bharata's text itself mentions one performance which is not included in drama, but is of the form of dance, namely *lasa*. The greatest name in the history of drama and dance after Bharata is Kohala whom some recensions of Bharata's text itself—for example, the one in the Kavyamala edition—mention as the author of the *Uttaratantra*, suggesting thereby that Bharata's text would be the *Purva-tantra*. All that developed in the post-Bharata period was codified by Kohala; in fact, the labours of Kohala were so significant that it appears from Abhinavagupta's statement that even Bharata's text underwent a redaction on the impact of Kohala's work. From Abhinavagupta's observations, we gather that it was Kohala who for the first time spoke of the stage-performances outside the pale of the *dasa rupaka*. And it is in Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Natya Sastra* that we first see some of these *uparupakas* referred to, occasionally mentioning a technical characteristic of theirs and an illustrative composition also. The chief of these *uparupakas* mentioned by Abhinavagupta as dealt with by Kohala is the *totaka*. The *totaka* is described by post-Abhinavagupta writers, Saradatanaya for example, but none has any clear idea of it nor even an undisputed example of a *totaka*. *Totaka* is taken, like *natika* and *sattaka*, more as a dramatic form and sometimes, the *Vikramorvasiya* of Kalidasa is cited as a *totaka*. The correctness of this identification cannot be vouched for. Though the names *sattaka* and *totaka*, or *trotaka*, have been understood as names of dramatic forms, it is not forgotten that they were intended to be danced or that they were dominated by music and dance. It is quite likely that these were originally popular dance-forms. As early as the Barhut Stupa, we hear of the *sadaka* dance. These dance-forms might have been taken and used as bases or motifs for sophisticated and elaborate dramatic efforts by the classic poets and dramatists, and gradually the over-emphasis on the literary side might have led to their growth into a species of drama. An element called *totaka* occurs among the sixty-four *sandhyangas* or emotional or incidental ideas occurring in a regular drama. Bharata defines it as something said in agitation, under the stress of an emotion.

The following *uparupakas* are referred to or described to or described by Abhinavagupta in his *Abhinavabharati*: *dombika*, *prasthanā*, *silpaka*, or *shidgaka*, *bhanaka* or simply *bhāna* as distinct

from the *bhāna* in the *dasa rūpaka* class, *bhānika* separately from *bhānaka ragakavya* or simply *kavya* as distinct from the poetic composition proper called *kavya*, *prerana*, *ramakreeda*, *rasaka* and *hallisaka*. While these are the forms mentioned by one writing from Kashmir, let us see what varieties of these minor stage-performances a writer from Malwa mentions. Dhanika in his commentary on his brother's standard treatise on drama, the *Dasarupaka*, refers to the *uparupaka* forms, *dombi*, *srigadita*, *bhāna*, *bhāni*, *prasthāna*, and *kavya*; he cites a verse mentioning these and the verse significantly adds this remark that these seven are executed by a single dancer. In the same region of Malwa arose the royal polymath and patron Bhoja, who, in his *magnum opus*, shows his acquaintance with the local as well as Kashmir traditions; his *Srinaga Prakasa* is the first regular work on poetry and drama to give a codified treatment of types of *uparupaka*. He defines, citing examples for some, twelve types: *srigadita*, *durmilika* or *durmilita* (mentioned by others as *durmallika* too), *prasthāna*, *kavya* or *chitrakavya*, *bhāna*, (*suddha*, *chitra* and *sankeerna*) *bhānika*, *gosthi*, *hallisaka*, *nartanaka*, *prekshanaka*, *rasaka* and *natyarasaka* or *charchari*. Thus between Abhinavagupta on one hand and Dhanika and Bhoja on the other, we get a good deal of light thrown on a little-known side of the ancient Indian theatre. The ancient Indian stage—to emphasise an important fact—had a rich repertoire and the ancient *rasika* had a surprisingly large variety of stage-performances to witness and enjoy.

Later, three works, the *Bhavaprakasa* of Saradatanaya, the *Natakalakshanaratnakosha* of Sagarānandin and the *Sahityadarpana* of Visvanatha, give full descriptions of these *uparupakas* but their evidence is of less value; they draw their material mainly and ultimately from Abhinavagupta and Bhoja. As maintained at the outset, an examination of these *uparupakas* is useful as it lights up the history of the surviving forms of popular dance and dance-drama. The *uparupaka* is the link or common ground where the classic met the popular, and the sophisticated took up the folk-form; and therefore an inquiry into the nature of these *uparupakas* is highly valuable. The name *uparupaka* signifies an effort to codify these lesser and popular forms, and assigns them a place in the framework of theory; and their relevance and significance to our present purpose will be clear if we refer to them by their other name, *nritya-prabandhas*.

Now collating the data available in Abhinavagupta, Bhoja and



other sources, let me place before you such reconstructions as possible of the *uparupakas* and *nritya-prabandhas*. First the *sreegadita*.

