

The Devadāsīs of Tamil Nadu: A Study

R. NAGASWAMY

The *devadāsī* system is essentially connected with temple worship. The survival and popularity of the Bharatanatyam tradition in Tamil Nadu are to be traced to the large number of ancient temples (there are over 40,000 temples in Tamil Nadu) that came into existence long before, and several thousands during the time, of the Cholas (9th-13th century AD). Such a large number of temples came to be built as a result of the *bhakti* movement, spearheaded by the Śaivite Nāyanmārs and the Vaisnavite Ālvārs in the 6th-9th century AD. This devotional upsurge was the main plank of the *devadāsī* system. In order to understand the *devadāsī* system of Tamil Nadu in its proper perspective, it is necessary at first to understand the roots of devotion and temple movement.

Bhakti is defined by Nārada as intense love of God—*parama prema rūpā*— which is immortal: *amṛtasvarūpā*. “A man who loves God has no wants or sorrows. He neither hates nor joys, nor strives with zeal for any ends of his own [Nārada Bhakti Sūtra no. 5]. Love of God is no selfish passion; rather it is self-denial; for it means the giving up of the world. It also means dedicating oneself entirely to God” (*Nārada Bhakti Sūtras* 7,8,9). It is totally different from the passion of earthly lovers (Nārada Bhakti Sūtra no. 23). Devotion to God means cultivating love and love alone in the form of perpetual service and perpetual love: *nitya dāśya* and *nitya kāntā bhajanātmaka*. These citations from Nārada Bhakti Sūtras, the most important work on *bhakti*-devotion, are absolutely essential for grasping the fundamentals of the *devadāsī* system, especially the two phrases *nitya dāśya* and *nitya kāntā bhajanātmaka*. The *devadāsī* system is essentially based on these dictums. Women motivated by intense devotion to God dedicated themselves to the service of God and came to be called *devadāsīs*.

Agamic Role: The second point that deserves to be noted is the nature of worship in temples. Temple worship is codified in texts called *Āgamas*, those dealing with the worship of Śiva being *Śaiva Āgamas* and those dealing with Viṣṇu called *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. Both the groups deal with daily *pūjās*, daily festivals (*nityotsavas*) and periodical and annual festivals

(*mahōtsavas*). Just as a priest is absolutely essential for performing *pūjā*, so also music and dance are essential both in *pūjās* and festivals according to all *Āgamas*. The *pūjā* is incomplete without dance and music, called *kottattuppattu* in Tamil and *nṛtta gīta vādyā* in Sanskrit. The texts also prescribe the *nṛtta* part of the *pūjā*, where *nṛtta* should be offered, the duration of the dance, and the *tāla* and song to be employed, etc. The texts also prescribe the qualifications and personal observances of dancing girls when they come to dance in the temple. A few passages from both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava texts are cited here to show the role of *devadāsīs* in the temples. Dance is one of the parts (*aṅgas*) of temple ritual and is reverentially offered.

For example, the *Rauravāgama*, a Śaiva text, says that *nṛtta* should be offered with the *hṛd mantra* after *dhūpa*, *dīpa*, and *naivedya* in daily ritual:

नृत्तगेयसमायुक्तं स्तोत्रं वाद्यं हृदा ददेत्

Rauravāgama, p. 43

The *śandhyā pūjā* should end with *nṛtta*, says *Kamikāgama*, another Śaiva text. In this process, the *Vedas* and *śāstras* should be sung. Then dance to the accompaniment of songs in Tamil (*Drāvida*) language should be performed. This may be followed with songs in another 18 languages. Different dances could be presented:

- a. ऊर्ध्वं द्राविडभाषागुणं गानं नृत्ययुतं तु वा
नानादेशप्रसूतं च नर्तनं परिकल्पय च

Kamikāgama, p. 41

At another place the same text says that *nṛtta* should be performed for one *ghaṭikā* duration in the *śandhyā pūjā*. The *Marīcisamhitā*, a Vaiṣṇava *Āgama*, stipulates *nṛtta* and *gīta* as an essential unit of *pūjās* and *utsavas*:

- b. देवगणिकाभिः देवदासीभिः भक्तैः च नृत्तगेयं संयुक्तं...

