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NRITYA SHASTRA

Mythological Origins of Dance



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Title: NRITYA SHASTRA Mythological Origins of Dance

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*Krishna playing flute with other 'Gopis' in
dance posture. Bhoramdev Temple wall.*

NRITYA SHASTRA

Mythological Origins of Dance



Directorate of Culture & Archaeology
Government of Chhattisgarh





मुख्यमंत्री

छत्तीसगढ़ शासन

संदेश

मुझे यह जानकर हार्दिक प्रसन्नता हुई कि संचालनालय, संस्कृति एवं पुरातत्व, छत्तीसगढ़ शासन द्वारा कॉफी टेबल बुक 'नृत्य शास्त्र' का प्रकाशन किया जा रहा है।

शास्त्रीय नृत्य प्राचीनकाल से हमारी संस्कृति और गौरवशाली परंपरा के अंग रहे हैं। छठवीं - सातवीं शताब्दी में शिव तथा विष्णु मंदिरों में इन नृत्यों का प्रचलन था। चौदहवीं शताब्दी से स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बीच हमारे देश में यह परंपरा संकट में रही, लेकिन स्वतंत्रता के पश्चात् भारतीय ललित कलाओं को पर्याप्त सम्मान मिला, वहीं नृत्य कला को भी अकादमिक ढंग से योगदान को रेखांकित करते हुए यह प्रकाशन संगीत और कला जिज्ञासुओं, रसिकों, शोधकर्ताओं तथा सभी पक्षों के लिए उपयोगी होगा।

प्रकाशन अपने उद्देश्यों में सफल हो, इसके लिए मेरी शुभकामनाएं।

भूपेश बघेल







मंत्री

छत्तीसगढ़ शासन
खाद्य, नागरिक आपूर्ति एवं उपभोक्ता संरक्षण
आर्थिक एवं सांख्यिकी एवं संस्कृति विभाग


संदेश

मुझे यह जानकारी प्रसन्नता हुई कि संचालनालय संस्कृति एवं पुरातत्व, रायपुर छत्तीसगढ़ द्वारा **NIRTYA SHASTRA (Mythological Origins of Dance)** नामक कॉफी टेबल पुस्तक का प्रकाशन किया जा रहा है।

पुस्तक का प्रकाशन, भारत के शास्त्रीय नृत्य परम्परा के नैतिक मूल्यों की रक्षा के लिए प्रकाशित किया जा रहा है। आठवीं शताब्दी से 13वीं शताब्दी तक मध्य भारत के क्षेत्र में शास्त्रीय नृत्य की परम्परा बनी रही। उस काल में शास्त्रीय नृत्य का नाम बहुत प्रचलित था। 14वीं शताब्दी में इस परम्परा को विकसित नहीं होना दिया गया एवं यह सांस्कृतिक परम्परा लुप्त होने के कगार पर था। आजादी के बाद फिर हमारे देश में इस नृत्य परम्परा को बहुत अकादमिक ढंग से प्रचलित करने में देश के अनुभवी गुरुओं ने इसकी शुरुआत की।

विभाग द्वारा नृत्य शास्त्र पर प्रकाशित होने वाली यह कृति अकादमिक होगा जो संगीत एवं नृत्य शास्त्र के विशेषज्ञों, महाविद्यालयीन छात्र-छात्राओं के लिए उपयोगी साबित होगा।

इस पुस्तक के प्रकाशन पर मेरी हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं।


अमरजीत भगत






Secretary,
Directorate of
Culture & Archaeology

Message

It is indeed a pleasure to know that Directorate of Culture and Archaeology is coming out with a Coffee Table book titled “NRITYA- SHASTRA” (Mythological Origins of Dance).

It is remarkable that in Ancient Temple Architecture of Chhattisgarh various classical dance forms are found depicted in Shiva and Vishnu temples of this region from Early Medieval Period(c.6th -7th Century CE) to Medieval (c.12th Century CE). I believe, this important academic publication of the department will be useful both for the classical dance and music lovers and act as a source of inspiration for Students.

My best wishes to the publishers.


(Anbalagan P.)





संचालक

संचालनालय संस्कृति एवं पुरातत्व


संदेश

अत्यंत ही प्रसन्नता का विषय है कि संचालनालय संस्कृति एवं पुरातत्व विभाग, छत्तीसगढ़ शासन, रायपुर द्वारा **NIRTYA SHASTRA (Mythological Origins of Dance)** नामक कॉफी टेबल पुस्तक का प्रकाशन किया जा रहा है।

यह शास्त्रीय नृत्य 6वीं एवं 7वीं शताब्दी में शिव मंदिरों तथा 12वीं शताब्दी से विष्णु मंदिरों के परिसरों तक प्रचलित था। भारत में **NIRTYA SHASTRA (Mythological Origins of Dance)** को पंचम वेद माना गया है। यह रचना छत्तीसगढ़ के पावन भूमि को श्रद्धांजली अर्पित करते हुए नृत्य शास्त्र की गरिमा को उच्चता प्रदान करने के उद्देश्य से संचालनालय, संस्कृति एवं पुरातत्व विभाग, रायपुर द्वारा इसका प्रकाशन किया जा रहा है।

विभाग द्वारा नृत्य शास्त्र पर प्रकाशित होने वाली यह अकादमिक पुस्तक, इस विधा से जुड़े संगीत एवं नृत्य प्रेमियों के लिए पठनीय, प्रेरणदायी एवं संग्रहणीय योग्य कृति होगी।

यह पुस्तक अपने उद्देश्यों में सफल हो। मेरी हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं।


(अमृत विकास तोपनो)



Editorial

Classical dance as a temple ritual, occurred in India without interruption for many centuries. The photographs in this book, with their accompanying notes, are used to trace this ritual by looking at the architectural and sculptural developments that took place between the 6th and 13th centuries AD. These milestones from the past mark how a religious environment developed where the

dance ritual took centre stage in the community worship. The temple environments changed in form and detail, becoming grander and richer with each century as the dance tradition unfolded. My focus has been on the gradual 'coming of age' of the sculptural, languorous maiden (alasakanya) motif on temple surfaces, like in Bhoramdev Temple Chhattisgarh, Sun Temple Konark, 64 Yogini Temple, near Bhubaneswar, Beluru Temple, Helebidu Temple. It was this image that inspired the physical shape classical dance took when it was formed in the 20th century.

The evolving temple structure, on which the motif appeared, represented the Universe. The idea of performing within a form (temple) viewed as the 'Body of God' has remained a source of inspiration for dancers even today. Embodying sacred space through dance is a dominant idea in the choreographic works that are being created across the Indian classical dance tradition.

The Indian classical dance forms have come to be known World Wide. It used a variety of sources that included existing folk traditions, ancient mythological texts, and a rich legacy of temple

sculpture, subsequently attaining the 'classical' status. In ancient times India was known as 'Bharata'. This sub continent had a high cultural and religious panorama and a long history of fierce battles and finally political independence. The earliest religious thoughts of India were rooted in fear of nature. The 'Sun' in the sky and mother 'Earth' were worshipped. Animals and bird forms were worshipped. 'Gandharvas' (musicians) and 'Apsaras' (dancers) lived between the human and celestial realms.

Indian Classical dance is a dance of sculptures. The evolution of dance forms were as a ritual worship in the medieval tantric temples of India. It was this legacy from the past that culminated into the Indian classical dance. The write-up about the 'Karanas' is to revive a lost dance technique. The 'Karanas' have been reconstructed through a correlated study of the 'Natya Shastra, and the 'Karana' sculptures of Thanjavur Temple and Chidambaram Temple. During my journey of completing this book I have taken references from the following books, Padma Subramanyam's Book of Karanas, Shanta Serbjeet Singh's Indian Dance. Geeta RadhaKrishna's Jayadeva's Geeta Govinda, Leela Venketraman's Indian Classical Dance, Sonal Mansingh's Classical Dance Book, Kalicharan Pattanayak's Book of Gita Govinda.

It is my earnest hope that this book will be of interest to all artistes from any part of the World belonging to any discipline of dance, for getting a glimpse of Indian classical dance forms, rooted in the ancient concept of body language, Mother Earth is propitiated before dancing by any dancer. So I prostrate before her.

"Ya Devi Sarva Bhutesu Buddhi

Rupena Samstitha,

Namastasyai Namastasyai

Namastasyai Namah"

Purnashree Raut
Purnashree Raut



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NRITYA SHASTRA

INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE.....

existed in the temples as a part of ritual worship and in the princely courts where dancers performed for patrons. As a reaction to British rule, the intelligentsia seeking a national identity revived the indigenous arts. Common to all the classical dances, is that their roots are in religion, and mythological and devotional stories forming their content. The expressional aspect tends to revolve around a 'nayika' the heroine, who pines for union with 'nayaka', the hero. The heroine symbolizes the 'soul' of a devotee and the hero, the Lord, the super 'soul' with whom the 'soul' wishes to unite. The spirit of the Bhakti movement, the cult of devotion, permeates these dance forms.

It is 'dance' which provided us with a mirror view of the ancient Hindu conception of the Universe and the nature of reality. Like the pre - vedic era Indians who believed that all matter, whether here on 'Earth' or in outer space, is involved in a continual cosmic dance and that 'matter's', essential properties are 'rhythm' and 'movement'. The modern physicist too, used the most delicate and advanced instruments to explore the world of the 'sub atom' and has come to the same conclusion; that all 'matter' is essentially dynamic and that 'matter' is engaged in a unique, 'ceaseless dance' of destruction and resurrection. We have the metaphor of "the dance of the cosmos" finding its most profound and beautiful expression in Hinduism in the image of the dancing God 'Shiva'. It is 'Shiva as Nataraja', the Lord of dance, who is most popularly known as the 'god of creation and destruction', who sustains, through dance, the endless rhythm of the universe.

Einstein has shown that the constituents of 'atoms', the 'sub - atomic particles', have dynamic patterns which do not exist, as isolated particles but as integral parts of an inseparable network of interactions. These interactions involve a ceaseless flow of energy and its manifestation as the exchange of particles: a dynamic interplay in which particles are created and destroyed without end in a continual variation of energy patterns.



The mystic - physicist Capra says that "the whole universe is thus engaged in endless motion and activity, in a continual cosmic dance of energy'. Using the latest technology, Capra developed the bubble - chamber photographs of interacting particles and was stunned to find the visual graph traced by them to be identical to the line etched by the famous 'Nataraja' pose of 'Shiva'. The Metaphor of the cosmic dance is thus seen to unify ancient mythology, religious Art and Modern physics.

The tenth and twelfth century Indian artists sought to capture this vision (of the dancing 'Shiva').

In the concept of the "Ardhanarishwara" dance the most vexing polarity, that between male and female sides of human nature is resolved. 'Shiva' as half male, half female. (Trimurti) The right face of the god shows his male profile, personifying 'Veera Rasa', virility and power. On the left, his female aspect shows the tender, beautiful and loving face of Goddess 'Parvati' and the centre is the sublime union of the two aspects in the magnificent head as 'Shiva Maheshwara'.

One finds all the classical forms revealing, in a depiction of the 'Ardhanarishwara' concept, both in the form and in the content of the dance.



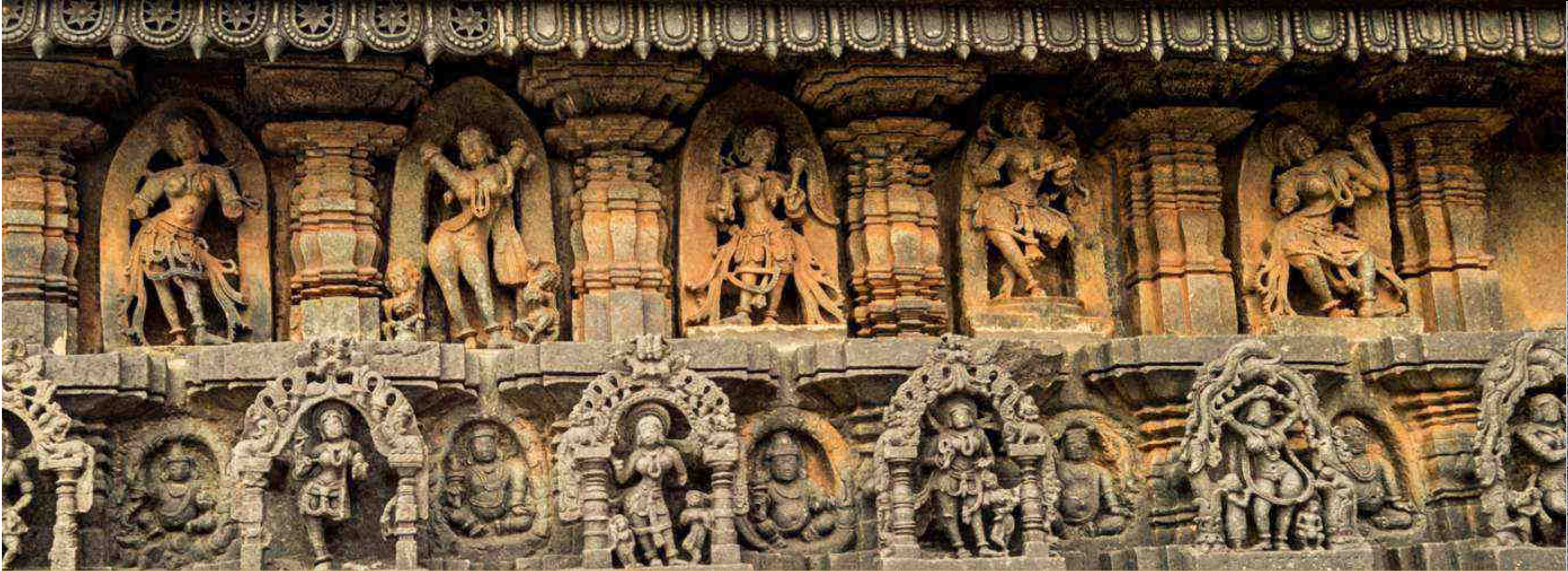
Each style has the 'Male' and 'Female' principles fully represented in the concepts of 'Tandava' the male aspect and 'Lasya' the female principle. Dance in India with its continued history of more than three thousand years, grew and was nurtured within the sacred precincts of the temple.

Sage Bharata's 'Natya Sastra'⁽¹⁾ is an encyclopaedic work on the theatre art. It is also called the fifth Veda. It is the common basis for classical tradition in music, dance, drama, poetics and iconography for India. The path showed by sage Bharata was called "Marga", meaning, classical style in music, dance, drama, coexisted with the respective regional style called "Desi". The 'Desi' forms of dance are Bharat - Natyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri, Odissi, kuchipudi, Sattriya and many others.

Sage Bharata is called the "Adiguru". He is said to have received the knowledge of 'natya' directly from 'Brahma', the Creator himself. 'Brahma' is said to have created the fifth 'Veda' namely 'Natya Veda' by compiling its elements from the four 'Vedas'. He took 'pathya' or recitation from Rig Veda, "Abhinaya" or the art of communication from Yajurveda, "Ganam" or music from Sama Veda and "Rasa" or aesthetic experience from the 'Atharva' veda. 'Veda' is knowledge and 'Sastra' is systematisation of knowledge. The thirty six chapters of 'Natya Sastra' are in the form of questions asked by Atreya and other sages for which Bharat muni gives the answers. It includes interesting and symbolic stories regarding the origin of 'Natya' and some of its elements.

Dance Posture Sculpture Belur Temple





*Dance Posture Alasakanyas
Belur Temple*



The entire 'Natya Sastra' can be viewed as answers to three questions asked by the disciples of Bharat in the very first chapter. The questions are:-

- (I) How did 'Natya Veda' come into existence?
- (ii) For whom was it meant?
- (ii) What are its limbs?

The answers are spread in the thirty six chapters. The essence of the answers is as follows.

- (1) 'Brahma' created the 'Natya Veda' as an audio-visual aid to save humanity from deterioration in moral standards, at the beginning of Treta yuga. 'Brahma' created this Veda by taking elements from the other four Vedas, and handed it over to Bharat.
- (2) It is meant for both the poet and the actor
- (3) Its limbs are Rasa, Bhava, Abhinaya, Dharmi, Vritti, Pravritti, Siddh, Ganam, Ranga, Svras, Atodyam.

*Halebidu Temple
Ganesh with Alasakanya*





The account of the origin of Natya and its components found in Bharata's 'Natya-sastra' fell under the category of 'mythology'.

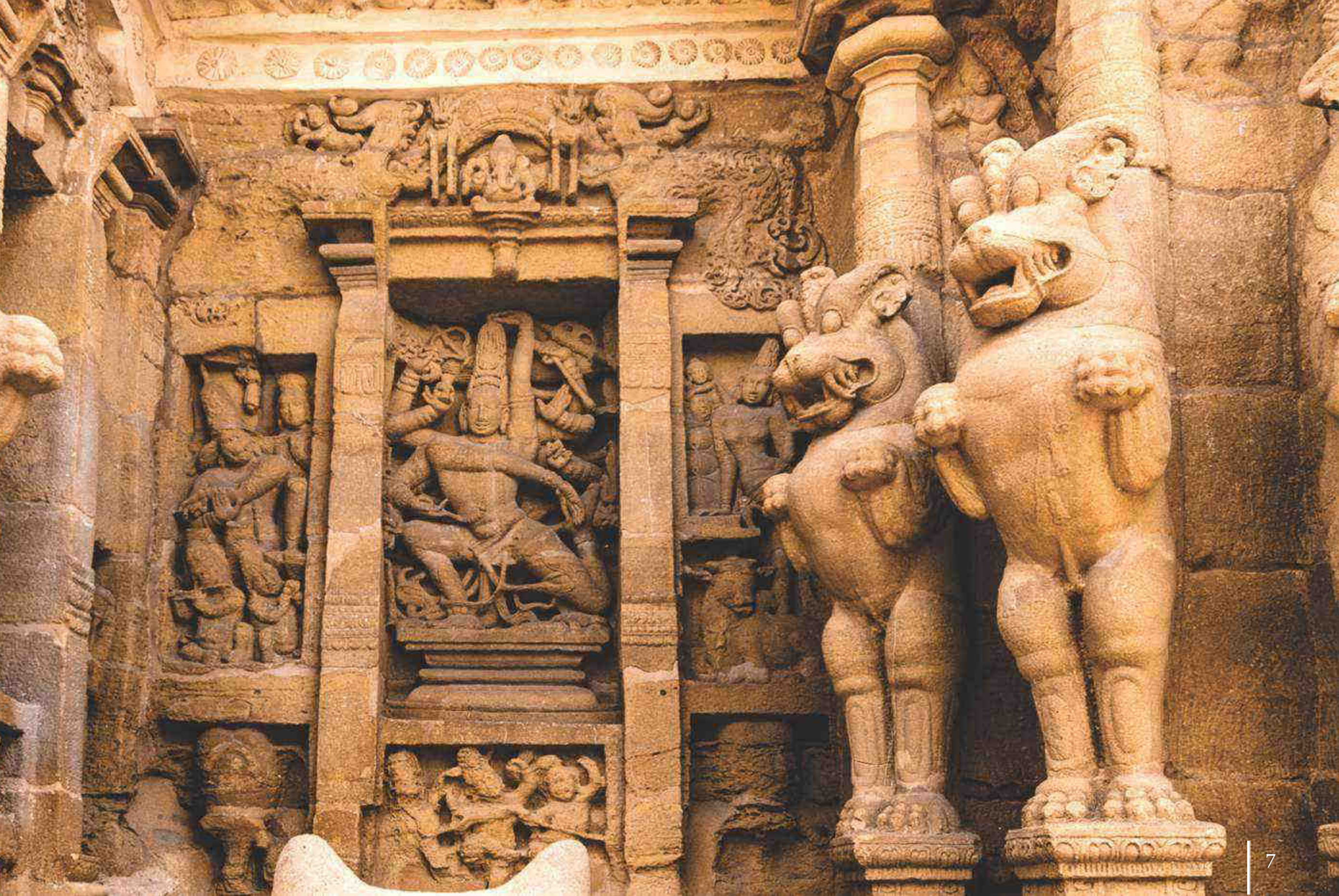
Bharata prepared to present his play with his hundred sons. It included the three dramatic styles namely 'Bharata' (Verbal) 'Satvati' (Emotional) and 'Arabhati' (spectacular) in its format. One style was missing the 'Kaisiki' or (graceful) endowed with beautiful dances, music, costumes. 'Brahma' asked Bharata to add this style too. For a successful performance of 'Kaisiki Vritti', 'Brahma' created the 'Apsaras' 'divine damsels'. Their male counterparts, the 'Gandharvas' were summoned for providing music. In the IV chapter of 'Natyasastra' there is a second story regarding the origin of the 'Tandava Nrta'. 'Tandavam' signifies all aspects of dance including gaits, steps, movements, covering space with leaps, jumps, twists, and so on. This art is the art of dance with all its intricacies. It is endowed with graceful, 'Angaharas' and 'karanas'. The Trinetra (Siva) had ordered his attendant Tandava to teach Bharata the 'Angaharas' and 'Karanas'. This is the mythological account of the origin of 'Karanas'.

The third story, is that of the origin of 'vrittis' or styles in the art of 'writing' and presenting the 'plays'. This mythological account is seen in the beginning of the chapter xxii of the 'Natyasastra'. After the deluge, when 'Visnu' was lying on his huge serpent couch, the demons Madhu and Kaitabha challenged him. When the fight

Alasakanyas in dance postures



*Vishnu in a dance posture
Kanchipuram Temple*



started as exchange of harsh words, 'Brahma' is said to have noticed the beginning of the 'Bharati vritti'. This style is marked by flowery language with speech as a live wire.

The communication of ideas called as the 'Art of Abhinaya' was mainly through 'Vachika' or verbal expression. The 'Satvati Vrtti' was the result of 'Visnus' will power and concentration while handling his bow. The word 'Sat' means the mind. This 'Vrtti' is the emotional style in which the drama depended for the strength of the story, characterization and their mental involvement.

The 'Kaisiki Vritti' is said to have originated when 'Visnu' tied up a knot of his 'kesa' during the course of the fight. This style is marked by beauty of femininity, charming dance, lilting music and attractive costumes. when the fight is in full 'vigour', the 'Arabhati Vrtti' resulted with its full force. This style was marked by its spectacular nature with the grandeur of combats. So the four major 'Vrttis' or styles of 'natya' are said to have originated from the various stages of 'Visnus' fight with the two demons (Asuras). The 'Vrttis' are the deciding factors in the final shape, contents and present action of a play. It denotes the style or mode of composition.

The art of music and dance are associated with the name of 'Gandharva Vidya'. 'Gandharvas' are spoken of as devotees of 'Siva'. 'Bhagavad purana' declares that their duty was to sing and dance and play instruments before 'Rudra'. Kadambari speaks of 'Gandharvas' building Siva temples. The 'Mahimna stotra' in praise of 'Siva' is said to have been composed by the 'Gandharvas'.

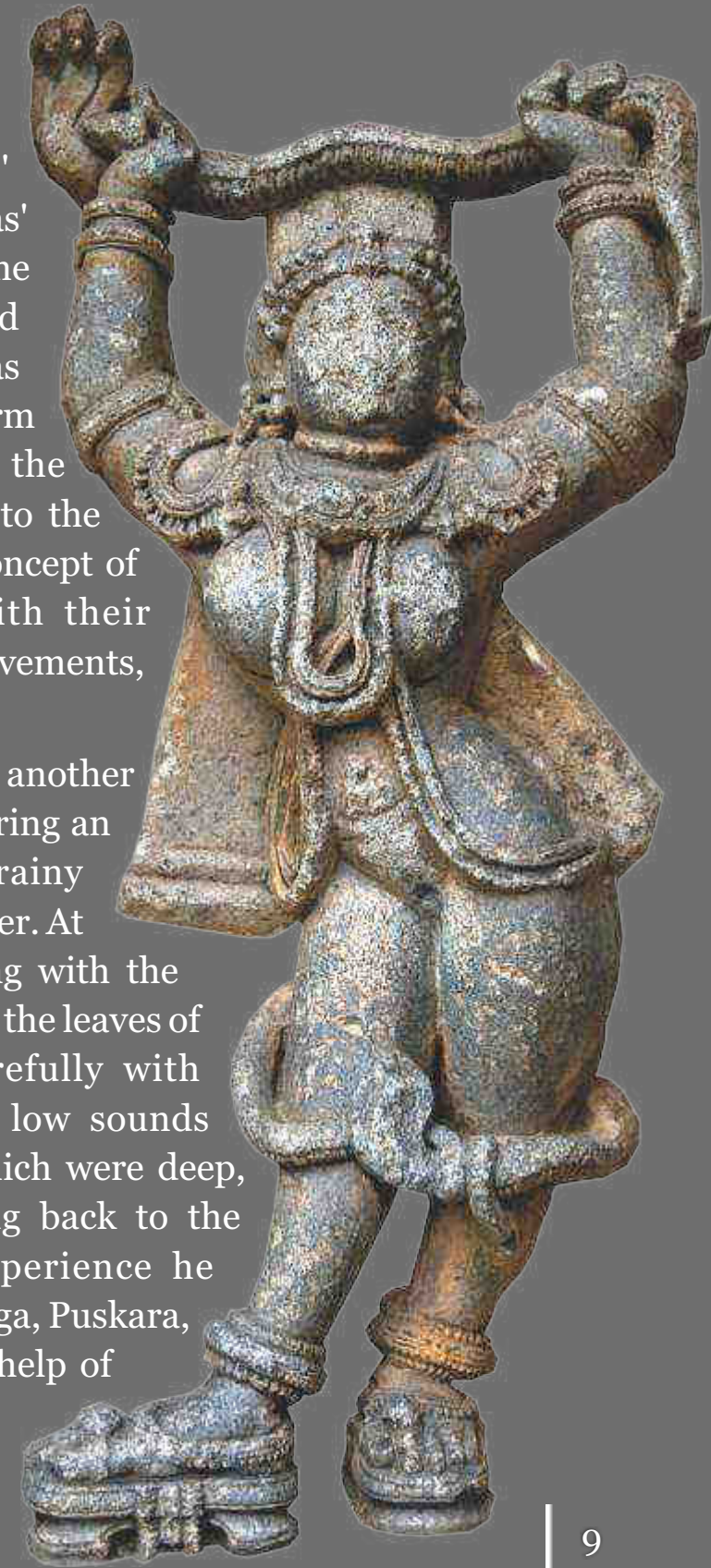
*Dancer with musicians
Helebidu Temple*





'Apsaras' are described as dancers and singers In 'Indras' court 'Ap' means 'water' and 'saras' means 'nymphs', 'Water nymph'. The fluidity of movements caused through graceful throw of limbs was characteristic of the feminine charm of the 'Kaisiki Vrtti', for which the 'Apsaras' were created according to the myth of 'Natysastra'. It was the concept of the beauty of the 'Apsaras' with their feminine charm and fluidity of movements, later known as 'Lasya'.

In chapter 33 Bharata, gives another story of the origin of 'Drums'. During an intermission of studies in the rainy season, Svati sage went to fetch water. At that time, torrents of water falling with the force of wind made clear sounds on the leaves of Lotus. Sage Svati observed carefully with wonder, the high, medium and low sounds produced on the Lotus leaves, which were deep, sweet and pleasing. After coming back to the hermitage, inspired by this experience he devised various drums like, Mrdanga, Puskara, Panava and Dardura all with the help of the divine architect Visvakarma.



NRTTA

'Tandava', was used only in the sense of 'Nrta' or dance. During Bharata's age, it acquired the meaning of dance of masculine majesty. Sarangadeva's definition of 'Nrta' is seen in two different contexts in his 'Sangita Ratnakar' (12th century). He defines 'Nrta' as "when the throw of the limbs is devoid of 'Abhinaya', but only serves to add beauty and variety of form to dance, it is called 'Nrta'. The older names for 'Tandava' and 'Lasya' were 'Uddhata' and 'Sukumara' respectively. 'Nrta' lends itself to three other classifications. They are "Visama" (acrobatic nature), "vikata" (comic) and "Laghu". 'Visama' 'Nrta' evokes wonder or horror, 'Vikata' induces laughter, 'Laghu' creates pleasantness.

The 'Beauty' and 'Awareness' are seen unified as 'one', in the concept of Almighty as a Dancer, performing and galvanizing the whole cosmos into activity. Ideal 'Nrta' is a spiritual experience. It is capable of emanating

*Aravatti Vritti - grandeur combat
Kanchipuram temple*

beauty and joy. It is a means through which the dancer achieves a shedding of her body consciousness. It is spiritual experience at various levels. It is a discovery and experience of the Godliness within one self. In the process of handling 'Nrta', the dancers self integration with the universal dance of the constant cosmic activity liberates her from all shackles, of this 'Earth' and 'birth'. The dancer, momentarily gets transformed into a 'microcosmic being', experiencing within herself a sense of unlimited freedom and bliss. 'Nrta' is an artistic synthesis with 'Ananda', Bliss of the Greater self.

*Shiva in dance posture
Aralguppe Temple*

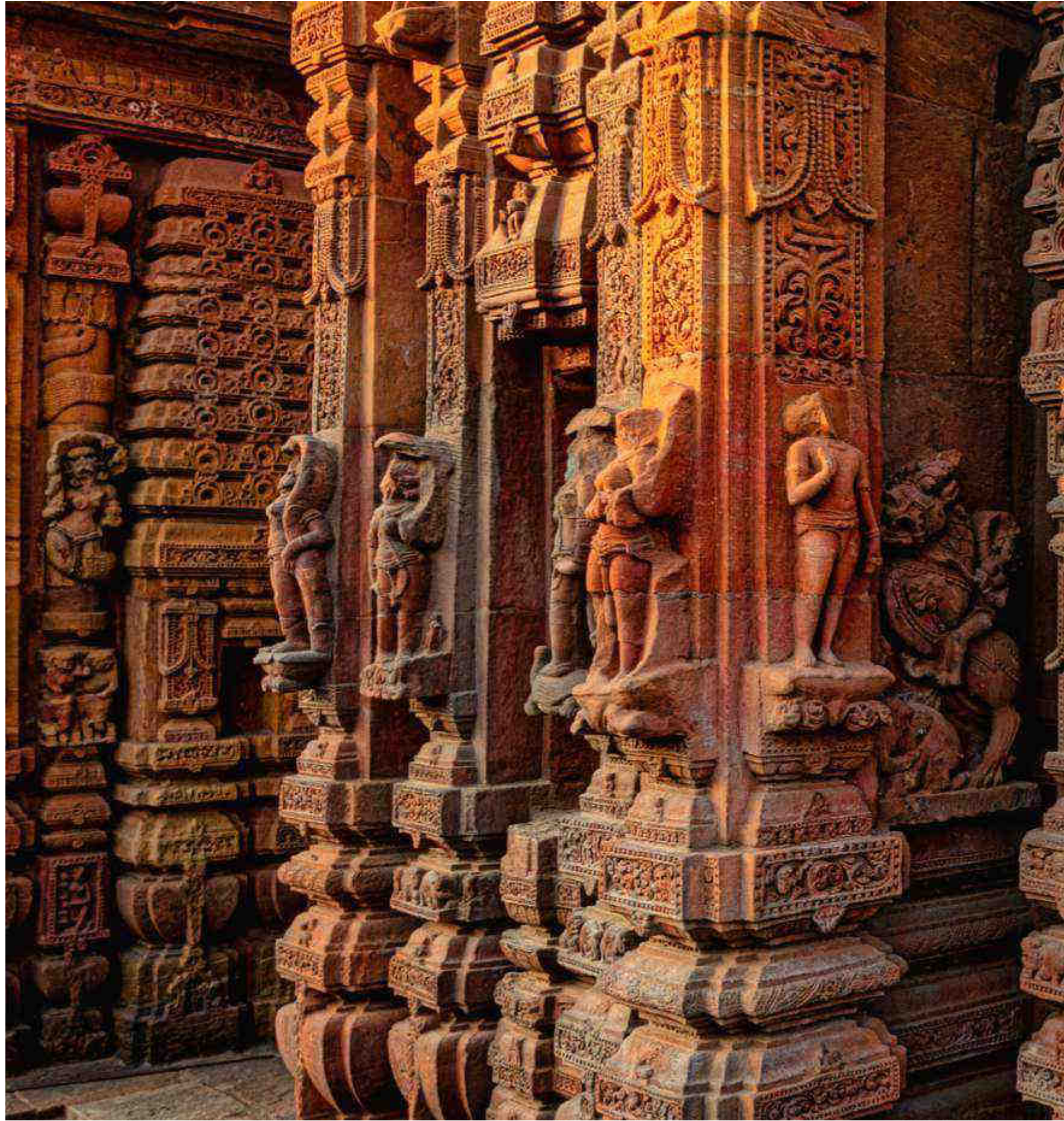


KARANA

Bharata has defined the 'Nrta Karana' as "Hastapadasa mayogah Nrttasya karanam Bhavet", a combination of the movement of hand and foot in dance is called a 'Karana'. But it transcends this mere technical level and rises to become "Atma Kaya samayogah Nrttasya Karanam Bhavet", the combination of the body and soul in dance is called the 'Karana'.

It is a combination of three elements A 'Nrta 'Hasta', A 'Sthana' and A 'Cari'. A dance movement of the hands, a dance posture for the body and a dance movement of the leg. So 'Karana' was understood as a 'movement'. The 'Karana's' are defined and enumerated in the fourth chapter of Bharata's 'Natyasastra'. The Karana's are numerous but 108 have been codified in the 'Natyasastra'. They are the units of dance. The 108 Karana's detailed in the treatise reveal the genetic relationship between different dance styles of the Indian sub continent and South Asia.

Alasakanyas, Mukteswara Temple





Historical background of 'Karanas':-

The two icons found in the India's valley excavations - namely those of a female dancer and a broken torso of a male dancer represent the embryonic stage in representing both 'Lasya' and 'Tandava'.

Archeological background:-

The figures of 'Tandu' and 'Bharata' have been identified at Mahabalipuram. The pallava inscription mentioning the name of Bharata as a great authority on the arts, is highly relevant. Rajarajachola the Great was inspired by the Siva temple of Java to create another such series of the 'Karanas' at Thanjavur. Rajarajas contribution to dance is unique for he had created the authentic 'karana' figures.

The Chidambaram temple can be rightly described as an encyclopadia of Indian dance in stone. Its gigantic expanse covers the various aspects of Bharata's dance technique, conceived and executed as a logical continuity of the work started by Rajaraja at Thanjavur. The base of the 1000 pillar Mandapa at Chidambaram belongs to the 12th century. The sculptures seem to include a portrayal of some 'Angaharas'. The dance sculptures around the shrine of Goddess 'Sivakami' gave dance sequences like the 'Nrta Matrka' and 'Kalapaka'.



*Foot in dance posture
Nagalapura Temple*

Technical background of the 'Karanas':-

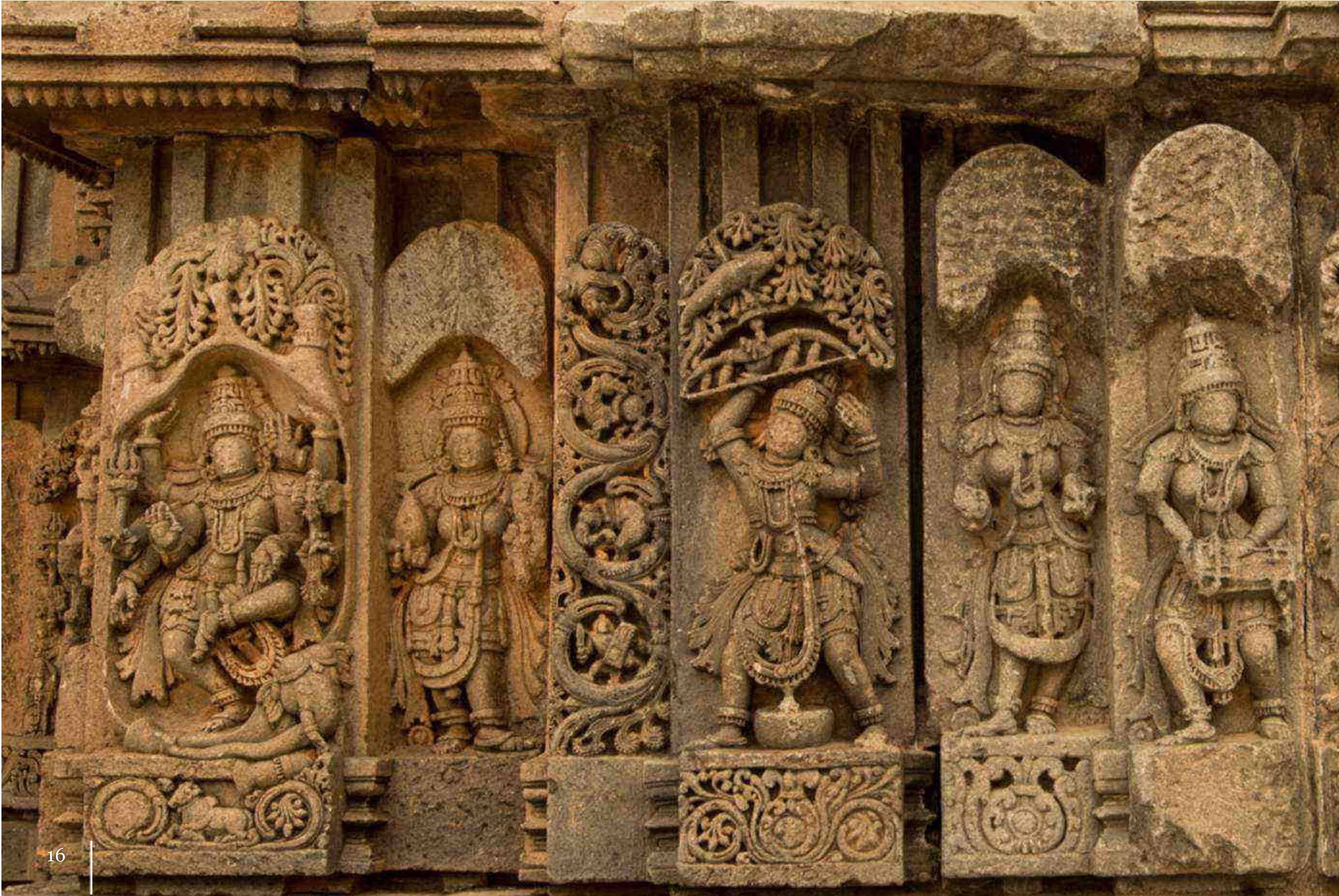
Each Karana is a combination of three elements named as 'Cari', "Nrtta Hasta" and 'Sthana'. It is a correlated movement of every major and minor limb of the body. The entire dance art of the 'Natyasastra' is built on the basis of a combination of 'Karanas' only.

