

**DANCE IMAGERY IN SOUTH INDIAN TEMPLES : STUDY OF THE
108-KARANA SCULPTURES**

DISSERTATION

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the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the theme of dance imagery in south Indian temples by focusing on one aspect of dance expression, namely, the 108-*karana* sculptures. The immense popularity of dance to the south Indian temple is attested by the profusion of dance sculptures, erection of dance pavilions (*nrtta mandapas*), and employment of dancers (*devaradiyar*). However, dance sculptures are considered merely decorative additions to a temple. This work investigates and interprets the function and meaning of dance imagery to the Tamil temple.

Five temples display prominently the collective 108-*karana* program from the eleventh to around the 17th century. The Rajaraja Temple at Thanjavur (985-1015 C.E.) displays the 108-*karana* reliefs in the central shrine. From their central location in the Rajaraja Temple, the 108 *karana* move to the external precincts, namely the outermost *gopura*. In the Sarangapani Temple (12-13th century) at Kumbakonam, the 108 *karana* are located in the external façade of the outer east *gopura*. The subsequent instances of the 108 *karana*, the Nataraja Temple at Cidambaram (12th-16th C.E.), the Arunachalesvara Temple at Tiruvannamalai (16th C.E.), and the Vriddhagirisvara Temple at Vriddhachalam (16th-17th C.E.),

also use this relocation. Situated in the inner passageway of the outermost *gopura*, the 108-*karana* are arranged on vertical pilasters in a sequence that moves vertically from bottom to top. In addition, the 108 *karana* is present in all four of the outer *gopuras* that encircle the central shrine.

This study situates the 108 –*karana* sculptures within the larger iconographic program of the temple and its structures. In doing so, it analyzes and presents the meaning and relevance of the 108 *karana* to the *vimana*, the *gopura*, and to temple vocabulary. It investigates the 108 *karana*'s agency in communicating themes associated with Saivite legend. In doing so, it disputes the prevailing notion that dance sculptures are merely aesthetic additions to the temple that carry little or no meaning. Rather, it interprets dance and the 108 *karana* as agents for depicting visually, core aspects of Hindu worship—ritual, transformation, and meditation.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents,

Radha and ERBS Sundaram

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MASTER LIST OF DIACRITICS

Note on Diacritics : For this volume, I am providing this master list of spelling Sanskrit and Tamil words. The diacritics are not included in the body of the document except for the bibliography.

1.	acarya -----	ācārya
2.	Agamas -----	Āgamās
3.	aharya -----	ahārya
4.	Ajitagama-----	Ajitāgama
5.	akasa -----	ākāśa
6.	ananda tandava-----	ānanda tāṇḍava
7.	ancita -----	añcita
8.	angahara -----	aṅgahāra
9.	angika -----	āṅgika
10.	antarala -----	antarāla
11.	apanyasa -----	apanyāsa
12.	Ardhanarisvara -----	Ardhanariśvara
13.	Arunacalesvara-----	Aruṇācaleśvara
14.	Astadhyayi -----	Aṣṭādhyāyi
15.	atikrantam -----	atīkrāntam
16.	Bharata Natyam -----	Bharata Nāṭyam
17.	Bharatarnavam -----	Bharatārṇavam
18.	bhava -----	bhāva
19.	bhujangancitam -----	bhujaṅgāncitam
20.	bhujangatrasitam-----	bhujaṅgatṛāsitam
21.	Brhadisvara -----	Bṛhadiśvara
22.	Candrasekhara -----	Candraśekhara
23.	Cidambara mahatmya-----	Cidambara mahātmya
24.	Cidambaresvara -----	Cidambarēśvara
25.	Cola-----	Cōla