Marīcī, p. 308

216 *ganikās* will dance in the three *sandhis* daily in the *uttamottama* type of the *pūjā*, 50 *ganikās* in the second best and 34, 24 or ten girls in the third best, says *Kāmikāgama*:

- c. गणिकाः चतुस्त्रिंशत् चतुर्विंशति वा दश
रूपयौवनसंपन्नाः त्रिकालं नृत्तं आचरेत् p. 38
पञ्चचाशत् गणिकान्वितं नृत्तं कुर्यात् त्रिसन्धिषु
षोडशद्विंशतैश्चैव गणिकाभिः समन्वितम् p. 39
नृत्तं कुर्यात् त्रिसन्धिषु p. 39

Similarly, dance is essential in *nityotsavas*—the daily processions generally taken out within the precinct of the temples. The dancers are expected to dance and follow the procession around the temple and when they reach the *balipīṭha* should circumambulate three times with *disānṛtta* and then make one more *pradakṣinā* around the temple.

- d. नाना वाद्य समायुक्तं नृत्येयं समन्वितम्
 प्रदक्षिणद्वयं कुर्यात् हर्म्यादौ विशेषतः।
 बलिपीठं प्रविश्याथ दिशानृत्यं समन्वितम्
 प्रदक्षिणत्रयं कृत्वा पश्चादप्यालयं कुरु॥

Rauravāgama

When the dancers circumambulate and dance, the *tālas* and dance vary according to the secondary deities in the enclosure. The following is an illustration from *Cidambarakṣetra Sarvasva*, a text on the worship in the Natarāja temple of Chidambaram.

Deity	Pan	Rāga	Vādyā	Tāla	Dance
Brahma		Madhyamāvatī	Viṇā	Tripuṭa	Kamālāvṛtta Nṛtta
Indra	Gandhara	Valavali	Flute	Samatāla	Bhujangalita Nṛtta
Agni	Kolli	Varāli	Sringuni	Rūpaka	Bhujangatrāsa
Yama	Kausika	Nāṭṭakkuruaci	Patāha	Misra	Daṇḍa
Nṛti	Nattappāḍa	Bhairavi	Maddala	Ādi	Kuñcita
Varuṇa	Sikāmaram	Deśi	Simhananda	Jambhi	Kāli

The *Kāranāgama* gives another interesting aspect of dance in rare *tālas*, to which dance should be performed before the *parivāra devatās*:

Vṛṣa tāla	before	Nandi
Bhringī tāla	before	Saptamātās
Uddanttana tāla	before	Śaṇmukha
Dhakkari tāla	before	Vighneśa
Bali tāla	before	Jyeṣṭhā

Tatapradhaya <i>tāla</i>	before	Durgā
Udghata <i>tāla</i>	before	Īśāna
Silence	before	Gopūra

“The *gaṇikās* should sing and perform *vinodanāṭya* during the *yātrās*, and should take up appropriate positions. At the end the *dāsīs* should circumambulate the deity thrice. The *gaṇikās* should carry lamps and vessels and dance as stipulated by Bharata” (*Cidambaraksetra Sarvasva*, p. 189): सर्वेदासीदासकाः गान नाटय पुरस्सरं देवान् त्रिः प्रदक्षिणीकृत्य गणिका जनाः प्रदीपपात्र कराः भरतोक्तं नाटयविनोदं कुर्युः.

In the festival of pounding turmeric, the *devadāsīs* should make powder to be used for the God’s *utsava*:

a. ततः देवदासीभिः अवघातं कृत्य चूर्णीकृत्य

Marīcisamhitā, p. 356

Qualifications of Dancing Girls: Many of the texts devote a chapter on *sudhanṛtta*—to be performed during *snāna*, *nityōtsavas*, *snapana*, *sthāpana* and *kumbhabhiṣekan*. The *Rauravāgama* gives the qualifications of dancing girls. She should be pure, of subdued nature, exceptionally beautiful, young, blemishless in all her limbs, not greedy, and well learned in dance.

b. सुसंशुद्धा गणिका शान्ता त्वतिकान्ता सुयौवना।
सर्वावयवसंपन्ना अलुब्धा नृत्तयोग्यका॥
स्नानद्वय समायुक्ता शुद्धवस्त्रधरा वरा
नानाभरण संपूर्णा श्वेतपुष्पसुमस्तका॥
पादप्रक्षालनं कृत्वा प्रविशेत् नृत्तमण्डपम्

