UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Performative Geographies: Trans-Local Mobilities and Spatial Politics of Dance Across & Beyond the Early Modern Coromandel

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

by

Pallavi Sriram

2017

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Performative Geographies: Trans-Local Mobilities and Spatial Politics of Dance Across & Beyond the Early Modern Coromandel

by

Pallavi Sriram

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Janet M. O'Shea, Chair

This dissertation presents a critical examination of dance and multiple movements across the Coromandel in a pivotal period: the long eighteenth century. On the eve of British colonialism, this period was one of profound political and economic shifts; new princely states and ruling elite defined themselves in the wake of Mughal expansion and decline, weakening Nayak states in the south, the emergence of several European trading companies as political stakeholders and a series of fiscal crises. In the midst of this rapidly changing landscape, new performance paradigms emerged defined by hybrid repertoires, focus on structure and contingent relationships to space and place – giving rise to what we understand today as classical south Indian dance. Far from stable or isolated tradition fixed in space and place, I argue that dance as choreographic

practice, theorization and representation were central to the negotiation of changing geopolitics, urban milieus and individual mobility.

This study traces change through intersecting movement of people, ideas and repertoires anchored in specific new and changing urban milieus; developing the concept of performative geographies It unpacks the ways in which multiple stakeholders, themselves often on the move, drew from diverse milieus (performative, geopolitical, temporal and social), connecting through the subcontinent and across the Bay of Bengal. Examining three sets of articulations: of popular representations of performance, ideals of practice, and hybrid performed repertoire; this study reads across text (Indian language plays, memoirs, song text, treatise), painted visuals, and spaces themselves as archives. These circulations and the individual choices they weave together map shifting translocal relationships, imaginaries and politics of space.

This interdisciplinary project lies at the intersection of dance studies, critical cultural studies approaches to space and place, and historiography of the Indian Ocean. It extends postcolonial dance studies investigations of performance and/as politics, focused on twentieth-century nationalisms and globalization, back into a consideration of eighteenth century shifts to engage with early modern scholarship on new subjectivities, circulations and intellectual networks. By offering performative geographies as both framework and methodology, this project works against macro-imperial narratives of decline, colonial rupture, and revival, as well as the fixing of precolonial bodily pasts in order to open up new considerations of urban connectivities across South Asia and the Indian Ocean world.

This dissertation of Pallavi Sriram is approved.

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This dissertation is dedicated to

Sidharth, Latha and Sriram

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Acknowledgements

It gives me great joy to acknowledge and thank the many people who have made this project possible. I believe knowledge production is a process of speaking across time and place, made possible by those we are lucky enough to encounter and share space with. I have to first thank my advisor and Chair, Janet O'Shea, whose work sparked the process of questioning that led to this project before we ever met. Her countless conversations and unphasing enthusiasm for this work fueled me through this process, inspiring clarity even when I could not find it. Susan Foster's faith in me and this work kept me moving through some of its most difficult phases and her incisive comments on my writing and approach crucially helped me shape the dissertation. Anurima Banerji's generosity and probing questioning, particularly regarding inter-disciplinary methodologies, energized me and pushed my work forward in key moments. Finally, I thank Sanjay Subrahmanyam whose support allowed me to conceive of my research under different historiographical concerns, engaging with early modernity and Indian Ocean pasts in exciting ways, both productively and rigorosly.

Aside from my committee, others in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance and UCLA generally have supported me and allowed this project to come to fruition. David Shorter, Angelia Leung, and Hayley have been central to my graduate career and their support cannot be understated. I would also like to thank Victoria Marks, Cheng-Chieh Yu, Lionel Popkins, Polly Roberts, Al Roberts, Peter Sellars, Christy Edmunds, David Gere, and Aparna Sharma, all of whom I had the pleasure of either taking courses with, working under as a teaching assistant or sharing conversations with. Arsenio Apillanes, Lynn Tatum, Tiffany Long, Will O'Loughlen, and Erica Angarano all made my WAC/D experience a positive one. I couldn't imagine carrying out this project in any environment other than the truly multi-disciplinary home I've found here.

The Center for India and South Asia has been a place of community for those working across disciplines and departments on the study of South Asia. It has been an important resource and the starting point for many conversations which helped me think through this project with rigor. I would like to thank Akhil Gupta and the many faculty, visiting scholars and graduate students I met through CISA. The presentation of part of my first chapter for the CISA Graduate South Asia Conference was pivotal to the development of the dissertation.

In India, many people have helped me in archives, archeological sites and more. In Tanjavur, I would like to thank Dr. Ramakausalya for hosting me and having many conversations about dance and music history; the Tamil pundit Manimaran and Sanskrit pundit A Veeraraghavan and director S Sudarsan at the Tanjavur Sarasvati Mahal Library for obliging me on my many requests for materials and copies, despite bureaucratic red tape. In Chennai, I would like to thank everyone at U Ve Swaminatha Iyer Library, Roja Muthhiah Library, the Madras Music Academy, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, and Tamil Nadu State Archives. I would like to thank Asai Thambi at the Ramanathapuram palace, Saktivel at the Madurai Tirumalai Nayak palace, Pakkirisami the Sivaganga palace museum curator, S Mohan at the Airavateswarar temple in Kumbakonam, Murthy heading the Archeological society at Brhadiswara temple in Tanjavur, Mahalingam in Melattur, and the countless others I met along the way as I drove up and down the Coromandel coast, particularly in the summer of 2016.

I am grateful for the financial support that I received from various granting agencies. The Graduate Research Mentorship early on my PhD process allowed me to do crucial initial work on archival searches both in the US and in India. My dissertation research would not have been possible without funding from UCLA School of Arts and Architecture, the General Dean's Fellowship and South Asian Dance Fellowship. The writing of my dissertation was funded by a

UCLA Graduate Division Dissertation Year Fellowship. The Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance at UCLA has provided additional financial support and several travel grants.

I extend a special thanks to Susan Manning. As an undergraduate student at Northwestern University straddling engineering and dance, my path into my current work was far from predetermined. Not only her infectious energy but her insistence launched me into this field and she continues to be a point of support. I'd also like to thank Susan Dun, Susan Lee and Joseph Mills all of whom made possible my time at Northwestern.

Writing a dissertation can be an isolating process. I would like to thank the wonderful friends and colleagues who have provided both insight and emotional support. Rita M Rufino Valente-Quinn, Mana Hayakawa, Carl Schottmiller, Sarah Wilbur, Ellen Gerdes, Barry Brannum, Peter Haffner, Elaine Sullivan, Elyan Hill, and Alessandra Williams have been my fellow travelers, whether near or far. Their in-depth conversations and comraderie were central to completing this dissertation. I'd also like to thank Sharna Fabiano, Isaac Oboka, Meena Murugesan, Naveena Naqvi, Sarah Jacobs, Jenna Delgado, Alison D'Amato, Brynn Schiovitz and countless others in my graduate community as a whole, in WAC/D and outside for the opportunities we provided one another to share work and support.

Finally, I could not have gone on this journey without my family. Music and dance have been part of my history, my inheritance and a shaping force in my life from the beginning. I am grateful for my gradparents back in Chennai and for the grandparents who are with me in spirit. Most importantly, I am grateful for my brother Sidharth and my mother Latha whose creative visions led me to think deeply about dance/music as process and choices, and especially my father Sriram, who has challenged me when it matters most and whose sheer openness I aspire to as a scholar and person. They are not only my support, they are my inspiration.

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Performative Geographies:
Trans-Local Mobilities and Spatial Politics of Dance Across/Beyond the Early Modern Coromandel

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Back on the road, the skyline flashed intermittently through palm groves across the window frames, as I drove through. My dancer's knees were sore from being on the road and my back needed stretching out as we turned the corner and a fragment of huge fort wall seemingly leaped up to meet me, jutting up from a large busy intersection as I entered into Madurai, a city in the far south of Tamil Nadu. We turned another corner coming into the classic entryway of the southern courtyard of the looming old Nayak palace with its open-aired white-pillared courtyard and its natanaasabha or dance hall. As I entered the space and scanned my eyes over the walls, multiple layers of movement and pasts rippling through the restored paints, all I wanted was to get a sense of the bodies that had danced there, the bodies that had sat on the other end of the hall, or in the upper balcony watching, feeling, responding, or those that stood against the walls watching both watching each other.

Over weeks and months, I drove through the many spaces across southeast India in which dance lived and people congregated – some thriving and overwhelming today, like Rameswaram or Madurai temple, parts of the Tanjavur palace; some completely unacknowledged, run down or painted over, such as the many out of the way lodges or smaller temples in Kumbakonam and Nagapattinam or the palace estates of Pudukottai or Sivagangai which no longer exist but for a courtyard. Dance existed in these spaces, on the walls and in the courtyards, spaces of

movement, encounter, passing through and assembling. These partial and whole fragments of space and time form the basis for my story in more ways than one. The musty archives were important in my journey but it was in these lived-in spaces and moments that I really found the past, the dancing and spectating bodies in the nooks and broken crannies, the odd juxtapositions of temporalities in the spaces of cities and crossroads.

Only in walking through these spaces, driving over these long roads, talking to the caretakers of the places and its materials, did I understand what I was addressing; the pulse beneath the idea of writing about dance in a period we don't acknowledge and places we don't address in all their live-ness and complicated dynamics. These places haven't 'died' today; they don't merely exist in the past-tense, this history is not far from us. It just seems so because of which voices we have chosen to hear and which bodies we have chosen to follow. The reason for this work is to re-orient, towards a rousing set of danced dynamics and entire worlds of imaginaries that have been left by the wayside but that can tell us much about not only south Indian cultural and performance pasts but about our/these worlds today.

This dissertation proposes a rethinking of South Asian dance histories through a critical examination of dance in and through urban milieus of the early modern Coromandel and Deccan. The study is centered on a pivotal historical period: the long eighteenth century, 1680s to 1820s. This period saw significant political, economic, and socio-spatial change in south/east South Asia and the general Indian Ocean world on the eve of European colonialism. Dance in emerging and changing urban centers, known variously as *sadir, kacceri, (cinna) melam, dasi attam*, embodied a new paradigm of concert performance, defined by new hybrid repertoire organized

with an attention to structure and abstract elements of movement and music. Yet, this period and the key dynamics around performance it produced remain overshadowed by colonial and postcolonial historiographies.

In this dissertation, I examine plural movements of and around dance-making to trace the new dynamics of performance they generated at this historical moment. Performers, patrons, intellectuals and composers, produced imaginaries around dance practice and performance. Implicit in the new genres and repertoire was an attention to values around performing and participating bodies, their relationship to urban spaces and social mobility, and to performance as socially and aesthetically structured. I focus on the representation, theorization and composition of dance by intersecting sets of individuals and agendas. I do so by reading across media and kinds of archive – textual (largely Indian language), visual, spatial. I argue that through the production and circulation of dance and knowledge around dance in this period, individuals claimed multiple pasts in an effort to define trans-local social and kinesthetic politics of space, place, mobility and authority.

By attending to intersecting movements of people and ideas across urban milieus around dance, I develop the idea of performative geographies. Intersecting with, but distinct from, geo-political mappings and the flows of capital and material, dance performance and knowledge production around dance mapped distinctly trans-local connections and imaginaries in the context of a rapidly shifting subcontinent and Indian Ocean world in the long eighteenth century. The geographies that thus coalesced around dance make visible a number of corporeal negotiations of mobility, authority, and socio-spatial logics, in relation to defining new and changing urban milieus and the states that they anchored.

Coming into the seventeenth century, the Coromandel (the southeastern coast of the subcontinent) and the circulations that connected it through the Deccan (central plateau region), broader subcontinent and across the Bay, were defined by multiple existing states: primarily Telugu Nayak states and Perso-Turkic Shia sultanates. By the end of the seventeenth century, the expansionary policies of the hegemonic Mughal imperial state, particularly towards the south, left a weakened center at Delhi and multiple new states in the Deccan and South. In addition, an emerging Maratha network of military expansion contested Mughal power throughout the subcontinent, including in the Coromandel. Beyond Mughal offshoot and Maratha states, new figures emerged from the social margins on military prowess and independent financial backing to establish independent new states. Thus, the period was defined by new kinds of opportunity and mobility.

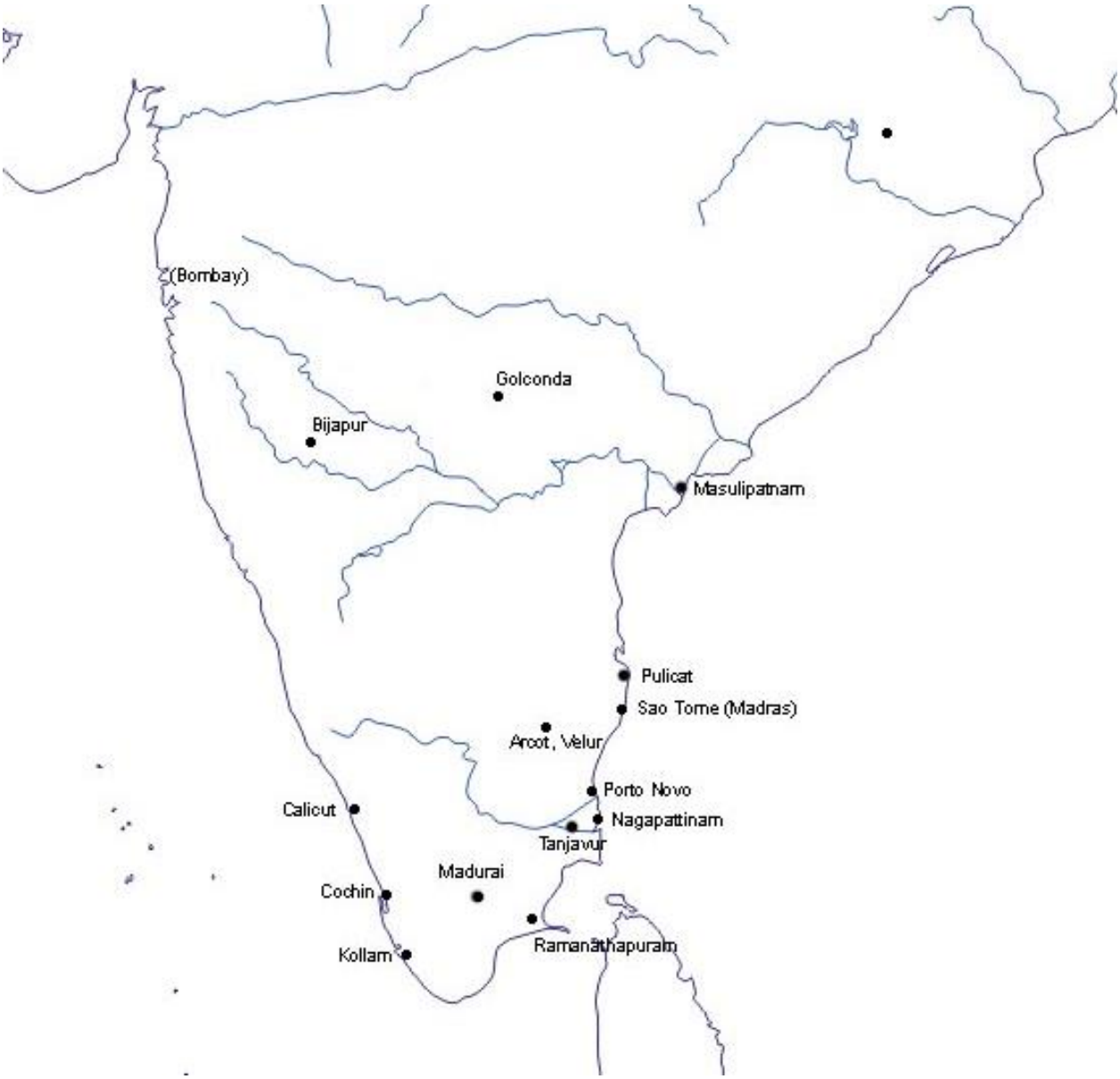


Fig. 1. Map of South Asia with Major Centers of Deccan and Coromandel, 18th century

Throughout the eighteenth-century relationships between various urban centers continuously shifted and social relationships redefined. In the far south, Madurai Nayak rule had expanded and

developed under Rani Mangammal (r.1689-1704)[1] as she negotiated relationships (military and political) with newly arrived Marathas in Tanjavur, the Mughal army, expanding Mysore state in the north, Travancore state to the west. However, as the working capital had moved north to Tiruchi in the Kaveri Delta, Madurai lost its edge as a political center and a new state, centered at Ramanathapuram grew. Raghunatha Setupati (1645-1670), who had gained clout helping Mangammal's predecessor win several military campaigns, and his son and successor Kizhavan Setupati annexed territory, grew Ramanathapuram as an urban political and economic center by the early 1700s. In the Kaveri delta, Tanjavur, which had been under the rule of a Telugu Nayak dynasty, fell into trouble in the 1670s, due to a marriage-related conflict between the Tanjavur and Madurai Nayak families, and was taken over by a branch of the expanding Maratha Bhonsles from the western Deccan. Hyderabad, which had grown under the Persianate-origin Qutb Shahi Dynasty came under Mughal purview as the center of the Deccan territory after prolonged siege by Aurangzeb's army in 1687. In Ramanathapuram, Tanjavur, Arcot and Golconda therefore, the turn of the century saw new ruling elite across the board as well as differing relationships between them, with no sense of one clear imperial center.

In the process, many artists, artisans and intellectuals increased the already existing flow of people southward, invited to settle by the Tanjavur and Madurai states – both under the Nayaks and their successors. Often, not only performers and intellectuals but patrons (kings, landed gentry) had relationships with multiple places at once, moving back and forth between them. In this midst, not only various Indian individuals, but a number of European trading companies,

[1] She was a popular administrator and is still widely remembered as a maker of roads and avenues, and a builder of temples, tanks and chatrams with many of her public works still in use. She is also known for her diplomatic and political skills and successful military campaigns

particularly Dutch, French and English, saw opportunities to embed themselves into the geographies of the subcontinent, not just as economic players but as political stakeholders. Economically, increasing European company monopolies of overseas trade industries (particularly textiles) which had thrived in the seventeenth century caused independent Indian merchant-entrepreneurs to turn inwards, becoming visible in the Coromandel landscape as bridging political and economic spheres of activity – financing new small states and more.

This dissertation is situated amongst these considerable shifts, focused on the long eighteenth century. It focuses on key circulations of patrons, performers and intellectuals. I attend to dance through individuals' movements between specific centers including Tanjavur, Ramnad, and to a less extent Golconda – connected not only through the subcontinent (up to Mughal Delhi) but also across the Bay of Bengal (to Southeast Asian centers like Johor and Malacca). I trace the ways in which they constructed and translated popular representations of dance, conceptual ideas about practice and hybrid repertoires as they found themselves in new contexts, rooted in urban space and place. In the process, I attend to the multiple ways decisions around dance making and knowledge production make visible the histories, identities and urban publics these individuals negotiated in the eighteenth-century Coromandel. Ultimately, I suggest that the paradigms we today understand as classical south Indian performing arts were borne out of instability, debate and plural negotiations across geopolitics of state-building, socio-economics of trade and bodily values around mobility, sensuality and practice. Far from stable or linear, these negotiations were translocal, transtemporal, and fundamentally in flux.

I. Literature, Debates

Macro-imperial narratives of South Asian history locate the eighteenth century as a dark period at the juncture of the Mughal empire and the British raj. Alongside these macro-

narratives, dancers and scholars in the period of the Indian Independence movement defined a narrative of decline associated with early modernity and British colonialism and revival aligned with nationalist movements in the early twentieth century. In this narrative, dance which had been classically associated with temples, religious institutions and pan-subcontinental Sanskritic pasts was standardized by specific court musicians at the beginning of the nineteenth century – seen as a golden period – then slowly degraded (into prostitution) first through association with human patrons (kings and zamindars) and subsequently through the denigration by British colonial powers and lack of native patronage. Ultimately twentieth century dancer-choreographers 'revived' the form and its classical heritage, leaving behind the baggage of its negative connotations – identified as both the sensual parts of the *sadir* repertoire and the devadasi women who practiced them.

By temporally and spatially distancing a 'golden era' from political and economic contestations of European presence in the Coromandel and by removing dance from both political and commercial concerns, twentieth century revivalists were able to isolate a narrative of 'high art', associated purely with religiosity and spirituality that could adhere to emerging Indian middle class and global respectability politics. That is, as cultural nationalists, they contributed to the argument for self-rule on the basis of Indian civilizational antiquity and glory, inverting but still adhering to the thematics laid out by colonial discourses. Both colonial and postcolonial narratives thus rested on the erasure of complicated recent pre-colonial south Asian pasts: defined by hybridity, intersecting geopolitics and so-called cultural spheres like dance, music, drama, literature, visual culture and more. Just as subcontinental eighteenth-century dynamics cannot be understood in terms of macro 'periods' (Mughal, British or otherwise), dance histories cannot be understood only in terms of native decline of patronage and rupture

produced by colonial intervention, without redefining the terms under which we understand the early modern precolonial bodily past.

Moreover, after Independence, India was defined through a nation-of-nation model in which each state is imagined as embodying a particular ethno-linguistic identity– for example Tamil Nadu is the land of the Tamil people. In many ways, this territorialization was also an extension of European/colonial logics. By extension, while certain dance forms were constructed or imagined as representing the nation as a whole (such as bharata natyam), most of the forms that the central government institutions recognized as classical were identified with a particular state. In fact, part of the political project of regional states in the 50s and into the 60s was predicated on identifying, defining and advocating for national recognition of what they deemed as classical dance and music forms. In the process, these projects and the geo-political boundaries on which they operate, occluded the ways in which cultural imaginaries and their embodiments were not defined within these current-day borders but rather through movement and relationships between multiple urban centers falling within multiple of today's state-regions and, just as importantly, beyond the national boundaries of India itself. Thus, this dissertation's conceptual framework of performative geographies is aimed at working against both notions of colonial rupture and the fixed territorialized identity of colonial and post-colonial mappings through an attention to the translocal dynamics of dance and knowledge production around performance in a pivotal eighteenth century.

i. South Asian Performance and Post-Colonial Critique

Revisionist scholars of South Asian performing arts have situated dance's centrality within projects of nation-building and cultural revival in the twentieth century, particularly in response to British orientalist colonial discourses (Bakhle 2005, O'Shea 2007, Peterson and Soneji 2008).

Dance and music scholars have highlighted processes of standardization, textualization, moralization and classicization associated with shifting patronage systems, new arts institutions, viewing publics and social mandates of the emerging middle class (Meduri 1996, Allen 1997, Subramanian 2006, Weidman 2006). Navigating both local pressures of respectability politics and new consciousness of India's place in a global world, performing artists and thought leaders re-aligned movement vocabularies with classical Sanskritic grammars, aligned visions of the body with modern middle-class notions of femininity, public decency and beauty, and aligned lyrical content with a de-eroticized and coherent national Hinduism. Dance scholars have shown that despite post-colonial narratives, 'classical dance' continues to be understood not as fixed, but as dynamic and engaging with the past, privileging the idea of inheritance (Jeyasingh 1990) via highly individual interpretations of tradition. Other historians of south Asian dance, particularly kathak and odissi, locate dance and dancing bodies in a number of politics around gender, sexuality, class and religion, complicating simple narratives of South Asian historical pasts (Banerji 2009, 2012, Chakravorty 2006, 2008). In the post-colonial nation-state context of India, dance and to some extent music, came to embody a cultural essentialism that intersected with a feminized private sphere that allowed the masculine public sphere to operate as a space for the negotiation of global geopolitics and liberal capitalist economics (Performing Pasts

While many have focused on dance through the historical lens of twentieth century nationalist movements, another set of scholars have looked back to colonial histories of social and legal 'reform' that set the tone for the marginalization of devadasi women and the bodily inheritances they manifested. Unable to reconcile nineteenth century Victorian mores around women, sexuality and domesticity, missionaries and English East India company officials sought to define devadasi women as either prostitutes or nuns. However, as very few women who could

own land, read, write and make claims to public space, devadasi women's sexuality became a means for both English and Indians with various agendas to disenfranchise them. With few exceptions, anti-nautch and anti-dedication movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, spearheaded by European and Indian women's' reform groups, effectively removed dancing women from the public sphere as agents of their own stories, much less of generally acknowledged dance histories. Much of the scholarship recuperating devadasi women's histories, memories and agency have revolved around deconstructing colonial narratives of sexual degeneracy from legal and social perspectives (Srinivasan 1985, 1987, Oldenburg 1990, Gaston 1996, Jordan 2003) or distancing devadasi women from questions of sexuality by highlighting religiosity and auspiciousness (Kersenboom- Story 1987). Recent scholarship has sought to attend to historical realities of women who were professional performers or held high-standing social rank outside of domestic ties by nuancing their relationship to temple institutions (Orr, 2000) or focusing on royal courts as the site of dance and music activity, particularly in Tanjavur (Peterson 1998, 1999, Weidman 2006, Subramanian 2006, Soneji 2008).

However, the discussion around dance before the late eighteenth century remains particularly sparse, especially with regards to the southern part of the South Asian subcontinent. Predicated on a focus on profound colonial rupture, existing post-colonial scholarship implicitly de-focuses from both the dynamics of pre-colonial histories as well as the continuities of those histories into the present. Moreover, discussions about the politics of performance remain hinged on questions of sexuality and socio-spatial location (temple or court) raised by European colonial discourses from the nineteenth century. Instead, I am interested in dance's location as part of broader politics of mobility and state-building in the eighteenth century which cross between domains of religiosity, commerciality and political power.

As opposed to an assumption of colonial rupture or modernity as rupture, I rely on an implicit historiographic idea: that there have been multiple moments of profound change that have negotiated the dynamics of significant political, economic and social change. Just as with the twentieth century independence moment, the eighteenth century was one such period. In this period, dance was central to bodily negotiations of histories and identities. I aim to show that south Indian dance, in moments of heightened political self-consciousness, was already intimately engaged in the concrete politics of state-definition as well as individual upward mobility and the construction of public spheres. This engagement is visible through the consciousness around dance's representation, aesthetics and repertoire.

ii. Questions of Modernity & Change: The Indian Ocean world

In order to look back to the eighteenth century rigorously and without prioritizing Euro-centric notions of change, modernity or territorialized identity, I engage with historical scholarship on South Asia and more generally, the Indian Ocean world, which locates change in an 'early modern' period. While I am not invested in the debates of what constitutes 'modernity' per se, my work engages with the rigorous attention to the kinds of circulations, agency and state-making that define this period.

The eighteenth century has often been treated as a backdrop to colonial histories, as a period of decline that forms the blank canvas onto which European discourses were mapped onto.[2] While colonialism rendered a profound violence and constructed many new discourses in and around the Indian Ocean world, including South Asia, many scholars have for decades now questioned the persistent idea that 'modernity' or significant change by any other name, in terms

[2] John F Richards made an argument in 1997 against these terms and the focus they reveal.

of economics, intellectual ideas, political formations and more, was either brought to the rest of the world by Europeans or was an indirect result of European intervention. Among colonial historians of the Madras Presidency, many have pointed out the extent to which we must understand colonial discourses in terms of existing indigenous ones (Raman 2012, Irschick 1994, Peterson 2010, Mukund 2005, Howes 2003, Ebeling). Scholars have variously addressed the emergence of colonialism as a matter of policy (towards the various 'problems' of agriculture and sectarianism) (Irschick 1994, Appadurai 2007) as social structures (Neild- basu 1984, Mukund 2005), and sets of bodily habitus of writing, documenting, truth-deciding associated with bureaucracy (Raman 2012). New ways of sharing information defined and the construction of new publics which might or might not have been in dialogue with European technologies and ideologies (Bayly 1996, 2001, O'Hanlon, Washbrook 2011).

On the other hand, scholars of Eurasia and the Indian Ocean have proposed the temporal scope and concept of the 'early modern' covering roughly the sixteenth to mid eighteenth centuries. This temporal and conceptual focus allows for a closer examination of major shifts in history-writing, individual subjectivity, rise of commercial cash economies and mobile individuals and relationships between kingly authority, ethno-linguistic identity and institutionalized religion along terms very different than what was happening contemporaneously in Europe. At the same time, it allows for an understanding of connected histories from Europe through to East Asia through trade, political relationships, and individual encounters with difference. Scholars locate the Indian Ocean as a place of significant shifts vis-à-vis the position of the individual, approach to knowledge production, modes of economy, and unprecedented connectivity. New classes of multi-lingual and mobile literati writing not only in pan-subcontinental languages like Sanskrit (Pollock 2006, 2011, 2016) and Perso-Arabic (Alam

2004; Alam and Subrahmanyam 2004, 2011; O'Hanlon and Washbrook 2010) but vernacular languages of court and elite like Telugu or Urdu (Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam 2003) defined new cultures of writing for broader consumption, histories which focused on individual human agency and paradigms of poetry and performance that reflected the very human aesthetic priorities of elite courtly culture: sensuality, commerciality and mobility.

Many new kinds of cultural production (particularly dance, music, poetry, painting) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were negotiated and crystalized in the complicated melting pot dynamics of the Deccan and southern India – whether vernacular movements in poetry, genres of miniature painting, or hybrid repertoires of music and dance. Scholars writing on central and south India have attended to political economics (Subrahmanyam 2001, 2002; Das Gupta 2004), trade histories (Arasaratnam 1986, 1996), literature (Rao, Shulman 1992, 1998, 2002, 2006) and to some extent, religious studies (especially Islam, Green 2006; O'Hanlon 2010, 2013; Minkowski et al 2015). Working against the marginalization of southern India in South Asian historiography, some of these scholars have radically proposed that this period saw new ideologies of pleasure and transgression, focus on the individual, and historiographic sensibility under Telugu Nayak rulers from merchant-warrior non-elite backgrounds (Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam 1992, 2003).

Dance as performance, practice and intellectual debate reveals unique negotiations of power relations and trans-local urban public spheres in this context. However, no extended work has been done on performance (particularly dance) as bodily culture, coming out of the major shifts of the early modern period and negotiating the changing politics, economics and material culture of mobility in the eighteenth century. From the scholarship on early modern Indian Ocean, particularly south India, I take three things in particular: the focus on individual mobility and

construction of authority through multiple means, the attention to new kinds of relationship to the past in the writing of histories and personal narratives particularly in relation to projects of state-building, and the conceptual importance of networks and circulations. While the focus of early modern historians has been on political geographies, trade networks and more recently intellectual circulations, I offer a focus on plural movements around dance-making (people, ideas and representations) as part of what I define as performative geographies, as I will outline next.

II. Methodology: Archive, Dance & Circulations

To understand dance across urban contexts of the early modern Coromandel and Deccan in the context of Indian Ocean circulations, I have examined multiple kinds of archives and archival traces. I have focused on analyzing how dance was located socially and kinesthetically, experienced by multiple audiences and elite, theorized and ultimately composed and structured. Reading across materials (both in terms of media and time), I have read these materials choreographically: that is, I attend to dynamics between bodies and other elements within a text, painting, or space, and I also I attend to the organization of circulations, genealogies, and fragments (of dances, representations of dance, or movement concepts) as they are brought together, shifted, packaged, oriented, structured, turned around or framed by individuals at various moments in time and space in order to address new audiences and communities. Ideologically, I have made several important choices about archive that have determined what kinds of pasts this work is oriented towards and what kind of histories of performance I produce: to de-center European voices and knowledge production, to expand beyond textual sources, and to analyze materials inter-textually (text referencing all the written, painted, spatial materials I mentioned).

i. Sources: Non-European focus, Expanding the Archive

The eighteenth century, when attended to, has largely been examined in terms of the construction of the British raj and thus, through the lens of European language materials – whether diaries of British officials, accounts of Danish missionaries, the intellectual debates of scholars associated with various schools of Orientalism. If pre-colonial Indian language materials around dance, music and drama are attended to, they focus largely on the classical or medieval periods and/or on the ostensibly pan subcontinental material written in Sanskrit (which are considered mostly derivative by the eighteenth century and thus ignored). The main exception to this has been musicological scholarship that has attended to Tamil and Telugu materials of the Maratha Tanjavur court – without however an interest in broader political geographies, circulations or, most importantly, a primary focus on dance as bodily performance (rather than a study of song-texts).

However, an entire world of imaginaries and debates around dance performance defined the changing elite cultures and urban milieus of the eighteenth century, borne out in multiple kinds of textual (in a number of languages), visual, and spatial materials produced in the period. This is true not only in the affluent and more conservative Tanjavur court but in up-start courts in the far south, such as Ramanathapuram, and the erstwhile Shia sultanate at Golconda. Moreover, the circulations between these considerably different urban courts and others in the subcontinent and across the Bay of Bengal, produced different articulations around dance across language and media. In this dissertation, I attend to Tamil popular plays, mural paintings and friezes, courtyard spaces, Sanskrit treatise on (dance, music) performance, miniature paintings, and song-texts for danced performance (in Telugu, Marathi, Tamil). I do attend to a few European language materials (a Dutch memoir, early Tamil-English dictionary entries on dance, accounts of Queen

Victoria jubilee celebrations in the 1830s, and the writing of Orientalist scholar William Jones) – primarily in order to trace how European individuals drew on and negotiated with the dynamic imaginaries and performance paradigms I trace over the eighteenth century, which they found themselves within at the turn of the nineteenth century; to locate Europeans within this world of change rather than fitting knowledge about India into western histories of knowledge production.

I also extend the archive to the many spaces across southeast India in which dance lived and people congregated – some thriving and overwhelming today, like Rameswaram or Madurai temple, parts of the Tanjavur palace; some completely unacknowledged, run down or painted over, such as the many out of the way lodges or smaller temples in Kumbakonam and Nagapattinam or the palace estates of Pudukottai or Sivagangai which no longer exist but for a courtyard. Through these multiple textual, visual and spatial fragments, I address the representation, theorization and composition of danced dynamics. In turn, not only the performance of dancers, but the participation in scenarios of performance as well as the process of theorizing dance as movement vocabulary establishes trans-local identities and audiences in the process of defining individual or state authorities.

ii. Reading Inter-Textually for Dancing and Participating Bodies

I focus not just on the materials I mentioned but on their circulation or citation in other materials. My analysis is therefore inter-textual; I trace how ideas about dance travel and morph by reading across materials and media. The tensions between the formulaic and the specific form the backbone of my analysis. In theorizing the relationship between bodies, text, space and politics, especially in relation to writing histories, I turn to multiple sets of scholarship from dance and performance studies. Not only does this scholarship locate agency within the bodily action and interpersonal dynamics around dance, it provides frameworks for understanding

interpersonal relational dynamics across space and time as contingent, continually re-organized and re-established through multiple kinds of practical and strategic moves (bodily and discursive).

I attend to the politics of dance not just in terms of dance composition, but also dance-participation (as patron-audience or general public) and knowledge production around dance (representations in popular culture and intellectual debates). Susan Foster (1995, 2010) addresses the act or process of constructing a dance as a conscious and pre-meditated form of producing knowledge and constructing history, that is distinctly corporeal. By extending and critiquing older scholarship that connects bodily action to social conditioning and discourses of power, such as the work of Michel Foucault, Marcel Mauss and more, Foster recuperates a sense of agency in bodily practice as producing multiple kinds of knowledge in the negotiation of existing power structures and discourses about bodily identity (sex, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.). Extending this attention to decisions and discourses of dance-making, Janet O'Shea links bharata natyam to processes of identity construction and institution building both on a local and global level in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, centralizing dance practices as active choreographic negotiations of socio-political change that cite different visions of the past and authorize contrasting positions in the present (O'Shea 2007). Drawing on her work, I extend this attention back into the eighteenth century and to considerations of not just dance-making but choices around how to represent and theorize dance by a number of stake-holders with political and socio-economic ambitions. By focusing on the different strategies that individuals mobilize around not just dance-making but imagining and representing dance as performance scenario or movement practice or compositional structure, I suggest that these individuals define their own positions of authority vis-à-vis multiple pasts and different real and imagined audience that are

defined conditionally and trans-locally (rather than locally or globally), in the eighteenth century as a pivotal period of shifting landscapes and ideals around performance.

Methodologically, I attend to the bodily dynamics of bodies in motion in relation to one another and the spaces they move through – by closely reading texts, images and the spaces themselves. In addition, I attend to how individuals pull together, organize, mobilize and configure ideas and material traces travel in the construction of new authorities or institutional loci – I consider their choices as 'moves' in the articulation of their own authorities and urban milieus. I am interested not just in dancing bodies but those viewing and writing/painting about it – and the relationship between them.

I understand dance as a relational dynamic – with meaning, affect and significance produced in the space between performer and audience, and broader debate. Dance historians have shown that the meanings and significances of dances are both social and politicized in ways that are plural and determined not just by its creators and practitioners but also its spectators, patrons and contexts (Manning 2004, Desmond 1999, Srinivasan 2011, Taylor 2003, Hamera 2006). However, rather than thinking about the processes in/of performance in terms of spectatorship and consumption, I am interested in performance as inter-personal and kinesthetic. By reading across textual, visual and spatial material, I can interrogate the multiple ways in which bodily dynamics are constructed in the context of dance practice and performance. In the context of intellectual debates around dance as practice and movement vocabulary, I suggest that authors respond to dance's affective and kinesthetic potentialities, rather than to questions of narrative

representation or meaning-making in a religious, puranic or ritual sense.[3] My analysis of dance-making and representation is thus underscored by a long-standing notion in South Asian aesthetic theory that affect and meaning-making are constructed in the space-interaction between performance (object) and viewer-experiencer.[4] Because conceptualizations of both performance, literature-poetry or visual art have been considered not just visual but sensory in a broader way, the viewer-experiencer is also participant. This opens up the space to consider dance as a relational dynamic constructed in specific space, place, and between performer and other participants (patrons, general audience, writers on dance) in conversation with translocal trends and ideas about dance.[5]

iii. Tracing Genealogies and Circulations: Dance, Space/Place and Mobility

Working against the fixing of bodily histories to colonial and postcolonial geopolitical boundaries, I focus on the relational dynamics between urban localities in the early modern

[3] I also draw on debates around performativity and textuality, including Diana Taylor's distinction between archive and repertoire and historian Bhavani Raman's arguments about the changing habitus of textual production.

[4] There are some common misconceptions about rasa. Rasa shows up first systematically in the text on dramatic arts, Natya Sastra. However, it developed largely in discussions of literary theory and aesthetics – first in terms of figures of speech (Dandin, Udbhatta), then as an aspect that defines characters *within* a literary work (Bhoja) then by the 11th century, to define a reader's response to the work (Bhatta Nayaka, Abhinava Gupta). Rasa dropped out entirely from discussions of dance (or vice versa) after the medieval centuries Deccan. Rasa became important again in the early modern period, through poetry, primarily as srngara – erotic love – which subsumed everything else (Bhanudatta, Keshavdas, others). In this context, it is the idea of srngara that became aquainted with dance, not through the formal scholarship on rasa, but through the aesthetics of courtesan poetry which became a mainstay of performance. Today, the idea of a general importance of rasa to dance is based on the revivalist conflation of drama and dance which had been separate before the nineteenth century, along with a revivalist project of aligning dance with the Natya sastra. Otherwise, it was only srngara that was important, and not in any formal sense put forth by the Natya Sastra but through the creative possibilities of early modern poetic-visual-performative courtly paradigms.

[5] Both the broad sensory approach to experiencing the 'performance-object' and the location of affect and meaning-making in the space between performer and experiencer might be somewhat present in western conceptions, mostly associated with the post-modern turn but have long and complicated genealogies both formally in South Asian intellectual debates (since the 10th century Kashmiri debates but especially the early modern aesthetic revolution) and informally in the way performance has been used in popular movements (with music in early bhakti movements and dance and drama later on).

context, not as objective geographic locations but as real and imagined products of multiple kinds of flows. My attention across textual, visual and spatial fragments around dance makes visible the ways in which various circulations of individuals, movements, and ideas about performance intersected with the state and projects of imperial expansion at various moments in time and place; or how individuals negotiated the contingent spaces between and beyond state authority as they moved between courts or established their own space and authority in a shifting geography. Thus, in constructing genealogies through these circulations, I attend to continuities not as singular or universal Histories but as plural and contingent threads and movements sometimes overlapping and at other times diverging to produce certain shifts in certain places and times. I locate dance in movement and circulations, defined through the process of translation, re-articulation and relocation. At the same time, I anchor my discussion in an attention to dance's relationship to the specifics of space and place, to avoid the pitfalls of a local-global dialectic.

In his seminal work *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Arjun Appadurai theorizes the production of locality in relation to other formations – the state, the nation, the west, the global – in terms of flows or what he calls scapes (Appadurai 1996). Appadurai's conception of locality and scapes re-orients discussions of cultural production from isolated bounded localities to ones produced by the movement of people, ideas, technologies and more. Appadurai's focus on the production of locality is presented in contradistinction to the deterestrialization many argue is the defining factor of post-modern globalization. Coming from another angle, I am interested in movements and circulations that define trans-locality, not as a border zone, but as a defining condition of early modern urban culture. In this, I am in conversation with scholars of the Indian Ocean who trace human, material and ideological flows

across South Asia and across Afro-Asia (Ramaswamy 2014, Amrith 2013). I trace movement across and through both place and time – to present a cosmopolitanism anchored across multiple localities in changing configurations in relation to one another, rather than through dialectics of the local and global.

I understand dance and ideas about dance to be borne out of processes movement rather than stably located. In the process, I draw on dance studies scholars who have grappled with dance and globalization albeit in a very different context than the one I write about (O'Shea 2007, Chakravorty, Gupta 2012, Kwan 2013, Srinivasan 2011, Savigliano 1995). Attending to a variety of dance forms and histories, these scholars attend to how dancers and others construct identities, define cities, and navigate political economies in and through dance. While I draw on their attention to the multiple ways dance and dancers can circulate and how they can create a space that transcends physical locality, I am interested in the rooted discussion of dance as re-articulated in conversation with the specifics of multiple urban milieus. I believe dance, whether categorized as experimental, classical, traditional, ritual or social can be understood in terms of the tensions between what is being drawn upon and what is being shifted – that is, between the formulaic and the specific – either explicitly or implicitly through bodily processes of citation. In that case, I do not think about dance-making or performing as passive acts of inheritance. Instead, I think about dance-making as well as knowledge production around dance as a series of decisions and orientations, in a complex relationship with place (specific urban milieu) and social context. Conceptually, I draw on scholar Sara Ahmed's feminist and queer studies phenomenological focus on orientation. I suggest that bodily knowledge (here not just text but visual culture and spaces themselves) is dependent on the producer's orientation towards particular practices, values around the body and mobility and trans-local audiences, imagined or

real.

I thus attend to the construction of urban space and place in the context of these flows: not just as physical built environments, but as imagined cultural milieus of encounter and mobility defined by the transgression of existing social hierarchies, and as sets of kinesthetic practices (particularly of assembly, performance and patronage-participation around dance events). I focus especially on the social and performative space of the courtyard – which crosses domains ostensibly demarcated as political, religious or commercial, and complicates the question of 'public' and 'private' (or as discussions on Indian spatial dynamics have described, interior and exterior). Rather than understanding these spaces and places as heterotopias or tactical strategies, spaces that are distinct because they subvert hegemonic power structures, these spaces were definitive of the early modern condition of flux and part of the construction of authority and power itself in ways that conditional, contingent, translocally imagined and hybrid-ly constructed. I suggest that the consideration of space as existing between real and imagined is not just a post-modern condition (De Certeau 2011, Soja 1996, Hall 2008, Goldman 2013). Rather, it is a reality of the period and context I write about and an important lens through which to understand dance and vice-versa. I further draw on scholarship that locates dance in the construction of distinct kinesthetic worlds (Candelario 2016; Tomko 2000, Banerji forthcoming).

In the process, I construct alternative genealogies of the present. I define genealogies as threads of practices, aesthetic conceptions or performance ideals through time and place and are mobilized by individuals to define dance in the context of shifting landscapes. That is, I attend to continuities as well as shifts as constitutive not only of the eighteenth century but also nineteenth century colonial knowledge production. Therefore, my approach to trans-localities as well as my argument against a sense of colonial rupture come together in these genealogies. These

connections, and the urban milieus that are imagined and constructed by the individuals making them, constitute what I call performative geographies, the organizing conceptual framework of this dissertation.

A note on identities: Religious identities have been significantly over-written into South Asian pasts vis-à-vis colonial and postcolonial narratives, treated as monolithic and cohesive. However, the over-arching categories of Hindu, Muslim, etc., were not the organizing categories around which people mobilized, responded to one another or imagined cultural landscapes, particularly in the contexts and sources I examine around dance and performance. Instead, a number of sectarian identities and movements: Shia, Saivite, Sri Vaishnavite and more intersected variously with linguistic identity (Tamil, Telugu, Maratha, Perso-Arabic), political affiliation (Mughal, Nayak, Setupati, Qutb Shahi), community (Marava, Marakkayar, Niyogi, Kaikolar) and importantly, place (Tanjavur, Ramanathapuram, Pudukkottai, Golconda, Kumbakonam, Madurai and more). In fact, in many ways, this dissertation is about understanding how conditionally and performatively all of these operated not just on the level of identity, but of affiliation, authority and strategy.

III. Structure of the Dissertation

My dissertation is organized along several formative debates around the aesthetics, repertoire and representation of courtly dance and professional dancing women. The first chapter addresses the socio-spatial binaries under which South Indian dance has come to be defined: 'temple dance' or 'court dance', public or private performance, and the politics of eroticism implicit in that distinction. The second chapter is framed by the debate about the Sanskritization/ textualization of dance in the twentieth century – working against another set of binaries, 'north' and 'south' India, 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' patronage, and the politics of 'modern' knowledge in

the context of a language today perceived as ancient or classical. The third chapter addresses the idea of concert structure and debates about standardization, bringing together concerns raised in the first two chapters in discussing the new paradigm of dance-making that emerged and defined what we today consider classical south Indian dance forms. Each chapter is organized around a different set of translocal performative geographies that I trace and the processes that enlivened them – translating, orienting, structuring.

i. Translating (Re/Staging) Urban Mobility: Space, Place, and Scenarios of Performance

Chapter 1 sets the stage, focusing on the socio-spatial politics of dance across the Coromandel – complicating distinctions between religious, economic and royal urban performance spaces through attention to new mobilities and urban milieus in the eighteenth century. It does so by centralizing scenarios around courtly dance in text, image and drama produced in the eighteenth century (Tamil and European); namely popular Tamil plays known as *nonti natakam* (cripple's play), mural paintings in emerging urban spaces, the spaces of performance including court darbars and public lodges, 'company' paintings, and a European (Dutch) memoir. The scenarios of performance imagined in these sources connected localities in southeast India and beyond into specific urban geographies. I look specifically at popular Tamil plays known as *nonti natakam* (cripple's play), mural paintings in emerging urban spaces, court *darbar* and public lodge spaces, 'company' paintings, a Dutch memoir, reading across the textual and visual to interrogate the construction of space, place and geographies in and through dance. The focus is on how dance is imagined and where. I argue that dance performance cut across socio-spatial contexts, court and temple, public and private, local and translocal, by embodying a kinesthetic dynamic of mobility and urban cosmopolitanism – particularly as imagined and located in emerging urban centers.

Moreover, these scenarios were translated, articulated and re-spatialized not only by various Indian nouveau riche but Europeans fashioning their authorities as native elite.

I trace specific circulations from the late seventeenth century into mid-eighteenth century Coromandel (as connected across the bay through trade): Ramnad, Tanjavur, Masulipatnam and other urban centers – Kanchipuram, Tiruchi, Madurai, Nagore. By the 1680s, when Nayak control had weakened or mostly been supplanted by successor states (Maratha, Marava Setupati or Nawab), the region was connected especially through independent political players and economic connections – trade and relationships of tribute (one state paying another and being nominally under its authority). Little kings, merchant-entrepreneurs and political intermediaries patronized the production of these new urban imaginaries centered on the kinesthetic dynamics of authority and mobility embodied in dance performance and participation.

ii. Orienting Taste: Literati, Sanskrit Textuality, and Dance as Practice

Chapter 2 turns to debates around the aesthetics and trends of practice– played out through Sanskritic textual production that in the eighteenth century connected dance to a series of medical, gender and sexual discourses. At the same time, these debates sought to canonize and standardize dance practices. I look at specific Sanskrit texts on dance (as *sangeeta or nartana*) in relation to miniature paintings and courtly poetry to situate the convergence of an aestheticized sensuality (*srngara*) across media. When we reach eighteenth century Tanjavur, however, Sanskrit texts on dance, grappling with new moral and practical priorities and responding to movement vocabularies distinct to the south Indian context, present dance distinctly in terms of the effort of movement technique and practice and privileging abstract rhythmic movement elements. The focus is on how dance was theorized in terms of movement and significance (affective or meaning-making). I argue firstly that textual ideals have been produced through

orientation towards new practices and trends at various historical moments in the south Asian context, with authors conversing across time, space and various geographies with other intellectuals – both text and practice were conceived as dynamic, mutable and always subject to debate. Secondly, I argue that through this process, intellectuals, variously located within changing institutional and geo-political matrices through relationships of patronage and the debates they sought to engage with, produced distinct shifts in the early modern period, particularly the eighteenth-century Kaveri delta – shifting from a focus on the affective and sensual possibilities of performance towards dance practice as technical and effortful movement.

I trace specific circulations over the early modern period into the eighteenth century: Vijayanagar Deccan up to Mughal Delhi, back to the Deccan under the Ahmednagar (and Golconda (Qutb Shahi) sultanates and following the Marathas from the Bijapur sultanate to Tanjavur. I also trace the circulation of ideas from the Vijayanagar Deccan straight south through the Nayak dynasties. This chapter, more than just about circulating ideas about dance in relation to political geographies, is about the interface at multiple moments of popular socio-devotional movements (their performative practices) with the projects of imperial expansion: starting with Haridasa music and dance and the expansion of the Vijayanagar empire, to Sufi and Krishna bhakti which gave rise to courtly *ritikal* aesthetics central to Mughal Delhi's courtly patronage, and multiple movements coming into the eighteenth-century Coromandel. The interface between devotional movements and courts was mediated by minister intellectuals (like the Diksitar family under the later Nayaks and the family of Tryambakaraya makhi under the early Marathas at Tanjavur) who along with kings themselves produced most of the texts examined here.

iii. Structuring Repertoires and Socio-Spatial Publics: What is a Kacceri?

Chapter 3 turns to the formation of a new structural logic for courtly dance repertoires – the

sadir kacceri (concert) – by tracing the rising influence of several populist religious movements on dance as a distinct form from drama and music, through their interface with state patronage. Tracing three genealogies, I highlight the increasing move away from lyricism to abstract rhythmic and melodic concerns, the focus on concert as a structural entity, and the socio-administrative spaces of assembly 'concert' dance became synonymous with. I look specifically at song texts of the new genres that emerged in the eighteenth century – varnam, svarajati, sabdam – and performance texts or *nirupanas* alongside early Tamil-English dictionary entries on dance and descriptions of public celebrations involving dance (from Jubilee Celebrations of Queen Victoria and a journal called *The Literary Panorama)*. In a couple places, I read these materials against inscriptional records about payments made or tax collection for special events. The focus is on how dance is composed and by whom. I argue that through the formal elements of repertoire, performer-composers brought influences to the Kaveri delta through their own circulations and performative backgrounds – producing both a priority of abstract elements in dance (and music), and an attention to concert as structured event by the end of the eighteenth century. Moreover, I suggest that this compositional attention to structure and hybrid elements spoke to dance's changing socio-spatial contexts and authorities.

I trace specific circulations leading to the late eighteenth century: particularly from Golconda down to Tanjavur and Madurai, followed by Travancore and Ettayapuram in the early nineteenth century. Extending the relationship between bhakti movements and politics of empire, this chapter hinges on circulations of itinerant saint composers or troupe-communities as they intersect with state courts, patronage and support. This includes the relationship of Samarth Ramdas' to Sivaji Bhonsle, Bhadrachala Ramdas to Abul Hassan's Golconda court, Narayana Tirta, Bharatam Kasinathayya and *bhagavatar* disciples for Shahji Bhonsle and the subsequent

Tanjavur court. Blurring simple understandings of sectarian identities and the relationship of religiosity to politics, the circulations of these individuals and the performative movements they spurred gave rise, in the 18th century Kaveri delta, to new hybrid repertoires, with a focus on abstract music and movement elements and structured concert form. The formation of the *sadir kacceri* (dance concert) brought together not only formal aesthetic and structural concerns but connotations of both legal and commercial space – as seen in the Perso-Arabic loan words, popularized through British usage *sadir* (dance, also legal court and 'cheap') and *kacceri* (concert, also peripatetic revenue office). Thus, the convergence of multiple notions of socio-spatial authority, played out especially in contexts of public assembly, spurred an attention to dance performance as structured 'concert' by the turn of the nineteenth century.

iv. Epilogue

The conclusion of this dissertation leads me into the twentieth century but through a very different 'genealogy of the present' of where dance is located vis-à-vis trans-local (and by this time transnational) circulation in the context of globalization: dance in popular cinema, in particular in Tamil cinema. Today Tamil cinema is one of the biggest industries in the world reaching across audiences throughout most of the world, springing up its own sub-cultures and processes of translation that have little to do with Europe and the US, or at least main stream conceptions of south Asian diasporic identities in these places. In examining a specific iconic dance number/scene from the 1958 film ___, I bring myself back to the main questions I raise in the dissertation, about dance and the complicated dynamics of mobility and trans-locality that aren't predicated on western-educated elite that construct different kinds of imagined publics, often equally universal, but also conscious in its cutting parodic critiques of nationalisms, globalism and respectability politics. I suggest that to understand the dynamics of eighteenth

century dance in the Coromandel, we have to look not at classical dance today, because it is over-determined in its discursive constructions of nation, middle class and diaspora but to dance in popular culture – to understand its grappling with popular trends, the centrality of multiple circulations and its engagement with audiences. Ultimately, I hope this opens up a different kind of conversation around dance that today allows a consideration of circulations and imaginaries especially across Afro-Asia, or the 'Global South' more broadly, through the travel of dance in and through networks not always acknowledged or deemed important.

IV. Significance

This dissertation aims to make multiple interventions into South Asian dance histories, Indian Ocean urban bodily connectivities, and early modern history. Firstly, this dissertation aims to mobilize but also push beyond post-colonial critique. Post-colonial scholars have highlighted the construction of narratives and discourses produced by European colonizers and the ways in which many post-colonial practices and narratives about the past were constructed in response to it. But it is also important to look beyond colonial institution-building and knowledge production to the numerous actors and stakeholders around bodily histories of performance – not just on an individual level but on the institutional level of state-building – outside of Europeans in the Indian Ocean world. This is not just an ideological stance but a historical necessity: in large part Europeans in South Asia and Indian Ocean relied on already existing institutions, networks of capital, modes of authority, and cultural imaginaries to function in the subcontinent and beyond, well into the nineteenth century.[6] Even at the height of British colonial imperialism, the geographic and social area they covered was far from the entire subcontinent. An entire network

[6] See Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *Penumbral Visions: Making Polities in Early Modern South India*. University of Michigan Press, 2001.

of heads of state, merchant-capitalists, landed elite, multiple industries, artisans, intellectuals, performers and more drove change and the definition of new socio-spatial urban dynamics in the eighteenth century. This dissertation, through an attention to the politics of performance and kinesthetic cultures of authority and mobility is but one part of a larger project. Dance is central to these conversations because of the ways in which it moves, the ways in which it constructs movement, the ways in which we read signification and pasts through movement.

Secondly, I hope to help de-stabilize histories of South Asian dance and Indian Ocean bodily histories more generally. The pasts and the movements traced in this dissertation became relevant to a number of forms we today consider separately: bharata natyam, kuchipudi, mohiniattam, and even kathak. Current categorizations of classical dance forms are a product of twentieth century cultural nationalism in which dance more than any other form was upheld as an embodiment of language-based territorialized identities linked to state boundaries. I do not suggest that one history produced many forms and relatedly that all south Indian forms are a version of bharata natyam – that is a model that has been rightfully critiqued by many scholars working on south Asian dance. I instead suggest that the histories for what we today consider different genres of dance are all tightly interconnected through movements examined in this dissertation – both in terms of places and in terms of ideas and representations of dance. I aim to destabilize mappings that fix dance in space and place – whether to temples as stand-alone spaces of religion or to territorially defined cultural regions which are now defined as states within the Indian nation – Tamil Nadu, Andra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, even up to Orissa. These were not isolated regions nor was dance treated separately, but as coming out of the multiple movements across, between and through. In fact, this story of dance from the early modern into the eighteenth century takes me from Ramnad in the far south to Mughal Delhi (and

the Rajput courts) back down through the central Indian sultanate centers of Ahmednagar and Golconda as well as Tanjavur.

Finally, I attend to dance as part of the construction of new publics – I aim to contribute to a broader conversation about dance's location today in the Indian Ocean context. In early modern contexts, new dance paradigms actively negotiated shifting geo-political landscapes as well socio-economic mobilities: as intersubjective dynamic and media. While individuals involved in making dances, representing and writing about dance grappled with discursive and bodily ideals, they did so with the full understanding that identities and values were contingent and constantly re-negotiated, with little preciousness around fixed and absolute ideologies. Today, classical dance is in many ways over-determined in terms of respectability politics and imagined cultural pasts (whether national, regional, community-specific and otherwise). However, if we look outside the world of classical dance today, in the numerous negotiations of dance in the public sphere – in relation to music and popular culture, cinema, and digital social media, we find ways of mobilizing movement, multiple citational strategies and focus on kinesthetic and affective connections across multiple publics, with a sense of flair and self-awareness that are reminiscent of the early modern dynamics I address in this dissertation.

I focus on early modern and eighteenth-century circulations of/around dance across the Indian Ocean because they are vitally relevant to understanding and re-enlivening those connections today. The fluid connective networks that the early modern period, and the performative geographies I trace, across the non-western world offer a means for re-framing the present in a way that de-centers Euro-American globalizing forces. The period just before colonialism has an important resonance with the current moment we find ourselves in today, when once again the language-ethnicity based boundaries of colonial regimes and post-colonial nationalisms seem

increasingly to be dissolving in the face of new kinds of connections and geo-politics. Centralizing the intersections of class, mobility, and identity politics embodied in urban dance paradigms of early modernity(/ies) is, I believe, relevant to re-situating what we consider the global south today – especially around questions of diaspora, urban popular cultures and institutional patronage across national borders.