This is a composition depicting love in separation—*vipralambha*, featuring a *kulangana* or lady of family and a lady friend of hers (*sakhi*): the heroine describes the qualities of her lover and then, referring to his bad behaviour towards herself, complains against him. According to Bhoja, it is called *sreegadita*, the utterances of Sree, because Goddess Sree or Lakshmi and her Lord, Vishnu, are the prototypes of the beloved and the lover figuring in it. In Abhinavagupta, we come across a form described in similar terms but called *shidgaka* which is sometimes given as *shingaka* or in a Sanskrit form *silpaka*. There may be here a process of wrong Sanskritisation or hyper-Sanskritisation, which is quite common in this process of give and take. According to Abhinavagupta, in *shidgaka*, a *nayika* in separation relates to her friend her husband's bad conduct and perverse behaviour. Students of dance may at once recognise here the similarity of this theme with that of the recurring theme of Bharata Natya songs, particularly *varnas*.

While the heroine in *sreegadita* is a *kulangana* and the atmosphere is dignified, that in the next type *durmilika* or *durmilita* is less dignified, dealing as it does with clandestine love. The character featured in this type is a female accomplice of a lower type, a *cheti*, who takes the audience into confidence over the secrets of the clandestine love-affair she is aiding. After she appears and holds the audience for some time, one of the parties to the love intrigue appears on the stage, and she sets forth her plans and makes her demands, bordering on blackmail. The name *dur-milika* (-ta) may mean the clandestine union. Songs featuring themes approaching this can be found among the *padas* of Bharata Natya.

*Prasthanā* is a type described by both Bhoja and Abhinavagupta, but by each in a different way. Bhoja says that *prasthanā* depicts all the phases of love in separation including *pravasa* or that caused by the lover going away on a journey, which last is evidently to be understood by the name *prasthanā*. There is to be the description of the seasons of spring and the rains, and the longing of the heroine. A technical detail of music and dance mentioned by Bhoja is the performance marked by four *apasaras*, the *Natyadarpana* explains. is the name of a section marked by a course of dance, *nrityacchinnani khandani apasarah*. The performance enlivens itself towards the close by the introduction, through some device of the theme, of the

heroic sentiment *veera sara*. *Prasthanā* means also 'starting of a warrior on a victorious expedition, and if the hero is one such, his triumphant return and the description of his exploits could very well introduce this heroic element at the conclusion of this piece.

Abhinavagupta speaks of different other elements in his version of the *prasthanā*. He says that it should be played in both the styles of *tandava* and *lasya*, forceful as well as delicate, with the latter predominating. He too speaks of the going-on-journey, evidently of the lover. But the striking detail mentioned by him is that, in the piece, there is imitation of the gait and movements of animals like elephants. Are elephants and horses to be understood here as forming part of the forces of the hero going on the expedition? In another context, Abhinavagupta refers to a music feature called *varnanga* as characterising the *prasthanā*.

*Kavya* and *chitrakavya*, in the class of *uparupakas*, are not to be confused with types of poetry of those names known in *Alankāra Sastra*. The *kavya* is here a whole story composed into songs and danced. If the whole song-poem is in one *raga*, it is just the *kavya*, if it is in a variety of *ragas* it is *chitrakavya*. Bhoja's description of these two is full of technical details concerning the composition, *raga* and *tala*. Abhinavagupta gives it the clearer name *ragakavya*; it is sung and interpreted in gestures, *abhinaya*. Two examples are also mentioned, on parts of the *Ramayana* story, the *Raghava-vijaya* and the *Marichavadha*, the former composed and sung throughout in *takka raga* and the latter in *kakubha grama raga*. Abhinavagupta makes special mention of the fact that in this type, despite the change of situations and sentiments, the same *raga* continues to be employed. A verse of Kohala is quoted in the same context, describing a variety of this in different *ragas* and *talas*, which would be the *chitra-kavya* mentioned by Bhoja. Elsewhere Abhinavagupta quotes Kohala describing the story of *Tripuradaha* composed in this form, sung and danced to by Siva. That this was an early development is shown also by a reference in the *Ubhaya-bhisarika* in the Chaturbhani collection to courtesan dancers taking dancing contests on such story-compositions for dance as the *Purandara-vijaya* mentioned there.

It could be seen that the celebrated *Geeta Govinda*, in the wake of which many musical story-poems arose, belongs to the type *chitra-kavya* noticed above. The *Geeta Govinda* occupies indeed a key-position in the history of both music and dance and not only

inspired numerous Sanskrit imitations but led to the outburst of a class of musical dance-drama in the local languages, sometimes mixed with Sanskrit, in different parts of the compositions of Sankaradeva of Assam, of Umapati in Bihar, of Bhagavatanatakas and Yakshaganas and the Krishanattam and Kathakali of the Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil and Malayalam areas—all return to the *Geeta Govinda* as the ultimate source and inspiration. In the whole history of music or dance, in any part of the world, I do not think there has been a creation of a genius of greater destiny and potentiality than the *Geeta Govinda* of Jayadeva.

The *raga-kavya*, particularly of the *chitra* variety, has been cultivated in the Tamil country, in the field of music primarily but sometimes with the intention to be performed as a dance-drama too. Thus we have whole *puranas*, *itihasas* and episodes thereof and stories on the lives of saints composed in Tamil in the form of *keertanas* in different *raga* and *talas*: for example the well-known compositions of *Nandan Charitram* of Gopalakrishna Bharati and *Ramanataka-Keertanas* of Arunachala Kavirayar, and the lesser known *Skandapurana-Keertanas*, *Bhagavata-dasama-skandha-keertanas*, etc.