While the 'Nrtta', 'Matrkas' and 'Angaharas' could be solo in nature, the 'Pindibandhas' involve more than one dancer. The 'Mandelas' were intended for the use of the actors in enacting fighting sequences in which they carried dummy weapons in their hands. The beauty of all such combinations of movements depend on the use of 'Recakas' which are the ornamental factors in dance. They create the variety of hand movement and soft jerks and glides, thus cutting monotony in movements. They are ultimately responsible for the intensity, space and time that each part of every 'Karana' is expected to undergo. the 'Recakas' are to be used in linking the basic elements of each 'Karana' as well as chaining the 'Karanas' to form the 'Angahara'.

The 'Karana' sculptures depict frozen moments of movements.

The physical aspect of the 'Karanas' lies in the use of every major and minor 'limbs' of the body, in a correlated way. The correlation between music, movement and rhythm requires an intelligent understanding. It also has an emotional side because each physical movement has a







*Dance Sculpture
Nagalapura Temple*

psychological effect. Finally, it is spiritual because, it's performance produces an indescribable sense of bliss both subjectively and objectively. At that point, it is beyond the physical exertion, mental tension of its technical brilliance, no more felt at that point. It is the enjoyment experienced by the inner self.

The same kind of movement produces different results when performed by a male or female. This is the basic difference between the often mentioned terms 'Tandava' and 'Lasya'.

'Tandava' is virile, energetic, forceful and masculine. 'Lasya' is soft, graceful, flowing and feminine. The words 'Uddhata' and 'Sukumara' are seen used by Bharata and Abhinava Gupta to mean 'Tandava' and 'Lasya' respectively. Though the terms were different, the concept, existed during Bharatas time. The 'prayoga' of the set of 108 'karanas', were meant for both the sex. "Tandava" was used as synonym of 'Nrta'.

'Tandav' and 'Lasya' were associated with 'Nrta' performed by men & women from the time of Kalidasa. Since the 'Karanas' are based on the throw of limbs, these movements came to be called 'Nrta Karana'. Even when they are divided as 'Tandava' and 'Lasya', it is all 'Nrta' only because, the 'karanas' are common to both. 'Nrta karanas' radiate emotions. They are not only physical and intellectual conceptions, but they do shine as physical reaction of the inner feelings. The concept of beauty is very close knit with the feeling of love. Bharata has said that whenever 'Sringara Rasa' dominates, the 'Sukumara prayoga' must be adopted and 'Nrta' must be performed 'Nrta' enhances the feeling of love and contributes towards the culmination of 'Rati'. It is this state of 'Rati Bhava' that blossoms into the 'Srinagara rasa'. So there is 'Nrta' inclusioned in such scenes. 'Karanas' used in such scenes must be appropriate to the 'Rasa'.



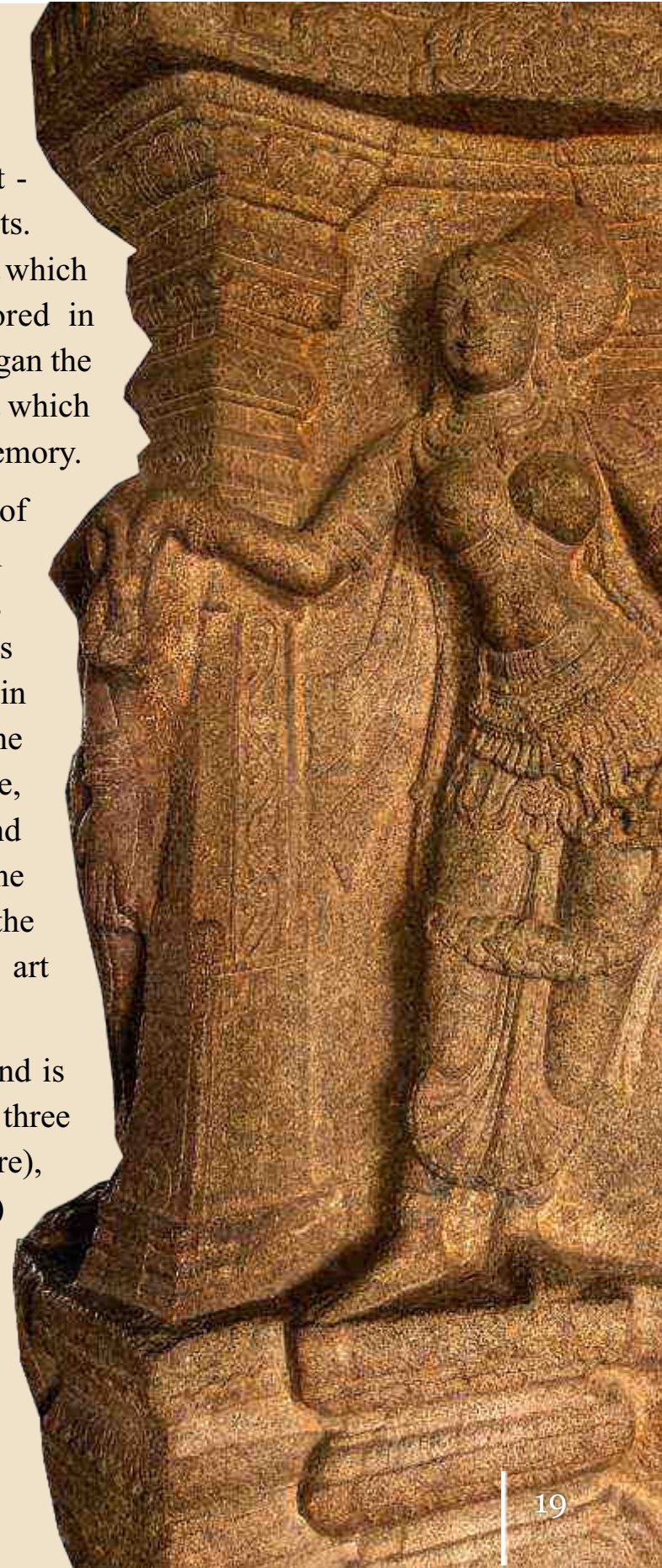


In the Indian tradition, 'myths' are not just - tales. Legends and 'myths' are based on real events. These are called 'puranas' in sanskrit, meaning that which happened a long time ago, but has been stored in collective memory of many generations. Thus began the two systems of accruing knowledge - 'shruti', that which is heard, and 'smruti', that which is stored and in memory.

Indian dance works on the assumption of further exploration and enhancement of any given idea. Cutting across geographical, social, religious and linguistic barriers, the idea images and legends have endured to form a pool of water in which every dancer is baptised, regardless of the style of dance she pursues. For a quick glance, through the kaleidoscope of commonly found names, ideas and metaphors, let us first consider the long list of names of divinities who inhabit the common spaces in philosophical, religious and art traditions.

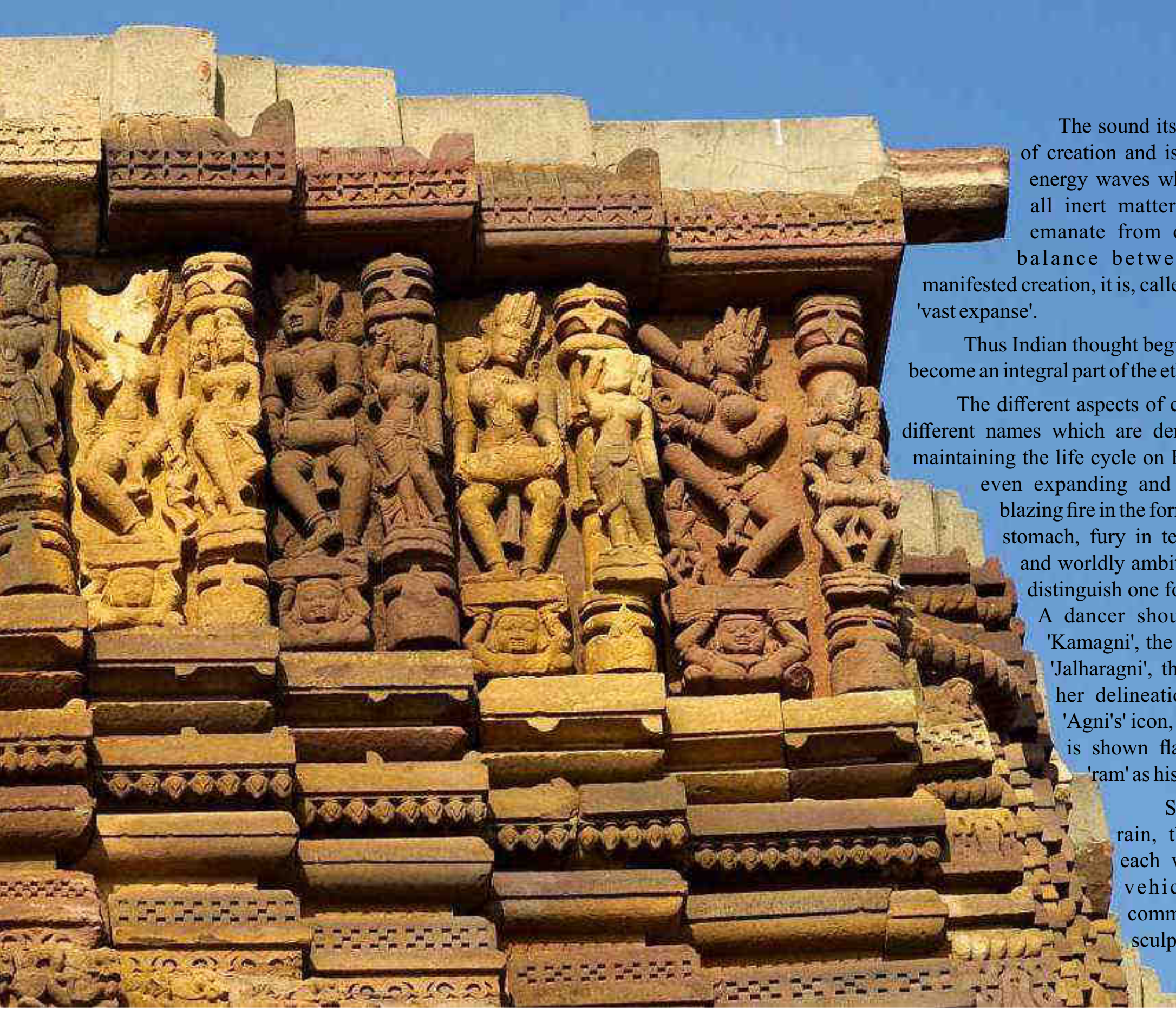
To begin from the beginning, the first sound is 'aum'. The three letters are supposed to denote the three qualities or 'guna' in creation, namely 'sattva' (pure), 'rojas' (self-Conscious) and 'tamas' (dark hidden) or the three tenses of 'trikala' 'Bhuta' (past), 'Vartaman' (present) and 'Bhavisya' (future) or the three levels 'akaash' (heaven),- 'prithvi' (earth) and 'pataal' (nether world).

*Musician with a dancer
Mandwa Mahal*



*Dance sculpture
Vishnu Temple, Janjgir*





The sound itself is called the life-breath of creation and is the first manifestation of energy waves which vibrate and galvanise all inert matter. Because energy waves emanate from one centre, the point of balance between unmanifested and manifested creation, it is, called 'Brahmand', meaning the 'vast expanse'.

Thus Indian thought begins with 'aum' and music to become an integral part of the ethos of dance.

The different aspects of creation (energy) are given different names which are derived from their role in maintaining the life cycle on Earth and the cycles of the even expanding and contracting Universe. A blazing fire in the form of the 'Sun', hunger in the stomach, fury in temperament, sexual desire and worldly ambitions-prefixes are added to distinguish one form of 'fire' from the other. A dancer should be able to delineate 'Kamagni', the fire of sexual desire, from 'Jalharagni', the 'fire' of hunger through her delineation. Yet the God of fire, 'Agni's' icon, remains constant where he is shown flames with the aggressive 'ram' as his vehicle.

Similarly the God of wind, rain, thunder storm and water each with their own weapons, vehicles and consorts are common motifs in dance and sculptures.



Devi, Bhoramdev Temple

There is 'Saraswati', the Goddess with a beautifully carved string instrument called the 'veena', showing her as patron of music and every other art form. Her vehicle is a white swan which conveys purity of soul. The Goddess of wealth is 'Lakshmi', wherein the root word, 'Lakshmi', meaning 'restless', is worshipped and requested to stay in a household, so that she does not vanish. Further, there are presiding deities for every direction and angle, for every hour of day and night, for every element in nature to convey to the egoistic human the importance of humility and consideration towards everything around. In the hierarchy of divine beings, those who are in the higher realm are 'Devi', 'Shiva', 'Vishnu', 'Krishna' and 'Ganesh'.

The Indian dancer is at once a scholar, linguist, philosopher, musician and believer. If the dancer does not know the meanings of names, their symbolism and iconography, their connection and context to each other and to the world of humans and the wider cosmos, then the dancer is unable to convey the essential flavour and meaning of the concept.

Musician, Bhoramdev Temple





Deity Features

*Devi,
Bhoramdev Temple*

‘Devi’

Derived, from the root word 'div', in sanskrit, it means 'light', thus 'Devi' means 'the great, Goddess who illumines and energises creation.' She has millions of forms and attributes, names and legends, because she is manifested in every atom in space. Some of the oft-used names are 'Jagadamba' or mother of the constant flux of creation and destruction, 'Bhavani' who is the cause of all happenings, 'Kali' the dark one, 'Gauri' fair one, and 'Mahisashur Mardini' slayer of sloth, ignorance and demonic forces. She appears as 'Parvati', the daughter of the king of Himalayas and is married to "Shiva", the great God, she is also the "Amba" (mother) having two sons, 'Ganesha and Kartikeya',



Devi posture, Bhoramdev Temple

‘Shiva’

'In the anthropomorphic' form of 'Linga' 'Shiva' is worshipped as the axis 'mundi' spanning Heaven but rooted in Earth, as 'Nataraja' the king of dancers, he is seen in his dynamic form, as 'Dakshinamurti' he is the Guru, the teacher, as 'Bhairav', he is fearsome, as 'Rudra', he is ferocious, as 'Sundereswar', he is the most handsome, and as 'Vishwanath', he is the Lord of the Universe.

For every weapon held in his four arms and for every demon slain he assumes a new name which the dancer employs in her story to emphasise a special mood. 'Shiva' literally means 'beautiful and auspicious'.



*'Shiva' playing
'Veena' one
foot raised,
a dance
posture.*



*Agni (fire)
God in the
middle with a
dancer and a
female musician*

‘Vishnu’

He is the one that sustains the creation. Giving recognisable form to the concept of dance, has created so many personas that the dancer finds herself veritably in a crowd of identities with whom she converses and interacts. It is this dialogue with a name, of a form behind a concept that the dancer depicts. Some of the popular aspects of 'Vishnu' are 'anant-shayan'-resting on timeless time and shown on a giant serpent/cobra floating, on a milky ocean-'ksheer sagara shyama', because 'milk' symbolises sustenance and nourishment. 'Vishnu' as 'Lakshmi's' husband is called 'Lakshminarayan' and 'Vishnu' alone as 'Narayana'-he who is within and around. It is about the 10 incarnations of 'Vishnu' called the 'Dashavatara'. The theme speaks about recurring period of evil perpetuated by arrogant and violent demons and the necessity of 'Vishnu' arriving on the scene to remove them and set the cosmic balance right again.

They are:-

Matsya-fish

Koorma-tortoise

Varaha-wild boar

Narasimha-man-lion

Vamana-midget

Parasurama-warrior Brahman

Rama-King

Krishna-The dark one

Balarama-Tiller

kalki-end of an aeonic cycle.



Vishnu, Bhoramdev Temple



An intelligent dancer connects this to the process of evolution as can be seen from the first incarnation. which occurs in elemental waters; the second equally in water and on land; the third being wild boar digging deep in to the earth; fourth shows half entry of human and of animal species, and the fifth brings the early. man as short in physical stature. The conflicts and struggles of earlier times are depicted by the sixth, then the settled security of a ruler gives us the seventh, the eighth incarnation, 'Krishna', has been seen as a 'synonym of 'Vishnu' himself, taking the human form with the totality of every attribute he possesses. In settled times, agriculture flourished and is shown in the ninth incarnation. According to every known school and sect of Vaishnavism, the above nine incarnations have already taken place in our aeonic time cycle. The tenth and the last one to arrive on the scene will be

'Kalki', who is described as a 'ball of fire' riding on white horse and holding a sharp sword drawn. He would bring this aeonic drama to a close for a new one to begin, after creation has rested a while as seen in the image of 'Vishnu' resting on the serpent or as an 'ananta'-without an end.



*Narasimha dev
Bhoramdev Temple*



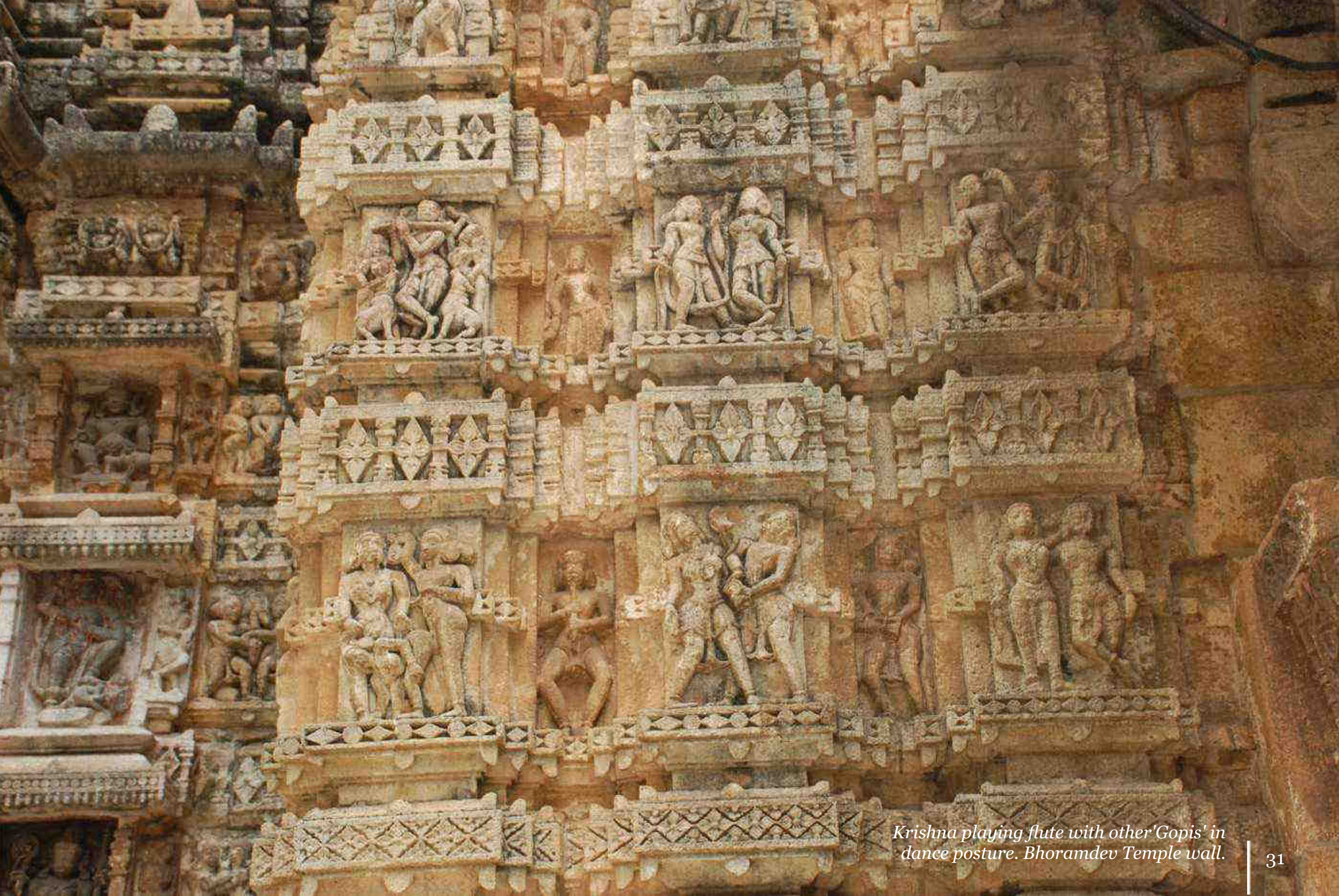


‘Krishna’

The dark, handsome, mischievous, charismatic, romantic hero of the epic 'Mahabharata' and the philosophical 'Bhagavad Gita', Krishna occupies a very special place in the Indian mind. His romantic love for the milk maids of Vraja, his naughty pranks in stealing butter and milk, his special relationship with 'Radha'-all have given dance material to dancers of all ages and practice. His flute playing, his special attire of a peacock feather tucked in his hair and striking yellow cloth draped around the dark swarthy body have provided rich imagery for poets, sculptors, painters and dancers.

Among the many names by which he is called are included 'Madhava', 'Keshava', 'Govinda', 'Gopal', (protector of light shown in the symbol of cow), 'Vanamali' (wearer of a garland of jungle flowers) 'Ghanashyam' (dark as the rain bearing clouds), 'Hari' (who removes sorrow and pain), 'Giridhar' (one who lifts Mount Govardhana). Endlessly the dancers of every dance form, poetry, depict one or more of the countless episodes and stories from his life as recorded in the 'Srimad Bhagavad' and many other texts.

*Radha & Krishna playing flute
standing in dance postures
Brahmeswar temple*



Krishna playing flute with other 'Gopis' in dance posture. Bhoramdev Temple wall.



‘Ganesha’

This is a God. with the head of an elephant to symbolise wisdom and capacity, to remove and over come any obstacle. 'Ganesha' is the son of 'Parvati', the adoring mother, and an indulgent 'Shiva', the father. 'Ganesha' is often portrayed. as a body seated on 'Parvati's' lap with a round ball of sweet in his hand. He has a portly stomach to contain the secrets of creation, hence the name 'Lambodara'. For his elephant shaped head, he is called 'Gajanana' and because he blesses the devotees by removing obstacles and troubles, he is called 'Vighna Vinayaka'.

He is also shown dancing in a variety of postures as 'Nritya Vinayaka', and as the chief of 'Shiva's' group of 'ganas' (goblins), he is 'Ganesha'. All such images and iconographies are woven into dance, Usually in a dance or music performance and even in traditional theatre forms of India, an invocation is offered to 'Ganesha' at the beginning of every performance to seek his blessings for a smooth presentation.

Some of the more popular themes basic to all dance styles are the 'Navarasa' and the 'Ashtanayika'.

'NAVARASA' refers to the classification of human emotions under nine heads. 'Rasa' is one of the two key words of Indian aesthetics. The other being 'Ananda'. 'Rasa' has been translated as emotion, sentiment and mood.

The totality of any experience reviewed and recalled in repose can give the kind of pleasure and delight which immediacy of the same experience, may not have given at the moment of its happening. This kind of pleasure translated into 'Rasa', the taste of 'Rasa', the aesthetic delight. By

observation and experience, eight categories were classified to understand and successfully portray human emotions. These are described in great detail by Bharata in his classic compendium on theatre, the 'Natya Shastra'. The eight moods are of 'Sringara' (love), Veer (valour), Karun (pathos), Hasya (mirth), Raudra (furious), Adbhut (wonder) Bhaya (fearful) and Bibhatsa (disdainful). The ninth of the present day 'navarasas' is the mood of 'Shanta' (tranquility), which was added to the list in the 11th century.

A detailed depiction of the 'navarasa' contained in poems relating to 'Ramayana', 'Devi' or 'Krishna' episodes are popular with every dancer. Another abiding motif is that of the 'nayika' the romantic heroine. The 'Sringara rasa' has the distinction of being given the title of "Adi Rasa" (the first and origin of emotions) and Rasaraj' (king of rasa). 'Sringara' or love rules our lives. 'Love' in any form and relationship

exists in Nature as in humans. The mutual attraction and distraction, the romantic tension between sexes, the ensuing body language and voluntary or involuntary reactions, naturally form the basis on which the idea of 'ashtanayika' is anchored.

ASTANAYIKA - They are:-

Abhisarika - leaving home to meet lover

Vasakasajja - fully adorned and prepared

Virahotkanthita - unable to bear separation

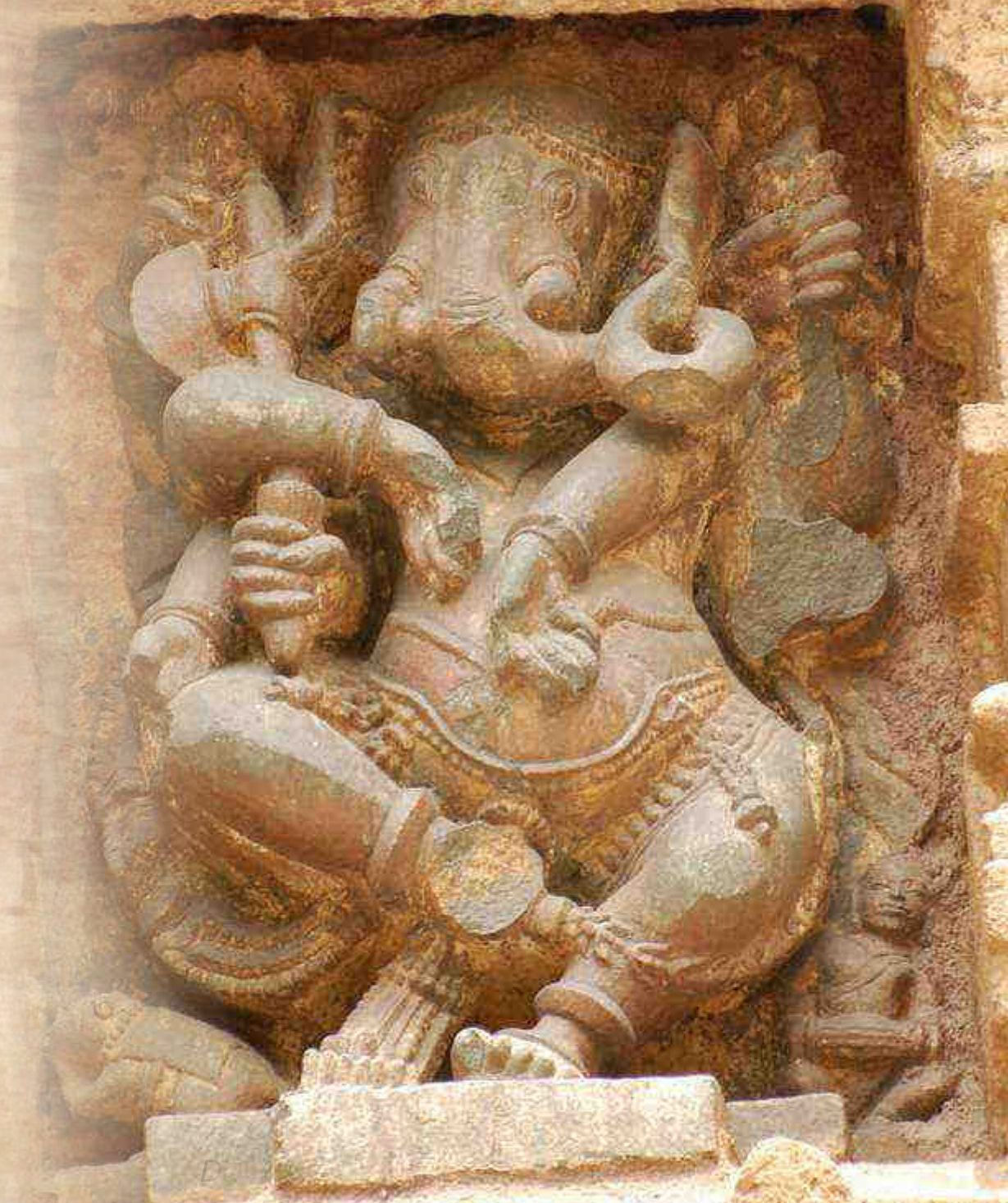
Vipralabdha - disappointed, deceived

Khandita - angry and jealous

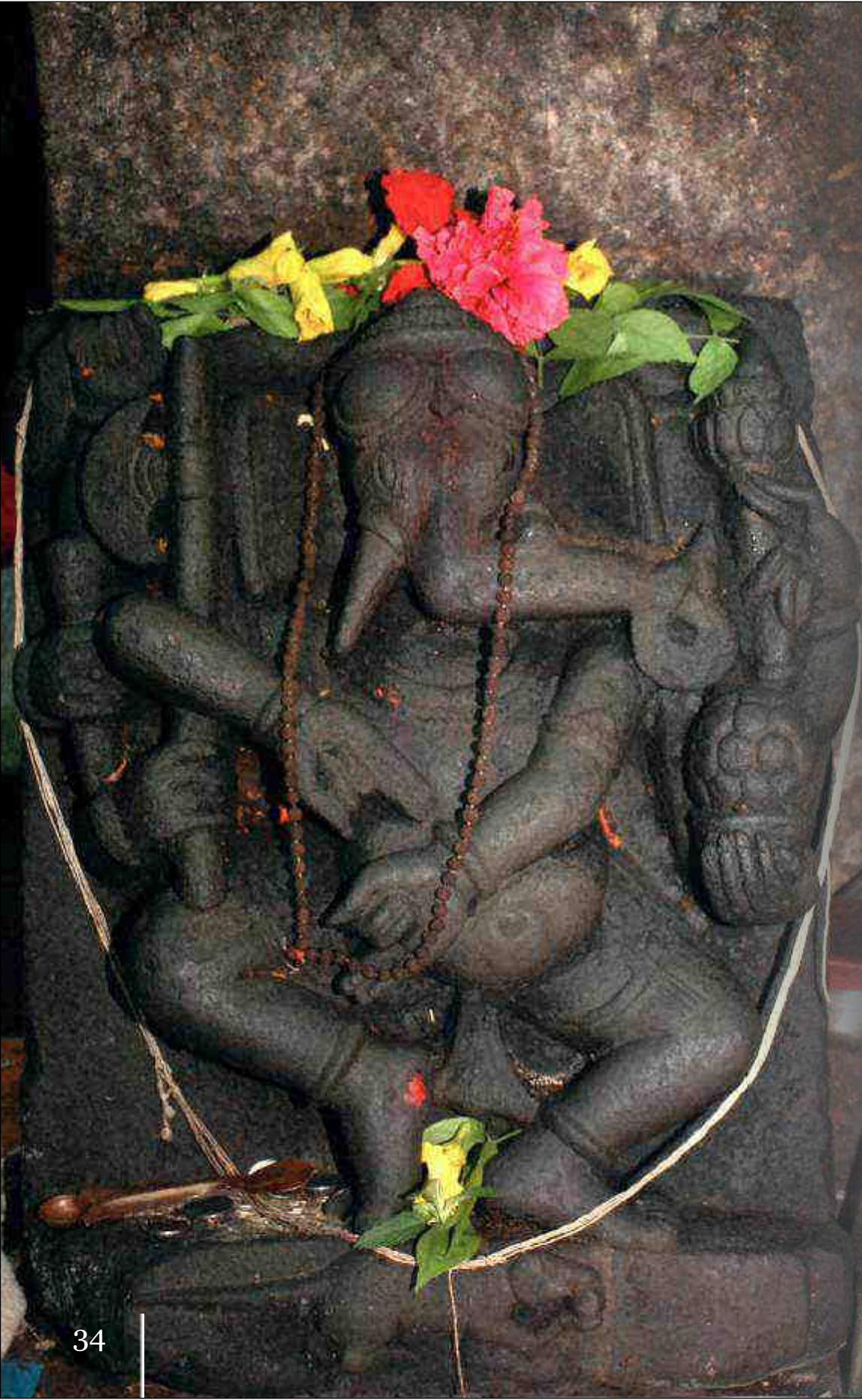
Kalahantarita - repentant after the quarrel

Proshitpatika - waiting for him who has gone abroad.

Swadheenbhartika - adored by the lover.



*Ganesh in dance posture
Bhoramdev Temple*



The classification, according to age shows a young woman, almost adolescent, on the threshold of life making her first shy, hesitant entering into the world of love, she is called 'mugdha'.

The woman, who, having experienced romantic love, is sure of her hold on the lover is called 'pragalbha'.

In advancing age, she who still, wields mature charm is called 'praudha'.

There are those who show their upbringing and station in life by their billigerent and unbridled temperament. They are 'adhama'. the lowest.

One who knows the pitfalls of losing control either in anger or jealousy, yet occasionally falls prey to it is 'madhyama' the 'middling'.

She who exercises great control over passion and temper and is ever smiling and pleasant, is called 'Uttama', the best.

This and much more, go into the building up of a dancers training to a point, when situations, stories and characters do not remain strange but become an intimate part of her inner world. Then, without the aid of props, special lights and technology, she creates a world of magical happenings and characters.

Our ancient integrated world view, to quote Dr. Kapila Vatsayan's book, "The 'Natya Sastra', embodies a vision 'concurrently at the level of the physical and its meta physical, the terrestrial and the celestial, the purely biological, and its psychical, the sensuous and the spiritual".

*Ganesh, dance mudra posture
Bhoramdev Temple*



Krita Yuga | (Golden Age)

Dance was created to please the eyes and ears and give enlightenment to the 'Devas' and 'Asuras', created by 'Brahma' and 'Shiva'. 'Brahma' took -

'music' from "Samveda"

'words' from "Rigveda"

'Law of gestures' from "Yajurveda"

'Sentimentality' (Rasa) from "Atharvaveda"

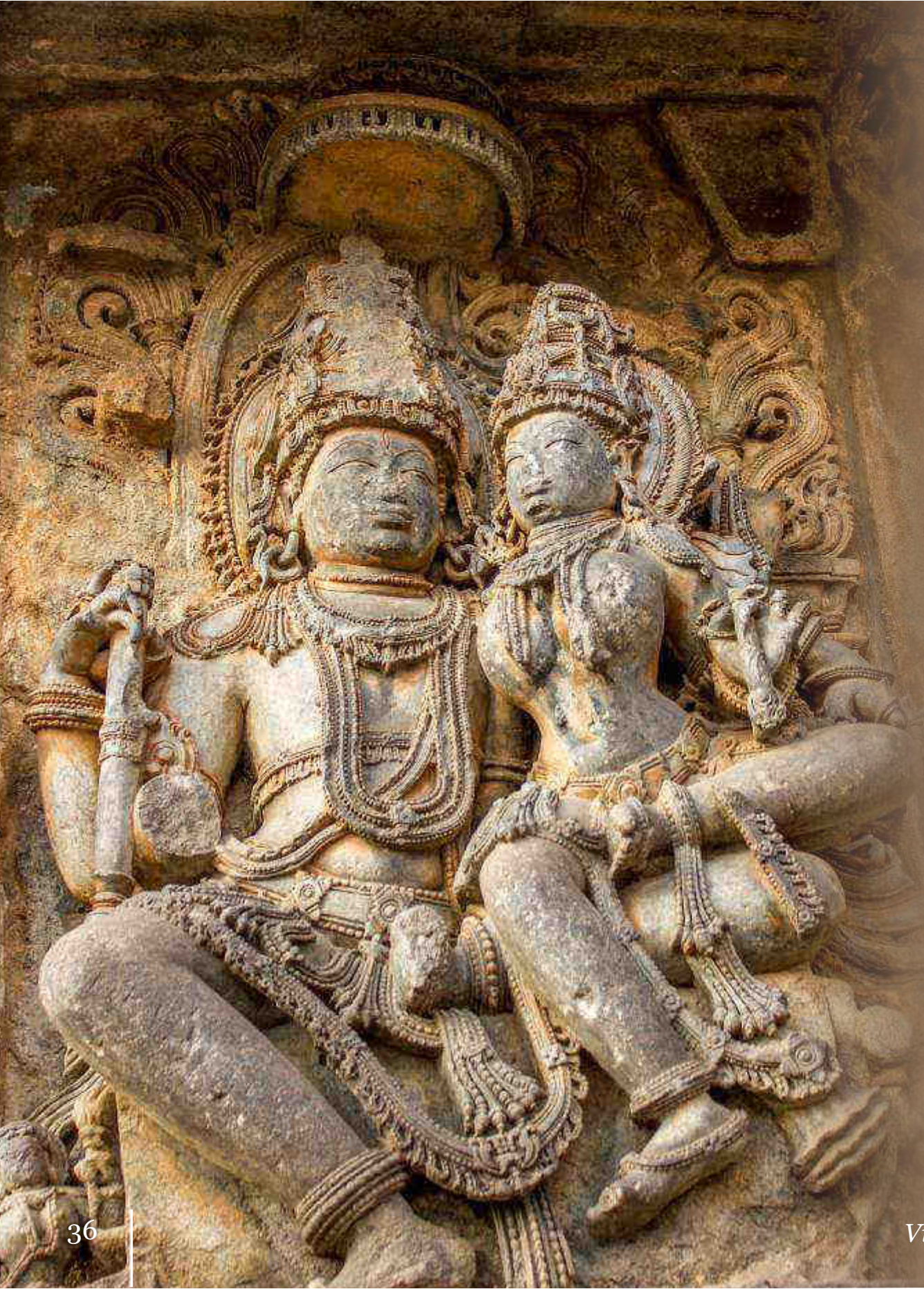
He united all these and added his little divine talent to form 'Natyaaveda'. Sage Narada & Gandharvas provided musical accompaniment and the "Natya Brindam" was formed.