CHAPTER 1

Translating (Re/Staging) Urban Mobility: Space, Place and Scenarios of Performance

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A man enters the large hall with his companion…

the hall is bright with the beauty of many women. But they are merely backdrop, scenery for the one beautiful woman, appearing across from him. She is surrounded by musicians, the horn (thitthi) player, the maddalam (percussion) player, the singer singing sangeetam, and of course, the nattuvanar dance master keeping time with his talams (cymbals), who start up with pomp and joy the music, the melam. And she dances. She dances with grace, and movement and vibrancy and erotic flourish, her feet twinkling with the sound of bells (salangai)

Enacting lines of love and union with her hands, enticing

She dances natanam

The man is awestruck; he has fallen for her in that hall filled with music, dance, sparkling beauty. He melts inside…

This scenario was staged and restaged in various ways in creative genres throughout the eighteenth century – in popular Tamil plays, palace murals, tapestries, company paintings, and the memoirs of European and Indian travelers. There are variations, omissions, additions, and re-framings in different interpretations. Sometimes the generalized backdrop of dancing women has been removed. Sometimes the man, the spectator, the rasika is outside the frame, leaving the reader or viewer as the sole spectator. Sometimes the whole scene is bodily removed from the

context of defined interior space and set in a nameless landscape. The context might be Srirangam a temple town, Ramanathapuram a new urban center, or Masulipatnam a European trading post. Yet the moment of first encounter is a constant; it lingers. The evocation of the dancer's movement in the flair of her feet and the expressiveness of her hands replays in texts, images, and dramas in the rapidly shifting cultural and political milieu of southeast India.

Dance surfaces time and again in and through new creative genres from the late seventeenth century onwards – namely genre of popular play in Tamil known as *nonti natakam* (cripple's play), new kind of mural friezes, 'company painting' and memoirs. Artists and poets produced these genres and their representations of dance for new patrons in a number of distinct social and geo-political contexts. In particular, they produced particular versions of the scenario described above, across media and contexts. In this chapter I trace the contours of scenarios of dance performance that emerged as part of a distinctly trans-local network of spaces, places and imaginaries from the late seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century. I locate these scenarios in changes that defined this period: new politics around sensuality and transient relationships to space and place.

Most discussions of South Indian dance's pre-colonial pasts have defined dance forms' identities in relation to location: as belonging to temples or as more recent revisionist scholars have argued, palace courts. Countering colonial accusations of Indian cultural degeneracy, twentieth century dancers and intellectuals insisted on the spiritual and religious roots of what they defined as the classical dances of India. Identifying forms like bharata natyam, kucipudi and mohiniattam as 'temple dance', dancers and intellectuals aligned dance with both the nationalist need for ancient classical origins and the imperatives of an emerging middle-class respectability politics which divorced art from commerce. On the other hand, Indian musicologists and more

recently, revisionist performance historians have focused on the development of sadir dance in courtly milieus, primarily that of Tanjavur. However, these studies still treat court and temple as fixed and self-evident spaces as well as spheres of activity.

Moreover, discussions of pre-colonial 'traditional' south Indian performing arts are primarily centered on Tanjavur, cited as the cultural hub of south India. On the other hand, discussions which locate in dance in socio-economic mobility, individual self-definition and politics have focused on European port cities – Madras first and foremost but also Pondicherry where the French were established, Nagapattinam where the Dutch were established, Tranquebar where the Danish were established and others (Mukund 2005, Mantena 2012; Fihl et al 2014). Scholars, when addressing the development of modern paradigms around dance-making and publics have traced a shift from traditional patronage in Tanjavur to the modern concert halls of Madras (Subramanian, 2006; Weidman 2006; Peterson & Soneji, 2008; Soneji 2012).[7]

However, this was simply not the entire picture in this period; the Coromandel was defined by multiple political centers (capitals of ruling dynasties and their states) and multiple trade cities along the coast (Subrahmanyam 1990, 2001; Rao, Shulman Subrahmanyam 1992; Arasaratnam 1984,1986).[8] More importantly, the eighteenth century saw significant shifts in patronage and representations of dance-as-performance, tied in with the spatial politics of mobility. I suggest that sadir dance's physical location in spaces of temple and court was superseded by another demarcation: that of the urban milieu defined by dynamic configurations bringing palace courts,

[7] Implicit in these shifts is the tracing of a shift from traditional to modern – where classical dance is signaled as part of the making of modern India

[8] Nayaks ruled Tanjavur, the most cited cultural center of pre-colonial south India. They also ruled Madurai further south – an important center since at least the medieval period but much less attended to in terms of culture history – and Senji, a strategic fort town to the north

major urban temples and commercial public spaces together into constellations of political, economic and cultural centrality. Dance cut across these and other spaces, making visible a broader social sphere. In the closing decades of the seventeenth century, significant shifts in political geographies redefined the subcontinent in general and the southeast in particular. Over the course of the eighteenth century, alliances were constantly shifting between rulers and between cities – making the period one of distinct political and economic opportunity for new entrants on the scene. In this context, new states as well as elite emerged.

Many of those newly seeking to define themselves as elite patronized poetry, painting, performance and architecture, spurring the definition of new creative genres. These genres, such as the Tamil *nonti natakam,* were distinct in that they turned away from the usual focus till that time: royal centers and ideologies of kingship. Instead, they turned towards the urban contexts of a broader social geography, with mobile individuals (rather than kings) as protagonists. They formulated scenarios around performance through which these new social players and shifting urban milieus defined themselves and their concerns. In constructing and transmitting scenes and scenarios around dance in and through spaces of authority, patrons, poets and artists redefined politics of patronage, mobility sensual kinesthetic of space vis-à-vis performance. Sadir dance's physical location in spaces of temple and court was superseded by another demarcation: that of the urban milieu defined by dynamic configurations bringing palace courts, major urban temples and commercial public spaces together into constellations of political, economic and cultural centrality. Dance cut across these and other spaces, making visible a broader social sphere. Sadir performance, anchored by the space of the courtyard (of temple, court, or public lodge), also blurs the lines between what constituted public and private spheres of activity.

This chapter addresses scenarios of dance performance as negotiating two distinct but inter-related concerns. Firstly, multiple sets of people who were newly defining themselves as figures of authority in urban contexts in the Coromandel, negotiated dynamics around performance and sensuality set up by early modern Nayak courts in the south – a culture of 'atrophied eroticism' (Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam, 1992). In doing so, however, they often moved against Nayak hedonism and expressed ambivalence around the sensual body – both of patron and performer. Secondly and relatedly, both artists/performers and nouveau riche patrons had a less stable relationship to space and place than earlier ruling elite – given their efforts to mobilize multiple opportunities and investments across the Coromandel and beyond. Relationships to space and place were not only transient, translocal conceptions of political and performative geographies were common. Scenarios of performance represented in popular plays and paintings from multiple urban milieus in the long eighteenth century make visible the intersections between politics of the sensual body and transient relationships to space, place and power. That is, these scenarios manifest as kinesthetic concerns around not only performance dynamics but mobility – socio-economic and geopolitical. Dance scenarios, whether staged in court darbars, temple courtyards, or the common spaces of public lodges, made visible a world on the move.

In the first section, I frame the rest of the chapter through the historical intersection of sensuality, authority (kingship), religion and space set up by the Nayak ruling elite who predated the new political and commercial elite of the long eighteenth century. Here, I rely on the seminal work of David Shulman, Narayana Rao and Sanjay Subrahmanyam on Nayak culture and politics of state-building but extend the attention to issues of space-making as well. Next, focusing on the new ruling figure of Kizhavan Setupati and the new state and

urban milieu he developed at Ramanathapuram (the city and its palace) by the turn of the eighteenth century, I dive into the problematics between performance, space and place-making and individual authority. I read across mural paintings from the Ramanathapuram palace and a popular Tamil play produced under Setupati's patronage.

In the next three sections of the chapter, I explore the translations and slippages as the scenario of performance was articulated across multiple urban milieus and spaces by different kinds of individuals constructing their own authorities –in ways that both echoed and re-spatialized dance from Ramanathapuram representations. In the third section I attend to figures such as the Muslim (Marakkayar) merchant-politician Abdul Sheik Qadr (aka Citakkati) who's family helped finance the Ramanathapuram state through their overseas Southeast Asian trade, as well as a dubash or intermediary for the English Company, Ananda Ranga, and finally a Diksitar minister of the Tanjavur court – who all patronized *nonti* plays which represented dance in similar yes contextualized ways. I also attend to dance in a space that emerged as a definitive part of the Coromandel landscape – the *chatram* or public lodge usually located as crossroads of major travel routes. In the fourth and fifth sections of the chapter, I turn to a new set of individuals constructing themselves as native elite by the end of the eighteenth century – European individuals. I focus on a Dutch-man's memoir about traveling down the Coromandel on a palanquin falling in love with a dancer, and an English set of paintings commissioned by East India Company officials. I suggest that in many ways these figures inserted themselves into existing bodily and cultural imaginaries in constructing their authorities, and yet, their representations often shifted or erased the relationship of dance to space and the visibility of patron that representations of the time relied on.

Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, suggests that a scenario is "a paradigmatic setup that relies on supposedly live participants, structured around a schematic plot, with an intended (though adaptable) end" (13). A scenario, especially as imagined by Diana Taylor, is a series of enactments, of interactions that might have a script, or formula but are also highly performative, improvisatory in their enactment. This series of performative enactments, staged in the milieu of changing social space, recur and mutate over time and place across the eighteenth-century Coromandel. Looking at performance draws our attention to the relationship between performer and participant and makes the process of meaning-making itself contingent and contextual from scenario to scenario. The scenarios examined in this chapter focus not just on dancing bodies but on the dynamics between patron, performer and space. These scenarios, make visible how authority and class are embodied in and through patronage, participation and sensory experience.

Dance scholars have theorized spectatorship– suggesting that spectators actively construct meaning and responses based on their own locations (Manning 2004; Desmond 1999; Foster 2010). The same performance can be consumed and responded to in multiple ways by different spectators based on their racial, sexual, gendered orientations. I extend this focus by arguing not only for an attention to spectatorship as a viewing experience, but to participation as a sensory, kinesthetic and spatialized experience. The act of coming into a space, encountering dance and dancer, and being physically-viscerally transformed by the experience are all equally important. For the painters and poets of the creative genres explored here, the focus is not how dancing bodies signify so much as what is created in the corporeal dynamic between dancer and patron-participant in the mutually visiblizing space of a darbar, courtyard or sannithi. Moreover, as scenarios of performance are translated across

different urban contexts by different individuals – Indian, European, little king, merchant, queen or other – they are framed and understood differently.

In the process, dance was not only framed by new political geographies, but also helped construct space, place and public identities. Given the dynamics of performance patronage and participation as imagined in these scenarios, locating dance in or on particular spaces and places defined them as urban and cosmopolitan. A performance, scheduled or impromptu, could turn the courtyard of a public lodge into a space of 'holding court', a palace darbar or public festival ground. Thus, dance could define spaces and urban-ness itself as practiced. Henri Lefebvre, in his theorization of space as socially produced, presented space as produced through the trialectic of everyday practices, representations of space and the spatial imaginary of the time (1974). Michel De Certeau on the other hand presents everyday practices as 'tactics' which reclaim space from the institutionalized mapping of cities by those in power (1984). Foucault has presented heterotopias as spaces for the affirmation of difference and escape from authoritarian mappings (1984). Later scholars, from the disciplinary position of critical urban studies, have extended Lefebvre's trialectics of space and Foucault's heterotopias, particularly in describing postmodern urban cityscapes (Soja 1989, 1996). In this chapter, I look at how a particular representational scenario, idea about dance, or genre of performance travels, weaving together a translocal performative geography – connecting localized spaces and places (both real and imagined) across the Coromandel.

Note on Sources:

The creative genres I address, across dramatic, visual, textual registers, are specific to this historical period– nonti natakam dramas, palace murals and Company paintings, and memoirs

and diaries. Nonti natakam, or cripple's play, was a genre of popular Tamil drama – a multi-act solo (male) performer narrative-based satire – that emerged sometime near the end of the 17th century but slipped out of circulation by the 19th century.[9] Murals, depicting not only Puranic myth episodes but scenes of socio-cultural (usually elite) life and sometimes historical scenes had a longer history but almost entirely went out of fashion sometime in the nineteenth century when the separation of religiosity and pleasure left little room for murals in temples. By this time, a new context for paintings – known as Company paintings – emerged sponsored by individuals associated with the British East India trading company, reflecting a hybrid aesthetic sensibility and gaze that was unique to the early colonial moment. And finally, memoirs and diaries of the eighteenth century reflected a similar early colonial European sensibility in which individuals imagined themselves as, and emulated in many ways, the 'native elite'.[10] All of these sources have not been central to writings of South Asian dance histories because they exist on the margins of today's sensibilities around religion, sexuality, and respectability – not to be associated with dances that are defined as classical and sacred. Yet it is precisely in these traces that dance seems to have existed – in the interstices of social relations, social spaces, and aspirations for mobility.

Bharata natyam's history has for long been written as something entirely stable and physically rooted in royal centers. Usually linked back to discussions of classical texts such

[9] I make this claim based on existing available paper manuscripts of the play's texts. They most likely didn't exist before this because there are no contemporary records. Whether they continued to be performed into the 19th century is a question I haven't yet answered.

[10] The genres and their performance scenarios follow implicit and explicit conventions to varying degrees that make them somewhat formulaic. Beyond mere conventions however, genres act as particular sets or frames of reference that structure narratives, space, representation, and ultimately experience itself. The rules or norms implicit in a memoir, a 'cripple's" play, or mural frieze provide a means of understanding how they create meaning. They draw from what's around them and what is inherited from older frameworks, providing a genealogy of ideas implicit within their structure and aesthetic.

as the Sanskrit *Natya Sastra* and physically limited to the south Indian royal center of Tanjavur, pre-colonial dance has been treated in ways that are both considerably ahistorical and disconnected from shifts in political geographies and economies of urban culture which defined the Coromandel in concrete ways and I argue, dance within it. In all of this, professional dancing women themselves existed at the intersections of multiple investments – as professionals (either with a troupe or with institutional support), as social actors in relation to other artisan and service communities[11], and as civilians who were engaged with local economics and politics of responsibility for institutions in which they are involved.

I. Linking Political Geographies and New Politics of Sensuality

In the sixteenth century, provincial military generals under the medieval Vijayanagar kingdom known as Nayakas, helped expand the empire in the south, but started declaring their autonomous dynasties in centers of Madurai, Tanjavur, Ginjee and others.[12] The Nayaks were mainly merchant military figures from Sudra Balija Telugu communities, who claimed kingship through their entrepreneurial and military individual élan backed by the wealth of their commercial successes. They presented a shift in narratives of kingship; the old dualistic model of Sanskritic kingship locked between Brahmins and Kshatriyas was no longer privileged. Instead, new narratives focused on Sudra (lower caste) glory and unitary individual kingship. Politically,

[11] For more on political economies of craft, artisan trade, and service (including textile): Mines, 1984 Warrior Merchants; 1994 Public Face, Private Lives; Parthasarathi, 2001. Transitions into Colonial Economy; Sinopoli 2003. The Political Economy of Craft Production; Ramaswamy 1986 Textiles and Weavers in Medeival South India; 2016 Women and Work in Precolonial India; 2016 Migrations in Medieval and Early Colonial India

[12] General works on Vijayanagara include: Burton Stein, *Vijayanagara*, The New Cambridge History of India I, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Richard M. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300–1761. Eight Indian Lives*, The New Cambridge History of India I, 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Chs 1–4; M. H. R ̄ama Sharma, *The History of the Vijayanagar Empire*, 2 vols, M. H. Gopal (ed.) (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1978, 1980).

however, the Nayaka kings still looked to a (weakened) overlord and patronized Brahmins. Thus, the Nayak king was a grandiose figure cut out for display but shockingly vulnerable to attack. Nayak kingship also shifted the classical relationship between kings and gods. Moving from a devotee-deity relationship predicated on duty (dharma), the king was seen on more an equal footing with an increasingly humanized and personable god in the early modern Nayak court. The king was even seen as the patron of the central deity of the family dynasty.

The ideal king was an erotic figure whose identity was embodied in the enjoyment of erotic play with courtesans, the giving of sumptuous food on a large scale and the construction of beautiful and sensorially-stimulating built-spaces: palace courtyards, temple courtyards, public-lodge courtyards. Mural painting in built spaces and new genres of court poetry and dramas came into vogue, which brought together erotic pleasure and the practical concerns of commercial cash-based transaction[13]. Sensuality was thus imagined not only through sexual pleasure and eroticism but through the kinesthetic pleasures of space, visual art and performance (Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam, 82). Mirroring the changing relationship between kings and gods, both royal and temple spaces that Nayak elite constructed revolved around a deeply physical experientiality – densely figured painted walls and ceilings, whole courtyards of sculptured pillars (often erotic), architecture of awe-inspiring scale, lush spaces for pleasure and leisure (in palaces).

Nayak literary, visual and performance production reflected a seriousness in the interest in the body: from medical to cultural/poetry, domains of ritual, devotion and metaphysics (Rao,

[13] The padams of Ksetrayya centralize the authority of courtesan women and are filled with references to cash transactions between courtesan and her customer, god (Muvva Gopala) himself. Plays in Sanskrit and Telugu both from court playwrights and other literati throughout the Coromandel region frame social interaction similarly.

Shulman, Subramanian, 1992). In particular, Nayak elite focused on the idea of the body and sensual practice as sadhana (practice towards an intended spiritual goal). The idea was in conversation with the emerging problem of the individual and his awareness and pervasive themes of violation, physical mutilation, linguistic fragmentation, and regeneration (82). Nayaks thus created a culture of rule that celebrated individual agency, material wealth as a source of authority and the sensual body. Thus, under the Nayak regime, sensuality became deeply intertwined with elite authority as well as the building of new spaces.

In the closing decades of the seventeenth century (1670s-90s), multiple geopolitical moves brought new elite into play in multiple urban centers across the Coromandel. On one hand, new elites such as 'little kings' or portfolio-capitalists with political aspirations in the eighteenth century adopted Nayak ways of thinking about eliteness, sensual experience, space and performance as part of their aspiration for mobility. These new elite, whether new rulers or political intermediaries inherited genres of performance, poetry, and literature that Nayak elite had made popular, not to mention the ethos of pleasure and transgression embodied through Telugu courtly culture.

However, the emerging figures of the eighteenth century also held a different relationship to power, place, and material culture; navigating political and economic spheres that were constantly in flux. Their authority was contingent and often fragile. Their relationship to authority, space and place was transient, signaled by a changing political, social and economic landscape. In their relationship to space-making, those such as Maratha kings, Setupati lords and dubash intermediaries directed their energies not only towards the more permanent spaces of court, temple or fort compounds but in large part towards transitory multi-use spaces such as

public lodges. These new elite expressed ambivalence around the large-scale spending of the Nayak era but also the ideologies that had underscored Nayak patronage of *annadhanam*, construction and literary and performance production.

Most importantly, elite and rulers who newly established themselves and the sphere of authority by the end of the seventeenth century showed, through the new creative genres they produced, a wariness around the hedonistic ideals of sensuality, transgression and material excess. They drew on other genealogies of thinking about the body and relationships to material culture that treated the senses with deep distrust, such as classical Tamil poetic worlds. In plays and paintings, new ways of imagining and representing dance, patronage and urban milieus in the eighteenth century emerged out of this milieu. The confluence of Nayak legacies of pleasure and the conditionality of new authority refocused the social relationship between performance, patronage and space.

Tiruvidai marutur nonti natakam (Tiruvidai Marutur cripple's play) from the mid eighteenth century reflects the changing social imaginaries of a landscape in transition[14]. The Tamil play is not about king or Brahmin protagonist, nor about a royal city, but about a bandit-thief anti-hero who travels from place to place, driven by concerns of money, authority and ultimately savior. The scene below is found about a third of the way into the play, once Viracorpuli has fled his hometown after some trouble with his peers.

> *Having traveled for some ways, Viracorpuli (literally, "brave lion") lands up in a small city close to the coast called Tirupporur (east of Kancipuram) to visit the*

[14] Anandabarati Iyengar. "திருவிடைமருதூர் நொண்டி நடகம் (Tiruvidai marutur nonti natakam)." Kancipuram, mid 18th century. Tamil Collections. U Ve Swaminatha Iyer Library.

Arulmigu Kandhaswamy (Murugan) temple there. He stays at a chatram (public lodge), Karunai vamsham pervalar thandavarayan chattram, on the temple water tank's East street. One day, on his daily visit to the temple, he sees the "natanam seyyum pengal", the women who dance, in the sannidhi. There, he sees all of the dancing women. Most importantly, he sees Madarasa valli dancing…

அந்தத் தித்தி ஊதிய நாதமும்	the (sweet) sound blown by that horn
அதில் சேர்ந்து பாடும் சங்கீதமும்	and the sangeetham sung along with it
வித்தை மத்தளத்தின் வினோதமும்	the pleasantness of skilled maddalam (playing)
அவள் நாட்டிய வரிசையிற் பேதா பேதமும்	and the variations of her nattiya varisai
ஒத்து நட்டுவனொக் களிப்பதும்	along w/ the mirth of the nattuvanar-
அதிலே நாணங் கூட உள் களிப்பதும்	I too exulted inside-
ரித்தினஞ் சட்டமா மெய்யிர்ச் சொலிப்பதும்	with order of fortune, her body was alight.
பாதச் சதங்கை நூபுர மொலிப்பதும்	(Her) feet's salangai bells twinkling
மெய் நல் வடிவுச் சிங்காரமும் பின்	(Her) body in sweet form sringaram (love),
அபினயத்திலே ஒய்யாரமும்	in abhinaya, graceful gestures, and walk
அவள் கலவியின்விப காரமும்	matters of sexual union
கையை காட்டி யாடுங் கெம்பீரமும்	she gestured, dancing with stateliness
திவ்விய விரவு சவ்வாது பூசியே	And with beautiful mixture of scent
என்னை மிரட்டிக் கண்வலை விசியே	she berated me and cast her net
அவள் பரத நாட்டியம் ஆடினாள்	she danced bharata nattiyam.
நான்பரிதவித்து உள்ளம் வாடினேன்	I melted inside.

In this moment, Viracorpuli walks in to the temple precincts to find himself greeted by a group of dancing women. Madrasavalli is the woman he is drawn to. Surrounded by her musicians, she dances, her bells twinkling, her body beautiful in its grace, enticing Viracorpuli with re-countings of love and union in abhinaya. For him, the moment is transformative.

Dance is placed within a temple context; however, dance is not framed as religious. The scene takes place in the sannithi, or hall, of a Murugan temple in the small beach town of Tirupporur near the bigger city of Kanchipuram. The dancing is not described as ritual or linked to the deity

of the temple. We do not, for instance, hear of ceremonies around the daily waking up, feeding, washing, putting to bed of the main deity; the monthly processions when the deity is taken around the central city streets; or annual religious festivals.[15]

Instead, the performance is positioned as part of public life in a small town and Madrasavalli's dancing is described in terms of the aesthetic, conceptual, bodily world of a court darbar milieu. The temple is linked socio-spatially to other public spaces – the local chatram (lodge), the local city council – as well as to the dancer's home (seen in the following scene). The references to sangeetam (concert music) and abhinaya (erotic courtesan performance) as well as descriptors like *gambeeram* (stateliness) and *olippathu* (glittering or twinkling visually and aurally) do not suggest a utilitarian interest in dance's function in temple proceedings. Instead, the scene foregrounds an aesthetic and physical interest in courtly dance performance as sensory experience. It presents the spectator's interest as one of appreciation of movement, music and the performers' own energy.

[15] Saskia Kersenboom's is the defining work on dancers as ritual specialists, characterizing them as *nityasumangali* or always-auspicious because of this ritual status (1987). Many scholars through the 90s and early 00's referenced her work and continued to focus on dance and temples, including Avanti Meduri and others. While presenting an important turn in the ways devadasi women and their pasts are considered, focusing purely on women associated with temples as ritual specialists both de-historicizes their practices and roles in temple functioning as well as de-historicizing how temples themselves functioned. Temples, particularly large temples in urban political centers have held a close relationship to the states and patronage in which they are implicated. For example, the Meenakshi temple at Madurai was a source of both authority and devotional practice for successive generations of Madaurai Nayak kings and elite. The same is true to of the Brihadiswara temple in Tanjavur which was built by Chola kings, patronized subsequently by Nayak and then Maratha rulers. Over the years, however, the role of temples vis-à-vis kingship and palace courts has changed and so has the role of women in temples, as performing artists or otherwise. This is made particularly clear by the work of Orr, Leslie C. *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God : Temple Women in Medieval Tamilnadu: Temple Women in Medieval Tamilnadu*. Oxford University Press, 2000. She shows that in the medieval centuries, women associated with temples were rarely performers and more importantly, the nexus of temple practice, women as ritually auspicious and courtly ideals of sensuality was not established. The paradigm that Kersenboom reveals through her interviews and oral histories is a reflection of intersectional ideals from the early modern period and the particular narratives devadasi women adopted (or were forced to adopt) in the colonial and post-colonial eras. On the other hand, the Vedic materials she ties devadasi auspiciousness to do not reflect these changes as they were produced far earlier, in the classical period, and sometimes not in the south Indian context.

The dancing is sensual and creatively *skillful*, meant to evoke an emotional and physical response. There is also distinct focus on the expression of the dancer's moving feet and arms which reflects an attention to technique – *pAtha* satankai nupurum olippatum (feet alight), *kayyum* kAtti Adum ('showing' her hands and dancing). In mentioning hands especially, the nonti natakam seems to be referencing shorthand for technical gestural vocabulary, that the dancer *expounds* on erotic play through her ample gestural vocabulary. It is improvisatory, underscored by the *abhinaya* iterative logic of courtly eroticism – building up to her innumerable gestures of erotic love and sexual union. Viracorpuli's attention, and by extension our own attention, is not just a general appreciation of the dancing body. The scene focuses on the physicality of nimble footwork, gestural vocabulary, movement and sound – as producing a distinctly sensory experience of which the kallar is a part. Viracorpuli, initially just a passerby, becomes central to the scene as an active participant.

The visitor-participant's response – immediate, sensual and interior – is interwoven into the description of the dance itself. In a sense, not only does the scene reveal a level of Viracorpuli's interiority *through* physical and sensory experience, this experience fundamentally constructs who he will be in the future of this play. The *act of becoming* (spectator, patron, rogue, lover) through the scenario of the performance is central. The protagonist, Viracorpuli who starts out as a mere passerby, visiting the temple, becomes first a spectator-participant and then a patron through the course of the performed encounter. The scene recreates a momentary intimacy reminiscent of a court scene in which he plays the king and patron. Here however the patron is fleeting, and his authority lasts only as long as his money.

The play in general is about economic and corporeal consequences. The nonti natakam genre follows a somewhat stock narrative framework, linking several episodes that reveal the anti-heroes' interiority through the intensity of physical experience.

> The protagonist, a kallan (thief by trade) is forced to leave his home and city due to some falling out (usually professional). He travels and arrives at a new town where he meets a dasi/vesai at a temple and falls hopelessly for her, usually after seeing her dance. He inevitably follows her home where over the course of some days sleeping/living with her, bankrolling any number of whims, he loses all his money on this woman (and on general bad habits) and is forced to leave. He sets off to another urban center, looking to steal to make it back into her good graces. He gets caught by an officer or nawab (usually for stealing a horse to make his escape) and his limbs are cut off as punishment. At this ultimate low point, lying bleeding in public, he is found by a well-wisher who takes pity on the kallan, takes him in and directs him towards a potential savior – a local deity, Muruga, Shiva, Vishnu, Allah, Christ. The nonti finally finds his way to the place of worship, fainting in the sanctum, only to find he has regained his limbs when he comes to. With this corporeal miracle, the cripple's (now no longer a cripple) story comes to an end.

In a sense, the nonti natakam is a string of over-determined scenes that link to each other through highly corporeal consequence – the performance scene sets off a vivid scene of eroticism and sexual union in a prostitute's bedroom, then the stealing of a horse in an urban center, the graphic dismemberment in a public square, and finally the faint-and-recover-limbs scene in a temple sanctum. Among these, the scenario around dance performance, pivotal to the arc, repeats again and again, with variations and relocations in different nonti natakams. Moreover,

the encounter of bandit and dancer is not of an authoritative subject gazing on a mute object of desire. The bandit is a figure who is on the social margins, trying to make his way in, but generally part of the same milieu as the dancer herself. Moreover, in the play, the dancer is assertive, very much in control of her sexuality, and in control of the arc of their encounter. The presence of strong, sexually realized women in the public sphere is not new to the nonti natakam genre or necessarily to the eighteenth century. The genre of poetry-performance known as *padams* was especially popularized in the latter half of the seventeenth century in the Nayak courts of the Coromandel through the work of the court poet Ksetrayya – centered on the unabashed world and voices of courtesan women, unafraid of their own sexual pleasure or the commercial nature of their transactions. The nonti natakam is different however because ultimately, the promise of transgression and sensory revelation (sexual or otherwise) is not followed through here. The protagonist's concerns of socio-economic mobility and moral savior ultimately take over.

Considered a genre of minor Tamil play (*cittrilakkiyam*), the nonti natakam draws from earlier narratives and tropes. Earlier Tamil genres, for example, *Virali vitu tutu* a genre of the Nayak era, position dancing women as courtesans who fleece their patrons. In *Kūḷappa Nāyakaṉ Viṟaliviṭutūtu*, a Brahmin leaves his wife only to fall in love with and lose everything to a dancer, Mataṉāpiṣēkam. After living the life of a philander, he regains his wholesome life after being discovered for his poetic talents by the good king Nākama Kūḷappa Nāyakkaṉ. (Zvelebil 1989, David Shulman, 2001 The Wisdom of Poets). In these and other similar plays, there is a conflation of dance and sexual activity – naming a woman a dancer or *virali* is enough to identify her as a seductress (Ebeling 2010). As Ebeling puts it however, the real critique in the *tutu* genre is not of courtesans or association with sexuality, because that is an important part of the court.

The real critique is that this sexuality, pleasure and activity is meant for the king alone: the negative consequences are "what happens when you try to play king" (157).

In courtly dramas of the Nayak period such as *yaksagana*, the protagonist is the king himself and his arc, though involving separation from the woman he encounters and falls in love with, ultimately ends in erotic bliss and sexual union. In the 17th century *virali vitu tutu*, the protagonist is a brahmin whose wholesome morality must be saved – the brahmin begins and ends in a stable marriage, with the entire narrative framed as a blip, a momentary lapse of judgement with the worst consequence being loss of money and maybe loneliness. At worst, the Brahmin is a fool. In the nonti natakam, the stakes are much higher – losing limbs and bleeding out in the public street is much direr than anything imagined in the *tutu* genre. Moreover, the nature of the bandit's downfall centers always around material resources – his encounter with the dasi woman is that it leads him on a spending spree to please her and prove he is a gentleman of leisure, his lowest moment of physical dismemberment and near-death comes about because he can't afford to disguise himself well enough to avoid being outed as a bandit-thief. Finally, the trajectory of the nonti play leads not to the return of a normalized home life, but to a fundamental transformation, almost rebirth, through the power of a miracle deity[16]. The nonti or cripple manifests a unique set of concerns – an intense concern with physicality that is distinct from earlier Nayak ethos of pleasure and transgression, a mobility that revolves around wealth and material resources (or the lack thereof), a constant trope of disguise or reforming subjectivity that

[16] Some of these differences may be due to the more Tamil milieu of the Marava and other palayakkarar courts, and therefore the greater reliance on medieval Tamil Chola tropes common for example in the Tamil bhakti poetry, *Tiruppugazh*.

leads to concrete gain or loss, and all of this underscored by a narrative of continuous travel and lack of stable sense of place or belonging.

The nonti natakam's bandit protagonist is neither king nor brahmin. The kallan represents a position far less stable than king or elite brahmin. The kallan is a figure on the social, economic and political margins of early modern south India – both a thief and a watchman whose marauding violence places him in an ambivalent tension with existing order and the king who represents that order (Shulman).[17] Because of the tenuousness of kallan authority, the tone of the performative scenario is different than that of early modern Nayak plays. There is deep ambivalence around corporeal experience and of trusting the senses, rather than a Nayak idealization of sensuality and sexual transgression. In the nonti natakam, the dance scene puts the kallan in a precarious position, at once embodying the courtly patron but clearly not in a position of complete authority. The power over resources and eroticism that god, king, or even brahmin has in the yaksagana or virali vitu tutu which leads to a normative resolution of erotic desire is absent from the bandit's scenario. In fact, here the encounter results in literal physical destruction to the traveling bandit as evidenced in the rest of the play.[18] Throughout the play, issues of money form an urgent undercurrent in the nonti play in general and in the framing of dance in particular. As mentioned earlier, the play's protagonist and dancer are from similar social strata; there is little preciousness around dancers or their performance, nor is there any simple moral condemnation of dancers' sexuality. Rather, the kallar's eventual bloody downfall and

[17] For a detailed discussion of the bandit as clown and tragic hero, in relation to the figure of the king from myth and oral tradition to written plays like nonti natakam, see Shulman's 1985 work The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry

[18] In terms of language, the nonti natakam draws from Tamil terminology reflecting a connection between the body and knowing. For example, there is word play with the term *mei* – meaning truth, veracity, the 'real', but is also the body, or the sense of touch – which revolves on the idea that you cannot trust the senses.

miraculous recovery make the story a lesson in playing at something beyond your means, a critique of a certain kind of sensual and material excess, played out in urban contexts and public spaces.

II. New Elite, Dance, Space, Place: Ramanathapuram

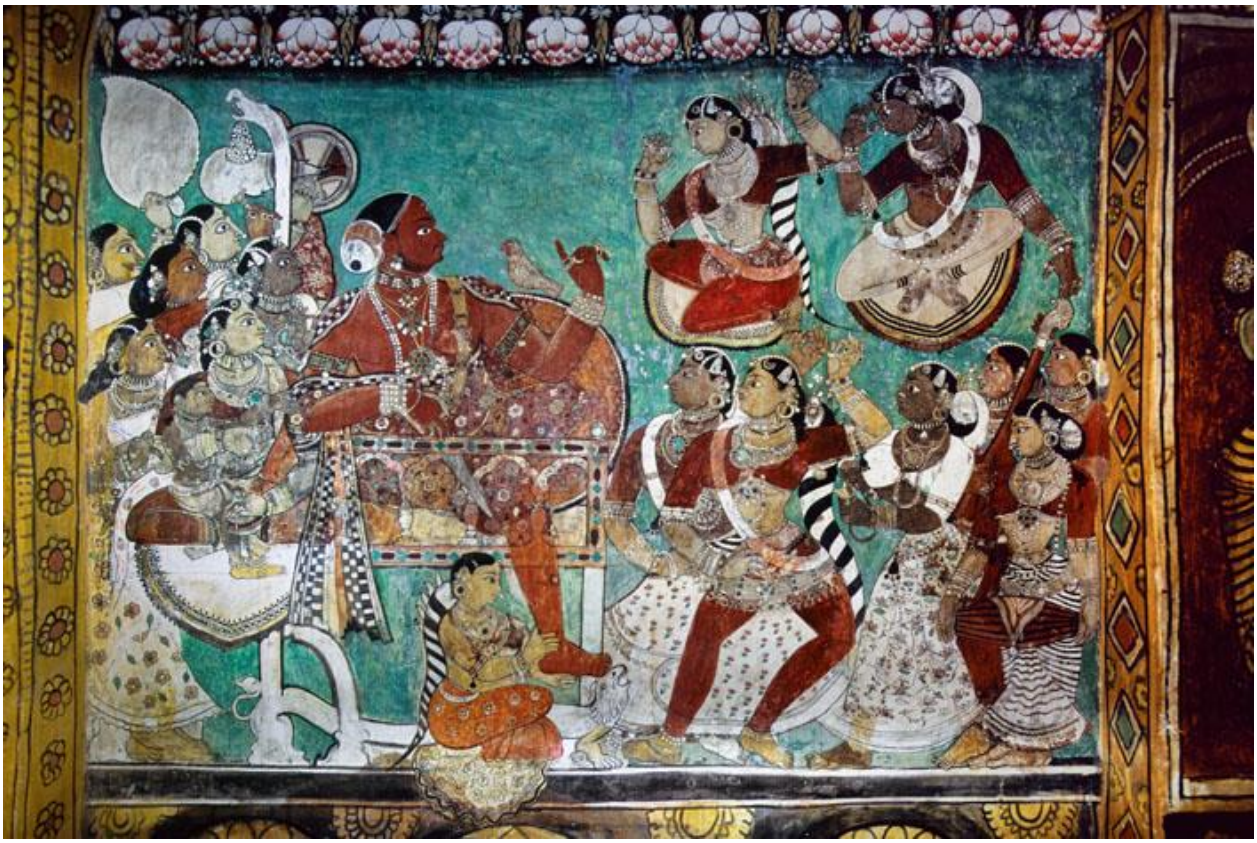


Fig. 2. Mural in the Ramalinga Vilasam Palace Durbar, Ramanathapuram, dated to early eighteenth century. Photograph from author's travel

The king sits back, wrist tilted in appreciation, surrounded by intricately bejeweled women behind him playing different instruments. One of them is waving a fly-whisk to keep him cool, another sits at his feet messaging them. But our gaze is directed towards what he is watching, the dancing women in front of him. In various kalamkari prints and bright intricate jewelry, two women dance, hips cocked, matching arms raised above, feet in motion. They are joined by two more women in seated positions in attitudes of deference, the pleated cloth of their saris fanning out in front of them. Behind them are

the musicians accompanying them – one playing the maddalam (percussion), one singing sangeetam, one playing the veena, and leading them all is the woman doing the nattuvangam with the cymbals.

The painting above formed part of the cultural milieu of Ramanathapuram, a city that emerged as a new urban milieu in the seventeenth century. The painting appears on the walls of the palace of the Setupati rulers who established the city and their independent state by the end of the seventeenth century. Known as Ramalinga Vilasam, the four-chambered audience hall was most likely built around 1700 by Kilavan Tevar (r. 1673-1710), one of the more powerful of the Setupati rulers. The extensive paintings on the walls and ceilings of the Ramalinga Vilasam chambers are understood to be commissioned by his successor, Tiru Udaya Tevar known under his regnal name, Muttu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati (r. 1710-25).

In Ramalinga Vilasam, when you enter the main hall, you are immediately surrounded by mural panels covering the walls from ceiling to floor.[19] While the deity's 'darbar' hall showed the stories relevant to him or her, the murals here show the stories relevant to the Setupati king – the 'foundation myth'. Firstly, the 'foundation myth' of the Setupati victory over the Tanjavur Marathas after which they were granted Ramnad as a center presents the king's source of political currency. Secondly, the Ramayana epic tableaus remind visitors that control over Rameswaram (an important site in the Ramayana) continued to be a basis for the Setupati's authority in the region. These scenes lead the visitor to the innermost chamber of the ground

[19] Jennifer Howes describes this space and the murals in her work on the courtly spaces of little kingdoms. My interest here, however, is not to understand or make distinctions between private and public but to understand how movement (both of the layout of the space and the visual stimulation of the paintings on its walls) creates a space of dynamic but exclusive sociality that represents nouveau riche sensibilities – drawing on earlier paradigms of visualized and spatialized authority but condensing and intensifying them.

floor, where there is a raised pillared platform where the Setupati king sits and holds assembly, surrounded by his courtiers.

The walls of the four chambers depict increasingly personal tableaus, ending with the fourth chamber upstairs.[20] In this innermost chamber, on the western wall, we find the painting above – surrounded by scenes of the king in various tableaus of love-making, play and other pleasurable activities. The same chamber includes equally intimate scenes of musical performances, exclusively featuring women as performers. These scenes helped shape the space of the hall, defining courtly culture and power dynamics for the privileged exclusive audience who were invited in. While the main large hall downstairs was likely used for more public large-scale audiences, the smaller chambers as you move further in and finally the chamber upstairs were not necessarily private but meant for smaller, more informal and thus more exclusive audiences. The paintings on the walls of the palace darbar reflect these dynamics – from the narrative content of the mural panels to the way the king is clothed.[21] Dance and music, like the king's amorous dalliances, are not seen as part of a private domestic sphere so much as on a continuum of more to less access to the Setupati ruler. The courtly dance performance was part of a scenario of exclusivity and intimacy.

Other than the 'bedroom' chamber upstairs, dance scenes are found in the ground floor inner chamber where the king holds court. The walls here are covered with scenes from the bhagavata purana or mythological narratives. The arches of the ceiling however show Vijayaraghava

[20] For more on discussion of Ramnad palace space in relation to definitions of interiority and exteriority, See Howes, Jennifer. *Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*. Psychology Press, 2003.

[21] For an in-depth discussion of south Indian rulers' use dress in Persianate or Indic styles to navigate more public diplomatic contexts vs more domestic audiences, see Bes, Lennart. "Sultan among Dutchmen? Royal Dress at Court Audiences in South India, as Portrayed in Local Works of Art and Dutch Embassy Reports, Seventeenth–eighteenth Centuries" *Modern Asian Studies* 50, no. 6 (November 2016): 1792–1845)

Setupati in various scenes of royal activity, including one scene that depicts him accepting tribute from European officials, others in various scenes of official assembly (Fig 2-7). Of these several of the ceiling arch panels show him surrounded by women – wives and courtesans. At least one of these scenes show him in a darbar scene, watching a performance. *The king sits back [almost the same pose as upstairs] two women in front of him – one with both arms raised in movement in front of her face with a scarf billowing away from her elbows, the other woman in vibrant red one hand raised behind her, the other dropped in casually in front. They are not the gauzy materials of the women upstairs, but full flowing skirts, almost (but not entirely) hiding the movement of their feet. This time, they are not accompanied by more women but by two men on nattuvangam, retreating from the scene in deference.*

While the scenes in the upstairs "bedroom chamber" clearly locate dance in a scenario of intimacy, leisure, and pleasure, the scenes downstairs frame the Setupati and his spectators differently. The chamber in which they exist also holds the raised platform where the Setupati himself would be seated when holding assembly. The arches which are all around that raised platform area, literally framed his seated figure. However, someone looking would only see it if they were all the way inside the chamber with him and could look up at the ceiling around the small room. These scenes and their depiction are mundane. They are part of everyday life, or so it's meant to seem. Here, the scene of performance is not meant to position the Setupati only as an erotic figure, but as a statesman looking after the business of state functioning. Ostensibly, this official business includes presenting himself as patronizing the arts. This latter image of the king as statement, however small in the space of the Setupati's palace, was a more generally reproduced, reframed and re-oriented expression of authority, later becoming a model for some

Europeans as well as they sought to establish their authority in the changing political and economic geography of the Coromandel.













Fig. 3-8. Ceiling arches in the inner (3rd) chamber downstairs, Ramnad Ramalingavilasa darbar. Photographs from author's travel

Ramalingavilasam darbar: space and visualized authority

The palace space of Ramalingavilasam anchored the urban milieu of Ramanathapuram – as a relatively new city and center of the small but dynamic Setupati state. The Setupatis, coming from the lower caste Tamil Marava background, gained visibility and leverage as regional governors or *palayakkarar* for the Madurai Nayak state. They protected the popular pilgrimage site Rameswaram[22] and won a series of military battles for the Madurai queen Mangammal and her successors – gaining the title Setupati. Maravar had not only military history but connotations of banditry, marauding and enforcing (in myth, oral tradition, classical Tamil literature).[23] By mid-seventeenth century, the Setupatis declared autonomous authority. By the closing decades of the seventeenth century, the Setupatis were invested in developing Ramanathapuram as an urban political and economic center and the palace as a site of cosmopolitan authority. The Setupati Ramnad state was financed largely by influential Muslim Marakkayar merchant-financiers who leveraged their trade networks for political say at the Ramanathapuram court.

As an ambassadorial space, the Ramalingavilasam darbar brought multiple sets of bodies into its orbit. Unlike a proscenium stage of current-day performances, the darbar or temple sabha mandapam has audiences seated along both sides of a long corridor where the dancer faces the

[22] Rameswaram was (and continues to be) an important site of healing and miracles for a number of people, regardless of sectarian affiliation– Saivites, Vaishnavites, Smartha Brahmins and those without Hindu sectarian affiliation.

[23] See Dirks, Nicholas B. *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. University of Michigan Press, 1993.

Shulman, David Dean. *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry*, 1985.

Price, Pamela G. *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

patron or deity performing. In the palace, sometimes the women of the court would watch from an upstairs balcony or room. The audience members must be as conscious of each other as they are of the performer. The question of the gaze comes into play across the space – dance as presented in performance as well as depicted in the paintings on the walls of the inner chambers construct a space of corporeal self-consciousness. Through the multiple paintings in the different Ramalinga vilasam space and the imagining of dance into the space through a nonti natakam (play), the Setupati palace is defined as multiply-practiced elite space and Ramanathapuram as an active urban center. The Marava palayakkarars self-fashioning as kings centrally involved establishing Ramanathapuram as an urban center. In the process, they centered dance as cosmopolitan practice.[24]

Nonti natakams, along with several genres of Tamil poetry and drama known as *citrilakkiyam* such as *kuravanci* (fortune-teller's play) and *pallu natakam* (depicting the life of a farmer and his two wives), were a product of the palayakkarar milieu of late seventeenth century south India. These genres all brought together a new aesthetic sensibility of colloquial language, everyday characters and the implicit critique on the elite. They belied both easy moral ending-lessons and the hedonistic celebration of material culture and sensuality of the Nayak elite. The ideology of banditry and deep concerns around performing kingship reflected in the nonti natakam in particular reflects the socio-political reality of relatively new rulers like the Setupatis and other *palayakkarar* smaller states that emerged and defined themselves around the same time, such as

[24] In the South Asian context, scholars have debated the notion of public and private. Scholars of both architecture and literature have pointed out that the seemingly equivalent terminologies of antar (outer) and bahir (inner) or puram (relating to public life) and akam (relating to matters of the heart) do not have the same distinctions as European conceptions of public and private. These categories move between ideologies of space but also social activity and notions of self-hood but are rarely a practical concern in the organization of urban space in the eighteenth century. I disagree with Howes here that these are relevant categories for talking about space in the eighteenth century.

the Tevars of Pudukkottai or Sivagangai.[25] The figure of the bandit was never far from Marava self-expression and construction of public authority, nor the ambivalence towards institutionalized power and leisure that the bandit-rogue embodied[26]. Several early nonti natakams were produced by and set around Madurai, Ramnad, Tirunelveli, and surrounding small estates and courts, many of which emerged by the end of the 17th century. This includes, for example, *Tiruppullani nonti natakam, Tiruccentur nonti natakam* (Shulman 1985), and *Citakkati* (addressed in the next section). The poets who wrote them – Kantacami pulavar, Viraraghava Iyengar, Umara pulavar's friend – are either all well-known poets or part of well-known circles of poets, often with links to new elite patrons.

A lesser known play, *Tiruppulani nonti natakam,* produced early in the eighteenth century was authored by Viraraghava Iyengar, a court poet at Ramanathapuram[27]. The *Tiruppullani nonti* play centralizes Ramanathapuram and the Setupati milieu in contrast to an aging Nayak center at Madurai. The play, particularly its representation of the scenario of the bandit encountering dancing women and being transformed, raises questions about the intersections of sexuality, sensuality, mobility and space.

> *The kallan arrives in the bustling city of Ramanathapuram disguised as a holy mendicant to get an audience with the king. Accompanied by the royal guard, he sees the dancing women at the Rameswaram temple, where*
>
> *the abhinaya tradition is thriving,*

[25] For an in-depth study of Pudukottai and the construction of 'little kings' in relation to caste, community and power relations, see the definitive work Dirks, Nicholas B. *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. University of Michigan Press, 1993.

[26] Shulman, 1985. *The King and the Clown*

[27] Viraraghava Iyengar. "திருப்புல்லாணி நொந்தி நடகம் (TiruppullAni Nonti Natakam)." Ramanathapuram, early 18th century. Tamil Collections. U Ve Swaminatha Iyer Library.

sangeetam is thriving,

natya kalai (dramatic tradition) is thriving,

But only subsequently, in the relatively more private environment of Ramalinga vilasam, the Ramnad palace, he sees the dasi dancing woman doing natanam and falls in love with her.

விடுதிவிட் டிருக்கசொல்லி -- இராமலிங்க … – to Ramalinga
விலாசத் தழைத்துச் செல் லாபத்துடன் vilasam he brought me, w/ thoughts of profit
நடனங்கள் பார்க்கலுற்றான் -- அப்போது to watch natanams – at that time
நானு மிருந்தேனந்த நடுச்சபையில் I also was there, in the middle of that hall
கண்டேன் தாசிகளை -- ஓடிப்போய்க் I saw the dasis. To run and
கட்டிக்கொள்ள நினைத்தென் கெட்டமனது embrace them was my thought, my bad mind,
பெண்டாசை பொல்லாதே - என்னையந்தப் the bad desire for women --
பேய்பிடித்தது புத்தி போய்மடித்தது took hold of me as a craziness, my wits end.

The scene is brief, filled with movement, and intense. The physical effects of the kallan's encounter with dancing women are literally and brutally felt, much more so than in the later nonti natakams like the *Tirukkaccur nonti natakam*. The description of the dancing is much more cursory. There is a more direct association of dancers and prostitution. Perhaps most importantly in this nonti natakam, the dancing woman has barely any individuality at all, at least not as an artist or performer. Other early nonti natakams like the *Citakkati nonti natakam* and *Tillaivitankan Aiyanar nonti natakam* by Tamil poet Marimuthu Pillai, treat dance and dancer similarly.

The language, the flow, the meter of the scene all place us in a bustling whirlwind tour around Rameswaram, the cosmopolitan pilgrimage center, and then Ramanathapuram, the state center, before coming to a standstill right in the middle of the court hall of Ramalinga Vilasam. In the set-up to this scene, as the kallan enters Rameswaram, he describes the arts – sangeeta murai (music), abhinaya murai (dance), natya murai (drama) – as thriving or *virutthi* (literally

being grown) in the nataka salai or performance hall. A significant part of the way Ramanathapuram and Rameswaram are described by the poet as urban centers revolve around highlighting the presence of its dance and music.[28] Sorasuran, an outsider coming into Ramanathapuram, seems a bit overwhelmed by the activity and bustle of the city. There is an urgency in the language of the scene in the play, a sense of being lost in a cosmopolitan urban milieu. Moreover, Sorasuran is in disguise as a holy man in order to gain access to the Setupati king at the Ramanathapuram court. The undercurrent of urgency in the movement of the scene also stems from some anxiety about being 'found out', as the remainder of the scene reveals.

When Sorasuran arrives in Ramanathapuram, the officer (described as corrupt) who accompanies him brings him straight to the Ramalinga Vilasam court hall. He describes himself as suddenly being right in the middle of the hall – with the feeling that everything is happening around him. In that moment, the kallan Sorasuran goes mad, just upon being in the midst of these dancing women. Surasoran literally sees – kantEn - the dasi women. Kanten, however, doesn't just mean to see, but to encounter, to discover, to realize (as in fully comprehend in terms of the senses). It was a physical realization – this fact is reinforced by the bandit's immediate response, a physical response of running towards the dancing women. The way it is described, he loses his mind. What actually happens is more gripping – *pey pittitatu, putti poy madittatu*, literally pey (bad spirits, demons) grabs hold of him and his mental capacity crumbles or folds. That is, he is possessed, in a concretely physical sense. Even losing his wits is a physical action, his brain 'folding'. The language is not only vivid; it is corporeal.

[28] Abhinaya is not a general term used to refer to expressivity but a specific tradition, associated with solo female performance (referring to *padam* performance) as distinct from music or drama, sangeetham and natyam respectively.

The tension in this scene acts on multiple levels. The bandit is attracted to the dancing woman but also very keenly feels the physical danger of the encounter. Moreover, the encounter with the dancing woman causes him to forget himself so thoroughly he gives himself up as a fraud, for which there are dire consequences. For attempting to steal from the king, he is punished by having his limbs cut off, but before that, he loses all the money he had come with. Surasoran, walking a tight line on the margins but daring to do whatever necessary to live a life of leisure, does not have the leisure of forgetting himself, losing his wits, giving in to his senses, and transgressing the moral and social codes that define this urban milieu. Cosmopolitan centers, with their music and dance and beautiful women, the huge crowded temples and exclusive courts which house all this activity, are places of distraction, especially dangerous for those already playing their luck. As someone from the margins continuously attempting to step into a position of authority and/or leisure, that is 'looking in' on the high life, the bandit's perspective on dance is one which locates it in the contexts of urban activity and enjoyment of sensual experience and material culture, things which are out of his own reach and more importantly, things which he ends up getting hurt every time he attempts to access or own. From this perspective, the politics of space, materiality and sensuality are intertwined.

Darbars and Prakarams – Cutting Across Urban Space

As with plays, dance emerged as part of the narrative and spatial logics of various modes of painting and visual expression increasingly in the eighteenth century. Paintings like those in the Ramalingavilasam palace commissioned by Kizhavan Setupati were central to constructing visual and spatial authority as well as anchoring urban centers. Paintings, performance, and the spatial definition of authority intersected both courts and temples – two of the primary spaces of urban public spheres.

The construction and organization of urban political centers in South India had long centered around major temples which defined the landscape and skyline, particularly from the medieval centuries of the Tamil Chola empire. Under the early modern Nayak rulers, however, the fort-city, housing temple, palace and commercial center within a walled fort, became common.[29] The plan of the temple also shifted under early modern Nayak patronage, who added to existing Pallava, Pandya and Chola temples following a logic of accretion – a main sannithi or with its compound wall and then leaving space for a corridor and additional secondary sannithis a second compound wall often added later, and then a third and so on. This is true Varadarajaswamy temple in Kancipuram, the Tiruvidaimarutur temple in Kumbakonam and the Minakshi temple in Madurai. The building up of space and defining the urban landscape through the physical skyline as well as the social dynamic of urban centers was crucial to defining authority for Nayaks and continued into the eighteenth century with the important distinction that it was now not just kings but private individuals, mostly merchants, who made important additions to central urban temples and thus manifested their own authorities physically and socially.[30]

[29] Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*. p83.

[30] Temples are thus large compounds housing many large and small units, each a home for its respective deity. The placement of these units, or sannithis in relation to each other is governed by various norms – the consort (husband/wife/lover) of the main deity, if present, is to the left of the deity, secondary deities have smaller sannithis, that surround the main one. The Cholas built big open temples without internal walls that contained various sannithis within it. From the medieval period however, temples have also been defined through a process of accretion, with first Cholas, then Nayaks, then big patrons of the eighteenth century adding concentric walled corridors with striking gopurams (entry gates) to what might have originally been a small sannithi.

While the visual art of medieval space-construction in south India centered on sculptures, murals[31] had emerged as a primary medium around the sixteenth century under the Nayak kings and their projects of space-making. Murals were painted on the walls of both temples and palace courts – depicting epic narratives in tableaus accompanied by textual captions or depicting figure portraits of kings and elite.[32] Paintings were added to existing spaces or were included in Nayak construction of new spaces, defining both temples and palaces as sensual kinesthetic experiences. In a choreographic sense, these paintings pick up the pace of the space around the palace darbar or the main sannithi, of the temple – that is the primary chamber of king or god respectively.[33] Both as people are waiting to go into the temple sannithi or court inner audience chamber and after they come out, they are surrounded by the mural panels covering entire walls and sometimes ceilings of the hall and then the corridor which wraps around sannithi. These murals create a visceral sense of movement, activity, and energy. In these paneled stories, dance is often included as punctuation for an important scene in the narrative logic of the panels physical organization.

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[31] For more on dance and sculptures, Kapila Vatsyayan has deeply theorized the relationship in terms of aesthetic principles in Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Bharata The Natyasastra*. Sahitya Akademi, 2006.

———. *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*. Sangeet Natak Akademi New Delhi, 1968. http://library.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/toc/z2008_2719.pdf.

———. *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts*. Abhinav Publications, 1997.

For more particularly of the 108 karanas built in Siva temples by the medieval Cholas in south India, Subrahmanyam, Padma. *Bharata's Art, Then & Now*. Bombay: Bhulabhai Memorial Institute; Madras: Nrithyodaya, 1979. Also in Southeast Asia including Java, Royo, Alessandra Lopez Y. "Embodying a Site: Choreographing Prambanan." *Journal of Material Culture* 10, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 31–48.

[32] See "Praise, Politics, and Language: South Indian Murals 1500-1800" Dissertation, Anna Lise Streasand. 2013.

[33] The most striking example is the Varadarajaperumal temple in Kanchipuram. Paintings cover the outer hall of the Varadaraja perumal sannithi and were commissioned either by later Vijayanagara or early Nayak kings. See the work of Dr. Nanditha Krishna, Director, C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer Foundation for more on the paintings of that particular temple.

Mural paintings depicting dance as part of extended narrative panels in palace audience halls and temple courtyards similarly framed the kinesthetic experience of the visitor. The mural walls in temples are almost always the inner walls of the first concentric courtyard surrounding the main sannithi where the main deity sits. The paintings in that first corridor are a defining part of the temple's space and of the outward expression of the deity – the murals are usually visual narratives from mythic stories about the main deity. Similarly, in a palace audience hall like that of Ramalinga Vilasam, the paintings in effect tell the origin story of the dynasty in the form of a major military victory and associated diplomacy. A visitor to a temple generally walks straight to the main sannithi to get a glimpse of the deity and then out and clockwise through the more open first prakaram and then perhaps the others if there are any. In the court darbar, a visitor seeking an audience will be taken straight into the ruler's chamber before coming out again passing the walls of murals. Paintings at Bodinayakanur, a smaller palace in Theni district, portray dancing women as part of a processional scene. Here, the panel is part of the mural story of the Ramayana covering the inner walls of the palace. Similar mural panels of especially of Ramayana, Mahabharata scenes cover whole inner walls in temples like Thirupudaimarudur near Tirunelveli, Alagarkovil, Chidambaram and other places (Ettaiyapuram, Alagapuri). Matancherry Palace in Kochi, Kerala is almost exactly the same as Ramnad palace in terms of the structure of the darbar, with a "bedroom" chamber, coronation hall and extra chamber, with paintings fully covering the walls. The paintings of the bedroom chamber depict Ramayana scenes but also scenes of Krishna in foreplay with milk maidens. The Jaganmohan palace built by the Wodeyars in Mysore at the beginning of the nineteenth century also has murals covering the four walls of the main audience hall – depicting scenes of war and leisure. Similar paintings are found in Tipu Sultan's palace in Mysore as well. Since god and king were imagined as

‘holding court’ in similar ways from the early modern period in south India, the courtyard became, in many ways a space that cut across both spheres.



Fig. 9. Nayak era murals on walls of the inner corridor at Varadaraja perumal temple in Kancipuram, 17th century. Photograph from author’s travel



Fig. 10. Setupati paintings on walls and ceilings of inner chamber at Ramalinga Vilasam, the palace darbar at Ramanathapuram, eighteenth century. PhotogrPH from author's travel.