Rauravāgama Chap. 19

The dancing girl, here called *gaṇikā*, should be pure, good natured and without greed, besides being young, beautiful, and adept in the art of dance. The same view is echoed in *Suprabhadāgama*. The *Virāgama* goes a step further, and stipulates that the *gaṇikā* after having been bathed and dressed should be worshipped with *gāṇḍha* and *puṣpa*. She would perform 108 *nṛttas* (the *karaṇas* of the *Nāṭyasastra*).

c. गणिकां सनापयेत् तत्र गन्ध पुष्पादिना अर्चयेत्
अष्टोत्तरशतं नृत्तं भावयेत् गणिका ततः

Virāgama Patala 40, 58-62

In this passage the *gaṇikā* is said to be worshipped (*arcayet*), indicating

the sanctity attached to her profession of dance. The other point of interest is that they must dance as prescribed by Bharata, emphasizing the importance of Bharata's dicta. Though *deśī* dances were also performed and mentioned, Bharata's dance form was essential in all the daily rites and festivals, popularizing the term Bharata Nāṭya. These manuals on temple rituals also state the purpose for which the dance is performed in the temples. They are performed for victory in all endeavours and to ward off suffering:

a. शुद्ध नृत्तनिगेषानि ह्यपमृत्यु जयार्थकं

Rauravāgama I, p. 90

The *Suprabhedāgama* explicitly states that dance is intended for prosperity and world peace:

b. एवं नृत्तं कृतं यत्र सुभिक्षं लोकशान्तिकं

Most of the texts refer to the dancing girls as *gaṇikās* in general. In one instance, they are called *devagaṇikās*. The terms *dāsī* or *devadāsī* are also employed. Instances are also not wanting where the terms *dāsī* and *gaṇikā* are synonymous. However, we do find some texts making a distinction between them. For example, the *Marīcisamhita* mentions *devagaṇikās* and *devadāsīs* as two distinct groups. The *ganikas*, according to the text, were considered superior to the *dāsīs*. They were expected to be pure (*sānta*) and without greed. Dance in the temple was "an offering for the prosperity of the world". It must be made abundantly clear that none of the texts even remotely associate prostitution with temple dance. The institution of temple dance has nothing to do with prostitution and as such to call the *gaṇikās* temple prostitutes is wrong. They held an honoured place in the temples and were even worshipped before performing dance. This was a process of deification to enable them to offer dance to God.

Early history: Dancing girls used to claim descent from divine dancers like Rambhā, Urvaśī and others. Mādhavī in *Śilappadhikāram* is said to be born in the line of Ūrvaśī and is called *vaṇavamakal*—divine woman. The early commentators identify them with *taliyilār* (associated with divine abodes or temples.) They started learning dance and music from the age of five, and practised and learnt rigourously twice a day for seven years. At the age of 12 the dancing girl, if she had learnt the basic forms, gave a maiden performance before the king, who conferred honours on her for her accomplishment. The highly sophisticated nature of the art and the rigours of the training suggest that it was a codified system of education. Terms like

nāṭya, raṅga, piṇḍi, vāram, karaṇam, maṇḍala, etc. of Sanskrit origin and several technical terms in Tamil indicate that at the time of the *Śilappadhikāram* dance in Tamil Nadu was an integration of Bharata's dicta and regional practice. This evolution was a product of several centuries.

The same work also refers to other classes of dancing women: *kāval gaṇikais*, *ādal kūṭṭis* and *pūvilaimadantai*. The term *kāval gaṇikā* means women guards, but the early commentators called her "veśyās of the nights". The later commentators called her a dancer in the armed camp—*kalattilāḍum kūṭṭi*. *Ādal kūṭṭis* were dancers who performed *ahakkūṭtu* or *śṛṅgāra* dances (like the *padam*). The later commentators called her *patiyilār pūvilaimadantaiyar*, those who sold their bodies. It appears that by the time of the *Śilappadhikāram* the three-fold classification of dancing girls as *gaṇikās*, *kūṭṭis* and *adal siladi*—corresponding to the later classification *taliyilār*, *patiyilār* and *devaradiyāl*—had come into vogue. Though the *arangetram* of Mādhavī took place in the presence of the king in a *raṅga*, that she performed in the Indra festival later shows that her dance was connected with temple worship. It also indicates the link between court dance and temple dance. The *Śilappadhikāram* is dated around 2nd-3rd century AD.