The art of 'Natya' shown to 'Shiva' was (i) Amrita Manthan (ii) Tripura Dahan.

The great 'Shiva' offered 'Brahma' to unite his 'Tandav' or 'Nritya' to 'Natya'.

'Brahma' supported this idea and asked 'Shiva' to train Bharata. Then 'Natya Shastra' was written 'Dance' becoming the integral part of the art of

'Natya'. 'Parvati' added her dance style to it called 'Lasya' while "Bharata" was getting trained. So the two main lines of Indian dance 'Tandava' and 'Lasya' spread all round the world. According to 'Brahma' the 'dance' is a source of 'enlightenment' and 'sacrament'. So 'Brahma' instructed all dancers to do 'puja' before performance.



Dance performed inside the sanctum of the temple according to rituals were called 'Agama Nartanam'. 'Natya Shastra' classifies this type of dance as 'margi', or soul liberating dance. Dance performed in royal courts to the accompaniment of classical music were called 'Carnatakam'.

The term "Classical" (Sanskrit - "Shastriya") was introduced by 'Sangeet Natak Academy to denote the 'Natya Shastra' based 'performing art styles'.

A very important feature of Indian classical dance is the use of 'facial' expressions and 'mudra' or 'hand gestures'. Out of the eight recognized classical dance the only two 'temple dance' styles that have their origin in 'Natya-Shastra' and are prescribed by the 'Agamas' are 'Odissi' and 'Bharat Natyam'.

A dance style is classical to the extent it incorporates the 'Natya-Shastra' techniques. 'Desi' form is purely entertaining and not classical.

The art of 'Natya' includes 'nritya' and includes 'abhinaya' and 'singing'. These features are common to all the Indian classical styles. In the 'margi' form 'Nritya' is composed of "Karanas" while the 'Desi' is composed of 'adavus'.



Vishnu & Lakshmi, Helebidu Temple

Classical Dance



*Vishnu, musicians
and alasakanya
Helebidu Temple*



BHARAT NATYAM

It is the oldest Classical dance form. But the dance in its present form is not more than two hundred years old, having had its beginnings in ancient Tamil Culture, mingling with the Sanskrit culture, engulfing the whole of India. The origins of the dance can be traced to the 'Tolka ppiyam' a work of Tamil grammar offering insight in the art and life of the people.

Solo dancing in the temple and in the court was known as 'Sadir', until early 20th Century, when it was christened as 'Bharat Natyam'.

The term 'Bharat Natyam' has two connotations-first, 'Bharata' is considered to be the name of a sage-scholar to whom is attributed the first comprehensive treatise on theatre, music and dance, called the 'Natya Sastra'.

The second connotation breakup the word 'Bharata' in to three syllables 'bha' for 'bhava (emotion)' 'ra' for 'rasa' (music), and 'ta' for 'tala (rhythm)'. The term 'natyam' implies theatre, in the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries, This dance was also known as 'sadir', 'Nautch of Dasiattam'. The origins, as with other Classical styles, are in time-honoured traditions systematised and codified by Bharata.

*Torso shifted from
central Axis legs crossed
Alasakanya
(female dancer)
Brahmeswar temple*





Technique:-

This dance form consists of 'nrta' and 'nritya' meaning 'pure dance' and 'narrational dance'.

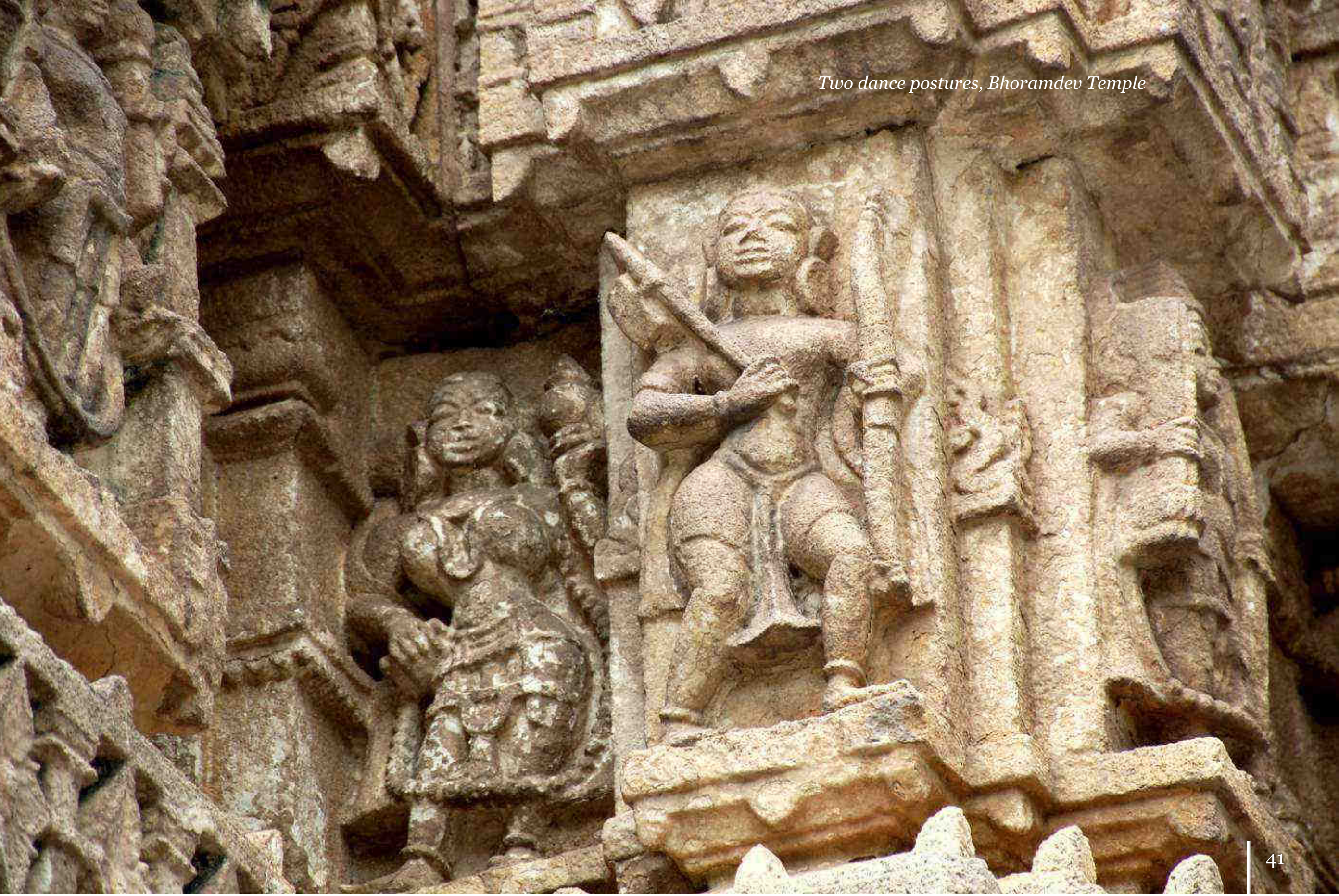
'Bharat Natyam' begins with a salutation to the guru, taking the first steps in pure dance of 'nrta'. Initially the basic posture-'aramandi' (also called ardha mandali) has to be mastered before the initiating even lifting a foot. This posture shows the legs bent at the knee, the knees turned out and, the feet turned out joining at the heels, stomach held in, hands placed neatly on the hips and the torso inclining forward slightly. From this posture emanates the entire corpus of 'adavus' (units of dance), Beginning with the simple exercise of lifting the right foot up to the level of the other knee and beating it down forcefully on the ground to produce a clap like sound. This is repeated with the left foot and, alternately, the feet rise and fall in three variations of tempo- 'slow', 'medium' and 'fast', bearing in mind that only the legs move without any supporting movement of the torso, hands or the head.

The moment the right leg is extended side ways, resting on the heel. The right arm, which is held aloft, slightly bent at the elbow with the hand in the 'tripataka' gesture (out stretched palm with the third finger bent) twisted, making the arm straight, palm facing up wards, the head turns to the right, looking at the hand.

The second phase of this 'adavu' consists of bringing back the out stretched leg to its original position, while simultaneously turning the palm out wards (facing the front)

Alasakanya dance posture Bhoramdev Temple.

Two dance postures, Bhoramdev Temple





and arm assuming the semi-circular positions with the head brought to its initial position looking straight. The same movement is repeated on the left side.

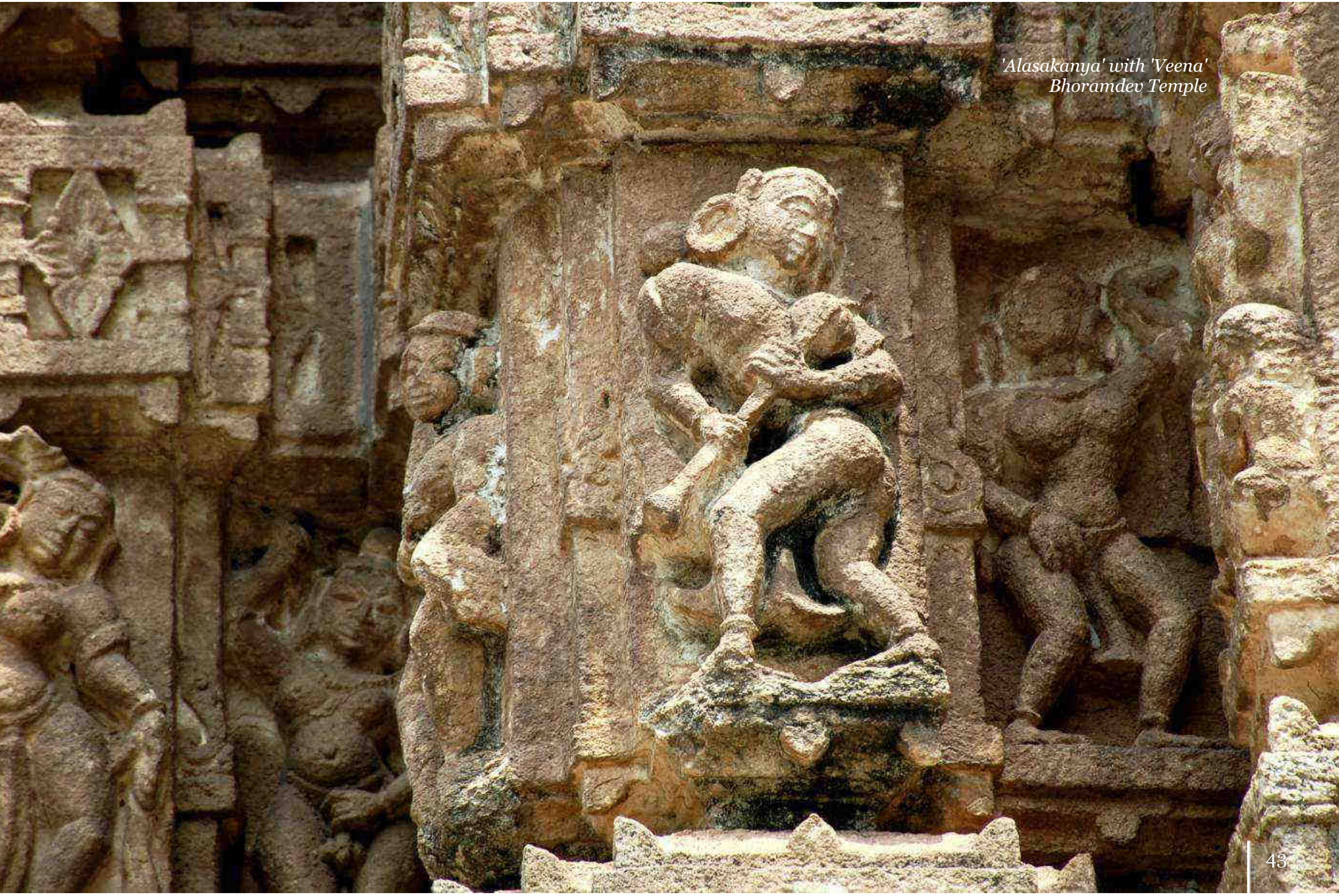
Once the student masters the coordination of movements, she moves forward to complicated patterns involving flat footed stamps, jumps on toes, beating of the foot in toe-heel combinations, sitting on toes and then leaping up like a released spring and movements, circular or lateral, with arms held above the head or outstretched at the chest, weaving a design of criss-cross, squares and triangles while the hands fold and unfold in flower-like movements to make different 'hasta' (hand gestures used in pure dance) 'Bharat Natyam' reveals in neatness of line which gives the pure dance a geometrical majesty comparable to the architectural grandeur of the South Indian temple.

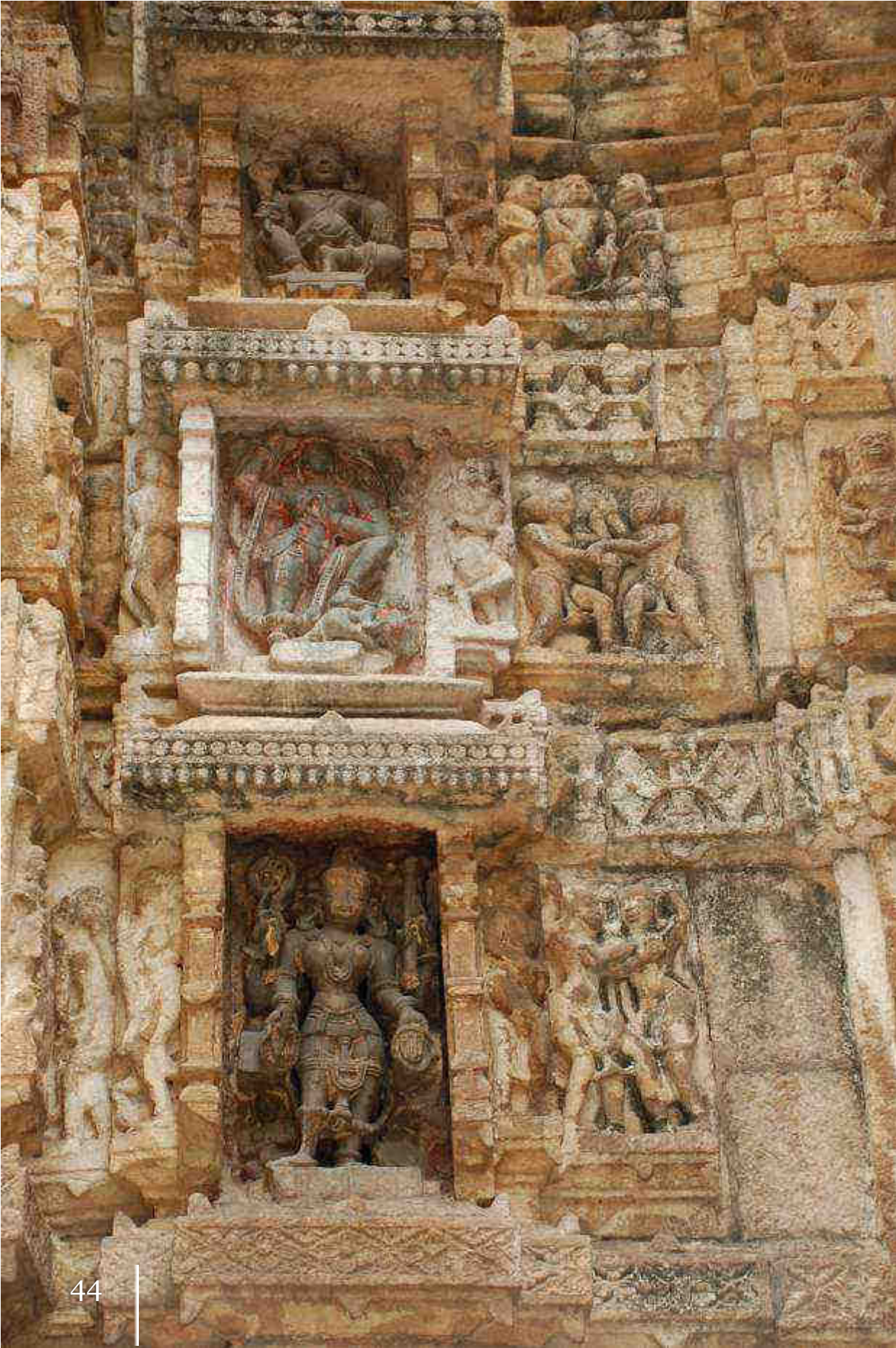
There are nine groups of 'adavus'-each group consisting of three or more variations which become successively complicated in execution. There are a set of exercises for the concerned limbs feet, ankles, knees, waist, torso, shoulders, wrists, fingers, and head to tune the body before physical and visual music of dance can be produced.

The next stage includes a unit of successive 'adavus' with a 'teemanam' (rounding off) called the 'jati'. Then follows the dance proper, called 'alarippu'. This is the shortest dance in the repertoire and is designed to set up the technical framework which provides a base for the succeeding items. It involves movements of the eyes and eye brows, along with the sideways, gliding neck movements termed "attami" in Tamil and 'sundari' (rechaka) in sanskrit, movements which the student has learned at the time of

*Alasakanya in a raised foot
Bhoramdev Temple.*

'Alasakanya' with 'Veena'
Bhoramdev Temple





practicing the 'adavus'. proceeding from the eyes and neck, with feet together, knees straight, the body erect and the balance. distributed on both legs, the shoulders and hands standing erect in 'Samapada' are moved in smooth glides and jerks, moving sideways and front. The process is repeated in the fully seated posture, which leads to the other half of the dance, where lightly more complicated locomotion, foot work, bends and hand gestures build up to the flourish of a short 'jati', to bring the dance to a close. The garland-like movements of the arms give it the character of a greeting and salutation.

The second step is more complicated dance patterns and rhythms of 'Jatiswaram'. It is a string of 'jatis' set to the 'swaras' of musical notations of a particular melodic mode, the 'raga'. The 'alarippu' is danced to rhythmic syllables uttered by the teacher reproduced on the 'cymbals' and percussion instruments; it is thus unaccompanied by any song. The second element, 'nritya' is the next item. Great literary works set to music are introduced at this stage and these are to be translated in dance through the medium of 'nritya-abhinaya'.

The student proceeds to manipulate the 10 fingers separately or together to produce myriad images, which infuse colour into the words of a song, vivifying the situations and characters. According to 'Bharata' there are 24 gestures through the use of both hands and 28 with one hand. The technical terms for these are 'samyukta hasta' and 'asamyukta hasta'. 'Hasta' means 'hand' in Sanskrit each 'hasta' has a name which either refers to the literal meaning of the word or simply describes the mechanics of arriving at the gesture.

*Bhoramdev Temple wall Showing
dance postures of Rudra & Devi*



For example the hand gesture called 'allapadama' means a full blown lotus'. The gesture itself resembles a Lotus flower in which the fingers are outstretched from a curved palm to look like the petals of a Lotus. Here the sanskrit term, its literal meaning and the hand gesture combine together to create a total image. There are others, like the 'tripataka' which in a method of 'forming the hand gesture 'tri' meaning 'third' and 'pataka' meaning 'the flag which is the first gesture of the series. Thus, by bending the third finger in to the 'pakaka' gesture one arrives at the 'tripataka'. Among the double hand gestures, the most easily recognisable is 'anjali,' or 'an offering' and 'Namaskar'. It is performed by joining both the palms of the hands in a typical Indian salutation called "namaskar", namaste,' or 'pranam'.

Each gesture can denote many objects and ideas. for example:- the 'allapadma', gesture, which has the possibilities of showing the Lotus, a flower, a full Moon, the Sun, a place, a mountain, a beautiful face, face, an 'hair do' etc. These are all recognisable. The same hand gestures can now be used to show beauty and oneself questioning mockery, dallance.

The face, specially the eyes, play an equally important role, sometimes even rendering the use of hand gestures unnecessary. Each component of the face is brought in to play, but before one can gain a mastery over their use, their direction and movements are essential. The eye brows have to move separately or together up and down, quivering or knitted. The eyes are mirrors of the soul, eyes that encompass spheres, directions and emotions, indeed are creations. The shape of the eye has been compared to a Lotus petal or a fish, the glance to gazelle or as hypnotic as a cobra's. Indian Classical Literature is full of allusions about, the beauty and propensity of eyes. Indian dance has also laid so much emphasis on 'drishti' (gloss, the





look). To be able to convey emotions-subtle or gross, the eyes must be trained to move vertically, horizontally, in half or full circle, zig-zag or slantwise, with the pupils dilated or contracted. To facilitate a clear movement, the eyes are opened twice the normal size by pushing the upper eyelids upwards with the index finger and the lower still lower with the thumb while doing the exercises. This also strengthens the eye muscles. Great dancers have been known to perform 'abhinaya' for a considerable length of time purely with their eyes-summoning, rejecting, yearning, mocking or beseeching. In dance "where the hand goes, the glance follows, where the eyes go the mind follows, where the mind is involved, emotions arise, and where emotions ripple, rasa (flavour) permeates the work of art". This is the ancient concept of aesthetics of movement and expressions.

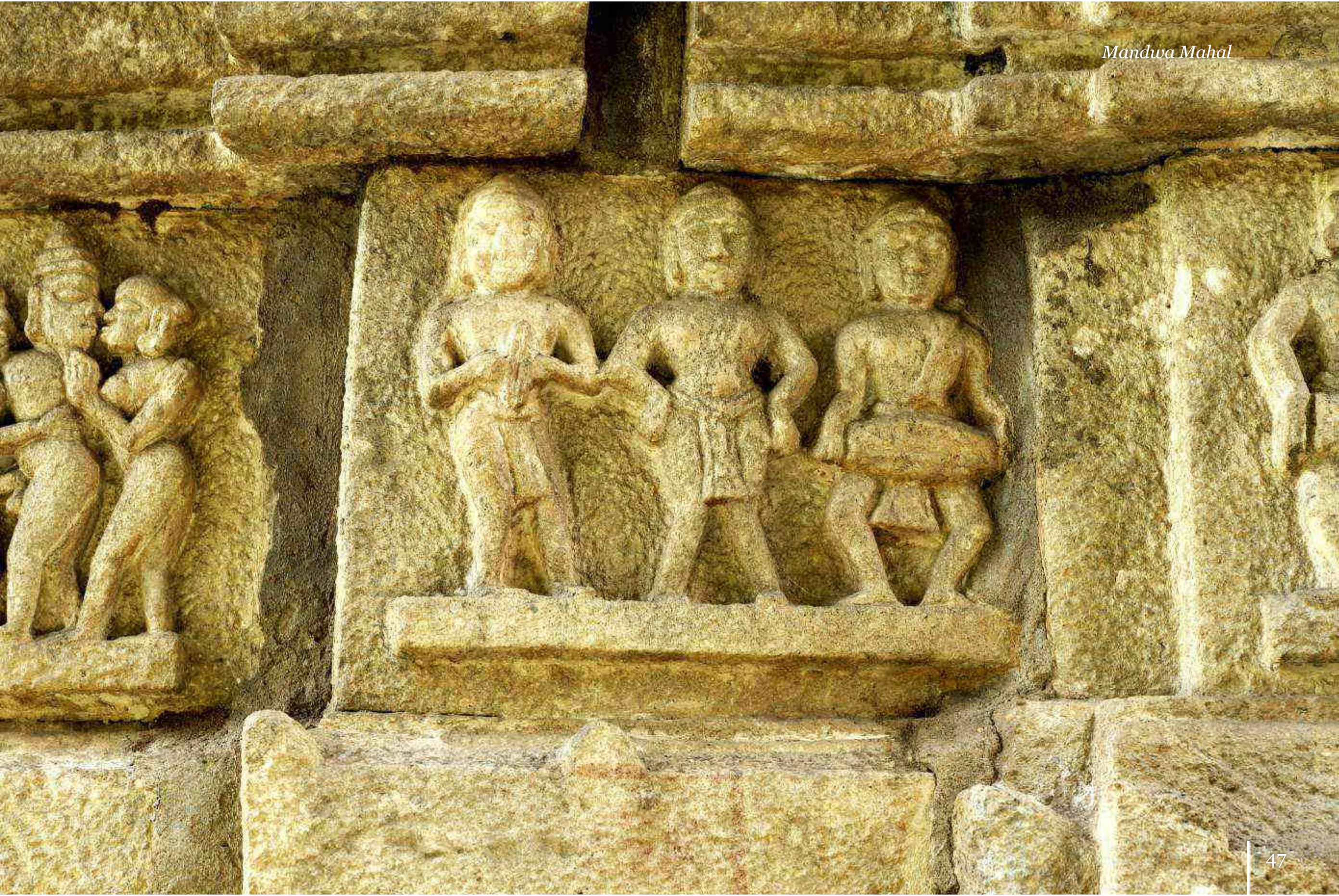
The nostrils are capable of showing happiness and sadness by looking pinched or dilated. The mouth is capable of remaining natural, pursed to show displeasure, drooping down-wards to express contempt and mockery, slightly open to show surprise, and extended to express joy, mirth and happiness.

The neck is also important to hold the head at an angle appropriate for a particular emotional situation.

The third Shabdam (song with words) which has four verses, with each giving a dancer the scope to bring out a few interpretations, while introducing short, pure dance sequences between each verse. Thus, the structure of 'Shabdam', is 'Abhinaya' oriented, pure dance serving only to provide contrasts, to the heavy tract of 'Abhinaya'. A 'Shabdam' is usually set in a time cycle (tala) of seven beats called 'misra chapu'.

*Shiva Dance posture,
with both knees bent
Brahmeswar temple*





'Varnam', an item that has been variously called the masterpiece of Bharat-natyam, is like a precious gem, well-cut and polished; A 'varnam', comprises the six tastes.

- (1) Katu-hot, chilli
- (2) Amla-sour, acid, lemon
- (3) Madhur-honeyed, sweet
- (4) Lavan-saline, salt
- (5) Tikta-bitter
- (6) Kashaya-astringent, betel nut

'Varnam' is poetry, in dance-the kind of poetry which embraces eternal values. The traditional structures of a 'Varnam' comprises two parts-the first consisting of four verses, each preceded by glittering 'jatis' which are choreographed to display cross rhythms and dazzling foot works, the second part consists of four or more verses which are preceded by the actual notations of the verse line and are danced at a slightly faster tempo than the first half bridging the two-parts, is a portion called 'muktaya', which sums up the firsts and hints at the second. From the dance point of view 'Varnam' offers a challenge to the dancer, luring her in to revealing her powers of interpretation and expression. From the point of view of music too, 'Varnam' make demands that the vocalist matches to the cadences of music as per the variegated interpretations of the dance. The vocalist is expected to have a strong sense of rhythm to be able to maintain the 'Tala' (rhythmic cycle), while the dancer indulges in cross rhythms. A good vocalist can turn a 'varnam' in to a musical treat, filling it with all the graces of a concert of classical music.

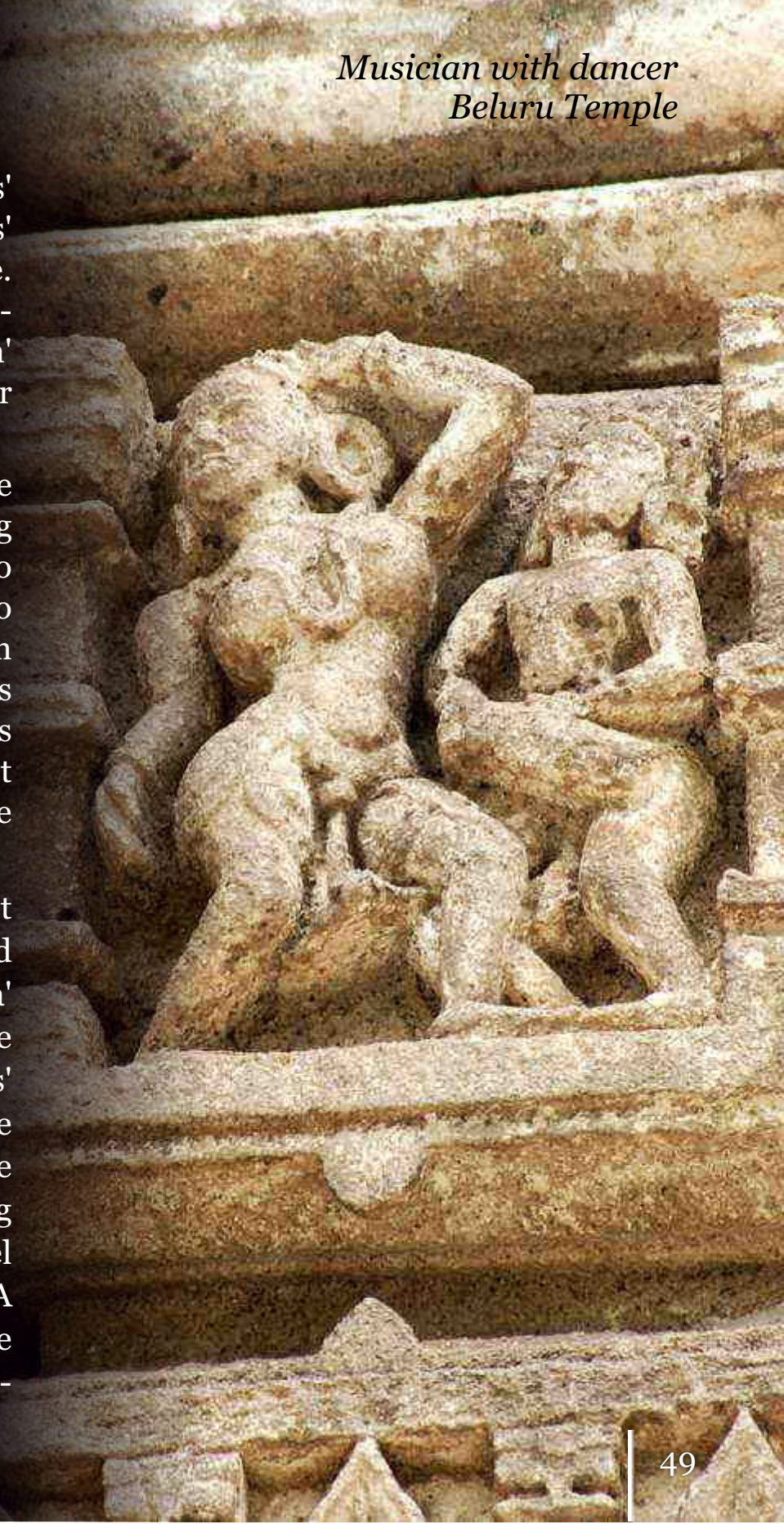
The text of a 'Varnam' usually comes from the classical literature and reflect the emotional and philosophical richness.

*Alasakanya
Beluru Temple*

The source material is from the time honoured 'epics', 'puranas' and the works of saints and poets. The 'Ragas' to which the 'Varnams' are traditionally set, enhance the majestic architecture of the dance. usually only 'Ghana' (serious, heavy) 'raga' are used, like the 'Sankara-bharanam', 'Todi', 'Bhairav', 'Kambodhi' or 'kama'. The 'Varnam' depicts a situation where the 'nayika' (heroine) expresses her love for the hero who is either a king or a presiding deity of a temple.

The situation calls for a total involvement of the dancer in the role of a 'nayika'-now amorous and coquettish, pleading and yearning for his love, more often than not taking her 'Sakhi' (friend) in to confidence. Some times a 'Varnam' is written as a companion's plea to the beloved on behalf of the 'nayika'. In both cases the elaboration paints pictures of a soft breeze, moonlit night, flowers in bloom, bees humming and cuckoos calling, in short, all the ingredients supposedly required for creating an atmosphere of desire for love. It depends on the dancer to breathe new inter pretations in the 'Sanchari bhavas'. (transient moods)

Taking 'Sringara' (love) as the main theme has distinct advantage. Love in its wake brings reflections of the 'navarasas' and their 'sthayi bhavas', 'Vyabhichari bhava', 'Vibhava', and 'Anubhava' as if taking a birds eye-view of the life around. 'Sthayibhava' is the basic and persistent mental state like clear sky. 'Vyabhicharabhavas' are the transient emotions like floating clouds-'Vibhavas' mean those circumstances and situations which give rise to and determine the basic mood. 'Anubhavas' follow the play of all the above, showing consequent physical activity. Another point that is the parallel meaning, which runs through like a thread holding a necklace. A 'Varnam' and most songs danced in India offer the opportunity to be interpreted in two ways-subjective and objective and at two levels-





'human' and 'divine'. A true devotee of this art travels constantly from one level to another, fusing every day reality with cosmic dimensions, through artistic stylisation and giving the dance a devotional ardour and disciplined abandon.

Then comes the 'Tillana' which occurs at the end of the recital. 'Tillana' is a pure dance extravaganza exhibiting the exciting possibilities of rhythm-bound vagaries. The raga chosen is lighter and lilting variety as only rhythmic syllables are chanted repeatedly, which do not call for any great musical virtuosity. But the simple arrangement of the music helps enhance the intricate dance structure. The concluding cadences of a 'tillana' draw are-like movements, criss-crossing the stage and bringing a 'Bharat-natyam' recital to an end with rapid-fire dance movements.

Gradually the dancer is introduced to the richness contained in items known as 'padams', 'Javali', 'Slokas', and 'Kirtanams'. Those belong to the time-honoured sacred poetry of poets like Kshetrappa, Tyagaraja, Deekshitar, Shyama Shastri, Swati Thirunal etc.

'Padams' are songs in Telugu, Tamil, Kannad and Malayalam. 'Slokas' are always in Sanskrit. 'Javalis' are written in all four southern languages whereas 'Kirtanams', have been mainly composed in Sanskrit.

The 'padams', can be of various kinds,-extolling



Rudra or Shiva on one foot

*Yogini, dance
standing posture*

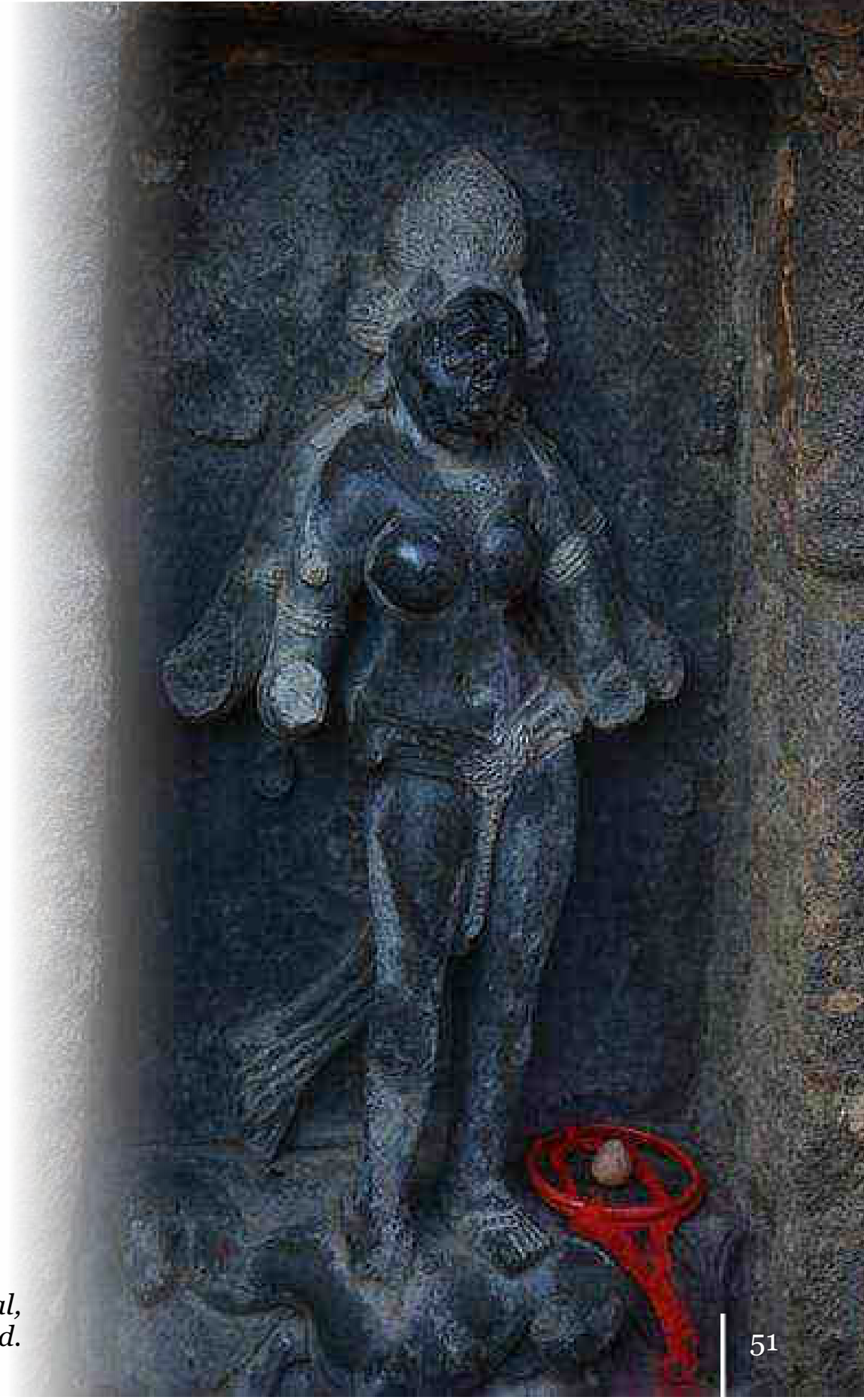
the erotic, secular or devotional aspects of love and addressed to a God, a king, or a 'Nayaka' (common man). Most of the 'Padams' depict a 'parakriya' 'nayika' (a woman who is married to another man) yet expresses her love for the hero of the song. The situation calls for careful handling by the dancer who otherwise can slip into eroticism. There are many songs, that speak of mythological happenings using rhetoric and epiphany to create great effect.