Fig. 11. Bodinayakanur palace painting, part of Ramayana. Image by V Muthuraman

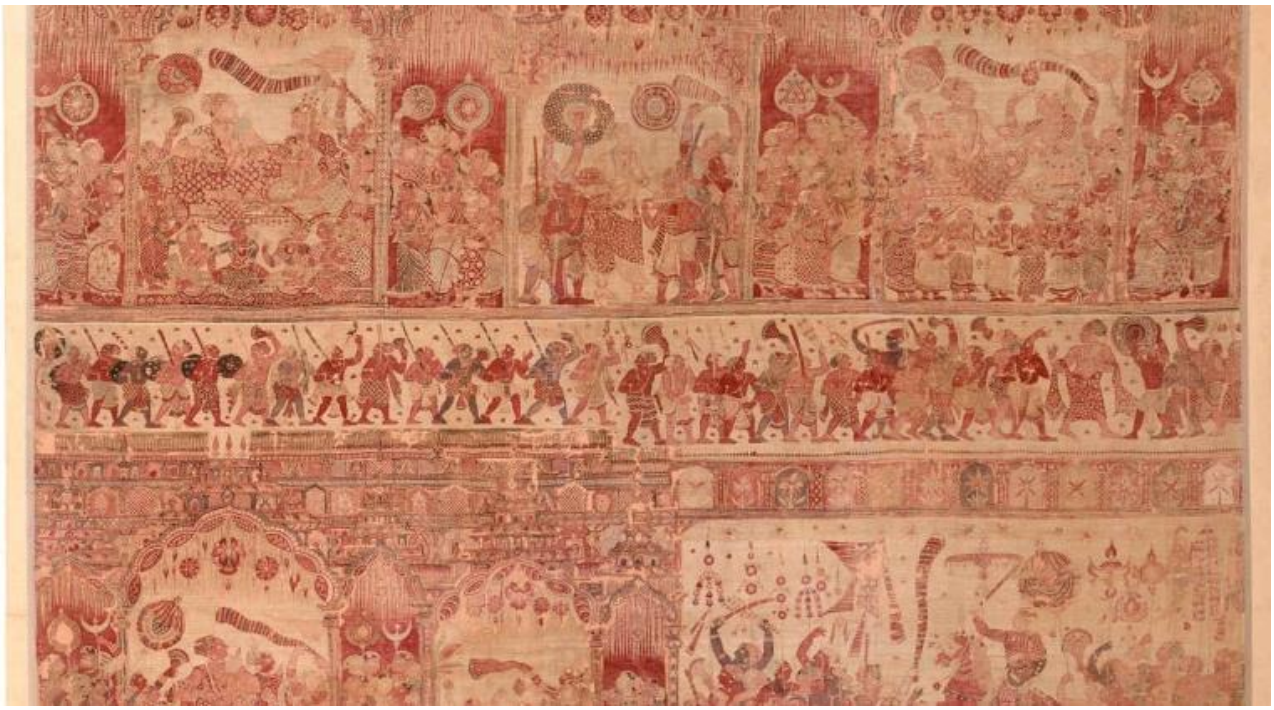


Fig. 12. Kalamkari Tapestry, late 17th century, Musee Guimet Riboud Collection MA5678 (AEDTA 2221)

Performances occurred both in temple prakaram spaces and court darbar spaces. In temples, performances would often happen in one of the structures of the temple compound, called a kuravanci or nataka medai. It consists of a raised platform in open pillared hall (w/ open corridor down the center) where dramas and dance would be staged for annual festivals or one-time events, like *kumbabishekam* ceremonies. This kind of performance *medai* (platform) is found in in places like the small Uma Maheswari temple tucked away in Konerirajapuram (near Kumbakonam) and the major urban Brihadiswara temple in Tanjavur. Dramas were staged under the Tanjavur Nayak's patronage at the Mannargudi Vishnu temple as well. These performance medai within the temple are usually within one of the outer prakarams of the temple and to the left facing inwards towards the main sannithi. When part of daily rituals, the dancing or singing would happen within the main sannithi or the *unjal mandapam*. Different spaces had not only different functions and different levels of access but also different configurations of practice. In palace space, more public performances happened in the assembly space of a darbar. More private performances sometimes took place in the women's parts of the palace, a more informal and intimate setting, meant just for the (extended) royal family.

In the eighteenth century however, the majority of new construction wasn't new temples or additions to temples but smaller palaces or estates and public lodges dotting the important highways and travel routes[34]. In the context of this changing relationship between temple, court, and broader urban landscape, dance framed space in new ways through visual representation and performance itself – with the courtyard or hall becoming the site of distinct urban dynamics and

[34] While Nayak early modern fort cities had centered around temples included within them, the new urban centers that arose in the eighteenth century such as Ramanathapuram were associated with pilgrimage centers (like Rameswaram) but physically separated from it. Similarly, Pudukottai and Sivagangai have significant temples nearby but neither the palace nor the city is constructed around them. This is the case with other palayakkarar estates that emerged around this time like Bodinayakanur as well.

mobility, cutting across these spaces. In the next section of this chapter, I turn to the Coromandel as a world on the move, with sadir performance punctuating and bringing together multiple embodiments of mobility – geographic and socio-economic.

III. A World on the Move: the Kaveri Delta

The Coromandel was defined by movement; communities of artisans, performers and others on the move because they were often patronized by multiple patrons – little kings, political merchants or portfolio capitalists, and intermediaries who themselves straddled multiple socio-political worlds.[35] Urban imaginaries peopled by dancers, soldier-peons, and mendicant saviors, centered on narratives of individual resourcefulness on the margins of established authority resonated with nouveau riche throughout the changing southeast Indian landscape. Portfolio-capitalists working as merchants and vying for political position within the various southeast Indian states, dubashes working as intermediaries for European trading companies and handling their own landed interests, as well as the numerous 'little kings' who carved out their estates through a number of economic or enforced means patronized these creative genres.

Plays like nonti natakams and others that became popular in the period were built on a narrative formula of travel. The bandit protagonist of the nonti play moves from city to city across the Coromandel, with particular narrative turns taking place in each urban milieu. The plays usually start in a smaller town (the hometown of the kallar). The kallan travels first to a big

[35] In the seventeenth century, the biggest cities in terms of size and population were Golconda & Bagnagar/Hyderabad (head of the Golconda sultanate) then Masulipatnam (trading port), smaller capitals like Srirangam, Madurai, Tanjavur, Velur, Senji (mostly Nayak centers), then Bhatkal, Pulicat, and smaller ports like Pulicat, Nagapattinam, Basrur, Honawar, Cochin. 'Temple' towns like Kanchipuram, Tirupati, Sringeri, Sravanabalegola fluctuated seasonally but also had continuous communities of artisan, service, and trade. See Subrahmanyam 1990, Political Economy of Commerce. P 23-26. Apparently, there was a process of de-urbanization associated with early colonialism, that is the eighteenth and early nineteenth century specifically the Madras presidency – but that just means that people were moving out of Madras specifically. They could easily have been going to a number of other urban centers.

urban center, usually one centered around a politically important temple: Madurai or Cidambaram or in other examples Kumbakonam or Kancipuram. The travel then takes the kallan to a political center associated with military activity: Tanjavur, Mylai, elsewhere Arcot. Finally, the plays always locate a holy site which is seen as outside of the realms of politics and material excess. The Coromandel is treated as a series of urban or semi-urban nodes, interconnected by travels and socio-economic concerns. In each of the nonti natakams, dance performance was located in centers like Madurai, Kumbakonam or Cidambaram. While these places are associated with larger than life temples and are today understood primarily in terms of these temples, the eighteenth-century plays present them as commercial and political centers, of importance to emerging nouveau riche.

In the *Ceytakkati nonti natakam*, the play ultimately ends not at a Saiva temple but Mecca, the religious center of the Islamic world. From a small town outside Tirunelveli in the south, the kallan goes to Madurai, the cosmopolitan center where he meets and falls for a dasi woman. From there, traveling through Trichy, he lands in Senji just as Zulfikar Khan's army is occupying the city in a siege, he disguises himself as a beggar and attempts to steal a horse and gets similarly corporeally punished, after which he is directed to Mecca. The patron of the play, mentioned near the end as the person who directs the desperate cripple to Mecca, was Shaykh Abd al-Qadir or Citakkati, the head of the Kilakkarai-based Periya Tambi Marakkayar. The family were portfolio-capitalists, central to the fiscal consolidation of the Ramnad state. Abd al-Qadir and his relatives belonged to the Tamil Shafi'i Muslim community of maritime traders settled on the southeastern coast, known as Maraikkayar (Tamil marakkalam, 'boat'). They were granted the title 'Periya Tambi Marakkayar' by Raghunatha or Kizhavan Setupati, ruler of Ramnad, reinforcing the close relationship they had to the ruling family and the workings of the

state.[36] The play makes visible the complicated ways in which influences and identities intersected: Tamil, Shafi'i Muslim, Arabic, Marava, Setupati alongside the audiences such a play was ostensibly speaking to, which brought into its orbit such far apart places as Mecca, Ramanathapuram, and Senji and a number of different values around the body, devotion, materiality and duty that do not simply fall into current religious boundaries.

Another early eighteenth century nonti play, *Tiruccentur nonti natakam* was written by Kantacami Pulavar, commissioned by a palayakkarar 'little king' of Tirunelveli.[37] The first place the kallan stops is Cidambaram and where he encounters a professional dancing woman in the midst of the bustling city. Cidambaram, although today known as a temple town, was closely linked to the nearby ports of Cuddalore and Porto-Nova, making it unsurprising that in the landscape of the nonti natakam, it is imagined in commercial terms. From Cidambaram, the kallan travels to Tanjavur; in the midst of a military conflict, the bandit disguises himself as an ascetic and attempts to steal a horse, ultimately having his arms and feet cut off. Tanjavur at this time was one of the centers of Mughal campaigns under his commander Zulfikar Khan attempting to expand south. Finally, the play takes the kallan to Tiruccentur, in the southernmost part of south India, known for its Murugan deity associated with miracles and thus another popular place of pilgrimage. The fact that the kallan's final resting spot and miraculous turn occur in Tiruccentur is based on the fact that it is close to the patron of the play's production and

[36] For a discussion of the role of 'portfolio capitalists' in general and the Periya Tambi Maraikkayars in particular see Chapter 1 and: Vin, *Mission to Madurai* pp 77-80. See also: Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, pp.264-304; Shulman and Subrahmanyam, 'Prince of Poets and Ports'; Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, esp pp79-92; Arasaratnam, 'A Note on Periathamby Maraikkar'; Bes, 'The Setupatis, the Dutch, and Other Bandits'

[37] The play is analyzed at length by David Shulman in relation to notions of kingship and its tensions (1985)

Tirunelveli. Each place and corresponding encounter are a node in the mapping of urban south India and the particular patron-poet-play production.

In each example, the play weaves between the historical realities of the south Indian political landscape and the stock narrative of a primary protagonist. The basic story and character types remain the same. There is always a bandit, a dancing woman or courtesan, a well-wisher who directs the limbless cripple near the end of the play to his ultimate savior. However, the cities the bandit travels through change depending on the play. In addition, the courtesan or well-wisher or military-political conflict in the play reflects historical realities. For example, the well-wisher character written into the play is actually always the patron of the play itself - Shaykh Abd al-Qadir or Ananda Pillai in the example from the beginning of the chapter. This well-wisher (and the patron of the play himself) is often a courtier or merchant for one of the Coromandel courts or a 'little king' *zamindar*, in a couple cases he is a dubash for one of the European companies.

Many of the poets or pulavars that composed nonti natakams were employed by multiple patrons at once, rather than being employed long-term at one court.[38] The *Tirukkacchur nonti natakam* first mentioned in this chapter was written by Mathura kavirayar ('Mathura kallan' in the play), who was patronized by several people including a dubash for one of the European companies, Ananda ranga, as well as a man named KAlatti Mudaliar who was a Tamil merchant and others.[39] The *Tiruccentur nonti natakam* mentioned last was written by Kantacamipulavar,

[38] See Indira Viswanathan Peterson's conference paper, "Pandinadu as a Center of Tamil literary production; Networks of pulavar Poets and Patrons in Tirunelveli and the Tamiravaruni Valley in the eighteenth centuy", 2009, Fifth Annual Tamil Conference UC Berkeley

[39] Kalati Mudaliar's son, Karuppu Mudaliar patronized the important Tamil poet Arunachalakavirayar in the 1770s-80s. See Kanakalatha Mukund. The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant.

associated with Sivagangai and other nearby courts (Shulman).[40] The author of *Citakkati nonti natakam* is not known by name but is acknowledged to have known Umara pulavar who was associated with the well to do and powerful Muslim merchant community in Kilakkarai, financiers of the Ramnad Setupatis.

Not just nouveau riche patrons and poets, but also performers were on the move. Troupes of performers often associated with multiple urban centers and travelled between them.[41] Dancers, often associated with both a big urban temple and the court that patronized it, performed in festivals and special occasions that connected both the court darbar and the temple sannithi through processions and stand-alone performances in both spaces. Traveling troupes of performers stopped to stay and perform at chatrams and temple sannithis. As professionals in travelling troupes and as participants in urban economies, dancers, along with artisans and other trade specialists, defined changing milieus while the textual and visual representation of performance scenarios was definitive of urban space.

Traveling across the Kaveri Delta: Dance and Public Lodges

In the affluent Kaveri delta region, the Maratha Bhonsles who took over in the 1670s continued a legacy of investing in constructing or adding on to new spaces. Perhaps more than elsewhere in the Coromandel, there was a strong legacy of sculptural and mural depiction of dance in urban spaces of temples and palaces that dated back to the medieval centuries thanks to

[40] He composed other well-known works like a Tamil translation of Tiruppavanam puranam (hagiography of religious sites).

[41] For some discussion of this in the postcolonial context of the Tanjavur region (based on fieldwork done by the author in 1950s), see Gough, Kathleen. *Rural Society in Southeast India*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

the then ruling Chola dynasties. In the eighteenth century, as the Bhonsles established themselves and their rule through space and place-making and patronage of dance, among other performing arts like music and dance-dramas, the focus of the spaces they constructed shifted from temples and palaces. The big temples and palace of Tanjavur had already been built before them – the Brihadiswara temple had been built by the medieval Cholas and extended by the early modern Nayaks at Tanjavur, the Tanjavur palace had largely been built by the Nayaks. The Bhonsles did however extend the Nayak palace with an additional audience or darbar hall. Instead, the Maratha focus on building was directed towards more transitory spaces. For example, Bhonsles built mansions along the Kaveri river banks in Thiruvaiyaru – an important town housing the primary deities of the Tanjavur Bhonsle family. At least one, if not more, of these mansions holds a nataka mandapam – or performance hall, inside its compounds.

The most important of Maratha building projects were in the form of chatrams, or public lodges – dotting the Kaveri delta region beyond the walled city of Tanjavur. The Bhonsles particularly built chatrams on the main road that formed the pilgrimage route towards Rameswaram – it was also a central overland trade route. For people travelling from the Deccan and further north (particularly the holy center of Varanasi in north-east), the route cutting through the Kaveri delta and headed to Rameswaram was a popular route. This same route further south was the purview of the Ramnad Setupatis already discussed. Thus, geopolitical and religio-spiritual geographies were interconnected and overlapping. Chatrams (lodges) were multi-use public spaces that connected a geography of travelers, elite and otherwise. Usually organized around a central open-air courtyard with rooms surrounding it and often additional spaces on a partial second floor, these spaces were informal meeting grounds for multiple kinds of travelers and as well as spaces of local activity. They were social spaces, increasingly

important for a social world 'on the move. Moreover, they were also political spaces in that they were outposts of authority from the state-center, built under royal patronage and sometimes serving as a resting place for royal elite on their own travels. Interestingly, much of the new chatram construction under the Maratha Bhonsles, from the middle of the eighteenth century, came at a time when Tanjavur was in considerable fiscal stress – given the mounting costs of military activity and the increasingly intrusive presence of Europeans (particularly British, French and Dutch) on the coast cutting into Indian Coromandel trade (particularly textiles).[42] Building chatrams was also means of claiming authority through claiming a more decentralized territorial space at a time when the politics of state-building were in flux.[43]



[42] Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. "The Politics of Fiscal Decline: A Reconsideration of Maratha Tanjavur, 1676-1799." *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 32, no. 2 (June 1, 1995): 177–217.

[43] For an in-depth study of Maratha chatram building, particularly under Pratapasimha and the penultimate Maratha king Serfoji (1740s- 1820s), see Linderman, Michael Christian. "Charity's Venue: Representing Indian Kingship in the Monumental Pilgrim Rest Houses of the Maratha Rajas of Tanjavur, 1761--1832." *Dissertations Available from ProQuest*, January 1, 2009, 1–268. He argues for an understanding of chatrams as a project of embodying and projecting royal authority. I further suggest that dance in these spaces makes them not just projections of authority but a spatialized projection of mobile aspirations.



Fig. 13-16. Friezes from along bottom of central courtyard, Maratha Yamunambal chatram at Needamangalam. Photographs from author's travel.

At the crossroads of two major roads (south to Rameswaram and east-west from Tanjavur city to the coast), in the town called Needamangalam, the fifth Maratha Bhonsle king – Pratapasimha Bhonsle (r. 1739-1763) had a chatram built in 1761 in the name of one of his wives, Yamunambal. Dance frames the main spaces. The central courtyard contains imagery of dance scenes engraved into friezes, reminiscent of Chola influence, along the bottom of walls, pillars and ceilings (Fig 9-11). As it turns out, the chatram in Needamangalam was not only a public rest house at an important junction in the delta region, it was also a getaway for Yamunambal, with an open second floor which includes a roof garden and an enclosed kacceri hall where she would be privately entertained. This was not unusual, as another chatram in the delta is similarly structured and named after another of Pratapasimha's queens, Muktambal. Another chatram was built close to Tanjavur in 1802 by the second to last Maratha king Serfoji which contains elaborate frieze panels of the king in procession, including dance scenes.[44] These spaces bring to bear religion, commerce and pleasure all into the condensed public space of the chatram. In fact, chatrams were not only rest houses but served as schools, conducted marriages, regularly fed guests, served as a medical facility when travelers fell sick, all at the chatram's expense. They were superintended by the queens they were named after. Those that stayed included those who were traveling for trade, for pleasure, for pilgrimage. In very concrete ways, these spaces were the most important form of outward expression of the new ruling elites of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

[44] See Linderman, Michael Christian. "Charity's Venue: Representing Indian Kingship in the Monumental Pilgrim Rest Houses of the Maratha Rajas of Tanjavur, 1761--1832." *Dissertations Available from ProQuest*, January 1, 2009, 1–268.



Fig. 17-18. Upper floor half roof garden of Needamangalam Yamunambal chatram. Photographs from author's travel.





Fig. 19. Upper floor hall, where queen Yamunambal entertained and ostensibly stayed. Photograph from author's travel

The association of dance and these public lodges was not limited to the southern part of the Coromandel. In the mid seventeenth century, the reigning sultan of the Golconda sultanate (current day Hyderabad) Abdul Qutb Shah, built a serai or inn named Taramati Baradari for his favorite courtesan, Taramati[45]. A lover of poetry and music, he invited Ksetrayya to come stay at his court showing both that courtesan performance was neither restricted to 'Hindu' courts and contexts and also that the association of courtesan performance and transient urban space

[45] It was built as part of Ibrahim Bagh, a Persian style garden in Hyderabad.

reached far beyond what is now Tamil Nadu. Dance not only framed but was also framed by these spaces. In the nonti natakam dramas and later memoirs which echoed nonti natakam scenarios, the protagonist stays at chatrams before visiting temple's or encountering dancing women.

Chatrams were also spaces of women's authority that often go unnoticed and open up the space for a queer understanding of performer-patron/spectatorship/experience. In the Kaveri delta, for example, most of the chatrams were built not only in the name of royal wives or wives of Maratha elite, but were built on their command and with their grants of land and money. In addition, they were often spaces where these women actually stayed. For example, the Needamangalam chatram has a partial second story, half of which is open from the lodging courtyard below, the other half consists of an open verandah garden and a smaller hall lined with windows and housing a small stage where Yamunambal would enjoy performances of dance and music. As a patron and spectator watching dance, her experience of sensuality is not predicated on heteronormative sexual desire and not necessarily on sexual desire at all, but on something else, the construction of sensory inter-subjectivity that is predicated on hierarchies of class, not gender. The politics of sensuality are not necessarily drawn across gendered lines but through the distinction of elite patron and professional performer.

Dance was thus central to a world on the move, intimately linked to space and place, but at the same time, translocal in conception/importance/dynamic. Not only was dance located in cultural imaginaries which connected the Coromandel in new ways, amidst changing urban milieus, dance was located as much in the space of the chatram or public lodge as it was in temples or palace courts. The space of the courtyard, and the construction of inter-personal dynamics in the intimate context of performance opens up a space for understanding multiple

kinds of identifications with mobility and authority. In the following section, I turn to the ways in which new sets of individuals by the end of the eighteenth century not only fashioned themselves in similar ways but turned to the same kinds of representation of dance to orient not only their views of South Asia but how they presented themselves, inserting themselves into existing imaginaries.

IV. Dancing in/out of Space: Madras Europeans Inserting into Scenarios of Authority

By the end of the eighteenth century, another set of individuals sought to define their own public authorities in a changing Coromandel landscape – Europeans. Either independent merchants and traders or the increasing number of men associated with East India Companies. As they defined not only their public images but also their personal experiences in the subcontinent, these men found themselves within complicated dynamics of politics, socio-economic mobility and trans-local urban imaginaries. At the turn of the nineteenth century neither the project of colonialism nor its discourses were self-evident. In this transitional period, the kinds of representations produced around dance were in fact directly embedded in existing representational dynamics and imaginaries which located dance in the politics of sensuality, space and socio-economic mobility.

Tensions of Authority and Representation: Two British Paintings



Fig. 20. ‘Nautch Scene’ with inscription “General Sir John Dalling Bart/Governor of Madras”, 1785-86; Artist Unknown. British Museum

The officer sits back, head cocked in appreciation, surrounded by intricately bejeweled women behind him playing different instruments. One of them is waving a fly-whisk to keep him cool, another sits at his feet messaging them. But our gaze is directed towards what he is watching, the dancing women in front of him. In various kalamkari prints and bright intricate jewelry, two women dance, hips cocked, matching arms raised above, feet in motion. They are joined by two more women in seated positions in attitudes of deference, the pleated cloth of their saris fanning out in front of them. Behind them are the musicians accompanying them – one playing the maddalam (percussion), one singing sangeetam, one playing the veena, and leading them all is the woman doing the nattuvangam with the cymbals.

This ‘nautch’ scene takes us back to the scene in the Ramalinga Vilasam palace mural with the king Vijayaragava Setupati witnessing a dance performance. Commissioned by an officer of the British East India Company, John Dalling Bart, the scene positions Dalling himself watching a nautch. The painter of John Dalling’s nautch is unknown, but it is likely an Indian artist. Moving up the ranks of the British forces, Dalling was a lieutenant for the Company forces at Madras from 1782, colonel from 1783, and commander-in-chief 1784-86. In this period when British presence in the subcontinent was far from stable, Dalling presented his authority in distinctly Indian terms. The other painting Dalling commissioned was of a procession in which he (and a second officer) were being carried on a palanquin. It is very similar to paintings exist of the later Tanjavur rajas or Mughal and Sultanate elite around this time. In the nautch scene above, by not only placing himself within the frame but also directing the gaze of viewers to his own centrality, he inserts himself into and co-opts the existing visual-presentational-bodily politics of spectacle around dance. This image, like the Ramalinga Vilasam painting, centrally incorporates the patrons as spectators in the frame of the image itself. Here, however, the audience-patrons are British, under a distinctly European Company-style tent, with a retinue of ‘native’ attendants and administrative officers at hand, receding into the background. While the dancers are the center of the Tanjavur paintings, the center of this painting is Dalling himself.

However, the spatial terms not only *within* the painting but its meta-context reframes this spectacle, divorcing it from a concrete sense of place for a wider circulation audience. Politics of authority were negotiated in the Ramalinga Vilasam and other murals not only because of the markers of royalty and elite leisure within the paintings but also *because of the placement of the murals themselves*. They were part of a logic of increasingly exclusive space in the Ramalinga Vilasam palace that denoted a level of personal access to the Setupati based on social, economic

or maybe even ritual privilege. These complex politics are all but erased in the mapping of these depictions onto a new 'canvas', that of the Company paintings. Dalling's Nautch scene is not a mural that is forever linked to a particular place and architecture. Instead, it is a stand-alone painting that might find a long-term home in a private home salon but is, in essence, mobile.

The paintings themselves replace the courtly framing of the dance scene with an empty landscape, emptying it once over. Then, the paintings themselves are removed from the spatial moorings of physically static architecture (i.e. the palace's inner walls) and instead are meant for fairly wide geographic circulation (between India and the England at the very least). The consumption of these Company paintings is also predicated on exclusivity but one very different from the murals. It is meant for an elite *British* audience in India as distinct from 'native elite' and even more for British elite in London. This exclusivity, however, is predicated on an *erasure* of patron-spectator from the politics of display, which goes hand in hand with the divorcing of the image from its spatial moorings.

The bulk of Company painting miniatures also reproduced almost exactly the figures of dancing women found in existing visual registers. However, there was a clear erasure of both links to place (in terms of the meta context of the image) as well as markers of place within the image itself. Sometimes, place was left ambiguously absent, as in the case of the Tanjavur school of paintings. In other cases, a different sense of place was introduced, betraying both British agendas and sensibilities, such as the explicit religious focus of almost all Tiruchi school paintings and the salon scene of Tilly's Madras Nautch painting. These company paintings in fact re-defined the scenarios around courtly performance, in effect, removing it from the court and from the interactions of intimate space, which defined both dancer *and* spectator.

The British company paintings of the late eighteenth century built on the kinds of representations of dancing scenes that were already part of the south Indian milieu in the eighteenth century. More specifically, they were often drawing on scenarios from spheres of the nouveau riche, because they themselves were fashioning themselves after these new elite. Often using the same visual tropes, early Company paintings produced hybrid visions of south India, especially dancing women's bodies in movement. While palace murals and tapestries presented the king or royal elite in the position of patron-spectator, later Company paintings positioned their European civil servant patrons as the center of the image. In concrete ways, early company officials sought to insert themselves into existing imaginaries often in literal ways. An officer like John Dalling reproduced courtly scenes, like that in Ramalinga Vilasam, almost wholesale, inserting himself into the politics of display. He represented a distinctly transitory moment in which Europeans sought to fit into existing social, cultural, and political structures rather than completely re-imagine it. While some of them removed the spectator from the frame of the image, others hyper-consciously re-inserted the man as spectator. This was true not only in south India, but in the courts of the Golconda sultanate and even the Mughal center. It was a particular approach that was a part of Europeans negotiating their own contingent status in India.[46]

There were, of course, other negotiations of 'native' scenes that led the way for the kinds of romanticizing that took over later British representation of India. For example, unlike Dalling's Nautch Scene, Tilly Kettle's painting 'Dancers' did not imitate the scenario of spectatorship that was already part of the south Indian imaginary. Rather than taking on existing framing of dance visualization, Kettle re-orients the entire frame, employing a British/European Romantic

[46] By the middle of the nineteenth century however, the European power broker had become completely removed from, invisiblized in representations of India. Instead, we see the treatment of India as a blank canvas for Orientalist fantasies and more distanced expository knowledge production about the native "other".

aesthetic and coloration. It seems almost a violent move, the wresting of representation. In Kettle's painting, the two dancers are fully oriented forward, one with arms at least reminiscent of the Tanjavur painting, but barely recognizable. The other woman, in all white, is embodying a trance-like state. There are many witnesses: mostly men, all Indian, surrounding them, some standing, some seated on the veranda floor, the pillars of the veranda rising behind them and the hazy romantic-cloud-filled sky just barely visible behind the entire scene. Not only is spectatorship shifted, the representation of dancing women does not echo Indian paintings like the Company painting miniatures did. The women have tiny waists, cloth billowing out at hips rather than pleats flowing out to ankles. They appear gauzy, as hazy as the clouds framing their heads. Even though there are audience members all around them, they are almost props to the scene, not the direction of the gaze. That is, they are not central spectators in the way Vijayaraghava Setupati or Dalling are. Instead, the only real spectator is the viewer of the painting. In effect, Tilling's painting completely re-imagines the dance scene with little or no reference to existing forms of representation and clearly no Indian participation in the process.

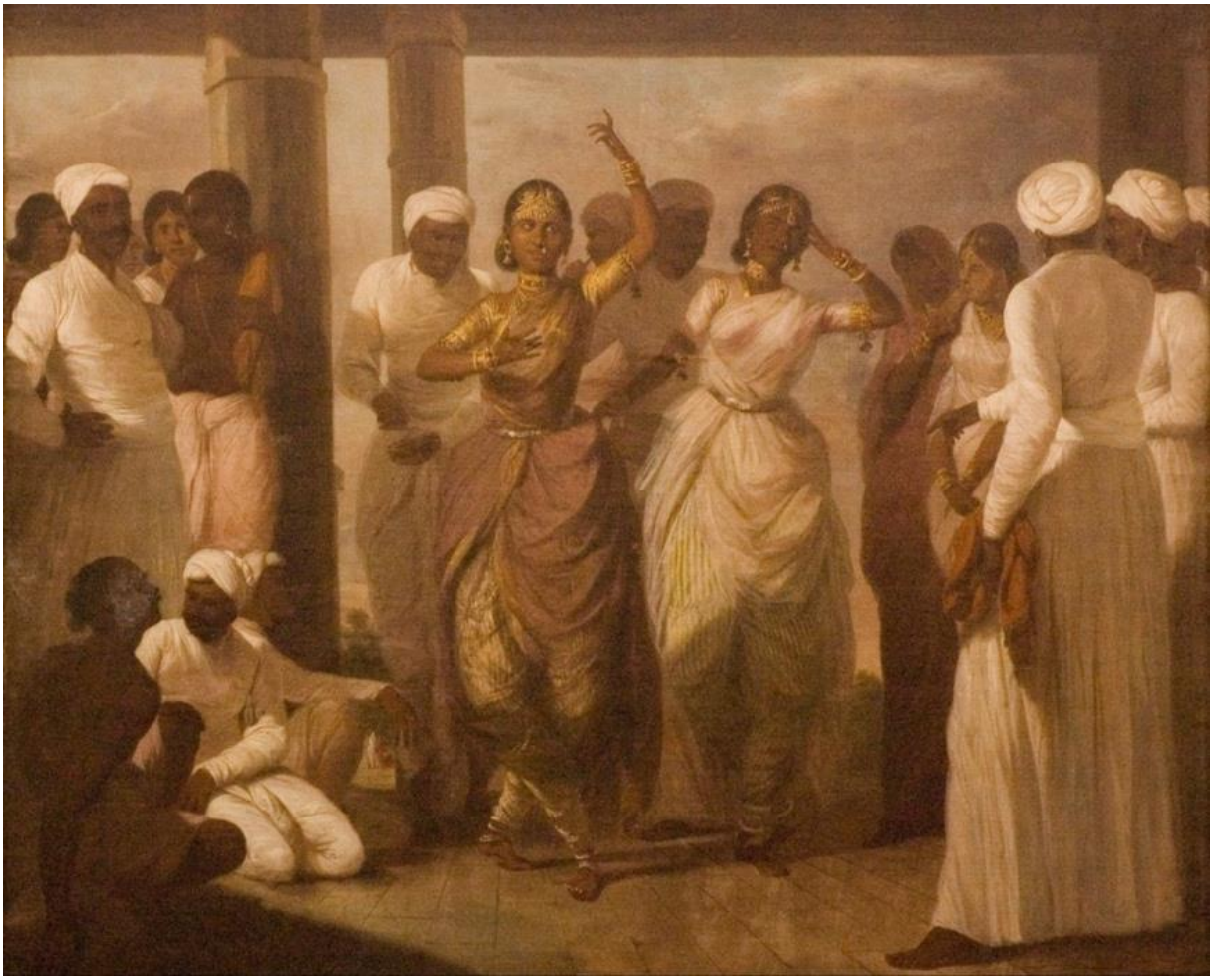


Fig. 21. “Dancers”, Artist Tilly Kettle; 1789. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

The framing of the dancing women with all the spectators serves, if anything, to make the moment one almost of voyeurism on the part of those looking at the painting. In some ways, it is a more complicated painting Dalling’s. Dalling’s co-option of authority is front and center, he is claiming space and authority for himself within existing models, or at least versions of existing models. Kettle’s image, on the other hand, imagines entirely new scene that has less to do with existing ones than it does Orientalist fantasies.

Miniatures and the Erasure of Space

Miniature paintings were particularly popular for European audiences, sent back in albums to Europe from 1790s to 1850s before photography took off. Collected and brought together in the twentieth century by British museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Library, these paintings came to be understood as 'Company paintings', a term made popular through the work of the curators of India Office Library and VAM, Mildred and Bill Archer (1950s-80s), whose collections most of these paintings are today found. Rather than one genre however, these paintings were produced in multiple South Asian cities in which Europeans found themselves, based off of multiple courtly schools of miniature paintings. The albums were based off the Persian genre of muraqqa (portfolios of miniatures and calligraphy). However, the albums sent back to European didn't include calligraphy or, often, the spatial framing of the courtly milieu which the originals had in abundance. Created by Indian artists, these paintings took on distinctly hybrid aesthetics over the turn of the 19th century before European styles (muted colors, shading, perspective, lines, materials) dominated visual production. Like postcards, these collections of miniature paintings representing the flora, fauna, people and 'scenes' of India operated through the circulation of imperial knowledge and representation connecting South Asia and Europe.[47] Leading centers were British settlements (Madras, Bombay, Calcutta) but also centers such as Delhi, Lucknow and Tanjavur. From the middle of the nineteenth century, new techniques emerged in paintings. Mica was introduced by the British, it was a cheaper

[47] Mathur, Saloni. *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display*. University of California Press, 2007.

option than paper, even if much more fragile,[48] The Tanjavur paintings are almost all on paper,[49] while a few from Madras are on canvas. The use of opaque water colors on wasli (guouche) was common in many courtly miniature painting styles in this period. The Trichy paintings are mica paintings, which were otherwise found in Patna, Benares, and Murshidabad.[50] The techniques of the painting, as well as the content of dance scenarios mark out a trans-local geography. Although miniatures were not as central to south Indian courtly visual culture as they were to the Deccan and northern India, there were a couple of centers from which most of the miniature 'Company' paintings have been found – Tanjavur, Madras and what the British called Trichinopoly.

[48] For more on south Indian paintings from an art-historical perspective, see the work of Anna Dallapiccola:

Dallapiccola, Anna Libera. *Rāgamālā-Miniaturen von 1475 Bis 1700*. Vol. 15. Harrassowitz, 1975.

———. *South Indian Paintings: A Catalogue of the British Museum Collection*. British Museum Press, 2010.

[49] There was a booming paper production industry in Tanjavur, Kumbakonam and other places due to the advent of printing technology at the turn of the eighteenth century in south India.

[50] http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-35/conservation-of-indian-mica-paintings/ "The paintings from Trichinopoly are small in size (120 x 90 mm) and are painted on one side of very thin, flexible sheets of mica. A particularly interesting series from Patna dating from 1860 show the production of opium, (Figure 1). These are painted on slightly larger (160 x 200 mm) thicker sheets of mica and are painted in thick watercolour on both sides of the transparent support. The mica paintings were identified as a priority for treatment and re-housing in a survey of works of pictorial art in the Indian department carried out by Paper Conservation in 1994."

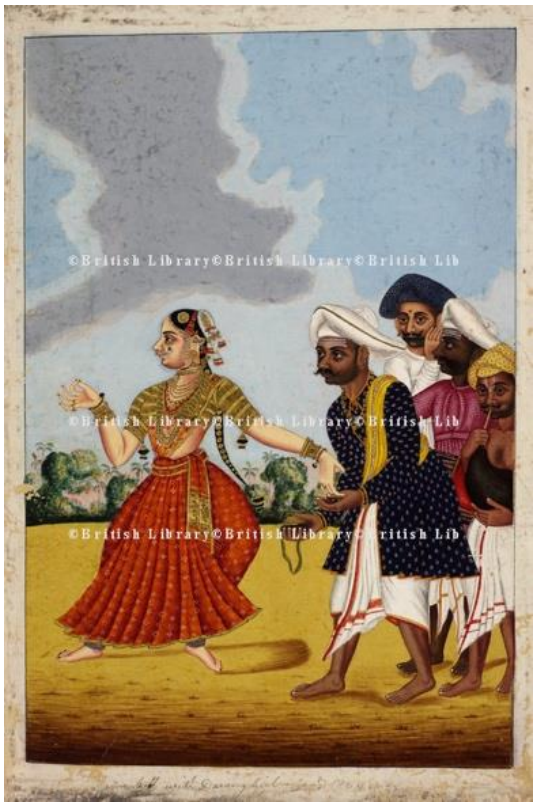




Fig. 22 (left):1790-1800. “Tanjore Dancing girl & her Tickataw men (Tanjavur)”, Artist Unkown. British Library

Fig. 23 (right). 1803. “Same boll (cymbal?) w/ Dancing girl (Tanjavur)”, Artist Unknown. Victoria and Albert Museum

Both the Tiruchi and Tanjavur ‘schools’ of these miniature paintings have repeating scenes. The Tanjavur style paintings (Figures 22, 23) repeat a particular ensemble image, usually titled something like ‘dancing girl with three or four musicians’ in the archives. The focus is entirely on the dancing woman, framed by her musicians, primarily nattuvanar, flutist, and mridangam player. If there is a fourth musician, he is generally playing tutti (bagpipe-shaped drone instrument).[51] The earliest image found in the Victoria and Albert Museum is labeled “Tanjore Dancing girl & her Tickataw men”. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of the Trichy

[51] T.M. Krishna. A Southern Music. (Chapter 20. An Unequal Music)

style paintings (Figures 24-27), which place dance in public space, are of procession scenes. These are overwhelmingly of the Ranganatha Swami deity. There a couple paintings of a woman dancing along with (1 or more) musicians like the Tanjavur paintings, but the composition, spacing and framing are unlike the Tanjavur ensemble scenes. The dancers themselves in the Trichy procession scenes are almost carbon copies of the Tanjavur dancers with the ensemble of musicians around her. But this ensemble scene-in-miniature is further framed by the entire temple deity's procession.

There is a common motif of the sideways dancers with her pleats blowing in the wind presumably because of the furious movement of her feet. The costuming is similar – she is wearing a full-length bold colored sari and bright jewels. The company paintings almost all replicate the scenes of palace and temple murals which depict dance scenes as intimate soirees in the context of large panels of painted tableaus. In the Tanjavur paintings especially, the women's body language and framing echo the court scenes of the Ramanathapuram palace mural and kalamkari tapestries. Painters, while producing for European audiences, were still clearly drawing on existing visual paradigms for content – scenes, figures, body language.

While the depiction of dancing women was often taken wholesale from existing courtly dance scenes, none of the dancing women depicted in these company paintings are presented in the context of a courtly performance– there is no audience and no patron. While Deccani and Mughal miniatures from the same period placed dance often in enclosed spaces of the court or a palace courtyard, the Trichy and Tanjavur 'Company' paintings present blank open landscapes as the frame for the dancing woman or ensemble. Instead, it seems that a zooming device was used to cut out just the dancer and musicians troupe from the earlier murals and tapestry tableaus, remove them from the courtly milieu, and place them bodily in the open-air landscape

of an India seen through European eyes. In effect, it erases spectatorship as central to the performance scenario. In the murals, the elite audience is also often on display and is as much part of the significance of the performance. In some ways, this doesn't erase the power dynamics of patronage, it just makes it invisible by placing it outside the frame of the painting. This served the British, who, by the nineteenth century had shifted from acknowledging their own privilege in south India to increasingly presenting themselves as a neutral and objective (and benign) observers rather than participants. The images parallel its increasingly Orientalist discourse which more and more emphatically insisted on its own separation from the way knowledge was produced in India.

The few paintings that do include spectatorship point to the changing associations of dance performance going into the nineteenth century. One miniature from the Victoria and Albert Museum's collections is labeled "Trichinopoly style", but from Tanjavur (Fig 28). Placed in an open verandah space, the performance has two spectators – a raja and his attendant. A second Trichy painting depicts the same open veranda court with pillars and high arches (Fig 29), but not with a dance scene. Here there are seated men in white jamas robes and turbans before whom a dark servant or laborer is brought, arms tied – it is a court of adjudication or petitioning, what is known as a sadir or kacceri. The visualization of dance in the same kind of space as assembly spaces or spaces of legal function either reflect the associations dance had gained, resulting in a term like sadir kacceri to describe dance. Or, artists were responding to these associations through a visual literalization of them. In any case, they reflect a reframing of performance and spectatorship in new spaces, imagined or real.

Moreover, in the case of Tiruchi paintings, the complicated politics of the place are erased in favor of a religious essentialism. The waning Madurai Nayak dynasty had moved its working

center to Tiruchi in the end of the seventeenth century in the hopes of staying ahead of the military and political expansions of the Thanjavur Marathas as well as the Mughal subsidiary Nawab of the Carnatic and Nizam of Hyderabad moving down from Arcot in northern Tamil country. However, in the 1730s, the reigning Nayak queen was ousted (ultimately committing suicide) and the pretender to the Arcot throne, Chanda Sahib, took control of the city. Through the 1740s, Tiruchi passed from Chanda Sahib to the Marathas to the Nizam of Hyderabad before becoming one of the centers of British and French contestation for power during the Second Carnatic War fought between them (1751-2). Despite the threat that control of Tiruchi quite clearly posed for all political players in the Coromandel, its representation as far as 'Company' style miniatures, for European audiences is almost completely limited to religious contexts, using stock visual tropes against the backdrop of the temple it continues to be known for today – Ranganathaswamy temple.



Fig. 24. One of sixteen mica paintings depicting Hindu deities and festival processions with decorated cars. Jambunadaswami. 1850; Artist Unknown. Victoria and Albert Museum.







Fig. 25-27. Ranganadaswami. 1850; Artists Unknown. Victoria and Albert Museum





Fig. 28. Tanjavur, “Trichy Style” ~1850. Artist Unknown. British Library.

Fig. 29. A trial scene in a magistrate's court, Trichinopoly, ca. 1860; Artist Unknown; gouache on mica. Victoria and Albert Museum.

The erasure of special markers, spectatorship and the politics of place all intersect in representations of dance, removing performance from the translocal networks and urban milieus

which it centrally defined in the Coromandel in the eighteenth century. This erasure of specific spatial markers and, more importantly, of elite spectatorship in these paintings, reflects a broader shift in the politics of performance of courtly dance in south India over the eighteenth century. By removing the spectator from the scene, the company paintings remove the corporeal consequences, the sensory exchange that is at the heart of the nonti natakams and the Ramalingavilasam palace. It also removes the construction of public identity from a sense of place. The nonti natakams located courtly dance in a changing trans-local urban milieu. The paintings reveal the slippages of translation in the context of changing spectatorship and social space. Not only Madras, but places like Kanchipuram, Tiruchi and Ramanathapuram had a shifting demographic in this period, which meant new audiences for dance. This included not just the British who imagined themselves as native elite, but also groups of people who were imagining themselves as elite for the first time, often with a tenuous relationship to economic status.

V. Scenarios of 'Native' Romance: A Dutch Traveler down the Coromandel Coast

I turn to one final example in depth to trace the complicated ways in which scenarios around performance were re-articulated and translated across the Coromandel. Jacob Haafner was a Dutch traveler to Asia in the latter part of the eighteenth century who wrote a travelogue memoir that covered his travels in India, in which dance figures centrally.[52] His two volume memoir, titled *Reize in eenen palanquin: of lotgevallen en merkwaardige aanteekeningen op eene reize langs de kusten Orixa en Choromandel* (Travels in a palanquin: or fate and remarkable notices on a voyage along the coasts Orixa and Choromandel) was one of five travel books he wrote and published in retrospect in

[52] Jacob Haafner. *Reize in eenen palanquin: of lotgevallen en merkwaardige aanteekeningen op eene reize langs de kusten Orixa en Choromandel.* J. Allart, Amsterdam. 1808.

Amsterdam from 1806-1808 about his time in eastern India and Sri Lanka, where he lived and travelled from 1771-1776. His work is thus a combination of his recollections, the self-fashioning of his persona and experience in India and orientalist tropes that European Indologists had already made common. In *Reize in eenen Palanquin*, Haafner has one chapter out of the long two volumes devoted entirely to devadasi women. In addition, the entire second volume revolves around his romantic relationship with a dancer, Mamia. Haafner came with the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to Nagapattinam in 1771, working as a bookkeeper but moved around, stayed to work independently and traveled across the Coromandel coast and Ceylon. He was taken as prisoner during the British siege of the Dutch settlement in 1786, escaped. Reize in eenen Palanquin cronicles his travel up and down the eastern coast of India, down to the southern Coromandel, on a palanquin in 1786.

While Haafner's book in general is organized by the route of his travels, one chapter on devadasi women seems to have nothing to do with him personally – it is distanced and educational in tone, taking us out of the narrative. Starting from the very first sentence that devadasi is a Sanskrit term to describe dancing women, we understand that it is an expository essay on received Indological generalities about dancing women. It echoes earlier Calvinist clergyman's' and the Dutch Company residents' writings – an entire discourse on dancing women in south India that had already been well developed. Marco Polo at the end of the 13th century, in his travel writing on south India, conflated the western and eastern coasts of India under the term Malabar, and in fact conflated matrilineal communities on the western coast with women associated with temples in eastern India. What followed was a long trend of imagining

temple dancing woman and prostitution in romantic orientalist literature.[53] Early modern travelers who came to India remarked on 'the dancing girls' especially of south India. The scenarios that emerged from them simultaneously equate dancing women with temples and bring to bear a complex set of ambivalences around sexuality and religiosity.[54] Haafner also had more recent Dutch precedent that may have influenced his writing on dancing women and temples. Abraham Rogerius, a Dutch Calvinist clergyman and translator who traveled to and wrote about eastern India in the mid 17th century – he was in Dutch Pulicat for about a decade and published Open Door to the Secrets of Heathendom on Hinduism soon after his return to the Dutch Republic in the 1650s. Adolff Bassingh, while a resident at Trichinopoly near the end of the 17th century, wrote an extended description of the Nayaks of Madurai in which he talks about dancing women in the context of temples and the distastefulness of Brahmin culture.[55]

In the remainder of his memoir however, Haafner shows a very different approach to dance and dancing women- one which is not only personal but inserts Haafner into existing south Indian cultural imaginaries and constructions of elite self-hood. Haafner's reason for writing about devadasis in the first place was his love affair with Mamia, who was part of a *melam* or all-women performing troupe.[56] In the arc of the travelogue, his interactions with Mamia are highly

[53] See Jeop Bor's article "Mamia, Ammani and other Bayaderes"

[54] Kannabiran (1995), Kersenboom-Story (1987), Srinivasan (1987), Meduri (1996), Jordan (2003), Anandhi (1991), Nair (1994), Soneji (2012), Chakravarti (1990)

[55] See Markus Vink's translation of several Dutch officer's writings in Madurai/Coromandel – Mission to Madurai. Rogerius (p 114), Bassingh (p 325, 360)

[56] This takes us back to the beginning of the chapter and our discussion of kuravanci dramas since they were performed primarily by melam troupes

personal. In fact, Mamia's death marks his decision to return to Europe after being in India and Sri Lanka for several decades – and the end of the memoir as well.

Jacob Haafner's love affair

> *"[We had] our regular evening drink; we brought orak; lime and sugar we bought at the local bazaar (market), or at the Commetis (equated by the author to kommenijswinkels or small supermarket).*[57]
>
> *Meanwhile the choultry (i.e. chatram, public lodge) became more and more crowded. Kors, Pilgrims, Land and artisans, Sepoys, Oders, or traveling merchants, with their packets, others again with beasts of burden, came from all directions. Finally, when it was already seven o'clock, our group was joined by a troupe of Soetradharies, with her juntries (musicians or minstrels).*
>
> *After they, according to habit, (although it was dark already), bathed themselves in the nearby pond, and changed into a different set of clothes - the first dancer from the troupe (they were seven in total) came forward and offered (after the proper Salam) me and my friend Huau each a flower, on behalf of the whole troupe, put forward the request to dance for us.*

Already, the stage is set. Haafner is located in a *chatram*, the quintessential urban space. He had been traveling down the coast on a grand voyage down the Coromandel on his palanquin. He had stopped at this chapter on his way from Masulipatnam. It is a crowded space of travelers of all kinds – merchants, pilgrims, soldiers and more. It is a place of temporary stays and exchanges, between different kinds of people, with different reasons for being there. In effect, it is the epitome of the eighteenth-century public urban milieu that I have invoked in this chapter.

[57] I am grateful to Ingrid DeSanto, graduate student in the Department of History, UCLA for translations from the original Dutch which I have further edited.

Haafner has placed himself with the urban geography that connects southeast India even as he maps it with his own experience and love story.

Soetredharies are described in a footnote as traveling female dancers. Haafner is describing a cinna melam troupe, or troupe of women performers who would travel and perform in a number of places – dramas, dance, and music. Their initial interaction sets off a whole series of exchanges enacting the essential patron-spectator-performer relationship.

> *All the eyes of the travelers, who were nearby, and had overheard her request, focused on me. A whisper went through the whole crowd. The wives and daughters of Korwas, especially the ones closest to me, as well as those of other castes, could not hide their desire and passion to see the dance, and mainly because of that, I told the dancer to be ready; After supper I would call her.*
>
> *No sooner was it known that I had given my consent the dance, and I heard around me the words Nela Dhore! Maharaja! and the like. The whole place was almost in motion, the good news spread from traveler to traveler. Those who were already asleep were woken up, all hastily left their mats and army beds to get a good spot. Even the inhabitants of the villages came in large quantities to witness this fun/spectacle- and the place was filled in a short time.*

Before the performance even starts, we get a sense of what is important to Haafner, in the construction of his own persona around the exchange. Consenting to a dance literally *made* him a Dorairaja, Maharaja. Moreover, this scene really is in some ways about presenting himself as somehow special, not just in universal terms but in the eyes of 'the native people'. In some ways, the brown bodies of the rest of the audience forms a backdrop to the scene Haafner is constructing with himself at its center. In this, his description feels reminiscent of Tilling's visual representation of the nautch scene. He also notes that 'the Indians, especially their wives' love to

watch the dance but never do it themselves – clearly Haafner is distinguishing between professional women and wives, taking on the stance of an orthodox Indian, something he does again later in his interaction with Mamia.

Finally, after we had eaten, I told the dancers that they could begin. Space was made, each rallied on silk, and some Letchemies ([58]) more were oil was placed in the lamps ([59]). When all was ready, I sat with my friend, put the mattress of my Palanquin down; with a fresh punch bowl for us, and our cigar smoldering - we waited with expectation, with the crowd that surrounded us. A wide circle formed around us. And then the arrival of the dancers; who appeared then, heads shrouded in veils and accompanied by the juntries (musicians).

I gave the sign by hand, and the instruments began. Now the Chelimbikaren appeared behind them; at the sound of his tal (small cymbals) the veils come off- and suddenly are seven young Nymphs, all well-shaped and clean/beautiful, with uncovered faces, and hair full of finery. The tal sounds one more time; they form in one row, approach before us, and according to custom, with a bow and the right hand laying on the chest, they first pay their respects.

Now the music is getting stronger; through the quiet village echoing the joyful and loud tones of the Nagassaran and Carna, the Matalan, the Pilancoil with a single tone Tourte ([60]) - and the dance begins. How quickly and supple are the movements of these glib nymphs, how synchronized their movement, how pleasing and bewitching the voluptuous bends of their shapely limbs, and with how much art and skill, they unfold, without compromising their modesty, all their physical charms.

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[58] These are small coarse earthen lamps on which the idol of Letchemie, the goddess of fortune, rough body is expressed, why them also called Letchemies. They lit coconut oil or jeujelie in them. Grease Candles in yonder countries not in use because of the great heat, melt them would almost. They use it not then tapers. The Indians would want besides, no burning grease candles, speak of the koebeesten (pig?) be made.

[59] In the walls of chauderies everywhere a multitude of small niches or rather cemented small triangular holes, where each traveler burning Letchemie, puts up his couch, to eat by the light of them, reading or anything else verrigten. exhibit this chauderies in the dark from a distance as if they were illuminated.

[60] These instruments have already been described hereinbefore.

In this story, Haafner is very clearly fashioning himself after a Nawab or Zamindar or Raja. Not only has he initiated the performance, he is the one signaling for it to start, he is clearly placing himself in a position of authority in this scene. The performance begins and we find the seven dancers come pay their respects, with right hands at their chests. The music starts up with all the instruments we have come to associate with the particular scenario of courtly dance – nagaswaram, maddalam, pulancuyil (flute) and tutti (bagpipe horn). The *Chelimbikaren,* probably a transliteration of Silambakkaran, must refer to the nattuvanar. The term itself is not one we hear today but, interestingly, echoes the term used to describe dance practice by the Maratha king Tukkoji in a dance sastra text he produced earlier in the century, suggesting that it might have been a commonly used Tamil term. In all of this, Haafner echoes the scenes from the mid-century nonti natakams.

The dancing is not only beautiful but *skillful* and *art*istic. Unlike the natakams however, movement of feet are conspicuously missing. Again, this feels a bit like a textual echo of Tilling's romantic image of dancing women. The sense of dynamism and movement is somehow missing from the language itself, possibly in part because we have moved from poetry (with a meter) to prose. More importantly, there is a new sense of having to emphasize that the dancers are *clean*, that they do not hurt modest sentiments.

Haafner seems very pleased with himself for not being like the rest of these Europeans (maybe a veiled reference to the English specifically) but an insider who impresses the natives with his knowledge of the gebruiken (customs) and taal (language) of the land. He finally focuses in on one of the women, in this narrative. He makes it a point to say she is from Surat and that while it was once a flourishing and fair-trade city, now the "all-devouring and

destructive Vandals in Europe, the English," robbed Surat of all its glory and riches – but Surat still carries the reputation for the cleanest and most skilled dancers.

After they had danced about an hour, I signaled them to stop with my handkerchief. The music went silent. I had to, as is customary, make her a compliment. "Enough! Beautiful Moeite ([61]), "I said, "it is enough for now. You have satisfied me to highest with your artful dance, and filled my heart with joy. Rambhe, you could not have done a better job. If you are not tired, please seat yourself and caress my ear with your sweet voices ([62])."

The praise pleased her; they seemed very surprised to see a European, so well acquainted with the customs and language of the country, and expressed immediate readiness to meet my request. Mats were brought in. They settled themselves in a semicircle in front of me; close behind them sat the musicians - and around them (at a small distance) the people, all listening with the greatest silence and attention.

On her repeated requests to know what kind of Geet ([63]) I appreciated, I chose the Kamie ([64]). They then sang the love stories of Biddhia, Princes of Bhordowan and Sondor, Prince of Hostinapoer. How he, by a mighty sorceress, was thwarted in his love, persecuted after numerous adventures and vicissitudes - finally obtains the beautiful Biddhia ([65]), etc.

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[61] signifies the Malabaarsch as much as jusvrouw(?) [again, conflation of Malabar devadasi/dancer with Coromandel?]

[62] High-sounding words, and disguised or Metaphoric modes of speech, are the Indians proof and sign of learned hero and genteel upbringing. [oh my god!! Again, fascinating, this is his interpretation of being a maharaja, totally in the style of a Nayak hero!! He REALLY is emulating what he understands to be native elite, seriously amazing.

[63] All romances, compacted or true histories that can be sung, have the general name of Geet. So it has been, for example, the Bhaguat-Geet, (translated into French) or the song of the tiger, which they nicknamed fomtijds indicates Krischna.

[64] Kamie his love stories or novels in verse

[65] Love stories Biddhia and Sondor, a very fine novel, written by the celebrated Gobinda Daas, who lived, or iron age at the beginning of the Kali yug.

It was almost midnight when the singing ended. They wanted to start another song, but I thanked her, and after giving the gift to the first dancer the gift ([66]), with the betel and areca, they stood up - and said their goodbyes, with many a salam and acknowledgments, because of my politeness and generosity. The audience also departed each to his house or night lodging, highly satisfied with the entertainment that I had given them. They had rather seen, without doubt, that it had lasted the whole night.

At the heart of Haafner's encounter with Mamia, and the moments of their performative interactions with her draw from a distinctly south Indian imaginary. In this it shared with genres like the nonti natakams and the Indian and Company paintings of dance and court life. Haafner's interaction with Mamia brings up many issues surrounding travel, encounter and translation of existing tropes around dancing women and dance itself. The moment of his initial interaction with her evokes some of the scenarios around dancing women from distinctly Indian genres from the eighteenth century.

The context of travel, the performative moment of encounter, the relationship of seeing and being seen, the one woman surrounded by many who form her backdrop in that moment, all carry over. The narrative goes on to explain that just as Haafner was about to sleep, the "Daija" (or mother of the troupe) came to him with regards and betel leaves from one of the young performers, Mamia. Using the figure of Mamia's mother as an intermediary, the Tamil terminologies used to describe Mamia and the terms of their interaction reflect the more popular imaginary of the nonti natakam.

[66] This gift is voluntary and not determined; can be in a case like above, is in rupees, about 15 f - exist; but when they are summoned to parties or festivals, and all night by to sing and dance, they receive rather more, if money is to cloths, doilies, etc. The money is, after the end of the dance, if one hair heur farewell shows, on a salver full of betel leaves and areca nuts, handed to the first danseresse; This is always a fixed use, they give never exposed, even the coins always have an uneven number. The latter brings the civility co.

Here however, the moment of transformation is not the performance itself, which to Haafner is still part of the mundane. The important moment is the next morning, when he sees Mamia stripped of finery, in the bright natural light of day and realizes, deeply and suddenly, that he has fallen for her and that he regrets turning her away. But everything points to a privileging of 'the natural', or the un-mediated. He rejects the initial advance because it comes through the Daija. Beyond the literal sense of mediation, however, is a deeper denial of physical experience. For the kallan, the dance is the reason he falls for the woman, her physicality and the sensory nature of experience are at the heart of transformation. Here, however, it is *despite* the previous night that Haafner finally falls for Mamia.