Devotional hymns: The profuse reference to dancing girls in temples mentioned by Śaiva Nāyanmārs and Vaiṣṇavite Ālvārs show that the institution reached wide popularity before the 7th century AD. The Tevāram hymns of Sambandar and Appar refer to the dancing girls as *kanyās*, *gaṇikās*, *tonḍar* and *aḍiyārs*. The description of these girls given by the saints conforms in all respect to the Āgamic writings. During the daily festivals (*nityapūjās*) the Brahmins used to recite *Vedas* and the girls danced. A considerable number of the Tevāram hymns couched in the *aham* tradition (*śṛṅgāra* tradition) were obviously influenced by the dance which Narada would call *nitya kāntā bhajanātmaka prema*. Thus already by the time of the early saints of the *bhakti* movement the role of dancing girls in the temple had been firmly established.

A remarkable event deserves notice at this stage. The Śaivite saint Sundaramurti, the youngest of the Tevāram trio assigned to the 8th century AD, fell in love with a dancing girl, Paravai, at Thiruvārur and married her. Sekkilār, the composer of the great poem *Periyapurānam* on the lives of Śaiva saints, mentions Paravai, the dancing girl, as born of a *rūdragaṇikā* also known as *patiyilār*. It is thus obvious that *rudragaṇikās* and *patiyilārs* are identical.

Historical Records: In Pallava times besides the Tevāram and Prabandham

hymns epigraphs and sculptures throw valuable light on the subject. Men and women dancing together are depicted in a series of early Pallava panels in a Kanchi temple. Assignable to the 5th century AD., they show the late Nagarjunakonda tradition. Some sculptured panels in the Vaikuntaperumāl temple (8th century) also show men and women dancing in a royal court attesting to the prevalence of court dance. The Muktesvara temple in Kanchi, an 8th century Pallava temple, carries an inscription giving over 30 names of dancing girls attached to the temple. Incidentally, all of them are seen suffixing *manikkam* after their names. The temples in the Pāndya country also depict dancing girls. A 9th century record from Pallimadam mentions the names of a number of *devarāḍiyāl* of Sundarapāṇḍya Īsvaram (no. 83, *South Indian Inscriptions XIV*). An 11th century record, also from the Pandya region—Mannarkoil—mentions *devarāḍiyāl* women making flower garlands and holding lamps (*vilakku piḍikkum, thirupallittāmam todukkum devarāḍiyāl peṇḍukal*; no. 132, *South Indian Inscriptions XIV*). *Devarāḍiyāl* were also employed to perform other temple services besides dancing. A *devarāḍiyāl* of Thirunelveli, Sāttan Ammai, endowed a perpetual lamp in memory of her sister Sāttan Deyam in the 8th century AD. (no. 48 of *S.I.I. XIV*). The position of the *devarāḍiyāl* in the Pandya country, in the south, remained more or less identical to the condition that prevailed in northern Tamil Nadu.

Under the Cholas: The establishment of the Chola empire in the middle of the 9th century AD may be termed the golden age of Bharata nāṭya as it was in other fields. The epigraphical records throw a flood of light on the *devadāsīs* and their rights and privileges. In hundreds of records they are seen either building temples, gifting lands or endowing money for services in the temples. Obviously they were economically well off and participated in the functions of the society. They were called *devarāḍiyāls, talicceripendugal* or *śantikkūttigal*. Some of them received the title Talaikkoli from the king. A dancing girl with the title Talaikkoli built a Viṣṇu temple at Thiruvidaimarudur and named it Talaikkoli Vinnagar in the reign of Parāntaka Chola in 10th century (no. 181, *S.I.I. XIX*). The king witnessed the *arangetram* and conferred the title Talaikkoli. This custom, first noticed in the 3rd century AD, as mentioned in *śilappadhikāram*, continued even in Chola times in the 12th-13th centuries AD.

Under Rajaraja in Tanjore: The most important record (no. 66, *S.I.I. II*) of dancing girls of the Chola age is that of Rajaraja Chola I (985-1014 AD) who transferred over 400 dancing girls to the great temple of Tanjore built by him from other temples of the Chola *mandalam*. The record is remarkable

in the sense that it furnishes such details as the name and title of the girls, where they came from and the share they got for their services. All the girls were called *taliccēripēṇḍugal* to indicate that they were dancers. It is interesting to note that they were neither called *gaṇikās* nor *devarāḍiyāls*. They seem to have undergone some religious initiation and prefixed the word *nakkan* before their names. Special colonies for these 400 dancers were built by the king who provided each of them with a separate house serially numbered. Each of them also received 100 *kalams* of paddy annually. It is seen from the recorded stipulations that they were all beautiful young maidens well versed in the art of dance (*vogyarāyiruppār*). They came from temples in 50 villages of the Chola country. That the Chola country had such a large number of dance centres before the time of Rajaraja must be noted. The largest segment of dancers—53—came from Thiruvārur, and 50 came from Palaiyārai. Thiruvaiyāru (22), Ambar (22), Tanjavur (18), Thiruvaidaimaruddur (15), Nāgappattinam (12) and Nemam (11) were other great centres of dancing in the 10th century. Pandananallur, which is now famous, sent one girl to Tanjore then.

