

# INDIAN DANCES IN THREE PERIODS

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## Abstract-

This study covers the evolution of Indian dance in the three periods, ancient, medieval and modern. Different types of dances came up with these periods due to social, political, cultural, economical change. The study will be specially conducted with fieldwork however; I would like to collect data from both primary and secondary sources. I will try to collect the data and the materials from monks and experts of this field and from some of the community leader and main persons of a community union or a community.

## Introduction-

Indian dance has variety of colors. It was practiced as sacred in ancient time and gradually it passes different phases. The leading Indian scholar Kapila Vatsayan divided the history of dance into three or four periods. The first is the pre-historic or proto-historic period, this period carries the cave paintings, engravings. There are no literary records in this period. History starts with Vedas, which is in the second period. The second period may be considered from 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Both those period are considered as Ancient period. The third period may be considered from the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This period include early medieval and late medieval period. And the forth period is from 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century to the contemporary India which is called the modern period.

In this paper, I have studied about the evolution of Indian dance in different period, its social, political, cultural, economical change and what are the dances present in different period of time.

## Methodology-

The study will be specially conducted with fieldwork however; I would like to collect data from both primary and secondary sources. I will try to collect the data and the materials from monks and experts of this field and from some of the community leader and main persons of a community union or a community.

## Evolution of Indian dance-

Indian dance crosses different changes of time. It has a great evolution from the ancient to modern period. Dance is prior to language. Dance is the best way of communication; it gives us an immense pleasure and makes us healthy. Cave paintings, sculptures give us the evidence of the existence of dance in ancient period.

The paintings of Mohenjodaro gives evidence that dance is originated in early Indus valley civilization. There is a myth that dances first introduced by lord Shiva in Natyasastra. Dancers practiced dance in ritual purpose or in worshipping God. In the ancient time, there was no such auditorium. Dances were practice in temples and in royal courts. In ancient time, dancers were the devotees and they worshiped different Gods and Goddesses through dance. The Natyasastra gives the rules and regulations of Indian dance. Bharata talks about dance in some chapters of his Natyasastra. The chapters are- 4, 5, 8-12, 19, 21, 22, 25 and 31 are on dance.

- Chapter 4- Tandavavidhi
- Chapter 5-details of Purvaranga or the preliminaries
- Chapter 8-movement of head, eyelid,eyebrows, pupils,nose, cheeks,lips,chin,mouth and neck.
- Chapter 9-movements of hands,chest,sides, belly, waist,thighs,shanks and feet
- Chapter 10-caris,sthana
- Chapter 11-mandalas
- Chapter 12-gatis
- Chapter 19-lashyangas
- Chapter 21-aharya abhinaya and the distinction between Natyadharmi and Lokadharmi
- Chapter 22-4 types of Abhinaya
- Chapter 25-Chitrabhinaya and the specific ways of expressing different objects and states and the use of gestures,postures,gatis, walking and theatrical gatherings
- Chapter 31-cymbals, tala, rhythm and metrical cycles and lasya

In medieval period, Mughals came in India. Along with them Kathak dance was popular at that time. In this period, Devadasi or the temple dance got the importance and got the position just after the priests. They were invited by the local kings to perform in the palaces and courts. A new dance was popular at that time which was the Rajadasis. They performed dance for entertainment. There was a noticeable change in this period. The regional dance styles came up in this period. The family system or the Gharanas or Sampradayas developed at that time. Artistes tried to preserve their styles by any means.

In the late medieval period, temple dances lost their importance in some places because of the Muslim tradition. The sacred form of dance looked as for entertainment as well.

In the modern period, due to national movement, eight Indian classical dances have been come up. In this period dances are practiced as performing arts. Political pressure is more in this period. Indian dances practiced in temples are faced declination period in this time and again they are revived. Many different organizations like Sangeet Natak Academy give dance a huge platform to flourish. Different types of scholarships/fellowships given to the dancers in this period. Awards are given to the dancers.