The delayed visceral response between traveler and dancing woman is transferred to when the two meet again much later in the memoir, when Haafner sees Mamia by chance outside a temple with the rest of her troupe. Now however, we hear the entire first encounter from Mamia's perspective, which we never get in the nonti natakam. She reminisces about how they met *the first time* and the familiar scene of dance and seduction comes up. Mamia, speaking to Haafner, describes how they met in an extended flashback. She says that the "politeness and kindness that you showed us, your graciousness and goodness to the beholders, your knowledge of our language and customs, attracted me, and opened my heart to you." The transformation that happens to both Haafner and Mamia in their performance encounter is based on a mutual appreciation of both beauty *and knowledge*. They had met in Masulipatnam, where she had been invited to join the harem of a Nawab as a personal paramour, but she was too proud for it. But then, she met Haafner, she realized how kind and generous he was when she and her troupe sang and danced for him. He knew the language and local customs and she was intrigued and sent him

a betel leaf, which is a universal Indian courtesan signal of invitation. At the end of the day, Haafner has fashioned his narrative as a savior story.[67]

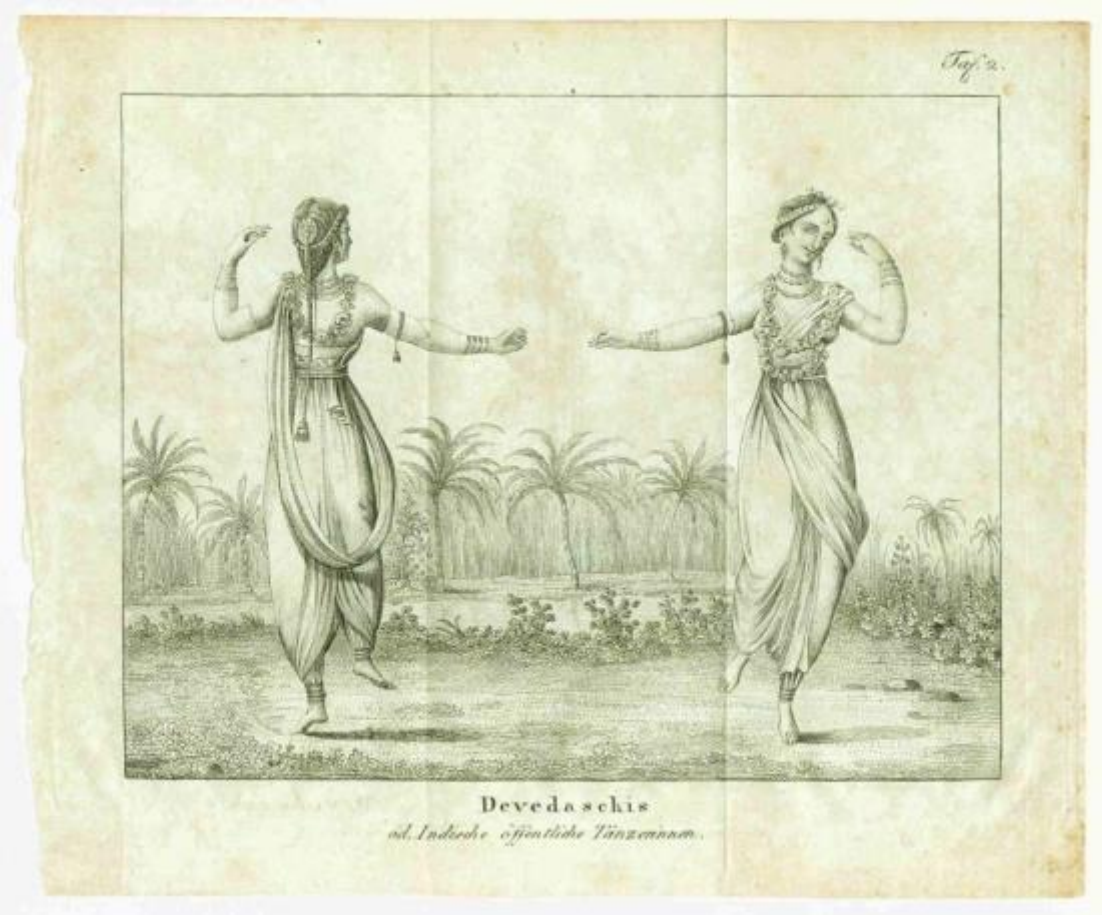


Fig. 30. Haafner's Illustration. *Rezien en palanquin*

Haafner, however, fashioned his own personal experience around existing formulas of courtly performance encounters of the south Indian imaginary. It parallels in some ways Dalling's Nautch scene painting. The difference however is that while Dalling is clearly using the scene to construct a diplomatic presence (surrounded by Indian and European officers) meant to emulate

[67] As Gayatri Spivak puts it, this is the common story of the white man saving the brown woman from the brown man, but in this case, brown men in general. See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 1988.

scenarios where dance serves almost ambassadorial functions, here Haafner is using the scene to construct his persona and experience as an emotional and aesthetically sensitive man, in short, the ideal Romantic hero in 'far off' lands. It is a scenario of romance.

The point of Haafner's exchanges, however, with Mamia have little here to do with presenting a political self. Here the performance is not about constructing a scenario of exclusivity. Rather, it is supposed to revolve around their love which is born out of the moment he sees her perform. In that way, Haafner's scenario is more faithful to the original drive of the courtly ula than even to the nonti natakam. Like both, the initial encounter, the moment of performance, starts out almost as an accidental moment of passing. But unlike either the ula or the nonti, the resolution is neither an unproblematic happy union or the intensely physical destructiveness of lost morality. Instead, the story of Haafner and Mamia ultimately ends with Mamia's death and Haafner's return to Amsterdam. As such, Haafner's scenario echoes the tragic endings of high Romanticism. It is a scenario of *un-resolved* romance. Haafner emphasizes a particularly European concern when it comes to performance and dancing women – cleanliness and naturalness.

At the same time, Haafner is also drawing on more pan-Indian imagery of court life. The way the entire scenario is constructed reveals its artifice – its existence as an imagined, or at least partially imagined, encounter. In the scene, Mamia uses the word *zenana* to reference a Nawab's harem. The choice of an Urdu word and the overt references to seduction place the scene in a more pan-Indian courtesan scenario, reminiscent of Mughal court culture. There are multiple accounts from the period of British men's love affairs with women in the Mughal and sultanate courts of the subcontinent. For example, in his work on the Golconda sultanate of around the same period, William Dalrymple follows a love affair between a British East India company

resident in Hyderabad Captain James Achilles Kirkpatrick and Khair-un-Nissa, a Hyderabadi noblewoman.[68]

Haafner imagined himself as a localized elite, as several European men did in that interesting moment of the late eighteenth century. Dalrymple follows one, a British resident. But there were also others such as Major General Claude Martin, a French officer (later for the British army) who lived as an influential nabob with a courtly Mughal lifestyle in Lucknow in the last part of his life, as well as the Swiss Colonel Antoine-Louis Henri de Polier who worked for royalty in Calcutta and had two Indian wives and multiple children there. Their accounts form a genre by themselves. It is not until we move into the 19th century that British attitudes around racial difference took shape and led to not only dismissive attitudes against Indians themselves but also the conception of the Indian Other as less human which became codified into the emerging legal structure of the East India Company and ultimately the British Raj. In a way, these 'white natives' are marginal figures in the historiography of India. Haafner is doubly so because he is Dutch and the history of European involvement in India is almost exclusively focused on the British because of the course of the 19th century onwards.[69]

After he returned to Amsterdam in 1796, Haafner met August Wilhelm Schlegel, a German literary critic and translator, who was at the heart of the German Romantic movement. He possibly had significant influence on Haafner's writing. And in the years following his return he initially spent time studying and writing on the Ramayana before publishing the first volume of his memoir in 1806. Even before all of this and during his time in India, Haafner was strongly

[68] Dalrymple, *White Mughals*. 2004

[69] See writings on Warren Hasting's "Enlightened Despotism", the art of emulating Indian "despotism" as policy of diplomacy. (Natasha Eaton 2008)

anti-colonialist and took a reformist stance on British presence in India. The romantic movement focused on the human and the individual – in the colonial encounter, this served to de-focus and ultimately erase the context of unequal power dynamics, mobility and access that a white man had in India even at the turn of the 19th century. Even so, to simply call it Romantic would ignore the ways in which existing scenarios of courtly dance performance found striking continuities even in the accounts of a marginal Dutch traveler writing about his end of the century travels well into the 19th century back in Amsterdam.

Ananda Ranga and Pondicherry's dancing women

The Romanticism of Haafner's self-fashioning as native elite through scenarios of courtly dance, among other things, stands in stark contrast with another border figure's diaries and his mentions of dance. Ananda Ranga Pillai was chief dubash for the French East India Company in the mid eighteenth century (mid '40s – '61), in the midst of the Anglo-French Carnatic wars. He was born to a wealthy merchant family outside Madras and was one of those key border figures who navigated the emerging world of European politics and economics while negotiating existing relationships. He also is one of the nouveau riche that, in the midst of political fragmentation presented a new kind of public identity – fluid and self-aware. He has left records of patronizing arts and several poets who created works on and for him. He had little to say about dance, however. In the volumes of his diaries he left behind, dance appeared a handful of times.[70] In those moments, it was always as embroiled in local politics in Pondicherry.[71] For example, in

[70] Ananta rankam Pillai, 1709-1761, and John Frederick Price. *Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai: Dubash to Joseph François Dupleix, a Record of Matters Political, Historical, Social, and Personal, from 1736 to 1761*. Madras: Gov't Press, 1904.

[71] Another example: March of 1767, Ananda Ranga Pillai notes that the Kammalas took their deity on a procession through the streets of the left-hand castes and in return, Kandappa Mudali ordered the dancing women and

May of 1750, Ananda Ranga Pillai notes a conflict when a left-hand caste Chetti complained that the left-hand caste dancing women had not stood up to honor him at the wedding of a left-hand caste Chetti's daughter's wedding. The question was whether it was fair since the right-hand caste dancing women don't act the same way (which turned out to be questionable) It turned into a whole issue when the question of which streets the wedding procession had taken (whether they belonged to right or left-hand caste neighborhoods). The women, who were imprisoned on charges of misconduct, themselves protested and eventually it was resolved, they were released.

The spatialization of politics in European trading towns seems to be especially visible with the concentrated urban milieu of fairly recent cross communities in Pillai's account. Maybe more importantly, there is none of the romanticism of Haafner's accounts of dancing women or even the drama of the nonti natakam. In the mundane workings of Ananda Ranga's Pondicherry, dancing women are part and parcel of the public authority negotiated through internal politics. It makes visible the stark contrast in different imagined urban landscapes of south India from the vantage points that were relevant at the time. At the same time, while the attitude is entirely different, it does reinforce the fact that dancers and performance itself was somehow important to public culture and was political. The context for the episode was a wedding, but it was not for religious purposes that these women and their performance makes an appearance in Ananda Ranga's accounts, but rather for their part in the contestations between two groups of people of which the dancing women themselves were a part. This was not a Brahmin wedding. The right and left-hand castes were carpenters, craftsmen and others.

musicians performing on the occasion to be seized and jailed – which they were, until several negotiations resolved the conflict between the groups and the performers were released.

This brings us back full circle to the question of the politics of performance in a shifting urban geography in eighteenth century southern Coromandel. While Ananda Ranga's and Haafner's accounts both locate us in or around European towns, the urban milieu they locate dance in echoes what we have seen with nonti natakams and paintings. If anything, it presents a fluid landscape in which the boundaries between the 'temple town', a small court and a European fort town are somewhat less relevant than we might assume when it comes to the actual workings of the city and the construction of public identities. Together they instead connect a trans-local urban milieu in which the politics of courtly dance performance played an important part. This was in part because of the complicated class politics that it represented in these places. It was also because of the importance of a strata of people, including those in the service industry, of whom professional performing artists were themselves a part. The politics of these places was not necessarily dominated by the Brahmin-centered politics of later urban colonial centers like Madras, although this was also important as evidenced by Sanskrit satirical epics like *Sarva deva vilasa* from that period (V Raghavan, Subramanian, Neild-Basu). The distinct translocal urban milieu of the eighteenth century connecting places like Ramnad in the south, Kancipuram in northern Tamil country, Masulipatnam, and Nagapattinam and Tanjavur in the Kaveri delta shaped the politics of performance in terms of spectatorship-experience, gaze-sensuality, mobility, and relationship to space and place. These connections were mapped through the movement of individuals, not only new patrons such as merchants, dubashes and little kings and the poet-playwrights who constructed their imaginaries and public identities but performers themselves who traveled and were associated with multiple patrons and institutions (courts, temples, lodges).

VI. Conclusion

The performance of professional dancing women – variously called *cinna melam, attam, or nattuva melam* in Tamil sources– evoked in various ways in this period was centrally located in this fluid trans-local geography.[72] Bharata natyam's history has for long been written as something entirely stable and physically rooted in royal centers. Usually linked back to discussions of classical texts such as the Sanskrit *Natya Sastra* and physically limited to the south Indian royal center of Tanjavur, pre-colonial dance has been treated in ways that are both considerably ahistorical and disconnected from shifts in political geographies and economies of urban culture which defined the Coromandel in concrete ways and I argue, dance within it. The fixing of bodily histories and disavowal of movement and fluidity comes out of both colonialist processes of territorialization and 'ruralization' of the south Indian countryside and subsequent Indian nation-of-nation models which further fixed linguistic and cultural identity to state boundaries. Historian David Ludden points out that what he calls early-modern urbanism faded in light of colonial and post-colonial modernities in which "cultural elites conceived all the countryside as a world where village people worked their farms inside the "social framework" of Indian tradition" (2002). The ruralization of the south Indian landscape went hand in hand with the construction of south Indian culture as revolving around the temple, or defined through religious concerns, as distinct from secular concerns and sexuality.[73]

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[72] Scholars have referred to precursors of bharata natyam as *sadir kacheri, kelikkai, melam and mejuvani*. However, most of these terms don't seem to appear in the popular Tamil sources of the period and in state records until late in the eighteenth century.

[73] At stake in this project of locating and fixing dance was dance's association with sex and prostitution – both because of the eroticism of repertoire and dancers' social locations. While scholars and dancers of the twentieth century combatted the British notion that dance was degenerate because of its associations with prostitution, they did so by divorcing themselves from devadasi women seen as prostitutes, rather than by addressing the European terms of respectability. Initially, post-colonial scholars pointed out the nationalist continuation of European narratives associating devadasi women with 'religious prostitution' by pointing out that devadasi

Rather, the eighteenth century saw a destabilization of social spheres which caused new popular imaginaries to turn to the broader social milieus and urban geographies beyond traditional tropes of kings and courtesans. Dance was deeply implicated in this shift, creating a space for the negotiation of trans-local mobility and space-making, both real and imagined, physical and social. Popular genres across plays, paintings and memoirs present dance and sensuality at the heart of tensions around mobility, urban space and place in the context of a rapidly shifting Coromandel from the end of the seventeenth century. The multiple scenarios that emerge from the archives examined here – nonti natakam and other plays, panels of murals in temple, palace and chatram spaces, miniature paintings for various audiences, travel memoirs and diaries of European and Indian traders – locate dance both in the concrete spaces and places of a changing urban geography in eighteenth century south India and in the new imaginaries which constructed urban milieus.

The politics of performance isn't just about the gaze rather a politics of sensuality – not just seeing, but hearing, feeling and most importantly, being physically transformed in the process. Performance is defined by its interactivity and improvisation – not just in *how* a dance is performed, but even *what* is performed, how the performers are oriented, and the nuances of

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women were not in fact prostitutes initially but were exalted, owning land and gaining education at a time when married women could not. However, the implication is that prostitution, and sex more generally, is divorced from any exalted position devadasi women might have held, and the cause for their downfall later. This both continues to play into the denigration of sexuality and the separation in time of the good devadasi from the later bad devadasi. More recently, dance historians have taken the colonialist assumptions of dance and prostitution on more directly by arguing that eroticism has always been central to dancers' repertoires and dancers were part of the sexual economy, through a focus on the Tanjavur court. While this revisionist scholarship has pointed out the construction of "Indian classical dance tradition" narratives in the twentieth century and pointed out that dance was tied into court culture and kingship, what remains is a clear narrative of movement from royal Tanjavur to colonial Madras and the continuation of distinctions between court and temple. What I have attempted to show in this chapter is that while these spaces are distinct in many ways, the way dance was conceived in the sources and genres examined here, dance was imagined similarly across spaces in ways that made the distinctions of secondary concern

what that performance means, what its effects are. The intimacy of a performance in which dancer and spectator are imagined one on one make the spectator-patron a vital part of the performance. The proper patron not only knew how to enjoy performance, he or she knew how to be viscerally transformed – either in pleasure or pain or ecstasy, appreciation of a really good satirical moment, or on this continuum arousal. Although there aren't many women's voices in the archive, women of the court like Muddupalani in Pratapasimha's court in Tanjavur express this similar visceral responsiveness in her magnum opus *Radika Santwanamu*.

Far from stable and isolated histories, performance scenarios present on a transitory relationship between performer and audience, between artist and patron, imagining a trans-local rather than truly local sphere of activity and belonging. Dancers themselves, coming from a variety of social backgrounds but largely from social groups associated with crafts and service industries like weaving, were themselves navigating local and translocal politics and economics through their association with institutions, sectarian identity politics, and tax collections. I have located the shifts in attitudes towards dance not in some sense of colonial rupture but in the changes to south Indian political geographies and social mobilities at the end of the seventeenth century, coming out of broader early modern shifts in attitudes towards sensuality, individual subjectivity and commerce. At the same time, new modes of representation, including miniatures and legal documents, isolated dancer and dancers from the contexts of space and place in which they were located, removing the spectator's gaze from the frame and thus universalizing it, and most importantly, removing the experience of dance from the web of socio-economic and geo-political concerns which defined it.

The urban social dynamics in which the scenarios of this chapter locate dance, frame the rest of the chapters of this dissertation. I shift the attention to various stakeholders and engagements

with dance while extending the idea that dance and ideas about dance developed in the movement between urban centers, not only in the Coromandel but connected through the subcontinent and overseas. In the chapters that follow, I turn first to intellectual debates around what constitutes dance in and through the field of Sanskrit commentaries well into the eighteenth century. Building on the idea of networks and translocality that I have begun here, as well as elite constructions of authority, I suggest that Sanskrit textuality around dance was not merely about classical texts but new knowledge intimately engaged with the movement and relational dynamics of political geographies and the trends of intellectual, aesthetic performative activity which defined elite urban courtly cultures in the early modern period, and the eighteenth-century Coromandel specifically. Tracing multiple genealogies and strategies, I centralize how intellectuals and literati responded to danced practices to reconfigure and re-orient textual ideals rather than merely inherit older models and impose them on new practices. In the third chapter, I suggest that the destabilization of the eighteenth century led to a redefinition of danced repertoires and the very idea of a dance concert, pulling from various performative movements and imagined publics. Composers and patrons structured new performance and viewing experiences to construct what we understand as traditional south Indian concert dance, the sadir kacceri.

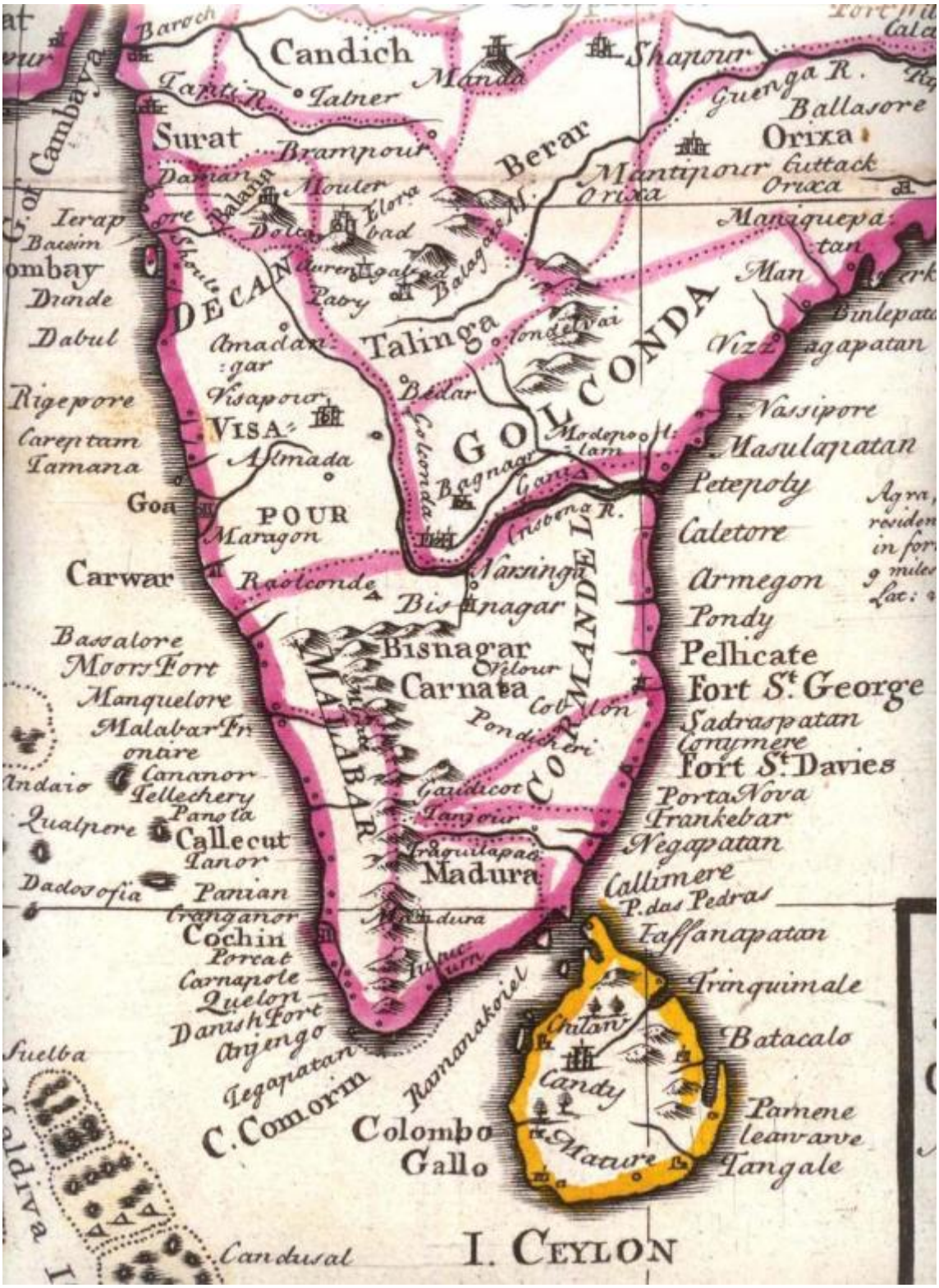


Fig. 31. "India Proper or the Empire of the Great Mogul, Agreeable to Modern History, by H. Moll, Geographer" (c.1715) (Columbia University)

CHAPTER 2

Orienting Taste:
Literati, Sanskrit Text, and Dance as Practice

"Authority is declared to be of three kinds – *loka* (popular, conventional usage), *veda* (scriptures), and *adhyatma* (conscience/personal experience). Therefore, *loka* is declared to be the authority in the context of *natya*."

Nartana nirnaya, Pundarika Vitthala, 16th century

"Training is the heart of *nrtta*, its home"

Tukkoji Bhonsle (18th century) quoting Sangeeta Mukatavali, 15th century

A close relationship between dance and text predates colonial and postcolonial modernities in South Asia. Theorization, classification and analysis of danced and dramatic performance has existed centrally in the subcontinent for millennia. In Sanskrit, a tradition of textual commentary propelled intellectual debate not only in the arts but also in fields as disparate as statesmanship, political theory, medicine and metaphysics, making knowledge production highly intertextual and trans-temporal. Authors, while engaged with the concerns of their place and time, usually patronized by an up and coming or established court, were in conversation with those who had written before them, framed in such a way in the text that they seemed to all exist contemporaneously.

On the one hand, I argue against the assumption that the importance of Sanskrit text to dance was new to colonial or postcolonial movements. European colonial projects privileged texts as a means of fixing colonial subjects.[74] However, the production of textual knowledge and debates had already been important in the subcontinent. European Orientalist scholars, colonial administrators and missionaries shifted an existing relationship between textual production, authorship and practice. By treating text as product rather than ongoing process, they reified text, fixing practices to textual ideals, and divorcing the production of textual knowledge from the practice of embodied forms.[75] Through a focus on 'ur' texts – an original or earliest version of a text, to which later versions can be compared and tested – British and German Orientalist scholars translating Sanskrit texts treated these texts as fixed products (used to verify objective factual knowledge about the subcontinent) rather than as ongoing debates involving relational intellectual and performative positions. From the first translation of the Sanskrit play *Abijnana Sakuntalam* into a European language by the Orientalist scholar William Jones in 1790, in which he referenced Bharata's *Natyasastra*, it became important for scholars to locate and objectively understand this text as an originary text for Indian dramatic arts. In the process, they disavowed the thriving networks of knowledge production and commentary-based debates that defined the knowledge they were seeking as well as their role in the politics of state and urban cosmopolitanism.

[74] The privileging of text took on a variety of forms: the colonial administrative production of paper as verificatory process (see next footnote), Orientalist scholars' production of translations (Said 1978, Vishwanathan 1990, Niranjana 1992), and missionaries' print production of educational materials including religious texts/epics, dictionaries, and ethnographic accounts.

[75] In terms of British textual knowledge production and the building of the colonial bureaucracy, Bhavani Raman refers to a new textual habitus, a 'document raj'. Raman, Bhavani. *Document Raj: Writing and Scribes in Early Colonial South India*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Therefore, I also argue against the idea of an unbroken or linear evolution of textual knowledge around dance since South Asian classical pasts – an idea constructed by colonial Orientalist scholars as part of a broader narrative around Indian knowledge production, reinforced by twentieth century dancers and scholars seeking to 'revive' dance in terms of a cohesive Indian classical past and continues to be reiterated by dancers today. The idea that text is determinative of practice lead twentieth century revivalists to align dance practices inherited from devadasi women with classical Sanskrit texts as a means of 'refining' and therefore making a truer version of a dance that had supposedly fallen into disrepute (sadir).[76] In the process, classical texts like the Natyasastra often served more as a metaphor or canvas for emerging middle-class values about dance, religiosity, gender norms and respectability – allowing the excising elements of eroticism and 'cleaning up' movement vocabulary in service to a more 'classical' dance.[77] Both European Orientalist scholars and the postcolonial cultural revivalists of the twentieth century who inherited the privileging of classical texts masked the extent to which the paradigms of dance and text we understand today as 'ancient' were a product of ideological changes in the three to four centuries before colonialism – the early modern period.

Instead, in this chapter I argue that an acute attention to Sanskrit textual knowledge surfaced at moments of profound change and that ideas were re-oriented to new sets of practices and trends in those moments. Not only was textual knowledge mutable, it was often secondary to common usage when it came to final authority on a subject. Performance (dance, music, drama) specifically embodied an ideal urban cosmopolitanism. Thus, in moments of historical change,

[76] Srinivasan 1983; Arudra 1986-7:18; Meduri 1996; O'Shea 2007

[77] This privileged the carriers of written knowledge over the carriers of practical knowledge on dance – that is intellectuals over practitioners, both of whom had been historically distinct but often in conversation with one another.

textual ideals were re-anchored in and re-framed through contemporary practices. I focus on Sanskrit texts on dance produced in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Deccan and Coromandel, linked back to key medieval and early modern texts produced in intellectual and cultural centers from the thirteenth century onwards. Further, I examine these medieval and early modern texts in the context of both their production and circulation – which locates the conversation in courts and urban elite across the subcontinent alongside changing political geographies and new religio-performative movements.

Sanskrit was a lingua franca, a language of cosmopolitan cultural production throughout the subcontinent, including in the south for millennia.[78] The production of Sanskrit texts was in the hands of specialized intellectuals who, like artists and performers, found patronage in the courts of the subcontinent. This patronage created a link between geo-political trajectories of empires and Sanskrit intellectual production. As there have been many dynastic empires at any given time, the subcontinent's political sphere was (and in many ways, continues to be) defined by networks of relational power dynamics rather than a subcontinent-wide top down hegemony. By the medieval period, if not before, Sanskrit became one of the connective tissues of political, intellectual, aesthetic culture of urban cosmopolitanism across various established and aspiring centers of activity/power. Sanskrit texts acted as living negotiations of these relational dynamics and their authors staked claims to what was *en vogue* (or not). There was a self-consciousness, at times a biting sarcasm and even a sense of wry humor to commentary on older scholars, as well as a cutting and discarding at will what was no longer useful to newer scholars and their

[78] Sheldon Pollock, *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500–1800* (Duke University Press, 2011); Sheldon Pollock, "New Intellectuals in Seventeenth-Century India," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38, no. 1 (2001): 3–31.

audiences. The tradition was not one that cautiously upheld the sanctity of an established and unshakeable ur-text or even the sanctity of text itself.

The relationship of dance practice to text was therefore, a dynamic one. While Sanskrit textuality provided a framework by which to make sense of and organize knowledge about dance, it did not represent itself as an absolute. Rather, authors of Sanskrit texts presented themselves in relation to other scholars (writing not only in Sanskrit but other languages of cosmopolitan South Asia) across time and place, rendering the texts both intertextual and in a dialogic relationship with practice. Tracing the relationality of their texts makes visible the ways in which Sanskrit texts about dance, and dance-as-practice, participated in trans-local networks of ideas and aesthetics which connected courtly and urban milieus across the subcontinent at a time when they were shifting rapidly.

From the medieval period onwards, scholars patronized by courts of central and south India redefined what constituted dance and performance in the Sanskrit framework by turning to practices coming out of influential popular devotional movements. The early modern period was characterized by increasing individual mobility and the rise of literati (scribal specialists and intellectuals) throughout the subcontinent (O'Hanlon, Washbrook 2010; Alam, Subrahmanyam 2004; Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam 2003; Pollock 2001; Minkowksi, O'Hanlon, Venkatkrishnan 2015). In this period, artists, intellectuals and patrons brought together painting, performance and poetry into a new focus on eroticism and visual aesthetics in the leisure court cultures of the Deccan and northwest.[79] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, scholars of

[79] As I will trace later in this chapter, miniature paintings became hugely popular and brought together courtly aesthetics and the personalized imagining of the god Krishna into a enduring visual tableaus – marking a new era of visual courtly culture that linked new poetry and new approach to dance. However, not much has been written about this art history. Most of what has been written about paintings like Ragamala, Pahari, Basohli, Kangra have been examined with either music history or colonial histories of collecting paintings and

urban Mughal Delhi and Nayak courts of the south brought together multiple genealogies of written knowledge with an increasing focus on practice to re-position text more as an aid or descriptive survey. In the eighteenth-century Kaveri Delta, amidst significant political and economic shifts, ministers and kings produced texts not as a way of fixing practice to ancient 'classical' ideals but to update the ideals and concepts of Sanskrit text to the practices of the time.

In the first part of this chapter, I trace the genealogy of key ideas about dance – namely its place as a form of performance in relation to music and drama, the segmentation of the body and a particularly choreographic approach – back to a key medieval text from the Deccan by Sharngadeva, responding to emerging performance trends from the popular socio-religious movement of Haridasas.[80] He introduced or popularized key frameworks for understanding dance: *sangita*, *nartana* and *desi*. In the second section of this chapter, I follow the changing relationships of text and practice (an instrumentalization of text and focus on visual aesthetic) through the shifts of the early modern period with the fall of Vijayanagar and expansion of the

curiosities. For example, see Anna L Dallapiccola's writings: Vijayanagara and Nayak Paintings. 2011; Ragamala, Paintings from India 2011; etc; Tushara Bindu Gude's Dissertation Between Music and History: *Ragamala* Paintings and European Collectors in Late Eighteenth-Century Northern India. 2009.

[80] The Haridasas were literally 'servants of the lord Hari', many of whom were itinerant bards or philosophers. They defined a devotional movement whose ideals and thoughts pervaded and received noteworthy contributions from all sections of society. It emerged in current-day Karnataka and was consolidated in the 12th century – 14th century CE period, prior to and during the early rule of the Vijayanagara empire. The movement and its performative forms were underpinned by the Dvaita philosophy of Madhvacharya (*Madhva Siddhanta*), geared towards broadly inclusive communities through a literary medium known as *Dasa Sahitya* (*lit* "literature of the servants of the lord"). Later, Vallabhacharya in Gujarat and Guru Chaitanya were influenced by the teachings of Madhvacharya – giving rise to much artistic and performative forms of worship to Krishna, imagined as friend, lover, or child – someone with whom the devotee has a close and familiar relationship. However, the early Dasas focused on the personal without the focus on the sensual which came with the iconic Sanskrit opus of Jayadeva and especially crystalized in the Gaudiya Vaishnava movement which originated in eastern India in the 15th century under Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In this chapter, the Dasa movement and later iterations intersect at multiple moments with the court-patronized production of Sanskrit intellectual work on dance from the medieval through early modern period: from the 12th century Yadav court, through the 15th century Vijayanagar court, up to 16th-17th century Mughal Delhi and then down to the 18th century Coromandel, both through the Telugu Nayak legacy and the new Mratha Bhonsle rulers.

Mughal empire – in particular, the new nexus of devotional movements and classical conceptions of affect and eroticism that came together in the courtly milieus of the urban subcontinent. I look specifically at texts produced by Pundarika Vitthala in the sixteenth century (likely 1576) Mughal court in Delhi and by Damodara Misra in 1625 also in the Mughal court but associated with the emerging Maratha polity.

In the third section, I focus on the Sangita Saramrta, a text written by a Bhonsle Maratha king of Tanjavur in the early eighteenth century. I trace the ways this text responds to early modern courtly shifts and connects to other discourses about bodily and everyday practice for the Maratha elite– namely medical discourse and discourses around duty and daily life. I argue firstly, that these scholars, from their various politico-geographic and institutional locations, drew on specific genealogies of knowledge about dance in presenting their own position. Secondly, I argue that in the eighteenth-century Coromandel, amidst a context of changing political and economic geography (Mughal decline and newly independent polities asserting themselves in its wake), individuals like Tukkoji foregrounded new priorities of training and effort, while also showing an urge to turn back to classical authorities. In the final section, I turn to the ways in which early Orientalist scholars negotiated this world of inter-textuality-practicality in the nineteenth century – ultimately divorcing it from its geo-temporal networks and from practice in an effort to define themselves as keepers of true knowledge about India.

Throughout the chapter, I use the term 'orienting' in the phenomenological sense that scholar Sara Ahmed proposes – that where/what one faces determines what one sees/perceives. The foregrounding of orientation shows that the developments in Sanskrit textuality did not just follow a natural evolution of increasing regionalization or vernacularization – in contrast to what has been proposed by most Sanskrit scholars. Rather, the trajectory of Sanskrit knowledge

production on the performing arts depended centrally on location (geographic and political) as well as time. If a line can be drawn at all, it would look like zig-zagging, with turns of varying degrees depending on the historical moment: with stops and pivotings towards new orientations at these turns. Many times, the line would cross back over itself ultimately forming an uneven network of connections – of practices, quotes and commentaries across historical periods and geo-political locations.

A note on sources: For the main eighteenth century text of the Maratha king Tukkoji which forms the basis for this chapter and for several of the other lesser known early modern texts I reference, the translations presented are my own. For the more well-known texts such as the medieval Sharngadeva's *Sangita Ratnakara* and early modern Pundarika Vitthala's *Nartananirnaya*, I draw on the nuanced published editions of RK Shringy and Premlata Sharma and R Sathyanarayana respectively (both part of the Sangeet Natak Akademi's series), at times including my own reading of the Sanskrit portion.[81] I am interested in these texts (or parts of these texts) as part of an argument I make about texts' relationship to practice and political geographies and the translocal, transtemporal production and circulation of knowledge around dance. Regarding the milieu of cosmopolitanism constructed in and through Sanskrit textual production specifically, I draw from scholars such as Sheldon Pollock who situate the socio-

[81] Puṇḍarīkaviṭṭhala, R Sathyanarayana, and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. *Nartananirṇayaḥ*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994.

Shringy, Dr RK, and Dr Prem Lata Sharma. *Sangita Ratnakara of Sarngadeva, Text and Translation*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1978

"Sangita Ratnakara of Sarangadeva Vol IV (Chapter on Dancing) - Translated by K Kunjunni Raja and Radha Burnier."

politics of Mughal and Maratha patronage in knowledge production.[82] I also draw on scholars who have historicized the emergence of new literati (not only writing in Sanskrit but also Perso-Arabic) who see their relationship to text, knowledge production, and the past in new ways from around the seventeenth century.[83] Finally, I develop ideas about textuality and colonialism in part with historians such as Bhavani Raman who writes about the changing habitus of writing from scribal culture to the 'document Raj' in the colonial period though not addressing Sanskrit textual production.

I. Medieval Legacies and Inter-textual traces: *Sangita* Dance and Music

Dynamic relationships between dance and text have a long and plural history. The Natyasastra, comprehensive and much cited treatise on performance and aesthetic theory, as well as other key classical texts on aesthetics and dramaturgy such as Dhananjaya's Dasarupaka and Anandhavardhana's Dhvanyaloka were produced in Kashmir in the far northwest of south Asia in the first millennia AD. Kashmir was a political and intellectual center until its decline around the 10th century – Kashmiri intellectuals produced many of the works that are now canonical with regards to Sanskrit intellectual tradition. The period from the eleventh century has been referred to by various scholars as a period of vernacularization – in which non-Sanskrit 'vernacular' languages emerged as more important sites of intellectual, cultural and political

[82] Pollock, Sheldon. *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500–1800*. Duke University Press, 2011.

Pollock, Sheldon, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. "Cosmopolitanisms." *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (September 21, 2000): 577–89.

[83] For a full discussion of early modern south India and the role of a new class of literate elite and their influence on new kinds of history-writing, see Rao, Velcheru Narayana, Vēlcēru Nārāyaṇarāvu, David Dean Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800*. Other Press, 2003.

knowledge production.[84] While not always explicitly stated, scholars on dance who attend to Sanskrit materials also cite the 10th century as a demarcation between a classical period and a later period defined by branching and the production of texts in regional centers and thus regional forms of dances, all based in the universal conceptual foundations of the classical Natyasastra.[85]

However, the Natyasastra, attributed to Bharata, was produced in this specific milieu in terms of the ideological underpinnings of its aesthetic theory and the specific kinds of dances and dramas it explicitly mentions. It was not necessarily a text that reflected pan-subcontinental practices at the time and, in fact, anything south of the Vindhya mountain range (central India) was largely outside the purview of the author's scope. After his period moreover, while Bharata's name was often invoked, knowledge of the Natyasastra text itself was largely mediated through key medieval texts – quoted secondhand and sometimes without knowledge of the original text. While they used some of the organizing categories for movement and the affective impact of movement, these later scholars often presented quite different philosophies around movement and performance. They did so by centering different sets of performance practices

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[84] For an overview of the historicization of Sanskrit knowledge production, see Pollock, Sheldon. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. Univ of California Press, 2006.

Pollock discusses vernacularization in comparison to the processes that took place in Europe (which lead to the formation of language-based nation-states) in distinction from cosmopolitanism, describing both as actions, things people do, rather than ideas, things people declare. See Pollock, Sheldon I. "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History." *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (September 1, 2000): 591–625.

[85] Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Bharata The Natyasastra*. Sahitya Akademi, 1996.

Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Streams*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1980.

Bose, Mandakranta. *Movements and Mimesis: The Idea of Dance in the Sanskritic Tradition*. Springer, 1991.

while still using the overall discursive framework of ‘sastra’ as an authorizing move. Thus, scholars in new centers of power and intellectual activity used the structure and sometimes selected categorizations of older texts, at times referencing older works, in order to make claims to universality for the new practices and performative aesthetics they centered in their work. my discussion of text and practice is based on an idea of hinge moments in which both Sanskrit text and practice pivot in relation to each other and in relation to the broader geography of intellectual, performative activity of the subcontinent – all in conversation with the politics of empire and class mobility.

The region known as the Deccan plateau was the site of much intellectual and performative activity and important to any history of dance and performance from around the twelfth century. Sanskrit scholars on performance writing in the emerging centers of the Deccan grappled with the new trends and aesthetics of their urban milieus. Dynastic rulers in current day Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh became important patrons of Sanskrit intellectual production, producing the key texts on music and dance of the medieval period. In particular, centers such as the Rajput court of Malwa, the Kannada/Marathi Yadav and Chalukya courts, the Telugu court of Kakatiyas produced important work on performance. Here, Sanskrit texts on the arts became a reflection of paradigms of art-making and performance. In the twelfth century, a king of the Kannada (western) Chalukya dynasty, Somesvara, wrote an encyclopedic work covering topics such as polity, governance, ethics, economics, astronomy, astrology, rhetoric, veterinary medicine, horticulture, perfumes, food, architecture, sports, painting, poetry, music and dance – providing a picture of statecraft and social life in the medieval Deccan. The fourth book, mainly on dance and music, is longer than the rest of the books combined, pointing to their importance. Somesvara introduces key shifts away from the Natyasastra which are systemized

and made central by other medieval intellectuals whose work continues to define the field. These shifts include introducing music and dance centrally alongside other entertainment performance forms (like competitive sports and rhetorical performance) without the umbrella of drama, adding an intermediary category to the discussion of major and minor limbs and their movements, referring to six types of performers (not just actors or nata), and six categories of movement.

Sangita Ratnakara, a pivotal text on performance, was written in the thirteenth century by an intellectual named Sharngadeva (1210-1247) under the Kannada-speaking Yadava dynasty centered in modern-day Karnataka and Maharashtra (see the map below).[86] Firstly, the text solidified and popularized the performance as the composite of (melodic) music, dance and instrumentation – together referred to as *sangita* – divorcing the discussion from drama per se, and in the process decentralizing drama significantly. Secondly, Sharngadeva introduced new movement under the concept of *desi* into existing classificatory systems (sometimes adding his own new categories) – which reflected a new choreographic sensibility bringing together movement and its sensory impact in his approach to dance. I argue that Sharngadeva didn't merely add detail to existing frameworks, he re-oriented the conception of performance– overflowing and redefining the categories he inherited. Sharngadeva's success in redefining what he had inherited in terms of Sanskrit textual knowledge on dance and the wide circulation his work found meant that his work became of primary relevance to many subsequent scholars as the most quoted and referenced text even if today we nominally reference the Natyasastra.

[86] Sarangadeva, Srangadeva. *Sangita Ratnakara*. Devagiri, Maharashtra, 13th century.

Sanskrit scholars took an approach to movement and meaning that is highly classificatory and indexical. This is in line with Sanskrit scholarship in general, whether aesthetics, metaphysical philosophy, or political theory. In terms of dance, scholars consider the body as a sum of individual parts and systematically move through the postural and gestural possibilities of each limb – subdivided into major, minor and from Sharngadeva's time, intermediary limbs – down to the minutia of parts of the face, such as eyebrows, nose and chin. Having laid out all these possibilities, they address movement in terms of an additive logic – two or three gestures and postures together create the smallest block of movement (mandala); two or three of these blocks together define a bigger block of movement (karana) and so forth (angahara). Texts like the Natyasastra end there without ever necessarily addressing whole dances as practiced in the world. It was an overtly objective approach to movement, operating almost purely on the basis of possibilities rather than common practice.[87]

It is mainly from the medieval period and Deccan specifically that scholars addressed dances as such and Sharngadeva was one of the first. He expanded the scope of analysis of movement on multiple levels: the postures and gestural vocabulary of individual parts of the body, the additive built blocks of movement, and finally the whole dances he addresses at the end of the text. The new dances he includes are, by his own description, from central-western and southern India - which found little to no place in classical Kashmir texts like Natyasastra. Sharngadeva's attention to the central-southern subcontinent is the reason he focuses on not just 'regional' dances, but whole dances at all. Moreover, his attention to dances of his time and place determined the relationship of dance to music (sangita) as well as the nature of the additions he

[87] Somewhere within this structure is also a section on the qualitative aspects of the performance: performance space, seating arrangement, qualities of performers and of patron and audience and what constitutes a good performance – all in formulaic terms.

made to the movement possibilities (desi) in the body of his text. Thus, the attention to the contemporary practices of his time and context re-oriented the conceptual frameworks of performance as a whole.



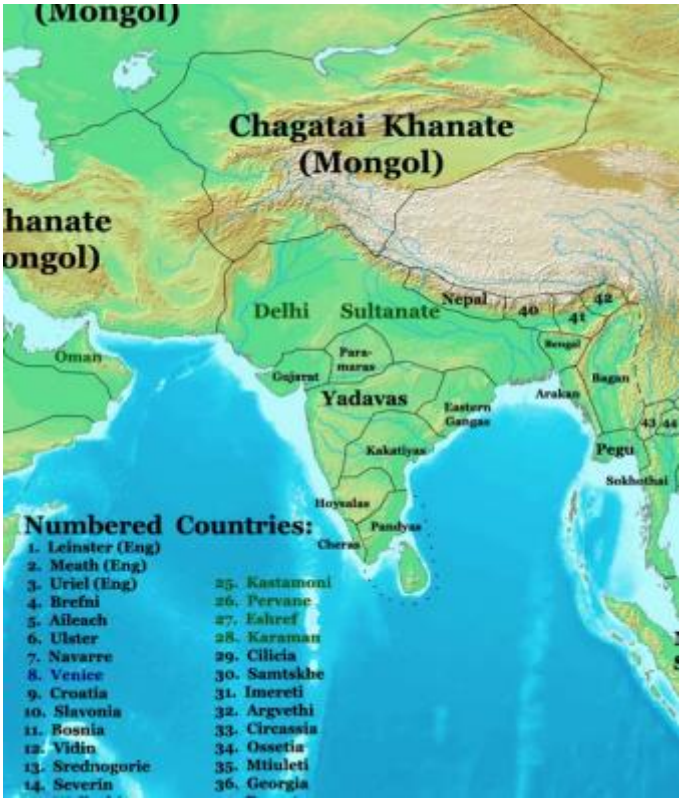


Fig. 32. Political geography of medieval subcontinent 12th, 13th centuries

Fig. 33. Political geography of pre-Mughal subcontinent 14th – 16th centuries

In contrast to the Natyasastra, Sangita Ratnakara focuses on the trifecta of music, dance and instrumentation – *sangita* – rather than drama as an overarching category. The Natyasastra's body chapters focus on types of dramas. Speech and costume were just as important as movement language and the expression of affect. Dance and music were subsidiary concerns.

Sharngadeva, however, covers various aspects of music in the first several chapters before launching into a full exploration of what he calls '*nartana*'. Nartana is defined as natya (drama), nrttya (roughly dance-drama) and nrtta (non-representational dance). In effect, drama has become a subsidiary concern of a different kind of umbrella - "sangita". While today, sangita is colloquially used in a limited sense of just music, the concept as originally conceived brought together dance, music and instrumentation. Almost all known texts from the medieval onwards follow this idea – covering either sangita as a whole, or nartana as defined by Sharngadeva. The evocative power of performance became more focused on movement, rather than acting. Movement, in turn, was understood through its relationship to music.

In his discussion of both music and dance, Sharngadeva systematized and made central the concept of *desi*, which had been mentioned marginally in a couple earlier texts. *Desi* literally translates to 'of the country' and is understood to mean regional or local – in contrast to the universal, represented by the dance paradigms of classical texts like the Natyasastra. However, I suggest that far from merely particularizing or incorporating regional practices into the Natyasastra's over-arching universal framework, looking at the Ratnakara text in terms of the relationship between text and practice suggests that Sharngadeva fundamentally redefined the idea of dance to reflect new paradigms of dance-making. That is, *desi* is not a particularization of an existing universal system of the Natyasastra but a different movement system couched in the Sanskrit framework of sastra.

Sharngadeva discussion of dance or *nartana* wove in new movement at multiple levels. Starting from his treatment of postures, he not only includes postures for men and women found in Sanskrit texts until his time. He also adds a new category: 'desi stanaka' or desi postures. At first glance, it might be assumed that desi here refers to regional. However, a look at what is

included shows that these new entries don't just add new movements to the existing list of postures, they actually show a different approach to the body and movement than the Natyasastra and other older texts did: these desi postures and the extension of postures into the category of 'sitting' and 'reclining' show a deeper interest in the evocative power of the body. Many of the descriptions of these postures not only describe the physical placements of body parts but also include descriptions such as "indicating persons feeling cold" (akuncita), "employed in calamity, despondency, anxiety and separation" (madalasa), or "used in solitude, when under arrest, and when suffering from grief" (krAnta) which ostensibly describes the uses for the posture but in the process, also draws distinct relationships between movement and both affective and physical states (cold, despondency, under arrest). Every description is thus not just a posture but also a snapshot, a vividly evocative still. Viksambita is described as follows: "the two thighs are spread out, the arms and legs are spread out beautifully, and the eyes are closed, it is called Viksamba". It goes on to state Viksamba is used in Yogic posture, meditation and sitting naturally. The physical description alone might not give us a sense of what this posture 'is', in an objective sense. The understanding that it is a seated position, for example, only comes from the second sentence on its uses. However, the *quality* of the physicality is immediately evoked in the initial description: the body comes across as luxurious and relaxed through the evocation of the limbs spread out and the eyes closed. Many of the descriptions are quite poetic, bringing together aspects of physicality, affect and evocation. For example, srastalasa:

> *When the two hands are free and hanging loosely, the body inactive, and the eyes dull in appearance, it is Srastalasa. It is used in failure, fatigue, intoxication, disease, swooning, and fear.*[88]

Or kranta (mentioned earlier):

> *When the two hands are placed on the chin, the head rests on the shoulder, there are a few tears in the eyes, that is called Kranta. It is used in solitude, when under arrest, and when suffering from grief.*

These new entries define constellations of evocations, affective cues and bodies of practice that cut across simple conceptions of 'movement' as abstract or objective. In these writings, there is no body or technique that exists independently of its 'uses' or the meanings, scenarios and emotions it evokes – whether in stillness or in movement. Similarly, in a different section of movement entries, Sharngadeva not only lays out movement but also does so in a way that is evocative. In the section, he calls 'desi lasyangas' (the ten elements of graceful dance in the desi style), he describes movement in a way that is full of qualitative detail. For example, the lasyanga called cali is described as "the simultaneous movement of the feet, thighs, hips and arms… soft, graceful, and attractive, in accordance with the Talas (rhythms) and neither too quick nor too slow, and mostly oblique." The following lasya, calivada, he says is the same but performed "quickly and mostly with straight movements". It is not the movement which distinguishes the two entries but the *dynamic quality* of the movement. The weaving of dynamic quality into movement description recurs. Angahara is described as "The gradual bending of two halves of the body in the form of a bow, gracefully to time" – in effect, bringing together

[88] Translation from K Kunjunni Raja, and Radha Burnier. "Sangita Ratnakara of Sarangadeva Vol IV (Chapter on Dancing) - Translated by K Kunjunni Raja and Radha Burnier." *The Adyar Library Series*, 1976.

metaphor ('in the form of a bow'), movement description (bending of the two halves of the body) and dynamic quality (gradual, gracefully to time). This interweaving is a recurring feature in the original parts of Sharngadeva's work like the desi lasyanga section.

In addition to postures, Sharngadeva also adds desi movements of the legs and feet, cari. While he includes the caris from the Natyasastra tradition, his new desi caris outnumber the older ones showing an increased attention to rhythm and footwork.[89] These include many of the basics found in south and east Indian classical dance forms today (bharata natyam, mohini attam, kuchipudi, odissi) – chaturasra (the basic chowk position in Odissi), ardhamandalika (the basic araimandi position of bharata natyam, kuchipudi and mohini attam). This includes a movement called kutta, referred to in later texts as kuttana – described as striking the ground with the (tip of the) foot. This term is used by the 18th century south Indian Maratha king Tukkoji when he 'translates' commonly practiced *adavus* of his time into the lexicon of Sanskrit textuality. In most instances, his 'desi' additions to existing categories like sthana (postures) and caris (movement of the feet) significantly outnumber the older entries he inherited from the Natyasastra – to the extent that sthanas and caris are defined more by the desi movement possibilities than anything else. In addition, his new categories, like desi lasyangas introduce a vitality in the descriptive approach to movement that colors the text.

In these additions and the development of *nartana* (both *desi* and otherwise), Sharngadeva creates new kinds of associations between movement, evocation and affect. Most importantly, the way Sharngadeva looks at movement moves away from the purely mechanical to the nexus of physicality, affective evocation and descriptive quality. For Sharngadeva, even though he uses

[89] The caris as well as mandala movements are described much less poetically than the new postures material

the list structure of classical texts, his approach to movement revolves around the moving body's performative potential. Finally, the whole dances or performances which he describes near the end of his text rely more on the desi movement entries and descriptive language than the older entries. Bringing these interventions together, the desi dancing body almost eclipses existing models. However, the text still claims itself as Sanskrit sastra and uses classical categories to propose this new dancing body and world of performance; even if Sharngadeva quotes and references strategically from the Natyasastra, the performative tradition he describes is not Bharata's. Ultimately, Sharngadeva's textual process is subversive to not only existing Sanskrit scholarship but also to how we consider the role of Sanskrit textuality in relation to practice. Sharngadeva doesn't just add to the Natyasastra; he uses the structural categories to builds up, step by step, a new dancing body and world of movement.

Sharngadeva's nartana was formulated through an attention to practices and movements coming out of central and south-western India at the time. Sharngadeva describes two dances: Goundali, which he explicitly states come from Karnataka region, and Perani which comes from "dakshina" region which refers to the far south. The description of Goundali is built around the new category of lasyangas Sharngadeva introduced, as well as a new system of rhythm – the sapta suladi tala or seven rhythms of the 'suladi' composition type. The musical system he refers to is one he systematized in his chapters on music – they come from the musical contributions of itinerant poet-musicians that were part of the Haridasa movement – a devotional movement of poets, philosophers, and scholars originating in present-day Karnataka and centered around simple personal devotion to god, without the mediation of clergy and scripture. The relationship of Haridasas to musical developments and ultimately what we understand as Carnatic music as

defined in eighteenth century Kaveri delta have been well-acknowledged. But the relationship of dance to these same movements and relationship to early modern projects of empire has not.

Sharngadeva's text on music and dance is ubiquitous in almost all Sanskrit textual production on music and dance thereafter. Most later texts produced throughout the subcontinent in the 15th century onwards follow the Ratnakara's framework or sangita and nartana and often extensively quote and reference its author, Sharngadeva. The extent of its influence must be due in part to its incorporation into the emerging Vijayanagar empire in the 14th century, from which it spread both north and south. However, the circulation of the text, its content and ideas, likely also found a valence in a cultural-political sphere in which strong southern states asserted their presences. The practices it reflected converged with the politics of empire - the consolidation of the Vijayanagara empire, its expansion southwards, and its influence northwards created new pathways of aesthetics and performative practices that were relevant in the subcontinent until colonial rule. The Haridasa movement that Sharngadeva had centered his work on, and the philosophy of Madvacharya which the movement spread through performance, gained popularity from the twelfth century as it was centrally part of the emerging Vijayanagara Empire. Vidyaranya (1296-1386), a minister closely responsible for the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire, wrote a treatise on music, Sangita Sara, which uses the Sangita Ratnakara structure and references it extensively and yet further expands music in terms of the musical contributions of the Haridasas. Another scholar, Devenacharya (15th century), patronized by the expanding Vijayanagar court in the early fifteenth century[90] cited Sangita Ratnakara in his work, Sangita

[90] In the court of Śrī Dēvarāya II (also known as Prauda Deva Raya) (ruled 1425-1446). Sanskrit poet Gunda Dimdima, and noted Telugu poet Srinatha (the king honored with the title *Kavisarvabhauma*, "Emperor among poets") were in his court. See Rao, Shulman's work for more on Srinatha and his contribution to a new literary paradigm in Telugu, one felt through the body, and bridged the gap between oral poetics and written text, invented the short story as a literary fiction genre.

Muktavali, as well as the other medieval texts Sharngadeva had drawn on, such as Somesvara's Manasollasa.

The performance and philosophy of the Haridasa movements and Sharngadeva's work gained particular importance under Krishnadevaraya (r.1509-1529), who extended the Vijayanagar empire to its peak. Haridasa poets and intellectuals, such as Vyasatirtha (1447-1548) were intimately tied into empire as family gurus of the Vijayanagara ruling family and members of the court. Through Vyasatirta, Krishnadevaraya and the Vijayanagar court patronized saint-composers like Purandara Dasa (1484-1564). Purandara dasa, known to have established standard training practices that continue to be basic to Carnatic music, continued to be central to saint-composers in the Coromandel well into the eighteenth century at least in part due to his canonization by the Vijayanagar court and the continuation of the Vijayanagar legacy through the Nayak courts in the south.

In addition, the Tallapaka family of poets were patronized at the Tirupati Vaishnava temple by the Vijayanagar court as it grew in the fifteenth century. Tallapakam Annamacharya (1408 – 1503), his wife Timmakka, and others were responsible for the Telugu kirtana genre, refiguring Vaishnava devotional performance in ways that defined what we understand today as south Indian classical dance and music. As part of their work, Tallapakam Chinna Tirumalacharya (Annamacharya's grandson) wrote a treatise on performance composition, Sankirtana Laskhanamu, which brings together conceptions of musical composition from Bharata's Natyasastra and Sharngadeva's Sangita Saramrta.[91] In multiple ways, intellectual conceptions of

[91] Sankirtana Lakshanamu introduction. Dr. Salva Krishnamurthy 1990. For discussion on the paradigm-defining contribution of Tallapaka poets to the bhakti ideology of personal love and affection for an intimately known Venkateswara (Krishna) but also Venkateswara as a 'large-scale needy banker', an image that reflected the

performance, socio-religious movements and the expansion of empire were deeply intertwined. Sanskrit textuality, oriented around new performance practices of socio-religious movements, in turn fed into the development of later performance paradigms.

In the following several centuries – mid sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, the focus of the rest of this chapter – the performance practices and intellectual debates defined in and through Vijayanagar imperial expansion set the stage for new movements across the subcontinent – up to Mughal Delhi and down to the Golconda and Tanjavur courts of the Coromandel. Beyond current-day distinctions of 'Hindu' and 'Islamic' cultural production, tracing the production of Sanskrit texts on dance and the threads of ideas around performance, affect, and aesthetics makes visible trans-local cosmopolitan dynamics, what I refer to as performative geographies. Scholars have tended to define this as the period in which north Indian and south Indian dance and music separated from each other. However, just as with distinctions of Hindu and Muslim, distinctions of north and south India become arbitrary when we trace the movement of intellectuals and ideas about performance.

II. Early Modern *Nartana*: Instrumentalizing Text, Centralizing Courtly Eroticism

By the middle of the sixteenth century, scholars writing on performance regularly based their work on the framework of *sangita* set forth by Sharngadeva and medieval scholars. At the same time, some fundamental changes took place in the conception of dance as part of broader shifts in aesthetics. Scholars in the early modern period brought together intellectual ideas around rasa or taste (in poetry, movement, sound, and visual art) with spreading devotional (bhakti)

increasingly economic nature of Tirupati itself, and its importance to the royal center of Vijayanagar, see Rao and Shulman: God on the Hill. (plus, new subjectivity and individual interiority that Anammayya opens up)

movements creating new aesthetic priorities. Intellectuals, located in courtly milieus, reflected in their texts the trends of changing political and economic geographies and centers.

Politically, the Vijayanagara kingdom which at its peak brought together most of central and south India, started disintegrating leading to the dispersal of resources, intellectuals and artists to the courts of the north and south.[92] The Mughal Empire emerged and quickly expanded into a subcontinental force. Under its most well-known ruler, Akbar (ruled from 1556-1605), the Mughal center also became a defining center of literary, philosophical, artistic, and performance activity. In this midst of these political changes, devotional movements and their performance traditions were central to the definition of new kinds of cultural sensibilities. Scholars and performers associated with Krishna movements which had been central to the cultural production of the Vijayanagar empire dispersed to new centers of activity in both north and south, including the Mughal center at Delhi. The sixteenth century also saw the rise and spread of Gaudiya Vaishnavism from eastern India (particularly Puri) with the work of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.[93] In south India, a socially inclusive religio-philosophical movement called Sri Vaishnavism split into the 'northern' school focused on Sanskrit vedas (centered at Kanchipuram) and the 'southern' school focused on Tamil liturgical canons and the idea of devotion (rather than philosophical study) centered at Srirangam in the Kaveri delta. Different approaches to class and caste (jati) were folded into philosophical differences (on the means to reach salvation) of the two schools.