Once these 400 dancing girls came to Tanjore to serve in the great temple, Tanjore virtually became the imperial seat of dance. The coming together of such a large number of dancing girls, performing within the same temple, resulted in the art teaching great heights and excellence which left an impact on the succeeding centuries.

Though most of the girls came from Śiva temples, a few also came from Viṣṇu temples like Mamanikkoyil of Tanjore, Tali Vinnagar of Arapuram and Avaniṇārayāna Vinnagar of Ambar. This indicates that there was no sectarian restriction on dancers.

A number of dancing girls are seen named after their villages—like Thiruvēdagam, Chidambaram (Tillai), Srirangam, Thirurangam, Karur, Thiruvorriyur, Thiruvannaikka, etc.—which were prominent centres of Bharatanatyam. A considerable number of them bore the names of Chola queens like Chola Madevi, Pancavanmadevi, Villavan Madevi, Sembiyanmadevi, Kundavai, Rajaraji, etc., indicating conferment of titles by royalty for their accomplishments. Some assumed names like Madanavallī, Kāmamohī, Nityasundarī, etc., recalling their voluptuous beauty. There are also names like Karana Vidyādhari, Madhuravācaki and Dēsicci indicating their mastery over special fields of dance. The dancing girls were called *taliceri pendugal* and *nakkan*. Sometimes a girl was called *nakkan caturī*—the clever dancer. The word *caturi* has been used in association with dancers down the centuries: consequently the word *catur* has come to denote dance. Among other family names, Kondi is worth mentioning for it is well known that the famous Kamalammal, who lived at the turn of this

century and was a great exponent of Tyagesar Kuravanci in the Thiruvavar temple, belonged to the Kondi family—a dance family that has survived for nearly a thousand years.

Payments: It is also interesting to note the payments made to some of the important categories of dancers. Each dancing girl received 100 *kalams* of paddy a year, the *nāṭyācāryas* were paid twice as much as also the Pātaka players. The Vinā player received one and three—fourths the amount. The flutists, the vocal musicians—Sanskrit and Tamil—received one and a half times the dancers' share. The *kottūmaddalam* and conch players received as much as the dancer while the other singers and *pakka vādyas* received three-fourths of the dancers' share. Obviously the *nāṭyācāryās* were held in great esteem during the reign of Rājarāja.

There were four other categories whose services was called *panan*. Among these two were called *cākkais*—Arikula Kesari Cākkai and Pallavan Cakkai. The Tanjore records show that the Cākiyars are identical with the Pānan class. The Pānans frequently mentioned in Sangam literature were not only singers, but dancers and players of musical instruments like Yāl and Tannumai (Mṛdanga). The female dancers accompanying Pānans were called Viralis, who are now called Maṅgyārs in Cākiyar troupes.

Under the Later Cholas: The Chola records refer to the king witnessing dance in temple festivals performed by dancing girls. An inscription of Rajadhiraja Chola II from Thiruvorriyur, near Madras, refers to the king's presence in the temple when a dancing girl, Uravakkina Talaikkoli, performed *ahamārga* dance. It was customary for dancing girls to undergo certain initiatory rites and perform for Śiva or Viṣṇu as a devotee. Generally their performances were confined to one or the other sect, but there are instances where the same dancers danced for both the deities. Rājarāja Chola I, in his 23rd year, ordered that dancing girls attached to the Śiva and Viṣṇu temples in Dadapuram should accompany Viṣṇu of Karivarada Perumal temple in procession, sing and dance during the hunting festival (ARE 14, 1919). Kulottinga Chola I in circa 1100 AD ordered that the devotees should stand behind the *mānikkams*—dancing girls—during the *thirūālatti*.