Such *raga-kavyas* in one or more melodies were produced in some number in Orissa when there was a music and dance renaissance there in the 18th century. This was to be expected of a place where the *Geeta Govinda* was produced and where there had been provision made, at the temple of Jagannath, for its dancing. Purushottama who flourished under King Narayana of Parlikhamedi, associated with the writing of *Sangeetanarayana*, produced some *raga-kavya* and Purushottama's son Narayana speaks in his *Sangeeta-sarani* of the two classes of the *raga-kavya*, the *suddha-prabandha* in one melody and the *sutra-prabandha* in many melodies; in the former class, he composed four and in the latter two, one on the *Ramayana* and one on a Jagannath Temple festival. Purushottama composed three *suddha-raga-kavyas* on the *Ramayana* story.

According to Bhoja, *bhana*, *bhanaka*, *bhanika* constitute the singing of praises of the deities Siva, Vishnu, Devi, Skanda, Surya etc. Bhoja's description of this type includes a number of music and dance details. It is to be in seven sections, employing one, two or more languages and danced in both forceful and delicate styles. Two noteworthy points found in Bhoja's description may be underlined: as the musician sings, he will go on saying something continuously

(*gayana-sehokti-yuktah*) and some speech appears to be necessary to explain its name, *bhana*. The other point is that things difficult to dance or interpret in *abhinaya*, intricacies of *tala* and rhythm—all these are to be displayed in the *bhana*. The same type would be *bhanika*, if the subject of the *stotra* is God Vishnu, with softer dances called forth probably by the love-sports of the Lord; nine or ten themes in equal number of sections may be composed into the *bhanika*.

That this type called *bhana* is definitely a music and dance composition is confirmed by Abhinavagupta who says that instrumental music is to dominate in the *bhana*. Regarding however the subject matter of the *bhana*-composition, the specimens known to Abhinavagupta were of didactic nature, inculcating principles of *dharma* etc., through symbolic descriptions of animals—lion, boar, bear, buffalo—much in the same manner as the *anyapadesa* verses known in poetry; when these animal-examples are used, they are featured in themes of the form of continuous animal-fable, thus necessitating imitation of the gait and other activities of the animals. This would then have been very valuable indeed as affording considerable scope for the different animal-gaits set forth by *Natya Sastra* texts in the chapter on *gati*. The animal-gaits, it is added, are displayed by the lady dancer who figures here. The scope for speech is also included in the definition to justify the title *bhana*. From Abhinavagupta's mention of Man-Lion (Narasimha), and Boar (Sukara) and Bhoja's reference to exploits of Hari, we may be tempted to link these up to some imitations of the incarnations of Vishnu. I have dwelt on the *bhana* at some length, as I understand from Sri J.C. Mathur that there is a type called *bhana* still surviving round about Mathura.

The *gosthi*, which is known from Bhoja only, depicts Krishna's exploits in killing the demons. *Hallisaka*, more widely known in literature, is a circular dance, in the manner of Krishna's dance with the *gopis*. The circular dance of girls is one of the most widely prevalent folk dances found in all parts of the country: the *garba* of Gujarat, the *achciyarkuravai* of ancient Tamil classics, the *kummi*, *kolattam* and *kudichcuppattu* of Tamilnad and the *kaikottikkali* of Malabar are all varieties of *hollisaka*.

The *nartanaka* is important, as it is just the well-known dance-recital by a single danseuse, such as we have in the Bharata *Natya*. This is the same as the *lasya* described by Bharata himself. Bhoja

underlines three features of this: slow tempo and elegant movement, and the *abhinaya* of transitory moods of the *rasa*. According to him *samya*, *dvipadi*, *chhalika* are only forms of this. *Samya* means the short multicoloured span-long sticks that girls use for striking the rhythm-beats in their dance, from which the dance gets that name; *samya* also means one of the hand-actions in beating the palms for keeping *tala*; therefore, as a dance, *samya* is done by girls either keeping *tala* with sticks, in which case it will be *danda-rasaka* or the *kolattam* of Tamilnad, or with their palms in which case it will be the *kudichcuppattu* of Tamilnad, and the *kaikottikkali* of Malabar. *Dvipadi* is the name of a *laya*, a music composition and dance based on it. *Chhalika*, as already said, is mentioned by Kalidasa as learnt by Malavika; Kalidasa says in his play that it was associated with the lady Sarmishtha as its author, that it had four parts or themes and that it was very difficult to perform the fourth part of its theme which depicts *purvanuraga-vipralambha* or longing before the first union. Later commentators fall back on the word *chhalita* its possible derivation from *chhala* and so on, or on Malavika's dance itself and offer no enlightening comment on it. The only source, apparently early, which gives a rather elaborate description is the *Harivamsa*, but no clear picture of the distinct form of this dance could be had from the text. From more than one context here, we learn that it is primarily the name of a piece of music, from which the dance employing that music gets the name.