Apart from short verses, the dancer is free to select excerpts from the Sanskrit texts, from epics like 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' the play of Kalidasa, the 'Gita Govinda' of Jayadeva, the 'Krishna Karnamrita' of Leelasuka and others.

Having taught the prescribed format called 'margam' which includes from 'Allaripu to tillana' the 'guru' makes preparations for the formal presentation of the pupil to the dance world. This event is known as 'arangetrum' or 'ranga praves' - 'ranga' meaning 'Stage' and 'praves' is entry.

The repertoire as danced today is a creation of the Tanjore quarter, the four brothers-Chinayya, Ponayya, Shivanadam and a Vadivelu-who were great scholars and musicians. Solo dancing in the temple and in the court was known as 'Sadir' until the 20th century, when it was christened 'Bharatnatyam'.

*Yogini standing on an animal,
Torso shifted.*

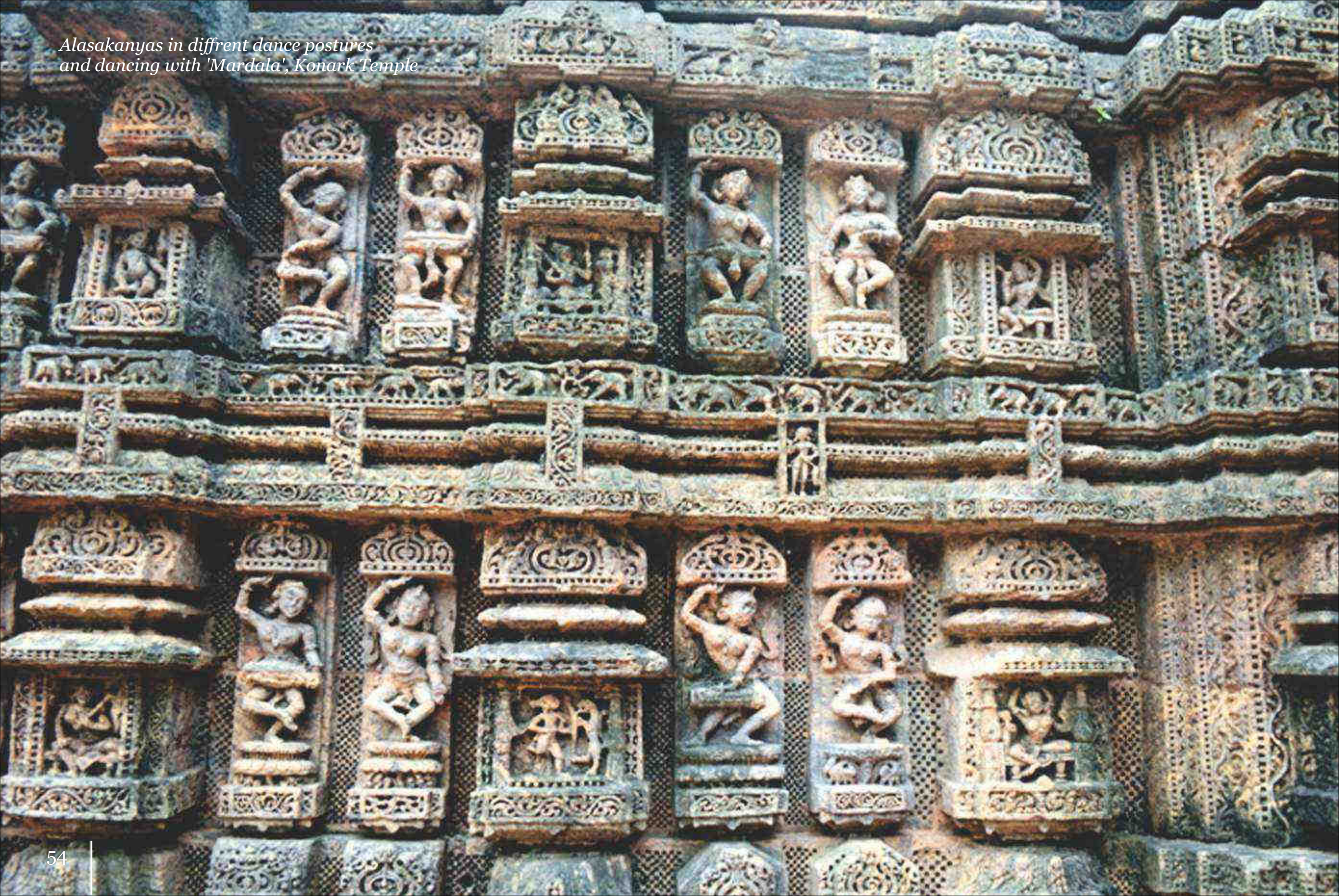




Bhoramdev Temple with dance sculptures



Alasakanyas in different dance postures and dancing with 'Mardala', Konark Temple



ODISSI

The region known as 'Odra-desh', meaning 'Odissi', land of Odra people, formed a strong cultural bond with the adjoining land of 'Magadhi' which is part of Bihar and Chhattisgarh today. Communality was in practice of performing arts. The dance style was mentioned as 'odramagadhi' in the treatise called 'Natya Shastra'.

Odra-desh, kalinga and then Utkal merges into the political identity 'Odisha' state from where the dance style derives its name, 'Odissi'. Down the centuries dance continued to flourish with royal and popular support so that when temple building patronage activity started, 'Dancing' became an integrated part of the temple rituals.

The 'Parasurameswar' temple of 6th century AD has some interesting sculpture of 'Shiva' as 'Lakulisa', in strong dance postures. The temple also has vivid figures of female dancers, in postures described in the 'Natya shastra'. They played on musical instrumentals, "held a mirror to look at their own beauty", or just 'lazing under a tree', 'held a parrot', 'washed hair', 'drops' from which fall into the 'open beak of a swan', 'combing hair', or 'applying Kajal' etc. To counter balance the galaxy of female sculptures many temples show images of a 'dancing Shiva' in various forms pertaining to the many Saivite legends. These sculptures, books in stone, from which iconography of each god and goddess could be learnt.

*Nartaki in 'Chauka' posture of
Odissi dance Boramdev Temple*



*Female dancer and a
Pakhawaj player dancer
Konark Temple*



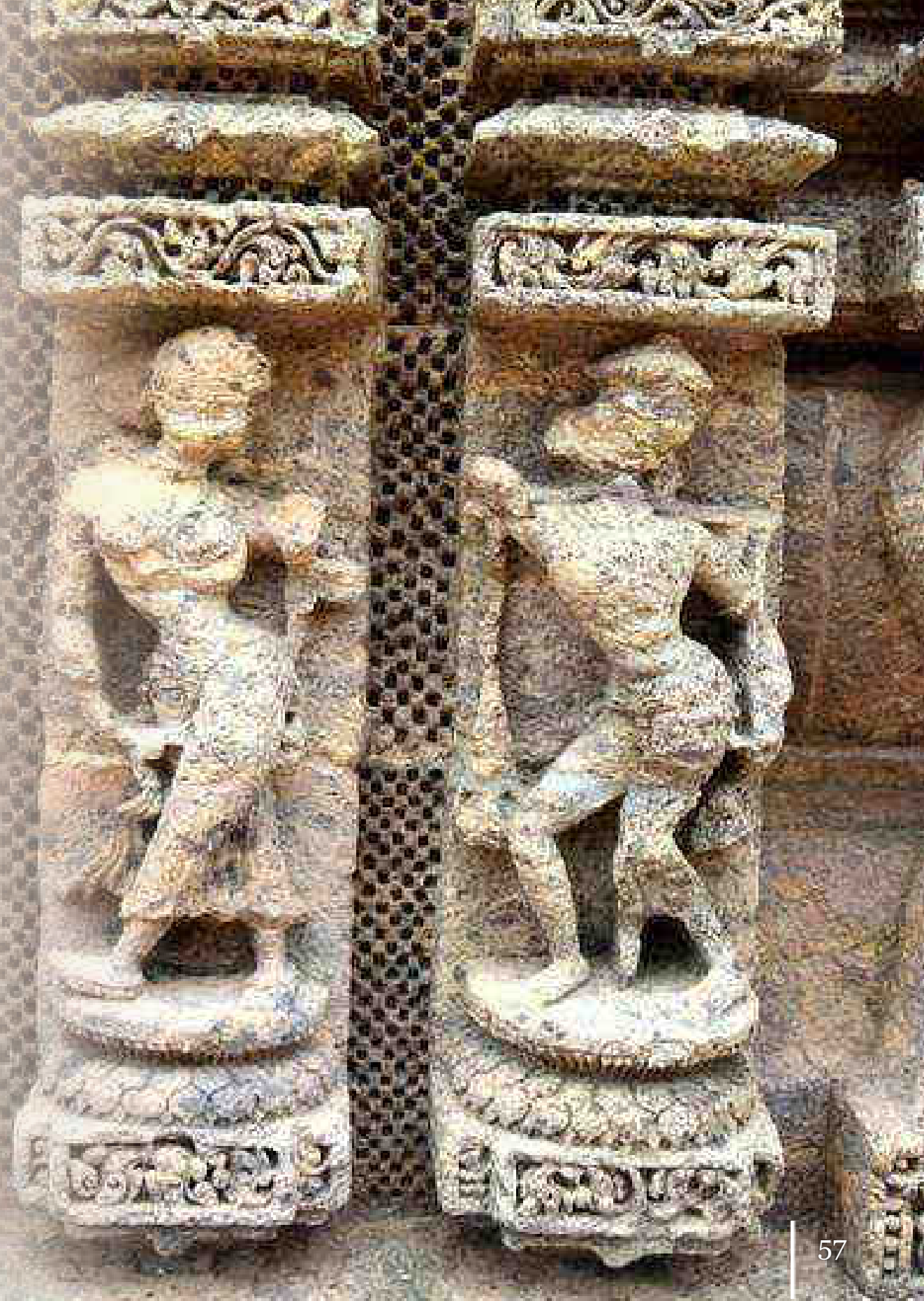
It is very important for an Odissi dancer, to know the stories connected with each divinity and his depiction in stone sculptures or paintings for they form the vocabulary of the dance. Texts peopled with divine and demonic characters, with 'Vishnu' in his ten incarnation or in deep ocean lying on a serpent bed and various forms, all these are in 'Odissi'.

Stories, parables, poems and plays, tell us of the great love of 'Krishna' for an older 'Radha' who was the epitome of love, grace and beauty. Among the vast number of literature on the subject the 'Gita Govinda' by Jayadeva stands out as an all time great love-poem.

'Vishnu' in his eighth incarnation is called 'Krishna'. Both share common attributes of form and intent. 'Krishna' wears a 'peetambara' a yellow cloth, which shines like the golden streak of lightning on his blue body and so does 'Vishnu'. The symbolism of blue as 'space' and yellow as the 'cosmic light' is clear. 'Vishnu' is at once dark, black-blue. As 'Jagannath' he represents the unmanifest, that which existed before creation. Here he is accompanied by 'Shakti', the cosmic energy, that triggers empowers and galvanises pure matter which is still dark and unknown. She is golden and called 'Subhadra'. At the touch of energy, vibrations begin and the black and unknown, the pure matter revealing it self in myriad forms. There-fore the manifested form is white and is known as 'Balabhadra'.

This 'Vishnu' as 'Jagannath' and 'Vishnu' as 'krishna' are equal to 'Jagannath'. 'Krishna's' life history and the geography of his various peregrination are recorded in the

*Alasakanyas in different body
and hand postures, Konark Temple*



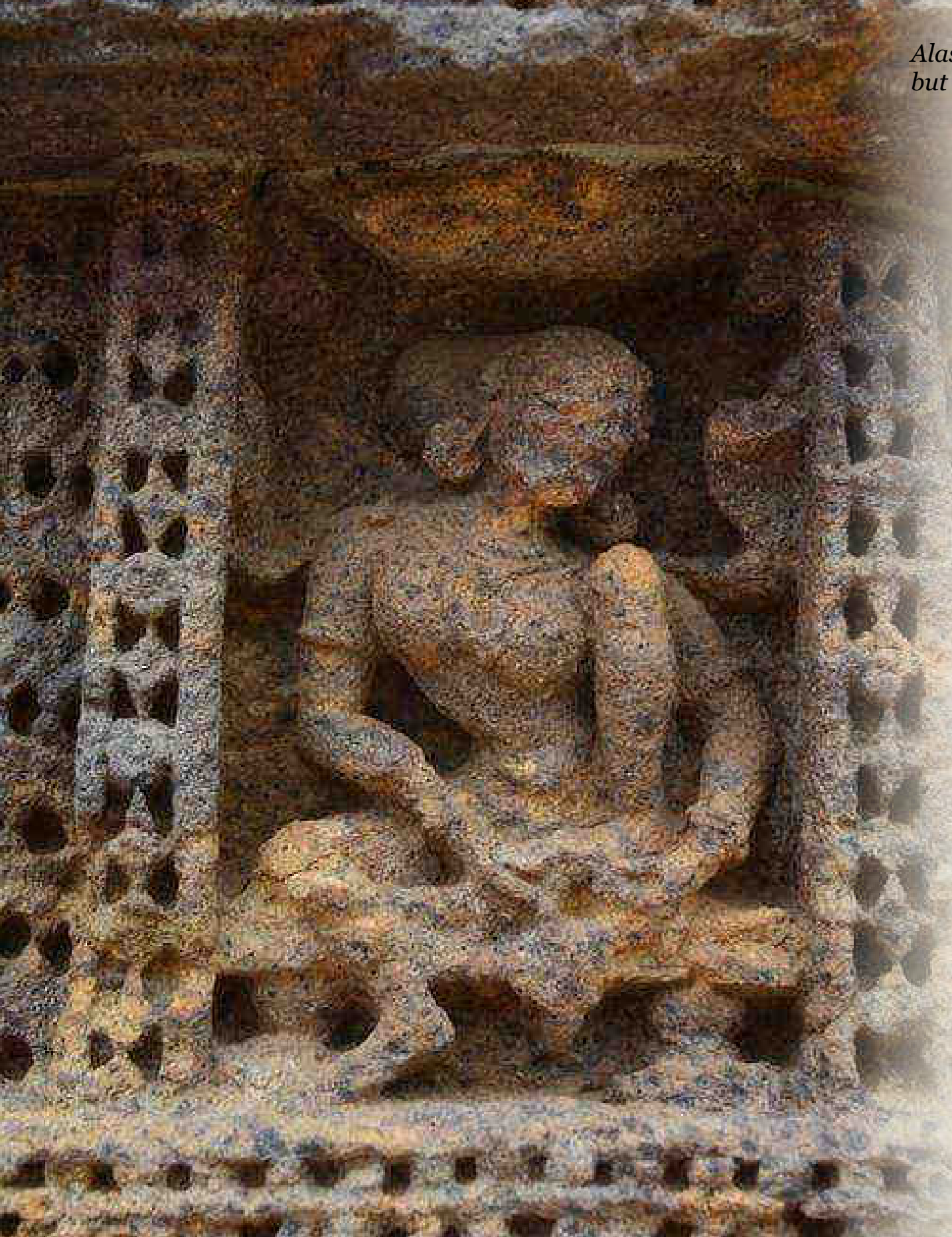


'Srimad Bhagavad' and the epic 'Mahabharata'. The Odissi dancer smoothly sails across various streams to find the one essence-'the divine form' which enchants the mind, fills the eyes and enriches the life. Of similar nature are the other characters of 'Devi', the great goddess with a million names, 'Ganesh' the elephant-headed God of wisdom the 'Sun' god with the Lotus symbol and riding a chariot pulled by seven horses (Which stands for seven days); and 'Shiva', who alone does not have any incarnation is always present. The Universe is his body, every sound, vibration, word music, are his speech, the 'Sun', 'Moon', and stars, adorn him as jewels, such cosmic beauty is called 'Shiva'.

The culture of India means the culture of the 'Lord Jagannath' and the culture of 'Jagannath' means synthesis of varied religions. The origin of the sacred shrine of 'Jagannath' goes back to the pre-vedic period and Purusottam Kshetra, the sacred abode of 'Sri Jagannath', has been described in various Sanskrit texts, such as the 'Padma Purana' 'Narada Purana', 'Matsya Purana' etc.

The primitive deity or 'Lord Jagannath' was worshipped for years as 'Nilamadhav' by the 'Savaras' in the dense forest. After 'Savaras' 'Lord Jagannath' was gradually embraced by all the religious sects like Jains, Buddhists, Saivas, Saktas, Vaishnavas, Ganapatyas, Sauras, Naths etc. Consequently the cult of 'Jagannath' came to be regarded as the religion of

***Two Alakshyas dancing
with two Pakhawajs, Konark Temple***



*Alakshya in a sitting posture
but torso shifted from central axis, Konark Temple*

masses, as 'Gana Dharma'. That means 'Jagannath cult' is a unique cult. Indian culture has reached its culmination in the unique culture of 'Lord Jagannath'. It is more than a cult, an all embracing synthesis of cults. It has combined diverse faiths, cultures, creeds and ideologies.

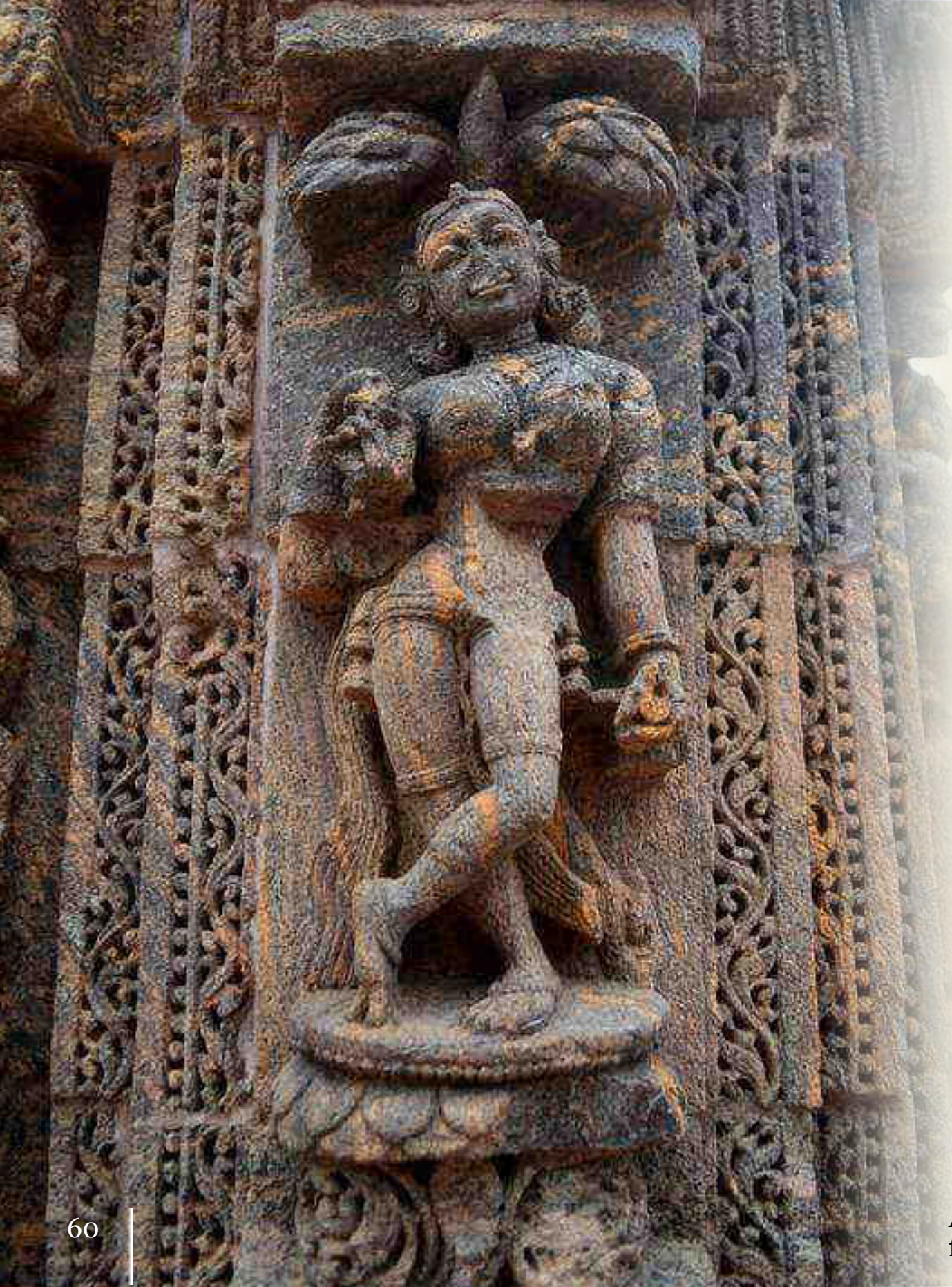
The Classical Indian dance 'Odissi' has its origin in the temples of 'Lord Jagannath'.

The community of the temple maidens called 'Devadasis' or 'Maharis' used to practice this dance form and used to perform before the Lord as a form of prayer or ritual.

At first they used to dance only the 'Nritya' (rhythmic portion of pure dance) accompanied by some 'Mantras'. But after Jayadev composed the 'Geeta Govinda', The 'Maharis' danced to depict the 'bhavas' and 'rasas' of 'Geeta Govinda' thus incorporating 'abhinaya' in dance form.

Odissi includes both 'Tandava' and 'Lasya' elements. It has 'Navatala' system. But the element that distinguishes 'Odissi' from other dance forms is the 'grace'.

To imbibe and translate grand ideas, images and concepts, the dancer has to go through some exercises and postures while learning different kinds of walks jumps, leaps and runs typical to the style of 'Odissi'. Although 'Odissi' shares a family resemblance to 'Bharat natyam', it is formed by a totally different philosophy of 'form'. By using the upper 'torso' as an independent unit 'Odissi' makes the torso glide from side to side in a smooth sway. Combined with the frequent use of 'tribhanga' (thrice bent posture) and the gentle, oblique movement of the neck, 'Odissi' can remind a viewer of watching a piece of fine filigree or a creeper gently swaying in a



soft breeze. Yet 'Odissi' is not just 'lasya' feminine grace. The 'chowka bhangi', creating a square with the half seated posture, both knees turned outwards and both hands stretched at shoulder level and then bent outwards from the elbow to offer various leaps, jumps, and stamps to a given rhythmic cycle (tala) have to be executed according to a demanding choreography. Most basic dance patterns are learnt both in 'chowka' and 'tribhanga' postures fully seated (on toes, knees out) or half seated (on toes, heels of flat feet) or standing in 'sama', 'abhanga' or 'tribhanaga'.

'Odissi' found its modern name in 1959 when a repertory was built by combining elements, from the prevalent performing art traditions of Orissa, like 'Chhau', 'sabda-swara', 'patha', 'sakhi Naach', 'Geeti Natya', 'Rashlila' etc.

Since then the repoirtory includes 'mangalacharan' (auspicious beginning, a prayer), 'Batu or sthaayi' (composition showing typical posture of Odissi mostly seen in sculptures), 'pallavi' (a music composition in a particular musical mode) 'raga' (with a complex rhythmic pattern). 'Geet', 'sloka', 'champu', 'ashtapadi' (poems as music compositions allowing for detailed treatment of expansive and communicative 'abhinaya') and 'natangi' or 'mokshya' as the final homage to 'creation' through dance. The orchestra for the dance usually consist of a 'vocalist', a 'pakhawaj' a 'flute', and 'violin' and the 'sitar'.

The accompanying music needs special mention as being truly indigenous to Odisha and comprising many 'ragas' as 'talas' unique to 'Odissi'.

When 'Odissi' was created after Indian Independence, perhaps unconsciously it echoes ideas of spatial symmetry and sacred geometry contained in temple architecture. It also retained the idea of dance being performed as an offering of the self to the deity.

Alasakanya with crossed
foot dance posture, Konark Temple



Alasakanyas, Konark Temple

Tribhanga Formation

The pivotal body design used in 'Odissi' is the 'tribhanga', which creates an 'S' curve in the body with a sensual 'thrice bent' central axis. It is commonly used to render images of the 'alasakanyas'. The 'tribhanga' is a stylised, elaboration of 'abhanga' a 'twice bent' body posture, and is derived by further bending the knees and allowing the head, as a consequence, to tilt in the opposite direction to the torso, completing the 'S' curve.

The 'abhanga' can be experienced in every day life as the natural shift of the torso when carrying a child or pot of water on the hip. It is formed by relaxing the parallel alignment of the feet and antikuluting a distinct torso shift away from the body's central line, or 'Brahmasutra'.

Both the 'abhanga' and 'tribhanga' have an opposite left sided counterpart. In both, the state of eternal yearning of the 'alasakanya' for her lover God can be experienced, in bodily terms, by the torso shift away from the centred axis. Then to experience, the 'tranquility of self contained wholeness' again, the centred position (or central axis) is returned to once more.

An analogy for this could be the way a string on instrument is plucked to one side to create a note. Here, the alasakanya's 'string' of her central axis

*Alasakanya in
Tribhanga body posture,
Konark Temple*

*Tribhangi posture
with one foot raised on the heel,
Brahmeshwar Temple*

has been 'plucked' the heart, causing the yearning.

As body weight in 'tribhanga' is assymmetrically distributed between the legs, the less load bearing, or sometimes non-load bearing foot can be lifted off the ground easily without causing a disturbance in the body's balance of weight.

Another permutation to 'S' shape of the central axis can be seen in images where the legs are crossed at thigh level, while turning the planes of the upper and lower body. This also creates a sense of languor, very much in keeping with the basic mood of the 'alasakanya'. A further variation of this 'turned planes' between the upper and lower body is formed when weight is taken on one foot, the other being decoratively raised. This kind of position is used in 'Odissi' when requiring a still moment to highlight moving choreographic sequences.

The body lines so formed are extended by positioning the arms in various ways, while the feet are subtly displaced to create decisive imbalances in weight distribution. The Odissi technique uses twenty-six alternatives, for placing the feet, which were each named by Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra in the 1980s based on his observations of temple sculpture.

Alasakanya Moods

The 'alasa kanya's' sculptural proportions apply as much to the rendering of the body on temple surfaces as they do it in 'Odissi', stimulating a sense of the stillness of sculpture when dancing.

Her manifold moods, all in standing postures using the 'tribhanga' template as.

'Alasa' (languorous), 'torana' (standing at the doorway), 'dalmalik' (holding branch) 'darpana' (looking into a mirror)etc.

Sculpture found in :-

'Padmagandha' - Rajarani Temple c. 1000 AD

'Darpana' - Brahmeswar Temple 1060 AD

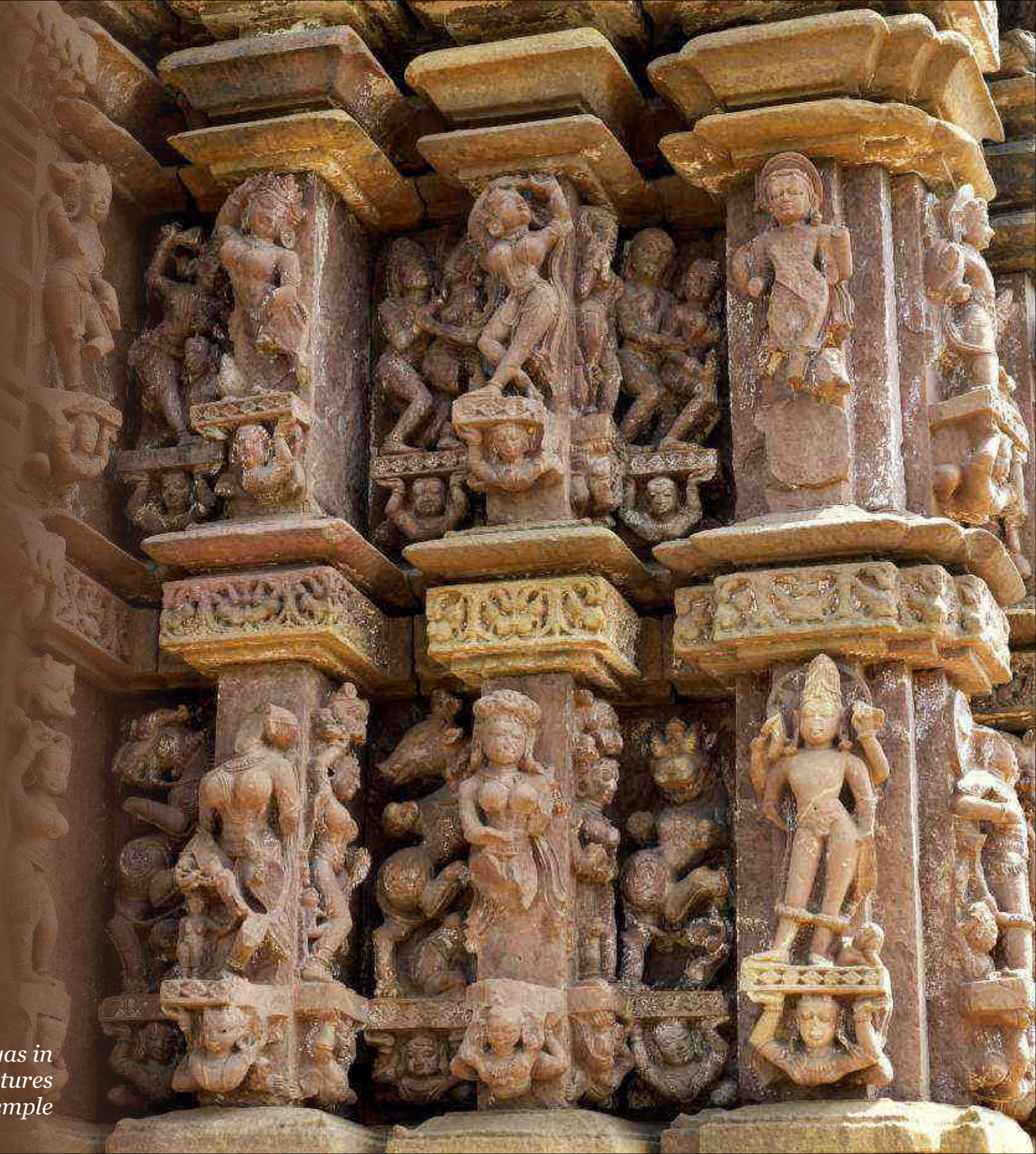
'Gunthana' - Rajarani Temple C. 1000 AD
(back turned fully towards the onlooker)

'Nupurapadika' - Rajarani Temple C. 1000 AD

'Suksarika' - Rajarani Temple C. 1000 AD

Vatsyayan's Kamasutra describes 'Pakshi krida' or playing with and taming birds, as one of the sixty-four arts required of a person of culture. The 'lady and bird motif predates this treatise and is seen in association with the early images of 'Yakhis' and 'shalabhanjikas'. The 'Suksarika' is a continuation of these early themes in art.

*Alasakanyas in
diffrent postures
Pali Temple*





*Shiv & Parvati
playing Veena
Brahmeshwar Temple*

Konark Temple



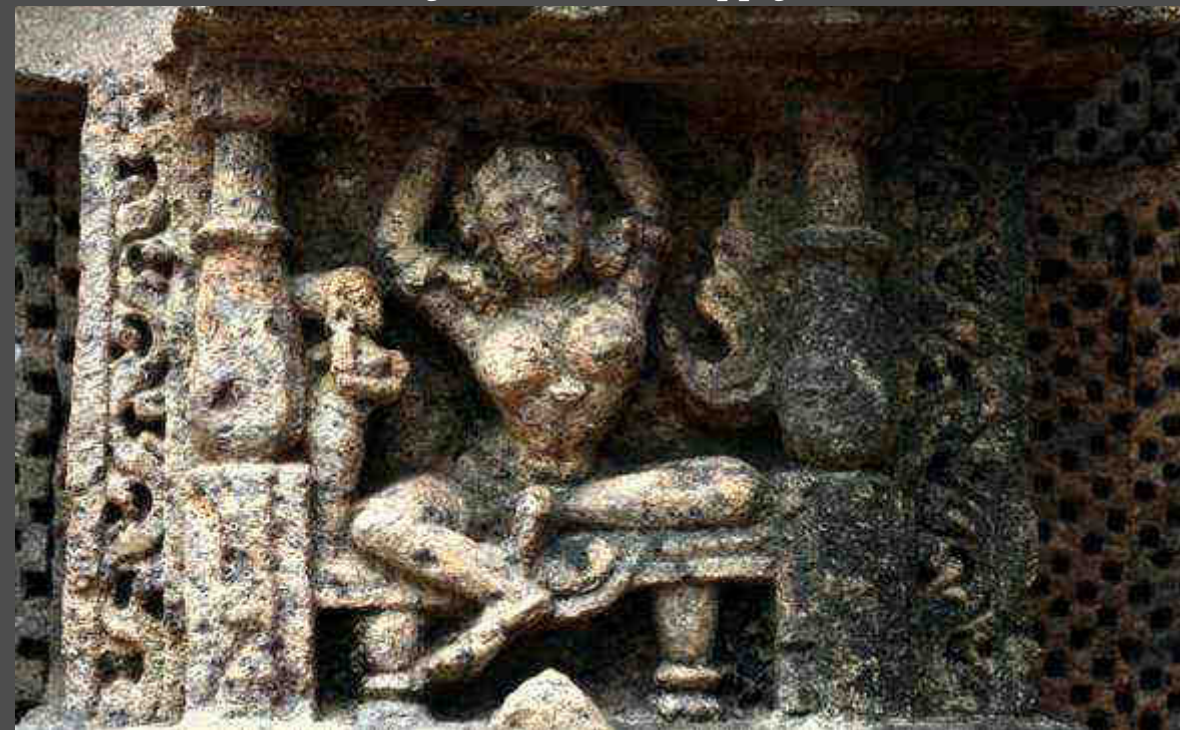
Alasakanya sitting with a flute.



*'Darpana' Alasakanya sitting posture.
Looking into mirror to apply vermillion.*



Alasakanya in sitting posture

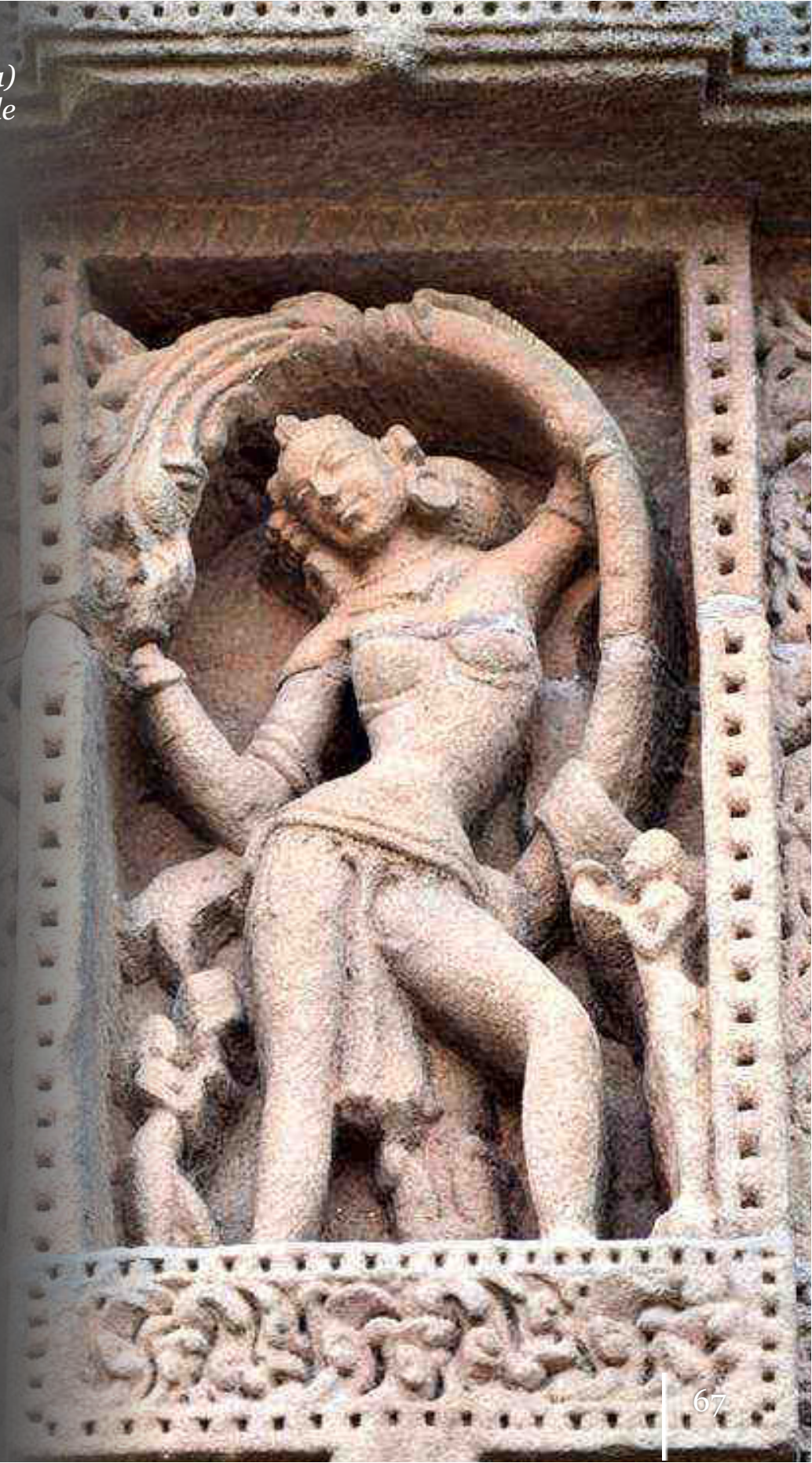


Alasakanya in sitting posture. Torso is shifted Archetypal hands.