A 13th-century record from Thiruvorriyur deserves special mention. According to the record several *taliyilārs* (dancing girls) died and a few were stricken with poverty. So a number of *iśavattaliyilār* were newly appointed. The following directions were issued by the king in 1265 AD:

- a. The *devaraḍiyāls* need not clean the temple premises.

- b. The *patiyilārs* and *devaradiyāls* should wave fly whisks during the day in front of the goddess.
- c. The *patiyilārs* should go in front and the *devaradiyāl* should follow them.
- d. The *devaradiyāls* should hold flower vessels and *vibhuti* vessels.
- e. *Isavattaliyilārs* alone should dance *ahamārga* and *varikkolam*.
- f. When the *patiyilārs* danced *sandhikkunippam* and *chokkam*, the *isavattaliyilār* should render songs in accompaniment.
- g. The *ishavattaliyilārs* should hold white *cāmaras* and dance *thiruantikkāppu*.

This record suggests a three-tier hierarchy among the dancers—the *patiyilār* claiming superior status, followed by the *taliyilar*, and the *devaradiyāls* holding the lowest rank. Though all the three classes danced, it is evident that certain dances were reserved for certain classes.

Vijayanagara and Nayaka Kingdoms: The Vijayanagara rulers continued the age-old dance traditions. However life had become more complicated due to incursions, threats of destruction, and the advent of alien faith. Tastes had changed in sculpture, painting, architecture, as well as dance. The simple, lucid, and suggestive elegance of the past had given way to more complex, involved and cumbersome patterns and compositions. Though on the one hand the Hindus and Muslims were fighting each other, an imperceptible cultural integration did take place—in dress, costume, music and dance forms. However the Mughal and Deccani traditions did permeate the fine arts.

Due to geographical and political factors the Tanjore region retained the Hindu ethos till almost the 19th century AD. The Nayaks of Tanjore in the 16th and 17th centuries and the Marathas in the 18th and 19th centuries were both great patrons who sustained the institution of dance and themselves contributed to the art retaining its respectability as a profession. Out of a plethora of evidence the following instances are cited.

In 1983 AD Sōluva Narasa Nāyaka of the Vijayanagara dynasty found that one *devaradiyāl* of Thiruvakkarai temple was paying some levy on land which was not within the territory and hence ordered that the levy should no more be collected (no. 220, S.I.I. XVII). This is an illustration that the *devaradiyāls* had land to their names and paid taxes like other citizens.

The Tanjore Nayak Raghunatha conferred the title Vijaya Rāghava Manikkam on a dancing girl, Muttu—the daughter of Attigiri, a *devaradiyāl* of the Telugu tradition. The title was given on a festival in honour of Lord Rama when the deity was in the *periannamaṇḍapam* in the Ramachandra temple of Nedumkunram. This was marked by a gift of three

kanis of land together with the taxes on it to the dancing girl to be enjoyed by her in perpetuity. The king also ordered that she should be presented with *prasāda* (a portion of the food offering) of the god Perumal daily (no. 762, S.I.I. XVII). The inscription, dated 1614 AD, suggests that the girl perhaps performed for the first time (*arangetram*) in front of the deity and received the title, land and *prasāda*.

However the increasingly lascivious life of the courts and weakening central authority slowly brought down the number of *devarāḍiyāls* who adhered to their calling uncorrupted by vice.

To this gradual decay must be added the attitude of Europeans and missionaries. Dance was not a part of ritual in churches and was alien to them in religious life. Further, in order to capture and retain power, Hindu faith and customs had to be destroyed. The Europeans thus propounded a contrary view of the tradition of *devadāsīs*. Westernised Indians, in their mistaken zeal for social reform, did great harm to this institution by legislating the Devadasi Abolition Act.

It is not within the purview of this article to evaluate the provisions of the Act. It is however the view of this writer that there did exist some malaise which called for correction. But by enacting the legislation the authors, "instead of curing the affected patient, buried him". One of the clauses of the Act reads:

3. Dancing by a woman with or without *Kumbharati*, in the precincts of any temple or other religious institution or in any procession of a Hindu deity, idol, or object of worship installed in such temple or institution or at any festival or ceremony held in respect of such a deity, idol, or object of worship is hereby declared unlawful.

It is beyond one's comprehension how such a clause could find a place in the Act. The effect of the act was simple. A devotional art which flourished throughout the rural areas of Tamil Nadu was killed in one stroke. On the positive side it has had one good effect. It has democratized the art in a sense. An art which was earlier confined to one community is now open to all. □