## Dance forms in three periods-

Dance has its own root which is very old in tradition. And some dances are very new with time. The root of the eight Indian classical dances is very much old.

Dance exists from the prehistoric period. We have not the evidence of what was the name of the dances in ancient times. We found dance postures in the paintings, sculptures which indicate that dance was there from the very ancient times. Then texts and literatures give us the evidences. Basically dance performed in ancient times in sacred purpose. In ancient time, temple dance was popular which is called as the Devadasi Dance in later period. Devadasis are the servants of God or the Dasis of Devas and Devis. They do all the temple duties and dance for God.

In the medieval period, temple dance popular as Devadasi dance. It has faced lots of ups and downs in this period. In medieval time dances practiced in temples and royal courts. There was not such auditorium at that time. In these period we have found some name of the dances. Devadasi is popular in medieval time. Dances practiced in temples are basically called as Devadasi. Temple dances lost their importance due to Muslim tradition. When mughals came to India Kathak dance was popular with them at that time. Though kathak name is new. Regional dances

With the arrival of Cholas, Dasiattam or sadir which is lately known as Bharatnatyam was popular in South. Many regional dance forms came up at that time.

If we talk about Assam, there were 3 main categories of dances in medieval period.

1. Nati style or temple dance
2. Non Neo Vaishnava Ojapali dance and
3. Sattrar Nach

Natir nach or temple dance is almost died in recent time. It is the Devadasi dance practiced in medieval period in Assam. Natir Nach is danced in Siva temples but Vaishnava temple also have Natir Nach. Natir are remain unmarried. They lived with their family members and attended temple services in the selected hours. The costume of Nati is Lohonga or Long skirt, long sleeved blouse which is wrapped by Riha or a long piece of cloth. They wear flower in hair and covered it with transparent cloth or Urana. They wear gold ornaments.

Drum and cymbal are the musical instruments in the Natir Nach. Natis songs are erotic sentimental.

Non Neo Vaishnava Ojapali dance is half dramatic performing arts. It represents the socio cultural life of Assam. Ojapali is similar with the other art forms in India like, Harikatha Burhakatha of Andhra Pradesh, Palagan of Orissa, Yakshagana of Karnataka, Kuttus if Kerala, Punaram of Madhya Pradesh, Meitei Jagoi of Manipur Kushan gan of West Assam and North Bengal.

Oja is the leader and the palis are the other singers. Ojapali is like the chorus performance. Oja sings a story with actions and palis repeated this by playing Khuti Taal or small cymbal. There is one Daina Pali who stands right side of the Oja. He is the second leader.

There are two types of Ojapali. One is Suknani Ojapali and other is Byahguwa Ojapali. Suknani ojapalis sing about the Goddess Manasha. This ojapali followed the Padma Purana. It is the non vaishnava ojapali. The Byahguwa ojapali follows the Ramayan and Mahabharata.

The costume of ojapali is chapkon Sula on upper part, Dhuti on the lower part, a Sadar of a piece of cloth wrap around the waist, a Sadar or piece of cloth placed on the shoulder with ends hanging in front of the body, paguri or headgear, garment on the neck. The dress is white in color.

Sattrar Nach is the dance lately known as the Sattriya Dance.

In this way the regional dance forms introduced.

In the modern period, there are so many regional dances and other dance styles are come up. Each and every state of India, every community people have their own dance forms. Folk dance, tribal dance, devotional dance, modern dance and the other contemporary dances are flourished in modern period. The main dance form popular in this period is the Classical dances or the major Indian dance forms in India. There are eight

classical dances in India .

1. Bharat Natyam- this dance is originated in Tamilnadu. This is a solo dance in tradition and performed by female dancers. This dance is based on Shaivism and also Vaishnavism.