[92] Also in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese landed in South Asia through a sea route for the first time – changing the relationship between Europe and the subcontinent and beyond. Early Portuguese travelers such as Domingo Paes, Fernao Nunez, Nicolo Conti (Italian), and Cecasro Frederici (Italian) wrote a lot about the Vijayangar court and empire, which they called Bisnaga

[93] For more on Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's influence on dance histories, see the forthcoming work of dance scholar and historian Anurima Banerji.

The increasing importance of Mughal Delhi as not just a political center but a cultural one can be seen by the trajectories of artists, scholars and composers over the course of the 16th century. Alongside the circulation of political influence and popular religious movements, the movement of intellectuals led to new kinds of paradigms in the early modern period. Musicians responsible for Hindustani music as we know it today developed the genres of dhrupad singing and later khyal. The musician who popularized dhrupad, Tansen, might have had ties to Haridasa musicians[94] and at one point spent time with the Sufi mystic Muhhammad Ghaus while he worked in the regional court of Gwalior before being invited to the Mughal court. He was one among many such performers whose trajectories in this period interlinked circulations of Vaishnava and Sufi devotional movements and various court-centered 'schools' of aesthetics (such as the Gwalior school or Hyderabadi school) across the subcontinent. The same circulations of performers and influences led to movements in music and dance both in the Delhi court and in the Deccan/South making 'north Indian' and 'south Indian' somewhat arbitrary demarcations mapped on in hindsight. Instead, we can understand the cultural geography of in terms of trans-local relationships between various urban centers whose relationship shifted with the power dynamics of politics.

Pundarika Vitthala was a scholar and Haridasa from what is now Karnataka. He started his career at the court of a sultanate between present day Karnataka and Maharashtra (central, western India) under the Siddi (Abyssinian, Afro-Arab) leader Burhan Khan of Ahmednagar. There he produced several key works on musical structures that incorporated the musical traditions of the Haridasa bhakti movement that had expanded in the preceding two centuries.

[94] There are some unsubstantiated claims about his temporary tutelage under Swami Haridas, a legendary composer form Vrindavan but the dates don't necessarily match. Tansen was however part of the stellar Gwalior court of Raja Man Singh Tomar (1486–1516 AD)

Later, Pundarika Vitthala found his way to the court of Prince Madavasimha who ruled from Jaipur as a feudatory of the Mughal king Akhbar. While there, he produced a number of works that continued to be important well after his death: raga manjari, raga mala and nartana nirnaya. The first two were texts on music that increasingly reflect his new north Indian court context while reflecting them through the framework (of raga, mela, prabandha, suladi tala) that he brought with him. These texts were also pivotal texts in the trend towards anthropomorphizing ragas, or picturing melodic scales as women and men, each with their own characteristics, scenes (based on time of day, associations with different stages of love and longing, etc.). Pundarika Vitthala wrote *Nartana nirnaya,* a text exclusively on dance, for Akbar near the end of the sixteenth century.[95]

Pundarika's text on dance, *Nartana nirnaya,* reflected his unique negotiation of frameworks he inherited from older Deccan Sanskrit works, practices from south India, and new practices he came to know in the north Indian court cultural milieu. *Nartana nirnaya* shows, for the first time, forms that we understand today as kathak.[96] He draws from medieval works like the Sangita Ratnakara and reformulates their ideas into new aesthetic focal points. Nartananirnaya took from Sangita Ratnakara the basic conception that dance, or nartana, consisted of natya, nrttya and nrtta. Pundarika Vitthala also adopted the breakdown of the body into major, intermediary and small parts of the body (anga, pratyanga, upanga) from Sharngadeva.

[95] The introductory verses to his text pledge the work to the Mughal king, making it clear he wrote it at the Delhi court later in his life.

[96] For more on Pundarika Vitthala's work, particularly in relation to concepts of nrtta and abhinaya, see Mandrakanta Bose's book *Movement and Mimesis*, Chapter 7 'The Desi Tradition'.

Pundarika's discussion of movement vocabulary moves in the direction of conciseness compared to Sangita Ratnakara and other earlier texts. He cuts down the number of postures, for example, that he covers and none of the richly descriptive entries from the Sangita Ratnakara find their place here – the approach is concise and matter of fact, relying on terminology. In the case of karanas, instead of covering all 108, Pundarika mentions they are endless but that he will only cover some karanas "for use in performance in the accomplishment of bandhanrtya". He goes on to discuss only sixteen. His approach to movement vocabulary is thus distinctly instrumental – a frame for presenting a variety of dances – rather than a detailed discussion for its own sake. In his discussion of hand gestures, Pundarika even more explicitly states his position on the usefulness of text. He includes only a select number and says, "Other hand poses, fit for abhinaya are infinite; they are not described by me here and they should be adopted by the learned from the world". He goes on to explain that "authority is declared to be of three kinds – loka (popular, conventional usage), veda (scriptures), and adhyatma (conscience/personal experience). Therefore, loka is declared to be the authority in the context of natya." (p 69, v 129). Pundarika is clear that popular usage is the final authority on what counts as dance. In accordance with this idea, he includes in his text only what is commonly used in practice. This determines the shortened length of his movement vocabulary sections. It also determines the longer space he gives to describing dances of his time and context, many from western India and the northern Mughal court.

Instead, Pundarika focuses much more on describing whole dances, adding many new dance genres to the movement vocabularies and spending fully half the text on their description. He firmly shifts the focus from taxonomical listings of movement vocabulary towards more extensive description of whole dances. While Sharngadeva's primary distinction was between

what was found in classical texts and 'desi', Pundarika's classification of dances is split along different lines. Pundarika splits his dances into bandha and anibandha, describing bandha as that which follows the rules of gaits, postures and abhinaya and anibandha as that which doesn't follow these rules. Desi dances make up most of both these categories. Looking more closely at his descriptions under each of the categories, it looks like the distinction is between those dances which are more codified, and are found already in texts, versus those which Pundarika calls more popular dances, which have not been codified. That is, while bandha and anibandha literally mean with and without structure, respectively, the content of each category, and Pundarika's description of the dances within them suggest that bandha and anibandha are shorthand for dances found already within the Sanskrit textual tradition by the time he writes and dances not found already, which Pundarika himself adds. As with Sharngadeva, the attention to new practices, as evidenced by his inclusion and categorization of dances, orients his re-conceptualization of dance in general.

Pundarika's text takes us on a dance tour of the subcontinent, as it was understood and regionalized at the time, particularly from the perspective of the Mughal court in the later sixteenth century. However, 'regional' was not presented as an opposite to classical or universal. Instead, multiple regionally-associated traditions were presented as codified forms. Moreover, the definition of distinct dance traditions is closely tied to music and only in some cases, language (Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Persian). Thus, under the bandha heading, Pundarika lays out traditions of dance from western India/Karnataka (urupa) that follow Haridasa suladi sapta tala or seven rhythm cycles. It includes dance that emerged in the Mughal courts through Persian influence, involving many spins (dhuvadas) and leaps (bidulagas). It includes a dance tradition from the far south, dakshina called cindu, which involves songs in the Tamil language and

adorned by the sound of ankle bells. The bandha category also includes a dance tradition from the south-eastern part of the subcontinent, daru, with music in Telugu language. This last dance echoes dance that was associated with dance dramas (and today Kuchipudi), describing a dancer (patra) entering the stage holding the edge of her garment, after an instrumental arddi. Pundarika also includes a tradition called dhruvapada, which is a Sanskrit tradition "based on the stories of men and women", with the dancer focused on abhinaya, srngara rasa, and grace.

Under the bandha, or codified dance, Pundarika spends significant space on a kind of dance which brings together abstract elements of syllabic recitation, solfege note singing, and movement. Starting with what he calls sabda nrtta, the dancer recites collections of syllables, generated by the cymbal-bearer, along with musical (solfege) notes and words. In his description, he says "Svaras should be [displayed] only with voice, [words] with limbs and movements of mood-expressive glances, tala should be displayed with feet and the sabda syllables with rhythm," thus intertwining movement, recitation, melody and rhythm. He goes on the describe abhinaya for the seven svaras (svarabhinaya), dance for svaramantha compositions, and dance for gita compositions – all of which involve the abstract musical elements of solfege and rhythmic elements of syllabic recitation. These abstract elements of solfege and syllabic rhythmic interludes became central to new developments in dance in the Coromandel in the eighteenth century – the focus of the next chapter.

Under the anibandha category (literally 'without rules') Vitthala covers dances which he is including in Sanskrit discussions perhaps for the first time, hence the lack of 'rules'. He covers desi dances from western India (yati, neri, lavani and gundala) as well as Persian Jakkadi and 'rasa' dance (the Gujarati folk dance) – reflecting the new practices towards which Pundarika turns in his conception of dance. The descriptions of anibandha dances are shorter, don't involve

much Sanskrit terminology found in older texts, and instead are described as involving rotation, circular motion, and 'trembling' or quick movements. That is, the codified language of older Sanskrit texts on dance are either insufficient or irrelevant to discussing these dances. Instead, Pundarika uses descriptive terms found in general Sanskrit language usage, bringing them into dance description vocabulary.

In the description of anibandha ('uncodified') dances, Pundarika's focus is distinctly visual and erotic. Terms like *manohara* and *sundara* are peppered throughout the description of anibandha dances – all generally meaning bewitching, attractive, charming or captivating with visual connotations. Elsewhere in his text Pundarika introduces what he calls *citrakalasa* which he describes as follows: *Wherein the dancer holds a pose, as if painted in a picture at the end of a section in dance to the [continued] accompaniment of tala and accompanying instruments*. Yet another term *mudra* is described as "a natural posture of the body imbued with special splendor of matta and hidta, held according to tradition". Even the description of the dancer is more focused on visual elements (complexion, limbs, etc.) than on movement qualities. Moreover, his text opens with an introduction to rasa abhinaya focused on srngara, or erotic love. This discussion of srngara, broken down into the ten stages of kama or erotic love, is descriptive, evocative, and visual in contrast to the technical approach of earlier discussions of rasa. For example, the first stage of kama is abhilasa or longing and is embodied thus:

[She] creates (i.e. paints or sculpts) the form of the Love-God Manmatha, goes in and out [of the house] again and again (impatiently) and places herself within his sight, in this first stage of kama.[97]

[97] Puṇḍarīkaviṭṭhala, R Sathyanarayana, and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. *Nartananirṇayaḥ*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994.

In the fourth stage, Pundarika states "Extolling his merits, slowly wiping tears and perspiration, by visualization of such acts should [abhinaya] be done in the fourth stage with exclamations of *ahaha!*". These entries are not general descriptors of separation or longing or love-sickness, they are specific snapshots, tableaus, scenes of visualized and embodied erotic passion – highly stylized and yet still with evocative urgency.

The concept of rasa, long important in discussions of aesthetics in Sanskrit commentary tradition, refers to the flavor of an artistic work that evokes an emotion, feeling or psychological state.[98] However, coming out of dramatic theory in classical aesthetics texts and extended into literary analysis by the eleventh century, rasa as a concept remained somewhat esoteric until it was appropriated by poet-musicians of expanding devotional movements from the fifteenth century onwards. Earlier, in texts like Sangita Ratnakara, a systematic outline of rasa, copied from the Natyasastra was included at the end of the text in a way that didn't speak to the conception of dance itself. Rather, it was included as a reference to the older texts on drama. In work from the sixteenth century such as Pundarika's, rasa, and more specifically srngara rasa or the flavor-sentiment of erotic love opened texts on dance and became an anchor point for the entire discussion. Moreover, the conception of the body in terms of visual stills coincided with the emerging popularity of miniature paintings which presented stylized men and women of the leisurely class as anthropomorphized visualizations of musical modes, times of day, or simply as

[98] The first definitive work on Rasa is Bharata's Natyasastra which develops the idea in relation to drama. However, the 10th century work of Bharata's commentary Abhinava Gupta provides more elaborate discussion of rasa and does so by extending the concept into literary theory (rather than drama). The idea of rasa that we know today, as underlying multiple artistic fields came from Bhoja in the 11th century but still was not relevant to dance, because dance wasn't treated separately, until the early modern period.

Krishna and his lover Radha.[99] Painters, intellectuals and poets found it compelling to explore the inexhaustible dynamics of courtly erotic love (srngara, kama) through movement, sound, poetry and visual painting.

Srngara rasa, or the flavor of erotic-romantic love or attraction, was centralized in the sixteenth century courts through poetry and painting as well as performance, in distinctly visual terms. In particular the Gaudiya Vaishnava movement started by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the fifteenth century was central to framing devotion to the god Krishna explicitly in terms of srngara rasa – erotic or romantic love – since it focused on the relationship between Krishna and his love, Radha.[100] From the pastoral contexts of medieval bhakti poets like Jeyadeva, court poets in the seventeenth century onwards brought Krishna devotion into the courtly milieu. Imagining Krishna and Radha in the world of courtly love, they pictured them in the courtyards and bedchambers of beautiful palatial spaces, clothed in the finery of urban elite, posed in the bodily attitudes of refined yearning lovers. These poets, located in the courts of the north and eastern subcontinent especially, gave rise to the *ritikal* movement in poetry in Hindi – focused on stylistic development of nayaka-nayika types in all their poetic possibilities.

Bhanudhatta's long poem Rasamanjari at the court of Ahmednagar (eastern Deccan) and Keshav Das' Rasikapriya at the court of Orccha, under Bundela Rajput patronage (central Deccan) were both collections of romantic verses which brought together typologies of nayaka-nayika rasa from classical Sanskrit texts on aesthetics and erotics and visual representations of

[99] Pundarika's own texts on music, Raga Mala and Raga Manjari, were filled with miniatures of ragas and raginis as men and women in various stylized attitudes of love – the anthropomorphized versions of themselves.

[100] For Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Krishna devotion as it relates to developments in rasa, see the work of fifteenth century Gaudiya Vaishnava philosopher and intellectual, Rupa Gosvamin, whose *Bhakti rasamrta Sindhu* & *Ujjwala nilamani* were important works on bhakti and madhurya (srngara) rasa.

srngara.[101] Soon after, dozens of schools of miniature paintings cropped up in the courts of the Deccan and northwest, especially current-day Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, capturing in vivid



stills the yearning, humor, sarcasm or eroticism of these *ritikal* poetry in couplets. The miniatures often presented different hues of love and separation alongside verses from the Rasamanjari or Rasikapriya either on the painting or on the flipside of the painting. The most well known as the series for Raj Kirpal Raj of Basohli (early 18th century), Nurpur paintings under Raja Raya Dhatta (1720), series for the Kangra king Maharaja Sansar Chand, (late 18th century), from Malwa/Mewar, Maratha folio of Rasamanjari miniatures (second half of eighteenth century). These artists, poets, and intellectuals brought together aestheticized ideals of devotion in the form of courtly erotic love through their aesthetic mediums while also for the first time producing intellectual and poetic works not only in Sanskrit but also vernacular languages.[102]

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[101] Pollock, Sheldon. *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics*. Columbia University Press, 2016.

Pollock, Sheldon. 'Rāmāyaṇa. "From Rasa Seen to Rasa Heard'." *Aux Bords de La Clairière, Paris*, 2012, 189–207.

[102] Allison Busch has written extensively on the vernacular movement of Braj in poetry and the incredible influence it had across Hindu and Muslim courtly production in the subcontinent

Busch, Allison. *Braj beyond Braj: Classical Hindi in the Mughal World*. India International Centre, 2009.

———. "Hidden in Plain View: Brajbhasha Poets at the Mughal Court." *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 267–309.



Fig. 34, 35. Vasant Ragini & Kakubha Ragini, Mewar, 1635; Artist Unknown. Opaque watercolor on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum

———. “Literary Responses to the Mughal Imperium: The Historical Poems of Keśavdās.” *South Asia Research* 25, no. 1 (2005): 31–54.

———. “Riti and Register: Lexical Variation in Courtly Braj Bhasha Texts.” *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture*, 2010, 84–120.

———. “The Anxiety of Innovation: The Practice of Literary Science in the Hindi/Riti Tradition.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 45–59.

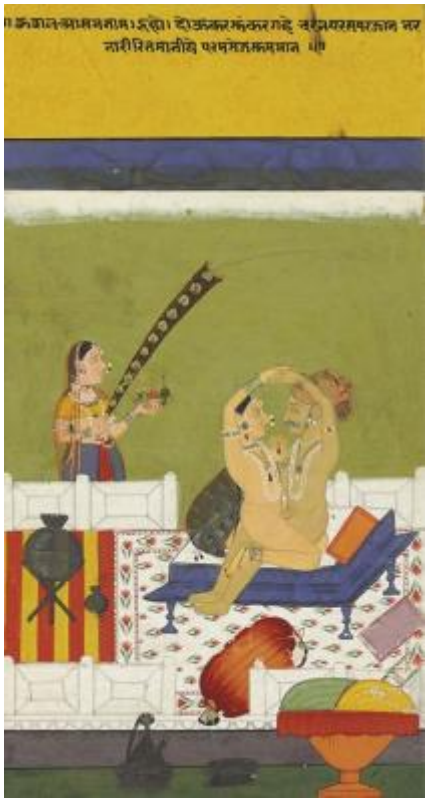


Fig. 36. Rajput miniature, first half 17th century. Artist Unknown



Figure. 37. The Unexpected Return of the Husband. Rajput, Sirohi; 17th-Century. Artist Unknown



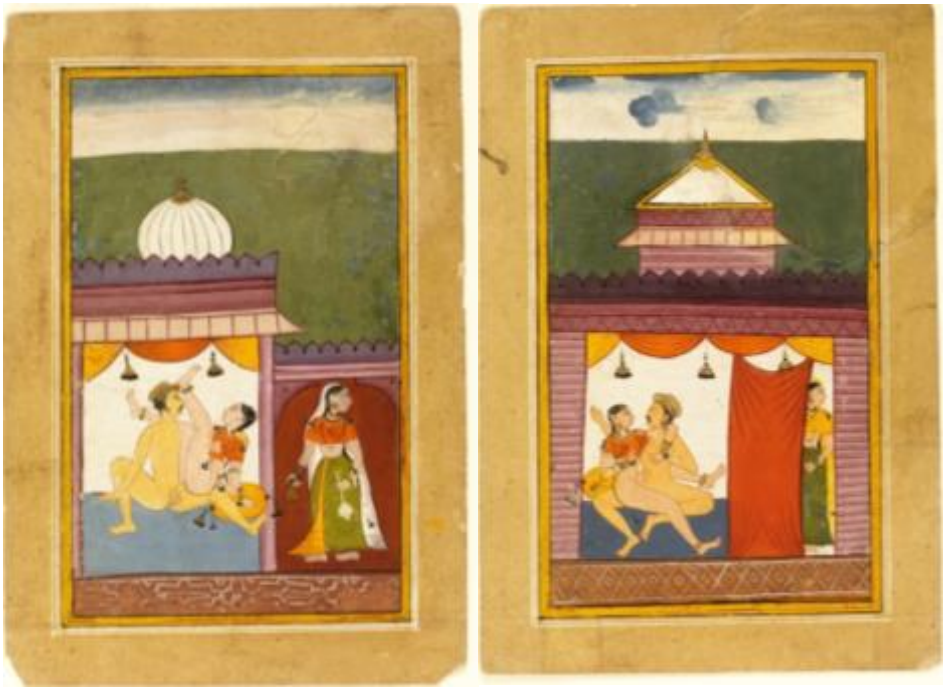


Fig. 38,39 (top). Pancham raga (left) and Vasanta raga (right). Mughal court. 1625. Artists Unknown. Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 40,41 (bottom). Erotic Scenes from from a set illustrating sexual postures. Mughal court 1630; Artists Unknown. Victoria and Albert Museum



Fig. 42- 46. “Krishna visiting tearful Radha”; “Radha Stupified”; “lady blames cat for scratches inflicted by lover”; “Radha and companion in pavilion” – Rasamanjari paintings; Basohli, 1660-70, Artists Unknown. Victoria and Albert Museum



Fig. 47. 18th century miniature. Deccan. Artist Unknown



Fig. 48, 49. Bairava raga (left) and Dipaka raga (right), Hyderabad 1770; Artists Unknown. Victoria and Albert Museum.

The manifestation of devotion, srngara rasa and visual aesthetics was interwoven with the changing political geographies of the period. Many of the courts that produced these aesthetic-devotional trends were also the ones that led some of the most prolonged and successful resistances to Mughal expansion (Rajput and Maratha/Siddi leaders of these Deccani states like Orccha and Ahmadnagar). As part of the project of imperial expansion, the Mughal empire thus sought to draw artists, intellectuals and courtly trends from them to Delhi – particularly from the late sixteenth to mid seventeenth century under Akbar and his son-successor Jahangir. They

patronized the best of not only Persian but also Sanskrit and Sanskrit-based production.[103] This included figures like Pundarika Vitthala who was from the western Deccan and initially patronized by the Siddi Ahmedi court of Burhan Khan. It also included a number of others like Sundar Das who worked his way up as a scribe in the Mughal court and produced an important ritikal work, Sundarasringara at Shah Jahan's Mughal court.

Damodara Misra, an esteemed musician in the Mughal court of Jahangir and his successor Shah Jahan wrote another text on performance, *Sangita Darpana,* in the early seventeenth century.[104] Damodara drew the framework of *sangita* from medieval scholars like Sharngadeva. He spends his initial chapters talking about music and instrumentation before turning to dance, much as Sharngadeva did. Moreover, Damodara is known for his conception of musical scales in terms of anthropomorphic figures, 'male' scales as ragas and 'female' scales as ragini in sets of families – tying into the schools of miniature paintings he was in close proximity to. While drawing from older texts, Damodara was specifically interested in reconciling sastra (theory) and sampradaya (practiced tradition) of his own time – organizing dances into shuddha nrtyas, desi nrtyas and others (bandha nrtya, kalpanrtya, etc). Damodara's text is much shorter than older texts. He leaves out most of the movement vocabulary lists that were included even in medieval and early modern texts until his time – he includes only the few entries on movement vocabulary that are relevant to contemporary common usage. Moreover, he spends more time on dance descriptions and the qualities of good dance.

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[103] For more on Sanskrit intellectual production at the Mughal court, see Truschke, Audrey. *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court*. Columbia University Press, 2016.

[104] Translations are my own, based on published text: Ed K Vasudeva Sastri. *Sangita Darpanam of Catura Damodara*. Vol. Madras Government Oriental Series. 66 vols. Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Series 34. Tanjavur: Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Library, 1952.

His chapter on nrttya starts with an opening piece, mukhacali (and word-by-word gestural vocabulary for the lyric, taken from the Nartana Nirnaya) and a brief discussion of rasa bhava. The author defines bhava (a psycho-corporeal state, literally a state of 'becoming'), vibhava (causing the psycho-corporeal state), anubhava (in response to the psycho-corporeal state), sattvika bhava (involuntary physical response), vyabicaribhava (complementary state) and stayi bhava). Again, the author specifically cares about srngara rasa, as the bhava stanzas are followed by newly included terms, all of which relate to srngara: rati (erotic desire), kataksha (side-long glances, as well as sarcastic speech), shweta (light), shyama (dark – these latter two are likely in reference to Krishna, who is supposed to be dark-skinned, and Radha who is light-skinned). From here, the text moves into the meat of its content, including more discussion of abhinaya, styles and modes of presentation (dharmi), limited discussion of movement vocabulary of limbs and stances, and a longer section with lists and descriptions of dances. This remaining material is thus framed in terms of rasa bhava or the flavor or psychological states, making it seem that dances and movement are important because they create rasa, or flavor.

In the content of his discussion of dance, Damodara relies strategically on Vitthala's Nartana nirnaya, but not nearly in its entirety. The traditional progression of vocabulary from movements of individual body parts (small, intermediary and larger limbs) to increasingly longer movement sequences (cari, recaka, karana, angahara, mandala) which had defined dance texts even into early modern texts finds almost no space in Chatura Damodara's text. Instead, he focuses on some of the same elements as Vitthala and some new ones: rekha, pramana, dasapranas, gatis, tandava/lasya (2 stanzas), mukharaga (followed by descriptions of whole dances). Pramana is rhythm and harmony with vocal and instrumental music. Mudra is grace in gestures. Dasaprana, or the ten qualities of a good dancer are defined as quickness, firmness, attractive poses, easy

rotation of the body, expressive look, endurance, affability, intelligence and memory, clear enunciation and sweet music.

Finally, the two most important rules for dance, according to Damodara, are expressed in the following couplet:

यतो हस्तस्ततो द्दष्टिर्यतो द्दष्टिस्ततोमनः || यतोमनस्ततो भावः यतो भावस्ततो रसः |

"Where the hand goes, there goes the gaze; where the gaze goes, there goes the mind/heart; where the mind/heart goes, there goes the (performer's) emotion; where the expression goes, there is the rasa."

This couplet, generally attributed to the Natyasastra, is actually from another (possibly classical) text Abhinaya Darpana, and is today one of the most often quoted couplets on dance. In the Abhinaya Darpana, the couplet prefaces the author's discussion of abhinaya. The quote, and the model of movement that it presents is distinct from the Natyasastra and the tradition of commentaries which followed it. Chatura Damodara's is the first text discussed in this chapter to draw from Abhinaya Darpana and I argue that he does so strategically. Unlike the Natyasastra, the AD is a text exclusively on abhinaya or gestural vocabulary and is framed by the idea that movement links directly to emotion – as the above quoted couplet suggests. Moreover, the AD is less an expansive treatise and more of a manual which covers just what is necessary for a practitioner to use as an aid. Even today, the Abhinaya Darpana, and not the Natyasastra, is commonly owned and used by students of south Indian classical dance. Damodara's citation of Nandikeswara's couplet reveals his own textual moves – towards a concern with movement as evocative in the context of rasa (albeit in distinctly visual ways – through poses, lines of the body, graceful gait, and more) and towards a shortening and instrumentalization of text. By

instrumentalization, I refer to the process of presenting only what is relevant and in practice at the time in text – with the idea that text should be useful, perhaps with practitioners or teachers specifically in mind.

Damodara, coming out of the intellectual and performative milieu of the Deccan but writing at the center of the Mughal empire in the early seventeenth century, embodies the distinct circulations and tensions of the historical period. He makes multiple trans-temporal intertextual moves: drawing the *sangita* concept from medieval Sharngadeva, some of his description content from early modern Pundarika Vitthala and the underlying motivation for dance from the rarely cited but commonly used *Abhinaya Darpana* – all in an effort to speak to contemporary usage and dance. These moves, and the attitude towards their own positionality are symptomatic of a broader shift of intellectuals and performers coming out of the Deccan at that time.

Seventeenth century intellectuals writing in Sanskrit in new centers of power wrote with a new sense of their own positionality. Across the 'core disciplines' of grammar, hermeneutics (mimamsa, dharmasastra), epistemology, literary theory and rhetoric, scholars particularly in Varanasi began to identify themselves as navya, or new scholars, signifying a different relationship with the past.[105] Scholars announced themselves as better than earlier scholars *because* they were new– thus both periodizing older scholarship and attaching value to newness in a way that scholars before them had not done. The 'navya' trend included scholars like Mahadeva Punatambekara (fl 1675) and Kaunda Bhatta, both Maharashtrians residing at Varanasi; hermeneutists Kamalakara Bhatta and Gaga Bhatta who also resided at Varanasi, and others. As intellectual historian Sheldon Pollock argues, though they present themselves as new

[105]Pollock, Sheldon. "New Intellectuals in Seventeenth-Century India." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38, no. 1 (2001): 3–31. p.7-8

and valued the new, their debates hark back to questions and concepts set out by scholars of the 10th and 12th centuries. There was a tension between presenting one's work as new (and treating texts as having practical relevance to the paradigms of the day) and at the same time, looking back to classical/medieval texts of renewed relevance. This tension defined much Sanskrit textual production around aesthetics, erotics and performance as well the core disciplines in the period.

New circulations & courtly eroticism moving south in the seventeenth century

By the mid seventeenth century, new political forces emerged out of a highly fluid and interconnected Deccan region. Out of the ranks of the Deccan sultanates' armies rose new leaders who quickly established independent domains. Intellectuals and ideas around dance moved across the Deccan and South in particular as leaders and the political geographies they sought to map re-arranged relationships of power. Not only were these textual productions key to the self-fashioning of emerging leaders and their public politics; these Sanskrit scholars (many of whom were ministers of state) and their texts connected the changing urban contexts in which they were produced – Pune, Keladi, Parlekhemundi, Golconda, or Tanjavur – through the stylistic possibilities of sensuality, eroticism and performance.

The Maratha Bhonsles emerged centrally from this milieu to have a significant impact on these changing geographies. Shahji Bhonsle (1594/1602 - 1664) was a general under the Ahmednagar sultanate and owned the *jagirs* of Pune and nearby Supe (western Deccan). Amidst a series of moves, he found his way into the Bijapur sultanate, soon becoming the chief general of the Bijapur army, gaining further *jagir* territory (including Bangalore). His son, Shivaji (1627/30 – 1680), established the Bhonsle Maratha kingdom as an independent ruler by the

1670s, expanding far beyond his father's territory, particularly into the south, contesting Mughal imperial expansion under its then emperor Aurangzeb.

Just as intellectuals and socio-religious movements were central to the emergence of expansion of the Vijayanagar state in the fourteenth century and the imperial expansion of the Mughal state in the sixteenth century, the emergence and expansion of the Maratha empire was closely linked to intellectual production around performance. Damodara Misra's grandson Vedasuri wrote a text on dance titled *Sangita Makaranda* – 'The Nectar of the Flower of Sangita' – dedicated to Shahji Bhonsle. Vedasuri's text provided detailed instructions for performance, reflecting a greater move towards the instrumentality of Sanskrit text. Slightly later, Bhasavaraja (Basavappa Nayaka, r. 1697-1714), king of the Nayak Keladi kingdom extending down the western coast from Goa to Kannur (current day Karnataka and Kerala), wrote *Sivatattva Ratnakara* (around 1709). The Nayakas of Keladi, particularly under Basavappa Nayaka's predecessor, the ruling queen Keladi Chennamma, were thought to have allied themselves with the emerging Marathas in contesting Mughal expansion in the Deccan and South. The *Sivatattva Ratnakara* is a huge encyclopedic work of nine chapters (kalollas) and 108 subsections (tarangams) covering all fields of knowledge prevalent during his times, including a chapter on dance which draws from medieval and early modern works on sangita.[106]

Around the same period in eastern India, an intellectual by the name of Narayanadeva at a small court, Parlakhemundi at the border of current day Odisha and Andra Pradesh, patronized by a Gajapati zamindar, introduced another set of 'desi' dance vocabularies – desi natyas and

[106] philosophy, economy, royal administration, warfare, agriculture, history, geography, astrology, astronomy, erotics, sculpture, drama, construction of gardens, divination of water and hydrology, musicology, and dance.

desi nrtyas as well as what he called kalasa karanas, which define the movements in terms of aesthetic elements. These karanas were drawn from early modern texts and unlike the classical and medieval texts' karanas, these were not described by the abstract movement and positioning of feet, legs, hands, waist, and head. Instead, they defined body language associated with animals, birds, lightening, thunder and more elements of the natural world.[107] Drawing on the conception of karanas from 15th century Rajasthani Sanskrit texts, which had incorporated the importance of miniature paintings into descriptions of dance, Narayanadeva carried it further into representations of the natural world.[108]

Further south, Akbar Shah, a preceptor of another Deccan Sultanate, the Golconda Qutb Shahi Sultanate, wrote a text titled *Srngaramanjari* for its ruler Abdul Hasan Qutb Tanah Shah.[109] The court of the Golconda sultan Abul Hassan Qutb Shah was an important site of the development of this nexus of courtly eroticism and bhakti that defined the Coromandel from the late seventeenth century, not only in Sanskrit textual production but in Telugu courtesan and

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[107] Kalasa karanas show up first in the 15th century NrtyaRatnaKosha, a chapter in a larger work titled Sangita Raja of Kalasena (Maharana Khumba of Mewar, Rajasthani court) see the edited publication: Mahendra, Kumbhakarṇa, and Dr. C Kunhan Raja. *Sangitaraja of Kalasena (Maharana Kumbha). Vol. I. Pathyaratnakosha. Edited by Dr C. Kunhan Raja*. Anup Sanskrit Library, 1946.

The SangitaRaja contains the following RatnaKosas: (1) PathyaRatnaKosa, (2)GitaRatnaKosa, (3) VadyaRatnaKosa, (4) NrtyaRatnaKosa and (5) RasaRatnaKosa.

[108] "In 1753, two years after the conquest of Orissa by the Maratha of Nagpur and before their rule was finally established there, Raja Jagannatha Narayana Deva of Parlakhemundi saw an opportunity to come forward with his claim to the Gajapati throne."'The Raja of Parlakhemundi in South Orissa attempted to capture the Gajapati kingship through occupation of Jagannatha's ratha and through performance of the rajanitis (or upacara) of the Gajepti of Khurda on the ratha. The Rajas of Parlakhemundi, claiming to be descendants of the imperial Gangas who ruled over Orissa until 1434 had never accepted Khurda's claim to Gajapati kingship."

Kulke, Hermann. "Rathas and Rajas: The Car Festival at Puri." *Journal of Orissan History* 1, no. 1 (1990): 28–39. (p34)

[109] Allison Busch's article, The Anxiety of Innovation: The Practice of Literary Science in the Hindi/Riti Tradition. 2004. This text, and Allison Busch's analysis, bring up the questions of 'vernacularization' as texts on dance of this period do as well.

dance-drama performance. Akbar Shah's *Snrgaramanjari* was a text on erotics.[110] However, unlike older manuals on erotics, Srngaramanjari followed the lines of Bhanudatta's Rasamanjari and its commentaries (in Sanskrit and Telugu), centers on the classification of women and men primarily to dive into the poetic possibilities of the idea of rasa in contexts of separation and union of lovers.[111] The focus is not on the physical acts of sexual union, its many positions, techniques of pleasure, strategies for wooing into bed and related conversations about sexual health, avoiding pregnancies, and more. Instead, the focus is on the stylized stages of erotic love, which includes sexual union but largely focuses on separation – the many bodily signs of lust or longing or utter desperation, the many scenarios of a jilted or cheating lover returning only to be met with biting sarcasm and scorn. By this time then, not only had the stylized eroticism of srngara rasa influenced expressions of devotion but also discussions of sex. The true possibilities here are not of sex itself but of the possibilities and near-misses of sexual union, imagined from every angle of classification – not only of the states of love but of the women (and men) involved in them.

Also at the Golconda court around the same time but more briefly, the court poet Ksetrayya (1600-1680) was patronized by the Qutb Shahi ruler. Ksetrayya, a prolific poet and composer

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[110] For full published edition with critical introduction, see Akbar Shah, V Raghavan, and Khwaja Muhammad Ahmad. *Srngaramanjari of Saint Akbar Shah: based on old Sanskrit manuscripts in Devanagari and Telugu scripts*. Hyderabad: Hyderabad Archaeological Department, 1951.

[111] The latest manual on erotics before Srngaramanjari was Ananga ranga, written at the Lodhi court in eastern Uttar Pradesh at the beginning of the sixteenth century – covering such topics as the various seats of passion in women, the different kinds of men and women, general qualities and temperaments of different types of women, characteristics of women of various lands, treatments for influencing or controlling your partner, different signs of passion in men and women, kinds of external enjoyment, kinds of internal enjoyment and finally appendices on astrology in relation to marriage and treatments for medical purposes related to sex.

The commentaries are *Parimala* and *Amoda* by someone named GurujAlasayin from Guntur district, who in turn largely quotes from Appaya Diksita, an Advaita Vedanta philosopher of the Thanjavur, Vellore and Venkatagiri Nayak courts in the south.

who defined the courtly *padam* genre of poetry and performance, making visible a dynamic world of bold and nuanced courtesans and their dandy customers, was born in the Godaveri delta region of current-day Andhra Pradesh. He spent his life travelling, with much of his work produced further south in the Nayak courts of Madurai, Tanjavur and more briefly the Golconda sultanate court. He epitomized the mobile urban artist of the early modern period. Ksetrayya drew on older works of Telugu bhakti poets, especially of Annammayya and the Talapaka poets from the early 15th century,[112] and was influenced by and influenced the Deccani erotic poetry tradition. Ksetrayya, for example, adapted Bhanudatta's rasa poetry into Telugu.[113] His focus on the sensual aspects of erotic union, more than the visual aspects, comes from the influence of Telugu traditions of devotion, eroticism and poetry.[114] Ksetrayya brought these themes into the sphere of commercial interaction even while located in the elite context of urban courtesan culture,[115] and focused not on themes of separation but of union with humor and sarcasm. Neither Akbar Shah nor Ksetrayya wrote Sanskrit texts on performance – Akbar Shah wrote a

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[112] Ramanujan, A. K., Velcheru Narayana Rao, and David Shulman. *When God Is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Ksetrayya and Others*. University of California Press, 1994.

Rao, Velcheru Narayana, and David Shulman. *God on the Hill: Temple Poems from Tirupati: Temple Poems from Tirupati*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

[113] Pollock, Sheldon I., and Bhanudatta, trans. *"Bouquet of Rasa" & "River of Rasa."* First edition edition. New York, NY: Clay Sanskrit, 2009.

[114] The trend of aestheticization took dance and erotics in separate directions, masking the physical sensuality of performance and prioritizing a slightly more distanced sense of pleasure based on beauty of formal elements. Both in the north/west and the south/east, Sanskrit scholarship took new turns in the seventeenth century – instrumentalizing textual knowledge in service to changing contexts of practice in urban milieus and increasing focus on visual aesthetics in writing on dance. The first trend, which could be called a manualization, is found in multiple fields of Sanskrit scholarship at the time. The second and related trend of aestheticization took dance and erotics in separate directions, masking the physical sensuality of performance and prioritizing a slightly more distanced sense of pleasure based on beauty of formal elements. In both trends, there is a close relationship between the music and dance court practices and the scholarly output of intellectuals writing on performance and related fields, especially erotics.

[115] Ramanujan, A. K., Velcheru Narayana Rao, and David Shulman. *When God Is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Ksetrayya and Others*. University of California Press, 1994.

sastra text on srnagara rasa and Ksetrayya wrote poetry that was danced. Both, however, were instrumental in the shifting and hybrid relationship between dance, the aesthetics of srngara rasa, and devotionalism as manifested in the courtly milieus of the Coromandel by the end of the seventeenth century – connecting the Deccani sultanates and Nayak courts of the south.

Further south still in Tanjavur, the Diksita family of court ministers had a significant impact on intellectual and cultural production for several generations, spanning the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Govinda Diksita, a Kannada Brahmin musician scholar from Mysore, served as a minister of the last three Nayak kings in the seventeenth century: Achyutappa Nayaka (1560-1614 AD), Raghunatha Nayaka (1600-1645 AD) and Vijayaraghava Nayaka (1634-1673 AD). Govinda Diksita's two sons Yagnanarayana Diksita and Venkatershwara Diksita or Venkatamakhin were both scholar-musicians as well as ministers of the Tanjavur. In 1614, Govinda Diksita wrote Sangita-sudha for his patron and then Nayak king Raghunatha. The work originally had seven chapters: Svara (notes); Raga (melodic structures); Prakirna (various subjects); Prabandha (compositional structure); Taala (rhythm); Vadya (instrumentation); and, Nartana (dance) – but all available manuscripts contain only the first four. Like many early modern scholars, Govinda Diksita uses Sharngadeva's framework of *sangita*. He also draws on the later Vijayanagar scholar Vidyaranya for the basic concepts used to define raga for the bulk of his material that he deems relevant to contemporary practice and which is still relevant today. Like Deccani scholars, south Indian scholars dropped Sharngadeva's highly involved and technical progression from sound to note to groups of notes and so on to build up to defining raga, or melody. Unlike the Deccani scholars who redefined music in the aesthetic mold of nayaka-nayikas in various aspects of srngara, south Indian scholars like Diksita redefined ragas through a systematic classificatory system of melas, or families of melodies. By defining ragas in

terms of all possible combinations of notes, Diksita and scholars like his son Venkatamakhin who followed him, opened the door to defining many ragas which had not been in practice or existence until their time. His work reflects a keen interest in applying theory to the musical practices of his milieu rather than listing and describing what was practiced in his time– introducing new kinds of musical genres into the conceptualization of melodic structures and canons.[116] His fourth chapter, which focuses on compositions, reflects a much broader attention to a range of performance compositions of his day than earlier musicological texts.[117] While most scholars of the Tanjavur and Madurai Nayak courts in the south didn't address dance as centrally, their approach to performance as a whole both drew on medieval legacies (through the Vijayanagar empire connection) and set the stage for an increased focus on technique and abstract elements of rhythm, movement and melody in dance, music and drama.

III. Tukkoji's *Sangita Saramrta* – Dance Practice as Effort in 18th century Kaveri delta

In the context of multiple contestations between Mughal, Maratha, Nayak and a number of independent polities in the Deccan and South, Sanskrit texts produced after the turn of the eighteenth century took on changing priorities. In Tanjavur, Maratha Bhonsle ruling class brought new influences as intellectuals, poets and composers, but also their own priorities in terms of Sanskrit textual production around not only dance and music but also astrology, statecraft and more. While early Maratha kings in Tanjavur embodied the legacies of the Nayak court cultures that they stepped into, they also prioritized Sanskrit as a language of intellectual, performative and political knowledge, more so from the 1730s.

[116] The chapter on dance however, which would have been an important link between Tukkoji's eighteenth century text and earlier ones (even though Tukkoji doesn't explicitly quote or cite it), is missing.

[117] See Sangita Sudha introduction P.S. Sundaram Aiyer and S Subrahmanya Sastri, 1940.

The second Maratha Tanjavur king Shahji II Bhonsle (r. 1684- 1712), known as Abhinava Bhoja or Dakshina Bhoja (the new Bhoja or the Bhoja of the south), produced many plays, literature and erotic poetry in Telugu. Styled as a polyglot and polymath, he produced dozens of dance dramas on various themes of love and union also in several languages including courtly Telugu. The themes of pleasure, obsession with physicality, and cutting humor from Nayak performance and literature carried over, albeit intensified – parody became outright satire and the themes of violation took more serious turns.[118] In addition, he likely commissioned or brought over a Telugu version of Akbar Shah's work Srngara Manjari from the Golconda court (it is present in the Maratha raja archives of the Saraswati Mahal Library, with a colophon addressed to Shahji).[119] However, Shahji did not write or commission any Sanskrit treatise on dance and music.

Later Bhonsle kings and ministers showed a renewed interest in Sanskrit intellectual textual production in a variety of fields.[120] After Shahji and his brother-successor Serfoji I, Bhonsle kings didn't show the same level of interest in the production and patronage of new Telugu work. Kings and ministers from the 1730s produced more Marathi and Sanskrit material. Moreover, they moved away from Nayak ideals of pleasure, irreverent humor, and transgression

[118] Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Dean Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance, Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamilnadu* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[119] See V Raghavan Introduction. Srngaramanjari. 1940.

[120] They also moved away from Nayaks on a number of things: away from the Krishna-based Vaishnava devotion of the Nayak kings centralized with the deity of Mannargudi. Instead their focus was underscored by Siva-devotion through an idealization of Siva's greatest devotee, the mythic Rama. Thus, their central deity was Siva in Tiruvarur and they patronized figures like Thyagaraja who manifested the same focus on Rama as ultimate devotee and dharmic individual. This latter shifts fell in line with a larger Maratha refusal of the ideals of sensuality, sexual transgression and material enjoyment that the Nayaks had built their court culture around. Like the Ramnad Setupatis discussed in the first chapter, the Marathas showed ambivalence towards the body as the site of subjectivity but expressed their ambivalence along more allegorical terms.

of social norms through the prioritizing of desire. Maratha Sanskrit dramas (or Marathi dramas which were very similar) tended to take on a moralistic and allegorical quality. The ultimate take-away of these plays wasn't a celebration of sensual desire so much as an ode to devotion and duty (as we will see in a close analysis of some dance-dramas in the next chapter). Outside of drama and literature, the Tanjavur court under the Marathas produced and collected Sanskrit texts focused on dharma, medicine, and astrology.[121] Ayurveda (Sanskritic knowledge system based on humors) in particular saw a resurgence from the seventeenth century onwards, with the incorporation of influence from Tamil Siddha and Persian Unani medical practices.

The fourth Maratha king of Tanjavur, Tukkoji Bhonsle presents a turning point in the intellectual and aesthetic production of the Kaveri delta. Tukkoji Bhonsle, born in 1677, was the younger brother of Shahji and Serfoji I. After the death of their father, technically the three co-ruled under the oversight of their mother, the queen Dipambai. Tukkoji ruled Tanjavur jointly with his two older brothers and independently from 1728 – 1736, relatively late in life (age 51 – 59), succeeding his two older brothers. He was the first of the Bhonsle ruling family to be born in Tanjavur. In the 1720s-30s, Tukkoji produced multiple texts in the genre of sastra or treatise in Sanskrit. They covered a range of subjects, namely, medicine, astrology and the performing arts. Unlike those before him, his interest in music and dance sastra was not accompanied by an interest in the performing and literary arts necessarily. He didn't produce dramas, poetry, or music the way his well-known predecessor Shahji Bhonsle did. Instead, his interest in dance and music came out of an interest in science – including medicine and astrology both of which he produced several texts on.

[121] Texts include Dharmakutam, Stri dharma paddhati, and Dhanvantri saranidhi

Tukkoji wrote a text on music and dance titled *Sangita Saramrta*, one of the only Sanskrit texts on dance from south India in this period.[122] This text consciously grapples with multiple worlds of practice, working through various levels of translation between Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit terminology and between various kinds of bodily practice. Tukkoji, and others writing Sanskrit texts on performance at Tanjavur at this time, drew on multiple genealogies of knowledge production and commentary. Firstly, these scholars drew most prominently on medieval works from the Deccan on the idea of *sangita* which had been absorbed into and circulated through the expansion of Vijayanagar imperial patronage and subsequently extended by its successors in the south, Nayak kings and intellectuals. The Bhonsles inherited these ideas and structures of understanding performance from the Nayaks. Tukkoji's *Sangita Saramrta* follows older texts on *sangita* – starting with chapters on various aspects of music and ending with a chapter on dance. Secondly, Maratha Tanjavur scholars drew on sets of ideas they brought from the early modern Deccani milieu – such as the work of Chatura Damodara Misra and Golconda scholars but also circulations with Mughal Delhi. Tukkoji, for example, makes oblique references to the work of Damodara Misra and Pundarika Vitthala. Thirdly, Maratha scholars and kings like Tukkoji also made an explicit move to look further back to classical texts, not necessarily for the majority of content but for citational references which authorized their textual production in specific ways. They foregrounded classical Sanskrit authors and ideas as part of Maratha Bhonsle public authority. Rather than an ahistorical reliance on classical texts like the Natyasastra however, scholars like Tukkoji located classical authorship alongside and in conversation with other, often more prominent, voices in their texts.

[122] Translations are my own, based on published text: Tulaja, S Subrahmanya Sastri, and V Raghavan. *The Sangita Saramrta of King Tulaja of Tanjore*. Madras: Music Academy, 1942.

Tukkoji's dance chapter is titled *nrtta prakaram* or Section on Nrtta. Unlike medieval texts like the *Sangita Ratnakara* or even the early modern Pundarika Vitthala's *Nartana nirnaya*, Tukkoji's doesn't cover dance as nartana, which had come to signify a system of movement vocabulary and gestural signification in service to affective evocation. Even Chatura Damodara's chapter on dance covers *nrttya*, similar in connotation to nartana. Tukkoji's chapter, however, covers dance as *nrtta* – movement which is either divorced from the same evocative worlds of meaning or for which it is of secondary importance. Nrtta tends to be described in terms of rhythm and movement qualities rather than meaning. Medieval scholars like Sharngadeva treats nrtta as a very limited term, referring only to a specific set of dances that were dynamic, percussive, and sometimes comic. Early modern writers before Tukkoji, such as Vitthala, often included a section on nrtta in their chapter on dance, which took up substantial space and covered most of the discussion on movement vocabulary – the connotation and scope of nrtta had shifted significantly, coming to refer to generally non-emotive movement with a focus on rhythm, and reflected changing ways of defining dance.

Tukkoji's opening summary of contents for the chapter on nrtta says it will cover the usual topics and structure found in the Sangita Ratnakara: anga, pratyanga, upanga followed by discussion of the hall, audience, performers, the opening piece (nandi, pushpanjali) and then the different kinds of dances (only those found in SR, none of the later additions are included). A second summary however, starts with the sabha (concert hall) and its various participants, goes into practice regimen of dancers, then goes into movements of the body, movement vocabulary progression ending with rasa bhava. This second summary outlines a discussion on dance that is less expansive in its coverage of movement possibilities but more practical in terms of covering

the contexts for performance and more importantly, practice regimen. It turns out, the text for the most part follows the second, more practically oriented, summary.

The systematic discussion of movement vocabulary promised by the initial summary is not found in the text – either because the parts of the original text are missing or because Tukkoji just never included it. While the initial summary gives the impression that the text will follow the structure of medieval texts like Sangita Ratnakara, the content of the chapter has more in common with more recent concise texts like Chatura Damodara's Sangita Darpana. However, even compared to sixteenth and seventeenth century texts, Tukkoji presents some key differences, bringing in citations from classical authors like Bharata that had long fallen out of circulation, focusing more on technical aspects of nrtta, and reconciling multiple new worlds of practice.

Tukkoji starts with a section titled "natyavedagama:" which is not copied or quoted from other sources but rather written by Tukkoji himself:

सुरज्येष्ठमुपागत्य लोकानन्दैकसाधनम् । स्रष्ठव्यमिति विझाप्य कारितं क्रिडनीयकम् ।।
सारमादाय क्रतः पुनः । भरतं मानसं पुत्रं सृष् .....ट्वा तस्मै प्रदाय च ।।
प्रवर्तनीयो लोकेषु त्वया पुत्र मया कृतः । नाट्यवेदो हि धर्मादिपुरुषार्यैकसाधकः ।।

The oldest of the gods (srashtyeshta) came to earth for the realization of joy for mankind. To be created for entertainment (kridaniyaka). Mythical female (?)… made again. Bharatam mental/spiritual son ascertained he/his supply. (To be) set in motion/begun for mankind, son for me obtained. The beginnings of natya, surely, the lord of dharma achieves.

Tukkoji follows this couplet with the opening passage from the Sangita Ratnakara on the conventional story of how drama came to earth, from the god Brahma, through the sage Bharata,

and the other god Siva added dance through Tandu and his wife Parvati, who passed it on through the women of Saurashtra, and so dance was established on earth. This narrative is a common one, linking mytho-religious origins to earthly-historic origins and framing dance in terms of classical intellectual authority.

Tukkoji's citation of this mythical origin story for drama (here implied as an origin story for nrtta dance), and his own additional introduction to it, was notable. After the medieval period, most authors didn't include it in their discussion of dance or even open their texts with origin stories of any kind. Instead, early modern texts had tended to open with the practical significance of a text on dance. The *Nartana nirnaya*, for example, starts his text with little preface with "One who is proficient in the knowledge (of his own and other) country, (regional) language, art, bhava and rasa, is leader of the orchestra, expert in practice and theory of nartana and who makes (teaches/conducts) others dance is a nartaka. Nartana is said to be that which is presented by an actor such that it has a specialty in the movement of the limbs and is appealing to the minds of people." Pundarika defines dance in clearly practical terms, literally by stating the definition in terms of what knowledge and practice it requires. Chatura Damodara, on the other hand, opens with a proclamation that the author provides the essence of *sangita*. However, he is interested in defining sangita in terms of marga and desi rather than in terms of Vedic origins. Most recently, Govinda Diksita's Sangita Sudha starts with a history of sorts but one that begins with 'Cola Desha' or 'Tamil country' and therefore medieval Tamil Cola legacies, rather than a Vedic origin story. Tukkoji's choice of beginning his text with his "natyavedagama" conventional Vedic origin story for performance is thus a distinct choice, a departure from his recent peers.

Rather than opening his text with a practical call, a historical genealogy or even a statement on the beauty and value of dance as did medieval and early modern texts (like Nrtta Ratnavali,

not discussed in this chapter), Tukkoji chose to go back to a medieval text's quotation of a classical text – the Natyasastra – and open his discussion with a particularly Sanskritic origin story for dance. This choice is counterposed by Tukkoji's otherwise focused attention to nrtta on the one hand and fairly practical concerns around technique and effort in the body of his text. Tukkoji's introductory couplet before the quoted passage from Sangita Ratnakara provides an idea of how the classic Sanskritic origin-story serves him: he describes the originator of natya, the oldest of gods or Brahma, as the achiever of dharma. Thus, Tukkoji re-orients textual knowledge on dance radically, through an attention to training and an effort to reconcile multiple worlds of textual-practical knowledge and ultimately frames both in the language of dharma, or duty.

Following his opening, Tukkoji moves directly into a discussion of abhinaya:

रसस्यानुभवं साक्षाद् जनन्यंस्तत्सभासदाम् । काव्याद्यर्थ विभावादि व्यन्जयन्यो नटे स्थितः ।।

स एवाभिनयः प्रोक्तो भरतादिमुनीश्वरैः ।

"Rasa anubhava appears before an audience. The meaning of the poem, with beauty, is made manifest (vyanjayano) by the performer (nata). That abhinaya is what Bharata Muni prescribed/described (proktho)."

Quoting from Sangita Ratnakara, another medieval text (Nrtta Ratnavali) and an early modern text from the Vijayanagar court (Sangita Muktavali), Tukkoji covers the meaning and four kinds of abhinaya, realistic and stylized representation, and, in particular sattvika abhinaya – important for showing srngara.

Jumping into a very short few stanzas on positions of hand and feet and postures, Tukkoji almost completely glosses over the conventional systematic laying out of movements for every

major and minor part of the body, as well as the progressive grouping of these movements into sequences to define dance. In this, he joins others writing on dance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in their move toward an increasingly concise treatment of movement vocabularies with an eye towards only what is deemed relevant to contemporary practice. Unlike Damodara and others from the Deccan and north in this period, his focus is not on reframing dance in terms of the visual aesthetics related to srngara. Tukkoji also lacks the interest of his early modern peers in expanding the inclusion and description of new dances.

Instead, Tukkoji's real interest and focus is on practice from the particular angle of training or technique. In the main text from which Tukkoji quotes, the Sangita Ratnakara, Sharngadeva addresses training or procedure for practice, *srama vidhi*, only very briefly before moving on to the qualities of the dancer, troupe, teacher, audience and patron:

> "After worshipping Ganapati, Sarasvati (Bharathi dhevi), Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, the stage (ranga), the presiding deities, the cymbals (layAdhyabhandAni) and musical instruments (?) in their respective order And the teacher (upadhyaya), the dancing girls nrutta kanya), the two pillars and the bar (dhandakam) by means of fragrant unguents like musk and sandal paste, white fragrant flowers, incense, and lights, various offerings of food and dress, betel leaves and oblations, the intelligent (?) dancer should start (prArabhedha) the *practice (shrama)* at an auspicious time (shubhe lagne).
>
> A bar (dhandikam) should be placed on two pillars, horizontally, at the level of the girl's breast/heart (hrudhaya) so as to be held [conveniently] by the hands for support. Putting on a white dress (shubhra vasana) and tightening the jacket (kanchukam), the chaste and intelligent girl (?) should support herself on the bar (dhandikalambini – lambini actually means to hang from), practice (abhyasa) the movements (vivarthana, actually

turning/revolving/a kind of dance) of the limbs (anga) and learn valana, sthapana, rekha, thalasamya (tallying with the time-beat), the layas And the angas and all the accessories of the lasya dance explained before, and also learn to follow the singing and the instruments."

सामूशालम्बमित्येवमान्ध्रद्रविडभाषया ।	In the sAmu hall, in Andra & Dravida language,
लोकप्रसिद्दमभ्यासक्रम इत्यभिधीयने ।।	known everywhere, the practice (abhyasakam)
अभ्यस्तस्य पुन सम्यगभ्यासः श्रम इरितः ।।	learnt by heart repeatedly/ well exercised (shrama)
।। शिक्षारम्भः ।।	training begins (shiksha arambham)

With this, Tukkoji launches into a detailed discussion, showing us what he really means by srama (labor/effort) and shiksha (training).

Natva krtuva dolahasta sTHitva bhuvi sarekhakam |	after having offered obeisance, with dola hasta, standing in a line
Shikare hastasi karou krutvA gArudapUrvakam ||	having shown shikara hasta @ chest like an emerald
SavyApasavyatho hasthou patakasyvyou prasarya cha |	spread (the) pataka hasta (outward) to the left and right
bhrAnthvA sashikharam parshvAdhekahastamuru… ||	having brought around the shikaram from the back,
savyApasavyathaha krutva hastaddhayamurum punaha |	show left and right having danced (w/) hastas well
utplutya bhramanam chaiva krutva savyApasavyathaha ||	jump, turn and thus having done this to left and right
anthavahirshva kamalapatakakaravatenAha |	out and in (w/) kamala pataka, pay tribute
ubhayorvarthanAha krutva pu(na?)… ||	having turned both ways well
shuddhamandalamAsTHAya THeyyaTHeyyethi pAtakai |	in shuddha mandala, perform theyya theyyethi lesson

This entire section is devoted to a term not treated before in Sanskrit texts – *adavu*. Adavu, a Telugu and Tamil term, is a building block of movement from which nrtta choreography is built. It reflects a movement system, organized around the feet. It is distinct from the movement progression generally found in Sanskrit treatise: cari (foot movement), stanza (postures), angahara (full body movement blocks), and karana (full body movement sequences). Adavu form the bulk of training in south Indian dance forms. However, they are not found in the Natyasastra or other Sanskrit texts barring one passing reference in an early modern Vijayanagar court text.[123] Tukkoji is the first to address adavus systematically.

Not only is Tukkoji's choice of addressing adavu unique, his approach in doing so is also distinct. Rather than merely presenting the Tamil/Telugu adavus, he attempts to define each adavu he lists in terms of existing Sanskrit categories or concepts. For example, for the first adavu, Tukkoji provides a heading in Tamil – *thattadavu*. Then, his verse on thattadavu, in Sanskrit describes the movement as such: *In the slow speed, carrying on while saying 'theyyathei'; strike forcefully with the heel, (keeping) pataka hands, such is khhanath kuttanam*. In this brief verse, not only does Tukkoji break down the adavu movement in Sanskrit terms – slow speed is vilambit, the term for heel is pArshni, the term striking is thAdanam. These are all terms found commonly in earlier Sanskrit texts. Tukkoji employs them to describe movement not previously found in Sanskrit text. The next level of translation is on the level of the adavu itself. Tukkoji needs to find a place for adavu in the Sanskrit text model, to translate it into the Sanskrit world. He equates the first adavu, theyyathei adavu, with a type of kuttanam. Kutta (or kuttana) is a term found under the heading of caris or foot movements, particularly desi caris in the

[123] The term adavu makes a brief appearance in a 15th century Vijayanagara text, the Sangeeta Muktavali, which simply includes a line equating karanas with what those of the south (Andra and Dravida countries) call adavu.