26.	Daksinamurti -----	Dakṣiṇāmurti
27.	devadasi-----	devadāsi
28.	devaradiyal-----	devarāḍiyāl
29.	devaradiyar-----	devarāḍiyār
30.	gana -----	gaṇa
31.	gangavatarana -----	gangāvatarana
32.	harinaplutam -----	hariṇāplutam
33.	hasta -----	hastā
34.	Jambhukesvara -----	Jambhukēśvara
35.	Kailasa -----	Kailāsa
36.	kalapaka -----	kalāpaka
37.	kalika tandava-----	kālīka tāṇḍava
38.	Kamikagama -----	Kāmikāgama
39.	karana -----	kaṛaṇa
40.	katakhamukham -----	kaṭakāmukham
41.	Kodukotti -----	Koḍukottī.
42.	korvai -----	kōrvai
43.	krantakam -----	krāntakam
44.	kuncita -----	kuṅcita
45.	kunippu-----	kuṇippu
46.	kuthu -----	kūthu
47.	Laksmi -----	Lakṣmī
48.	lalatatilaka -----	lalāṭatilaka
49.	Makutagama -----	Makutāgama
50.	mandala -----	maṇḍala
51.	mandapa -----	maṇḍapa
52.	mudra -----	mudrā
53.	muladhara cakra -----	mulādhāra cakra
54.	nagasarpitam -----	nāgasarpitam
55.	Nataraja-----	Naṭarāja
56.	nattu adavu -----	nāṭṭu aḍavu
57.	natya -----	nāṭya
58.	Natyastra-----	Nāṭyaśāstra
59.	Nerkkupai -----	Neṛkkupai
60.	nrtta -----	nṛtta
61.	nrttamartrka -----	nṛttamātrkā
62.	Nrttaratnavali -----	Nṛttaratnāvali
63.	nrtya -----	nṛtya
64.	nyasa -----	nyāsa

65.	Pandarangam -----	Pāṇḍarangam
66.	pataka -----	patāka
67.	paydal -----	pāydaḷ
68.	prasada -----	prasāda
69.	punya -----	puṇya
70.	Puranas -----	Purāṇas
71.	Rajaraja -----	Rājarāja
72.	Rauravagama -----	Rauravāgama
73.	recaka -----	recakā
74.	Rgveda -----	Ṛgveda
75.	samhita -----	samhitā
76.	samghataka -----	samghāṭaka
77.	Sangita Ratnakara -----	Sangīta Ratnākara
78.	Sarangapani-----	Sārangapāṇi
79.	sattvika -----	sāttvika
80.	Silappadikaram -----	Śilappadikāram
81.	silpa sastra -----	śilpa śāstra
82.	simhavikriditam -----	simhavikṛīditam
83.	sloka -----	ślōka
84.	sthana -----	sthāna
85.	suci -----	sūci
86.	talapuspaputa -----	talapuṣpapuṭa
87.	tandava-----	tāṇḍava
88.	tattu adavu -----	taṭṭu aḍavu
89.	tevaram -----	tēvāram
90.	Tripurantaka -----	Tripurāntaka
91.	Tyagarajasvami-----	Tyāgarājasvāmi
92.	vacika -----	vācika
93.	Vajasaneyi Samhita -----	Vājasaneyi Samhitā
94.	val amala kuthu -----	vāḷ amala kūthu
95.	viksipta -----	vikṣipta
96.	vimana-----	vimāna
97.	Visnu -----	Viṣṇu
98.	visnukrantam -----	viṣṇukrāntam
99.	Vridhagirisvara-----	Vriḍdhagiriśvara
100.	vrschikam -----	vṛṣchikam

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the topic

This dissertation studies dance imagery in the art of south India (Fig.1.1) and, specifically, the so-called 108-*karana* sculptures found in Hindu temples from the Cola period (ca. mid-ninth –thirteenth century), and extending into the Vijayanagara rule (ca. 1336- 1565). Presenting a chronological distribution of the 108-*karana* imagery, my study also explores the continuity and change that characterize the *karana* sculptural program during its extended period of presence. This study relates the Tamil region corresponding to the modern state of Tamilnadu in south India today.

Defined in the *Natyasastra* rather simply as the “combined movement of hands and feet in dance,”¹ the *karanas* illustrate small movement formations. Stylized dance movement finds articulation in the form of the 108 *karanas* or 108 within the context of a vocabulary steeped in the rich theatrical tradition of India.