The *preksanaka* was a show which took place in the open on streets, amidst a gathering of people, in quadrangles, and temple courtyards; it was performed by a number of persons. Bhoja gives also the performance of the *Burning of Cupid* as an example. Even now, at the time of Holi, in Maharashtra, and under its influence in Tanjore District in Tamilnad, the episode of the *Burning of Cupid* is enacted in public, employing a Marathi song-type called *lavani* in which one party contends that Manmatha had been destroyed and another that Manmatha still lived.

*Preksanaka* has also been used by later authors to denote any kind of irregular stage-performance, not conforming to any of the well-defined types.

While all ancient dance, *tandava* and *lasya*, was associated with Saivism, later dance traditions had come under the sway of Krishna and his legends and sports. Already we noticed that the types of *gosthi* and *hallisaka* were associated with Krishna and the *gopis*. *Rasa*

is the type *par excellence* with which Krishna and the *gopis* are connected. *Rasa* is also a dance in a circle, by a number of women, sixteen, twelve or eight. The style is delicate or forceful; it is in different *talas*; in fact, *rasa* itself is a *tala*-name. The women sing and dance but there is no *abhinaya*. They do only pure dance or *nritya* but what is noteworthy in this is that they execute many patterns. As they are in some numbers, they combine into different patterns and designs called *pindibandha*, *srinkhala*, *bhedyaka* and *lata*. The first is the dancers coming together and forming clusters; *srinkhala* is forming a chain; *bhedyaka* is breaking from the lines of the former and going into different positions and *lata* is formation like creepers, with intertwining of the dancers standing in two or more lines. As one text says that the number of ladies in a *rasaka* can go up to sixty-four pairs, wonderful patterns are possible here.

In the description of the next type, *natya-rasaka*, Bhoja goes into further details about these patterns. *Natya-rasaka* otherwise called *charchari* is done in spring and in honour of the King, for example, the one at the opening of the drama *Ratnavali*. *Charchari* itself is a *tala*-name, but Bhoja mentions *varnataala* as being used here. The girls who do this in a body execute the patterns *pindi*, *gulma* etc. First one pair of dancers enters and dances, then another and thus groups are formed. Drums, sticks, recital of rhythm-syllables, other instruments, all these are employed. The performance ends with a benedictory verse, making a reference to the Gods having danced thus when they got the nectar by the churning of the ocean.

*Pindi* is a term already found in the *Natya Shastra* of Bharata in the description of the dances preliminary to the play proper, the *purvaranga*. *Pindi* is here described as the *nartaki* executing the form of the weapon or the riding animal of the different deities, Trident for Siva, Lion for Devi, Elephant for Indra and so on. In the same chapter, Bharata speaks of the patterns *srinkhala* and *lata* and while explaining these Abhinavagupta says that *pindibandha* means in general what dancers do by coming together; they can combine in two ways, the *sajatiya* in which the two dancers would appear as two lotuses from a common stalk or the *vijatiya* in which one dancer will remain in one pose like the swan and the other will be in a different pose to give the effect of a lotus-with-stalk held by the swan-lady; in *gulma-srinkhalika* pattern, three would combine and in a *lata*, four. *Bhedyaka*, Bharata says, is done with dance, that is while executing the other types there may not be elaborate dancing in the form of steppings whereas in *bhedyaka*, regular dancing is to be done. Further

interesting information given by Bharata here is that these patterns are achieved with the aid of (1) perfect practice, (2) some mechanical device, and (3) some armless seats or similar stage properties. Abhinavagupta however puts a different interpretation on this passage. I have devoted some attention to this, as there may be a wrong impression among some critics that Indian *lasya* is stereotyped, that there is no scope for group work and/or the exploitation of the pictorial possibilities here. That such compositions of pure dance with groups of dancers were done is known also from sculpture and I would draw attention in this connection to a frieze in the Amara-vati sculptures (Madras Museum, Bulletin, Pl. XIII, fig. 16); there are four ladies here, one kneeling in the foreground with another standing behind her, and both flanked by two others; the placing, the variation of *sthana* and *karana*, the symmetry, everything is so perfect—we may not be able to identify exactly the *karanas* here in terms of the 108 in Bharata, or of the *pindis* etc. mentioned above, but this is one of the simplest and most beautiful compositions.

We lost ourselves in the labyrinth of pattern-dance while speaking about *rasaka* and *natya-rasaka*. When on *rasaka*-varieties, we might refer again to the variety already touched upon, the *danda-rasaka*. In Act IV of the play *Karpuramanjari* of Rajashekhara, of the *sattaka*-class already explained as being full of music and dance, the poet introduces the *vata-savitri-vrata*, celebrated in summer and as a part of its festivities, depicts different dances. *Danda-rasaka* is played here by thirty-two *nartakis*, and as these, with their steps and sticks in their hands close to the *tala*, wheel round or cross each other, dividing themselves in two rows of sixteen, they form variegated patterns—*vichitra-bandhas*. According to a detailed Sanskrit extract in a Tamil dance-composition in manuscript called *Suddhananda-prakasa*, these pattern executed by them showed hexagonal and octagonal formations. The *Sangeeta-samaya-sara* has a long description of the *danda-rasaka*; Parsvadeva gives elaborate and varied instrumental accompaniment to this: cymbals, bells and *tala-vadyas* like *pataha*, *hudukka*, *mridanga* and *karatala*. Starting with a pair of dancers who entered first and then bringing on further ones, they went up to eight or more pairs: they danced facing each other and as they executed their elaborate dances, by steppings and wheelings, they formed different *sthana*s, *karana*s and *bandhas*. The *Nrityaratnavali* has also a long description of *danda-rasaka* and mentions that, in the place of sticks, the dancers hold also a fly-whisk, sword, etc. The *Nrityasarvasra* refers to dances of *desi*-type with sword, piece of cloth, stick, garland, fly-whisk, lute