The costume consists of Dhoti for both male and female dancers. On the Dhoti in the middle part a frilled cloth hanging from the waist to possibly the knees. The upper part of the male dancers body is uncovered and female wear a tight blouse. Armllets, bangles, earrings, necklace improves the appearance. Female dancers wear a veni or semi circle of real or artificial flowers surrounding the bun or the plaite of the hair. On the forehead tika or dot overcome. There is the particular name of their jewelries. On the head and waist they also used jewelry.

Mridangam, violin, flute and talam or cymbals are the main instruments in this dance form.

2. Kathak- kathak dance is belong to North India. It has the tradition of story telling in Aryan civilization around 2000 BC. Simply Kathak means Katha meaning story. This dance is the fusion form of indo-persian culture. Kathak dance is mainly practiced in royal courts. But it was invented in the temples .With the arrival of Mughals it was dragged to royal courts. Dancers elaborates the story of Raslila, a folk theatrical performance commerce with the Premises bhakti of Vaishnava of North India. While it was dragged to the Royal courts , it was practiced as secular art form.

This dance is popular in both the Hindu and Muslim communities. Therefore, in costume we have found the reflections of the two communities.

There are two types of Hindu costumes for female dancers.

1. A sari wear in a very unique way with a blouse . A scarf or urana worn on head in some places .

2. A long embroidered skirt with blouse and a transparent scarf on head.

They used traditional jewellery. Ghungurus are the main part of kathak dancers which made beautiful sound. And male Hindu dancers wear a silk dhoti with a silk scarf on the upper body. The body covered by a loose jacket. Jewelries are simple.

The costume of female Muslim dancers are a skirt with a tight fitting trouser and a long coat to wrap the upper body and hands. A scarf covered the head. Jewelries are light.

The costume of Muslim male dancers are payjama and rests are similar with the Hindu male dancers.

Pakwaj, tabla, harmonium, sarengi and talam or cymbal are the main instrument in Kathak dance.

3. Kathakali Dance- this is dance form of Kerala. The literary meaning of kathakali is story play. This dance form is the beautiful combination of music, literature , paintings, acting and dance. The base of kathakali is religious. It based on two epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The main attraction of Kathakali dance is its amazing makeup, costume and background.

The costumes of Kathakali dance is diverse from character to character. These are -Sathwika the hero, Kathi the Villain, Minukku the females and Thatti.

Chenda, Maddalam,Cymbals and Ela Talam are the main instruments used in this dance form.

4. Manipuri Dance- this is the dance belongs to Manipur the eastern state of India. The traditional Manipuri dance style symbolizes delicate, lyrical and graceful movements. This dance has soft sensuous movements of women and rare fast movements by male characters.

The costume of the female manipuri dancers are similar with Manipuri bride referred as Potloi costume. The drummers who also dance while playing drums are male dancers. They wear Dhoti and white Turban on head. A shawl tidily folded decorates their left shoulders.

Pung, and cymbals are the main instrument of this dance form. Flute, harmonium, Pena and sembong are the other instruments.

5. Kuchipudi dance- it is the dance belongs to Andhra Pradesh. The dance named by its village. This dance is practiced by the Telegu Brahmins. This dance is based on dance drama. Basically kuchipudi born from Bhagawat Mela .

The male dancer wears Dhoti. Female dancer wears sari with light makeup. They braids their hair which reflects their regional tradition. Wearing flowers on hair. They used jewelries on hair, ear, nose, necklace, armllets and ghunguru. On the forehead they wear red round bindi.

Mridangam, Violin, Been, Flute and Talam or cymbal are the instruments used in Kuchipudi dance.

6. Mohiniattam - this dance is belongs to Kerala. Mohiniattam basically a female oriented solo dance form. This dance has influential movements of the upper body with legs placed in a stance similar to the pile position.

Dancers are mainly females . They wear sari with golden lace with a similar blouse. A pleated cloth in centre on the front part of the sari from the waist. A belt wear around the waist. Makeup is light in face. They wear jewelry on neck , ear, wrist, hair and fingers. On foot they wear ghunguru. Their hair tied typically on the left side and beautified with flowers.