Sangita Ratnakara and a few later texts, defined as a striking motion. But it was never a central term, it was buried among a long list of foot positions and movements. Tukkoji picked it out and made it central to his translation scheme. Adavu, here is not equated with karanams as the earlier Sangita Muktavali briefly did, but with a more basic level of movement, caris. Kuttanam, however is not the translation given for all the adavu. The next few Tukkoji equates with other kinds of kuttana cari. One adavu he equates with swastika cari. Then he equates later adavus with utplutikaranas, or movements off the ground, and brahmaris, spins. While he references the arm movement associated with each, the focus is clearly on the movement of the feet, as seen by how Tukkoji classifies and categorizes the movement in relation to Sanskrit terminology.

In addition, Tukkoji follows the list of adavu-kuttana-cari translation entries with a section on brahmaris. Instead of following the entries and or style of what is found in earlier Sanskrit texts from which he draws however, his listings are new and each entry includes a Tamil subheading, suggesting that he is actually including new turning movements found in the sadir practices of the Tanjavur milieu. Some would be recognizable to practitioners today, some would not. Tukkoji then goes into a short section on karanas (only a couple verses) and a longer section on mandala. In each, there are a few Tamil words peppered through the verses, suggesting again that Tukkoji uses the older categories to hold new kinds of movement. Thus, Tukkoji's addressing and translation of adavus is not isolated but part of a larger project of translation and redefinition of movement vocabulary.

He closes this long section with a passage from the early modern text Sangita Muktavali. It states that training is the heart of nrtta, its home. It describes how the dancer, beautiful, intelligent, wearing fragrant unguents, dressed in white, and with bright fragrant flowers, after having done puja to the various deities and guardians of the stage, should begin training at an

ausipicious time – holding at chest level the (horizontal) pillar or bar used for training. The dancer should practice the movements of stanaka, valanam, the various padha nikuttana, talanusaranam (keeping time), the world of nrttanga, gaits, and karana; in special (vishamANi?) clothes, following the music and instruments with graceful movements. This, according to the passage quoted by Tukkoji, is how a girl should practice to be a dancer of nartana. He then finishes by finishing outlining the necessary attributes of the orchestra and very briefly the basic dance styles covered back in medieval texts, quoting mostly Sangita Ratnakara.

Tukkoji's interest was thus not in performance or in visual aesthetics, but in training. For Tukkoji, training is not merely a preface to a discussion about qualities of dancers, but in fact, the meat of the conversation about dance. By extension, dancers are defined by the work they do, by the training they must undergo, rather than by the finished product of the dances they perform. Tukkoji fits adavu, as an idea, into the existing Sanskrit movement organization by foregrounding it as firstly feet movement and secondly, as central to the practice of technique, which for him forms the heart of discussion about dance. In turn, the effort of practice, *srama* is framed, as mentioned earlier, through a conception of duty which, while drawing on the language of classical texts is quite new.

Moreover, Tukkoji co-opted the systems he chooses to engage with – Sanskritic models of talking about dances, movement and performance – much like the scholar he quotes so extensively from, Sharngadeva. He uses the usual categories of movement, not to mention large quotations from older scholars in other parts of his text. In many places, he introduces new genres and practices as illustrative examples for existing concepts and in several sections, he adds new concepts which show his interest in finding a place for new conceptions of practice

within the Sanskritic model.[124] He places the list (and translation) of adavus where cari (feet movement) and stanaka (postures) would usually go, right before other kinds of feet movements and karana and mandala (movement sequences). In effect, he uses the general idea of movement of the feet to act as a point of translation between systems of movement that are otherwise not parallel in the least. Tukkoji only addresses the categories of cari, brahmari and mandala to present what is practiced in Tanjavur dance practices of his day. Karana is covered in name only and angahara is completely missing. In terms of the basic building blocks of movement, none of the movements for any part of the body other than 'feet' are mentioned at all. In skipping straight to this section, spending as much space on it as he does, and translating it into what he considers the corresponding classification in Sanskrit, Tukkoji reframes the dance in terms of his own priorities, that is the priorities of the dance whose scene he is a part of and which he makes sense of through this text. Dance is defined not in terms of body parts and an abstract progression of movement accumulation but in terms of these adavu movement blocks which are ostensibly already in practice by dancers in the Kaveri delta.

As in the case of Sharngadeva, simply thinking of the material as an addition in text or performance paradigm does not reveal the depth to which the additions actually redefine the categories they are held in. While quoting from Sharngadeva, Tukkoji still takes only a small

[124] Sanskrit intellectuals didn't often present themselves or their work as new. Originality in and of itself wasn't the goal. This shifted in some fields in the 17th century, particularly with scholars in the schools of logic, as shown by Sanskrit historian Sheldon Pollock – for the first time, scholars identified themselves as new and belonging to new schools of thought (navya), in distinction from older schools. The norm however, was for texts from multiple periods to exist contemporaneously in new works. Writers interspersed long quotations, adding their commentaries on to the quotations as qualifiers. Usually, these additions and commentaries were along the lines of adjustments in understandings of particular quotes. Therefore, Tukkoji adding entirely new genres or sections on practice was significant. His production of a Sanskirt text on dance in eighteenth century south India was not a conservative move but a generative one – opening up not only new meanings for concepts inherited from at least the middle ages, but also opening up the opportunity for continued redefinition in the future. He did so by means of multiple kinds of translation.

portion of Sharngadeva's text, leaving the rest as irrelevant. More importantly, in key moments of the text, such as his treatment of practice, he doesn't draw on Sharngadeva but on the fifteenth century Sangita Muktavali which had already started incorporating aesthetics and repertoire from the Haridasa bhakti movements. In structure, Tukkoji followed this text and other early modern texts like Damodara's Sangita Darpana. Finally, beyond all these references, Tukkoji himself framed dance in universalist and mytho-historical terms and practice in terms of training; both of which were distinct departure from any of those he quoted or modeled his text after.[125]

For Tukkoji, and the Maratha Bhonsles in the eighteenth century in general, Sanskrit and its conceptual debates were a means to engage with a translocal cosmopolitan culture, especially as a lesser known or aspiratory king.[126] The circulations of power and influence in the eighteenth century between the Coromandel, the Deccan and centers of Sanskrit intellectual activity like Benares in the northeast had both political and cultural consequences. However, while Tukkoji could easily have reproduced completely existing texts, he re-oriented Sanskrit frameworks by acknowledging new practices which lay outside of the existing texts, on the level of movement vocabulary and training. Tukkoji's work is not only one of transcription – he is not merely documenting what is happening in his time in some effort to preserve. Rather, he engaged in a project of translating and reconciling with a cosmopolitan framework and conception in a way that is, in my mind, about generating new possibilities – defining and redefining both cosmopolitan Sanskritic ideals as well as contemporary sadir practices in the process.

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[125] Up to two thirds of his text are direct quotations – most commonly from Sangita Ratnakara but also from the other medieval dance text Nrtta Ratnavali and the 15th century Sangita Muktavali by a Vijayanagar courtier.

[126] Sivaji Bhonsle's rise and consolidation of empire centrally involved the patronage of Gaga Bhatt, a Varanasi Sanskrit scholar in the late seventeenth century, to produce a lineage for the Bhonsles leading back to Kshatriya warrior clans and thus legitimize their position as rulers.

Another manuscript from the eighteenth century re-enforces some of the moves made by Tukkoji in Sangita Saramrta. The *Natya sastra sangraha* was compiled by court scholar Utake Govindacarya in the latter half of the eighteenth century Tanjavur court. The actual manuscript is an outline of a work that remained unfinished. What exists however shows that Govindacarya drew from many different works. The first half, dealing with anga, pratyanga, upanga is from Sangita Ratnakara. Then he cites Sangita Muktavali, Sangita Darpana, Sangita Makaranda, and Bharatarnava for all the material that was still relevant in his day – stanaka, cari, and dances. Govindacarya's approach canonizes particular works and scholars, most of which are early modern rather than classical – including Chatura Damodara's Sangita Darpana. The compilation also reflects an urge to use text in increasingly practical ways, with a focus on technique and training and strategic reference to classical paradigms put in conversation with early modern voices and textual priorities vis-à-vis trends in dance performance and practice.

Govindacarya is not interested in the multiple translating processes that Tukkoji did. However, like Tukkoji, the author is interested in bodily practice and training. Govindacarya quotes the same couplet from the Abhinaya Darpana that Chatura Damodara does: where the hand goes, so does the gaze; where the gaze goes, there follows the mind/heart; where the mind/heart goes, there goes the mood and where the mood goes, there is the rasa. In a brief entry between the lists of postures (stanaka) and foot/leg movement (cari), he describes *vyAyAma* or drill exercises: "A number of caris (that is combinations of the movements of feet, knees, thighs, and hip) each leading to the next in particular order (together with the necessary movements of hands) is called Vyayama and is employed by way of exercise." He goes into a bit more detail: "If the vyayama consists of a single foot, it is called Cari. If movements of both feet are involved, it is called Karana (different than the 108 classical karanas). The combinations of three

karanas is called khanda and the combination of three khandas is called mandala." While Govindacarya does not go into any more detail, his gloss explains the logic underscoring Tukkoji's dive into adavus. Movements of the feet are considered for exercise and training and have been fit into the more classical models of movement accretion through the vocabularies of Sanskrit textuality.

Sangita, Ayurveda, and Dharma as Practiced

For Tukkkoji, the importance of practice was not limited to dance (or music) but rather cut across the multiple fields which he was interested in – namely medicine and astrology alongside music and dance. He wrote two texts on Ayurveda, the Sanskritic system of knowledge about the physical body based on humoral balances and its treatment of illness through a variety of techniques; Dhanvantri Saranidhi and Dhanvantri vilasa. Tukkoji not only focused on the practice of medicine but also on the doctor's role as one of duty. Here, medical practice is not just a question of health, but also of salvation. As with his text on performance, Tukkoji moves away from conceptual concerns of the field to focus on the subject of medicine or performance as a profession, requiring training.[127] Marathas showed a renewed interest in Sanskrit intellectual textual production in general and Ayurveda specifically– a renaissance from the seventeenth century.[128]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, slightly before Tukkoji's reign, one of the key minister-scholars of the Maratha Tanjavur court, Tryambhaka Rayamakhi, wrote a text on

[127] Wujastyk, Dominik. "The Questions of King Tukkoji: Medicine at an Eighteenth-Century South Indian Court." *Indian Journal of History of Science* 41, no. 4 (2006): 357–369.

[128] Wujastyk, Dominik. "Change and Creativity in Early Modern Indian Medical Thought." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2005): 95–118.

dharma for women, titled *Stri Dharma Paddhati*. Dharma, as a concept and field of study, refers to a social idea of duty. It encompasses notions of social pact, responsibilities to society as an individual[129] through action (and for some scholars, through thought as well)[130], responsibility to all living things and to truth itself.[131] Of these, the notion of the rights and responsibilities of an individual is linked to stages of life and the appropriate practices of living. Texts on law and kingship direct this conversation towards what a king must do for responsible rulership – these texts are innumerable and not homogenous. Instead, they are specific to historical context and the social legacies they inherit. They cover a wide range, from instructions on education of the young, marital rights and obligations, death and ancestral rites, laws and administration of justice, crimes, punishments, rules and types of evidence, duties of a king, as well as morality. Usually, texts of these kinds never addressed women exclusively, or even centrally, so this text is surprising. Stri Dharma paddati ostensibly addressed to elite women (Maratha and Brahmin?) – draws from kama manuals but is systematic about day-to-day schedule, similar to texts on king's dharma.[132] The text's author, Tryambakarayamakhin, was also the author of a much more well-known work titled Dharmakuta – a work on dharmic kingship through a commentary on the epic Ramayana; it defined dharma in fairly conservative terms.[133] He was minister to Shahji and Serfoji, the second two Maratha kings of Tanjavur, predecessors to Tukkoji. Tryambakaraya's

[129] Buhler, G. "Manusmriti: The Laws of Manu." *Trans. G. Buhler* 25 (1886).

[130] Vatsyayana, 5th century commentary on the *Nyaya Sutras*

[131] Patanjali

[132] See Introduction to Tryambakayajvan, and L. Julia Leslie. *The Perfect Wife: (Strīdharmapaddhati)*. Penguin Books, 1989.

[133] See discussion of Dharmakuta in Pollock, Sheldon. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. Univ of California Press, 2006.

family was an important part of the Bhonsle Tanjavur court. His father Gangadhara and older brother Narsimharaya were both ministers to the first Maratha Bhonsle king Ekkoji. Tryambaka's second brother Bhagavantaraya was minister to Tukkoji. Narsimharaya's son (Tryambaka's nephew) was a minister to Sahaji and Serfoji along with Tryambakaraya, wrote several allegorical Sanskrit dramas focused on dharma and was also a patron himself to several court poets and intellectuals. The relationship between dharma, medicine and performance under Maratha Bhonsle patronage was also brought together by an allegorical play called Jivanandam, or the Joy of Life, written by a minister-intellectual of the Tanjavur Maratha court, Anandarayamakhin, which was performed for the first time around 1700 for the Brihadisvara festival procession.[134]

At the same time, there was a healthy dose of satire and critique around the idea of dharma, it was not treated preciously. A unique text titled *Mahisasatakam* or 'In Praise of the Buffalo' was written by a former court intellectual Vancheswara Diksita, alias Kutikavi, with a commentary by his grandson Vanchesvara Yajvan, the poet's grandson.[135] It was likely written in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Described as a hundred verses in praise of the buffalo, the entire work is an extended study in double entendre and satire. The poet, levels a searing critique of both intellectuals who have ostensibly 'sold out' and to the kings too stupid to know good intellectual work. In a series of expertly crafted verses, Diksita first attacks the king and his officers for a world in which scholars and scholarship have lost their relevance, then equates king and officers to the lowly buffalo and finally levels a social critique on the king and officers' lack

[134] Wujastyk, Questions of King Tukkoji. P 7-8. ; Wujastyk, Medicine and Dharma (not actually relevant); Anthony Cerruli, Narrative Well-Being: Anandarayamakhin's Joy of Life

[135] Tripathi, Radhavallabh. *Mahisasatakam of Vanchanatha: Edited with Introduction and Translation in Hindi and English*. Dillī: New Bhartiya Book Corporation, 2010.

of responsibility towards society at large. Based on the contemporaneous writings of the German missionary Reverend Christian Frederic Schwarz who was central to British involvement in Tanjavur through his personal relationship with the last kings, the work has been read primarily as a critique of the Tanjavur court at a time when not only famine but bad rule. However, as multiple historians have shown, British accounts, particularly Schwartz', was highly motivated by the desire to take over Tanjavur and creating an account of disaster and bad native rulership was key. Here, I would like to point out that the work, while drawing on themes that have been drawn out already – namely dharma and the politics of scholarship – uses a highly self-referential and cutting humor to make a social critique, even as its author is intimately woven into the politics of the court already. I cite the play here because it brings together the Sanskritizing direction of the Tanjavur Maratha court, but also points out that this didn't by any means refer to a simple link to classical texts or ideologies or a reactionary universalism. Knowledge production and even the position of the court was treated as a matter of debate, open to criticism, without preciousness and always self-consciously referential. The treatment of dance was no different and, in fact, the pressures of keeping up to date and on top of trends meant that for authors like Tukkoji and Govindacarya, producing Sanskrit texts meant turning to new paradigms of practice and ultimately changing discussions of dance significantly.[136]

Within the conversation set out by medieval scholars and responding to the politics of courtly culture of the early modern period, whether Mughal, Nayak, or Sultanate, scholars of emerging intellectual and political centers in the eighteenth century used Sanskrit textual production to establish ideals around technique, practice and performance. Scholars like Tukkoji reflected an

[136] See Novetzke article on Laine (& book) and Deshpande. *Creative Pasts.* 2007

urge to reach back to classical Kashmiri intellectuals even as he presented movement practices new to Sanskrit text. Rather than textualizing practice, he and other early modern scholars 'practicalized' text. In the process, Tukkoji and court intellectuals drew on multiple genealogies, in conversation across multiple temporal and geo-political locations. Tukkoji made multiple moves: returning to the classificatory priorities of Sharngadeva (particularly in music), framing dance through classical references to Vedic origins in universalist tones that were unique for his historical period. At the same time however, Tukkoji's primary interest was in reconciling current practices of his milieu into Sanskrit discussions on dance in the early modern period.

He focused attention on training, incorporating Tamil/Telugu vocabularies for movement blocks that reflected sadir performers' practices in the Kaveri delta. His interest in practice and training was underscored by his investment in the driving force of duty as it intersected with the practice of everyday life as well as bodily discourses of medicine. Tukkoji, in reaching back to certain classical tropes around dance, went against the grain of what was common for his time. Moreover, Tukkoji drew on a larger Maratha focus on dharma which served the Bhonsles in their mobilizing and military-political expansion from the late seventeenth century. Therefore, the development of textual ideas around dance were tied into projects of empire and state-making as well as responding to trends in intellectual production and courtly culture throughout the subcontinent.

IV. Shifting Textual Temporalities: Orientalist Natya Sastra and Abhinaya Navaneetham in the nineteenth century

Near the end of the eighteenth century, well after Tukkoji produced Sangita Saramrta, the poet Anandhabharati Iyengar wrote Tiruvidaimaruthur nonti natakam most likely under the patronage of a courtier of the Tanjavur court. In the Tiruvidaimarutur nonti natakam, Iyengar sets

up the usual scenario of encounter between bandit and dancer but describes dance with reference to adavus unlike any earlier examples of the genre:

பத்தியுள்ள மண்டபத்திலே - மேளங்கூட்டிப்	*In the bhakti-filled mandapam – melam kUtti*
பாடினாள் தங்கமுத்து ஆடினாளே	*she sang, Thangamuttu danced*
ஆடிய கேளிக்கையைப் - பார்த்திட	*The performance (kellikai) she danced, to watch it*
ஆயிரங்கண் வேணும் ஞாயம் சொன்னேன்	*one needs 1000 eyes, I told the truth.*
கூடு துத்திப் புல்லாங்குழல் - மெத்தளங்	*With thutthi flute - maddalam*
குணங் கொண்டு தாளமும் இணங்கியதே	*talams with good qualities come together.*
இணங்கிய வரிசை கண்டேன் - அடவுகள்	*Well-joined verse I heard - adavus*
எத்தனைவிதமோ தங்கமுத்துப் பிடித்தாள்	*of so many types, Thangamuttu showed*
வணங்கிய அபிநயத்திற் - கைபிடிக்கும்	*graceful abhinayam, she showed with hands*
வரிசையும் பதம்பாடும் பெருமைகளும்	*verses & padhams she sang w/ praises.*
பெருமை பெறு மேனகையோ - ரம்பையோ	*Is she the pride-filled Menakai? Rambai?*
பேராம் உருவகியோ. ஆரோவென்றேன்	*the great Urvashi?*
அருமையறிந்து நானே - பார்க்கின்ற	*I who understood her greatness, she*
அசைப்பைக் கண்டாள் மெத்தப் பசப்பினளே	*saw me awestruck, and enticed me*
பசப்பி நடனஞ் செய்தாள்	*she enticingly danced natanam*

Unlike previous nonti natakams which framed dance solely in terms of dancers' skill in the gestural languages of love and erotic play, srngara abhinaya, and dancer's charm (both the charm of her appearance and the charm of her movement, sound, and sometimes smell), Iyengar's nonti natakam also includes the dancer's skill in adavus, or abstract movement technique. Even beyond the world of Sanskrit texts, the particular terms along which Tukkoji defined dance in the early eighteenth century carried valence as part of a broader shift in dance paradigms. The importance of technique in conceptions of dance crossed between worlds of practice, Sanskrit text and popular poetic imagination of dancers' performance. Along with this focus on the technical seems to be an attention to dance, including srngara abhinaya, in visual terms rather than through other sensory inputs and inner visceral response that usually defined scenarios of this type in popular dramas. Moreover, the references used to praise the dancer – Menakai, Rambha, Urvashi – are all apsaras or celestial dancers married to celestial musicians (gandharvas) in Vedic references, harkening back to classical texts on dance, music and dramaturgy like the Natyasastra. Iyengar, writing for a patron associated with the Tanjavur court near the end of the century has co-opted the nonti natakam genre which came out of the urban milieus of new Tamil-speaking elites like the Setupati kings in the far south and the palayakkarar 'little kings' in the less affluent Tamil hinterlands. In doing so, however, Iyengar flavors the encounter of bandit and dancer and the description of dance with the increasingly Sanskrit-forward affluent court culture of the Kaveri delta. He reflects new trends in talking about dance – in terms of abstract movement technique rather than the gestural language of erotic performance – that are gaining hold by this time.

New figures emerged in the south Asian landscape who engaged with Sanskrit scholarship. In 1789, the British Orientalist scholar William Jones published the first English translation of a

Sanskrit Drama – *Shakuntala; or the Fatal Ring*. As the first center of British authority in the subcontinent, Calcutta became the primary center for the production of knowledge around Indian ancient classicism. The early Journals of the Asiatic Society of Bengal was as interested in Persian classicism as Sanskrit. At the time, European Orientalists were looking for a parallel to European classicism. The strategy was to present something comparative to the West, so Sanskrit theatre was compared to Greek tragedies and Natya Sastra to Aristotle's Poetics – except Sanskrit dramas were not tragedies and the Natya Sastra was not anything like Poetics[137].

"Dramatick poetry must have been immemorially ancient in the Indian empire : the invention of it is commonly ascribed to Bheret, a sage {?} believed to have been inspired, who invented also a system of musick which bears his name ; but this opinion of its origin is rendered very doubtful by the universal belief, that the first Sanscrit verse ever heard by mortals was pronounced in a burst of resentment by the great Válmic, who flourished in the silver age of the world, and was author of an Epick Poem on the war of his contemporary, Ráma, king of Ayódhyà ; so that no drama in verse could have been represented before his time ; and the Indians have a wild story, that the first regular play, on the same subject with the Rámáyan, was composed by Hanumat or Pávan, who commanded an army of Satyrs or Mountaineers in Ráma's expedition [368] against Lancà"

Jones had a history of Orientalist scholarship, starting mainly with Persian works and knowledge on Persia, Turkey and the Middle East. His interest was linguistic philology, particularly comparative philology – the origins and relationships of language families. In 1783, he was appointed judge to the Court at Fort St. George in Calcutta and moved to the

[137] Wagoner, Phillip B. "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 4 (2003): 783–814.

subcontinent. The next year he founded the Asiatic Society and studied the Sanskrit vedas with Rāmalocana, a pandit teaching at the Nadiya Hindu university in Bengal.[138] Over the next few decades, he and the Asiatic Society produced innumerable works of translation and explanation on everything from laws, music, literature, botany, and geography, defining European knowledge of India to this day. Jones died in 1794, while the Society and its journal were carried on.[139]

In some ways, Jones was inhabiting the space of Indian intellectuals by embodying administrative and scholarly authority, as minister-intellectuals of Indian courts often did. Unlike South Asian intellectuals, however, Jones was not invested in the relational and trans-local dynamics of power that defined Sanskrit knowledge production in the subcontinent and shaped not only its circulations but the very debates and aesthetic-intellectual priorities from which scholars defined the content of their texts. Moreover, Jones did not imagine himself as part of the commentary tradition per se. He did not conceive of knowledge production around older Sanskrit texts as a matter of debate, putting himself in conversation with scholars across time and various geopolitical contexts to present his own views on what ideas were relevant and worthy of holding onto. Rather, Jones' saw his work as an act of simple translation, bringing Sanskrit texts to an English-speaking world. That process of translation, however, involved multiple moves which isolated the text from the web of associations and politics of intellectual trends in which it existed and fixed it as a stable and unitary entity in order to be re-packaged for an audience that

[138] Cannon, Garland, and Kevin Brine. *Objects of Enquiry: The Life, Contributions, and Influences of Sir William Jones, 1746-1794*. NYU Press, 1995. P 56, citing William Jones' personal letters

[139] See Also, P Regnaud, J Grosset Intro to their publication of NS (1898)? Or of F Hall's version (1865). Intro to first volume of Asiatic Society of Bengal (1808? Need to read), Transactions of the Literary Society of Madras (1827) or Madras Journal of Literature and Science (1837). The latter two don't have as much on language or drama, interest seems mainly on ecology, geography, flora/fauna and legal matters. Article from Ellis? Mackenzie? Others from Madras Literary Society (est 1817) Walter Elliot?

didn't know or care about the contexts of its production and circulation in the subcontinent. Instead, Orientalists like Jones sought go far back as possible to identify an Indian classical antiquity which they could use to define subcontinental culture most quintessentially. Moreover, the search for Indian origins coincided with the administrative function of many of the scholars who sought to frame the Indian present as degenerate and in need of British rule and reform.[140]

The preface of Jones' Sakuntala shows that the primary interest in dramas was in understanding whether or not they represented a true and authentic picture of Hindustan and to qualify what constituted as truth. Through an elision of multiple kinds of Indian textual knowledge – histories, intellectual commentaries on aesthetics, performance texts – Orientalist scholars created new rules for true and false knowledge.

"Having an eager desire to know *the real state of this empire before the conquest of it by the Savages of the North*, I was very solicitous, on my arrival in Bengal, to procure access to those books, either by the help of translations, if they had been translated, or by learning the language in which they were originally composed, and which I had yet a stronger inducement to learn from its connection with the administration of justice to the Hindûs ; but when I was able to converse with the Bráhmens, they assured me that *the Nátacs were not histories*, and abounded with fables ; that they were [366] extremely popular works, and consisted of conversations in prose and verse, held before ancient Rájás in their publick assemblies, on an infinite variety of subjects, and in various dialects of India : this definition gave me no very distinct idea ; but *I concluded that they were dialogues on moral or literary topicks ; whilst other Europeans, whom*

[140] Chatterjee, Partha. *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*. Princeton University Press, 2012.

I consulted, had understood from the natives that they were discourses on dancing, musick, or poetry."

The play Jones' had chosen to translate was popular with literati in the subcontinent. Based on a scene in the epic Mahabharata, the classical Sanskrit dramatist and poet Kalidasa wrote the play Sakuntala. Various new poets over the centuries produced new versions and it was particularly popular in the period before Jones' writing.[141] For example, about a century before Jones, one of the early Maratha Bhonsle kings of Tanjavur, Ekkoji, wrote his own Marathi version of the Sakuntalam play. It was not a word-for-word translation of Kalidasa's play but a re-telling in the format of Telugu yaksagana musical dramas (long verse songs and spoken interceptions) in the language of Marathi. Ekkoji's Sakuntalam thus involved multiple translations. While he pays homage to the classic poet Kalidasa, as many have done over the centuries, Ekkoji evinces no sense of being beholden to an idea of an original. His text-performance is in conversation with many others who imagined Sakuntalam into various forms. His version speaks to his positionality as a public authority in the south, the elite urban milieu from which he wrote and sought to shape as a new ruler, and the relational political geographies which directed his linguistic and aesthetic decisions. Jones most likely came across the text due to its existing popularity and came to know about the classical poet Kalidasa through conversations with his 'informant'-collaborators.

Yet, the text he produces isolates it from both these networks of knowledge production and the broader political geographies in which he too is a part. Instead the genre of 'Translation' allows Jones to present the text as a faithful reproduction of a centuries old text. Similarly, in the

[141] See Romila Thapar's work Sakuntala Texts, Readings, Histories. 2011

following years, other Orientalist scholars would 'discover' the original text of the Natyasastra.[142] As I have sought to show in the previous sections of this chapter, the Natyasastra was not directly quoted in discussions of dance in south India in the eighteenth century, with regards to the forms that would become bharata natyam, and had not been for some time. However, it was clearly in circulation in name, secondhand references and some conceptual ideas, among many other medieval and early modern texts and ideas. The name or title of Bharata held importance, especially as I have shown, with the renewal of interest in classical Sanskrit textual knowledge from the Marathas from the late seventeenth century. It was far from lost. However, from the earliest English translations of the text, efforts were made to fix and universalize it which could only be done through an erasure of the dynamics of text and practice in knowledge production around dance in the subcontinent in the centuries leading to colonialism. Jones's translation of Sakuntalam into English involved several translating moves and new orientation towards new audiences. However, unlike Ekkoji who acknowledges both those who created versions of Sakuntalam before him and his own part in re-envisioning it or Tukkoji who re-envisions Sanskritic models of dance around the new practices he translates into the Sanskrit system, Jones' presents his translation as directly presenting Kalidasa's original, not acknowledging the web of translations and versions that led to his, nor his own position in presenting a different version of the play (in English, in distinctly Shakespearean style). At the end of the day, while Jones, like Ekkoji was both an intellectual and in a position of authority in the definition of a new state, their approaches were very different.

[142] Versions of Natyasastra, starting with partial translation by American orientalist.

In contrast to Jones' search for original knowledge in the form of Sanskrit ur texts, nineteenth century texts in Tamil presented a translocal and transtemporal approach to classical textual production and the problem of translating worlds of knowledge. Panchapakesa Nattuvanar wrote *Abhinaya Navaneetham* in 1835 – a practical 'how to' for dancers, largely focused on gestural vocabulary of the hands. Panchapakesa Nattuvanar was a 'samasthana vidwan' or primary scholar-musician of Tanjavur and Ramanathapuram courts. In the middle of the nineteenth century Coromandel poets, musicians, scholars and dancers circulated through the courts of the far south: namely Ramanathapuram, Ettayapuram, Tanjavur, and Mysore. At the turn of the twentieth century – another scholar-musician Subbarama Diksitar wrote a significant work titled Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini. The work not only canonized many of the eighteenth-century musician-composers like Thyagaraja, Shyama Sastri, and Diksitar (to whose lineage he himself belonged) but also experimented with the relationship between text and performance by introducing new kinds of notation for the compositions of this period. Subbarama Diksitar had been adopted by a musician of the Ettayapuram court and soon became a musician of the court too. These writers continued both the practicalization of text manifested by Tukkoji. In addition, both scholars were themselves practitioners, belonged to lineages of practice leading back into the eighteenth century and continued to exist in the translocal network of patronage beyond Madras – leading them to treat textual knowledge production with a continued close relationship to what was being practiced and performed, rather than in objective or universal terms.

V. Conclusion

I traced two major circulation-genealogies in this chapter. The first moves from the medieval Deccan, through the Vijayanagar imperial expansion, up to Mughal Delhi in the early modern period, back down the Deccan, Ahmednagar and Golconda in the seventeenth century, down to

the Kaveri delta in the 1730s and forward. The second moves from the medieval Deccan, through the Vijayanagar imperial expansion, down south to Tanjavur and Madurai with the cultural-intellectual production of the Vijayanagar successor Nayak courts and from there to the Kaveri delta in the 1730s under the Maratha Bhonsles. These circulations show that textual ideals around performance were not only deeply intersected with poetry, painting and music in the early modern period but that spheres of activity were not limited to Hindu and Muslim courts but traveled through and conversed across them as per the dictates of political and economic geographies. These relationships shifted in the eighteenth century, but still not in the straightforward ways, along religious lines, we might today assume.

As with Persian, the other major language of state-craft, intellectual activity and culture from the early modern period, Sanskrit was a field of distinctly self-conscious and modern knowledge production before, and even into, the colonial period. Thanks to the commentary tradition, textual knowledge was a field of exchange in which scholars entered into debates, some long-standing, in conversation both with scholars long before them and those who were their peers. Particularly from the sixteenth century onwards, the circulations of intellectuals, the multiple influences they drew on in producing their ideas and texts on performance and the subsequent circulation and re-use or referencing of their work by later scholars, stitching together the subcontinent. I argue that knowledge around dance, in relation to the trends in practice and performance were translocal and transtemporal not in some general sense, but directly in relation to the political geographies which often framed the production of scholarship and performance itself through patronage and the dynamics of state-formation. Drawing intellectuals to urban centers of state and producing new knowledge that was relevant and fresh was part of the project of state and empire, establishing new political and cultural centers particularly in moments of

profound historical change. Therefore, to talk about dance in the Coromandel is not merely to talk about 'south Indian' dance (as distinct from 'north Indian' dance), a demarcation that has little relevance to the workings of pre-colonial networks of knowledge production and has been mapped on in hind-sight.

Finally, in terms of a historical argument about dance these circulations and the ways in which authors spoke across time and space complicate simple notions of ancient and modern when it comes to Sanskrit textual production on performance. In fact, the central dynamics we associate with classical south Indian dances today developed trans-temporally, but in a relatively recent context and are distinctly modern. The early modern centrality of srngara rasa to conceptions and composition of dance to the eighteenth-century relationship between Sanskrit text and focus on training and effort that Tukkoji Bhonsle presented defined the ways in which we think about forms understood as south Indian classical dance forms today. Tukkoji's discussion in particular, which focused on skill over communicative possibilities - the idea that regularity and focus on minutiae of practice was a means of good citizenship or subject hood, foreshadowed many of the discursive constructions of dance, public culture and citizenship that underscored twentieth century revival movements. Moreover, even the close relationship between Sanskrit textual debate and practice continued in some ways in the twentieth century – particularly with the prolific Sanskrit Indologist and dance/music scholar V Raghavan and his close relationship with the influential devadasi performer, choreographer, and teacher Balasaraswati. When V Raghavan presented his speech defining bharata natyam to a newly formed twentieth India, Balasaraswati was with him. As secretary of the Music Academy Madras from 1944 to 1979, Dr. Raghavan extended institutional support to Balasaraswati in several ways and furthermore, V Raghavan's ideas were often formulated through his attention to and writing

on Balasaraswati and vice versa – as seen in writings such as V Raghavan's review of Balasaraswati's performance in 1933 under the pseudonym Bhavuka. Complicated as it was, their relationship had some of the back and forth that determined practice and textual ideals in the early modern subcontinent.

However, along with dance's disappearance from new textual production in the nineteenth century, dance lost its living associations of Indian elite concerns around translocal cosmopolitanism, class and political mobility, and elite gender norms around patronage and participation. This, along with the concerted move on the part of important early twentieth century dancers and scholars such as Rukmini Devi Arundale, E Krishna Iyer, V Raghavan and others contributed to the centralization of classical Sanskrit texts as the source for, rather than in conversation with, practice. Ultimately, colonial and postcolonial histories de-temporalized Sanskrit textual production around dance, and in the process dance as well as classical tradition. Important to note however, is that this de-temporalization could only occur by first erasing and then disavowing the circulations and distinctly geopolitical concerns within which both performance and textual production existed and navigated within and continue to exist and navigate within today – but without the same transparency over agendas.

CHAPTER 3

Structuring Repertoires and Socio-Spatial Publics: What is a Kacceri?

கச்சேரி kaccēri, *s. (Arab.)*

A revenue or police office, a court of justice, a place of public business, உத்தியோகசாலை 2. *(local.)* An assembly for vocal and dramatic entertainments, சங்கீதவினோதசபை.

1862 Miron Winslow Tamil English Dictionary

By the early nineteenth century, a distinctly structured repertoire had been defined as *sadir kacceri* (sadir concert), for dance performances in the court, salon and chatram contexts of urban Coromandel. This *kacceri* was defined by new genres which centered abstract elements of rhythm, solfege and *nrtta* movement. The *kacceri* was distinctly hybrid and brought together not only new genres but genres from various performative-religious contexts which had not heretofore been part of one cohesive repertoire or world of movement. Moreover, this assemblage of movement and music worlds was clearly structured – not through narrative logic but through a particular dynamic trajectory of the elements of rhythm, melody and lyric.

Common narratives of bharata natyam history state that traditional concert repertoire developed in the temples of south India and was systematized and standardized by four brothers, composer-teachers (nattuvanar), at the Tanjavur court at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In the first chapter, I discussed the strategic elision of multiple histories marked as 'court' and 'temple' into a cohesive historical narrative. Here, I point out not only does this narrative single out specific individuals as entirely responsible for current repertoire, it also dates this shift to a watershed moment in the 1830s. In this chapter, I instead firstly point to longer trajectories of change, involving multiple sets of people and most importantly, each with their own movements (migratory movements of performers and saint-composers, circulation of distinct movement-music dynamics related to socio-spiritual movements). Relatedly, I argue that out of these movements and shifts resulted a new dynamic of dance performance that can be understood as a 'concert' – distinctly bounded and structured and oriented towards new kinds of audience and social space.

In the famous and often quoted speech given by Balasaraswati at the Tamil Isai Sangam in 1975, she likened the trajectory of the bharata natyam margam to the practice of moving through a temple – moving from the alarippu which is like entering the outer entrance tower (gopuram), to the jatiswaram which is like the intermediary hall (artha mandapam), to the main hall (mandapa) with the sabdam, to enter the main precinct of the deity with the varnam. With the padam, one enters the inner sanctum, a space of cool, quiet and calm. The tillana is the final burst of energy, the bright burning of the camphor illuminating the body of the god.

While the temple metaphor is commonly cited as an essential aphorism of bharata natyam tradition, the movement through the temple is not the only trajectory Balasaraswati is tracing. Intertwined in this movement is a deliberate articulation of a relationship between rhythm, melody, and lyric. Balasaraswati alludes to a logic that starts purely with rhythm (alarippu), then adds melody (jatiswaram), then adds lyric (sabdam), arriving at the main piece, which brings

together all these pieces "providing the fullest scope to her [the dancer's] own creativity".[143] Following this virtuosic exploration is the padam, which strips away the distraction of rhythm, focusing on soul stirring lyricism and the accompanying abhinaya. The setup ends with a final breakout into movement, rhythm and limited lyric with the tillana.

Balasaraswati highlights central aspects of danced repertoire that emerged by the end of the eighteenth century. The first aspect is the interplay between rhythm, melody and lyric that corresponded to an interplay between movement meant to signify or evoke affect (abhinaya) and movement that illustrates rhythm (nrtta). Moreover, for Balasaraswati, and many practitioners today, dance and devotion are thus inseparably interwoven in the very structure of the performance. Even while holding onto the centrality of padams as the most essential expression of bhakti and therefore dance itself, Balasaraswati's metaphor clearly presents the varnam as the virtuosic tour de force of the performance. The second aspect is the attention to order – the idea that a concert performance entails particular kinds of dances in a set order which provides the logic for the performance trajectory from set starting point to set ending point. The third aspect is the signification of danced performance at the intersection of the social and the spiritual.

In this chapter, I complicate both the general notion of a timeless traditional repertoire and the focus on the 1830s with the standardization of the Tanjavur Quartette. By examining central pieces of repertoire, the concert structure and the socio-spatial connotations associated with concert performance, I suggest that what we understand as traditional was a product of a series of changes occurring over the latter half of the eighteenth century. Namely, I trace a move away from a focus on lyric and towards other musical-danced elements like solfege and syllabic

[143] T Balasaraswati, Presidential Speech at Tamil Isai Sangam, 1975.

rhythm; a move towards an attention to structure, eschewing the narrative logic of earlier dance-dramas; and a distinct attention to what a concert meant in terms of socio-spatial associations. Moreover, I suggest that these changes were the result of movements of composers, performers, and performance ideologies leading into and continuing through the eighteenth century. Populist devotional (*bhakti*) movements and state-sponsored aesthetic priorities converged in the Kaveri delta at this time, producing distinct paradigms of dance-making that came to be understood as the sadir kacceri.

Composers, dancers and musicians drew together dances from various existing dance, music and drama genres. In turn, the genres they drew together came from diverse social and aesthetic contexts – existing courtly erotic poetry-performance, dances performed for temple processionals, and pieces from Mughal and Maratha courts/popular culture. Each of the genres has its own history and set of socio-cultural references implicit in form and content. Thus, the repertoire was hybrid in language, form, structure, and socio-performative location. Moreover, the repertoire incorporated and centralized *new* genres that emerged only in the middle of the eighteenth century. These genres – varna, svarajati, and others – reflected new aesthetic sensibilities regarding movement, music and rhythm. Coming from dance-drama (devotional) movements across the subcontinent, they introduced abstract rhythm and melody as central performative elements to sadir performance – with connotations of intellectuality/virtuosity. At the same time, the emergence of these forms sidelined older courtly genres which were more focused on lyric. Thus, the repertoire represented a shift towards more structural concerns in dance and music.

I suggest that we can understand repertoire as choreographic assemblage. Assemblages bring together a number of distinct elements that were not together before – as the kacceri repertoire

did. Furthermore, the relationships of component parts are not stable and fixed; rather, they can be displaced and replaced within and among other bodies. The idea of assemblage points to the synthetic nature of entities and the fluidity of the relationships between components, that is relations of exteriority.[144] There is nothing essential or fixed about the composite, in this case the margam kacceri; it derives meaning and identity from the relationship of its parts. Perhaps the most productive part of thinking about the sadir kacceri as a choreographic assemblage is the attention to process that it draws attention to. Assemblages act on semiotic, material and social flows simultaneously – here, each dance (sub-genre) is a particular knowledge formation, physical embodiment and social dynamic. Thinking about assemblage means thinking about human actors, performance practices, social space, and economic flows that intersect and collide to produce what we understand as a particular dance paradigm. Thinking about choreography focuses attention on movements, of bodies in space and time. The sadir kacceri is assemblage not only with dances coming together, but also different kinds of performers and different socio-performative worlds of practice being assembled into a synthetic 'whole', that is the concert.

The new genres and attention to structure by composer-performers in the eighteenth century Kaveri delta drew on multiple genealogies of performance related to devotional movements in the subcontinent – namely the Haridasa movements from the western Deccan which became prominent in the 15th century under Vijayanagar patronage (Purandara dasa, later Maratha sants); Srivaishnava devotionalism from the eastern Deccan around the same time which was embodied in the ethos of the Nayak kings (Annammayya, Ksetrayya, more); and Madhura bhakti from eastern India especially from the 17th century onwards (Siddendra Yogi, Narayan Tirta). All of

[144] According to Manuel Delanda's take on Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory: DeLanda, Manuel. *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. A&C Black, 2006.

these were distinct, hybrid, and translocal movements and each embodies different philosophies of relationship to the metaphysical in the form of a human deity – renunciation, pragmatic realism and personal devotion respectively – in large part through performative practices, generating distinct genres of music, dance and drama. All three, moreover, had close relationships to projects of empire – bringing together politics, class and religion and bringing their performance traditions into the courtly realm. The trajectories of bhakti movements and the new genres and structures for dance performance they produced thus complicate simple notions of courtly and devotional or populist and elite; instead they point to an important dynamic embodied in dance performance, that courtly elite cultural production relied on the popularity and accessibility of devotional performance practices in key historical moments and that these devotional movements relied on the political economics of courtly and urban elite patronage to grow and expand as much as they did. Dance is central to this dynamic.

In the first section of this chapter I trace historical focus on dance as a space for hybrid form and influences from the early modern Vijayanagar court through to various south Indian urban contexts in the long eighteenth century. I suggest that sadir repertoire-as-assemblage brought together not only different danced forms but with them, different values associated with performance. Scholars have significantly pointed out that the compositional legacy of Vijayanagar imperial patronage gave rise to the mainstay of devadasi *sadir* performance – the erotic lyric performance of padam poetry centered on nuanced gestural vocabularies. In this chapter, I am interested in the focus on abstract elements of movement and music that became central under Vijayanagar court patronage.

In the second section of this chapter, I turn to the specific new genres (svarajati, varnam) that emerged by the mid eighteenth century through the work of composers straddling the spheres of

the Tanjavur court and public devotional dance-drama performance. Through these genres, I first trace the trajectories of *bhagavatar* performer-composers, as they migrated into the Kaveri delta under state patronage and defined genealogies of performance dynamics and devotional values. I then turn to the performance dynamics which their work and Tanjavur court patronage quickly made central to dasi concert dance through the genres they introduced – namely, prioritizing of abstract elements of solfege and rhythm over an older focus on lyricism and metrical aesthetics. These priorities dovetailed with a general focus on the universal qualities of movement and sound as not just aesthetically pleasing but as vehicles for a democratizing spiritual personal experience in the context of a distinct politics of bhakti.

I then turn, in the third section, to the emerging question of the structure of dance performance by the end of the eighteenth century. Focusing on a specific performance text for dance produced by the penultimate Tanjavur king, I tease apart the genealogies he brought together in presenting a vision for performance. The performance structure drew on narrative drama and hybrid expositional bhakti performance but presented a distinct structure for dance specifically - organized around a sense of compositional variety vis-à-vis the abstract elements I traced in the previous section. I locate the focus on structure in a set of shifting performance-social values that aimed to re-make courtly production more broadly accessible along new terms.

In the last section, I address the epistemological construction of concert dance, the sadir kacceri, through the very terms sadir and kacceri. Both the terms only came to connote dance concert at the beginning of the nineteenth century – around the time the changes of the last half century were being standardized into the form we understand today. Both ‘sadir’ and ‘kaccēri’ were recent Perso-Arabic loan words into Tamil, with thoroughly non-aesthetic connotations: sadir meaning cheapness and kacceri meaning administrative-revenue space. The multiple moves

that brought these terms to mean dance and concert by the turn of the nineteenth century makes visible questions about how dance was consumed and changing notions of public space. [one more sentence about how changing repertoire and traditional structure came out of these very shifts, so no go on the narrative of degeneration or decline]

Note on sources ans method: The content of this chapter overlaps in some ways with the work of Indian musicologists who have attended to the evolution of performance genres. However, I am interested in a dance as negotiating larger trans-local movements and the changing socio-politics of a particular historical period (the long eighteenth century and the early modern shifts and genealogies leading into it). As with the rest of my dissertation, my focus here is on the ways in which trans-local movement and circulations are constitutive of new genres, structures and roles for dance performance. Moreover, in my close readings of song-text and performance texts, I do not focus only on lyrical content so much as compositional structure and the choreographic dynamics that evidences, between lyric, syllabic rhythm and solfege. This choice also moves me away from the work of most musicologists who approach dance, if at all, through the study of music or literature. The choice I have made is not merely for its own sake but also due to the historical argument I am making: there was a move away from the importance of lyric and towards non-linguistic or abstract elements in dance that is, in itself, redefined dance towards what we take for granted today. While some of the song and performance texts have been published, none have been analyzed for the dynamics I am interested in here. The translations (where included) are also my own, working in places from published versions and in places from original manuscripts.

I. The Set Up: Kacceri As Assemblage

Hybridity and assemblage became a defining feature of dance in the early modern centuries of Deccan and South Indian courts, largely in association with the Vijayanagar court. Sanskrit texts reflect this urge from 16th century Vijayanagar court scholars. The Vijayanagar court scholar Devanagari expanded the discussion of dances from the medieval Sangita Ratnakara's limited list of three of four types of dances. Devenacarya added a new 'paddhati', method or approach - sabda-prabandha paddhati and framed the gondali dance from western India (in the Sangita Ratnakara) as 'nrtta-gita paddhati', 'nrtta-vadhya paddhati' or the dance-music approach and the dance-instrumentation approach (highlighting the importance music-dance relationship). The new paddhati is also framed in terms of musical developments. Titled sabda-prabandha, it foregrounds syllabic rhythmic material and prabandha, a kind of long-form musical composition which became popular with the Vijayanagar court. In this context, Devenacarya lists a set of dances: *Puspanjali, Mukhacali and Suddha-Yati nrtta* as introduction, followed by a whole list of dances: *Raganga-Yati-nrtta, sabda nrtta, rupa nrtta, dhvada, sabdacali, sudasabda, sudagita, gita-prabandhas, cindu, daru and drupad.* This list of dances has been compiled from multiple performative traditions. They also show an emerging interest in more complex relationships between nrtta (abstract rhythm), sabda (syllabic sound), and various kinds of lyric composition. However, these dances are not presented as a list for a performance; instead, they are found in different sections of the text under multiple 'approaches'.

Over the eighteenth century, the musician-composers, performers and patrons of the Tanjavur court brought together dances from multiple court cultures and multiple socio-religious milieus, each with their own aesthetic background and history. For example, alarippu, kavuthvam and mallari brought with them the aesthetic of the Tamil Saiva performative

traditions associated with oduvars and existing dance traditions associated with Saiva temples. They are underscored by meter-driven rhythm, with 5-beat and 3-beat rhythms being common. Melodically, they tend to draw from a stock set of tunes associated with Tamil pann traditions. On the other hand, todayamangalam privileges sloka text and has associations with Vaishnava bhakti. Padams, on the other hand, had a strong associated with Nayak courts of south India from the late 17th century, rather than with ritual temple repertoires. Bringing these all together positioned the dasi repertoire as a hybrid aesthetic form, drawing from different regional contexts as well as from different socio-aesthetic contexts.

The first set of dances in the ordered list acts as an opening – one which privileges rhythm and percussion – combining invocation with syllabic music and simple tunes, with the dance involving a stage entrance and rhythm-based nrtta movement. The opening set of pieces for south/east Indian dance (bharata natyam, kuchipudi, mohiniattam and odissi) came from medieval-early modern courtly practices, and is seen in texts such as Sangita Muktavali. In Serfoji's performances, this includes *melaprapatthi todayamangalam, kavuthvam, sollkattu,* and *alarippu* or *jaya jaya, saranu, alaru, sollu*. Many were pieces that were incorporated into south Indian courtly performance in the eighteenth century.[145] The melaprapti was a completely rhythmic piece with solkattu and nrtta, acting as a quickly paced opening. Kavuthvam came from the sphere of ritual temple festival performance in which dancers would follow the deity as he/she was carried on a palanquin around the main streets surrounding the temple. Mostly in Tamil, kavuthvams were in some ways embodied extensions of rhythmic Tamil music forms

[145] Today, odissi performances open with the mangalacharan and pushpanjali; kuchipudi performances open with melavimpu or purvaranga; margam bharata natyam performances often open with pushpanajali and alarippu; and mohiniattam with solkattu/anjali

associated with oduvars and Siva worship. Dancers would perform pieces like the kavuthvam and mallari when the procession stopped at each of the corners of the four streets surrounding the temple that the procession traversed.[146] The todayamangalam comes out of the male bhagavata drama traditions. Until recently it was still performed regularly in margam performances of bharata natyam, the lyrics starting with "Jaya Janaki ramana", especially in the Vazhuvur school. Salaam daru, a piece found in song texts by court composers and kings from the early eighteenth century onwards and meant to be performed at the beginning of courtesan performance was meant to welcome (and praise) a patron – it references the standard salutation of Urdu court etiquette, the salaam. It was a piece that reflected the influence of Islamic court culture from further north in the subcontinent in language and the hybridity of performance forms through its structure and melodies.

A number of other kinds of dances found their way into dasi repertoires by the end of the eighteenth century, even if they were not canonized by king-composers or court musicians. For example, lavani was a genre of poetry, music and dance popular in the Peshwa Maratha courts and performed at the court by women of lower caste groups that came to Tanjavur in the late eighteenth century, according to Modi records[1]. Another genre that became part of royal and non-royal households was Gondhala, performed at childbirth celebrations. A number of Hindustani music and dance forms also found their way into dasi performance in multiple contexts making visible not only a general sense of inclusivity but also the specific networks of exchange from Marathi and Mughal courts in the culture of urban Tanjavur. The repertoire for female courtly dance that emerged by the nineteenth century thus brought together dances from a

[146] Seetha Subramaniam, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music, during the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries* (University of Madras, 1981).

number of existing social and aesthetic spheres. A number of textual sources and oral traditions present a picture of negotiation and fluidity around what was included in performance repertoires and what was left out.

While early modern Sanskrit texts on dance and to an extent, the Tanjavur state Modi records from the early nineteenth century mention a variety of dances, the production song-texts and performance-texts provide an idea of what was in vogue. Poets patronized through the Vijayanagar empire popularized the genre of padams, which became central to courtesan performance under the Nayak courts and Golconda sultanate of south/east subcontinent. As a genre of erotic love poetry addressed to Krishna as lover, padams explore the sensuous possibilities of physicalized relationships. Like dance-dramas, they are thus also lyric-focused. Padams in particular operate through the deep possibilities and evocative tensions between gestural and lingual (written and sung) vocabularies. Whether or not they present narratives per se, both dance-dramas and poetic padam performance operate primarily on narrative possibilities – the creative possibilities of exploring the many tables and scenarios of desire anticipated, frustrated or satiated. Ksetrayya, the composers most responsible for popularizing the genre presented a world in which courtesan women were in unabashedly in control of not only relational dynamics, but the trajectories of desire and their own pleasure as well as the concreteness of financial transaction.

Aside from padams, in early modern performance in south Indian courtly contexts, the compositional forms of concert dance and music centered around highly complex meter in lyrical compositions, namely prabandhas and darus.[147] Before the eighteenth century, nrtta was found

[147] See Seetha Subrahmanian's discussion of *daru* in her work *Tanjore as a Seat of Music*

primarily as embedded moments in performance in early modern dance-dramas. Short rhythmic interludes tied together episodic tableaus in narratives. Dance-dramas developed especially in the contexts of bhakti movements from eastern India and the Deccan, for example with the Gaudiya Vaishnava movements – focusing on the body as the site of knowledge and connection to the divine – starting with Jeyadeva and his operatic drama exploring various facets of a devotee's (woman's) love for Krishna, as lover and friend in the 13th century. The rise of the Vijayanagara empire (14th century) and its court cultures centralized and popularized the paradigm of dance dramas as an elite form popular at court and in courtly textual production. The Telugu yaksagana dance dramas of the Vijayanagara court and its successor Nayak states in the south (Tanjavur, Madurai, others), were a staple expression of court culture. By the late seventeenth century, dance-drama traditions carried particular aesthetic values and choreographic structures. They were distinctly gendered because they were performed primarily by male troupes. They already encapsulated an important dialectic between state and popular religiosity, framing sometimes hegemonic ideals and tastes in a performative form underscored by radical egalitarianism. Dance dramas themselves make visible a complex relationship between popular religiosity and the state and the centrality of dance/drama performance.[148]

[148] The devotional dance-dramas of the Vaishnava cults, particularly Narasimha cults, were primarily performed by troupes of men, thus defining distinctly gendered repertoires and aesthetic values for elite courtly performance by the early modern period. In the seventeenth century, Nayak courtly performance production in Tanjavur focused on dance-dramas and erotic poetry (namely of Ksetrayya's). Both these forms privileged lyricism, though not narrative per se. In content, both dance-dramas and poem-songs revolved around similar themes of a man and woman's encounter, separation and various scenarios of union – whether imagined in terms of a king and wife/courtesan, or courtesan and god-customer. In tone, they shared a sense of biting humor, revelling in the different ways the interactions of man and woman could unfold, sexually and otherwise. In form, they shared an episodic quality but dance dramas weaved in entire personal histories or mythical histories into the sexual trajectory, drawing it out into epic proportions while the poetry provided snapshots and left much more implicit and in the background. This also left more room for padams to draw on the performance environment to imply context, such as the patron being performed to and the darbar hall as the setting for an imagined romantic encounter.

In the sections that follow, I attend to how different composers, performers, spaces and elite patronage came together in various ways – assemblages – to produce firstly the new genres that quickly became central to concert dance repertoire and secondly, the underlying aesthetic and structural shifts that defined dance in new ways in increasingly universalized and abstract terms, to present dance beyond the language barriers of lyricism and localized sectarian tradition. Moreover, I argue that these assemblages were key to constructing new kinds of publics who viewed dance and participated in its function as both entertainment and universalized aesthetics of devotion in the latter part of the eighteenth century – whether these publics were real or imagined in the language of the performances themselves.

II. Constructing New Genres: Nrtta and Bhagavatar Migrations

Writing in 1806, Raghaviah Charry provided an entry point into the logics of courtly performance. Charry, a native informant of Holt Mackenzie's Mysore Survey Project, wrote this introduction to south Indian 'nautch' dancing for his European employers.

> "It is now time to begin with the proceedings of the dancing set, when entered on the Court Yard. With the girl in front, the Natuvas (generally two) one on each side, and the small drum with the sruti bellows, and the singer together with the old mother in the rear, the scenes commence. Nattuva expresses first of all the technical syllables of Dim Dim in honor of Sambho, the first inventor of the art, and commemorates. Brumma with similar unmeaning sounds. An invocation to Vinayaka, or Pelliar, follows. A Prayer to Rama, is then offered. Rama, was the great hero who conquered the King of Giants. He is reckoned to be most valiant, as well as a just prince, and hence he is invoked for the success, and prosperity, of all undertakings.

His spouse, Sita, follows him in order.

After complimenting the gods, an hymn of Salam is sung, in honor of some one of our ancient, or modern, kings. Pratapa Rudra, a famous King of Carnata, Yova Runga, an extravagant Poligar of fame, and Pratapa Sinha, and Tolaja, Rajas of Tanjore, have been in their respective days, the patrons of music."[149]

Charry's passage indicates that by the time he was writing (1806), before the Quartette's work, there was already a consciousness around the structure of a performance, and it corresponded to what we understand today in many ways. The performance starts with more nrtta-based pieces that Charry characterizes as the "Natuva expresses first of all the technical syllables of Dim Dim in honor of Sambho". After invocations to various gods, including Rama and Sita, comes the salaams or salutations to kings ancient and modern, specifically because of their patronage of the arts. It takes both sets of acknowledgements to properly begin. It is only after this considerable 'commencement' that the main part of the performance begins.

In describing the gist of the main performance, Charry outlines one important thing about dasi repertoires, or 'nautch' – "Songs, among the Hindoos, are of three principal kinds — Varna. Pada, and Keertana — the former is heavy, and the latter is dedicated to religious and divine themes." He might be referring to music or to dance, but the definition is clear. The kirtana is dedicated to religious themes, the varna is 'heavy'. By the end of the eighteenth century, varnams had been centrally incorporated into the courtly dance repertoire. They did not replace

[149] P. Raghaviah Charry. "A Short Account of Dancing Girls Treating Concisely on the General Principles of Dancing and Singing with the Translations of Two Hindo Songs." *The Literary Panorama* 3 (1808): 545–556.

padams, which continued to be a mainstay of devadasi repertoires.[150] However, by 1806 at least, the status of the varnam had reached a point where someone like Charry could utter it in the same sentence as padams, showing how important the new genre had become. It had gained not only importance, but now acquired a central place in the repertoire of solo female performance. Even though padams continued to be popular, the varnam had taken on connotations of weight and substance.[151] Charry characterizes the varnam specifically as "heavy", or something of significance, gravity, weight. Devadasi women as far as away as Telugu-speaking Andhra Pradesh referred to varnams as *ghanam*, or weighty, well into the colonial period.[152] While padam and kirtana were genres with longer history, the varnam, which so quickly became a central defining feature of dance performance emerged around mid-eighteenth century. The introduction, incorporation and ultimate centralization of varnam (and svarajati) genres for dance embodied a shift in aesthetic values. This aesthetic shift is seen not by looking at lyrical content alone, but musical composition and most importantly, the underlying choreographic elements of the dance. Introducing both solfege note singing and rhythmic jati interludes as central features, the new genres that emerged for dance around mid-century shifted some focus away from the

[150] As evidenced from descriptions of salon performance from the nineteenth century as well as the accounts of devadasi women themselves. See Soneji's Unfinished Gestures, Kersenboom-Story's Nityasumangali.