Postures of 'Alasakanyas' :-

- (1) 'Alasa' :- In the position, called 'alasa' whether seated or standing in 'tribhanga', the 'kanya' is fully imbued with the languorous feelings, and not other wise occupied. The arms are typically held curved above her head, with hands joined together.
- (2) 'Torana' ;:- The 'Shilpa Prakash' states that 'tribhanga' be formed maintaining body weight on the right leg for this posture, while the left is decoratively placed behind the right. One hand held in 'Spandita mudra' is used to hold a doorframe, from which action, this name is derived.
- (3) 'Dalmalika' :- Holding or garlanding herself with a branch, this form is directly derived from the motif of the 'shalbhanjika', a common Buddhist image depicting a young woman holding the branches of a flowering tree, reminiscent of Buddha's birth, and of the ancient pastime of 'Udyana Krida'. She is also a continuation of the 'dohada' motif, associated with a beautiful maiden transferring life force into the base of a tree by placing her foot on its stem, impelling it to flower. The relationship between the 'Earth Mother' and the 'alasakanya' is clearly brought out in this manifestation.

*'Dalmalika' Alasakanya holding
a branch with crossed leg, Brahmeshwar Temple*



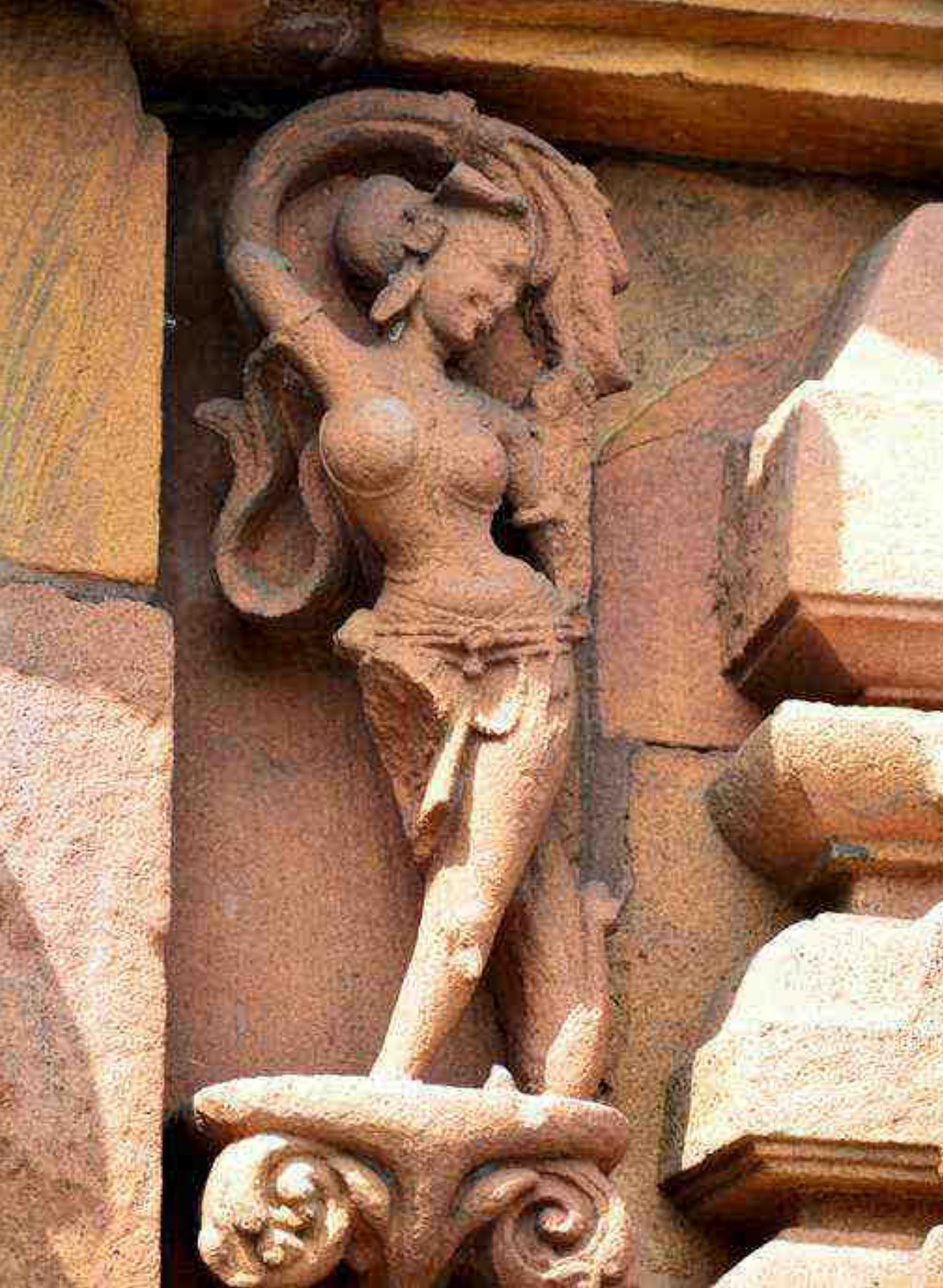


- (4) 'Mugdha' :- As 'mugdha', the 'kanya' is essentially a young, innocent girl one who has experienced love, yet does not fully know how to deal with her feelings. She is represented in an attitude of slight surprise with one hand in 'nagasirsa' held in front of her face under the chin.
- (5) 'Manini' :- Manini is a maiden who has been offended. Her face is always averted with a gaze looking downwards. She usually assumes a provocative, sculpturesque position, with one leg balancing body weight and the opposite arm protectively arched above her head.
- (6) 'Padmagandha' :- Here, the 'kanya' is rendered holding or smelling a Lotus, reminiscent of ancient festivals, where blossom - smelling was a ritual action. 'Vatsyayan's Kamasutra' (Ch IV Sutra 42) describes special games including eating Lotus stalks, plucking and collecting flowers.

The idea embodied in this form may be merely that of her enjoying the loveliness of the flower.

*Alasakanya in a (Dalmalika)
mood holding a branch
Brahmeshwar Temple*





'Dalmalika'
Alasakanya
Female dancer
holding a branch
Brahmeshwar
Temple



Sun Temple Konark

(13th Century AD)

Built by the Ganga King Narasimha deva. He celebrated his victory over the Muslim Afghan kings by building this architectural masterpiece, dedicating it to 'Surya' the 'Sun God', seen earlier having a close family connection to 'Shakti' and now popularly regarded as a manifestation of the cosmic preserver 'Vishnu'. 'Surya' at 'Konark' embodied 'Vishnu' as a pristine, warrior deity whose power extended beyond the frontiers of any Earthly kingdom.

The temple was conceived as a chariot on 24 wheels drawn by 7 horses. Apart from the 'Rekha deul' and 'Pidha deul' there is a free standing dancing hall, positioned axially as if to greet the arrival of the 'Sun God'.

Due to its 'two storied' 'Deuls', the temple had tremendous possibilities for rendering a wide range of figures.

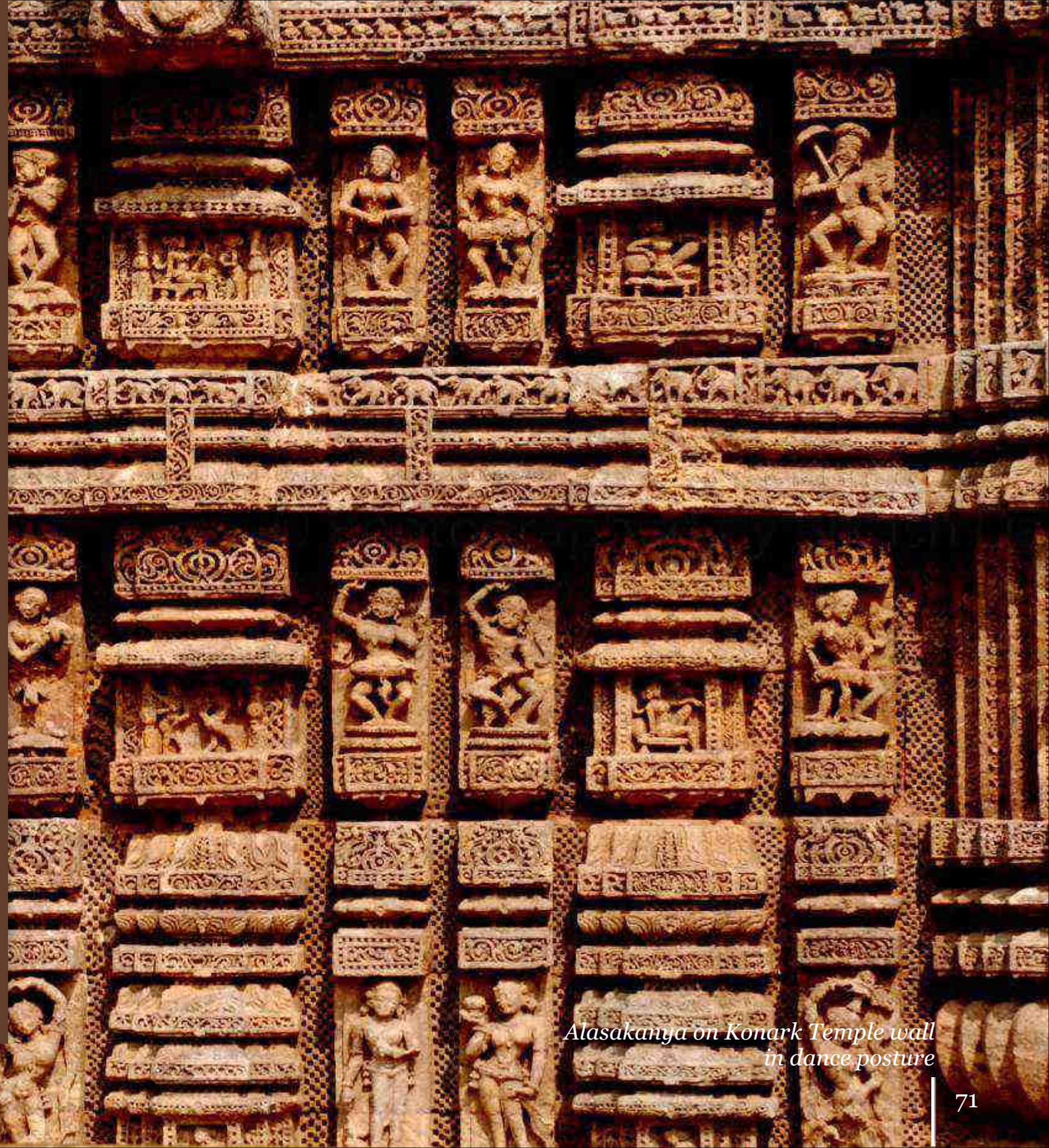


*Alasakanya in a Torso
shifted posture and hand in
a holding posture. Smile on face.
Head tilted slightly
Konark Temple*

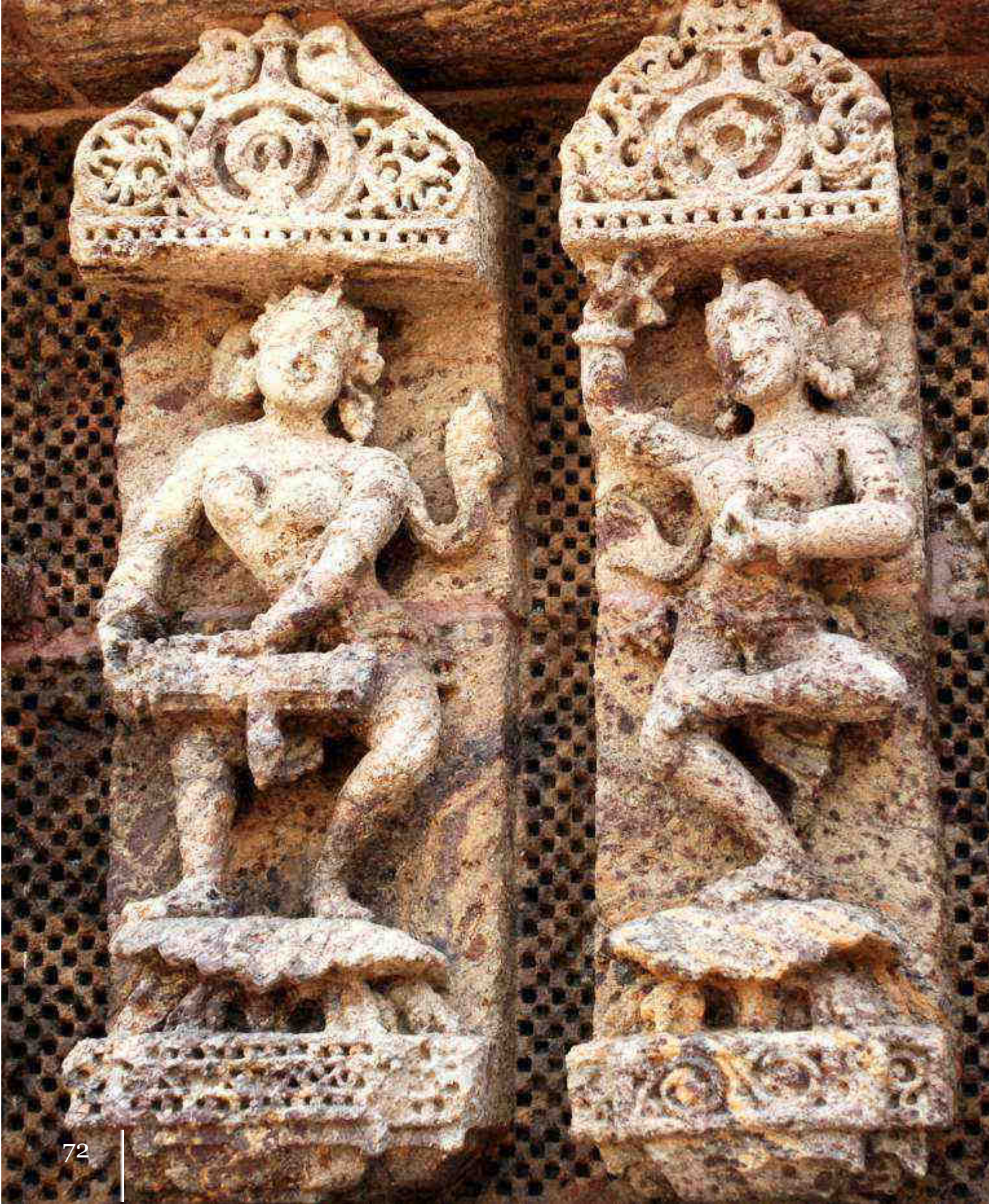
It was here at Konark that the ritual of music and dance was showcased in the most breath-taking way. Upon the walls and columns of the dance hall, dancers and musicians jostle for space and the feeling it conveys is of an orchestrated celebration that has been frozen in time. Dance imagery is also conspicuously seen on the upper mouldings of the Pidha Deul in the dancing forms of 'Bhairavas' and female musicians. There are even small images of musicians and dancers carved onto the pedestals of 'Surya Himself'.

When viewing such an array of sculptural friezes with all their variations in the placement of separate body parts, joining them together into dance sequences with 'Odissi's' curvilinear movements became a natural step.

The 'Alasakanya', so prolific at 'Konark', had evolved over 700 years. In each century she wore distinctive features of dress and ornament that testified to the changing fashions of her medieval world. At each stage she had acquired further refinement and greater prominence on the temple facade. In the 7th century, she appeared as a small ornamental motif. By the 10th century, when dance by women had become accepted as part of temple worship, the 'Alasakanya' images had distinct place in the decorative scheme of the temple and had acquired further visual prominence sculpted in high relief.



*Alasakanya on Konark Temple wall
in dance posture*

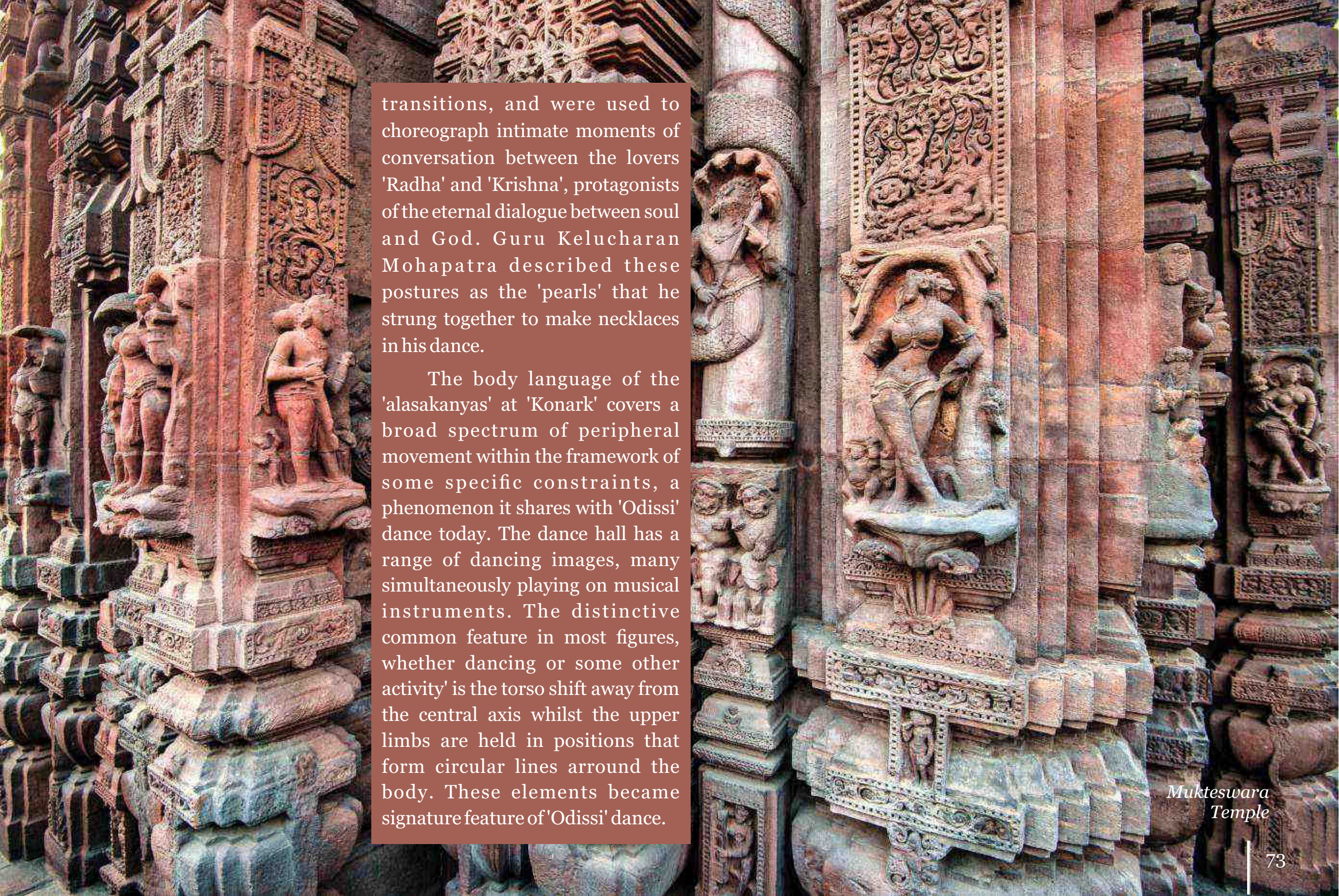


When the 'Sun Temple' at 'Konark' was conceived in the 13th century, the 'alasakanya' had already acquired full maturity, but it is here that her presence is over whelming. Her sheer numbness give an impression of a living dance in sculpture, and it is this that deeply impressed the minds of 'Odissi's' creators.

Images of the 'alasakanya' that were executed after the 10th century allowed a careful study of how the medieval artist positioned the torso vis-a-vis the hip, arms, head legs and feet, to evoke the particular flavour of languor-in-love, 'Shringaar bhava', that dominates the Odishan aesthetic tradition. These 'kanyas' are seen on temple walls next to the sinuous lines of 'nagas' and 'viralas', under lining not only the curvilinear lines of their bodies but also their tantric antecedents. This change in ornamentation of the female motif into a sensual 'alasakanya', which indicated the prominent presence of dance now in the cultural environment, was echoed through developments in the temple's architectural form.

When 'Odissi' was first created in the nineteen fifties and sixties, it's revered Guru's made much use of the 'alasakanya' imagery. Her varied postures were borrowed to build up a vocabulary for the dance form. Her seated positions especially lent themselves to slow

*Dancer with Pakhawaj and a Nartaki
with one foot raised dance Posture, Konark Temple*



transitions, and were used to choreograph intimate moments of conversation between the lovers 'Radha' and 'Krishna', protagonists of the eternal dialogue between soul and God. Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra described these postures as the 'pearls' that he strung together to make necklaces in his dance.

The body language of the 'alasakanyas' at 'Konark' covers a broad spectrum of peripheral movement within the framework of some specific constraints, a phenomenon it shares with 'Odissi' dance today. The dance hall has a range of dancing images, many simultaneously playing on musical instruments. The distinctive common feature in most figures, whether dancing or some other activity' is the torso shift away from the central axis whilst the upper limbs are held in positions that form circular lines around the body. These elements became signature feature of 'Odissi' dance.



‘Chouka’ Formation

The 'chouka' is formed by turning the feet outwards, whilst maintaining a distance of "the length of the dancers foot" as the interim distance between the heels.

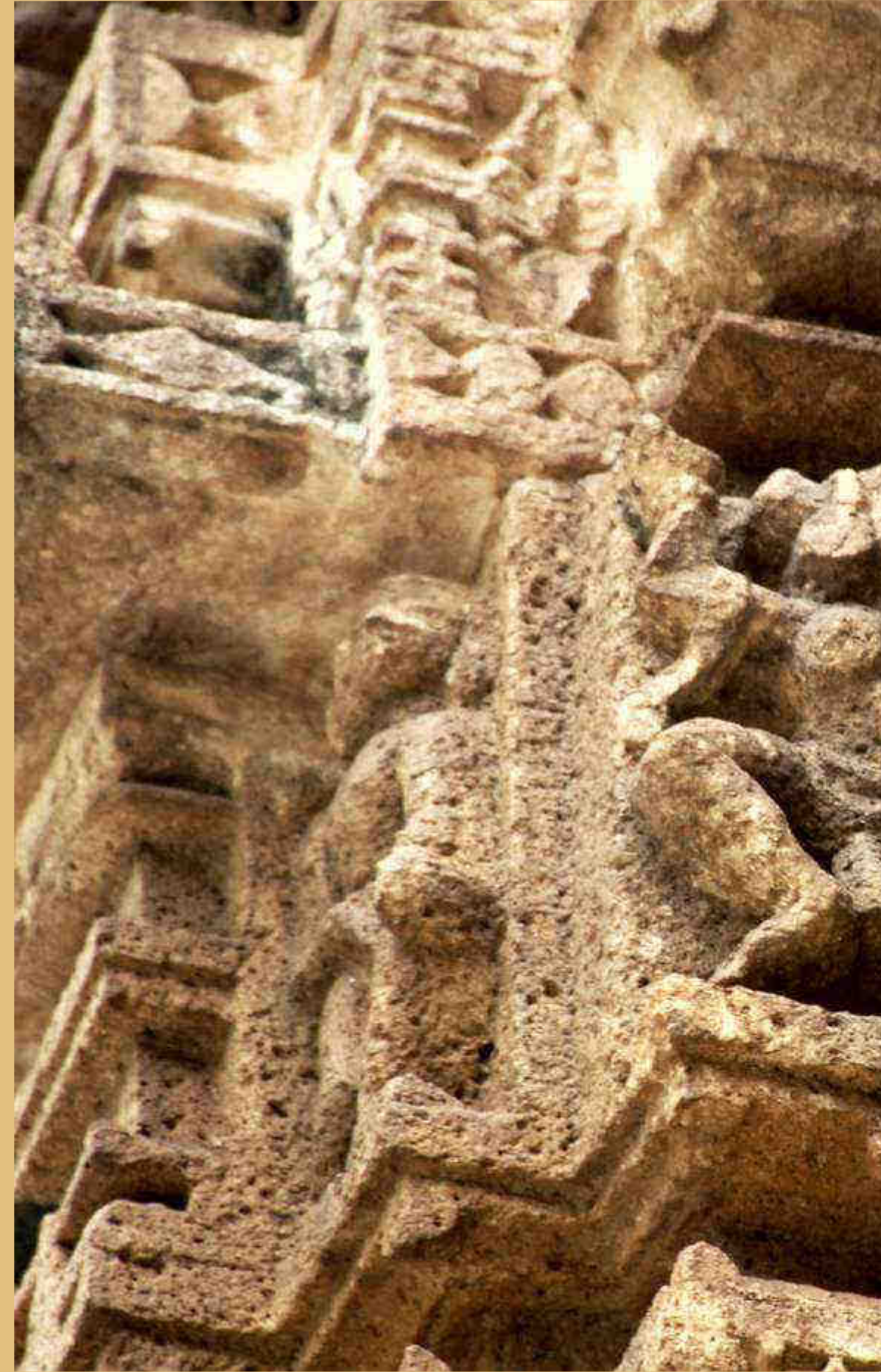
The arms are held up at shoulder height seemingly extending their length, elbows bent inwards making a 90° angle to the front plane of the body, and so emulating the conography of 'Lord Jagannath' and forming three sides of a square. This stance provides grounded strength and balance to the body.

In it's standard form 'chouka' , is a tightly resolved quadrangle, along the body's axis that is centred in the belly. It comprises of two opposing triangles. The body becomes the mythological hourglass-shaped 'Damaru' of 'Shiva' that released energy, causing creation in the Universe.

‘Mangalacharan’:- Invocatory item, with rhythmic syllables (Bols). The dance begins with floral offerings to 'Lord Jangannath', the presiding deity of Orissa, and salutations to 'Bhumi devi' in the manner of the 'Mahari'.

‘Pallavi’:- The visualisation of a musical composition of notes and rhythmic syllables set to a particular 'raga' emerged as the mainstay of a 'Odissi' recital.

‘Abhinaya’:- Part had a vast heritage of poetry by medieval poets like "Banamali..... "etc. full of expressions.





‘Batu’:- The item 'Batu', became a bone of contention among the gurus, some interpreting it etymologically as coming from 'Vadu' meaning bondage with reference to the 'Mahari' and others connecting it to 'Batuka Bhairava' cult with the item created with postures reminiscent of temple sculpture.

Kelucharan Mohapatra emphasises the non-use of the hip, all deflections of the upper body being dictated by the isolated torso or the "udvahita movement".

In the 'abhinaya', able assistance from Guru Mayadhar Raut, Pankaj charan, 'the Guru of Gurus' is famous for the delicacy of interpretative dance.

Stylistically, 'Odissi' revolves round the 'Tribhanga' as the central posture the head, torso and lower half of the body in deflection to the part above, creates the three bend figure, which along with the square half seated chauka that has the feet kept apart and the knees flexed side ways forms the core stylistic posture. The side ways movement of the isolated torso is a very special feature. Very lyrical when the dancer has the fluidity enabling the constant change of levels demanded in 'Odissi'. The graceful zig zag walk both forwards and backwards with one foot anchored while the other does an arch in the air to end with a crossed feet posture is very typical; for a dancer.

Bhoramdev Temple- ‘Chouka’ posture of Odissi dance.



KATHAK

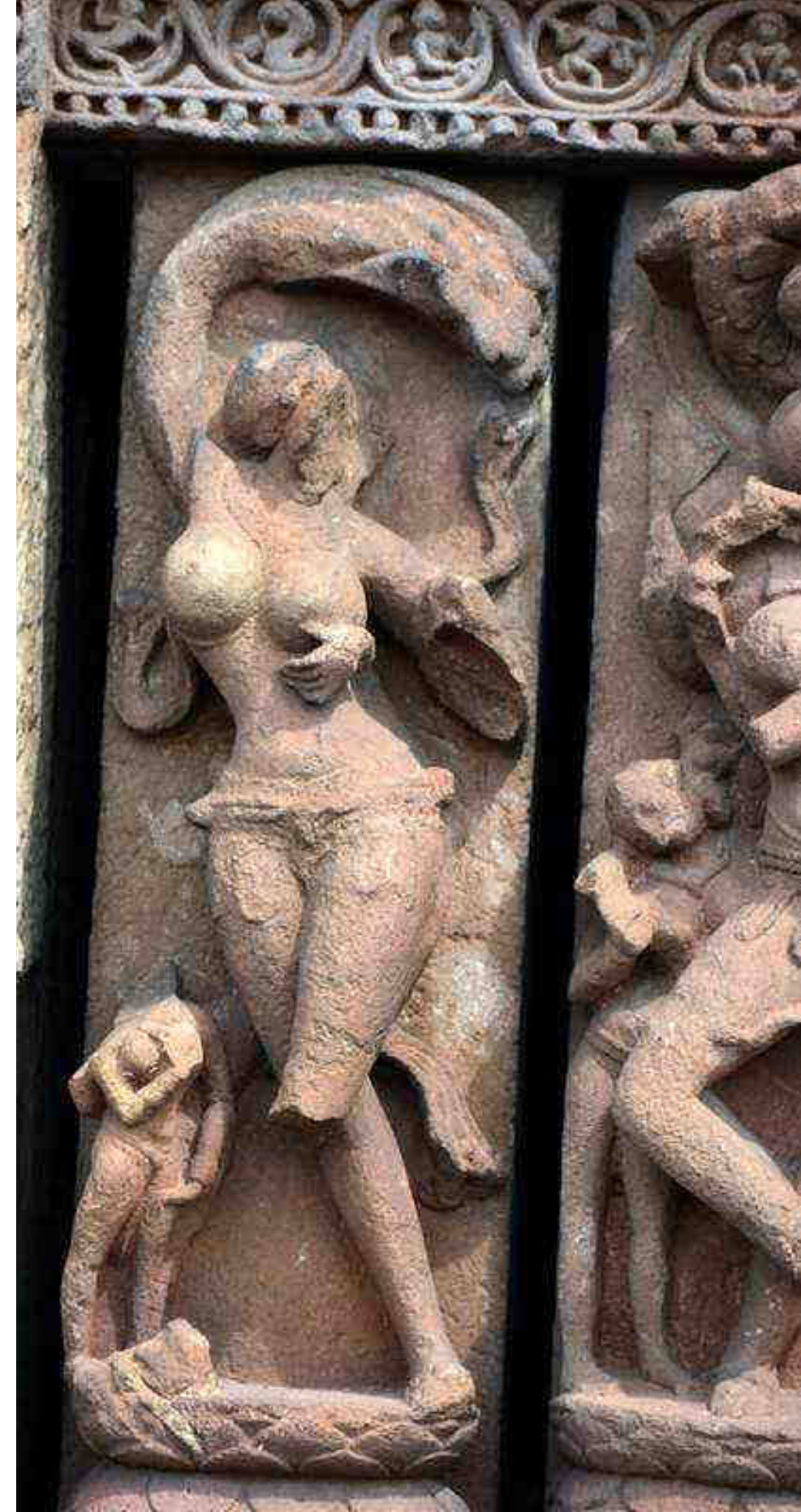
As the name suggests, 'Kathak' is a by-product of the art of story-telling in ancient India. In Sanskrit, a story is 'Katha' so storytellers came to be known as 'Kathaks' or 'Kathakar'. The 'Kathaks' are artists well versed in lore and human psychology. 'Sevadars' were the counterparts of the 'Kathaks' in the temples. They played in the 'pakhawaj' and sang in front of the Lord. This activity produced the great system of music now known as 'Dhrupad'. The music was accompanied by simple movements of ritual offering and recounting the glory of God, which, created a distinct style of performance imbued with beautiful devotion.

Relief from the monotony of constant wars and destruction came in the form of the poems of a resurgence of sentiments and devotion in the poems of such mystics as Kabir, Surdas, Mira, Tulsidas, Vidyapati and Cantatas etc. The beauty of their language and inner vision encouraged people at large to weave them into their daily duties and build an edifice of dance and music which came to be called 'Raslila'.

The 'Raslila' is a circular dance preformed by men and women swaying gracefully to the beats of the 'mridang' and the 'pakhawaj', to the melody of the 'Veena' and 'flute' played by none other than 'Krishna' himself. The circular dance goes on until mood and movement emerge from every 'limb' and 'the milk maids' and the multiported 'Krishna' become 'one'. It is this 'Raslila' which is symbolic of eternal play between the soul and god that has been the focal point of 'Kathak' in earlier times.

Historically in the reign of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Oudh (19th Century AD) 'Kathak' spreaded, contrary to the strict Islamic tradition. The Nawab provided a shining

*Alasakanya in a dance posture
appreciating 'nature', Brahmeshwar Temple*





example of tolerance, while even dressing as 'Krishna' and dancing to the songs of 'Krishna', written by himself in the company of court dancers dressed as 'milk maids'. The 'Lucknow gharana' of 'Kathak' was thus established with the involvement of the royal patron. He brought Thakur prasad whose two sons, Binda Din and Kalka Prasad, succeeded him at the court. Kalka prasad's forte was his mastery of rhythm, where as Binda Din was a composer of merit, excelling in 'thumris', 'dadras' and 'ghazals'.

Thus, the 'Lucknow gharana' of 'Kathak' acquired its pleasing synthesis of rhythm and grace.

There are three other distinct schools of 'Kathak' namely Jaipur, Benaras and Raigarh. Jai Lal and Sunder Prasad left an indelible stamp on the rhythmic aspect of 'Kathak'. The 'Benaras gharana' came into prominence with Sukhder Maharaj. Raigarh school flourished with royal patronage. The 'pakhawaj', 'table', the 'nakra' and the 'manjira' raise dance to heights. There is also a 'vocalist' and a 'cering' player. The recital proper begins with an invocation to 'Ganesha' as is traditional among other dance. styles also. This may be a simple sloka or song in Hindustani or sanskrit, danced with simple gestures. After the obeisance to God, comes the salutation to the audience with an 'aamad'(entry) and 'salaami'. The dancer establishes the atmosphere with slow and graceful movements signifying salutation, either as a 'pranam' in the Hindu way, or as a 'salaam' in the Islamic way. The 'aamad' is the act of entering the stage formally, after which follows the 'thaat'-a static pose showing Krishna as the 'natanagar'.