and ball. Till recently, it is known, that Nattuvanars fitted *adavus* and *jatis* to sword dances and trained their dancers doing *varnas* to execute the same with swords; in the course of their movements, they would cut vegetables with the sword tied to the body of a girl lying on the ground; in the course of their footwork, they would at specific points of the dance, bring down their swords on the vegetables in a most uncanny manner, without causing any hurt to the girl bedecked with the vegetables; they would similarly go about their dance movements with pieces of cloth in their hands, which, even as they danced, they would make into a dove.

Apart from these, a *rasakanka* is found in both Abhinavagupta and Bhoja and they quote from a composition called *Radhavipralambha*, on the theme of Radha in separation, by poet Bhejjala.

We now come to a type, important in a different way—the *dombi* or *dombalika*. Abhinavagupta refers to it several times and quotes from a composition called *Chudamani Dombika* by poet Ranaka, and perhaps from another composition also called *Gunamala*. The *dombi* is a type like the *nautch*, done by a single *nartaki*; songs are sung by accompanying singers, and the dancer, the *dombi*, dances. The difference is in the person of the *dombi* and the nature of the theme. *Dombi* is a kind of drum and also a class or community of people accomplished in music and dance. The *Rajatarangini* refers to *dombagayanas* and a *domba-mandala* consisting of one Ranga and his two daughters called *domba-gayikas*. The *dombankuttadis* were, till some time back, common in the countryside in the South, moving about with their women and drum and displaying their difficult rope-dancing. The *dombas* must once have been a community of people highly accomplished in the arts of music and dance. The kings used to receive them or entertain parties of them and spend time seeing their dances in which they sang songs of secret love-episodes, of how such and such a lady in love fared and what her accomplice achieved for her, themes not far removed from those of some of the lower specimens of *padas* in Bharata Natya. One important thing to be noted which makes for its difference from *nautch* and for its being a popular form is that the *dombi* does not interpret the words and meaning of the songs closely in *abhinaya*; on the other hand she does some action in accordance with the character and the theme, like the suggestive action of brows and eyes and some simple movements of hands such as figure in normal human activity and speech. The *dombi* concentrates on the song and the dance movements and poses she executes according to the *laya* of the song. During these



dance interludes the *hudukka* drum is played as accompaniment, and Abhinavagupta says that in the vernacular this is called *chillimarga*.

The more *uparupakas* or dance-compositions are mentioned by Abhinavagupta: the *prerana* which is said to be comic and the *ramakreeda* which is said to describe the different seasons. In a second reference of *prerana* along with *bhana* and *bhanika*, Abhinavagupta speaks of descriptions of animals and animal fables having a didactic import, as figuring in this type also.

References have already been made to the *chhalika* and *charchari* dance featured in the plays of Kalidasa and Harsha. The *Karpuramanjari* of Rajasekhara is an interesting source of information and it describes dances other than the *lasya* and *danda-rasaka*, noticed already. We may note them as they are quite out of the way and add to our knowledge about the richness and variety of dance forms: Rajasekhara speaks of comic dance, and dance of women dressed as hunters; he describes a terrible type depicting *raudra ras* called *Smasana-abhinaya*, with facial masks of fierce spirits, emitting weird noises. Another dance done by the women here is called *yogini-valaya-nartana-keli* but no details of this dance can be gathered from the description. To the accompaniment of the *hudukka* in rather fierce sequences and of the *mardala* drum in soft sequences, another woman performs the *chillikarma*. *Chilli*, also called *chillimarga*, is, according to Abhinavagupta, what is done as pure dance in between the sections of the *dombi* already described. This vernacular name shows the popular character and origin of the *dombi*.

The *Bhavaprakasha* describes some *uparupakas* not noticed by Abhinavagupta and Bhoja. There are *sallapaka*, *silpaka*, *ullopyaka*, *mallika*, *kalpavalli parijata*. A few of these names may be traced elsewhere also but the variants in the names themselves and the descriptions, such as are available, give us no help to get a clear picture of these.