1. Manomohan Ghosh, ed. *Natyasastra: A Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics ascribed to Bharatamuni*, Vols. I and II (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1951), 35.

The *karana* is the smallest combination of diverse body positions that make an integrated movement formation. Each *karana* formation has a beginning and an intermediate position, and culminates in a final position.² A *karana* is the fundamental unit of movement and the source from which performers initiate bigger and larger movement sequences. Due to its fundamental nature, the *karana* is central to dance and movement vocabulary.

Derived from the root, *kr*, "to do", and translated as "doing, action or performing,"³ 108 *karanas* are first described in the *Natyasastra*,⁴ an ancient text on dramaturgy attributed to the sage Bharata. The *Natyasastra* is a manual or technical treatise dealing exhaustively with the various branches of theater or drama in ancient India, of which dance was a part. Although there is disagreement among scholars regarding the antecedents of Bharata and his treatise, the *Natyasastra* is generally ascribed a dating from ca. A. D. 3rd-5th centuries, and one can assume the existence of a *karana* tradition prior to these

2. C. Sivaramamurti, one of the early scholars to approach this subject, discusses *karanas* as dance postures in his *Nataraja in Art, Thought, and Literature* (New Delhi: Lalith Kala Academy, 1975). However, Kapila Vatsyayan in *Dance Sculptures in the Sarangapani Temple* (Madras: Society for Archaeological, Historical, and Epigraphical Research, 1982), 5-6, explains the presence of movement in the execution of a *karana* and states that the translation of a kinetic form into a plastic medium may have led to its misinterpretation.

3. V.S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas Publishers, 1992), 336.

4. Manomohan Ghosh, ed. *Natyasastra: A Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics ascribed to Bharatamuni*, Vols. I and II (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1951).

dates.⁵ The sheer breadth and depth of technical terminology encompassed by the *Natyasastra* indicates, in my opinion, a project that is documenting and perhaps streamlining a tradition, not creating one.

In keeping with the literary practice of the time, the *Natyasastra* claims a divine origin, with Hindu gods Brahma and Siva being major players in its creation. Assisting them and transmitting their knowledge are the sages Bharata and Tandu, skilled in the arts and disciplines of theater. The 108 *karanas* are explained in a chapter dealing with the elements comprising the *tandava*, the dance of creation and transformation associated with Siva,⁶ and this version of the *karanas* is subsequently reiterated in many later texts.⁷

The definition of each *karana* in the *Natyasastra* is in the form of a simple two-line Sanskrit verse that describes a progression of body movements

5. Adya Rangachrya in *The Natyasastra: English Translation with Critical Notes* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996) advances an eighth century dating to the text. Therefore, this constitutes the upper (late) limit to the dating of the manuscript. Even if this dating were accepted, the assumption of a pre-existing dramatic tradition still stands testimony to the antiquity of a theatrical tradition that included dance.

6. The term *tandava* has dual, if not multiple, levels of meaning. On the more popular level, it represents a type of dance performed by Siva in his role as the destroyer of ignorance and protector of knowledge. Siva is also the performer of the different kinds of *tandavas*, such as Sandhya tandava, Kali tandava, etc. However, in the sphere of dance, all movement is divided into two broad categories -- *tandava* and *lasya*. Energetic, vigorous and masculine movements characterize the former and graceful, gentle, and feminine movement defines *lasya*.

7. See Manomohan Ghosh, ed. *Natyasastra: A Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics ascribed to Bharatamuni*, Vol. I (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1951). The fourth chapter titled *Tandavalaksanam* explains the one hundred and eight *karanas*. Other texts focussing on the technique of dance include the *Abhinayadarpana*, written by Nandikesvara. However, the *Visnudharmottara Purana*, *Siva Purana*, *Devi Bhagavata purana* and the *Agni Purana* discuss dance movement.

involving primarily the hands and feet, but including other body parts as well.

Using an intense array of technical terms, many of which find definition in later chapters, the *karana* verses are brief, and even terse. This pithy and concise sheath sometimes obfuscates the true nature and range of the formations of *karanas* in some cases.