*Alasakanya in a ritualistic mood
Brahmeshwar Temple*



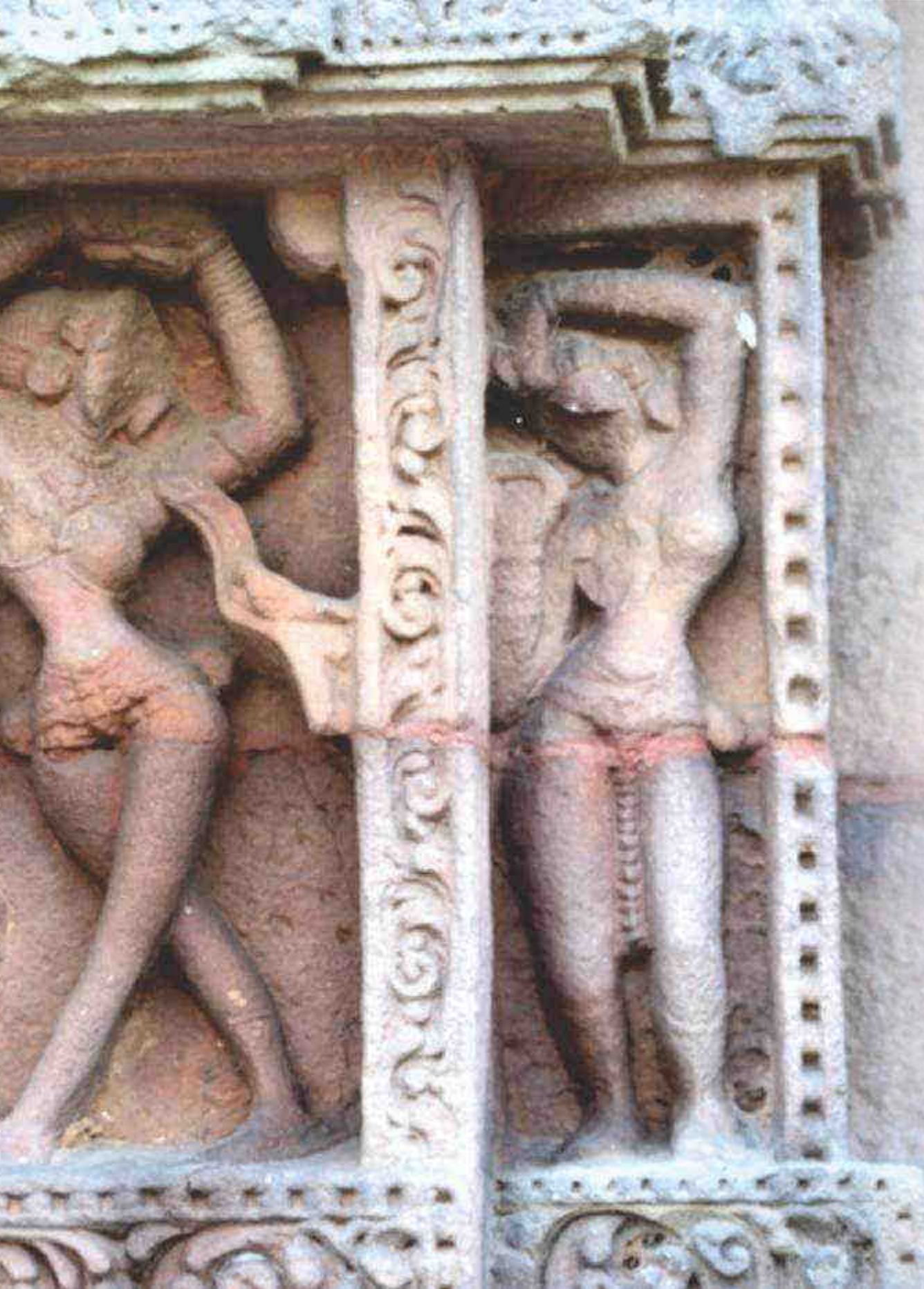
The right hand is extended vertically above the head, signifying the peacock feather, the insignia of 'krishna'. The left hand or arm is extended horizontally to the left, signifying his embracing of 'Radha', his beloved. The subtle movements of the wrist, the amorous glances of the eyes, the graceful horizontal gliding of the neck, the fluttering of the fingers and eyebrows help to invoke an atmosphere reminiscent of the days when emperors and courtiers sat around, in their glittering jewels and brocades, casting admiring glances at the 'bouri' the heavenly dancer who is the reward for various followers of Islam.

Then the dancer is ready to take up the introductory elements, like the 'gat'. This word comes from the Sanskrit root 'gam-ga-chhati', meaning 'to go', 'to move'. Thus the 'gat' is a phrase that denotes locomotion, and is representative of themes and characters easily recognisable by the way the dancer moves forward, takes a 'palta' (changing direction) slides from one character to another, glide in 'gat-nikas' (steps rhythmically backwards) characterising the essential features of the item.

In the episode of 'Kaliya Damana' (victory over 'Kaliya', the Cobra King) the dancer would perhaps begin the 'gat-bhara' by showing 'Krishna' in his characteristic pose of playing the 'flute'. River Yamuna is then shown with rippling hand movements, the cows are shown

*Alasakanya with crossed legs with
other two Alasakanya in various dance postures
Brahmeshwar Temple*





grazing and other cowherds playing around. The dancer shows with her hand gestures a cow drinking water and falling dead, The eyes move rapidly in horror to show a similar fate befalling all the characters except 'Krishna', who has climbed a tree to survey the river before jumping into the river. The dancer then shows the battle between 'Krishna' and the poisonous snake, Kaliya.

After a few symbolic postures and steps, where the accompanying music also reaches a crescendo, 'Krishna' is shown dancing triumphantly on the hood of the Cobra. The 'gat-nikas' holds the posture of triumphant 'Krishna' while treading lightly, covering the stage backwards and arriving at the 'sam' (the defining beat of a time-cycle) perfectly on time.

All along the 'Sarangi' player plays a melodious composition set to a particular time-cycle which is called 'lehar'. It accompanies this segment of the recital where it fulfils the need of the dancer to ensure alternate and quick-change portrayals. The time is ripe for a leisurely delineation of 'bhava' (mood) that could cover such popular types of musical compositions like 'dadra', 'thumri', 'ghazal' and 'bhajan'. The tempo of the recital is slow enough now to allow detailed rendering.

'Kathak' does not use a number of hand gestures, as do 'Bharata natyam' and 'Odissi'. It uses the entire body to convey the import of the song. Here after the dancer tackles passages

of pure dance with gusto entering with the percussionists in to frequent, 'beats', beginning with 'tukras' which are pieces of 'pure dance' set to complex rhythmic permutations within the given time cycle. The dance progresses apace with the introduction of 'parans' and 'paramelus' where as the 'tukras' are accompanied by the 'tabla'. The 'paramelus' interweave an intricate pattern of rhythms played on one or on all the percussion instruments together.

Alternately the unique syllables of these 'tabla, pakhawaj', the 'nakras' (percussion drums of different sizes and tones) are combined in one rhythmic passage, thus creating a 'paramelu' ('para'-meaning-'different', 'melu' means 'union'). As can be imagined, these pieces offer a great variety and scope to the dancer and the percussionists. Since these are danced at great speed, an absolute understanding of the 'talas'(time-cycle) and their implications are essential. A perfect command over the limbs and their velocity while in fast action is another requirement also-a body that is perfectly balanced even at the end of a demanding series of pirouettes. All this time the 'lehar' plays unerringly at a steady pace on the 'sarangi' providing anchor to the fast moving dancer.

The dancer may do this at the end of just a couple of rounds of the time cycle or go on weaving complex rhythmic patterns for several more rounds until her mental calculations propel her towards the vortex. If she calculates correctly, she would land on the 'sam' as an arrow hits the bulls' eye. If her mind wavers, she could land on a wrong beat.

The concept of 'Vishranti' (repose is important and applicable to all preforming arts in India, because the natural law of physical dynamics dictates that there will be an ebb after the tide-a point of stillness.

*Alasakanyas in different moods.
Middle in Naginisirsika
Brahmeshwar Temple*



The tempo of the programme increases at every stage, particularly now with the eddying and swirling of the dance called 'tatkar'. These are the climatic moments with the dancer manipulating the pace of footwork, weaving in and out of the complexities luring the drummer on to false trails, engaging him in a quick-silver bout of extempore responses, pithing her wits against his in keeping up the cadences of variegated footwork, controlling the sound of ankle bells of which 150 are worn on the left foot and 150 on the right, The dancer controls the sound of ankle bells, bringing it to an ever decreasing level and finally controlling the muscles and nerves to an extent that only one tinkling bell is heard. In a trifle, the sound increases gradually to its original pitch and joins the drummer in a vigorous display of final frenzy. The recital is brought to an end, and with a triumphant look, the dancer makes her exit.

Two kinds of costumes, have gained currency among female Kathak dancers. One is the hip to ankle-long, full pleated skirt, A short blouse of matching material and colour adorns the torso and a long scarf is tucked in one end at the waist in the style of Hindu women of North India. The ornament are usually based on old designs and studded with semiprecious or precious stones. The other costume represent Islamic influence. A tight pyjamas usually of a bright colour, worn under a high necked dress, called 'angrakha' in which the bodice is tight, outlining the contours, while the lower half swings out in full gathers. Kathak dancers can draw material freely upon the vast store house of Hindu and Urdu literature.



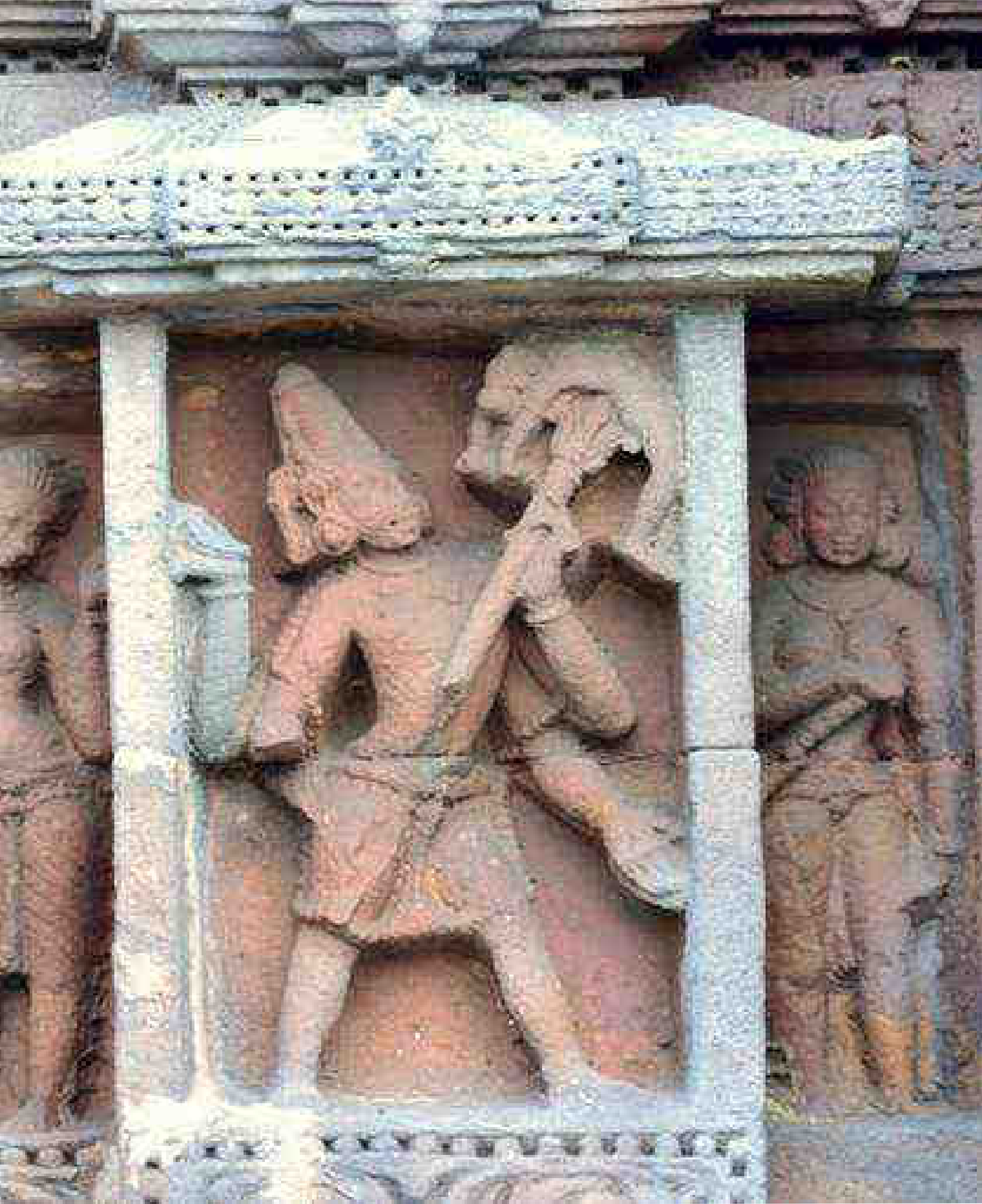
KATHAKALI

The vanguard consist of percussionists, one playing on the 'chenda', barrelshaped vertical drum, emitting ear splitting sounds another playing on the 'mardalam', the horizontal drum Then comes another beating of the basic time cycle on a pair of large 'cymbals'. this is the prologue to the play proper which goes on for the entire night with the 'drums' and 'cymbals' reaching a crescendo, a portable cloth curtain is brought in and held by two men dressed like musicians in typical Kerala fashions, bare bodied with a "mundu" a single piece of fine cotton wrapped around the waist. This curtain is the beginning of the 'Lila' the play that is to unfold.

The curtain has a symbolic significance it befoogs our vision and needs to be removed, in reality has to be glimpsed. The main character of the first scenes of a particular play also walks in with the curtain and begins behind it his ritualistic worship of the stage and instruments and offers salutations to the gods. All the while the music carries on with the curtain-bearers non-chalantly holding the lassels end...suddenly a hand, with long silver tipped nails appears, and the fingers curl and uncurl, now grabbing the curtain, now releasing it. The hand disappears and a blood-curdling shriek is heard. A magnificent, multi tiered crown comes into view, casting a spell over the now agitated audience.

The crown sways, two hands grab the edge of the screen, release it violently, making the curtain bearers





almost fall. The crown disappears from view. High pitched drumming follows the apparently energetic back screen dancing, bringing it to a point where the eyes, like burning coals, heavily out lined by kohl, mesmerise the audience.

The powerful glance shift jerkily in all directions, challenging, mocking, inviting. Again the eyes with the crown disappear. Thus it goes on. For a time the character plays hide and seek, revealing and yet not revealing and aided by constant drumming, creating an almost unbearable tension until, with a demonic shriek and a furious leap, the curtain is dropped to show the full glory of this larger-than-life-character. It is a world of gods and demons, of saintly beings and sinners, of the absolute belief that good triumphs over evil. The performance of 'Kathakali' now begins.

The ancient sanskrit theatre, now called 'Kudiyattam', exists only in Kerala. It is said that the early inhabitants of the regions worshipped nature as deities, especially 'snake'. 'Snake dance festivals' were regularly organized. The other diety worshipped from the earliest days was 'Mother' (Goddess 'Bhagwati'). Her victory over evil forces was the theme then also, and the enactment of battles between good and evil brought into vogue fantastic head gears and elaborate costume.

With the resettlement of the social strata and due to Dravidian- Aryan mingling, the caste system



took root, giving prominence to the Brahmins (priests) and Kshatriya (Warriors) at the top. The latter were known as Nairo who fought, ruled and kept order. The collaboration between the Brahmins and Kshatriyas was never before so harmonious. They intermarried and protected each other's rights. To facilitate their war-going fitness, the Nairos indulged in long hours at the kalan (gymnasium), learning to wield weapons, thus attuning the body and mind to extreme hardships and achieving steel like suppleness. Oils laced with herbs, different combinations for different seasons, were rubbed during long sessions of massage for which special masseurs were trained. The martial training in Kerala included exercises that added grace and elegance to deportment.

Steps and stances used for attacking parrying, side stepping and defending acquired the form of sequences that could be used later in dance. Some of these 'martial dances' have remained to-this day and are performed under the name of 'Kalari payattu'. Special exercises and massages play a big role in the development of the 'Kathakali' dance technique.

The ruler of Calicut, the Zamoria, was so influenced by the 'Gita Govinda' of Jaidev that he wrote his own version 'Krishna pattu' in Sanskrit. Dance and music were added to it and it became 'Krishnattam'. All the important 'Krishna' episodes were woven into the play which was more like an opera than dance. Some of the characters were given masks and special make-up to identify as being extraordinary or evil. The performance of 'krishnattam' acquired almost a religious sanctity and sanction. Even today it is performed at the

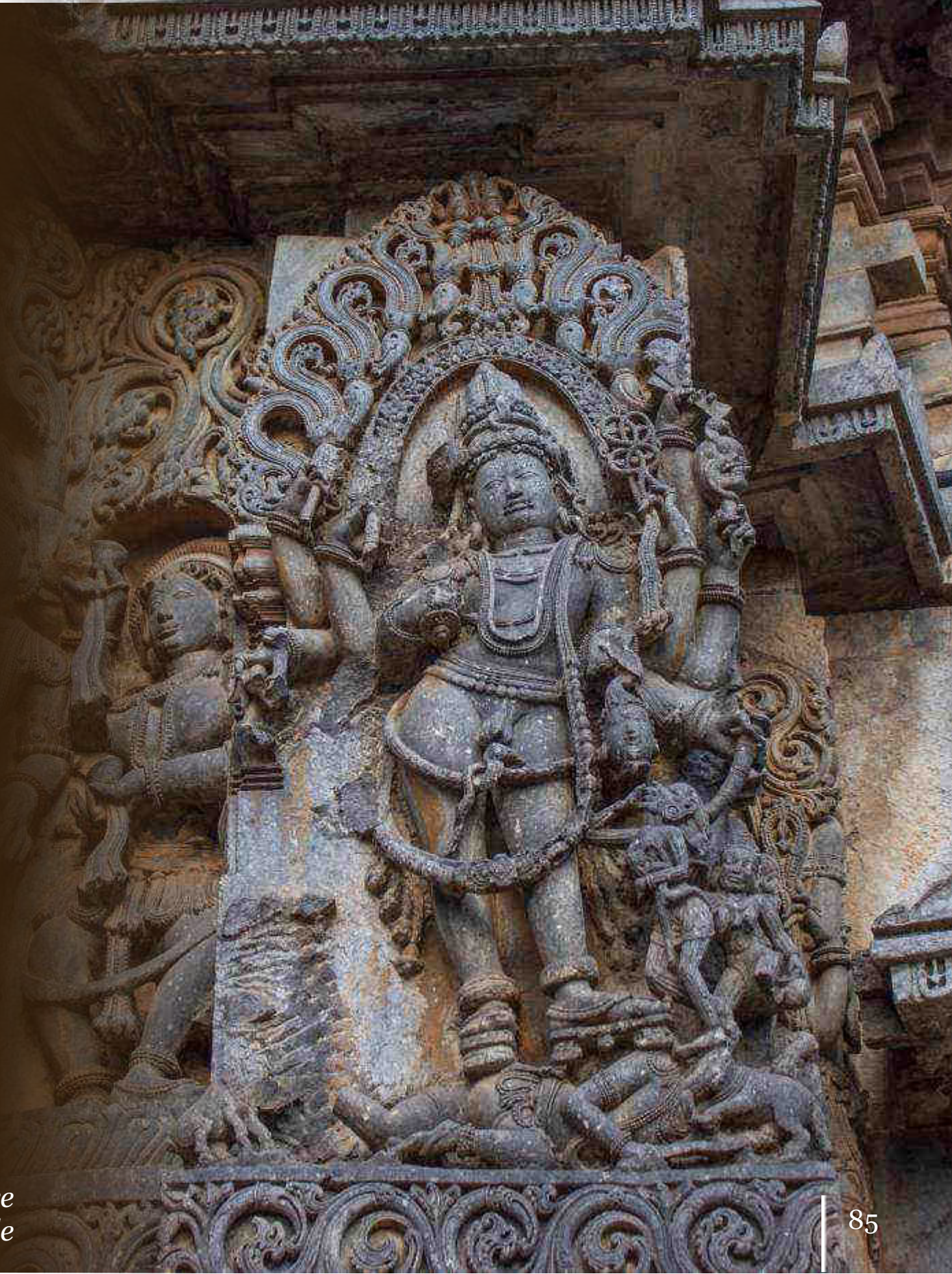
'Krishna temple' at Guruvayur. Its fame spread far and wide resulting in an invitation by the Raja of Kattarakara to perform in the temple of his Kingdom. He was refused and was even told that such an exposure would be misguided as the subtleties of the opera would go unnoticed. This insult resulted in the creation of 'Ramanattam'. The Raja, enlisted the help of his friend, the Raja of kottayam created his own troupe which performed the story of 'Rama', equally proficiently.

The present form of 'Kathakali' largely derives from these two predecessors. The use of 'drums' and 'vocal singing' was introduced in 'Krishnattam' because the stories had to be recited and enunciated clearly. In 'Ramanattam', the use of 'Chenda', the barrel shaped vertical drum, added volume and tonal variations which enriched the scope of characterization. Singing attained more prominence with the two singers rushing to match the long duration of the eight night performance. The masks gave way to elaborate make-up and headgear clearly defined into different types.

The legend has it that the Raja of Kottayam saw 'Lord Vishnu' emerging from the 'Milky Ocean' in a dream. Just as his vision took in the details of the Lord's beauty magnificence and attributes, the dream ended, leaving behind the memory of the billowing waves after which he fashioned the voluminous skirts of his dancers. Such a legend must be given credence to account for the unexpected sight of many yards of cloths swirling around.

Continued royal patronage fed the channels, enriching the twin streams and making it almost a privileged duty to patronise, propagate and present these dance dramas.

*Shiva standing in Dance posture
Helebidu Temple*





'Krishnattam' in particular, by being danced in temple at Guruvayur, led the way to the later exposure of 'kathakali' to all people.

The author of the first dance dramas, written specially for enactment was the scholarly Raja of Kottayam. The theme chosen were from 'Mahabharata'. Subsequently the Maharaja of Travancore and Vidvan Koyil Thampuran enriched the repertoire. In the contemporary times two names stand out for their contribution to the literary richness. They are Unnayi Warrier and Irayimman Thampi. It is believed there are around 150 works written for Kathakali out of which about 100 are published for ready reference. Out of these, about 40 form the repertoire of Kathakali today. But according to experts only 20 of these are regular features. Most of the themes for these dance dramas are derived from 'Devi Bhagavatham' the 'Mahabharata', the 'Ramayana' and the 'Bhagvat Purana'. So the themes are well known, easily understood and capable of being appreciated by connoisseurs and commoners.

Highly stylized vocabulary of hand gesture and eye movements characterize this dance theatre. Specialised make-up in vivid colours and designs on the face distinguish each character. A god or a hero would have a green base as the colour of the face while a royal character with violent temperament would have red. The red would be used for antigods, kings like 'Ravana' who challenge the good and just prince 'Rama' to battle. Black paint is used as background colour in face for those who live in forests, on mountains or are different from the generally accepted society, yellow make up is used for females and mendicants, sages and saintly characters.

Bhoramdev Temple wall with dance sculpture.



MANIPURI

The epic 'Mahabharata' mentions Manipur, in the context of the valiant hero Arjuna's incognito visit and his subsequent marriage to princess Chitrangada. The epic also mentions the metamorphosis of the princess from a warrior-like male personality into a soft, feminine woman learning the arts of dancing and music to win Arjuna's love. Nature-worship lies at the root of Manipur's traditional dances, recognising the life-giving power of the cosmos and paying homage to the symbols of that power. The ancient rituals are performed through dancing and singing and divining the mood of powers to be which are propitiated by the priest called Maiba. While the male priest, Maiba, involves himself in preparation and performance of the elaborate and lengthy rituals, the Maiba, comprising both the female and the male also from priestly families, translates the creation of myths through dance and songs. Then the body moves in figures of eight in a continuum flow of energy in many different patterns in space. The footfalls are petal soft, the hands open and close with Lotus movements and the fingers flutter like petals. Supple wrists play a very important role in Manipuri's *lasya* mode, the graceful feminine form.

Clad in a hand woven colourful 'phenek' closely wrapped at the waist, somewhat like the 'lungi' and a tight blouse and gossamer white scarf wrapped around the torso, the Maiba woman recreates the process of creation of the world in which the Earth and sky, the Sun and the Moon, the clouds and thunder, the rock and tree, the fruit and flower and ancestors-everything is offered for worship as being representative agents of the divine Nature.



'Snake' worship has an important place in rituals and festivals and in dance choreography. Snakes separately or intertoned are depicted in hundreds of different patterns called 'pafal' and the 'mandala'. Even processions and groups of priests, dancers, musicians and devotees move in 'pafal's' geometric patterns. The songs are accompanied by playing on 'pena', a small stringed instrument. In AD 1764, king Bhagyachandra of Manipur had a dream in which 'Krishna' appeared and asked that his idol should be worshipped. The king forgot to fulfill his promise. One day a Naga tribesman came to the king and reminded him about the promised idol. A repentant king immediately ordered a beautiful idol to be carved out from the trunk of a Jackfruit tree. A beautiful idol was carved out from the trunk of a jackfruit tree and installed it with pomp and ceremony in the 'Sri Govindji' temple. Thus began the second phase of 'Manipuri' culture when the cult of 'Vishnu-Krishna' was introduced. This particular sect follows the Gaudiya Vaishnavism where 'Krishna' is worshipped with his beloved 'Radha', who was a married woman according to popular legend. At another level, Radha is understood to represent 'Krishna's' divine energies without which he would be powerless. It is also balancing of 'yin and yang' male and female elements of creation, where any imbalance would result in chaos and destruction.

'Govinda' is one of the many names of 'Krishna', 'Vishnu'. 'Govinda' literally means one 'who is light', knows the nature of light and is illumined by the knowledge of enlightenment. The king designed 'Sri Govindji' outfits and jewellery himself from whatever he remembered of his vision of 'Krishna' in the dream. He also asked his favourite daughter princess Bimbavati

Manjari, to enact the role of 'Radha' in the first choreography of 'Maha Raas' in 'Manipuri' tradition and which he offered to 'Sri Govindji' in the temple.

Four more varieties of 'ras' dance choreographies emerged there after-'Vasant Ras' danced at spring time, 'Kunja Ras' where 'Krishna', Radha and her friends (Sakhis) participate, 'Gopa Ras' in which episodes from 'Krishna's' childhood including his friendship with the innocent cowherds of Vraja are enacted, and 'Nitya Ras' which may be performed on any occasion, on any day. There is a known system and order in which these are to be performed.

The two elements of masculine and feminine modes of dancing are etched in the 'Manipuri' technique. For example, in the masculine 'tandava' mode the male dancer moves in spirals in space or on knees on the ground. The male dancer has many occasions to lift the leg high by lifting the knee. The female dancer in the 'lasya mode, does not have this facility. Her 'phenek' encasing her legs allows her to only slightly bend the knees in an 'abhang' (slight flexion of knee) posture. A special composition which spells out the grammar and technique of Manipuri dance is called 'bhangi pareng', which consists of a series of movements in both male and female modes. It is like a dictionary of 'Manipuri' dance technique from which teachers and choreographers draw out the material they need even today.

The costume for 'ras' is different from that of the Lai Haraoba festival. Here 'Krishna' is usually danced by a young agile boy, not older than 12yrs of age. The men wear 'dhoti' (unstitched) cloth tightly wrapped around each leg separately with the remaining cloth pleated like a folded fan in the front.





'Krishna' always wears a yellow 'dhoti' and jewellery of gold, beads, sequins, and peacock feathers. The women wear 'polloi', box like skirts in bright greens and reds on which silver and gold sequins are stitched. The lower half of this skirt is rendered stiff with wires so that it does not swirl. Another shorter skirt in white tissue and bordered with mirrors and sequins is worn atop the box skirt in curling folds. A tight, velvet sequin worked bodice, a white tissue scarf, draped over a cone on the head and many ornaments and belts create a dazzling effect.

The third element is the 'nata sakeertana' which literally means 'singing praise through dance and music. This is where the drum dancers who leap, swirl and rotate with unimaginable dexterity while producing complex rhythms, rhythmic patterns on the 'mardal' (drum made of baked mud) are seen almost at every festival and event in India and abroad. Clad in simple white muslim 'dhotis' and white turbans, they show breath taking skill and virtuosity in managing the large drum slung from their lean but muscular shoulder along with choreographed walks and pirouettes in air and on the floor. This is called 'pung-cholom' (playing on the mardal drum called 'pung' in Manipur), There are also 'manjira' (Cymbals) and 'kartal' (palms of hands) with soft movements. 'Pung cholom' is always performed by male dancers while the other two include female dancers.

Dance posture with crossed legs, Haranhali Temple

The fourth element of 'Manipuri' dance technique is derived from the martial arts, 'Thang-ta' Techniques of attack, parry, re-group etc are instilled in the menfolk of Manipur who demonstrate excellent suppleness, agility and manoeuvres with real sword, lance, mace, stick, dagger and whatever else that can be used in warfare. These men are also excellent horsemen. The dance derives many movements from observing such manoeuvres.

The textual material for 'Manipuri' dance is taken from the 'Gita Govinda', 'Anand Vrindavan' 'champoo', 'Govind Sangeet Leela-mritam' and other Vaishnavite works. The 'Laittaraoba' songs use the ancient language of Meitei people. Composition preserved through oral traditions too are an integral part of pool material used for 'Manipuri' dance.



KUCHIPUDI

A great devotee of 'Vishnu', Siddhiendra Yogi had a dream in which he witnessed the enchanting vision of 'Lord Krishna' with his two favourite consorts, 'Rukmini' and 'Satybhama'. The dream unfolded the song of the 'parijata' the heavenly tree, which was coveted by both the wise and stately 'Rukmini' and the beautiful 'Satybhama'. Following an altercation inspired by Sage 'Narada'. 'Krishna' sought to placate his queens by setting off heaven wards to obtain the tree for his palace.

Over come with joy and devotion, Siddhendra Yogi began a search for dancers and actors who would enact this play of his dream. He found suitable young men among the Brahmin families of 'Kuchelapuram'. It was the enactment of his dream-vision on stage that pleased the Nawab of Golconda. Since then, every Brahmin family of the village ritually offers at least one male member to be trained as an actor dancer. The name of the village changed to 'Kuchipudi' as time passed and its dance-drama also acquired this name. Today it has retained the name and form, with its earthy flavour and seductive body language.

The families initiated into this art were given a thorough training in various aspects of 'Natya shastra'. A thorough training in dance, singing speech, rhetoric, Sanskrit and Telugu poetry was required before the dancer was allowed on the stage even in a small role. The technique of 'Kuchipudi' is 'natya' which include the twin arts of dance and music besides acting.

The acting is of two kinds- one where the "sutradhar" (narrator) dialogues with the characters, using speech as an instrument of narration, so the accompanying gestures and expressions are direct and simple. The other kind of acting involves the dancer-actors performing on music using the

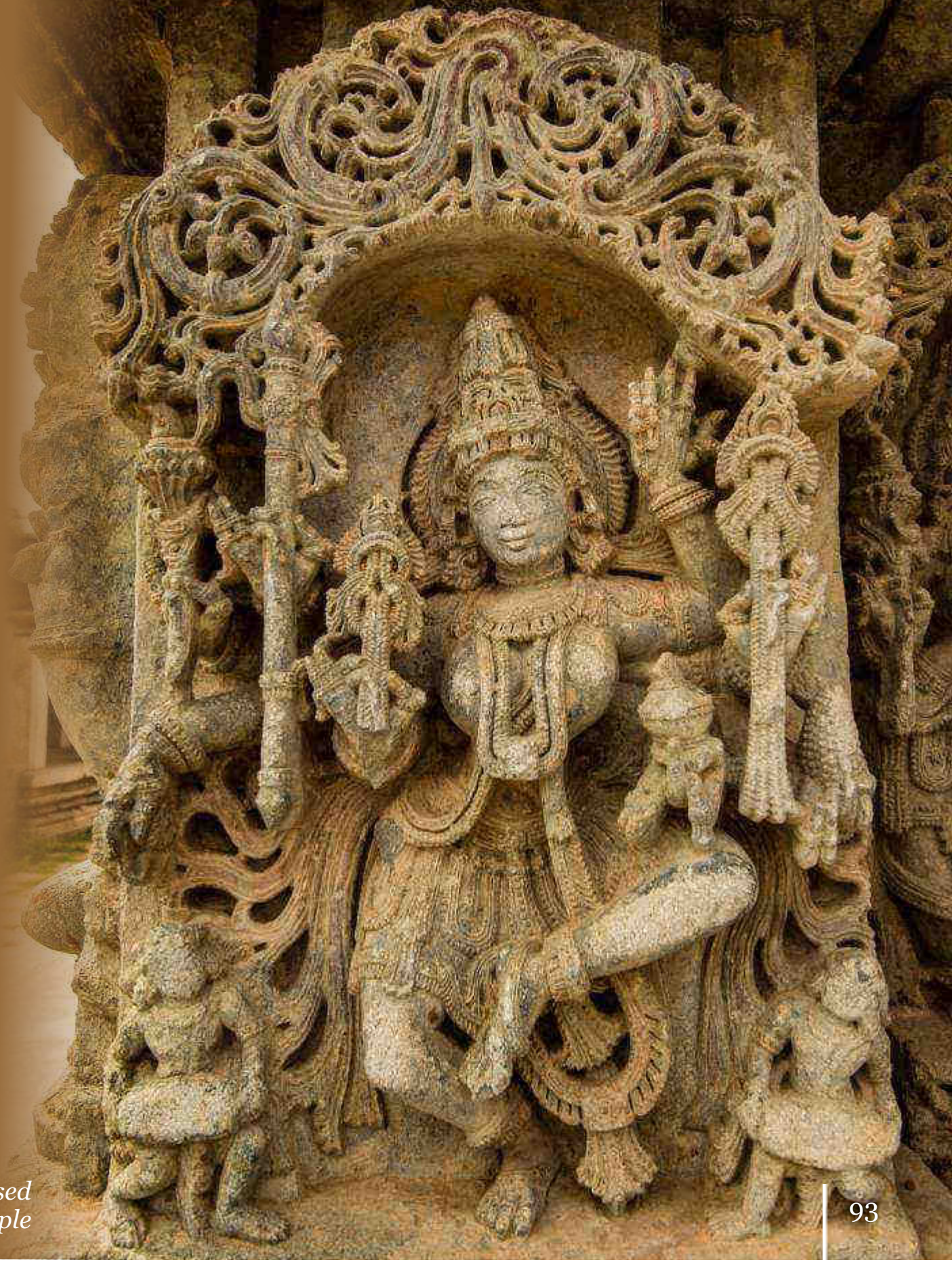
*Alasakanyas
Brahmesvara Temple*

prescribed hand gestures, facial expressions and footwork.

The important differences in the styles of presentation of a particular theme, event or episode are of two modes, one in "Natya dharmi" and the other is 'Lok-dharmi'. The first interpretes the theme purely with the help of systematized and codified gestures, stances and expressions. The second takes recourse to popular devices like theatrical movements, expressions and realistic costumes, make-up and bearing. For example, in the 'Natya dharmi' presentation, the demon 'Ravana' is depicted with hand gestures, showing the number 10 (for symbolically showing intellect and power, superior to a single person), one hand in 'shakatasya' held near the face (denoting fangs) and the other hand tracing the round outline of the face, 'allapadma' (gestures) to denote heads, thus completing the depiction of the 10 headed demon. In the 'Lokdharmi' representation, these and other such characteristics of 'Ravana' are used wherever the context allow, but the character of 'Ravana' is firmly fixed by planting a huge crown and nine, painted heads on the shoulder of the dancer who continues being 'Ravana' rather than characterising him.

The flow of the narrative element in 'Kuchipudi' is punctuated pieces of pure dance, performed to the accompaniment of 'Shollu kattu' of short or long duration, depending on the situation and character. At first glance, the pure dance in 'Kuchipudi' might appear very similar to 'Bharatnatyam', but on closer examination one notices the typical thrusts, extension dancing on toes and sequences that begin just after the beat, and which are typical of 'Kuchipudi'. Also the body is allowed to sway more languorously and

*Devi with one foot raised
Javagal Temple*





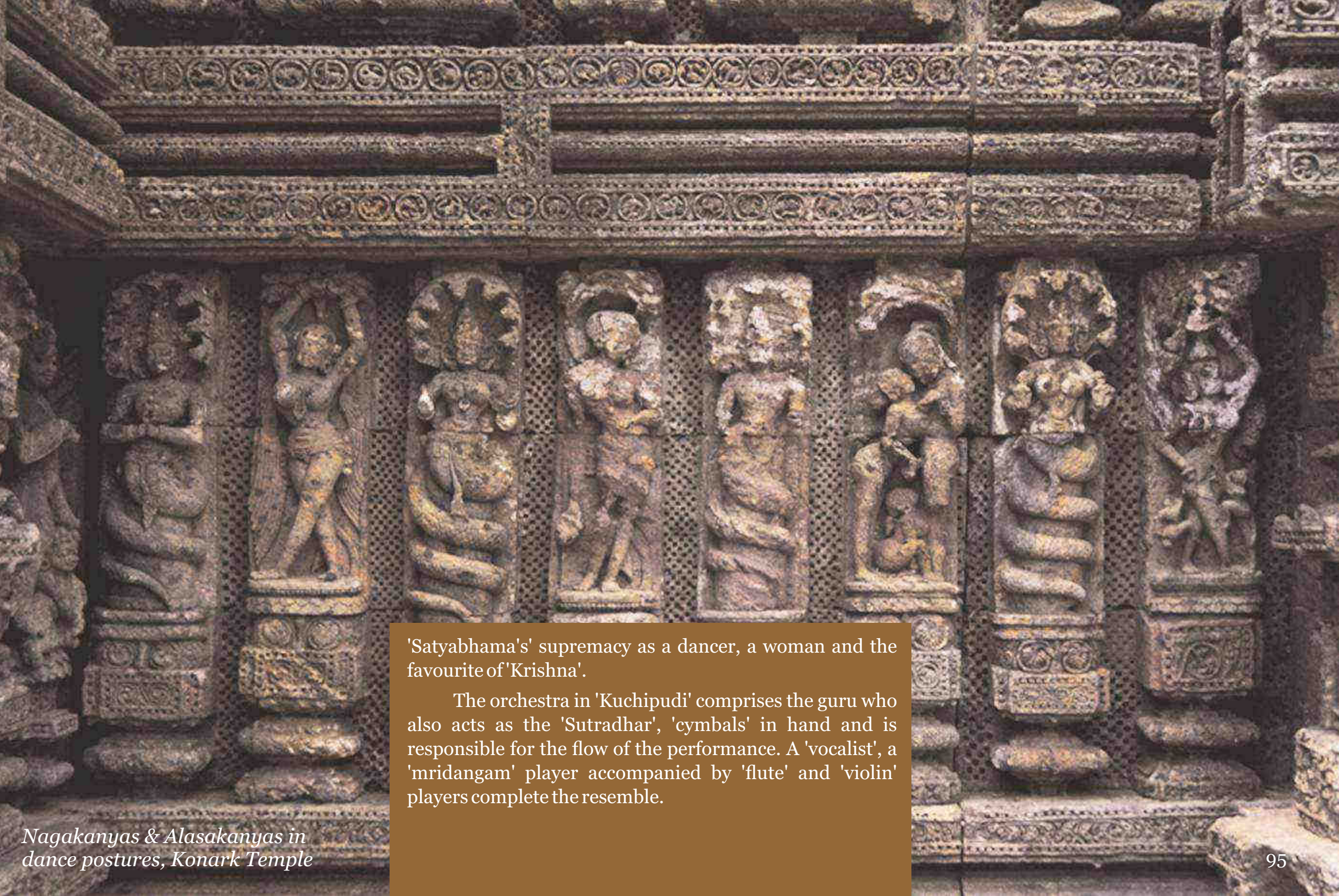
freely then is ever possible in 'Bharatnatyam'.