Having dealt with dance-forms that could be gleaned from sources which are of somewhat remote accessibility, I might turn now to those found in sources more accessible to general students of music and dance; the sources to be tapped now are of a later date, and if we follow a chronological order, they would, by steps, lead us to the present survivals in different parts of the country. It may also be noted that while the folk-affiliations of the *uparupakas* had to be traced vaguely, the series of dance-forms to be taken up now,

disclose their popular origin clearly; they are, in fact, dealt with in these treatises under *desi-nrityas*. Another point to be noted is that from the *rupakas* to the *uparukas* and from the latter to the *nritya-prabandhas*, there is a progressive reduction of the *vachya* or text or speech till it is completely replaced by songs; a literary composition of some length or size gives place to short songs and dance-music. The music and dance treatises used for the collection of this material some of which are still in manuscript, are: the *Manasollasa* of Somesvara, Music and Dance Section (Ms)<sup>2</sup>, the *Sangeeta Ratnakara* the *Sangeetasudhakara* of Haripala (Ms), the *Sangeeta-samayasara* of Parsvadeva, the *Nrittaratnavali* of Jayasenapati<sup>3</sup>, the *Sangeeta Chintamani* of Vemabhupala (Ms) the *Sangeeta Raja* (*Nrityaratnakosa*) of Kumabhakarna (Ms), the *Aumapata*, the *Sangeeta Muktavali* of Devendra (Ms), the *Sangeeta Damodara* of Bhatta Subhankara (Ms)<sup>4</sup>, the *Sangeeta Darpana* of Damodara, the *Sangeeta Saramrita* of Tulaja, *Sangeeta-sara-sangraha* of Ghanashyamadasa and several other works dealt with by me in my account of *Later Sangeeta Literature*<sup>5</sup>, as also some amorphous complications in print as well as manuscript.

The *gondali* is the most important of the dance described in these treatises. From the *Nrittaratnavali* of Jayasenapati we learn that this was organised into an art form for recitals from the folk dance of the *gondalis* of Maharashtra by King Somesvara of Kalyan, after seeing a *gondali* dancing before his camp. *Gonda* and *gondali* mean hunters. Without a knowledge of this history, some writers had needlessly made *gondali* into *kundali*, made her a divine damsel learning this dance from Parvati and propagating it! In *gondali*, the difficult music compositions are to be eschewed and delicate dance movements are to be resorted to. The danseuse may or may not herself carry or play the instrument called *trivali*. She is to wear Karnataka make-up, for Karnataka extended upto Somesvara's capital at that time. The progress of the *gondali* dance also follows the Karnataka mode, starting first with *melapaka* then after instrumentation, going to *puspanjali*, and then the danseuse beginning her dance. Either the dancer herself or a supporting musician should sing after a course of dancing with the accompaniments of instrumental music. The singing should include recital of rhythm-syllables and end with *kalasa* or *teermana* as we might now say. After this, she should resume dance involving various *charis*.

The next important dance on detailed technical information is given by Sarangadeva. Jayasenapati etc., is the *perani* also given,

in a slightly more Sanskrit form as *prerana*. The connection of this with the *preranā* of Abhinavagupta is not clear. The *perani* is a gifted male dancer, highly accomplished in music of voice and instrument, and in dance, capable particularly of doing the *desi bhramaris* and *karanas* involving jumps or *utplutis*. The most striking thing about him is his make-up: with a shaven head mounted with a tuft and a replica of a hooded serpent, with stripes of holy ash on his limbs, with ornaments of cowries, gold pieces and stones, and with a number of small bells on his lower leg, bearing in one arm a stick and in the other a fly-whisk, he enters the stage; before him singly or in pairs four, six or eight associates of his in the same dress being already present there, taking his stand in their midst, the chief *perani* assuming the *samupada* or *bhujangatrasita karna*, shows himself to the audience on the rise of the curtain. His dance has five sections; first, pure dance in both *tandava* and *lasya* styles; the next is *kaivara* or *kavicharaka*, a poetic composition in praise of the king; the third *anga* is *garghara* in which instruments of *tala* are played along with the steps of the dancer; this instrumentation and footwork has six or seven stages, involving different kinds of floorcontacts of the feet or *adavus* as we might now call them in the terminology of Bharata Natya; the fourth section is called *vikata* and comprises the imitation of the acts of goblins, monkeys, etc., and movements of face, lips, eye, abdomen, arms and legs, displaying contortions and exciting laughter; the last *anga* is the singing of songs. I mentioned that the *perani* entered surrounded by associates, with make-up like his own; one of these called *attabodaka*, that is a *desi* word meaning a completely shaven head, is said to indulge in some comic dancing before the *perani* arrives in their midst.

Side by side with this *perani* or *prerani* texts like *Nrittaratnavali* and *Sangeetasaramrita* speak of a *pekkhana* or *preksana* or *prenkana*. This comprises six *angas* of music and dance and involves *charis* and *karanas* of *utpluti* type in *uddhata* or forceful style. It is danced by men as well as women.

*Sivapriya* is a form described by Jayappa, and following him, by Kumbhakarna also. This is done by devotees of Siva, men or women, wearing stripes of holy ash and *rudraksha* rosaries, standing in a row and singing of Lord Siva. Quite a large number of *tala* instruments are played, each member of the party playing a different one. They recite the rhythm-syllables, form into two rows facing each other or

circles, and dance in delicate style executing many movements. The occasion of this dance is festivals of Siva.