[151] Interestingly, today it is padams that have the association of being weighty but only in music not dance (thanks to Veena dhanammal's success in turning devadasi performance into a hallmark of cultured tradition and musicality). The varnam has taken on a new connotation of virtuosity. In parallel, Diksitar's compositions which have both the twin associations of Sanskrit and earlier prabandha musical form, has connotations of weightiness, as compared with Thayagaraja's kritis' pure bhakti.

[152] See Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory, and Modernity in South India* (University Of Chicago Press, 2012), 215.

lyrical focus of older dance genres like padams and the erotic gestural vocabulary that defined them in movement.[153]

Abstract elements of melody and rhythm patterning were foregrounded– particularly through solfege (svaram) and mnemonic syllable (solkattu) interludes. Musical genres like the kriti, new to the eighteenth century, epitomized the move away from a focus on lyric and complicated metrical patterns. Citing older forms like kirtana, prabandha, and daru as a bit too intellectual, some new composers in the latter half of the eighteenth century focused on simpler language, shorter lines, and shorter compositions in general. Instead of many stanzas with a focus on repeating rhyme and meter, these compositions highlighted simple refrains that punctuated two or three varied stanzas. Most importantly, composers of the new kriti focused on dynamic melodies that didn't repeat from stanza to stanza but moved with the shifts in the lines. In effect, by simplifying lyric and setting up a composition that continually moved through and forward, composers shifted the attention away from flourishes of language to the evocative possibilities of abstract aesthetic elements like melody.[154]

The development of new genres in the Kaveri delta in the eighteenth century must be understood through the lens of translocal migrations of performers and ideas about performance, especially from further north. In the seventeenth century, the Shia Muslim Qutb Shahi sultanate

[153] The genres of svarajati and subsequently varnam, presented a new trend in music and dance performance. They had roots in genres like sabda which brought together syllabic interludes with lyric in short pieces. While abstract syllables or svaras appeared in earlier genres, varnams and svarajatis systematized and rendered them central to the flow and structure of performance. The much cited Tanjavur Quartette composed innumerable shabdams, varnams and svarajatis, thus centralizing the genres even further – through their teaching as well their compositions as they taught many of the dasi performers at the Tanjavur court.

[154] See Weidman, Amanda. *Singing the Classical: Voicing the Modern.* 2006; Jackson, William. *Tyagaraja and the Renewal of Tradition.*1994; Subramanian, Lakshmi. *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy* 2006.

in Golconda (current day Telangana) was an important site of patronage for a number of artists, poets and performers not only in Urdu and Hindi but also in Sanskrit and Telugu. The last Qutb Shahi sultan, Abul Hassan, was known to patronize courtesan performers of both north and south Indian backgrounds. At his court, poets and intellectuals of the ritikal tradition thrived, including Akbar Shah mentioned in the previous chapter, as well as Ksetrayya for a brief period, mentioned earlier. Beyond the patronage of court poetry and rasa texts, Abul Hassan's court was also home to an important figure of a different kind, Bhadrachala Ramdas – he was a Niyogi Brahmin born as Kancharla Gopanna, a nephew of the two prominent ministers of Abul Hassan's administration (Madanna and Akkanna) and was employed as a Tehsildar (revenue officer) of the court – he became known as a saint-poet and was influential to later figures like Tyagaraja. He is said to have granted the Kuchipudi village to a group of bhagavatar dance-drama artists in 1678. When the sultanate fell in 1687, with Aurangzeb claiming it as part of the Mughal empire and installing the Nizam there to rule, the dynamic of the Coromandel coast shifted. Already after the breakup of the Vijayanagar kingdom in the mid sixteenth century, there was a steady flow of artists and performers to the south, particularly Madurai and Tanjavur, with the establishment and patronage of the southern Nayak kingdoms. After the Qutb Shahi dynasty was taken over by the Mughal empire, however, there was a distinct move of figures and groups of performers from Golconda to further south. Landholding Mudaliar families and Niyogi Brahmins, some of whom had been important at the Golconda court and its trade concerns, migrated to the Kaveri delta[155]. At the end of the seventeenth century, for example, Tyagaraja's grandfather moved his family south to the northern part of the Kaveri delta from Kakarla

[155] See Arasaratnam, Sinnappah. "Indian Commercial Groups and European Traders, 1600-1800: Changing Relationships in Southeastern India." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 1, no. 2 (1978): 50

(southern Andra Pradesh)[156]. One round of Bhagavatar artists had already been invited to settle in Tanjavur, near Kumbakonam on the banks of the northern Kaveri river, by Achyutappa Nayak at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[157] More artists and scholars however were invited with land grants by successive Maratha kings in the first half of the eighteenth century especially.[158] The second Maratha king Shahji established Tiruvisannallur, close to Kumbakonam. The third and fourth kings, Shahjis' two younger brothers Serfoji and Tukkoji similarly added to these grants. Around this time, there was an influx not only from Golconda itself but also from Kanchipuram, halfway between Golconda and Tanjavur and an important site of Sri Vaishnava intellectual activity, due to political disturbances related to Mughal and Maratha contestations. These multiple movements, directly and indirectly patronized by the Tanjavur court from the seventeenth century onwards, served to establish communities of performers and intellectuals, particularly of Sri Vaishnava related philosophical backgrounds, Lakshmi Narasimha devotion, and Niyogi Brahmin social identities in the fertile northern banks of the Kaveri delta – making it an intellectual and cultural center in southeast India amid the shifting socio-political geography of the coast at the turn of the eighteenth century.[159]

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[156] See Jackson, William Joseph. *Tyāgarāja and the Renewal of Tradition: Translations and Reflections*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1994.

[157] Subramaniam, Seetha. *Tanjore as a Seat of Music, during the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries*. University of Madras, 1981.

[158] A series of land grants found in inscriptional evidence as well as archived records of the Tanjavur state show that villages were granted to families or groups of mostly Brahmin performing artists and intellectuals.

[159] These new genres manifested new structural concerns for dance performance coming out of new circulations of performers and performance traditions from the turn of the eighteenth century. Near the end of the seventeenth century at the Golconda court, Abul Hassan Tana Shah is said to have provided the land grant to a group of Brahmin performers, bhagavatars, that became known as Kuchipudi. This set of performers not only gave rise to the core of what is today known as the Kuchipudi dance form, but also gave rise to bhagavatar performers who traveled south to the Kaveri delta and produced the dance-drama genre known as bhagavata mela. Abul Hasan Tana Shah was the last of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty before the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb commanded it to be taken over (Abul Hasan defaulted on tributary funds), setting up the new dynasty of the Nizams in Hyderabd,

The travel of male bhakti dance drama traditions associated with Narasimha and Bhama cults connected the Kaveri delta to the Krishna and Godaveri deltas in what is now Andhra Pradesh – giving rise to practices of bhagavata mela and kuchipudi.[160] Similar dance-drama traditions and their aesthetic trajectories also connect to western India and the 'temple' drama traditions of kudiyattam and krishnattam. While the "nation of nations" ideal that India was built on sought to disconnect these forms along state/linguistic lines and present unique histories and aesthetic genealogies due to political and economic pressures (central and state patronage), traces of repertoire expose these connections. For example, sabdam continues to be central to kuchipudi and svarajatis have been popular in mohiniattam.

Court/Bhakti Genealogies for New Approaches to Dance: Narayana Tirta, Kasinathayya, Venkatrama Sastri & *svarajati, varna*

One of the main sites of this bhakti drama tradition and its musicians, composers, and natyacharyas was Melattur, known during Maratha reign as Unnathapureeswara. It produced composers of nrtyanatakas following the yaksagana dance-drama traditions set by Vijayaraghava Nayak and Shahji I, such as Gopalakrishna Sastry. Gopalakrishna Sastry is said to have lived in this village during the reign of Serfoji I, Tulaja I and Pratapasimha of Bhonsle dynasty. The

under direct administration of the Mughal center. Abul Hassan had patronized Ksetrayya, Bhadrachala Ramdas, the Kuchipdu bhagavatars, Akbar Shah. The shift in priorities of the new rulership, and perhaps the loss of patronage, must have prompted a wave of intellectuals, bhagavatars, and poets from the Godaveri delta south to the Kaveri delta at the turn of the eighteenth century – helped, most likely, by the Tanjavur Bhonsle's explicit attempt to attract them, especially as the Bhonsles were just settling into the Kaveri delta as rulers themselves and wanted to establish themselves as patrons and Tanjavur as a intellectual-cultural center.

[160] Until the nationalist cultural revival period in the early 20th century, kuchipudi was a completely dance drama tradition of male performers, named after the village in which it was primarily practiced in Andhra Pradesh. Contrary to some popular conceptions, these dance-drama traditions received patronage and support from the courts of the period, the Golconda Sultanate, Tanjavur Maratha rajas and most likely the Nayak kings in Madurai.

northern part of the Kaveri delta was one of its most fertile and productive (agriculturally and commercially), it was a strong point of focus for the Maratha state. Because it was a comfortable area, it also attracted intellectual and artistic elite. And significant state resources were directed there, both to attract intellectual and artistic activity, and to lay some claim over that activity through continued patronage and support. Many of the composers that are mentioned from the Melattur community, over several generations, are cited as court musicians or asthana vidwans (primary performing artist) of the Tanjavur main temple. The relationship between the court and Melattur was an important part of the construction of Tanjavur public culture. As evidenced by the artists and composers of the bhagavata tradition associated with the court, the bhagavata aesthetic was an important part of defining the kaccēri paradigm. These composers brought a sense of theatrical movement to the construction of dance. Moreover, because the main aim of bhakti performance traditions was to spread the notion of personal devotion to a broad set of people, in a way that was accessible and entertaining, the development of new genres was underscored by the same values.[161]

Narayana Tirta, born Govinda Sastrulu, was an itinerant saint-composer from the Andhra coast Guntur district who travelled to Varanasi before settling in on the northern bank of the Kaveri river at the beginning of the eighteenth century. There, he composed his magnum opus the Krishna Leela Tarangini, a Sanskrit operatic performance. It was envisioned as a dance-

[161] Novetzke, Christian Lee. *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India*. Columbia University Press, 2008.

Gupta, Ravi M., and Kenneth R. Valpey. *The Bhagavata Purana: Sacred Text and Living Tradition*. Columbia University Press, 2013.

Taylor, McComas. "How to Do Things with Sanskrit: Speech Act Theory and the Oral Performance of Sacred Texts." *Numen* 62, no. 5–6 (2015): 519–537.

drama and brought into the performative realm the bhagavata purana – the life stories of Krishna leading up to where the Mahabharata starts. It was inspired by the work of Jeyadeva several centuries earlier and the work of Gaudiya Vaishnava bhakti proponents, but brought a new performative sensibility. It was also the kernel of the kuchipudi mela and Melattur bhagavata mela traditions which emerged right around the same time as the sadir kacceri, as a genre of performance.[162] The Krishna Leela Tarangini is a long performance, in twelve tarangams or cantos.[163] Each one focuses on a part or episode of Krishna's life and has a combination of slokas, darus, prose (gadyam), and kritis. Variety in type of pieces is not of central importance. There is variety in the ragams and talams, which are specified for every kriti. At the end of several of the cantos, Tirta includes a short interlude of nrtta sol.

taddhi tagugu tigugu tattaddhagugu tigugu tatta tongutaka

kitakita kutarikita tattonga kidtakita takita tadhigina tom

dhai tarikita tAham dhittA jhejhejha taridhikidhiki dhittA

As a section of a smaller song in kamboji ragam, eka talam at the end of 7th tarangam

takjham takatItinutakajham tattimi takkita jhanutanatAm

takkina jhantari tana timita takatarikita jhanu tattimi

tattinnAm takajhanuta takita tatamita tikitaka jhanutAha tatami

tatami takita jhantari takajhanu taka takataki kanatom

[162] See study that compares melattur, kucipudi styles of prahlada caritram, a story central to the bhagavata bhakti tradition. Munagapati Samba Siva Raju. *Prahlada Yaksagana: A Comparative Study of Kuchipudi and Melattur styles*. 1997

[163] Nārāyaṇatīrtha. *Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini*. Tanjavur, early 18th century.

Narayana Tirtha, cited as the father of the Melattur dance drama tradition, set up a particular dynamic in his performances through the introduction of nrtta. The same is true of Siddendra yogi who is cited as the originator of Kuchipudi. The two spheres, aesthetically and geographically, intersected in the eighteenth century. The introduction of these aesthetics into the definition of courtly repertoires for female solo performance was closely tied to the associations that the tradition brought with it – a cosmopolitan male bhakti tradition with ties to the Telugu speaking north and far-reaching Vaishnava devotional movements.[164]

Bharatam Kasinathayya (1676-1740 AD), a composer associated with the courts of the first four Maratha kings, introduced simple unstructured lyrical compositions with rhythmic syllables interspersed within lines, known as sabdams. Kasinathayya was a part of the 'bharatam' lineage, or musician-composer-performers of all male dance drama associated with Vishnu bhakti, which spread especially through parts of eastern and southern India in the early modern period. His association with courtly performance as well is clear from the number of padams and other solo dance compositions he produced. Kasinatha's sabda begins primarily with rhythmic syllables and slowly incorporates more lyric until the second half is primarily lyric. The flow of the piece is determined by the rhythm set by the beginning and doesn't let up even into the more lyrical part. This kind of composition forms the backdrop for the later varnam and svarajati genres in

[164] Karnataka Melam And Native Music, "Telugu Dance Traditions of Tanjore Court," *Shanmukha* 14 (1988): 19; Sunil Kothari, "The Dance Drama Tradition of Kuchipudi Bhagvata Mela Nataka and Kuravanji with Special Reference to Rasa Theory as Expounded in Bharatas Natyasastra Volume 1," *University*, December 31, 1977; Gowri Kuppuswamy and M. Hariharan, "Kuchipudi - Dance Drama," *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society* 10, no. 3 (September 1, 1979): 34–36; Clifford R. Jones, "Bhāgavata Mēḷa Nāṭakam, a Traditional Dance-Drama Form," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1963): 193–200

which lyrics and abstract syllables are more clearly separated into distinct sections. The following is one of Kasinathayya's sabdam.[165]

Tattōm tittā haṅkuku takkuku -- tāhatīn̲utā
hiṉṉata ṭankiṇa -- tatiṉṉatahata -- tittaṇēkujem
tari -- taṇatajen̲uta jen̲utā -- jen̲ujen̲utā –
teyitattattā – Higher and higher, from Kasinatha (the author)
praises to the beautiful lord of the Cola land, to Sahabupala (king Sahaji) my salAms --
taṇakutaṇakujemtā –
tajemtari - taṇā -- tāhattajen̲u – tahattatakataka
tikitiki ||2|| *taṇā jen̲utatī --tarikiṭatakatatiṅkiṇatōm.*

Tattaṇēkutakaṭiṅkutakaṭiṅkutakkutimitāhata – timi
tāhata timitaṇēku -- timitaṇēku takkiṇakiṇuku
takatan jakaṇakajakaṇakajā – the luminous king of desire,
the love of Tanjavur. Kiṭatāhatakajen̲ujen̲utā –
I bow at your feet, lord of the world, the talk of all the poets
timitīn̲utahata timitahatatin̲ -- the one wearing brilliantly sparkling jewels across his chest (necklace)
Lord of Kasinatha -- *takatākujekutakatariku, jakatēka vīrā*
He who kills demons, the expert of yogacali, the beautiful king,
the strong Saharaja (king Sahaji), to you I bow (just this line in Hindi)
takkiṭa takkiṭatakatarikuṭu -- tattikiṭataka
Timikiṭakiṭataka -- tēhiṇamtarikiṭatakatarikuṭu -- tōṅku
taḷāṅkutatikiṇatōm.

[165] Viswanathan, N. *Sabdam alias Tala Solkattu of Bharatam Kasinathakavi, King Shahaji and Naranakavi (Captam, ennum, Tāḷaccorkaṭṭu)*. Tañcāvūr: Tañcāvūr Makārājā Carapōjiyin̲ Caracuvati Makāl Nūl Nilaiyam, 1985.

Later sabdams were distinct from the short unstructured pieces called sabdam composed by early composers like Kasinathayya. However, composers of the later sabdam, like another 'bharatam' school composer Venkatarama Sastri drew from Kasinathayya's work. His well-known piece, the Krishna sabdam, continues to be a popularly performed piece in Kuchipudi performance. The piece starts with a jati sung to melody and ends with a spoken jati. In between, the pallavi (first lyric stanza) cajoles a young Krishna to come to the woman "raa ra". Each line in the charanam extols some different virtue of Krishna – as powerful as the ocean, as beautiful as the god of love Manmatha, a warrior, a thief of hearts, the treasure of bharata sastra and finally she asks, why the delay, take my heart and mind, I'm yours. In this piece, the nrtta frames the song starting it off and closing it. The nrtta serves two functions. The first, in a sense, is to announce the dancer. The first jati brings a sense of energy and a flourish of virtuosity. The ending jati serves as a concluding interlude. Sabdams in bharata natyam are performed slightly differently. While there is an opening jati line sung to melody, this jati line is repeated after every lyric line. Here nrtta doesn't just open and close the piece. The bharata natyam sabdam follows the logic of varnam performance.

Ta dhim ; , taka ta dhimi takita taka jhaam ta ; , jagata tonga drugudu jhaga
naam ta ; , drugudu jhenu kina kina jhaga naamta ; , jaganaam, taka, taga
naam; taka, taga ruum, taka, kitataka taka jhaam taka naam takundari kitataka
takita takita dhimi, tadimitakita dimi ta, ;; tehidat ta, taam ; //

Pallavi

Raa ra …… (*tarikitataka dhinda*) / Raa ra …… (*tarikitataka dhim*) //
Raa ra…….. yadu / vamsa sudhaam- budhi chandra swami//
Raa ra yadu vamsa sudha budhi / chandra swami raa ra yadu //

Charanam

vamsa sudhaambudhi chandra) Ratnaakara sama gambhira
shata koti manmathaakaara bhaasura bhuja bala rana sura
naaree jana maanasa chora manmeru samaana dhira
kavi jana poshaka mandara para raaja shatru samhara
bharata shaastra nidhi nivera nivera… nivera…
bhara shaastra nidhi nivera sarasata gala dora nivera
mamu karuna chuchutaku vellara idi vellara
chala velara madi bhunera nee daanara nannelukora…….. //

Jati

Ta ; dhanam dhana , ; dhimim dhimi , ; kinam kina taka tari taka tadi
ta, kitataka dhi, kitataka tatta kitataka dhidhi kitataka
tangita takatari kitataka dhim; tadiginatom

Veerabhadrayya's svarajati

The genres of varnam and svarajati emerged and crystalized out of these earlier genres like shabdam, from Narayana Tirta onwards. The earliest composers of svarajati and varna brought together lyric, rhythmic syllables and solfege syllables, in a way that showed a conscious attention to structure. The first svarajatis are attributed to a Telugu brahmin composer of the 'bharatam' school named Veerabhadrayya with the reigns of the Tanjavur king Pratapasimha and his son and successor Tulaja II – 1740s through the 1780s. He linked to the court through patronage and support; One of his most famous svarajatis is addressed to Pratapasimha's brother-in-law and he is mentioned in the Modi records as having received a land grant from Tulaja II.[166] Many of the earliest varnams are attributed to a court musician who was a contemporary of

[166] Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures*.

Veerabhadrayya, known as Pacchimiriam Adiyappayya. Both composers traversed between multiple spheres of performance and between courtly and bhakti traditions, bringing together in their new genres a significantly new aesthetic – that which we today take for granted as the paradigm of classical south Indian dance, whether in the form of bharata natyam, kuchipudi, or mohiniattam. Veerabhadrayya's svarajati in the ragam Huseni was the one he was most known for and served as a model for many later svarajatis.

sAmi ninnareyella gaNtira cAla meccukoNtira	Sami, yesterday you wounded (me) very much
Ah | | Ah magu valaboddhanalu adhanamai	Oh, the agony, the trap of your teachings is excessive
Na mIdhi prema maracivo nannelu shri acyuthavaradha	My soul loving forgets me, shri achyutavaradha

\| \| svaram \| \|
s n d, n p d p d m p *m* ddhaNajhenu thaddhimi janu thajhemthA
r, r, g, m p m p, n d n, s jhanakujhemthA thaddhiginathom \| \| sAmi

\| \| svarajati \| \|
r, g, m, p, m g r r, m g r g r, s r, s, n g r r s, \| \|

Aura sAmi vinarA vagalu thelisenurA cenakakurA | |	Great sami, listen, I know your airs
r g m p, m g r p m g r r, m g r g r s r, s, | |	
nenaru vAdavani korinadhi nImathi dhalacavadherA	Affection unfading, I want you crazily

n g r r s \| \| 1 \| \|
bhaLibhaLirA \| \| 1 \| \|

s, s, n s r s, r g m g r m g r s, r g m p,
bAgAyanu maremi munupati celimiyun maracidhA
m g r r s \| \| 2 \| \|
nenasithivi \| \| 2 \| \|

g r g m, g r r g m p, m g r n s r s, s r g m
viraha cedhanala pAlaparachi mari yala sarojamukhini
g g r r s s n g r s m g r d p m p, m g r
kalisi melasina guruthulidhigo alaru movipayi
g m p d p p, m g r p, m g r s, \| \| 3 \| \|
paluguruthulA nika nanunnadhi gadharA \| \| 3 \| \|

p, m g r r, p m g r r n s, n r, r g g m,
niyurmunan thagilinadhi ganambugA cangavali
g r r s n, n r, r, p m g, r m g r s, s r g |
guruthulu nIdhu nena nerpe jadavetulI nidhura patulika |
m g r s p, n d p m, p, d, n s r, s r d, p m,
nalanenada cinnelidhugo minnAngamAri yidhe manchuthA
p, m g r r s \| \| 4 \| \|
bonkadha vipudu \| \| 4 \| \|

s, g r, s n s r, m g, r s g, p m, g r n s, s
emi jeppudhunu nI gaLambuna bhA melungIni vidempu

n r, r r g, m g r r, m g r r, p m, g, r s m
rasambu celanginadhiraA adhira yA sarojamukhini
g, r s r s r g m p d p p, m g r p m p g
gUdinadhi bahuvidhha sarasa jAdalanu thelisithi
r s n s r, g, m p d, p, m g r r s || 5 ||
gadhara yidhe melunanun meccithi gadharA || 5 ||

r, g, m p m p d p m g r r, r g m p, d
nenemamdhurA celuvuda marinI manasu nIdhu
p m g r g m, g r s || 6 ||
theguvagalu gaNtinirA || 6 ||

g r g m p m g r s, r g m g r s n s, n
dhinadhinamunu ninu ne penukonutaku dhalanchu
g r g m, p g r m g r s || 7 ||
nAnu mathenchura sarasuda || 7 ||

g, r g m, g m p, m, p r g, m p, m g r
I naya jAdalu rI madhu mAyalu yendhu nechinthivi
m g r g r s r n s r g m, m g d, p, m g r g m
bhaLibhaLiyani mari niny meccathi nivanti purushhuni
p, d m, p g r r g, m g r r s || 8 ||
yAdagAna nilu maremirA yipudu || 8 ||

n d n s, n r, r r g m g m p, p, m g r s, m g r s
p, m p n d p d p m p d n d r s n d, p m, p n d p
m, g, r s, n r, r n r, r r g m g, r g m g,
r m g, r s s, s, s r s n, d p s n d p m p s,
n d p m, p, m g r r s || 9 || shrirAmA ||

p, n d, p m p, d m, g r g m p d m p g, r r, s n s
cinna prAyamu nAtanuNidana nesthamunamathi nenchaleka munu
r, g, m, p, d, n, d, p, m g r m g g r r s d p p m
nAthone ennenno dhAnammithhyalu nosangina kriya dhalanchaka
p m m g g r n, n s, s r, r g, m g r g m p d p m
nAnu madhanuni pAlujesi yA sarojamukhi calanu yipudu
p d n s r s n s n d p m p, s n d p m,
thagilithivi vanaja nayanuda sAbhAsuyani ne
p, m g r r s || 10 ||
ninnu pogadithi || 10 ||

p, n d, p m, p m, p g r r, p, m g r p, g, r s,
ninnu bAya jAlananchu munupe nIve thana jIvambani
r g m, g s, m g r s, n r, r, g m g, r s r g m, p, m
palumAtiki sArasajeni cAlA nilinithalu salipipucu
p d n, d m p d, n s, n d, p m, g r r g m g m p g r
kaLalandhucu mudhambu jemdha seyuchun thodathodalu norayucun
g m p m g r g m p n d d p m, p d n s r s n d p m
rathivagavagalanu gadapuchu paripari vithamula nanu kalasina
g r g m p d p m d p, m g r r s || 11 ||
celimini dhalanchuvu adhemirA yipudu || 11 ||

thAm dhhaNathajhanu thadhhimIthakita thakajhem thajhamthAritha
I malayajuNdu palumAru pulivalane chalambukoni
kiNajham jhanuthakita thathom thonga thomthonga thAhatha
mari thA migulamayi jhilIrjhilI lanchu jhilinjhilinchu sokkenu

kitathakajhem kitathakajhejhem thajham tharintha dhharikididhhimthAm
vadivadigA kaluvalarAyudun yipudu churuchurumanchun
dhharikididhhimthAm thak griNNa gajaga | |
shagalagayinche yenthentha thALudu | |
dhhIm nAmthaka dhhIm nAmthaka thanthajhiku tharikidathaka
palukulu chevulaku kaToramuga muguli kriya nodhavenu
jhemthajhankuthathakum thakajhenuthaka dhhimi dhhimi
kanthudeyu viri sharamulakunu bahu thaha
tharikitathaka thakadhhrindhhaLangu thakathadhhingiNathom | | 12 | |
thahalu badina dhisunanthunIvu thalanchu gadharA | | 12 | | r, g, m, | |
AurAnA | |
Shri gopAlA | | shrirAmajayam | | shivapriye sahayam | |

The piece starts off slow. The opening lines set the context and the tone of the conversation between woman and lover. Or, on the other hand, between musician-dancer and spectator-patron-god standing in for the duration of this piece, at least, as lover. “Sami, you have wounded me very much. My agony is unbearable. My soul forgets everything else, oh Acyutavarada.” While the gist of this sentiment runs through the rest of the song through the varied angles of a woman lost in love, it is interweaved through and punctuated by other non-lyrical elements. The first lines give way to a second stanza in which half a line of solfege notes or svaras “s n d, n p d p d m p m” alternates with half a line of rhythmic syllables or jati “ddhaNajhenu thaddhimi janu thajhemthA”. This interweaving is what gave the genre its name, svarajati.

A number of stanzas follow (in this piece, seven), building in length, each adding a new layer, a new angle, or a new meaning to the refrain, returning to the opening line after each. “Sami, you have wounded me very much.” At the same time, the poetry of the piece is punctuated by the svarams given for each stanza. While the lyrics provide the interjections of the lovelorn woman, the svarams sung in between serve to draw us away from the conversation {and toward what?}. For each stanza, the svaram would be sung and then the corresponding lyrics. They mirror each other melodically but the former exists as an abstract interlude of music and movement while the latter carries forward the conversation. The build-up of the stanzas

culminates in the last – a section which intersperses a line of jati and a line of lyric with the lyric itself becoming increasingly onomatopoetic and rhythmic by its end. It is filled with patterns – of repeating three rhythmic phrases corresponding to triplets of rhyming words in the lyric line. Here, the mirroring between jati and lyric is of the rhythm, although it is not exact.

These genres presented not only a new structural logic as seen by the text of the song but a corresponding logic between text, movement and music that was new to this period. Before the eighteenth century, the most popular form of court performance were padams. Padams were poems that were performed. They did not include either svaram or jati. Other earlier genres like prabandhams were strictly metrical but did not include stand-alone sections of either abstract music or movement. With the varnam and svarajati genres, the text acts not only as a poem text but brings together these various aspects of movement, music, and poetry. In so doing, the text acts as choreographic score in a distinct way.

We can understand the text as carrying three types of textuality. The first is the recognizable words or lyrics. In these early compositions, they were largely in Telugu, still a primary language of both court and bhakti performance in the eighteenth century. This is seen in the opening lines, and in each of the stanzas. This type of text corresponds to movement that could be described as mimesis. But more appropriately, it is conversational rather than representational. For example, rarely in these compositions is the dancer showing a scene or a narrative. Rather, she is using the inexhaustible gestural language around love, love play and the various stages of separation and reunion between lovers, to improvise, build and play with the lines of the text – often in light of the context of her performance and its audience.

The second kind of text within the larger text is that of the svaram. As standalone, the notes might mean nothing. But when taken along with the line at the top of the piece, that names the ragam, the svara text corresponds to not only a specific melody that the musicians will play and sing, it opens up a specific musical lexicon which carries with it associations of tone, mood and most importantly affect. At the same time, the svaras correspond to the dancer performing nrtta, or rhythmic abstract movement interludes. The third type of text, or jati, corresponds also to the dancer performing rhythmic movement interludes. The jati sections in the svarajati might be set to a melody or spoken. The patterns within the svaram and jati serve as the framework for the movement but are not ascriptive. Someone, usually the nattuvanar or dance-master and choreographer would have created the movement that would have corresponded to a particular jati or svaram passage. But a senior dancer could just as easily have created the movement on the spot, based on her years of experience.

The text of the svarajati or varnam acts as a parallel to its performance. The emergence of svarajati, varnam and shabdam genres brought together lyric (sahityam), svara and jati in different kinds of combinations. For example, the varnam genre didn't include jati in the melody of the song but rather as standalone interludes that are added to the piece by the nattuvanar and dancer in between the first, second and third stanzas. In terms of structure, varnams are a bit different than svarajatis. They follow the pallavi, anupallavi, charanam structure of the new musical formats of the period (especially the kriti). However, the charanam or ettugada has a number of svara-lyric stanzas. The difference between this structure and the svarajati above is the fact that after each of the svara, lyric stanzas, the returning refrain is not the beginning of the song but the charanam lines. It shifts the attention of the piece to that charanam line, generally a simple short line that has high affective impact. In the varnam then, the first two stanzas (pallavi

and anupallavi) act as a long introduction to the primary motor of the piece, the charanam. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was the varnam and relatedly, a new forms shabdam, that became predominant.

The three composers mentioned above – Kasinathayya, Veerabhadrayya, and Venkatramasastri – and the genres they helped popularize– shabdam, svarajati, and varnam – make visible a different geography of performative, socio-religious and political economic connections than our current regional-linguistic boundaries. These genres presented a distinct combination – one that intertwined lyrical emotive expression which was the hallmark of courtesan dance, with nrtta or structured rhythmic movement. Varnams and svarajatis both introduced nrtta passages through the use of solfege in the musical composition. Moreover, additional nrtta was included as rhythmic passages known as jatis, which were accompanied not by notes or melody but spoken syllables. While leaving scope for improvisational expression and the many moods and bodily languages or erotic performance, the varnam as a composition is more structured. It punctuates lines of lyrics with both solfege and jatis which are not improvised. The interweaving of lyricism and abstract rhythm in these new genres, and their establishment in the dance canon in such a short time was a defining feature of the new dance paradigm produced in the changing urban environment of southeast India.The combination of jati syllables and corresponding rhythmic percussive movement defines one of two types of movement languages central to the practice of today's south Indian dance forms – nrtta. The other, abhinaya, references, mimes or evokes character and story. This conception of dance – as a particular kind of relationship between nrtta and abhinaya – is, in fact, not self-evident but is a product of the historical development of the 18th century. The new genres of varnam, svarajati and sabdam embodied this relationship.

Performance, Bhakti and the State

These shifts in aesthetics were distinctly rooted in new ideologies of performance. Composers and musicians, critiquing the intellectuality or limited relevance of courtly artistic production by the mid eighteenth century to select circles of elite connoisseurs, presented their work as more universally accessible and relevant. In doing so, they specifically drew on longer ideologies of performance-centerd devotional (*bhakti*) movements and specifically the genres of music and dance-drama these movements had produced. The composer who popularized kritis through hundreds of his compositions, Tyagaraja, drew from genelogies of bhakti performance that simplified lyric and focused on melody with the primary aim of appealing to a broader audience with a humanistic message (especially the songs of Anammayya and Marathi bhajan-kirtan) and from genealogies of compositions meant to highlight melodic structure as teaching tools (Purandara dasa's geetams). Outside of Tyagarajas kritis, new performance forms introduced solfege svarams more centrally as elements of compositions, again moving away from lyric. The formal elements of raga and tala were seen not only as aesthetic elements but as vehicles for both composer and listener towards a spiritual or moral aim. Notes, rather than lyric, were seen as the most important aspects of music. In a dance-drama, *Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam*, modeled on the performance of the bhagavatas and weaving together many of his kriti compositions, Tyagaraja in the opening verses describes his contribution as follows:

> *Agam(A)nta vihAruDai(y)alaru nIku rAga tAL(A)di yuta gAna rasamu cEta bAgu*
>
> *mIranga santOsha paracun(a)TTi tyAgarAj(a)nu pEriTa danarinADa*

> To you who shines as the Lord existing beyond Agamas, this person named as Tyagaraja, who, very charmingly spreads joy through nectar of music consisting of raga, and tala.[167]

Bringing together formal aesthetics of performance – raga or melodic structure and tala or rhythmic structure – as the focus of devotional transcendence was new, and specific to Thyagaraja's narrative. Importantly, Thyagaraja bypassed lyrical content and the aesthetic priority of language-based meter in favor of simple melodic structures punctuated by the abstract elements already mentioned. While for composers of music, the move away from lyric led to structural experimentation and universality via melody, those composing dances focused on other aesthetic elements – namely solfege and syllabic rhythm. Like for music, I also suggest these aesthetic shifts speak to a universalizing effort, making performance more broadly accessible beyond the established elite of courtly circles. However, at the same time, the content of these song-texts and genres belie the very real ways in which the circulation of artists and composers, even when fashioning themselves as itinerant saint-musicians who renounced the trappings of material life, were implicated in circulations of state-support and projects of state-building.

The new genres and their genealogies point to the particular location and importance of performance to devotional movements that were populist and anti-hierarchical in their conception but existed in complicated relationships to projects of state-building and empire. Very simplistically, the accepted historical trajectory of bhakti begins with the Tamil Saiva and Vaisnava saints from 8th to 12th centuries who were responding both to established religion and

[167] This translation comes from V Raghavan's published version of *Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam*

traditions of ascetism by focusing on personal devotion no matter what the individual's social position. New bhakti movements spread through eastern and western India in the early modern period and then with the famous poet saints of western/northern India by the seventeenth century.[168] The compositions of music, dance and drama, expressed a personal relationship to god rather than one mediated through institutions or ritual practice. At times, these bhakti movements were disruptive to existing states and status quos, like the Virasaiva movement in medieval Karnataka, Ramanuja's egalitarian Vaisnavism, or Guru Nanak's Sikkism. In each of these cases, the bhakti movements initiated a break-down of existing class and caste-based hierarchies with the idea that devotion, as a personal process, could unite anyone. However, it is also true that these movements were at other times aligned with state powers, and patronized by them, such as the Tallapakka poets and Vijayanagara, or Ramdas and Tukaram with the Maratha Sivaji Bhonsle.

When the state itself was disrupting status quos, the ideology of transgression that the bhakti performance traditions represented became central to the ethos of the state and its leaders. Bhakti was useful to new states, whose protagonists were invested in breaking down older hierarchies in order to assert the value of the state. This might have been especially the case in the early modern period, when a valorization of individualism and risk-taking (at least for rulers and elites) was underscored by an ideology of transgression.[169] Central to almost all of the bhakti

[168] Each movement was marked by significant philosophers and poet-saint figures – Adi Sankara in the eighth century, Ramanuja in eleventh century south India, Jayadeva in medieval Bengal and the Talapakka Annamacharya family in early modern Andhra (both eastern India), Madhvacharya and Akkamahadevi in twelfth/thirteenth century western India, and then the famous poets of sixteenth and seventeenth century Maharahstra and Rajasthan – Kabirdas, Mirabai, TukaramThere are many more.

[169] David Shulman and Narayana Rao were responsible for suggesting and fully exploring this idea in the literature and poetry of early modern Tamil and Telugu. But it is also true of the later Mughal state as well as the Maratha martial-king and the early construction of the 'Maratha Confederacy'.

movements that traveled through the subcontinent and beyond, were the performance traditions they engendered. The *practice* of bhakti, including singing, dancing, story-telling, has been central to its efficacy as a form of devotionalism and social critique. The same practice of bhakti, through performance traditions, is what made it efficacious to states in an effort to construct particular kinds of public narratives and spheres.

In the Kaveri delta in the eighteenth century, the patronage of forms like bhagavata mela by the Nayaks in Madurai and Tanjavur as well as the Marathas that followed in Tanjavur was a means of constructing a public sphere in a moment of contingent authority. I argue that both direct patronage and implicit incorporation of bhagavata aesthetics and structures into new repertoire for dance, negotiated a tricky tension – the renunciation of the material world was held up as an ideal by the court, the very center of political and material 'excess' and more importantly, the aesthetics and structures that made bhakti performance accessible were absorbed into the courtly sphere attempting to reframe its own exclusivity, or rather, get ahead of its ebbing exclusivity in the face of irrelevant boundaries between new and established elite-ness.

III. Ordering Dances: Sants, Dasas and Hybrid Performance Structures

Centralizing the new genres that developed by mid-century, composers experimented with performance texts that ordered dances into specific orders and thus beginning, middle and end. Rather than organizing based on narrative development however, these composers brought together a hybrid repertoire for dance along formal concerns of raga, tala, and compositional variety. The kacceri, or concert, that developed by the end of the eighteenth century was not defined by narrative logic. Rather it was defined by structure based the performance dynamics

that had developed by then, traced in the previous section. Here, I attend to close readings of specific new kinds of performance text and canon produced at the Tanjavur court by the end of the eighteenth century – particularly those produced through the influence of another bhakti tradition coming down to the Kaveri delta at this time, of sant-dasa kirtan performance from central India

Bhakti movements from the seventeenth century centered around the figure of the saint-musician (sant), travelled from western (and eastern) Deccan, and converged with saint-composer legacies of medieval Tamil movements. Overlapping with Narayana Tirtha but slightly earlier, Kancherla Gopanna or Bhadrachala Ramadasu was born in an affluent Telugu Niyogi Brahmin family to Linganna Mantri and Kamamba in Nelakondapallai village of Khammam dist Taluk (Warangal Division of erstwhile Hyderabad State) of northern Telangana (Deccan region). He was the nephew of Madanna and Akkana, brothers who were ministers at the court of Abul Hassan Tana Shah of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty in Golconda at the end of the seventeenth century, contemporaneous with Ksetrayya. He was hired by Tana Shah as the Tehsildar (Tax Officer in charge of collecting revenue) of Palvancha Taluk. The story goes that even though he was working as Tehsildar, he was set on saving the Bhadrachalam temple which was in dilapidated condition and thus used revenue collection money towards it. He was found out by Abul Hassan and imprisoned at Golconda fort during which time he composed many of his most well-known songs on Rama, praying for help. Ultimately, after a dozen or so years in prison, Rama went with Lakshmana disguised to the sultan, paying off Ramdas' debt and the Sultan, surprised but ready, released him after which both realized it was the play of the divine lord.

With these sant movements from the western Deccan (Maratha) came musical genres known as *kirtan*. Contemporary with Ksetrayya, Narayana Tirtha and Bhadrachala Ramdas but

following a considerably different trajectory was the Maratha saint-musician Samarth Ramdas (1608 -1681). He was born as Narayan Suryaji Thosar near Aurangabad in present day Maharashtra. Starting in his 20s, Samarth Ramdas travelled widely, spreading his teachings, writing and performing his poetry in the form of *kirtan*. His work spoke against corrupt rule, greedy merchant bureaucrats and the entrenched hierarchies of elite Brahmins, speaking for the general non-elite public. He was possibly at the same time associated with the Bijapur Adil Shahi sultans. Another central figure of the western Deccan bhakti movement was the Sant Tukaram (1608 – 1650), born near Pune from a family of shudra caste working in retail, money-lending and trade. He popularized the genre of devotional music in Marathi known as abhanga on the Krishna Panduranga at Vitthoba, also spreading a message of egalitarianism and critique of corruption in the face of considerable instability in the Deccan.

Stories differ but either Tukaram or Ramdas or both met Sivaji Bhosale around the time Sivaji was establishing himself as a military and political force, out of the ranks of the Bijapur sultanate and would go on to lay the foundations for a Maratha 'confederacy'. The association of Ramdas, Tukaram and the Sant movement in general became part of the fabric of the Maratha founding story. The ideology of egalitarianism and the cry against corruption became part of the ideological ammunition of Maratha expansion and statehood. These trajectories and the performative paradigms they engendered make visible the complicated ways bhakti and politics of expansion must be understood together – the content and structures of their artistic work and social commentaries must be understood in terms of their circulatory dynamics.

When Sivaji's step-brother Ekkoji established Maratha reign in Tanjavur, several of Ramdas' disciples brought the Marathi bhakti movement and its kirtan performance tradition. Some of Ramdas' major disciples (who are listed in manuscripts in Tanjavur Sarasvati Mahal archives)

established mathas (monestaries) in and around Tanjavur especially around mid-century. They are responsible for a unique kirtan tradition in south India that brought together the Ramdas legacy, which focused on orthodox philosophy, and the Varkari kirtan tradition of Tukaram that was popular in the period and more inclusive. While most kirtankars (kirtan performers) and audiences were Deshashta Brahmins who were gaining prominence in south India, there was still a sense of kirtan performances providing a sort of egalitarian vision and more accessible religiosity.[170] When it came down to Tanjavur, Marathi kirtan performance generated a vibrant and uniquely hybrid bhajana tradition in south India, involving music, exposition and sometimes dance.

Tyagaraja, Saintly Genealogies and Kirtan in the Kaveri Delta

Kakarla Thyagabrahmam, known as Tyagaraja and canonized as a saint, epitomizes the aesthetics of bhakti in Tanjavur, the tensions between the ideal of renunciation and the networks of support extended implicitly by the state.[171] Tyagaraja, whose grandfather migrated from the Golconda area was highly influenced by Ramdas, his renunciatory story and music. Although

[170] The Tanjavur bhajana paddhati (tradition) brought together a number of kinds of songs for the purpose of 'exposition': povada, pravacan, abhanga, saki, dindi, ovi. Many of these pieces are genres in their own right, with lives outside the kirtan performance structure, especially povada, abhanga, ovi. Kirtan performance brought these different kinds of compositions into a particular order. Based largely on the philosophical text of Ramdas known as *Dasbodh* and existing lineages of practice, kirtan performances have two halves. The first half, known as the purvaranga, is more expository. Usually the text for this part is called the nirupana. The second half, known as the uttaranga elaborates on the theme of the first through telling, singing and enacting stories. This is all done by a primary male performer and accompanying musicians. The varkari strand of the kirtan tradition focused less on the exposition and more on the stories. It was also more participatory with less prominence given to a single performer. It is through varkari performance that genres like abhang became especially popular.

[171] William Joseph Jackson, *Tyāgarāja and the Renewal of Tradition: Translations and Reflections* (Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1994); William Jackson, "Features of the Kṛti: A Song Form Developed by Tyāgarāja," *Asian Music* 24, no. 1 (1992): 19–66, doi:10.2307/834449; Venkatarama Raghavan and William Joseph Jackson, *The Power of the Sacred Name: V. Raghavan's Studies in Nāmasiddhānta and Indian Culture*, 4 (South Asia Books, 1994); Amanda J. Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Duke University Press, 2006); Lakshmi Subramanian, *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy: A Social History of Music in South India* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

they crossed paths only briefly and Tyagaraja's family moved to the Kaveri delta, Tyagaraja's songs and the story canonized about him clearly show an emulation of Ramdas as a "saint-composer". In addition to Ramdas, Tyagaraja was also influenced by the influx of Marathi kirtan saint-performers or sants who came down to Tanjavur and set up lodges after the Bhonsles started ruling.

The dance-drama that Tyagaraja wrote, *Prahlada bhakti vijayam* crosses between the two influences of Telugu dance-drama and Marathi *sant* musical expository performance. The story of Prahlada – a young boy devotee of Vishnu who survives multiple cruelties and attempts at his life from his father through unwavering devotion to Vishnu in his avatar of Narasimha, the lion-headed one – is a hallmark of bhagavata mela dance drama performance (even to this day). In the opening invocatory stanzas of Tyagaraja's performance text, however, he pays homage to not only gods but to those who came before him. They are all saint-composers of the dasa tradition. First, Tyagaraja names Tulsidas, an early modern Brahmin saint-composer (16th century) in Varanasi who wrote the Ram-caritra-manas text on Rama devotion in vernacular Awadhi Hindi, rather than Sanskrit, so as to reach the audience beyond the Sanskrit literati and started the Ram-Lila plays, folk theater adaptations of the Ramayana. Next, Tyagaraja names Purandaradasa (mentioned in the last chapter), an early modern Haridasa (Krishna devotee and follower of Madhva philosophy) musician who travelled across the Vijayanagar empire and was responsible for structuring the rhythms and training exercises, the basis for modern Carnatic music. Next, Tyagaraja names Bhadrachala Ramdas (mentioned above), the Niyogi Brahmin tehsildar of Abul Hasan's Golconda sultanate court who gave up his position in service to the Bhadrachala temple for Vaikunta Rama at the end of the seventeenth century. Finally, Tyagaraja pays homage to "all the devotees of Panduranga", including the Marathi sants from the fourteenth to the eighteenth

century: Namdev, Jnanadev, Sahadev, Jayadev, Tukaram, and Narayana tirtha. In effect, Tyagaraja has brought together in one moment, the constellation of bhakti saint-poets which defined musical production for him and performative production in Tanjavur generally from the late eighteenth century onwards.

The primacy of the saint-composer was not new, but the particular performance production associated with saint-composers he defined was unique to the late eighteenth century Kaveri delta and its nexus of influences. Moreover, Tyagaraja embodies the structural concerns in performance concommitant with this milieu – simple structured compositions focused on melodic movement in service to a puranic or expository through line. His operatic drama moves between his kriti compositions, other kinds of song-forms (phala sruti, dandakam, etc) and free-form sung verses.[172]

Along with the dance-drama mentioned earlier, Tyagaraja also composed another performance *Nauka Caritramu*– based on a scene of Krishna and a number of cowherd women (gopis) sporting on a boat ride down the river Yamuna (nauka means small boat or ferry in Marathi and Hindi). In the opening verses (phala stuti), he says: *Those who heard 'nauka caritra' enacted by Lord hari on the Earth, will tread path of highest good, be long lived, and flourish by attaining good children and worth*. In one line, Tyagaraja connects the hearing (or seeing) of devotional performance, moral certitude and a comfortable material life. This intersection defines the location of performance in the Kaveri delta in the latter eighteenth

[172] Today when Prahlada Bhakti vijayam or Nauka caritram are performed, if at all, the free-form verses are largely cut down to a few verses between songs. The kritis are the primary focus. See: Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam produced by Balamurali Krishna for All India Radio National Program (4.10.1986) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHfdnp_8kSA)

century. The story itself is not part of the classic bhagavata purana episodes but shows up in early modern plays, one in Bengali and most in Marathi. In particular, there was a work called the Nauka nirupana, a Marathi drama, popular in Tanjavur at the time. Thayagaraja was thus drawing on not only the bhagavata dance-drama tradition but also the Maratha *sant* tradition of kirtan performance.

Kirtan performances were generally split into a first part, purvaranga and a second part, uttaranga. In the purvaranga, the kirtankar or performer, sings a famous song by one of the well known sant poets and then turns to an explanation or nirupan of the song through reference to epics, popular literature, contemporary songs, and current events. This nirupan therefore is about using whatever resources and references are at hand to most widely reach the public the performer is trying to speak to. In the uttaranga or second part of the kirtan, the kirtankar brings forth their musical and theatrical force, telling a well-known story (katha or akhyan) that illuminates the initial lesson. The purvaranga is about erudition and the uttaranga is about performative virtuosity. While kirtan was mostly sung by a primary performer accompanied by instrumentalists, it involved expository speaking as well as some impromptu enactment and even some dancing if the performer was adept. In the context of kirtan performance, nirupana is discourse (not the Foucauldian discourse but exposition). The nirupana expands the initial idea through accessible examples and variety. In the Kaveri delta context (and possibly otherwise as well), nirupana became the written text of a story with songs interspersed, the story usually being

the oral or vernacular versions of traditional puranic stories.[173] To this day, the performances of harikatha, both in Maharashtra and the south, use a nirupan text.[174]

Serfoji's nirupana performance-texts

The second to last Maratha ruler of Tanjavur, Serfoji II (1777-1832, ruled as a British protectorate from 1792 till death), produced a number of works for music, drama and dance. Cited as a scholar-king,[175] a cosmopolitan renaissance man equally interested in western rational scientific inquiry and his Brahmanical beliefs,[176] and as an illustrious patron of the arts, Serfoji ruled the Maratha Tanjavur state at the turn of the 19th century. He wrote a number of natakas in Marathi. Serfoji showed an interest in experimenting with performative form. His Devendra Kuravanji natakam in Marathi outlined the geography of the world (or his world at the turn of the nineteenth century) in the form of a kuravanci play, drawn from Tamil performance.

Serfoji also produced a number of works titled as nirupanas. He was drawing on previous Maratha sant's works. These nirupana texts, instead of being just the exposition, were textual scores for the meat of the performance, the akhyan or story that illuminates the initial lesson. As such, it brings together music and story in an illustrative lesson. In import, Serfoji modeled his nirupanas after the kirtan performance paradigm his texts were named after. In style and

[173] Hinduism an Alphabetic Guide, p 414; Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature Vol 2, p 1552.

[174] The Life of a Text, Performing the Ramcaritmanas of Tulsidas

[175] See Peterson, Indira. "King Serfoji II of Thanjavur and European Music." Accessed May 22, 2014; Peterson, Indira Viswanathan. *Serfoji II - Scholar-King of Tanjavur*. 1st ed. Routledge India, 2008; Peterson, Indira Viswanathan. "The Cabinet of King Serfoji of Tanjore: A European Collection in Early Nineteenth-Century India." *Journal of the History of Collections* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 71–93.

176 See Savitri Preeta Nair's Raja Serfoji II: Science, Medicine and Enlightenment in Tanjore

compositional form, however, Serfoji experimented considerably. One set of his nirupanas bring together compositions which was usually found in Marathi kirtan performance – Padha, Kadaka, Dhindi, Ambhaga, and Chhandha – in the illustration of stories such as that of Kannappa Nayanar, Tirunilakanta Nayanar, stories from the skanda purana, Uma's marriage to Siva and the encounter of Siva and Arjuna in the forest. These are all stories on Siva from puranas or hagiographies of famous Siva devotees.

A second set of nirupanas produced by Serfoji, while covering similar stories, bring together entirely new kinds of compositions.[177] Some of this second set took on stories of classic Sanskrit plays – like the 5th century Kalidasa's Kumarasambhava (on the birth of Muruga) or the 6th century Kiratarjuniya of Bharava. The rest of this set were framed as conversations: Parvati talking to Siva, a woman talking to Manmatha, or Sita talking to Ravana. In some ways, while Serfoji called his performances nirupanas, drawing on kirtan framing, he was also drawing on existing courtly dance drama traditions in his use of theme, such as the Telugu yaksaganas, the legacy of Nayak court culture. Historians have pointed out both Serfoji's precarious position in terms of political economics and his particular openness to European enlightenment ideals and the expansion of knowledge in his court. Situated in this context, the nirupanas may be seen as a

[177] In outlining a specific order of different kinds of pieces for a dance performance, Serfoji was also referencing a longer genealogy of Sanskrit text, though perhaps implicitly. In Sanskrit textual tradition from the late medieval period, there was a distinct shift in how dance was described and categorized – for the first time, a central distinction in ordering knowledge about dance was the marga and desi distinction – marga generally translated today as the universal (classical) and desi as the local (popular or folk). The texts from the period that what was actually at play was that those concepts and techniques taken from the Natyasastra was referred to as marga, while those that appear in textual tradition for the first time got categorized as desi. Rather than thinking about this as classical vs popular, or pan-Indian vs regional, I believe it just means that one tradition (that of the Natyasastra) started existing in text alongside other traditions in text because the new texts were written much more from the Deccan and further south, as opposed to earlier when most of the texts we know of came out of the Kashmiri region or north-east. The importance of this distinction, and my geo-political (rather than just temporal) reading of it, is that in the medeival period, deccani and southern traditions found a central place in text, in large part due to the important dynasties that emerged and led by the 15th century to the Vijayanagar empire.

conscious engagement with artistic form and aesthetic function. Serofji produced these dance performances at a time when kirtan performance was a growing part of the social fabric of the kaveri delta.

These nirupanas also all have the same structure, set of pieces, and are meant for dance specifically. Serfoji incorporated new genres that had emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century – varnam, svarajati, sabdam – that I traced earlier. He constructed a hybrid performance structure that highlighted the ambigious lines between dance-drama and dance, as well as between danced and musical spheres of performativity in the public sphere of late 18th century Tanjavur. The collection includes seven performances each individually called a nirupana.[178] Nirupana loosely translates as a libretto. Most dance-dramas of the time have a text associated with them, which includes the song texts with *ragam (*)melody) and *talam* (rhythm cycle), any character speaking interludes, narrator (sutradhar) interludes, and any unstructured verses (slokas). Implicit in the text are character changes and movement. These are part of the learnt embodied repertoire rather than in written text. While different dance-drama traditions had associated texts, the term nirupana which Serfoji used to title his own performance text, comes from a specific performative miliue – that of the bhajan-kirtan tradition from western India (current day Maharashtra).

All of these performances when looked at more closely, are meant to carry through some moral or philosophical point. In Serfoji's nirupanas, the whole performance is held together by one imagined moment from puranic mythology. That one moment affords both story-telling

[178] Krishnaswami Mahdick, A, G Nagaraja Rao, and K Vāsudeva Śāstrī. *Dance Pieces in Marathi, Nirupanas of Serfoji Raja*. Tanjore: Gopalan, 1958.

(through reference to puranic episodes) and expository possibilities. Exposition comes through in the (imagined) conversation between author/primary voice/performer and the god/goddess. The values that come through in these expository moments are those of the bhakti tradition - renunciation, love, separation. There is a conversational casual aspect to the kirtan tradition that is evident in the Seroji dance nirupanas.[179]

Serfoji's performance texts were framed by earlier courtly dramas, especially by earlier Maratha kings (in Marathi, Telugu, and Sanskrit). In Telugu dramas, mostly under the yaksagana genre that were a central Nayak legacy, the play consisted largely of dharus, long songs in simple meter and many short stanzas, which focused on scene description, character introduction or development or emotional elaboration (rasa bhava), usually in the context of nayaka-nayika erotic love and separation. While the dramas were situated within the context of puranic and epic lore, the focus was really on the exploration of pleasure and pain and ultimately, the consumation of sexual union. The puranic characters and their well-known stories often served merely as backdrop. While yaksganas were central to Nayak court milieus, early Maratha kings continued their legacy, even as its import and drive morphed with the changed concerns and point of view of new dynasties, namely the Marathas in Tanjavur. In Sanskrit dramas, such as Raghanuthabhyudayamu, from the early 18th century court poet-scholar Bhagavantaraya makhi on the Ramayana, the play consisted of speech and couplets (perhaps sung), and follows a narrative trajectory with multiple characters moving the story along, largely in service to a moral lesson about righteous kingly behavior – Rama was the quintessential model of kingship for many of the 18th century state-heads, including the Marathas at Tanjavur. Marathi dramas from

[179] At the same time, From Rama, Krishna based content to almost all on Siva. Serfoji also included stories of Tamil saints/devotion.

through the 18th century took on various aspects of both legacies. For example, the play *Parvati Parinayam* on the union of Siva and Parvati, written by the king Pratapasimha around the middle of the century, draws largely on yaksagana structures and consists of darus interspersed with speech and the introduction scenes of new characters. However, the focus is more on a metaphysical point about devotion and union than the exploration of pleasure and erotic corporeality. Serfoji, writing at the end of the century, has these multiple genealogies to contend with in the construction of his aesthetic and structural vision for performance.

Serfoji's nirupanas take on the structure of yaksagana performances especially, with the focus on a specific episode with the puranic or epic story as a backdrop rather than as central subject. For example, in Kiratarjuniya nirupana is named after a famous episode in the Mahabharata when Arjuna goes for penance seeking Siva and Siva appears as a huntsman, they fight and when Arjuna loses he realizes it is Siva himself. Although the play is set in the context of this episode, it is not the subject of the nirupana. Instead, the entire performance is set up as a conversation between Siva and Parvati, with Parvati in the only speaking role – first demanding that Siva take her with him to the forest when he goes as a hunstman and then extolling Siva's virtous as the all-giving. In effect, the Mahabharata episode is the seed and continual reference point which makes space for the creative elaborations, rather than the subject of the performance itself. In that way, the Kiratarjuniya echoes the courtly yaksaganas.

However, while the focus of creative elaborations of courtly yaksaganas, like much of courtly performance in the Nayak milieu, was the full range of sensual experience backed by the codified stages of union and separation of erotic love (nayaka, nayika rasa bhava), here the focus differs. In Serfoji's work specifically, but also in many of the Maratha and Ramnad court production in general, there is a sense of looking back – many of the Maratha plays and Serfoji's

nirupanas are versions of Sanskrit classics from the 6th to 10th centuries – from Kalidasa, Bharavi and others. For example, one of Serfoji's nirupanas is a version of a 6th century Sanskrit mahakavya, Kiratarjuniya, by the poet Bharavi, itself written in the context of one of the courts of the southern Deccan. The mahakavya tells the story of a popular episode from the epic Mahabharata, in which Arjuna – an expert with the bow and arrow – goes into the forest seeking penance and Siva; Siva comes disguised as a hunter and they fight before Arjuna loses and realizes it is Siva himself. The story itself is perhaps not that out of the ordinary as far as episodes in puranic repertoire. However, its re-presence in the 18th century must be more critically examined. Another of Serfoji's nirupanas, *Kumarasambhava*, is taken from Kalidasa's classic kavya from the 5th century, on the birth of Muruga, son of Siva and Parvati – central figures of the Saiva Hindu pantheon.