Some of the well loved dance-dramas in 'Kuchipudi' are 'Bhama kalapam' taken from the famous work 'parijata, paharana' by Siddhendra Yogi, 'Golla kalapam' by Ramayya Shastri, 'The Krishna Lila Tarangini' by Tirtha Narayana Yati, the 'Gita Govinda' by Jaidev, the Telugu songs of 'kshetraya and the Kritis' by Thyagaraja. Dance dramas are performed regularly in 'Kuchipudi' in the surrounding villages on festival days.

As was seen is the traditional dance-drama, actor-dancers wear costumes and make-up suitable to the character. The solo 'Kuchipudi' dancer wears a costume similar to that in 'Bharatnatyam'. A red sari tied slightly higher than normal, or a stitched costume of rich material, opens into an ankle-length fan in front and a pleated border tucked at the back. The hair is pleated in a long braid decorated with flowers and a bejewelled hair piece called 'rukhu'.

There is an interesting legend about the special 'jadai' (head ornament) worn by 'Satyabhama' in the dance drama 'Bhama kalapam'. The ornament contains the 'Sun' and 'Moon', the 27 'nakshatras' (constellations), the 'hooded serpent', 'parrots' and 'floral motifs' representing 'prakriti' (Nature), which is represented by 'Satyabhama'. Traditionally this ornament had been ceremonially presented to the best dancer in the portrayal of 'Satyabhama'. Even the way of showing off this ornament is special. At the time of the entrance of 'Satyabhama', the curtain is brought forward as usual with 'Satyabhama' walking behind it. The braid is thrown over the curtain in full view of the audience. The braid acquires a significance of its own while 'Satyabhama' dances her initial salutations behind the curtain. The flaunting of the braid which is challenging to spectators, is symbolic of

Dance posture with one foot raised, Lepakshi Temple



'Satyabhama's' supremacy as a dancer, a woman and the favourite of 'Krishna'.

The orchestra in 'Kuchipudi' comprises the guru who also acts as the 'Sutradhar', 'cymbals' in hand and is responsible for the flow of the performance. A 'vocalist', a 'mridangam' player accompanied by 'flute' and 'violin' players complete the resemble.

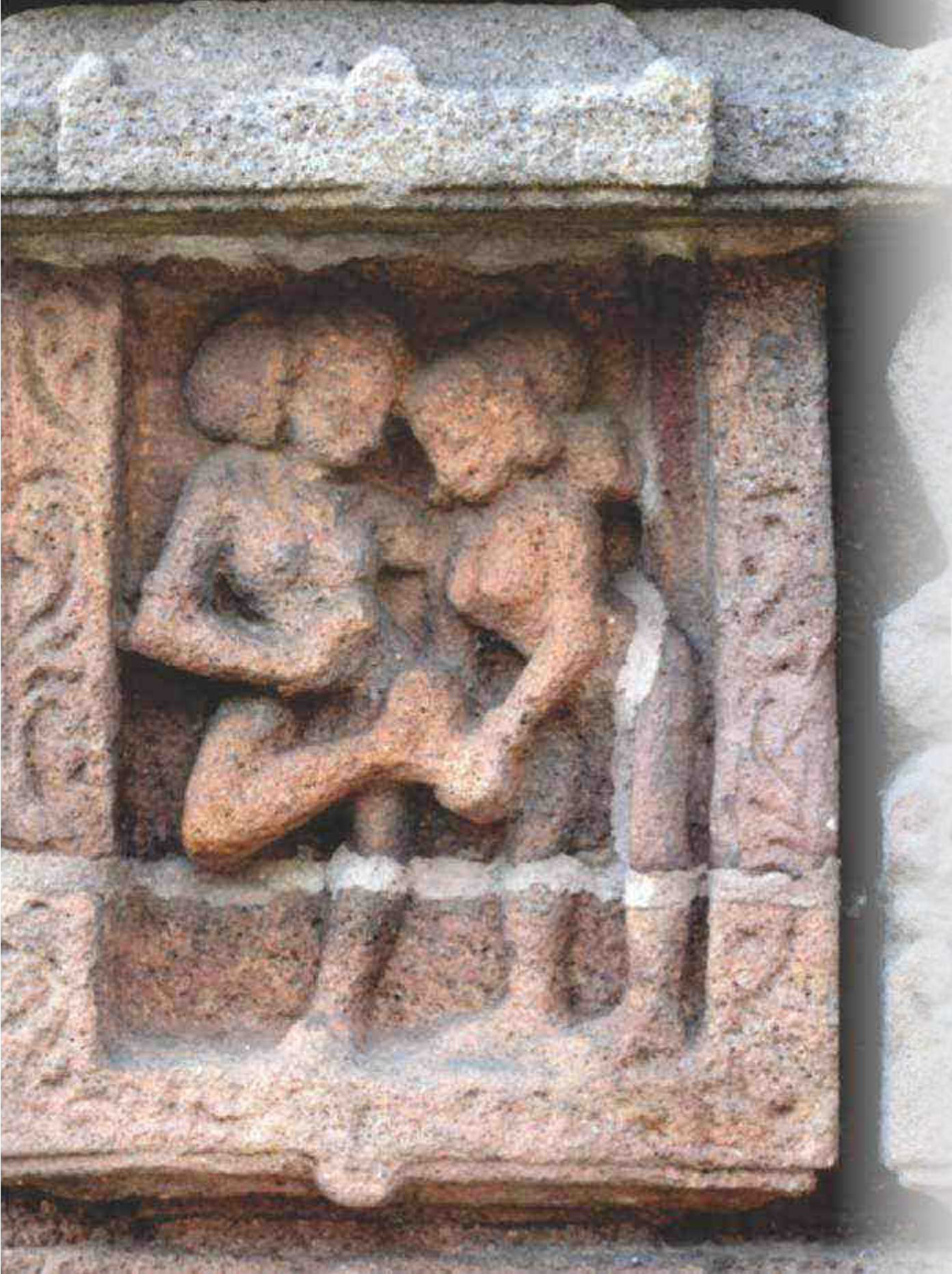


SATTRIYA

The 'namghars' in Assam are temples resembling the early temples in Japan. At the ancient temple of 'Itsukushima', the altar in the sanctum sanctorum has only two objects-a mirror and a sword. The rest of the temple consists of a large hall and smaller spaces for holding ritual ceremonies. The place of worship is called 'namghar' in the village, but in the monastery the name changes to 'kirtan ghar' meaning 'the place for singing praises and taking the Lord's name.

The altar has a beautifully carved and painted. wooden object with seven levels to denote the seven heavens of 'Vishnu' or 'Sapta Vaikuntha' on which is placed the 'Srimad Bhagavad', the ancient text composed by sage 'Veda Vyasa', to depict the life and deeds of 'Shri Krishna' who is synonymous with, 'Vishnu', the presiding deity at all 'sattras'. The offerings of food, sweets, fruits etc are made in a tall brass vessel called 'sarai' in Tamil, mouth freshners are kept in a smaller one made of bell-metal and called 'bota'. An intricately woven long piece of cloth, silk or fine cotton, with the Lords name, is draped behind the altar. It is 'gobain gamocha', and is specially woven for this purpose.

*Alasakanyas in various moods
and dance postures, Brahmeshwar Temple*



Among the 'Sattra' two ways of living are allowed. In some, only celibate monks live, forming a family bond with the older monks. Here the 'kirtanghar' is at the center of the 'Sattra' while the monks live at the four sides of the central hall. In the second kind, monks are allowed to marry and live with their families in the 'Sattra'. The head of the monastery, known as, 'Sattradhikari', literally meaning, authority of the monastery, looks after the administration and welfare of the place.

Some monasteries, form a group adhering to one main 'Sattra', e.g. 'Kamalabari' which has a group of six or seven monasteries of only celibate monks, This 'Sattra' is particularly famous for a festival lasting four days during which the monks perform dance and music and dance dramas. Such 'Sattras' house great artistic treasure. During festivals such as this, singing of 'kirtans' constitutes the main activity. Sometimes as many as 14 sessions of singing the Lord's name are organised.

There are also those praising the names of Sankaradeva who introduced 'Vaishnavism' to Assam, his chief disciple Madhav Deo, and Padmata who was sent in place of Madhav Deo to propagate Vaishnavism to far off places. For that reason, 'Padmata', ('Ata' meaning father) came to be called, 'Badula' meaning 'in place of'.

'Sattra' is a monastery where young boys are trained in the arts of dance, music and acting along with regular spiritual meditation. Mahapurusha Sankara Deva, was a saintly scholar of Sanskrit, (1449-1568) who introduced a new concept in devotional practice of the 'Sattra'. It was founded as an institution for the pursuit and preservation

of 'bhakti' to 'Lord Vishnu' and total devotion and faith in the Lord. Interestingly this also brought about co-mingling of diverse art forms indigenous to the land. The devices of dance, drama and music were used for propagation. The faith in a few 'Sattras' meant that to become celibate monks. Young boys between the age of four to seven years are given rigorous training in various aspects of 'Sattra' discipline and learning, including the 'performing arts'. Titles of 'gayan' (Singer) and 'bayan' (player) are conferred on those who after years of training under various senior teachers, show merit and proficiency. The name of the dance style emanating from the 'Sattra' came to be known as 'Sattriya'.

Although today female dancers have taken to this in a large number, only male members used to dance. The grammar of this dance style as seen today comprises of three elements or techniques used in the gymnasium and called 'maati akhara', ankiya nat' and 'oja palli'. 'Maati akhara' consists of 64 movements of dance, that is story telling on expressional content. So there are 64 units of pure dance among which some denote male vigour, others the female grace and the third may look neutral.

Sankara Deva drew inspiration from the



semi dramatic form of 'oja pali'. It is basically choral singing. the group consisting of the oja (master) and the 'palis' (assistants).

The group has five to six persons parallel to the 'pala' of Odisha and the 'oja' recites verses from a scriptural text, at times on a specific theme. The recitation is visually exacted through hand gestures and body movements. The accompanists keep time on the 'cymbals' while repeating the lines of text.

The Sattriya dance technique to day underlines 'bhakti' (devotion) as the main flavour of the style. The entire range of lyrics and texts used for dance has no mention of 'Radha', the beloved 'gopi' of 'Krishna', possibly because it would have meant condoning the emotion of love between man and woman called 'Sringara rasa' in classic texts. Sankaradeva ignored 'Radha' in preference to 'gopis' a group of women who pined for love and worshipped 'Sri Krishna'. This is a major point of departure from all the other dance styles of India.

The technique shows a body that arches and curves without showing straight lines, square or triangular postures, The upper torso moves independently of the lower body, similar to the 'Taranga', movement in Odissi. The body dips and rises in a bobbing continuum giving illusion of weightlessness. Many ways of walk, jump, sit and pirouette which are typical in Sattriya have developed giving flavour.

Costumes are made from Assamese silk. 'Mekhla chedar' and 'gamocha' are in cotton. Colours like white and red are prominent and a sandalwood mark on the forehead.



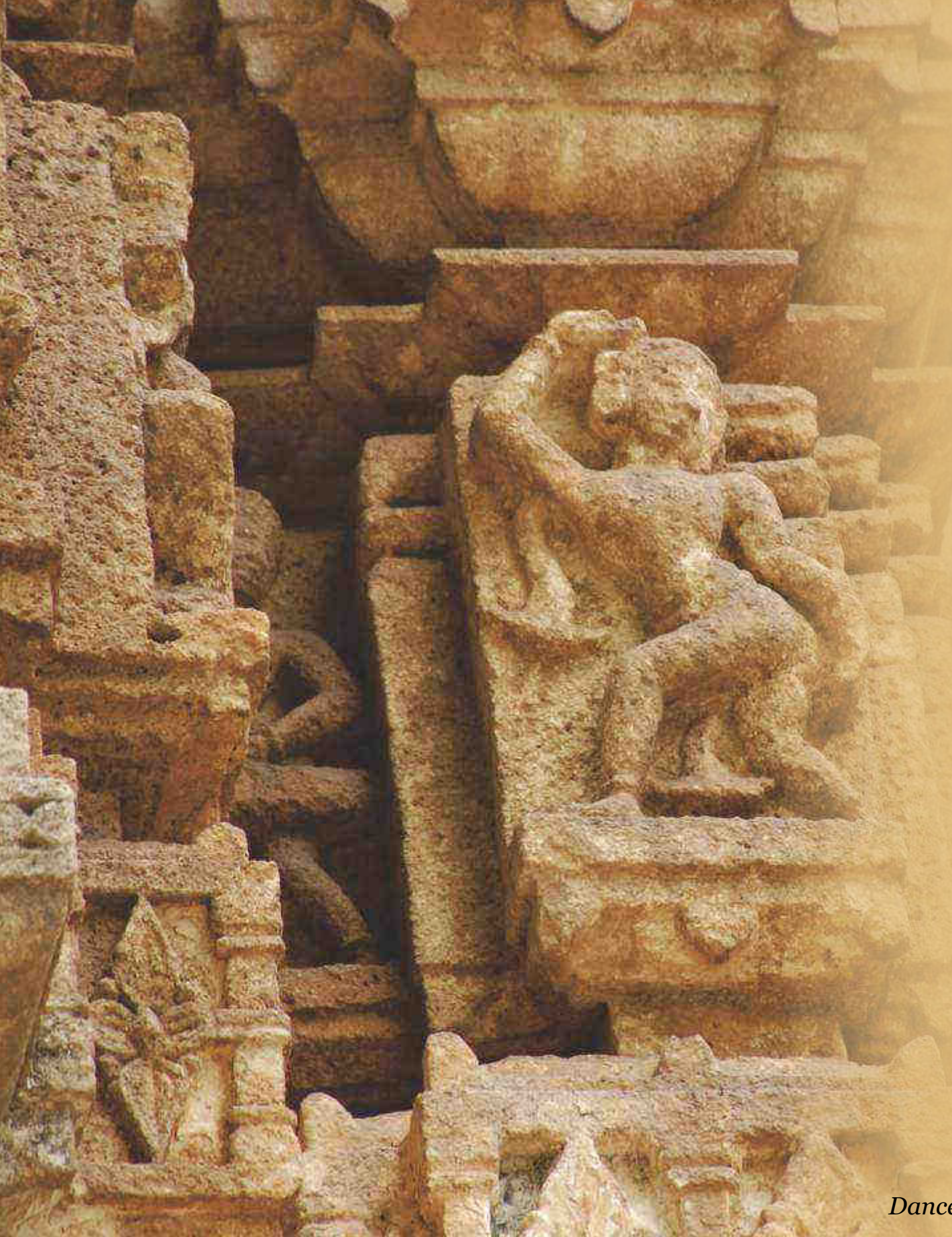
*Chamunda Yogini dancing
on own animal 64 yogini temple*

MOHINIATTAM

This dance style is from Kerala in South India. Its name-'mohini' means 'enchantress' and 'attam' means 'dance'. The strong influence of the 'Natya Shastra', already rooted in Kerala provided the grammar and structure to formulate this style. It derived inspiration from the ancient legend of 'Samundra manthan' (churning of the milky ocean). Putting aside their enmity, the gods and anti-gods or demons decided to launch a joint project-'the search of ambrosia', the 'elixir of immortality'. They had heard that it could be found at the bottom of the milky ocean. So planting the high mountain 'Mandara' as the churning rod and twining the sinuous serpent 'Vasuki' around it, they set to work. The gods wisely let the antigods hold on the venom spewing head while holding the tail end themselves.

At a signal, the churning of the ocean began one by one, 12 jewel- like items surfaced. Among them were the 'Moon', the 'conch', the 'tree of life', a 'wish fulfilling cow', 'four celestial dancers', a 'goddess of prosperity', 'king of elephants', the 'fastest horse', the 'divine healer', a 'dazzling jewel', a 'mighty bow and a garland of victory'. Suddenly, the waters turned dark blue and black. Poisonous fumes engulfed the cosmic breath Gods. and anti-gods screamed for help because the all consuming 'halahal' (poison) had begun to emerge. Together they prayed and 'Shiva' appeared to rescue the creation by drinking up the poison and holding it in his throat. Because of this the legend says, 'Shiva's' throat turned blue giving him the title 'Neelakantha'. A golden pot containig 'amrita' (ambrosia) bobbed up. It was snatched away by the ever-vigilant anti-





gods. This was a warning bell for the gods because if the antigods were to drink it and become immortal, all would be destroyed except for the anti-gods. The gods prayed to 'Vishnu', who was known for amending situations created by 'Brahma' or 'Shiva'. At that very moment, a soft cool breeze carrying the heady aroma of a beautiful woman wafted in the form of a bewitching beauty. The anti-gods fell prey to the gorgeous female and asked her to resolve their dilemma of rank and status. Even the gods staked their claim to the ambrosia. 'Mohini' accepted to become their arbiter and asked them to sit down facing each other to facilitate distribution of 'amrita'. 'Mohini' began her graceful dance of enchantment and tricked the gods into receiving the elixir while the antigods could only look on helplessly. The gods, now empowered with 'amrita', regrouped and fought off the anti-gods by pushing them back to where they had come from.

A second legend refers to 'Mohini-Vishnu' in connection with the arrogant and powerful king Bhasmasura who won his title as a boon given from Shiva, whereby he could reduce anything to ash by merely placing his hand on it. This was a terrible situation, where the demonic king could destroy the world. Once again, on hearing the pleas of frightened gods, 'Vishnu' appeared as 'Mohini', the bewitching beauty. She agreed to marry on the condition that the king would defeat her in a dance duel. 'Mohini' danced many patterns which the enchanted king imitated easily. As the tempo of dance increased 'Mohini' performed a movement placing her hand on her head. The king followed it and no sooner did he place his hand on his head than he was reduced to a pile of ash. Once again 'Mohini' saved creation from destruction.



Therefore a dance form, which derives its inspiration and name from such a concept, has to contain soft, bewitching movements. The waist is the fulcrum on which the upper and lower body twists and turns in gentle curving figures of eight or is a 'half moon' shape. The Footwork is rich yet delicately delineated. The movements of eyes and eyebrows are toned down from the accented, strong glances to soft inviting ones. Head gestures too speak of feminine grace and subtlety of expression.

The costume is white, bordered with gold and draped in a way that allows plenty of space for leg extensions. A huge fan like effect is created in front by bunching and pleating the upper border of the sari at the waist. The hair style is a big bun to the left side of the head, enriched by flowers and jewels. Simple, attractive gold, ruby and emerald jewellery is worn.

A typical system of music developed to accompany these dances is called 'Sopana'. The ladder-like soft, dance movements, accompanied by music, that ascends and descends on melodious notes in a prearranged pattern, seem to undulate and sway along with the body of the dancer.

This dance form reached its zenith in the early 19th century in the royal court of king, Swathi Tirural of Travancore in Kerala. He was a poet writer, scholar, linguist and a great patron of 'arts'.

'Mohiniattam' does not have a temple background but rather a social one with inclination towards sentiments and emotions of love in all its glorious manifestations. The beckoning eyes and fluttering eyebrows summon the viewers attention at will, justifying the form as a dance of the

GITA-GOVINDA

Of the various 'Gitagovinda' related cultural identities Odisha possesses, three facets. These are 'Jagannatha', 'Jayadev' and the temple of 'Konarka'. Together these three promote a distinct cultural and devotional tradition of human values, aesthetics and erotic beauty. The greatness about 'Jagannatha' tradition is its mystery and the power to assimilate and evolve. As a concept it functions on a popular level defying iconisation and classification. The concept of 'Jagannatha' allows people to project their own ideas (as Jayadeva did in his poem) which are finally subsumed and returned to society as a novel idea.

The 'Gitagovinda' or the song of 'govinda', the cowherd god 'krishna' was initially sung in 'Lord Jagannatha' temple at Puri by the poet and his spouse. The paraphrenalia, that grew around its ritualistic application, remained wrapped in mystery. Jayadeva, as a name is quite significant and he shares with 'krishna' a similar identity and in the process he develops his special relations to 'krishna'.

The role of 'Krishna's' cowherdess consort, 'Radha' in the 'Gitagovinda' derives its cosmic significance from the context of recurrent references to Sri Jayadeva's use of the epithet 'Jagadisa', 'Lord of the world', for 'krishna' in the first song is too similar to 'Jagannatha', to be accidental. The 'Gitagovinda' may well have taken shape in the richly syncretic environment in Puri, Odisha in the 12th century. 'Stoller Miller' observes that 'Radha' is neither the wife of 'Krishna' nor a worshipping rustic playmate, she is an intense, solitary, proud female who compliments and

*Krishna with Radha and her sakhi
Bhoramdev Temple*





reflects the moods of 'krishna's' passion. She is 'krishna's' partner in a secret and exclusive love, contrasted in the poem with circular 'rasa' dance is more justified.

The role of erotic energy in the 'Gitagovinda', its sexual passion (ratibhava) antithetical modes of 'separation' (Vipralambha Sringara) bring in an interplay of modes and results in aesthetic joy. This mysterious ramification in poetic sentiments brings the poetry to an intimate closeness of 'Jagannatha' who is primordial and sensuous. The temple of 'Konarka' which symbolizes the life energy of the individual and the world stands for passion which is made palpable through sensuous and graceful description of movements and physical forms. Both the 'gitagovinda' and the temple of 'Konarka' as sensuous poems in, words and stone, at one level stimulate wanton desire, and when the perceptual experience of sensuousness is restrained, it results in an aesthetic and devotional experience.

'Jagannath's' dark, elemental and mysterious form arouses erotic devotion which when filtered through passionate emotion becomes poetry and when it flourishes exuberantly results in the beauty of the plastic form. There, these distinguished identities have the same verve, same vision and same mood as well as the same implications in life and culture which no one could deny.

In ancient times one significant, point is the prevalence of 'Madhava cult' in Prachi valley. It is this 'Madhava' that appears in Jayadeva's poem who sings.

"Radha- Madhavayor Jayanti yamunakule rahah kelayah"

"Glory to the love dalliances of Radha and Madhava in solitude on the banks of river yamuna"



Torso shifted hands and foot in dance posture, Beluru temple



Here the use of "Madhava" replacing 'krishna' is singularly significant since 'Madhava' indicates the 'Husband of Lakshmi,' the 'Goddess of wealth' as well as the 'Universal Mother'. Jayadeva wanted 'Jagannatha' to configure in his poem and therefore brought in 'Madhava' (Ma+dhava), 'husband of Lakshmi'. The eternal love play between 'Radha' and 'Krishna' is regionised in the images of 'Lakshmi' and 'Jagannath'. The poet by associating the word 'Radha' with 'Madhava' has elevated the position of 'Radha' from the mundane to a heavenly one. The Vaisnavite acharya, Nimbarka proclaimed 'Radha' (as the female energy) and 'krishna' as divine sport. 'Madhava' images with four hands having 'conch' and 'discus' in upper two hands and 'flute' in lower two hands are found in plenty in the Prachi valley Odisha. This 'krishna-Visnu' form called 'Madhava' was the favourite God, who was worshipped by Jayadeva.

The first verse of 'Gitagovinda', 'Radha Madhavayor Jayanti', is sung in the temple of 'Jgannatha' as a part of daily ritual. Jayadev was closely associated with 'Jagannatha' who in the form of a 'gou' or bull symbolizes 'Dharma'. Once the bull followed the poet Jayadeva into a garden called 'Koili vaikuntha' while he was plucking flowers and 'tulasi' leaves singing the 'Gita Govinda'. Jayadeva found the impressions of the eight hoofs marked by the feet of the 'Dharma-Gou' and it moved him to such an extent that to immortalise the strange incident, he composed songs as 'Astapadi' or eight quatrains.

Jayadeva was a devotee dedicated to the temple of 'Jagannatha'. He was delighting in singing the 'Gitagovinda' in a spiritual fervour before his beloved God, repeating 'Jaya



Female dancer on a tiger, Brahmeshwar Temple

Jagadisa Hare'. Let there be victory to 'Hari', the 'Lord of the world, Jagannatha'. He found pleasure in introducing himself as a master conducting the (dancing) steps of Padmavati performing before 'Jagannatha'. He has, therefore called himself 'Padmavati-Charana-Charana-Chakravarti'. He was never a court poet. As a Vaisnavite devotee he dedicated himself to serve 'Jagannatha' singing the glories of 'His divine love'.

Jayadeva was the first to write a lyrico-dramatic Mahakavya. The 'music literature' and 'sculpture' respectively as 'Gitagovinda' and 'temple Konarka' took shape in 12th century. Jayadeva introduced and popularised the cult of 'Radha & Krishna' through his 'Gita Govinda'. The composite sculpture of 'Krishna' is 'tribhanga' with upper two hands playing the 'flute' in the company of 'Astagopi' and the cattle indicates the amalgamation of two cults at a time when Vaisnavism became the state religion of eastern coastal India.

Jayadeva, in intense devotion, structured and popularized the ten 'avatara' of 'Visnu' in his poetry. He converted the prevalent scattered narrations into a holistic concept of 'dasavatara'. Due to the impact of the 'Gita Govinda', 'devadasi' or the dancing girls were dedicated to the temples for performance of dance and music and the 'devadasi' tradition was institutionalised. Importance of the dancing girls in the temple ritual grew to such an extent that a special architectural structure called 'natamandira' or 'nata mandapa' was added to the existing 'deula' and 'mukhasala'. The continuing tradition of 'devadasi' was epitomised in Padmavati, the consort of Jayadeva who was dedicated by her father to 'Lord Jagannatha' as a 'devadasi'.




In his invocation in the 'Gitagovinda', Jayadeva addresses all ten incarnations of 'Visnu' while describing 'Lord krisna' as 'Jagadisa-Hare', thus associating 'Hari' with 'Jagadisa' who is responsible for these incarnations. The 'Gitagovinda' seva was being performed by 'devadasi' or 'Mahari' in the Jagannath temple at Puri. The tradition of 'devadasi' is very ancient in India. In course of time performances of the 'devadasi' were institutionalised in different religious systems in India and were treated as an integral part of temple rituals. Later the ritual was given sanction and status by 'Purana' and 'Dharmasastra'. This prompted appointment of 'devadasi' in temples and religious institutions. 'Devadasi' or the female servants of the divine God or Goddesses or girls dedicated to temples became a class of their own, who made a living by singing and dancing for the deities.

Historically speaking, appointment of 'devadasi' has been mentioned in the inscriptions or Brahmeswara temple (1061AD) which was built by Kalavati Devi, the mother of the king Udyotakesari of Soma dynasty. Following this we get several inscriptions which record the appointment of temple dancers or 'devadasi', 'ganika', 'darikga', 'bhavini' in different temples of Odisha beginning from the Mukteswara temple (1082AD) inscription to the Jagannath temple inscription, (1500AD) promulgated by the king Anangabhim Chodagangadeva of Ganga dynasty and Gajapati Prataprudra deva of Gajapati dynasty.

In the ancient land called 'Odra Magadhi',





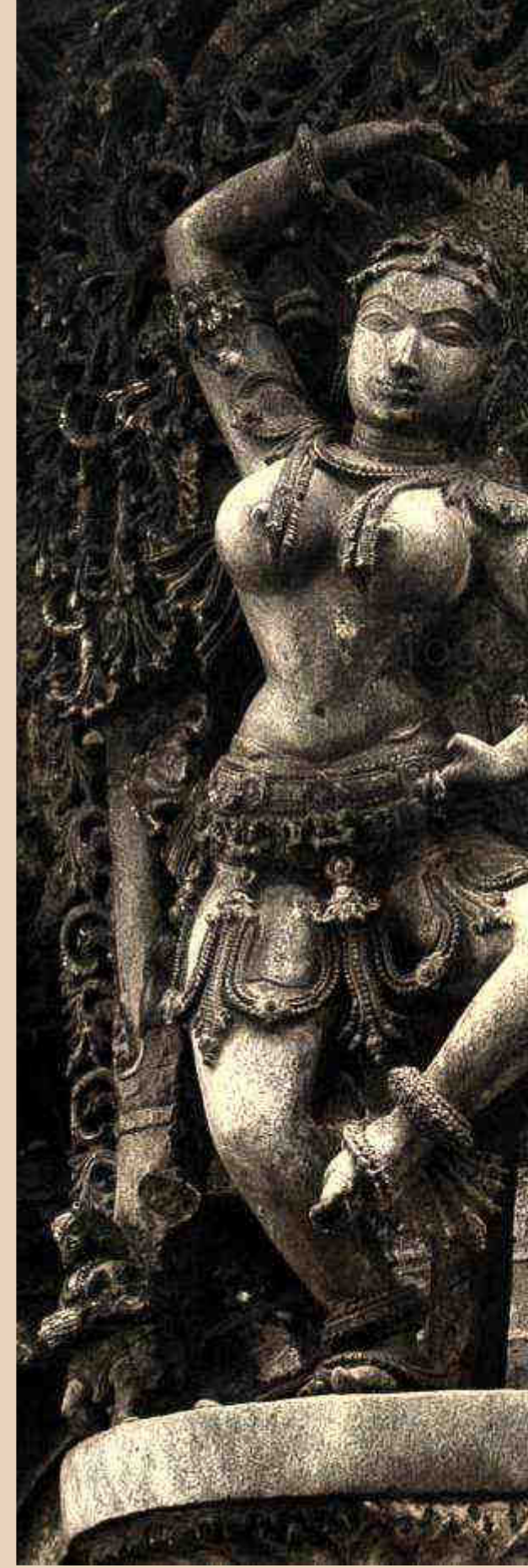


'devadasis' were known as 'Mahari'. The word 'mahari' was derived from Sanskrit 'Mahati', the noble or great lady. 'Mahari' is a local term used specifically for the woman who performed music and dance in temple. The 'Gitagovinda' was composed by Jayadeva and was simultaneously performed by his spouse Padmavati who was none else than a 'mahari' or 'devadasi'. After the establishment of the Jgannath temple at Puri, nine categories of Sevaka (temple functionaries) were appointed. Gradually the number of categories increased and Ananagabhimadeva introduced 'chhatisaniyoga' or the thirty-six order of temple functionaries. 'Gitagovinda' seva was an important ritual and was included in the thirty six order.

It is recorded in the 'Madalapanji', the temple chronicle of Puri that Kavi Narasimhadeva accorded permission for the recitation of the 'Gitagovinda' for the first time in the temple.

The seva is usually performed during 'Sandhyadhupa' at the 'Jay vijaya' gate. 'Arati' is performed and this is followed by a change of dress. The deities, are worshipped according to 'Sodasopachare puja'. During this 'puja', 'arati' is performed four times. After the 'sandhydhupa' the deities are dressed in silken garments and sandal paste is applied over them. This is called 'chandanalagi'. Then there is the recitation of the 'Gitagovinda' accompanied with the melody of 'vina', followed by the badasinhara vesa'. The special feature of this ritual is that a special silken cloth called "baralagipata", bearing a verse from the 'Gitagovinda' is offered to the deities by the temple functionary known as 'cangata mekapa'.

Basically, 'mahari' were of three orders. They were





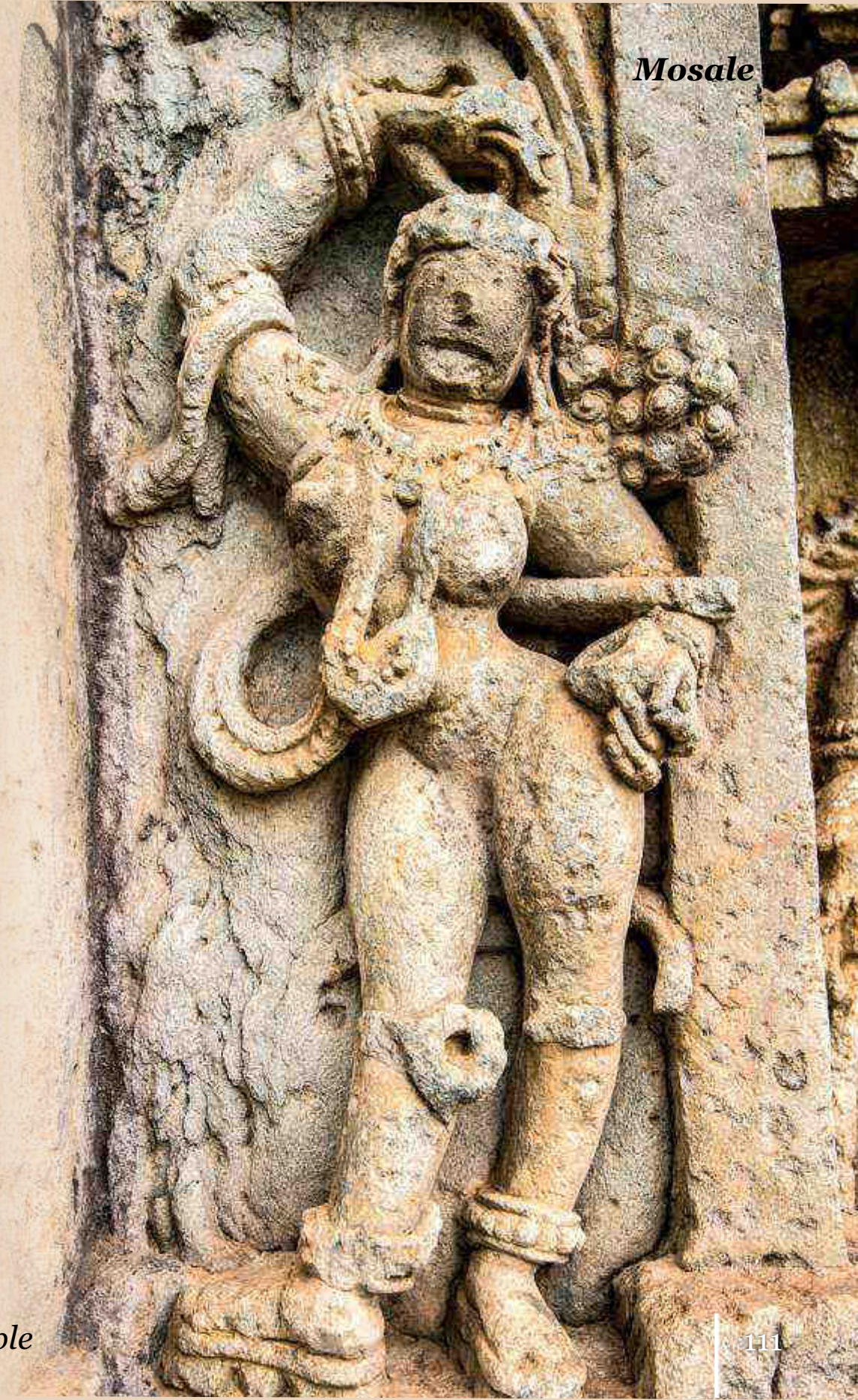
*One foot lifted 'Nartaki',
Belur Temple*

known as 'patuani, samprada', and 'gauni' 'mahari'. They exchanged 'seva' or service among themselves. For there 'seva' they enjoyed land grants and received 'khei' from the temple. There were another class of functionaries known as 'madeli' who made arrangements for the dance performance of 'mahari'. 'Madali' was another associate in the dance performance of 'Mahari'. The word 'madeli' is derived from 'madala', (one who plays on 'madala'). The 'madali' did not form a separate class as far as their services in the Jagannath temple were concerned. They were considered one with the 'mahari' and were treated like their adopted sons.

The 'mahari' were also known as 'nachuni'. The dance performance of 'Gitagovinda' is locally known as 'Sakhinata' or the dance of 'Sakhi'. These 'Sakhi' danced as 'Radha', 'Krishna' and 'gopi' in 'rasa' and the 'Gitagovinda'. These boy dancers were also known as 'gotipua' and this dance substantiated the present day classical Odissi dance. Thus the temple dance gradually was identified as Odissi dance. Gitagovinda is also performed as 'Giti Natya'. The theme of 'Gita Govinda' is based on the 'rasalila' of 'Radha-Krishna' which is enacted during the spring season. It is called 'Vasantarasa'. 'Gitagovinda' in its distinct theatrical form is called 'rasalila'. In its artistic presentations, the theme of the 'Gitagovinda' provides ample scope for the performance of solo, duet and small group dances.