*Kollatta* borders on circus. In this, with the sounding of horns, drums, cymbals, bells and the like the dancers walk on ropes on high, cutting difficult poses, mount high poles and wheel round on the top, play with edges of swords, endangering their lives in these movements, strut about lightly with heavy loads on their bodies, jump up into air like birds and brandish swords and other arms. Some of these were referred to above under the *dombika* and *dombas*. During the Dussera festival, displays of some of these were common a short while back. The story of *Vivarta* in ch. 8 of the *Dasakumara charita* describes the wonderful display of dancing with swords and the execution by the dancer of many *karanas*, of the *marga* and *desi* varieties. In the *Naishadhiya Charita* of Sreeharsha and the poem *Heerasaubhagya*, there is a description of a party going in front of processions and making display of sham fighting etc. The same *Naishadhiya Charita* refers also to dancing on the top of the pole. These artistic displays of sword-play etc. are not later developments; they are very old. In fact, the four *vrittis* and four *nyayas* of Bharata's *Natya Sastra*, as I have shown elsewhere, were derived from sports like sword play, javelin throwing etc.<sup>6</sup> Dances connected with weapons still survive in the dramatic *baris* of Bali. Unfortunately the decay of national games and physical exercises, as a result of the rise of more fashionable Western games and sports, has had its repercussions in the field of music and dance too.

*Kanduka-nritta* or the dance with the playing of the ball was a wide-spread and at the same time important form. The simple beating of the ball by the flat palm, as it springs from the ground, was worked out into a regular dance with the dexterous execution of different swift movements, turns, wheelings etc. This *kanduka-nritta* forms a motif in one of the stories of Dandin's *Dasakumara charita* (of c. 700 A.D.) ch. VI, the story of Princess Kandukavati of Damalipita who was, till her marriage, propitiating Goddess Vindhya-vasini by performing before her on the day of the Krittika constellation every month, the *kanduka-nritta*. In this dance which the Princess did before an admiring crowd of spectators, Dandin says, she adopted the three tempis of *madhya*, *vilamba* and *druta*; she displayed very rapid to and fro steps also; plied both her hands, sang, sent the ball in every corner and made it come back, executed numerous and varied *karanas* and moved in circles (*mandalas*), wavy

lines (*gamootrikas*) and other movement referred to as *geetamarga* and *panchabinduprasrita*; and displayed further many a beautiful game with the ball. The commentary refers even to a text on ball-playing as an art, called *Kandukatantra*. Describing this *kanduka-nritta*, Jayappa refers to the playing of music instruments, *charis* and rhythm patterns of steppings called lotus, wavy line, serpentine gait, and circle (*padmabandha*, *gomootri-kabandha*, *nagabandha* and *chakrobandhas*), and soft and delicate actions. Jayappa speaks of the *kanduka-nritta* as a group dance in which the women, besides beating it on the ground, threw and exchanged the ball and ran to catch it.

The *chindu* is a dance-form of the Dravidian-speaking areas taken up and set in a standard form in the Sanskrit texts, *Nrittaratnavali*, *Sungeetadarpana*, etc. The songs are in the Dravidian tongue (Telugu is meant) in a *dyipada* form, having *udgraha* and *dhruvapada* only and bearing the name *chindu*; young women in fine dress dance this, to the recital of *yatis* or *jatis*; movements are graceful and there is *abhinaya* of the meaning of the songs. It may be noted that, in the movements, the *chindu*, in common with other *desi* forms makes a liberal allowance to heavings and swayings of the chest, arms and hip. According to the *Sangeeta-darpana*, which speaks of two varieties of it, the dancer carries in his or her hand a trident, etc. In an anonymous and fragmentary text, printed recently from Jaipur, as many as six varieties of *chindu* are described, and the poses occurring in *chindu* dance are also indicated. In the variety of *chindu* dance still prevalent in rural parts of the Andhra-Karnataka border-region, there is indulgence in some obscene songs also, and sometime back, a legal suit also arose out of this. In Tamil, *chindu* is a dignified and beautiful song, featuring love or devotion and a particular votive offering and pilgrimage to God Kumara and is accompanied by devotional songs of this class called *kavadi-chindu*.

*Bhandika* is a comic dance indulged in by jesters. They strike their palms according to *tala*, recite the drum-syllables orally, and imitate lame men, dwarfs, children, monkeys, peacocks, waterbirds, parrots, asses, camels, dogs, imitating their cries, speaking and disporting their limbs indecorously. Though obviously hilarious and intended for fun, these buffoons dance extremely difficult rhythms.

The *charana-nritta* is a dance contributed by Saurashtra; here minstrels sing beautifully composed *dohaka* songs in the local

language along with recitation of rhythm-syllables and dance with forceful steps, wheeling movements and variegated hand-movements; as men go about this in *uddhata* style, women with veils covering their faces, dance in circle and in delicate style.

*Bahurupa* is, as its name signifies, a pageant of the world; the varied forms, dresses and actions of different types of people are here portrayed. This is done by a quick change of dress, voice, etc; he or she may also have assistants. Despite its avowed realism, it is stressed that this should not descend to the imitation of low characters. This is the same as the *pagati-vesa* and *pahal-vesa* of Andhra and Tamilnad in which a series of impersonations of characters in life by two actors, male and female, is presented on successive days of a week.