An important piece of information related to the 108 *karanas* is its absence in the popular dance tradition of India, despite the latter's own visible roots traceable to the *Natyasastra*. The continued use of several terms and elements, such as *hastas* (hand gestures), *mandala* (stances) and related movements in the contemporary dance tradition demonstrates its ancient ties to the *Natyasastra*. However, the *karana* formations are not present in the prevailing dance traditions of India. The role played by the *karana* is performed by regional equivalents that do not reflect, as is, the *karana* formations described in the *Natyasastra* and subsequent dance literature. Therefore, the dance reconstruction of the *karana* sequences for the purpose of sculptural interpretation depends heavily on textual sources.

The theme of the 108 *karanas* or 108 actions as an integrated dance program finds illustration in the south Indian temple of the Cola and succeeding periods. In the south Indian temple context, the 108- *karana* imagery is identified by its cohesive presence in a single location of the temple. Each *karana* is

abbreviated to a single pose and 108 poses are carved in bold relief within box panels. The 108 *karanas*' collective nature distinguishes it from other forms of dance sculptures, and contribute to the easy overall identification of the theme. Some instances of the 108- *karana* imagery carry an identifying label recording a number and verse although this is more an exception than the norm.

This study, which covers a lengthy period of south Indian history, explores the large corpus of monuments that stand as testimony to the rich and extraordinary heritage left behind by the Colas and their successors. During the Cola period, the Hindu temple of south India developed from being a small and simple place of worship into a grandiose cultural establishment. Not surprisingly, dramatic transformations in style, scale, content, iconography, and symbolism characterize the art of this time frame.

Five temples displaying the 108- *karana* program date from the Cola and Vijayanagara periods, and these form the subject of this dissertation. Although dance imagery is included in south Indian art even in Pallava monuments (8th century), the inclusion of the 108- *karana* theme in temple vocabulary is evidenced only from the reign of Rajaraja I, the celebrated Cola monarch.

The Rajarajesvara Temple at Thanjavur provides the earliest example of the 108- *karana* imagery in the south Indian region (Fig.1.2). Located within the inner realms of the *vimana* wall, eighty- one of the 108 *karanas* are represented in

a corridor corresponding to the upper tier wall encircling the shrine area. A four-armed Siva with attributes is the dancer of the abbreviated *karana* formations.

A second temple included in the study is the Sarangapani Temple at Kumbakonam (Fig.1.3). Dating from the reign of Vikrama Cola, who ruled during the latter part of the Cola reign (ca.1118-1135), this temple, located in the heart of the Cola country, is the only instance of a Visnu temple displaying the 108- *karana* iconography. All other temples with *karana* imagery are Saivite represented on the exterior walls of the eastern *gopura*, the 108- *karana* program of the Sarangapani Temple also depicts a horizontal arrangement, like its predecessor, although visible departures from earlier conventions also manifest. Prominent among them is the location of the *karana* program in the *gopura*.

Chronologically, the 108-*karana* imagery represented in the Nataraja Temple at Cidambaram (Fig.1.4), also from the Cola period, is the third instance of this program in the south Indian temple. Depicted in all four *gopuras* of the third enclosure (*prakara*) of this temple, the 108 *karana* is one component of the broader dance imagery that abounds in the various *mandapas* of this temple which is dedicated to the Siva-Nataraja.

In addition to the three Cola temples mentioned above, depictions of the 108-*karanas* are also found in the Arunacalesvara Temple at Tiruvannamalai (Fig.

1.5) and Vriddhagirisvara Temple at Vriddhachalam (Figs.1.6), both from the Vijayanagara period. The central core of the Vriddhagirisvara Temple displays affiliations to an earlier phase of Cola artistic idiom. However, the *karana* sculptures illustrated on all four *gopuras* of the outermost enclosure are characteristic of the Vijayanagara stylistic expression.

The five temples above are the only monuments of the thirty- four temples surveyed for this study that revealed the collective 108-*karana* program. However, select/random panels on *gopura* passageways reminiscent of the 108-*karana* program is present in six of the other temples. In the celebrated Meenakshi Temple at Madurai, three of the four outer *gopuras* display pilasters with square panels in the entryway passage. However, the squares are left blank, suggesting that there may have been an intent to carve the 108 *karana*. The same is true of the Vedaranyesvara Temple at Tiruvalangadu, too.