The first verse or the 'Gitagovinda' determines the mood of the play and sets an indicator like the 'Sutradhara'. Out of the 24 songs the first two are composed in praise of 'Lord Krishna', which can be treated as 'Mangalacharana' as is being done in 'rasalila'. The invocation to ten incarnations

Torso shifted, Mosale temple



'Jayajagadisahare' and the prayer to 'Lord Krishna'. 'Sritakamalakucha' are befitting for chorusing. Leaving aside the last song, the remaining twenty-one songs are based on the dialogues between 'Krisna, Radha and her Sakhi', companion. Out of which 'Radha's' companion sings ten songs and 'Radha' herself eight. The verse between these songs describes the place, situation time and mood of the 'Gitagovinda'.

After the 'mangalacharana', the Gitagovinda 'rasa nritya' starts with the core theme. The time suggested is the moonlit night in a spring season. On the banks of the river Yamuna and in the midst of 'tamala kunja' (tamarind garden) 'Krishna' dances in the company of 'Radha' and other young maidens. The form of dance visualized by Jayadeva is the 'Hallichaka' nritya. Dance is interwoven by the dialogues between 'Radha' and her companions. They exchange narrations about 'Krishna' and his activities.

The 'Gitagovinda' is an episode that centres around the union and separation of 'Radha and Krishna', the hero, (nayaka) and heroine (nayika) of the work. 'Abhinaya' is the major aspect of the 'Gitagovinda' dance. In 'abhinaya', the dancing characters express the characteristic of eight 'nayikas'. In the codified Odissi dance, 'abhinaya' occupies a prominent place where the dancer expresses the mood of the theme.

The hero 'krishna' has been depicted as 'daksina nayaka' and 'gopi' waiting for him have been portrayed as 'utkanthita nayika' in the first canto. 'Krishna' dances surrounded by the young 'gopis'. The dance has a prominent role to play in the first canto.

In the second canto 'Radha' is dejected by 'Krishna'.

*'Abhanga' Posture
Belur Temple*



'Krishna' does not turn up at her 'kunjā'. He is in his clandestine tryst in some other 'kunjā' while 'gopi' keep on waiting for him to return. Since 'Radha' is gloomy, dance is not suitable in this scene. Here 'Radha' is 'prosita bhartika' 'nayika'.

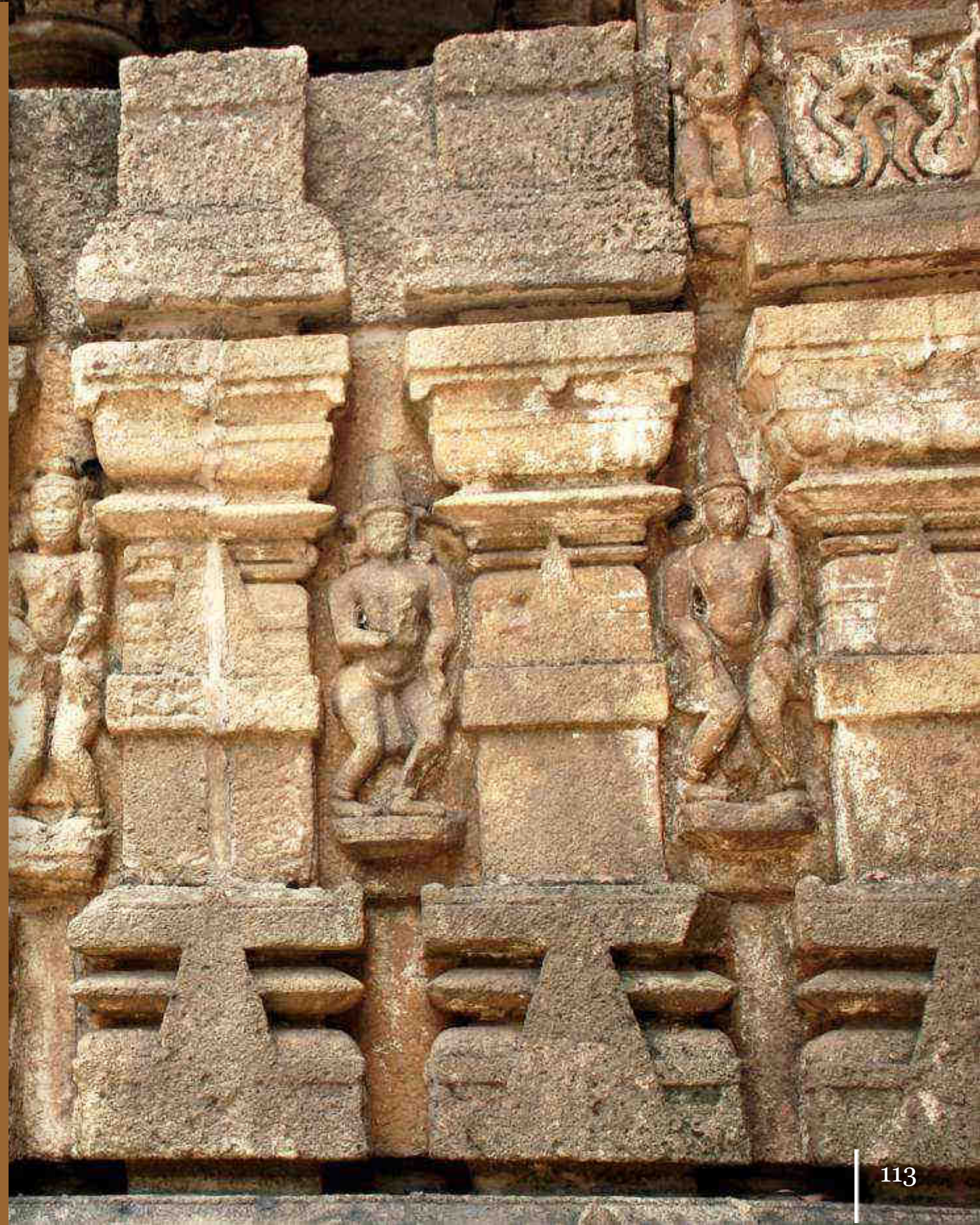
The third canto is also set in a similar mood as that of the second. 'Krisna' is in the midst of 'rasamandali' dancing but suddenly leaves the place in search of 'Radha' and in the course of his wondering comes to the bank of the river Yamuna. Here he is 'vidagdha nayaka'. The dance abruptly stops and is not continued anymore in the rest of the sequences.

In the fourth canto, the companion of 'Radha' comes to 'Krishna' and reports the pitiable condition of her friend 'Radha'. As 'Radha' is depicted here as 'Utkanthita nayika' the dance can not be performed.

The topics narrated from the second canto to the fourth canto can only be performed through 'abhinaya', not 'nrta'.

In the 5th canto Radha's companion returns back from 'Krishna' and describes the sad plight of 'Vanamali' who is pinning for her on the bank of Yamuna. 'Krishna's' attitude and the intensity of longing can be shown through the dance to elevate the mind of 'Krishna' for a union with 'Radha'.

According to the 'Natysastra' only the good qualities and activities of the hero and heroin eare to be performed through 'Abhinaya'. The songs of the 'Gitagovinda' which form the dialogues between 'Radha' and her companions and 'Krishna' and 'Radha's', friend, are performed through the 'abhinaya' and 'nrta'.





In the 6th canto 'Radha' is unable to move due to the burden of separation. The companion of Radha goes back to 'Krishna' to report the ailing condition of 'Radha'. She again requests 'Krishna' to come to the 'kunj' where 'Radha' is waiting for him. This much can be shown in 'Abhinaya'.

In the seventh canto 'Krishna' did not come, and 'Vipralambha' 'Radha' told her companion, that 'Krishna' has many other beloved women to satisfy him. So 'Radha's' time passed in vain waiting for him. This cannot be performed through the dance according to 'Natyasastra'.

The main essence of the 'Githagovinda', is the 'Vipralambha sringara' followed by 'mana', 'heta', 'rati' etc. These intricate situations of 'rasa' can only be better expressed through 'abhinaya' than 'nrtta' or pure dance. So also the 'dhrstanayaka' and 'khandita naiyika' of the 8th canto and 'kalahantarita nayika' of the 9th canto which cannot be normally depicted through the form of traditional dance.

In the tenth canto 'Madhava' tries his best to appease 'Radha' and at last bows down at her feet by way of supplication. This is best shown through 'abhinaya'.

'Krishna' waits to meet 'Radha' who as 'abhisarika' comes to the 'kunj' on the banks of Yamuna in the eleventh canto. To represent the amorous activities of the hero and the heroine, dance could be an exciting and action oriented performance. This dance is called 'Sukumara nrttya' according to the 'Natyasastra'.

In the last canto, the final Union of 'Radha-Krishna' takes place 'Radha' forgets everything that had happened before. Romantic mood descends and she then requests





'Krishna' to decorate her.

The 'Gitagovinda' is a 'Rasakavya' and starts with 'rasa' and ends with 'rasa nrttya'.

The 'Gitagovinda' is a short Sanskrit poem of unique character based on the love of 'Radha and Krishna' in Vrindavana. The Poem is divided into 12 cantos and is endowed with most of the characteristics of a traditional 'Kavya'. The poet Jayadeva himself categorises it as a 'prabandha' which can be sung and can also be performed with the accompanying music and dance. The 'Gitagovinda' is a combination of 'Kavya' and 'drama'. It is a combination of narration, description and speech which form a unique form in Sanskrit literature.

The poem has been divided into 12 cantos, 24 prabandha or songs and 77 verses. According to the tradition the 'Gitagovinda' contains 72 verses only, which has been attested by the poets, beginning from the 17th century. The first and the tenth 'prabandha' contain eleven and five stanzas, but the rest 22 'prabandha' contain eight stanzas, each for which the songs are called 'Astapadi'. The poet has noted the names of ten 'ragas' such as 'Malava, Gujjari, Vasanta, Varadi, Desi, Desaksya, Karnata, Bhairava', 'Sahana' & 'Nilambari' for 24 songs.

The first canto begins with introductory verses and two invocations to 'Vishnu' in his ten incarnations. The poet through a companion of 'Radha' describes the beauty of Spring season in the Vrindavan where 'Krishna' plays with the 'Gopi'. The canto is named 'Samodadamodara' or 'Damodara' who is full of delight. In second canto 'Radha's' sorrow and her complaints and happy, moments with 'Krishna' are described. This is named as 'Aklesakesava' or



'Kesava without sorrow'.

In the 3rd canto the lamentations of 'Krishna' within himself for 'Radha' is expressed beautifully, This is called 'Mughhamadhusudana' or the 'enamoured Krishna'. In the fourth canto a companion of 'Radha' meets 'Krishna' and tells him about 'Radha's' suffering and her longing for union with him. This canto is named 'Snigdha madhusudana' or 'Krishna who was feeling happy and at peace'.

In the 5th canto 'Krishna' requests the companion to bring 'Radha' to the bower, he will wait for her. This is named as 'sakanksa-pundarikaksa' or 'lotus eyed' 'Krishna' who was full of desire. The sixth canto describes 'Radha's' weakness due to separation from 'Krishna' for which the lady messenger comes to 'Krishna' and requests him to come to 'Radha' who is waiting for him. This is named 'Sotkanta vaikuntha' or 'Krishna' who is eagerly waiting for 'Radha'. In the Seventh canto it is described that 'Krishna' was not able to come to meet 'Radha'. 'Radha' apprehends some thing negative and her apprehension grows stronger, when she sees her companion returns alone.

'Radha' scolds the breeze, God of love and Yamuna who enhance her pangs of separation. This canto is named 'Nagaranarayana' or 'Narayana' as the lover of 'Radha'. In canto eight 'Krishna' comes to meet 'Radha' in the morning. He Places himself at her feet. But 'Radha' rebukes and asks Him to leave. It is named as 'Vilaksya Laksmipati' or the 'Lord of Laksmi who is surprised'. The title of the 9th canto is 'Mugdha-Mukunda' or 'Mukunda' who was enchanted while 'Radha' was thinking and her friend in a consoling voice asks her to be kind to 'Krishna'. The tenth canto narrates the scenes of evenings and 'Krishna' praises 'Radha' and

*Alasakanyas in motherly mood
Brahmeshwar Temple*





supplicates her to put Her feet on His head to remove the poison of passion. This is named as 'Chatura Bhuja' or 'Vishnu', 'the clever with four arms'. In the eleventh canto 'Krishna' was able to solace 'Radha' and the companion, helped them to unite and they both went into the bridal chamber. This is named 'samadadamodara' or 'Damodara who is full of joy'. The last canto describes the frank sport of love of 'Radha' and 'Krishna'. At last 'Radha' requests her lover 'Pitamvara' to decorate Her as before. The poet then concludes the work saying about his own knowledge of music, his devotion of 'Vishnu', his delicate discrimination of sentiments and his poetic charm and grace and mentions the names of, his parent and friends. The 12th canto is named as 'Suprita Pitamvara' who is wholly pleased.

The 'Gitagovinda' is a beautiful work endowed with sweet, simple and melodious words and remains unparalleled in the whole of Sanskrit Literature. The 'Sringara', which is variously described as physical love, is the main 'rasa' or sentiment of the 'Gitagovinda'. The description of the scene of nature with trees, creepers, flowers, hills, streams, singing birds and bees and the seasons, mainly the Spring, serves as the background of the work.

There are three visible characters in this love song. The main character is 'Krishna'. He is not merely a cowherd boy of Yadava clan, nor is He the lover of sporting 'Radha'. He is 'Kaliyuga Avattara' the incarnation of the 'Almighty', the 'divine ruler of the cosmic age of darkness'.

*Alasakanya feeding
a bird standing in dance posture
Brahmeshwar Temple*



Alasakanya with a mirror (female dancer)
Brahmeshwar Temple

'Ashta' means eight while 'Pada' means verse. 'Ashtapadi' literally means eight verses. Though an Ashtapadi had eight verses, yet it was known as one song. So in all, Jayadevas 'Gita Govinda' had 24 'Ashtapadis' meaning 24 songs. They were called by numbers. In Kerala, when 'Ashtapadi' is sung in the inner sanctum of the temple along with the beats of 'Edakka', in the atmosphere of poignant silence, awaiting the doors of the deity to open for the vision of the benevolent Lord, a deep sense of awe and reverence is experienced. The most amazing thing about these 'Ashtapadis' is that though the lyrics give an earthly flavour, yet when it is sung, it becomes so religious and divine. The quality of the music generates 'Bhakti' or devotion rather than any other gross feel. The 'Ashtapadis' are so sweet smooth flowing and beautifully moulding into an exquisite 'Raga'. 'Jayadeva's' Sanskrit verses can be sung with ease and can easily adapt them selves to a rhythmic pattern. Such is not the case with any other Sanskrit composition. And singing them in slow tempo, in Sopanam style (Kerala), is an experience par excellence not just with the singers who sing them but also to those who listen to it. 'Ashtapadis' are sung with such devotion that the passionate, erotic love transcends itself to a level of spiritual love.

'Sopanam' is temple music. 'Sopanam' music is the search of oneself, the beauty and melody of the voice within. Jayadeva truly lived a life of love and beauty, His love for his wife Padmavathi can be read between the lines of all his 'Ashtapadis'. 'Gita Govinda' has survived centuries only because of the couples 'Bhakti' or intense devotion to





'Radha and Krishna'.

'Sopanam' is Gods own music. It is classical in the sense it has classical 'Ragas' and 'Talas', yet, not strictly classical, because it does not fully adhere to the rigidity and norms, as set down by the classical music systems.

'Sopanam' is an exclusive music tradition that evolved in Kerala. 'Sopanam' means music sung at the footsteps leading to the innermost chamber of the temple which is called 'Srikovil' or inner sanctum of the temple. It is sung with great devotion in praise of the deity. Hence, 'Sopanam' is essentially 'Bhakti Sangeetam' and would fall under the category of devotional music, which is semi classical as well.

If a devotee sings with 'Bhakti' that means he is entering into a dialogue with his God-'Ishta Devata'- the deity he loves or he worships. It is a natural expression of the soul to reach out to the Divine. Though "Sopanam" was existent in old 'Shiva' and 'Devi' temples from time immemorial, the word 'Sopanam' took a definite shape and came into prominence, when Jayadeva's, 'Gita Govinda' made it's entry into Kerala. This was the time when Vaishnavism came into dominance in Kerala and most of the 'Vishnu' and 'Krishna' temples included the songs of Jayadeva in their rituals.

So though 'Sopanam' music of 'Ashtapadi' confined itself to the inner chambers of the temples, 'Sopanam' music through 'Kathakali' has crossed the shores with its dramatic 'Kathakali' performances. 'Ashtapadi' is another name of 'Gita Govinda'. The Keralites were so attracted to 'Ashtapadi' of Jayadevas 'Gita Govinda', that singing 'Ashtapadi' became a



part of the rituals, to such an extent that 'Sopanas' and 'Ashtapadi' came to be associated with each other.


The 'Ragas' which are to be sung with the 'Ashtapadis' are selected according to the mood and time of the day. For instance, 'Bhupalam' is sung in the morning, while 'Bhairavi' is rendered during midday, 'Sahana' and 'Nilambari' are sung at night.

The 'Gita Govind' was transformed from a temporal parochial literary work into a sacred pan-Indian scripture. It completely revitalized, 'Vaishnavism' in the sub-continent and catalysed the rise of the 'Bhakti' (devotional) movement in India. Jaydev, through his song, made sensuality and romantic emotion the vehicle of the highest level of spirituality. 'Krishna's' love for 'Radha' and 'Radha's' love for 'Krishna' were expressed in physical terms, but they communicated a profound mystical experience. In the 'Gita Govinda', 'Radha's' union with 'Krishna' is always a secret. There is constant reference to the threat of social disgrace. By making the relationship illicit and clandestine the poet heightened the emotional quotient of the relationship. It was seen as true love that transcended, custom and law.

The poet Jayadev was born in a village near Puri,

*Yogini in chamunda devi posture
to slay with a sword, 64 Yogini Temple*

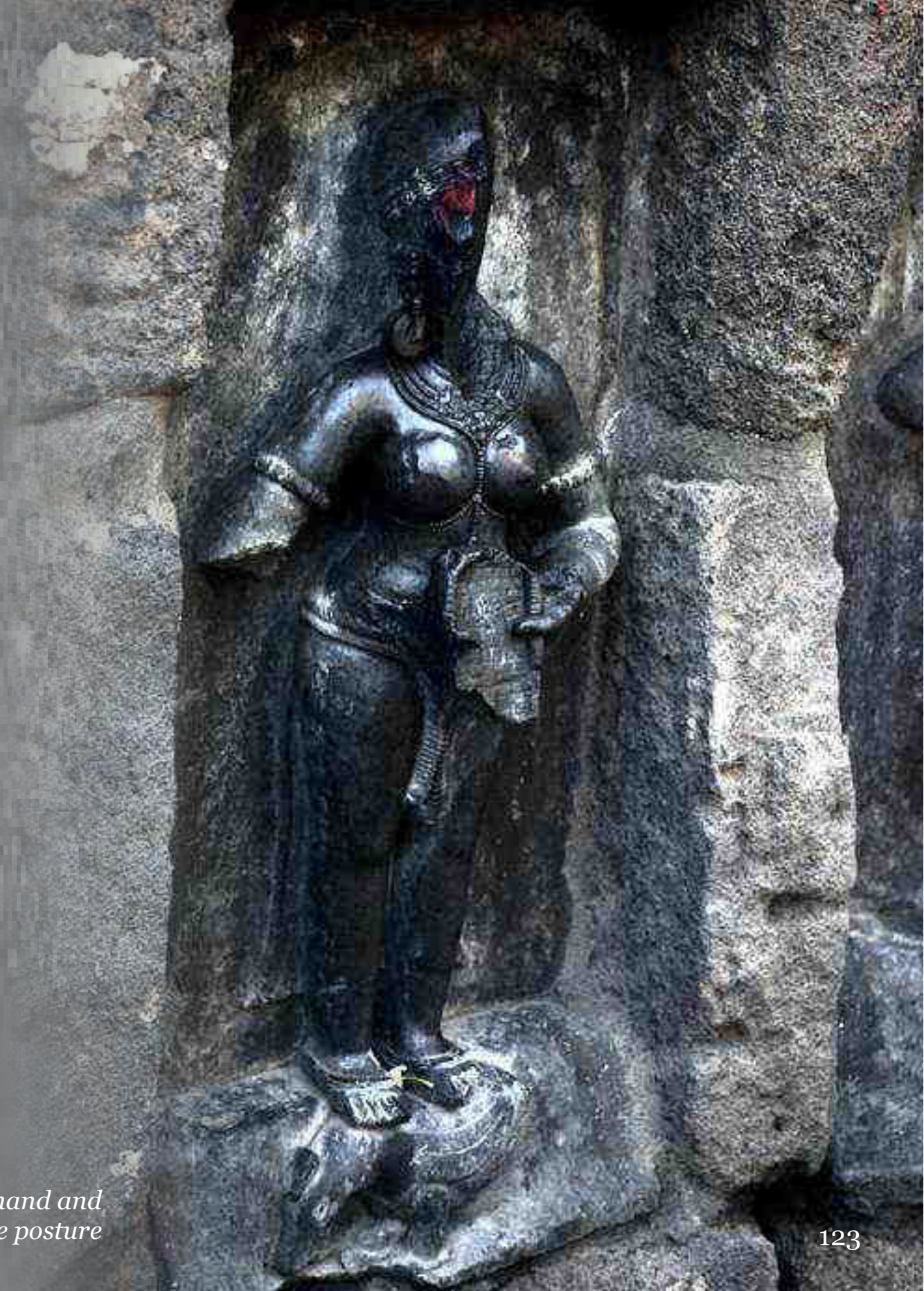


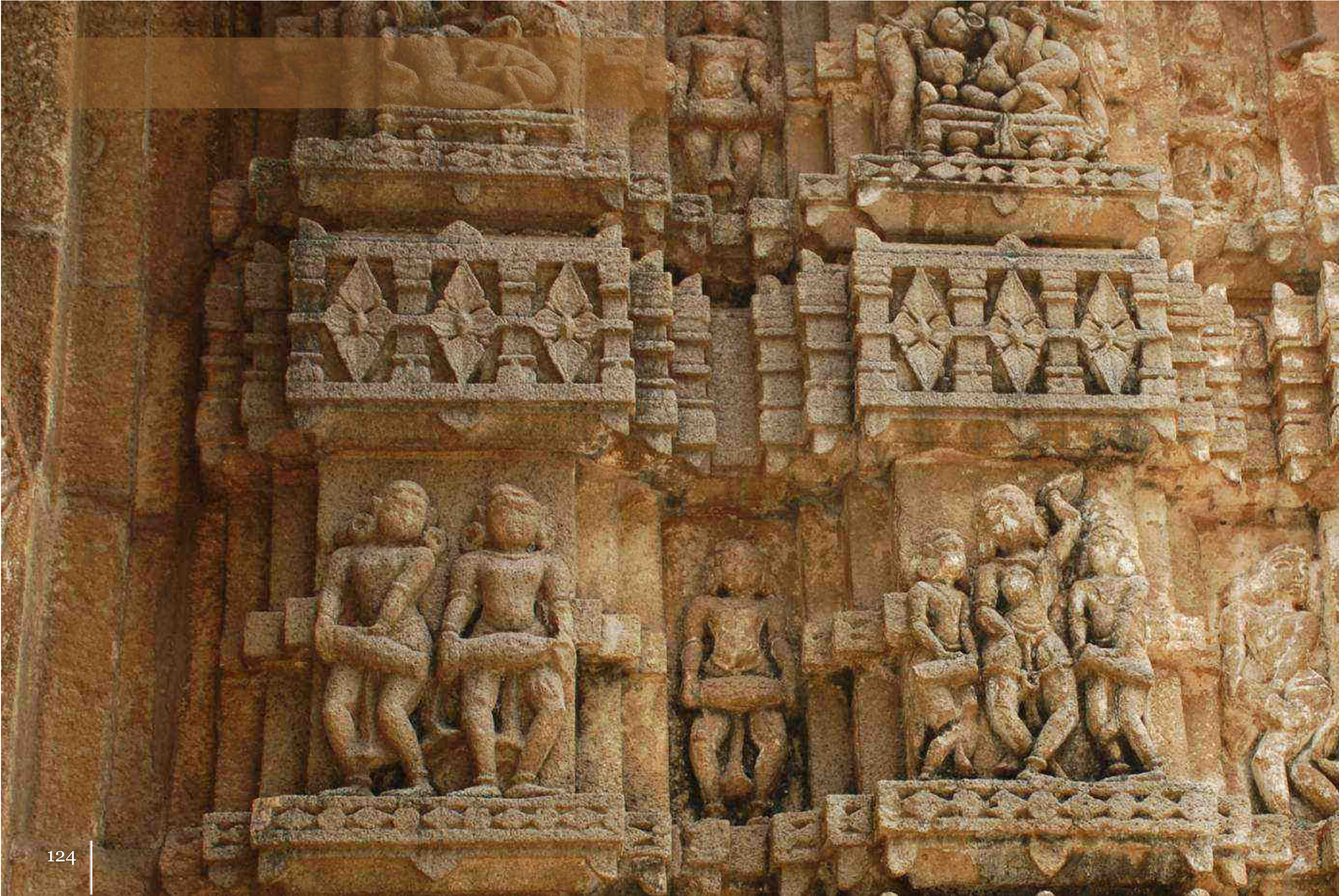


Odisha. Research shows that he was involved with Padmavati, a temple dancer or 'devadasi' and he even married her. His work was inspired by both his personal experience and his religious beliefs. Each of Jayadeva's songs is composed of eight couplets, known as 'ashtapadis'. Twenty four 'ashtapadis' make the entire work. In it 'Krishna' is identified as the 'supreme divine being' - a radical shift from the earlier scriptures where 'Krishna' is one of the many incarnations of 'Vishnu'. The book uses extremely ornamental language to describe in intimate detail of 'Radha's' passion. As one moves from verse to verse, one is transported from the physical realm into the spiritual realm.

The erotic longing becomes the cry of the soul for union with the Divine. Such an approach was revolutionary. It fired the imagination of the priests and dancers who made it a part of the temple ritual. Being a Vaishnava religious centre, hundreds of pilgrims from all over India poured into Puri. Day and night, people heard, the priests sing Jayadeva's song of 'Radha's' love for 'Krishna', with the 'devadasis' depicting their yearning for their beloved, in graceful dance steps.

Yogini Standing with hand and legs in dance posture







TRADITIONS

TRADITIONS AFFECTING OUR ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND THINKING, FORM, ARTISTIC IMAGES ON THE STAGE

Pluralism is the bedrock on which our cultural ethos is built. We live in many ages and different levels simultaneously. The journey of dance from temple and court to the proscenium has meant change. Dances nurtured for years in interior areas are now seen on the international stage.

Indian Classical Dance touches all aspects, spanning from the traditional to the futuristic. Classical dance has taken shape through the ages, enriched our culture and maintained our store of wisdom, sanity and humanity, even as it prepares for the enormous challenges it faces in the new millenium.

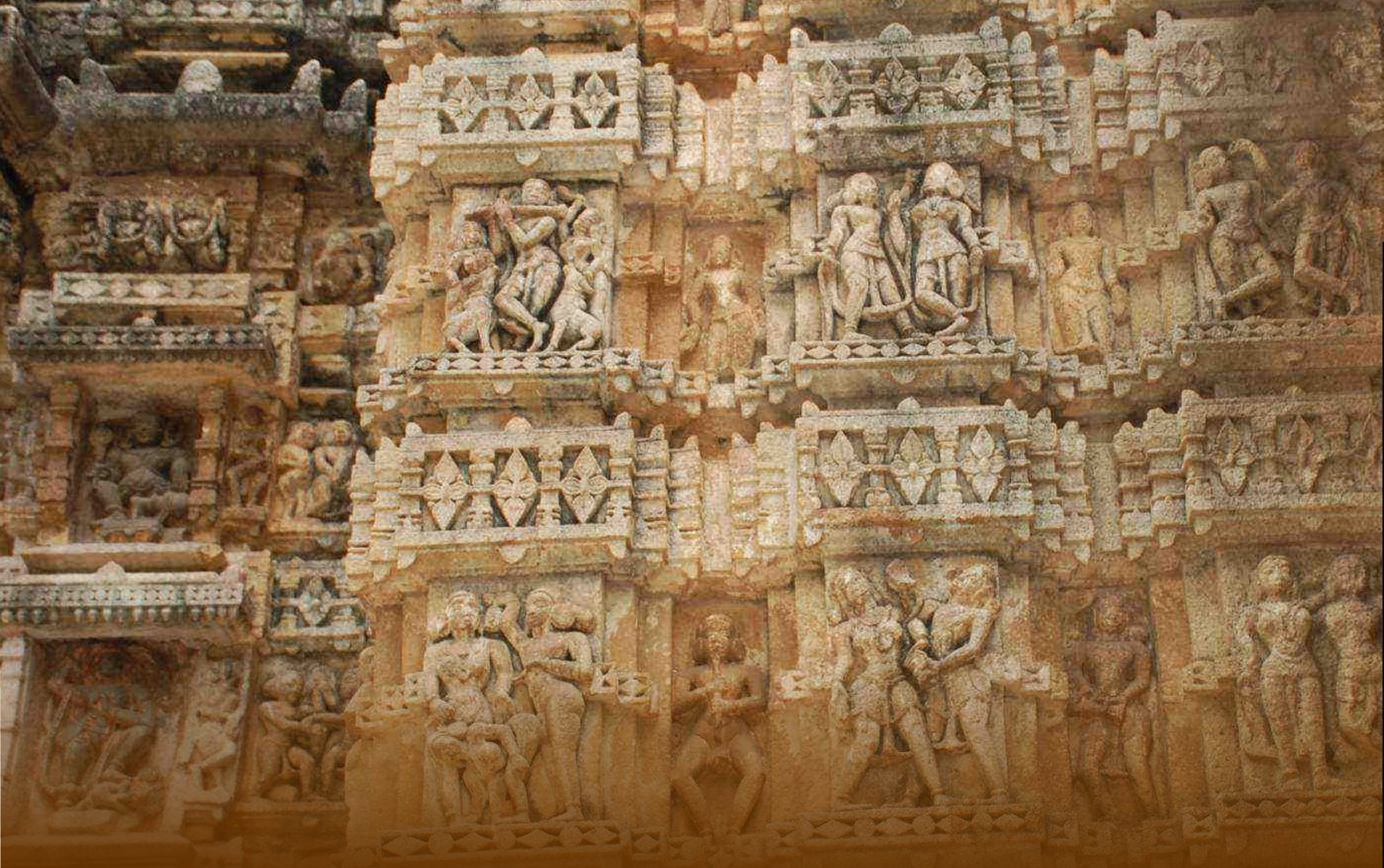
"Where the hand goes, the eyes will follow,
Where the eyes gaze, the mind will go,
where the mind goes, the mood will follow,
Where the mood arrives, There the rasa,
Sweet nectar of emotion arises".

quoted from - Abhinaya Darpara of Nandi Keshvara.

The cults of the 'tantric goddesses' had left a profound effect on Hindu society because they had established the concept of women as Shakti. It was this idea that paved the way for dance, by women, as a temple ritual within the sanctum. The dancers were dedicated to the temple's deity through a ceremony akin to a wedding rite, and their dance became a 'bodily offering' with which to please the deities and ensure the prosperity of the kingdom.

The actual shape and form of the temple dance so erocatively captured in stone in ancient temples is, something we can only imagine.

Our ancient integrated worldview, to quote Dr. Kapila Vatsgayan's book, The 'Natyasastra', the 'Indian Bible' of dance, embodies a vision concurrently at the level of the physical and the metaphysical, the terrestrial and the celestial, the purely biological and the psychical, the sensuous and the spiritual.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PURNASHREE RAUT is a performing Odissi dancer, choreographer, and teacher from Raipur, Chhattisgarh. She is committed to the art as a life time pursuit. She has had her training from Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra at Kala Vikas Kendra, Cuttack, Odisha. She had taught Odissi in Khairagarh University, Odissi department for more than a year. She teaches dance in the Jagannath temple premises of Raipur to 80 student every year. With passage of time, she has evolved a distinctive style classically rooted with contemporary energies. She explores and expands the language of Odissi through her performances and choreographies and workshops. From time to time, she organises workshops for the poor children also. She teaches the blind, deaf and dumb students honorarily in the local school of Mattapurena, Raipur (School for handicapped). She has received awards for this work from Social Welfare Department of the Government of Chhattisgarh. With four decades of dedicated performances in and outside the country she has enriched herself with the art form.

In 2019, Purnashree stepped into the 10th year of Shree Nritya Prajna Odissi Dance Academy Raipur as president, which she has founded and continuing to teach young students through it.

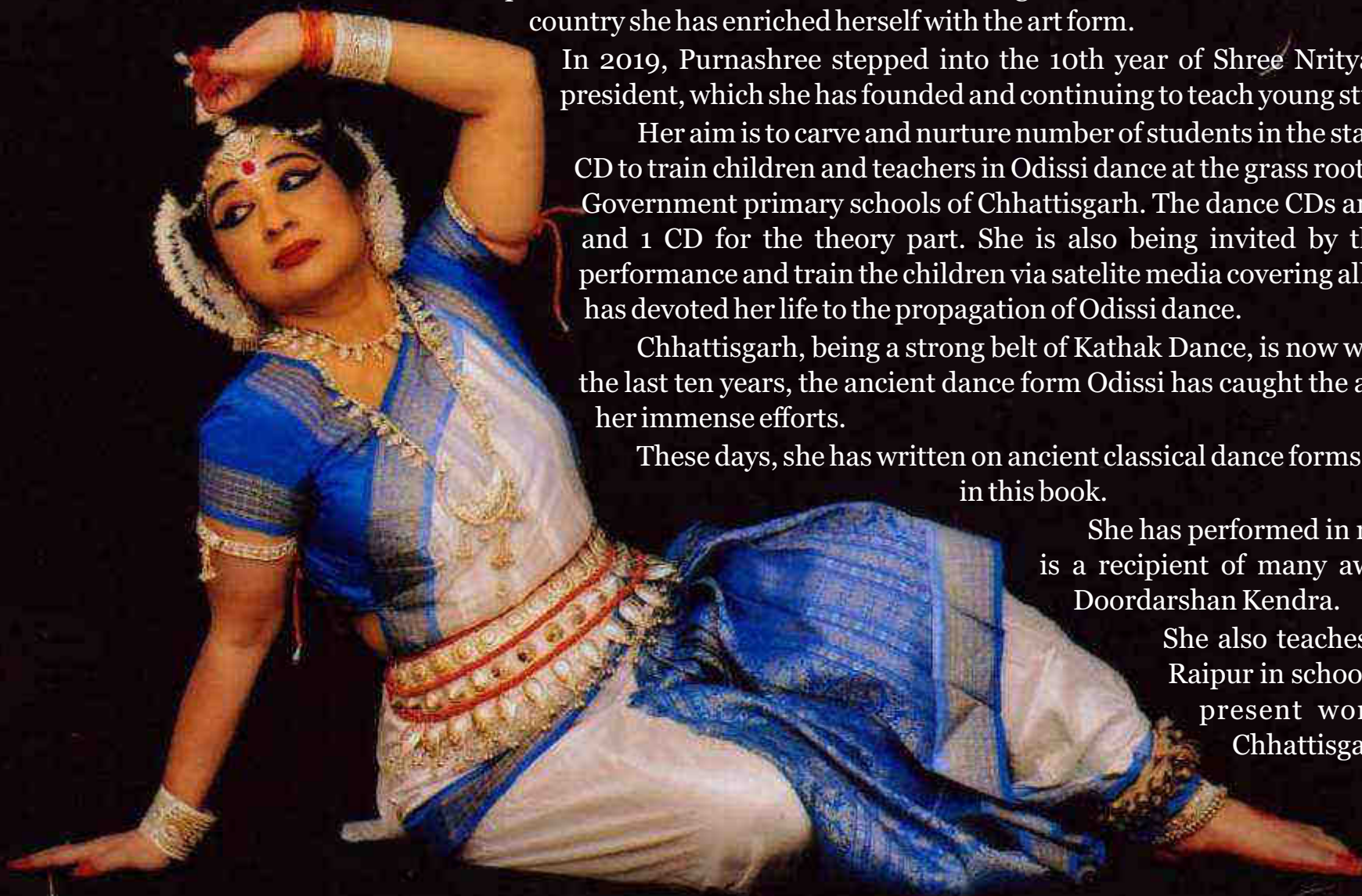
Her aim is to carve and nurture number of students in the state of Chhattisgarh. She has prepared a Video CD to train children and teachers in Odissi dance at the grass root level, which has reached students in 45,000 Government primary schools of Chhattisgarh. The dance CDs are in 3 parts, 2 CDs are for dance in practical and 1 CD for the theory part. She is also being invited by the EDUSAT Studio of SCERT to give live performance and train the children via satellite media covering all the kendras of the state. She is a dancer who has devoted her life to the propagation of Odissi dance.

Chhattisgarh, being a strong belt of Kathak Dance, is now well acquainted with Odissi Dance culture. In the last ten years, the ancient dance form Odissi has caught the attention of the youth of Chhattisgarh due to her immense efforts.

These days, she has written on ancient classical dance forms to spread it's uniqueness across the country, in this book.

She has performed in many national and International stages. She is a recipient of many awards. She is also an "A" grade dancer of Doordarshan Kendra.

She also teaches the blind and deaf and dumb students in Raipur in schools run by the Social Welfare Department. At present working in Culture Department. Raipur, Chhattisgarh.



Alasakanya, 'Nupin padika'



Directorate of Culture & Archaeology
Government Chhattisgarh

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