*Ghatīsiri* (-sani?) is a rather interesting form mentioned by Jayappa, whose correct name is not recoverable from the corrupt manuscripts. In this figures a *chandala* woman-dancer who sings with fine voice different songs including philosophical ones, *charyageetas* to the accompaniment of a *hudukka* drum hanging from her shoulder she is supported by male and female singers and players of flute, horns, cymbals and drums; the subject of the songs is Siva and Parvati in their appearance as the Hunter and Huntress; as these songs are sung and instruments played, she dances in the delicate style with graceful movements.

*Jakkadi* or *jakkani* is a Muslim dance-form with songs in Persian and bunches of peacock feathers in the hands of the dancers, The *Sangeeta Chintamani* of Vema and the *Sangeetasarasangraha* of Ghanashyama speak of a *paraseeka mattalli* or simply *mattalli*, another Muslim dance-form.

In addition to the *godali* which has its origin in the hunter's dance in Dekkan, there are other hunters' dances also; Ghanashyama speaks of two such; the *sabara-nritya* and the *kuranji* or *kuranji-nritya*.

In the *Sangeeta Darpana* and *Sangeeta Muktaavali* we come across *yati-nritya* and *raganuga-yati-nritya* and *sabda-nritya* and the *abhinaya* of particular types of songs—all of which brings us to the threshold of the modern period and form really the forerunners of the *jatisyaram* and *sabdam*, the second and third items of the Bharata Natya programme. Many other items or song intended for dance set forth

in such works disclose features similar to those forming part of the dance recitals as we know them now or in the near past. But the works produced in these later times show such a variety of names and in-flow of vernacular technical terms and jargon from all regions of India—sometimes different names for the same aspect or its varieties—that it is a highly difficult task to collate all these and work out their respective connotations and relation to what survives now. When probably the projected scheme of a Dictionary of Dance and Music Terms is put through we may be able to classify this data to some extent. For example, the *madhupas* or *charis* of different kinds inclusive of floor contacts, *urupa* or *udupa* which is of twelve kinds, *karananeri*, *bhitra*, *chritra*, *nartaka*, etc., the *dhyada* of twelve kinds, *lagava*, the *daru* which is the contribution of Andhara, *nibandha*, *lavani*, *chattu*, *kattari*, *kalpa*, and *vaipota* in Kannada and Telugu languages, The *Laysa pushpanjali* refers to dances of Jaunpuri, Tirhut, Tamil, Telugu, Persian and Maharashtrian regions.

In the foregoing survey only the literary sources in Sanskrit have been used. An examination of Telugu and ancient Tamil literature would reveal many other forms which require to be collected with the material set forth above. It is not possible here to include the material in ancient Tamil literature, which has been collected.

These dance-forms which had a popular origin have in many cases parallels in all parts of India, and have even become part and parcel of our talk, thought and philosophy, for example, the puppet-play, than which man has not been able to employ a better simile for the way the almighty controls and guides him. Some of these common popular forms are things that surprisingly persist from the most ancient times, such as the *karakam* or the sacred decorated poised on the head of a votive dancer, which came from Tamilnad for one of the Republic Day Festivals of Folk Dances, is something which goes through the *Upanishad* to early *Vedic* times, when as part of the sacrifice and at the end of the *marjali*-act, eight servant maidens carried waterpots on the heads, singing songs to Indra.

What are the results of this long sweep? We know from this that the ancient Indian stage was rich and had numerous forms of performances in its repertoire. The art of dance was not static, it was putting forth new forms continuously. In the creation of these fresh forms, the classical authors took freely from popular forms and popular elements enriched the dance are with their own contributions which were, far from being ignored, utilised. In the art of

dancing a whole new section became a regular part of treatises in the later times, devoted to *desi* counterparts of the classical *charis*, *karanas*, *lasyanas*, etc.

When we look for literary sources or authorities for poses and other aspects in current practice and attempt to identify the latter in terms of those found in theory, we should, therefore look as much among the *desi-karanas* and *desi-lasyangas*, as among the things said by Bharata or depicted in Chidambaram or Tanjore.

While all this intake of new nomenclature from different regions was going on, it is to be noted<sup>7</sup>, there were two features which helped their smooth assimilation—one the underlying similarity or even identity, and the other the consistent technique of *nritya* and *nritya* with which they were harmoniously adapted and fitted into the framework of a national tradition. Indian dance is one more illustration of that genius of Indian culture which synthesis and evolved a pattern of unity in diversity.\* □

#### FOOTNOTES

1. See the writer's *Bhoja's Srngara Prakasa* (1963) ch. xx *Bhoja and Natya Sasira*, pp. 533 ff., and especially 545 ff.
2. Since published in the Gaekwar Oriental Series, Baroda
3. Edited by the author for Madras Govt. Oriental Mss. Library
4. Since printed from Calcutta, from a single Ms.
5. Journal of the Madras Music Academy, Vol. IV and Bulletin of Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, Nos. 17 and 18.
6. *The Vrittis*, the Journal of Oriental Research, Madras, Vols. VI and VII. See also "Sanskrit Drama and Performance", Journal of the Madras University, Vol. XIX-i
7. See the author's "Variety and Integration in the Pattern of Indian Culture", the Far-Eastern Quarterly U.S.A. Vol. XV. iv. Also "The Popular and Classical, in Music", Journal of the Music Academy, Madras, xviii. pp. 100-6.

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