In the Veerattanesvara Temple at Tiruvadi, the outermost *gopura* has pilasters with dancer panels, however, it does not reflect a cohesive 108-*karana* sequence, and is characterized by repetition of the similar poses. Four other temples—Tirukkodisvara at Tirukkodikaval, Ardharisvara at Ulagainallur, Kamphaharesvara at Tribhuvanam, and Nagesvara at Kumbakonam—display *karana*-type arrangements in the *gopuras*. The Amritaghatesvara Temple at Melakkadambur articulates vibrant dance imagery on every component of its

vimana façade. All of the temples surveyed along with the results of the survey are included in the appendix of this dissertation.

Objectives of this study :

The primary goal of this dissertation is to understand the symbolism and meaning of the 108-*karana* sculptural program in the south Indian temple. To this effect, I explore the inter-relationships between the dance tradition and the temple tradition from different angles. Why does the temple exhibit the *karanas*, a dance theme, in its sculptural repertoire? What is the relevance of the *karana* to the temple and how does the *karana* function as a communicative device in a religious setting? In seeking answers to these questions related to the *karanas* in particular, I also examine the larger fabric of dance and its expression of religious concepts. In order to arrive at the meaning of the 108-*karana* sculptural program, I situate it within the context of dance, ritual, transformation, and meditation.

Methodology

Field Documentation

Thirty- four temples in south India were surveyed in this project. I compiled the temple site list based on the following: 1. temples for which I had prior knowledge as containing the 108-*karana*, 2. scrutiny of south Indian temple sculpture, 3. the presence of inscriptions relevant to dance imagery, and 4. inclusion of the 6 *tandava* sites.

I examined the south Indian art and architectural documentation of the photographic archives of the University of Pennsylvania for additional sites to survey. While in India, I used relevant information from the photographic archives of Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology in Madras and the archives of the French Institute of Indology at Pondicherry to update this list.

Inscriptions formed a vital source material in the compilation of the site survey list. Specifically, temples with epigraphs referring to the presence of *devaratiyal/devaradiyar*, a Tamil term used to denote the *devadasi* or temple servants was assembled together. Numerous references to *devaratiyar* are present in temple inscriptions, with a majority of them detailing a donation by a *devaratiyar* or her relative. Given that the *devaratiyars* of south Indian temples are assigned a variety of tasks in the temple aside from dancing, I selected epigraphs that supported or indicated dance activity in the temple. Some temples formed the included the list based on repeated references to the presence of *devaratiyars*, or to single reference mentioning a large contingent of these temple servants.

Due to this being a study of dance sculpture, the site list also includes six of the seven *tandava* (*sapta tandava*) sites associated with Siva. These six include Siva temples at Tirunelveli (*Kalika tandava*), Tiruputtur (*Gouri Tandava*), Madurai (*Sandhya tandava*), Kuttralam (*Tripura Tandava*), Tiruvalankadu (*Urdhva tandava*),

and Cidambaram (*Ananda tandava*). The seventh has no specific location but relates to the entire universe.

I surveyed the monuments and their structures for the 108 *karana*, and took photos and notes on location and related factors. I also collected information from priests and temple functionaries wherever possible. In particular, at the Thyagaraja swami Temple at Tiruvarur, I got the opportunity to interview a hereditary musician and a hymnist, whose ties to this temple extended many generations.

Analysis of Imagery

With the completion of the field documentation of the sites, I embarked on analyses of the data and presentation of the findings. The identification of the instances of the 108-*karana* motif and the *karana*-related compositions formed the first order of priority. Placing temples with the 108-*karana* sculptures in a chronological order, I trace the development of iconographic conventions in the 108-*karana* program.