Kuzhitalam or cymbals, Veena , Idakka, Mridangam, flute, Chenda, Mandalam, are used as instruments in this dance form.

7. Oddisi- oddisi dance belongs to Orissa. This dance is originated from Hindu temples. The dance has many themes from Vaishnavism and others linked with Hindu God and Goddesses like Shiva, Surya, Shakti. In oddisi dance female dancers wear bright colored sari of their tradition. They wear in a unique way and on the sari, they use a pleated cloth for the flexible movements. Silver jewelries they used. Wear belt with small metallic balls. They wear Tikka on forehead. Hair tied with a bun. A moon shaped crown or mukut they wear. A male dancer wears dhoti tidily pleated in front . Upper body remains bare. A belt wear in waist. Tabla, pakhwaj, harmonium, cymbals, violin, flute, Sitar and swarmandal are use in this dance form as musical instruments.

8. Sattriya- Sattriya dance belongs to Assam. This dance form is created to united people in one fold Bhakti. Lord Krishna or Vishnu has been worshipped in this dance form.

The costumes are different for male and female dancers. Along with that costumes differ from dance to dance. Cali Nach is the female dance. Dancer wear skirt or Lohonga, blouse, sadar on the upper part, Kinkini on the waist. Hair tied by bun . Urana or a piece of cloth wear on the bun in some dances. Traditional jewelry used. Male dancers wear dhoti, shirt, safar, kinkini, paguri on head and wear some jewelries. Nadubhangi is a male dance. Dancer wear nadubhangi tupi on head . Sutradhari is also a male dance . Here the dancer wear skirt or lohonga instead of dhoti and mughlai tupi on head. The names of the pieces of clothes are different. Jhumura Nach is also a male dance . Here the dancer wear skirt or lohonga and paguri on head.

Khool or drum is the main instrument of this dance form. Cymbals, flute, violin are the other instruments used in this dance form.

### **Social, political, cultural and economical imapct in Indian dances in the three periods-**

Social change influenced on dance. In ancient times people are more religious. They did religious works. Dances were also practiced in religious purposes. Females of higher caste families were not allowed to dance.

Gradually dance took as secular to sacred form in medieval time. Society created many different dance forms. Artists practiced dance to preserve it apart from the sacred form. In modern period people took dance as the performing art form.

Political condition on dance is very important to study. Mainly we noticed the politics on dance from medieval period. Temple dances were popular in the beginning of medieval period. With the arrival of Mughals, Muslim tradition came into India. Due to the political issues dances got affected at that time. So artists tried to preserve their arts by any means. In modern period, British rulled in India . They spread their culture and started anti dance movement. In the time of national movement , Indians tried to save our culture . Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri are the main dance forms most popular at that time. Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Oddisi and Sattriya are also got the popularity in the time of national movement.

Cultural change is also there in Dance. In ancient times only temple dances were there. With medieval period, so many different cultures entered in Indian culture . In Kathak dance we found the change or assimilation. To preserve the art forms , artists started their own gharanas or style. In this way, every community people have their own dance forms. In modern period we found that lots of dance forms come

up. Culture is the main impact on different kinds of dance forms.

Economical impact is also found on dance. We have found all the changes happened from the medieval period. Temples dancers lost their importance in late medieval period which reflects their economic condition. In the modern period, due to anti dance movement, temples dancers faced financial crisis. Because they are stopped from the daily services of the temple.

After 17th century Social, political, cultural and economical condition was not good for dance . But with the national movement, people got back all the status on dance.

**Conclusion-** Dance has the three periods. In all the periods we have found the changes in dance from different angle. The evolution on dance give us the dance now as an performing arts and every community can represent their culture through dance. Indian has the variety of different cultures and dances . It is very much rich in culture.

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