Serfoji's nirupanas are thus contextualized by three different embodied performativities; 1) the existing court drama tradition that, in the 18th century drew from both the Telugu Nayak legacy as well as the Sanskrit legacy (different word? that the Marathas were increasingly pivoting towards; 2) the history, especially from the early modern period and Vijayanagar court, of dances being named and clustered in texts providing grammars for dance which found renewed interest in south India as evidenced by previous kings like Tukkoji (early 18th century – see previous chapter); and 3) the bhakti performance traditions of kirtan–bhajana from western India which focused on variety, accessibility and an emotional metaphysical appeal and which found increasing importance in the elite public sphere of the Kaveri delta especially in the latter half of the 18th century through official and unofficial patronage by the Maratha Tanjavur state.

A close read – deconstructing performance structure

In *Kiratarjuniya nirupana*, Serfoji uses the themes of union and separation. Although the name of the play tells us the performance is about Kirata (Siva disguised as a hunter) and Arjuna, the entirety of the performance is set up as a dialogue between Siva and Parvati, ostensibly right before Siva is about to leave to trick Arjuna in the forest. Parvati demands, begs, coaxes Siva into letting her join him. It is thus presented in the form of a Nayaka play. However, the details show us that it is underscored by a metaphysical drive, rather than a sensual one – for example, instead of describing the physical ways in which Siva's touch brings her pleasure ('makes her bloom'), Parvati has an extended moment on the moral imperitives of listening to one's husband, and the contentment that comes from the same. In a sense, the ultimate point is still framed as pleasure, but a pleasure predicated on fulfilling duty rather than a bodily sensory pleasure.

If we think about the fact that Serfoji framed his performance text as nirupana, the entire performance must be understood as an elaboration of a particular moral or philosophical lesson. Each piece contributes to the trajectory of the unfolding conversation between Siva and Parvati. After the opening pieces which bring together invocation to the chosen deities and rhythmic interlude, the first piece is a sabdam. The lyric for the shabdam is very simple, it introduces the narrative moment from the epic, setting the backdrop: *Oh siva, to fulfill Arjuna's desire you go to the forest* – in Parvati's voice. From the one line, those who are familiar with puranic stories will know this performance is in reference to the episode when Siva disguises himself as a hunter and goes to the forest to bless Arjuna. The structure of the piece follows the shabdas mentioned earlier – the line of lyric is the refrain and is followed by different lines of syllabic rhythmic material and a final *tirmanam*. The second piece is titled as a varna. The opening two stanzas ask Siva, *Hey lord! You go to Arjuna's place. But here in Kailasa, how will I be alone?* These stanzas are followed by a muktayi swara or solfege passage before going into the second half of

the piece with the refrain: *Who's feet will I take/surrender to?* The second half goes back and forth between this line and multiple solfege swara lines. In performance, each time the dancer comes back to the line, she would elaborate it further, making this the heart of the piece. The varna is followed by a piece titled pada which offers the opportunity to delve into an elaboration on the theme of (imminent) separation. The lyric says: *When my father entrusted me to you/your place, from that moment I have been happy/content/sukam. If I go w/ you to the forest it will give me happiness. If I am separated from you, I will feel as if I am in a forest (here, meaning filled with desolation).*

After the pada, the following two pieces seem to be the central lyrical and virtuosic pieces of the performance. The first is a svarajati, with alternating stanzas of solfege and lines of lyric.[180]

n, s, r, m g r p, m m g, r m g r n d p, m g r s r ‖

I know the pleasures and hardships of the forest.

s, r n s r r, n, r n s n d p, p m p n, s r m g, r | m p n d p, m k,r s r ‖

I left my father and for a long time, was in (lived in) the forest.

r m g r g g r s n, n n s r n s r s, n n d, p m, p | n s r m, g r m, p n d p, m m g, r s r

Seeking you, doing tavam (penance), I didn't worry about the difficulty even a little.

m g r g r, s r n, r n r s n d p m p, p m p n, s r m g, r | m p n d p, m m g r s r ‖

Oh PuraharA! Moon-wearing Siva! The one who gives Sarabendhran sukam/comfort!

Svara

Refuge to all! Remover of ills! I bow and pray to you.

[180] Translations into English are my own, based on published text with Tamil notes in Krishnaswami Mahdick, A, G Nagaraja Rao, and K Vāsudeva Śāstrī. *Dance Pieces in Marathi, Nirupanas of Serfoji Raja*. Tanjore: Gopalan, 1958.

Svara

Coming with you to the forest, what difficulty can it be for me! Think and see.

The second is an abhinayapada consisting of just lyric.

I'll turn into a huntsman, with you, I'll also go.

I'll pluck young leaves, put a tilakam, sing sweetly and attract all the animals.

I'll turn into a huntsman…

W/ peacock feathers in my hair, flower buds for earrings,

I'll turn into a huntsman…

I will pick up the bow and arrow and come w/ you. Then my heart will be quieted.

I'll turn into a huntsman…

Between these two songs, the focus turns to Parvati herself. In the svarajati, she situates herself also as a puranic character by referencing the story of her leaving home to seek out Siva by doing ascetic penance. Turning her own story into an argument to convince Siva she is no stranger to the forest. In the abhinaya padam, Parvati takes the argument even further, imagining herself as a young huntsman to accompany Siva. Interestingly, there is an underlying homo-erotic imagination, Parvati imagining herself not only as a huntsman but as a beautiful young man with buds as earrings and peacock feathers in his hair, a tilakam on his forehead, singing sweetly to the animals. It paints a vivid picture.

The thillana is simple but it is also a pivot point. Unlike in today's bharata natyam margam kaccheri, Serfoji's nirupanas all have a whole other set of pieces after the tillana – another abhinaya padam followed by jakkini, gita, prabanda and triputa before ending with a sloka varna. With the tillana, the tone of the performance moves away from the formula of Nayak dramas and

fully takes on the moral lesson of dharma or duty. The tillana carries the lyric *Hey Kailasanatha! Whatever anyone wishes, you(r generosity) gives. You are aware of all the dharmas. What do I wish for?* The abhinaya pada that follows fully takes on the language of dharma but at the same time inverts it towards Parvati's own needs.

> *Watching your husband and acting (accordingly) is chastity's essence. In this, there is great sowkyam, both internal and external. The husband's word won't be violated. His heart will be happy. Whatever place you are, I need to be there. Oh he who is worshipped by Sarabendran. You must listen to this prayer/wish.*

Finally, with the following jakkini, gita, prabandha and triputa, the performance conversation turns to the episode referred to in the title of the nirupana – the encounter between Arjuna and Siva. The jakkini syllabic sung sol, solfege svara and lyric sahitya to say: *I will come quietly with you, with joy, and hear your (Siva and Arjuna) fight. How will parthan (Arjuna) destroy you? (ie he can't).* The gita alternates between lines of solfege and lyric, much like the svarajati earlier in the dance/drama, but the lines are shorter, the alternating quicker: *He Isvara! You go now as a huntsman. How will Arjuna do Pooja to you? How will he know you are Siva? A big fight will happen between you I think. Only after that, he will understand you are <u>the</u> sAksAth sivan (the real Siva)*. The prabandha that alternates between solfege and syllabic material for several stanzas before going into alternating solfege and lyric lines to express a very simple couple of lines: *After that, he (Arjuna) will bow/pray to you (Siva) joyfully.* In the final piece before the closing, the triputa, is very similar to the prabandha – alternating first between solfege and syllabic sol and then a couple of lines between solfege and lyric: *That sight, I wish/pray to see.* The narrartive movement of this entire section is minimal. The gist of it is Parvati, after having established who she is, who Siva is and the puranic moment they are at, telling Siva I will come

with you, how will Arjuna know who you are, I want to see the fight that takes place and him realizing you are Siva and bowing at your feet. The whole performance ends with a sloka, or unstructured sung verse, *In the universe, you are the protector, the savior, everything;* a rythmic closing called a kautta (kavuttvam): *The one worshipped by Saraboji, I join my hands and bow to you, bless me*; and a closing benedictory verse (mangalam) praising Siva, the subject of the entire play.

The actual narrative arc of the play is brief – it is a conversation that happens between Siva and Parvati before he is about to leave. The context of this puranic moment affords the author, Serfoji, the creative space to explore what actually matters, the dynamics of impending separation. While this structure and thematic overtones follow existing Telugu and Sanskrit courtly plays, for Serfoji, the dynamics of separation are not explored towards the possibility of physical and sexual union and its multitude of pleasure and pain. Instead for Serfoji it offers the framework for presenting a conversation about the duty of a wife towards her husband. This instrumental use of the performative genres Serfoji draws from kirtan expositional performance in a fundamental way.

More importantly, the entire lyric content of the performance, with all its moral and philosophical ends is not even the central concern of the performance. The lyric is so often interrupted by solfege or syllabic sol, performed by nrtta, that it is almost of secondary concern. The lyrical content is almost a vehicle for the performance of non-narrative virtousic singing and dancing. Almost all of the pieces, barring the two abhinaya padas and the slokas/mangalam, combine solfege, lyric and shabda. They are all structured differently and yet, their performance has as much to do with the rhythmic and abstract interludes as it does the 'story'. Serfoji's use of all these specific types of compositions (rather than primarily darus) shows a consciousness to

what those compositions can *do* in the space of these performance trajectories. This speaks to a specific attention to structure that is neither narrative or even episodic. The performance is structured by formal concerns of abstract non-affect driven movement and music. This change in approach is the fundamental shift of the eighteenth century – away from privileging lyricism and towards privileging rhythm, melody and solfege.

Serfoji produced multiple performances with this exact same list and order of pieces, meant to be danced. None have spoken text, limited sung text and all feature the same centrality of abstract rhythmic and melodic virtuosity. For example, another of the dance-dramas, also about the Siva – Parvati relationship is, however, presented as Parvati's sakhi, companion, speaking to Parvati about Siva's impending return home. The pieces in the first half, like in Kiratarjuniya sets up the moment in which the performance is situated. The sakhi assures Parvati Siva is returning soon but also turns it back into the relationship between Parvati and the sakhi, with the sakhi pleading with Parvati to not forget her when Siva returns. The lyric-heavy pieces all focus on this aspect. The second half of the dance/drama, from the tillana onwards, however, is about a particular dream that the sakhi had about Parvati and Siva reuniting – she can see it, in all its beautiful detail. Like in the Kiratarjuniya nirupana, these pieces are about visualizing the immediate future. In Kiratarjuniya, it was Parvati visualizing the meeting of Siva and Parvati. In this performance, it is about the sakhi visualizing the reunion of Siva and Parvati.

Not all of Serfoji's nirupanas are based in puranic mythology.[181] He produced a third dance-drama titled *Virapatni samvada* (roughly translated to dialogue of a hero's wife). In this

[181] Serfoji made a Kashi yatra trip (Varanasi) as well as a Kaveri yatra albeit heavily supervised/restricted to visit, consecrate all the Siva stala/linga. He also installed the idol of Vithoba brought from Pandharpur in commemoration of his pilgrimage to Kasi.

nirupana, a woman rebuffs a man who is making unwanted advances. The title aside, the dance-drama is in the voice of a dasi or courtesan woman and is a rare glimpse of individualized voice, and a particularly strong voice at that. In the pada in the first half, the lyrics are as follows:

Even being a dasi, I'm a woman with standards. Whoever I think of/want initially, that day itself he is my lord. Thinking that w/ a heart that steals the world, a strong woman doesn't have the position of a low woman and quickly going (about my day/work?), why are you stopping and bothering me? Even if you were/are Ravana, I am not interested. Because of veerar's meditation, my heart is w/out fear.

In the svarajati that follows, she says:

I am not afraid of you. You will turn and go.

I am someone else's. Blocking me is not advisable.

Thinking I am a silly weak woman with hardship, listen to my request

Normally, like a poet describes, women can be gotten but everyone will get comfort

Thinking of/wanting a woman who does not love you [however], might give you great difficulty but little to no comfort. Therefore, he Ravana! Rid the ill desire in your heart.

I told you in so many ways. Talking any more is intolerable. Beware! He Dasamukane! Don't disturb me.

The removal of any speech from the performance marks it as a distinct shift from dance-drama to dance. Its not just the lack of speech, but the function that speech played in plays. The narrator's interlocutions were the place where narrative moved along in earlier plays. Without that, the movement of the performance is very different. Now, it is focused on a single moment of conversation, referencing this entire story, rather than a series of episodes actually playing out the story. Move away from 'narrative' (its not narrative, decide what exactly the dance-drama through line is) to the episodic quality of a variety show tied together by formal concerns of raga

and tala rather than narrative trajectory. It is difficult to say if Serfoji's nirupanas were performed or by whom or where or for what audience.[182] Because it is a single character's voice, it is plausible to assume it was one dancer, along with the musicians who accompany that dancer. The framing of the performance is more like a dance performance, in the mold of padams or other solo dance pieces than a play. In the variety of pieces the performances also seem to be framed for solo performance, as it echoes the kind of hybridity seen in early modern Sanskrit texts on dance. Structurally, however, the single story approach that ties all the pieces into one episodic arc place the performances within the sphere of courtly Telugu dance dramas, yaksaganas. Then again, the focus on the expositional power of music and dance and the elaboration of a single character's voice within a single story moment is a product of kirtan-katha dasa performance.

Most importantly, Serfoji's nirupanas foreshadow the kacceri structure that I started the chapter with through the famous words of Balasaraswati. In a period of experimentation with form and structure, dance became defined through these new trajectories for concert performance. Is it possible to locate what this new attention to structure was in conversation with in terms of the changing social and cultural scapes of the Coromandel by this time? I suggest that the attention to the structure of a performance off-set earlier paradigms of performance which were more open-ended. These older paradigms, which centered much more closely around padam performance, also relied more on lyricism in the song and involved abhinaya gestural language in dance, both of which benefit from some familiarity with specific vocabularies – either linguistic or gestural. In the eighteenth-century subcontinent, and the Coromandel

[182] A divison of palace administration was meant for music and dance. See Venkatramayya 1982

specifically, more than ever before, at least spheres of assembly (which is where concert dance existed) were defined by audiences with hybrid cultural and language familiarities. This included not only the Marathas in the south, but merchants who travelled widely, portfolio-capitalists that navigated between emerging European spaces and native south Indian ones, and performers and composers themselves who migrated. Thus, even before or outside of negotiation of new European audiences and their distinct ways of consuming Indian dance, new structures for performance negotiated hybridity and difference in audience reception and responded accordingly. In the next section, I turn to the terms sadir and kacceri to tease apart their implications for dance's location and identity in these changing hyrbid socio-commercial landscapes.

IV. Structuring New Public Space: Sadir, Kacchahari, and Concert Dance

The *sadir kacceri* holds demarcated not only a repertoire and structure, but a particular social context and spatialized politics. In Saskia Kersenboom's work *Nityasumangali*, devadasi dancer P Ranganayaki describes many dances but a particular set known she refers to as *sadir kacceri* during the Brahmotsava festival, the biggest festival of the year, at Tiruttani in the far south of Tamil Nadu. On the fifth day, the procession of the deity (Muruga of Tiruttani temple around whom all the festivities occur), stops in the evening at the palace of the king where the king enjoys a concert, that is called the sadir kacceri. She says, after an introductory composition called cinna mela prapti and other introductory invocatory vocal pieces, the first dance is performed: alarippu, sabda, jatisvara, varnam, a few Ksetrayya padams, and a tillana. In a number of dancers' descriptions of activities in the work, the term *sadir kaceri* comes up – always to refer to a particular kind of performance consisting of these specific pieces,

undertstood as ‘concert’ dance, and almost always performed for a king or elite.[183] The very idea of a ‘concert’ dance – that it exists in the contexts of social, political and economic authority, rather than of religiosity, even while bringing together the spheres of court and temple in the construction of urban ‘centers’.[184]

While the aesthetic and structural elements of what is referred to as sadir kacceri developed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the term sadir and the term kacceri came to refer to this concert dance only from the tail end of the eighteenth century. The emergence of these terms to refer to a dance concert is located in the convergence of historical shifts in notions of public space, particularly spaces of assembly, and in turn in dance as defining these spaces. As Arabic loan words, the terms sadir and kacceri came into usage in south India with the expansion of administrative and commercial systems by the end of the seventeenth century with the establishment of the Maratha Bhonsles in the Kaveri delta and the Mughal offshoot states in Arcot and Hyderabad. The Bhonsles, having risen through the ranks of the Deccani Bijapur sultanate, brought similar administrative and fiscal systems as they expanded into the south. They thus index an Islamicat-ization of public space in the eighteenth century to some extent. However, their much more common usage from the early nineteenth century reflects British appropriation of both the administrative and fiscal systems already in place as well as the more fundamental project of defining social public space through the lens of the Company darbar. The following two entries from the first Tamil-European language dictionary by Danish missionary,

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[183] Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali*, p 132, 135

[184] For example, in Karvetinagar (border of current Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), on the day after the festival of Navaratri, all of the dancers associated with temples under the authority of the Karvetinagar raja (or zamindar), would go the palace and as part of honoring him would present a regular ‘concert’ repertoire or sadir kacceri

Fabricious and a subsequent entry from 1862 trace the shift that happened from the end of the eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth.

1779 Fabricius Malabar English Dictionary (p?)[185] :

> Sadir: சதீர். cheap. சதீராய. at a low or reasonable) rate. சதீர்பண்ணக்கொடுக்கிறது, to sell cheap.

Almost a century later, in 1862, the Miron Winslow English and Tamil dictionary defines sadir as follows:

> சதிர் catir, *s.* [*vul.*] Cheapness, குறைந்தவிலை. 2. Amelioration இலகு. 3. [see also சதுர் and சதர்.] An assembly to witness a play, or the performance of dancing girls, நாட்டியசபை. (*c.*) 4. [*loc.*] Boundary, limit, எல்லை
>
> சடிராய்க்கொள்ள, *inf.* To buy cheap.
>
> சடிர்வைக்க -- சதுர்வைக் ,*inf.* To have a dancing party.
>
> சடிர்க்கிராமம் ,*s.* [*loc.*] A frontier town
>
> சதுர் catur, *s.* (Sa. Chatur.) Four-fold. 2. [*vul.*] A party to witness dancing, &c. – as சதிர். 1, 3. 3. Sagacity, &c. – as சதுரம் 2, 3, 4. 4. Propriety, suitableness, good, நன்மை. (*p.*)
>
> …
>
> சதுரானவிலை, *s.* A low, cheap price.
>
> சதுர்காண, *inf.* To be cheap, to be obtained at a low price. (*R.*)

[185] 1809 second edition dictionary

1835 Rottler Tamil English dictionary

1852 Knight Tamil English Dictionary 2nd edition:

1862 Winslow Miron Tamil English dictionary (based on Joseph Knight's)

1897 1st edition, 1910 2nd edition, 1933 3rd edition, 1972 4th edition

சதுர்விலையாட, *inf.* To dance as a dancing girl before an assembly. (*Rare.*)[186]

In the period between the Fabricius dictionary at the end of the eighteenth century and the Winslow dictionary in the mid nineteenth century, the idea that sadir referred to dance became firmly entrenched for English language speakers. Beyond mere terminology, the shift reflects an acknowledgement of dance's location at the intersection of the commercial and public. The connotations of sadir in addition to 'economical' include "an assembly to witness a play or performance of dancing girls", "to have a dancing party", and "to dance as a dancing girl before an assembly". All of these sub-definitions have certain things in common. They involve dance in the context of an assembly or party which centrally implies that the definition includes the witnessers and the experience of assembling to witness. The sub-definitions also bring together a notion of economy and the dance assembly, locating dance centrally in the context of commercial concerns. Far from being divorced from the commercial, dance is located within it. This is not new to the nineteenth century, since we saw it in the various popular creative genres that located dance over the eighteenth century at the very same time that the concert repertoire was developing in the urban contexts of southeast India. I argue that far from simple trajectories

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[186] Fabricius-Based English-Tamil Dictionary 1972 Edition (4th)

கச்சேரி kaccēri (p. 72) , *s. (Ar.)* public office, a court of justice, நியாயஸ்தலம்; 2. an assembly for a musical concert. கச்சேரிகரைவாசல், public office.

சதிர் catir (p. 126) , *s.* ability, dexterity, சதுர்; 2. cheapness, favourable term low price; 3. a nautch party; 4. boundary, எல்லை; 5. fortune, blessing; 6. beauty, loveliness; 7. economy, செட்டு.

சதிராய், at a low or fovourable rate.

சதிரி, a skilful woman.

சதிரிளமங்கையர், beautiful young damsels.

சதிருக்கு வர, to be made public, to appear before the public.

சதிர்க்கிராமம், a frontier village.

சதிர்த் தேங்காய், cocoanuts thrown down with force so as to break to pieces, in fulfilment of a vow or for averting an evil eye.

சதிர் வைக்க, to arrange an exhibition or dance.

of a golden period when the Tanjavur quartette standardized the sadir kacheri and the subsequent fall of devadasi women due to courtly patronage and/or British foreign influence, the traditional kaccheri, the commercial concerns of elite patronage and urban contexts and the changing socio-spatial sphere of the Coromandel intertwined in the formation of the modern repertoire. In fact, I suggest in this chapter that the development of the sadir kacceri repertoire in the latter half of the eighteenth century as well as its standardization at the beginning of the nineteenth were in negotiation with and in response to these material and social concerns.

In the same article from 1805 mentioned earlier in this chapter, Raghaviah Charry explains the economies of professional dancers:

> "With regard to their revenues, the first source of emolument proceeds from their des tination, as public women. — When the young lady arrives at the age of puberty, she is consigned to the protection of a man, who generally pays a large premium, besides a suitable monthly allowance. Changes of men are made as often as it suits the con- veniency and advantage of the old matron.
>
> The second channel of benefit arises from the presents made to thcin for dancing or sing ing-— unfortunately, no standard of hire was ever established, but it is entirely left to the arrangements of the parties. A set, will probably- receive from 30 to 500 rupees for the performance of three or four day?, as the circumstances and disposition of the person who requests their dance may admit ; — the spectators, sometimes, give a few rupees to them, either from liberality or vanity.— The produce of this supply goes in shares to every individual forming the set, viz : Five or len per cent, on the whole, is taken off for charities. The residue is then divided into two shares, of which one is

allowed to the dancing woman. The other subdivided into 6'i shares, of which 2} to Natuva, or the dancing master; If to Paloca, singer; 1 to Piliangolo, or the jiitfe player ; lj to Maddatagar, or trumpeter; f to Srutyman, or bcllower [bellows blower! ; the dancing woman pays the latter} from her snare."

The idea of the courtesan as mercenary is an old one. The padam genre, a mainstay of dancing women's performance even into the salon performances of the nineteenth century, located courtesans and their performance within the cash-based transactions of commercial economies. Ksetrayya's padams from the end of the seventeenth centuries defined both the padam genre and the voice of self-assured courtesan women, even in the context of bhakti. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, attitudes towards dancing women had shifted somewhat. The ideal of the unapolagetic public professional woman was tinged with new kinds of social undertones that villainized the vagaries of commercial economies as well as courtesans as a symbol of them. This is seen in the nonti natakams from Chapter 1 and the move away from the focus on sensuality and sexuality in Sanskritic approaches to dance as seen in Chapter 2. Even the genre of the padam saw some shifts over the eighteenth century. Ksetrayya padams continued to circulate and be performed and were even cited as the definitive examples of courtesan production especially for Europeans in Madras,[187] but in terms of new production by

[187] Charry translated two padams in his article for the Journal, for his European reading audiences.

"Pada. — Songs of this description contain every thing relating to love. Yet, the re ligious principles of the Hindoo poets are ever untainted ; for every Padd is stamped with the name of some or other of their deities, excepting those, which they dedicate to please their masters — the Rajahs, or others, who hire their labour to transmit an indivi dual name to posterity. Cashatreya, a modern poet of the first note, has composed innumerable Padas, marked with the name of Moova Gopala (Kristna) — his style is elegant and musical ; his lan guage is easy and clear, and his meaning com prehensive. * From this poet's productions, I have select ed two songs, an indifferent translation of which, (for to be literal and elegant it does not become me, and I am concerned to find my abilities too poor to attempt) I annex be low. The Pall'avy, or chorus, of every Pada, is sung at the end of every Charana, or sen tence. [In order to convey to the English reader some idea of the effect of these songs we have hazarded the following free imitations of thetn.]"

south Indian composers and the general direction that courts like Tanjavur moved towards, the place and tone of courtesan performance shifted, reverting to more classical themes of the god coming in procession and the woman falling in love from afar, removing the women from the courtesan world of cash-transation and shifting the dynamics of power back towards the male god.[188]

“Panto rally RagoV' ^amdCommd Vd- Aditala (dandoka,Cliara rd Dum* ' J ma."

" Tis it a crime, oh ! friend, " [Whose] face is beautiful as the llos- " soim [buds] of roses f " Why does be disdain to approach (or " come near) me ?" !»».—" When he, the King of the world, *' once was sporting with me, I left the ogree- " able emotions of his repeated embraces; I *' blushed and remained smilingly silent, " with my head bashfully reclined } he wish- " cd me, at the time, to speak, but X coujd " not." " Is ii a crime, oh ! friend ? " rVhy does he disdain to approach (or " come near) mc f" 2d.—*- At the time, that I was conteniT *' plating the pleasing occurrences which his " agreeable company and sweet embraces *' produced in me, 1'laughed to myself, and " remained mute, w ithout being able to ac- " quaint him the value of tho present mo- '* luent." — " Is it a crime, oh .' friend "

The lover has mistaken his mistresses's ex treme lashfulness for disdain, and quitted her company in consequence. Tell me, my friend, where was my crime, Why should he treat me with disdain ? (Thou fairer than the rosebud's prime,) Why does he leave me to complain i Once when my royal lover strove, With blandishment, and kind embrace, To win my heart to meet hi? love ; — What glowing blushes vcil'd my face! Tell mc, my fiend, cVc I turned,— -my faultering voice grew weak, And bashfully my head reclin'd,— • " Speak," said my love : I could not speak, But sin i I'd : and every smile was kind. Tell me, my friend, & c. Yes, I was mute: — my charming theme With rapture occupied my breast; ^ly e\ery thought was fixed on him ; And joys too great to be expressed! Tell mc, my friend, &c< Yes, I was mute : — but eyes can speak, And sileuce' self proclaim the whole, joying the bliss of his love, is it possible " lhat I was not satisfied." '* Is it a crime, oh ! friend."

Observation. — The above Pada contains the language of a woman, addressed to her fe male friend, acquainting how harmoniously she lived with her lover, and explains the cause of the present variance — the heroine, is called Madhcyama, or the discreet woman, for she is, (as it is inferable from her senti ments in the-song) perfectly accomplished in the gallanlries of love, but circumspect and modest — -she complains of her lover's mistake with regard to his idea of offence, which ori ginates from her being modest, . and not sprightly and gay. The gallant is Paly, or 5Ian of fidelity, for he is not reproached with intriguing with other women, and his fault is a mistake in judgment.”

[188] New padam composers, such as those like Ghanam Krishna Iyer, who composed Tamil padams which continue to be performed in bharata natyam performances, took a different approach to bhakti poetry and the courtesan’s voice – he reverted to more classical themes of the god coming in procession and the woman falling in love from afar and wondering, why won’t he (the god) come to me – the woman is talking to her sakhi. This is the gist of a famous Tamil padam called Tiruvottiyur Tyagarajan, for example, or Muttutandavar’s padam Teruvil Varano (mid 17th to mid 18th century). Another of Ghanam Krishna Iyer’s padams still performed today titles Ella Arumaigalum, doesn’t fall back on classic bhakti tropes and mobilizes the biting sarcasm of Ksetrayya but is from the voice of the married woman, speaking about ‘the other woman’, rather than a courtesan demanding her money for the pleasure she gives. This is true of another popular padam of unknown author, Ariven ayya. Some padams have the wife speaking to ‘the other woman’, such as Subbarama Iyer’s Adhuvum Solluval. All of these padams, produced from the end of the eighteenth century through the nineteenth century,

Charry, translating courtesans for European audience, already in 1805 has recourse to many of the tropes that soon became common to British conceptions of devadasi dancers as something exotic and yet as 'fallen public women', saying "In former days, we had certainly some es tablished rules to regulate their conduct, for as public women they were not destitute of fidelity- and attachment — at present the case is otherwise, and needs no explanation, from the miserable objects we often see in the pub lic bazars." More importantly, however, Charry distinguishes between different kinds of women performers:

> "This race of women in this part of the country is formed into three grand divisions— 1st. — A particular set employed in the service of our Temples, where dancing is per formed at regulated hours. They are not re markable for their beauty, because thev are the refuse of the following class; and their masters (images in the Temple) are not nice upon this point. 2d. — The fashionable set — the women under this class, carry the prize of the day, for they arc accomplished to a certain degree in music, they profess the trade of dancing, and are initiated iu ail the bewitching arts of harlotry — they are pretty, not without exception, and live decent, and in good circumstances. 3rd — A shameless neetiie common wo men — they have no pretentions to any sort of acquirements, and wholly depend for the necessaries of life on the common trade to which they become devoted.
>
> The fashionable class with whose theatrical representations the public is entertained, are originally descended from the tribe of Kicolas or weavers, who from

fundamentally shift the location of courtesan women and their performance in the social space of a commercial world – removing both bhakti and courtesan women from the world of cash-transaction.

immemorial usage, de dicate one of the female offspring of each fa mily to the service, of the Temples and pub lic — this custom is not in much practice now ; for the uninterrupted employment the wea vers find under the auspices of the Honoura ble Company, together with their circumstan ces, has improved their feelings of honour and virtue. The deficiency arising from the above cause, is made up bv purchase of girls, from differ ent parts of the country, where the cala mities of famine and war, domestic misfor tunes and peculiar religious customs, drive the parents to the necessity of disposing of their children. An elderly woman, and one or two girls form a sett, which is distinguished after the young or old lady's name, as fortune or fame may render either of them conspicuous.

The young girls are sent to the dancing school at about b or 6' years of age, and at 8, they begin learning music; cither vocal or instrumental — some attain a great proficiency in dancing, others in singing; but the first art is limited to a certain period of life, for dancing in the Hindoo style requires great agility and strength of constitution — thus, no woman after the age of 2i years is reckoned competent to the task. The expense-attending the education of a girl, and to render her accomplished, will probably amount to between 300 and 400 pa godas, this is either managed by contracts, or monthly payment, to the Natuva, the danc ing roaster, and Pataca the singer. When the girl attains a certain degree of proficiency, the friends and the relations of the old mother, arc invited, and after obseiv- ing certain formalities and ceremonies, the young student is introduced to the assembly and her merit is examined and assayed, The expense of this first exhibition is great, including the presents to the dancing masters, apcl it is borne either bv the betrothed gallant of the girl, or the friend of her mother. —

After this ceremony, and not until then, the set gain admittance to the favour of the pub lic, and are a^ked to attend marriages and other feasts."[189]

Thus, Charry distinguishes between those who are employed by temples for religious service, those who are prostitutes and those whom he calls "the fashionable class". Dancing, in his description is associated with this last category of professional women, who he describes as beautiful and accomplished and whose performance Charry describes as entertainers. He also says they are supposed to have descended from weaving communities which, while putting aside the distinctly European concern with origins in this period, reflects the association of dancers with others of service and craft industries, especially weaving, that were central to the economies of southeast India in the eighteenth century. In particular, the commercial economy of textiles was complicated at the end of the eighteenth century by the fact that the British, due to high demand and their lack of control of Indian producers, started appropriated textile-making technologies back to Europe which fueled the industrial revolution and damaged eastern India's textile economy. At the intersection of micro socio-economic dynamics and macro commercial-economic histories, concert dance straddled the spheres of devotional content and popular entertainment in terms of existing as a social event. These complex dynamics are encapsulated in the shifting connotations of the term sadir.

In addition to the term sadir, the term kacceri was also a relarively new one in relation to dance. The 1862 Winslow dicitionary defines kacceri as follows:

[189] Writing in 1870 for the recently formed Anthropological Society of London was John Shortt, the Surgeon General Superintendent of Vaccination for the British Madras Presidency at the time. His article, titled 'The Bayaderes or Dancing Girls of Southern India' was a mixture of echoes of writings like Charry's and emerging discourses of sexual bodies as disease-carrying bodies. This article was an important turning point in framing dancer's not just as evil for taking money but as dangerous for the health (both physical and moral) of the first British, then Indian middle class public.

கச்சேரி kaccēri, *s. (Arab.)* A revenue or police office, a court of justice, a place of public business, உத்தியோகசாலை 2. *(local.)* An assembly for vocal and dramatic entertainments, சங்கீதவினோதசபை.

Prior to colonialism, kachahari were parapatetic revenue collecting retenues under Mughal systems of economic administration. It was adopted in the south-east from around the mid to late seventeenth century when the Marathas brought it as part of their administrative structure. From the late seventeenth century, it became a norm that was adopted even outside areas under Mughal admin, such as the Kaveri delta and further south. The kachahari stablized into the permanently located kacheri diwan or office sometime in the eighteenth century, in the areas of the Nizamates of current day northern Tamil Nadu and southern Andhra as well as in the Kaveri delta and further south. In the process, it created a whole cosmopolis/world of interactions – social, economic, and performative. By the early nineteenth century, if not before that, the kacheri or cutchery was not only the site of administrative functioning (tax collection, arbitration on money and tax related matters, petitioning, and the many paper-practices of beaurocratic functioning), but also a central public site for any festivities and demonstrations of authority. For example, in the *1839 The Sessional Papers Printed by Order of the House of Lords, or Presented by Royal Command in the Session, Vol VII (p 27):*

"GANESA FEAST. About One Month before the Approach of this Festival, which is celebrated in Honour of the Idol Gnnesa, a Throne is prepared at the Office of the Principal Collector for its Reception, which is beautified with variegated Works of Paper, Wax, Tinsel, &c.; and the Expenses attending the whole Work amounts to Twenty-seven Rupees. On the Day of the Festival, at about Three P.M., some of the Cutcherry Peons, accom panied by Country Musicians, bring the Idol Ganesa from the Place of Purchase to

the Cutcherry in a Native Palankeen, and place it on the prepared Throne, keeping lighted Lamps on both Sides. The Idol is made of Clay, and painted Red. Shortly after, the Brahmin, administering the Ceremonies of Poojah (Worship), attends at the Cutcherry, as also the Hindoo Servants. The Brahmin Bhutt then proceeds to make the Poojah, which he begins by adorning the Idol with Flowers, rubbing Sandal Wood Powder into it, and keeping broken Cocoa Nuts, ripe Plantains, with some other eatable Articles, in front of the Idol, and concludes the Ceremony by moving around it a Vessel containing lighted Camphor several Times. During the Time he performs those Acts he repeats Mautrams (Prayers), and the Musicians play on their Band outside. After the Poojah is over the Bhutt retires, and presents the Government Servants in attendance, observing the Order of their Rank, with Prassada (Articles offered unto the Idol), which consists of Flowers and a Mass of Sandal Wood. Betel Leaves are also distributed. It is usual also to distribute Alms on this Day amongst mendicant Brahmans, Bhutts, who assemble for the Purpose, and to make a Nautch of Dancing Girls."

Increasingly over the nineteenth century, the cutcherry diwan was mobilized as a site of British Company or Crown authority, embodying itself in practice as a 'native' state in many ways. For example, "Narrative of the Celebration of the Jubilee of her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria Empress of India in the Presidency of Madras, 1887" describes the same choreography of processions and important stops, centered around the 'cutcherry'. This time, however, it is for the celebration of 'the Queen Empress of India' which were held and recorded in dozens of places throughout subcontinent not only as an expresion of British authority but of Indian public enthusiasm and supprt. In doing so, the British crown inserted itself wholesale into the socio-spatiality of south Indian modes of authority but in ways that were already complex to

begin with. The idea of the kacheri thus not only structured new hierarchies of localized relationships in the encounters within the kacheri darbar but also in a newly evolving geography structured in terms of stable center and regional relationships in the broader urban landscape. The sadir kacceri embodied the choreography of socio-spatial relations, centered around the assembly hall/ revenue office.

Over the nineteenth century, the terms kacceri and sadir became associated with dance and music to refer to a concert or performance. The networks of meanings for the terms point to dance's role in the changing nerve centers of (trans-local) social space. By landing here to conclude this chapter I suggest that the new structures of performance that developed over the latter half of the eighteenth century in the Kaveri delta were intimately tied to these new socio-spatial urban dynamics with both late Mughal and European Company presences. The terms sadir and kacceri, and the processes they implied, foregrounded an acknowledgement of not spectatorship but assembly as constitutive of dance dynamics. Moreover, they brought together a unique historical nexus of Islamicized administrative space, British claims for authority based on existing courtly and urban paradims of authority, and the sphere of the commercial in the conception of assembly as well as dance. The notion of the sadir kacceri, far from simply referencing traditional repertoire, makes visible concert dances' identity as popular performance – both as entertaining and as devotional – which were not mutually exclusive but intimately intertwined.

V. Conclusion

The consequences of looking at the sadir kaccheri the way I have here and historicizing it accordingly are several. Different kind of genealogies and continuities become apparent for

dance today that work against the idea of rupture in the nineteenth century and revival in the 20th. The move towards universalizing dance (and music) was not limited to the twentieth century. The movements of the eighteenth-century show there was an urge towards this already, which produced and centralized the genres that became idealized to the exclusion of erotic repertoires in the twentieth century.

At the same time, in this chapter I have aimed to trace the distinctions that were in play before the twentieth century which recognize drama (nataka), dance-drama (natya) and dance (nartana) as distinct in terms of aesthetic priorities as well as performance dynamics. Natya was generally the purview of all-male troupe performance, associated with bhakti movements and Brahmin settlements. Nartana or what came to be the sadir kacceri, on the other hand, was the purview of female dance professionals, who though travelled in troupes often performed solo – as seen by the popular Tamil play accounts and European memoirs from the first chapter of this dissertation. However, in the twentieth century, the reformulation of the sadir kacceri into bharata natyam involved an elision of these two which allowed them to be understood as interchangeable and thus allowed the particular Sanskritized historical evolution to be identified for bharata natyam. That is, even though the practices and repertoire of bharata natyam comes from women's dance performance practices of urban contexts, the term bharata natya implies the legitimacy and universality of male dramatic tradition. The process of Sanskritization and textualization of dance thus also involved a confusion of gendering performance. That this move was conscious and systematic is evidenced by the fact that some of the key architects of the revival of south Indian classical dance in the 1930s and 40s started out in Sanskrit theater companies, including E Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi for bharata natyam.

On the flip side, whereas both dance-drama and courtesan dance were part of courtly milieus and aesthetics of the Deccan and south India, dance alone has been chosen as classical. This is partly because dance can be removed from reliance on language in a way that drama cannot. In a similar way, the discourse around music has effectively defined *true* music as melodic elements, not language – because presumably melody and sound can be appreciated and responded to universally whereas language cannot. This notion still holds today for many musicians and dancers of carnatic music and dance. The broader implications of this gender-elision for performances that were to be defined as classical reflect a politics of bhakti – the absorption of the radical anti-hierarchical ideals of bhakti as a personal and un-mediated experience, into the ideologies of newly forming states for whose leaders the boldness of bhakti visions dovetails into their own renegade image. Professional women's performance, what emerged as sadir kacheri by the nineteenth century, sat in an uneasy relationship to these bhakti movements, not completely within them but imbued with structural and performative values from various bhakti performance traditions as they intersected with empire/statehood in the construction of new public spheres. The difference between this early modern politics of bhakti and the absorption of bhakti into the establishment of middle class institutions and publics in the twentieth century is that the radical ideals of individuality was subsumed by other aspects of the bhakti ideology – universalize paradigms of devotion in moral terms.

Implicitly, understanding south Indian classical dance today through the trans-local movements and assemblages I have traced here works against the fixing of cultural identities and practices along language or ethnicity-based boundaries first by colonial surveyors and then the Indian nation as it carved out the subcontinent into states. The histories of what we today refer to as kuchipudi, mohiniattam and even orissi are intimately intertwined, sharing some pieces of

repertoire and structure but also sharing many performance, devotional ideals and courtly influences through the movement of composers, performance and populist movements. Moreover, these movements wee not divorced from the poliitical-economic and material concerns of the state before the nationalist revival but were directly related to them through the necessities of patronage and public authority.

The most important implication of this chapter is dance's relationship to the publics I have discussed. The very idea of a concert dance as it developed over the latter half of the eighteenth century implies entertainment – that is something meant to be enjoyed, for leisure and for show. This is not a result of its 'decline' but a function of its very identity. It is the context in which the new genres of varnam and svarajati that are now central to bharata natyam crystalized. It is the context in which the Tanjavur Quartette standardized the shifts that had taken place in the decades before. Composers and performers drew from various bhakti performance traditions in order to present a performance predicated on accessibility to changing audiences, one based on reliance on more abstract elements than lyric. At the same time, the kacceri was always elite in that its primary audience was first and foremost the authorities for whom the performance existed. While the locus of that authority shifted, the actual role of dance and its place in the negotiations of these dynamics did not.

As twentieth century practitioners and intellectuals shaped bharata natyam for new middle-class audiences, they held on to the structures and repertoire of performance apart from excising the eroticism of padams. They kept the hybridity and the multiple legacies of bhakti performance. However, they divorced these from their network of socio-spatial dynamics of urban public culture – not just the temple but circulation that connected temple mandapam and kacceri darbar, with all their associations of political, economic and social authorities. In fact, the

refiguration was part of a larger denial of any urban public dynamics at all, as pre-colonial south India came to be slotted in terms of isolated court or temple, fixed in space and time. Dance's cosmopolitanism, beyond a notion of polyglossia (language syncretism), is largely unrecognized. Instead, the dynamics of trans-locality, explicit engagement with audience in the definition of dance repertoire and aesthetics as well as the unique division of labor between dancer, composer-choreographer, and patronage can be found in spaces of performance outside that which is today deemed classical. In particular, both these dynamics and the actual circulations of performance that are at the heart of not only this chapter but also this dissertation overall might be found in a sphere most usually considered anti-thetical to the sphere of classical performance and the practices that supposedly gave rise to it – that of popular culture. As I conclude this dissertation in the conclusion-epilogue, I outline not only these dynamics in specific iconic examples of dance for popular cinema but also the implications of looking to popular culture and connecting it back to early modern performance histories in alternative genealogies for the present – working against the over-determination of grand narratives and respectability politics for dance that are the enduring legacy of colonial hegemonies.

EPILOGUE:

Alternative Genealogies for the Present

Throughout this dissertation, I have sought to make two main arguments: Firstly, dance, and the developments that led to major aesthetic and structural shifts in dance, were distinctly trans-local – and related to political and economic geographies and projects of state-making. Secondly, dance was not limited to spheres of high culture or the royal courts. It was located in and constitutive of the everyday social milieu of urban contexts, in public spaces, cutting across multiple spheres, not divorced from commercial spheres and ultimately intimately responsive to audience. Together, these two aspects of dance making and knowledge production around dance knitted together what I have referred to as performative geographies.

Performative geographies remained fluid and constantly reformed as individuals moved around, particularly between the Deccan and Coromandel, and translated tropes, ideas and genres they inherited and brought to new urban contexts in new centers. This dissertation has thus sought to focus the writing of South Asian dance's bodily pasts not only on circulations but on processes of translation, re-orientation, assembling and reformulating. Within these processes, individual patrons, composers-performers, intellectuals and others formulated ideas not only about performance and aesthetics but about the urban milieus which they sought to define. Dance was intimately implicated in the construction of not only individual authorities but politics of state-building in the context of rapidly shifting geopolitics.

Most importantly, dance was far from stable or confined to our current notions of tradition. The attitude towards aesthetics, vocabulary and repertoire were not treated as stable or absolute

or precious – rather everyone involved was experimenting and responding to trends and audiences. The legacy of this dynamic, the vitality and dynamism of not just dance itself but the ways in which dance was constitutive of new translocal publics, to understand this dynamic I argue that it is not to classical south Indian dance as it is conceived today that we must turn. Rather, to understand the nature of dance in the period explored in this dissertation, it is elsewhere we must look – to the realm of popular culture.

Dance, Popular Culture, Translocal Futures for the Global South

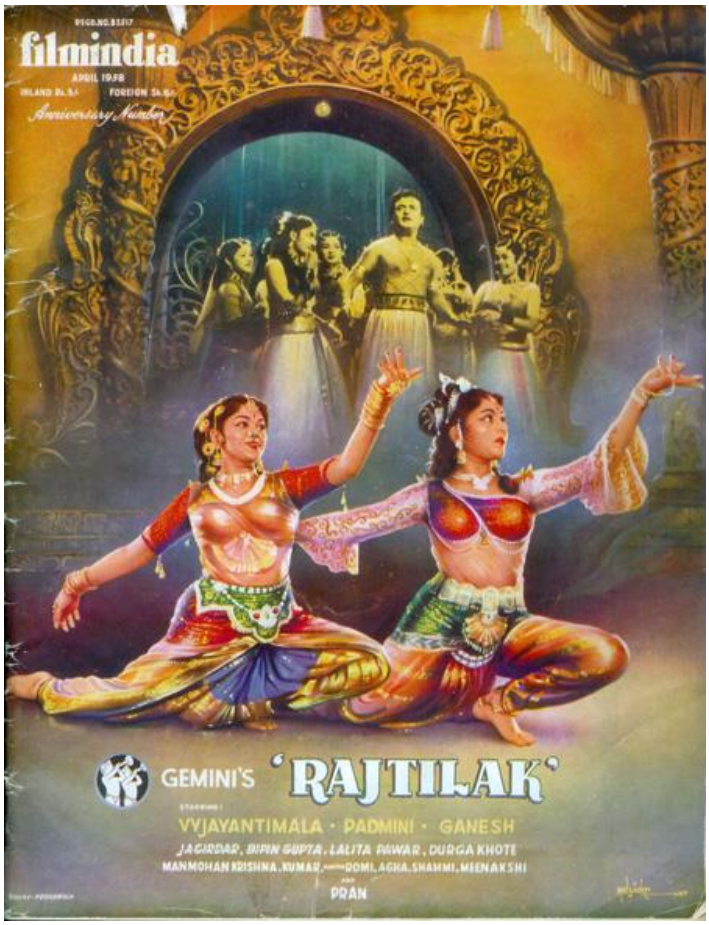


Fig. 50. April 1958 Cover, Film India Magazine (Film India Archives)

In 1958, the box-office hit Vanjikottai Vaaliban was released by the power house production house Gemini Studios, starring the iconic dancers Padmini and Vyjayanthimala Bali as leads

alongside leading heart-throb Gemini Ganesan. A recent Hindu article about the old film states, "The traditional ingredients of a Gemini Studios' movie were all present in liberal doses — expensive sets, exquisitely choreographed dances, melodious music, fast-paced onscreen narration and pleasing visuals." To this day, when that film is mentioned, it is for the dance numbers, with Padmini and Vyjayanthimala Bali both at the peak of their careers.[190] The dance number, *Kannum Kannum Kalanthu,* far exceeded the movie itself in popularity, often recalled even today. It was choreographed by B Hiralal (known as Hiralal master). He and his brothers, particularly his older brother B Sohenlal, were all involved in cinema as choreographers (later 'dance directors') from the 1950s onwards. Born in Jaipur Rajastan, they were trained in Kathak and other forms from childhood, and travelled south to seek their fortunes, settling in Chennai but ultimately becoming a central choreographer for Hindi films as well. The eldest brother, B Sohenlal was the teacher and mentor of Saroj Khan, one of the most prominent choreographers of Hindi films, choreographing more than 2000 numbers, including the most iconic dances in the 80's and 90s with Sridevi and Madhuri Dixit which have come to define Indian cinema.

> … As the percussion strikes, the first shot opens on Padmini swiftly turning towards the camera before launching into movement as the camera pans out. No more than a few seconds in, we cut to the excited patron before turning back to Padmini dancing, the accompanying musicians visible behind her and immediately to Vyjayanthimala bali looking on with an irritated lift of an eyebrow – all within the first ten seconds. The accompanying percussion continues with Padmini's joyous nrtta, soon speeding up into a crescendo-ing intro (ardhi) as shots back to the happy patron (royal couple) and

[190] Randor Guy, http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/Vanjikottai-Vaaliban-1958/article14962572.ece

increasingly irritated Vyjayanthimala before laumching into the lyric, Padmini gesture-singing with a flourish of her arm (miming really because the song is actually sung by Jikki and P. Leela voicing the two dancing ladies). The unadorned first line is mouthed by Padmini, as the camera focuses on her sparkling teasing face – "Am I Seeing love for the first time, is this love, is this love" - seemingly to her patron and yet the cheeky glance and the camera panning back to her angry rival suggest its really aimed at her regarding a man they mutually know…

…The song unfolds with each verse alternating between Padmini and Vyjayanthimala. The movement dynamic presents Padmini and Vyjayanthimala bali as two sides of a competition. Both the music and the movement shift between Padmini and Vyjayanthimala as they switch off. Padmini's verses follow the melody and instrumental accompaniment of Tamil semi-classical popular tunes (in Carnatic ragas) and her dance uses some vocabulary and abhinaya gesture associated with bharata natyam/sadir, although much is also not legible as that but involves ample shimmies, swirling hips and much more. Vyjayanthimala's verses on the other hand follow a different instrumentation and melody that evoke what I can most closely describe as Spanish, or must have been the reference point – with clarinet, a European sounding melody and punctuated by what sounds like castanets. Vyjayanthi's movement, not easily legible in terms of recognizable vocabulary is filled with long lines of the body, dramatic poses and ample use of angled arms and outstretched fingers in the rhythmic portions. But when the lyrics of the verse begin, while carrying the flavor of her dancing, turns to the cheeky evocations of her face aided by strategic use of gesture, especially as she sing-threatens to Padmini "aaduven paaradi.. paaduven kaeladi" (I will dance, watch me, I will sing, just you listen). In effect,

> Vyjayanthis' movement translates whatever vocabulary the choreographer has defined for this song into the evocative equivalent of Bharatanatyam abhinaya – that is gesture along with body language and the face that expresses threat, teasing, sarcasm and cheekiness. All the while, the movement feeds into the building drama of this dance-off as the two whirl around the court hall, camera cutting between them and the onlookers, zooming and panning and at times swiveling with them. Movement, lyric, camera, and melody, rhythmic interludes all work together leading to a climax styled like a *tani avartanam* or percussion break between two percussionists going back and forth in shorter and shorter sequences – with both dancers dancing to distinct percussion in a vocabulary that is as mixed as it is distinct (in this section also taking on some theatrical vocabulary of fight scenes) and oftentimes to a viewer like myself looking on confusing, but completely compelling, before ending in emphatic and angry unison and a startling crash as the mutual man of attraction cuts the chord for the chandelier hanging in the middle of the very excited hall…

The dance is an almost dizzying set of multiple conversations between dancers, musicians, spectator and camera. The whole episode embodies an engagement with new kinds of cosmopolitanism through movement (and music) that aren't necessarily readily coded.[191] There is something particularly campy about many of these scenes and dances, and in their fullness, a space of critique – a critique of middle class morality, easy nationalist narratives, and

[191] Another example, Manmadha leelai from Haridas (1944) is a 'classical' dance performance but in the rhythmic interludes, Rajakumari does movements that read as something else entirely.

colonialism. The power that dance in/as popular culture in the form of film is unequivocal and enduring to an incredibly large swath of people coming of age in an increasingly global era.

Also in 1958, in the Sangeet Natak Akademi Conference on Dance, scholar V. Raghavan famously declared bharata natyam the national dance of India – Raghavan and others of the period universalized what had developed into sadir kacceri over the eighteenth century in the translocal urban milieus of south/east India, presenting a new narrative that would not only define dance in India but define Indian dance for the rest of the world, not the least because of its international circulations through early modern dancers and Indian diaspora. However, it was not necessarily through figures like V. Raghavan or even dancers like Rukmini Devi and Balasaraswati that dance became popular with middle class families in India. And it was not only through the circulations of modern dancers and impressarios of Europe and US that south Indian dance travelled overseas. It was through the movies that dance largely became popular beyond limited circles of English-educated upper middle-class Indians. Padmini, along with Vyjayanthimala and Kamala Kumari became household names, popularizing bharata natyam to entire generations and across social strata. Moreover, through films and their many avatars in popular culture, south Indian dance travelled in global pathways in which the US and Europe figure only marginally. Dance was (and is) produced, consumed, and circulated in the construction of urban publics through popular culture in ways that don't always have the same relationship to discourses of nationalism or ethnic/language identity that dances that have been formulated as art dance do.

Film and other spheres of popular culture circulate in distinctly trans-local ways, often beyond the territorial boundaries and respectability politics of colonial and post-colonial nationalist re-drawings. Movement included choreographers, already mentioned, the trajectories

of dancer-actors, the movement of capital, the circulation of films and the circulation of dances beyond the screen into family parties, studios, personal videos and more. Padmini, who became iconic in Tamil and Hindi cinema, was born in Travancore, one of the places where much of the activity around dance and music went after energy died down in Thanjavur. She and her two sisters learned dance from Tiruvidaimurutur Mahalingam Pillai.[192] Padmini became famous through Tamil as well as Hindi film industries criss-crossing across the subcontinent. In 1957, in the first Indo-Soviet co-production, Padmini played a court dancer in the Russian movie Khozhdenie Za Tri Moray (The Journey Beyond Three Seas or Pardesi in Hindi). Based on a Russian classic, the film chronicles the adventures of a trader who falls in love with an Indian girl. Padmini plays opposite Russian heartthrob Oleg Strizhenov in the much-acclaimed movie. The film won a Golden Palm nomination at the Cannes Film Festival in 1958. In a temple scene where the film's Russian protagonist and Padmini meet for the first time as she dances, we see almost an exact replica of the nonti natakam scenes; a moment of first glance/being enraptured, the dance being oriented towards the visitor, falling in love/lust, etc.[193] For a Malayalam-born dancer, who largely became famous in the Tamil film industry, acting in a Russian-Hindi film through her close relationships with several Hindi film actors who had become popular in Russia, and dancing a piece choreographed by Hiralal who choreographed for multiple film industries in India.

[192] Tiruvidaimarutur has showed up already in this dissertation because of the Tamil nonti natakam play from the late eighteenth century which ended in Tiruvidaimarutur and was commissioned by a local elite from the Kumbakonam area.

[193] There is also an interesting interlude where the hero's Indian companion is heard translating into Russian as she gestures to him – not dancing but as if speaking through sign language.

The translocal circulations of dance in popular films also involved movements of musicians, choreographers and the production itself. Musicians were often just as iconic as the dancers and billed as a pair along with the actor. In the 40s and 50s, there were several choreographers who became not only central to the way dance was portrayed in films but also are found connecting multiple dance and film industries in surprising ways. Finally, the production of the films and the dance scenes specifically involved multiple circulations, from the location of shooting and production to the flow of capital through the production houses. Tamil cinema is one of the biggest film industries in the world reaching across audiences throughout most of the world, springing up its own sub-cultures and processes of translation that have little to do with Europe and the US. It reaches much of the world, but particularly the Indian Ocean – Singapore, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and the Gulf countries especially and because of working class and refugee migrations, places like Fiji, Toronto, London and Paris.[194] Tamil cinema specifically has considerable audiences in places like Japan and South Africa.[195]

These circulations map a connected world that only marginally involves the US and Europe and instead weaves together what is known as the Indian Ocean world. Moreover, the connections across this world were not formed through European intervention, although various Europeans did insert themselves into it, for economic and later political gain, to varying degrees of success. In the long eighteenth century, dance in the Coromandel was situated in a broader set

[194] Today, a rough break up of overseas BO collection for Tamil films:

Malaysia: 35%-40%
Singapore & Sri Lanka: 25%
Canada, UK, France, Australia & Europe: 20%-25%
Gulf Countries & USA: 15%-20% (https://southmoviebiz.wordpress.com/)

[195] *Chandralekha* was released in Japan as *Shakunetsu-no ketto* ("Fight Under the Red Heat") in April 1954, where it was distributed by Nippon Cinema Corporation (NCC)

of changes vis-à-vis urban cosmopolitanism and women's performance that criss-crossed the Indian Ocean world, connecting it in more ways than one. For example, in the istanas and kratons (royal houses) of Surakarta, Yogyakarta and more sultanates, entertainment dance was refined into bedaya beksan putri (women's dance) which unlike male-troupe-dance was not narrative or based centrally on epic stories. Professional women's dance crossed uniquely between entertainment, court and ritualized spaces, based not on story-telling necessarily but on evocative and sensory possibilities. These forms were almost all defined in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at a time when similar trends across the Indian Ocean littoral defined urban milieus – changing trade economies which centralized mobile merchant capitalists in the social and cultural as well as political spheres, changing conceptions of space and assembly, and the complicated relationship between performance and empire (Mughal, Thai-Ayutthaya, Chinese-Qing, various Perso-Arabic sultanates in southeast Asia and eastern Africa). In the period covered in this dissertation, the amount of circulation across this Indian Ocean world was immense and the shifts in urban milieus inter-connected. Through an attention to what I have called performative geographies and its circulations across this world, different kinds of negotiations of difference and political economics become visible in the definition of early modernity.





Fig. 51. (top) Serat Selarasa, 1804, f.64v - 65r, Javanese Manuscript

Fig. 52. (bottom) Miniature painting of Habshi musician plying Ethiopian lyre. Mughal court or Deccan. 1640-1660. Artist Unknown. Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection New York Public Library.

What can dance, and shifts in dance cultures, tell us about the definition of urban publics in the midst of economic and political shifts through trade circulations and projects of empire? In the early modern centuries, eastern African diaspora were central to the political and military contestations of the subcontinent, heading sultanates, and contributing to urban cosmopolitan cultures. The dance and music influences they brought, alongside Sufi practices, formed part of the cosmopolitan sphere of the Deccan and Coromandel. In the same period, Aceh's influence extended to most of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Aceh allied itself with the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch East India Company in their struggle against the Portuguese and their rival Johor Sultanate. Tamil Muslim Marakkayar merchants were central to Aceh court and

commercial activity. In both Golconda and Aceh, dance brought together hybrid sets of concerns, ethnic identities, class politics and translocal imaginaries rooted in space and place.

I focus on early modern and eighteenth-century circulations of and around dance across the Indian Ocean because they are vitally relevant to understanding and re-enlivening those connections today. The fluid connective networks that the early modern period, and the performative geographies I trace, across the non-western world offer a means for re-framing the present in a way that de-centers Euro-American globalizing forces. The period just before colonialism has an important resonance with the current moment we find ourselves in today, when once again the language-ethnicity based boundaries of colonial regimes and post-colonial nationalisms seem increasingly to be dissolving in the face of new kinds of connections and geo-politics. These pasts are not dead but continue to energize new connections and bodily translocal imaginaries across the Indian Ocean world today, despite the fixing of colonial and postcolonial boundaries and territorialized identities. Acknowledging the dynamism of these precolonial pasts opens the door to revitalizing those connections in the present. Centralizing the translocal imaginaries and politics embodied in urban performative geographies of early modernity is fundamental to re-situating not only the Indian Ocean but what we consider the 'global' today – through dynamic alternative cosmpolitanisms, south-south connections, and the fluid intersection of multiple identities, urban popular cultures and institutional patronage beyond geopolitical borders of the nation-state.

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