An integral part of the critical analysis undertaken included understanding the relevance of the 108-*karana* theme to the structure and temple complex. I examine the relevance of the 108-*karana* theme to the general iconography of the main shrine, or *vimana*, and subsequently, the gateway, or

gopura while trying to understand and explain the symbolism for the relocation of the imagery from the *vimana* to the *gopura*.

Study of Inscriptions

Inscriptions comprised the backbone of this project and epigraphic documentation supports various stages of its writing. Epigraphs provided information in assembling the site-list of temples. Along with epigraphs suggesting the presence of devadasis and dance activity, inscriptions of the 108-*karana* motif in the Nataraja Temple in Cidambaram, and fragmentary inscriptions on the façade of the Sarangapani Temple at Kumbakonam are also included in this study.

Study of Texts

The literary tradition of any period is both dependent on as well as influential to its artistic output. In the sphere of dance, the *Natyasastra* is the earliest extant primary text dealing with the 108 *karanas*. An encyclopedia and guidebook on the performing arts, including dance, the *Natyasastra* is a Sanskrit treatise on *natya* (narrative expression) compiled by a sage- author named Bharata.⁸

8. M.R. Kavi, *The Natyasastra*, Vol. 1 (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Series No. 36, 1926). Kavi's was an early attempt to bring together the various manuscripts of the *Natyasastra* that were being discovered. For a fuller account, see Manomohan Ghosh, *The Natyasastra: A Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics* (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1956).

The only available commentary of the *Natyasastra* is the *Abhinavabharathi*, written by a Kasmiri scholar Abhinavagupta around the twelfth century.⁹

Another text, the *Sangitaratnakara* by Sarangadeva is firmly datable to around the thirteenth century.¹⁰ Its relative lucidity augments our knowledge of dance and its treatment in ancient India.

Several later primary texts including some *puranas* mention or describe the 108-*karanas*. This includes the *Nrttaratnavali* by Jayasenapathi,¹¹ *Nartananirnaya* of Pundarika Vittala,¹² and *Bharatarnavam* by Nandikesvara.¹³ Among the *Puranas*, the *Agni Purana*¹⁴ and the *Visnudharmottara Purana* delve into the 108-*karana* theme with varying focus and detail.¹⁵ To arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the 108-*karana* sculptures, I also consulted architectural and

9. M.R. Kavi, *Natyasastra of Bharatamuni with the Commentary by Abhinavaguptacharya*, Vol. 1 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1956).

10. Radha Burnier and Kunjunni Raja, *Sangitaratnakara by Sarangadeva*, Vol. IV (Adyar: The Adyar Library and Research Center, 1976).

11. See V. Raghavan, *Nrttaratnavali of Jayasenapati* (Madras: Oriental Manuscripts Library, 1965).

12. R. Satyanarayana, *Nartananirnaya of Pundarika Vitthala* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1994).

13. Vasudeve Sastry, ed., *Bharatarnava of Nandikeswara* (Thanjavur: Saraswathi Mahal Library Society, 1989).

14. Refer to *Agni purana* (Poona: Anandasrama Series, 1900).

15. See Priyabala Shah, *Visnudharmottara Purana, Khanda 3*, Vol. 2 (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Institute, 1961).

sculptural texts such as the *Manasara*.¹⁶ These texts provide valuable information on the fundamental principles that governed architecture and sculpture apart from containing material on temple practices.

Theoretical Framework

My study uses an art historical framework employing traditional analysis and an information -based approach with a critical viewpoint. I have attempted to analyze all my sources critically before projecting their findings on my study. Further, this research goes beyond the conventional identification of dance imagery, it delves into areas such as ritual, transformation and meditation in regards to the dance tradition.

Following this Introduction (Chapter-1), an explanation of dance terminology relating to the *karanas* is presented in Ch.2. This is followed by a brief history of dance in literature and art of India prior to the 108-*karana*.

Chapter 3 presents the chronological development of the 108-*karana* sculptures in the five temples of presence. Specifically, discussions on the location of the *karanas*, their arrangement, and related contextual information are presented in the backdrop of the sculptural program of the temple.

16. Refer to Prasanna Kumar Acharya, *Architecture of the Manasara*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oriental Books Corporation, 1980); Acharya, P.K., *Manasara on Architecture and Sculpture* (New Delhi: Oriental Books Corporation, 1979).

Chapter-4 embarks on an examination of dance and its agency to what I refer to as ritual, transformation and meditation to bring out its intrinsic relevance to south Indian temple expression. After situating dance within the architectural, sculptural, and symbolic expression of the temple, I analyze the significance of the 108-*karana* in each of the five temples in Chapter-5.

Literature Survey and State of Knowledge :

The scholarly output on south Indian art and architecture is extensive. In particular, the Cola period has been examined from various standpoints, and its complex history has been given concrete shape. The following section is an overview of various published materials that are relevant as background for this study.

The broad master list consists of primary sources, such as inscriptions and ancient texts, along with several secondary sources. The south Indian temple itself forms the backdrop and canvas for innumerable epigraphs that document information regarding the founding, patronage, benefactions, land acquisitions, and ritual activities of the temple organization. These inscriptions, transcribed, translated and published in the form of epigraphic serials, have been of immense value to this research.¹⁷

17. *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vols. 1-26 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India); *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, ed. by T. N. Subrahmanyam (Madras: Government Oriental

Religious manuals, such as the *Agamas* and the *samhitas* (compilations) used in south India throw light on the metrics, laws of structure and codification of temples and sculpture. Agamic texts such as *Ajitagama*, and *Rauravagama*¹⁸ are also architectural encyclopedias that document the design of a Siva temple.

The survey of original dance literature is included at the end of this section. What follows is a brief survey of published material in the larger realm of south Indian temples followed by original dance literature on the 108 *karana*.

Architectural surveys of temples of the Cola period include S. R. Balasubrahmanyam's three part series titled *Early Cola Temples*, *Middle Cola Temples* and *Later Cola Temples*.¹⁹ By compiling a compendium of hundreds of temples belonging to this period, the author has made a significant contribution to the field. Following a chronological methodology, Balasubrahmanyam categorizes Cola monuments into Early, Middle and Late Cola. Unfortunately, this classification is questionable because the stylistic development of Cola temple architecture and sculpture does not reflect such distinct phases. The so-

Manuscripts Library, 1957); and *Epigraphia Tamilica: A Journal of Tamil Epigraphy* (Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka Epigraphic Society, 1971).

18. Both the *Ajita* and *Rauravagama* have been analyzed for their technical content by Bruno Dagens in *Architecture in the Ajitagama and Rauravagama* (New Delhi: Sitaram Bharatia Institute of Scientific Research, 1984).

19. See. S. R. Balasubrahmanyam's *Early Chola Temples (A. D. 907- 985)* (Bombay: Orient Longman Ltd., 1971); *Middle Chola Temples (A. D. 985- 1070)* (Faridabad, Haryana: Thompson Press, 1975); and *Later Chola Temples (A. D. 1070-1280)* (Faridabad: Mudgala Trust, 1979).

called Middle and Later Cola phases are noticeably similar to one another save for some relatively modest departures in the form.

The *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple architecture*, edited by Michael Meister, focuses on architectural studies of the region.²⁰ Using a dynastic division of its subject matter, this book also follows the trend set by scholars, such as Balasubrahmanyam, in adhering to a descriptive methodology in its approach to temples. A compendium of the major temples of each dynasty in the Indic region, it throws considerable light on the architecture and iconography of various temples and augments this information with detailed ground plans. The Encyclopaedia complements Balasubrahmanyam's efforts.

The Encyclopedia's focus is architecture, and iconography is dealt with in a secondary manner, and mainly when it complements the main deity of the temple. The 108- *karana* sculptures present in the *gopura* are seldom mentioned. Despite this, the Encyclopedia comprises a valuable resource for the compilation of an exhaustive site list, which is basic to this study.

20. Michael Meister, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol. I, pt. i, South India, Lower Dravidadesa 200 B. C. to A. D. 1334*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

Venkataraman's monograph on the Rajarajesvara Temple titled *Rajarajesvaram: The Pinnacle of Cola Art* as well as his *Temple Arts Under Cola Queens* further represent this continued emphasis on a descriptive methodology.²¹ *The Pinnacle of Cola Art* documents many of the inscriptions found in the Rajaraja temple along with a record of the imagery.

Venkataraman's work on *Temple Arts Under the Cola Queens*, essentially documents the contribution of Cola queens. With his focus on the female members of the royal family and their patronage to the temple, Venkataraman throws light on an important subject matter that has potential for further research.

J. C. Harle's important work on the *Temple Gateways in South India: The Iconography of the Cidambaram Gopuras*, has been valuable to this research.²² Harle does not analyze the *karana* panels in any of the four *gopuras* of the Cidambaram temple, mentioning that this comprises a separate study.

21. Venkataraman's monograph on the Rajarajesvara Temple presents the definition of the *karanas* from the *Natyasastra* with no analysis. For more information, see B. Venkataraman, *Rajarajesvaram: The Pinnacle of Cola Art* (Madras: Mudgala Trust, 1985, 118-147). The second title by the same author is *Temple Art Under the Chola Queens* (Faridabad: Thomson Press, 1976).

22. For further discussion, see J. C. Harle, *Temple Gateways in South India: The Architecture and Iconography of the Cidambaram Gopuras* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1963).

However, his findings about the *gopura* imitating the *vimana* in form, methods of construction, disposition of elements, and even iconography, was relevant to my study of the *karanas* and its symbolism on the *gopuras*.

Nagaswamy's essay on *Thanjavur Brhadisvara: An iconographic study* and a more recent publication titled *The Iconography of the Brhadisvara Temple* by Francoise L'Hernault attempt to catalog and study the sculptural imagery of the Rajaraja Temple in Thanjavur.²³ Nagaswamy's essay on the Thanjavur temple attempts interpretation of key aspects of the sculpture. However, the interpretation itself relies on the conventional approach of linking texts to sculptural programs. Accordingly, Nagaswamy claims that the Rajaraja Temple follows an agamic text—the *Makutagama*—in its sculptural articulation.

To Burton Stein and scholars in his mould goes the credit for giving a new direction to south Indian studies. Stein's *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, examines and addresses models of kingship and authority in the Cola state.²⁴ Neither Stein nor other scholars of economic history mention

23. Hernault's monograph on *The Iconography of the Brhadisvara Temple* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts, 2002) is a photographic catalog of the sculptural programs of the Rajaraja Temple. There is mention of a study of the iconography by Nagaswamy. While this was not available to me, Nagaswamy's essay on the same topic in *Discourses on Siva* provided me his interpretation of the sculptural program of the temple. See Nagaswamy's "Thanjavur Brhadisvara: An Iconographic Study" in *Discourses on Siva*, ed. Michael Meister (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 170-181.

24. Burton Stein has brought together the results of his earlier findings in his *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980). This work focuses

dancers or dancing in temples directly. However, these studies on the Cola state and authority encompass a wide range of interconnected issues, such as kingship, its political expediencies, and consolidation mechanisms, temple construction, land distribution, and cultural policies. Many of these factors influence the artistic developments of the period, and, therefore, these studies are very useful for future scholars in all areas of Cola history.

Hermann Kulke's essays on temple policies and the medieval kingdoms have also highlighted connections between the temple and royalty in south Indian history. Kulke, in *cidambrahamatmya*, states that a Nataraja cult may have existed in Cidambaram in the early years of the Cola rule. He proposes that the political pressure on the Cola monarchs to consolidate their hold on regions distant from the Cola center may have led them to incorporate local cults, such as Nataraja, into their fold. According to Kulke, this led to the Sanskritization of Cidambaram and Nataraja. This important argument is still gaining scholarly support in the form of newer approaches to understanding Nataraja.

Padma Kaimal follows up on Kulke's assertions in "Siva-Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon," and proposes that Nataraja reflected multiple messages in

on the various dimensions of the south Indian polity and brings out the dynamics of kingship, patronage, the role of temples, and the agrarian policies.

the course of the development of the cult.²⁵ She rejects Coomaraswamy's symbolism as being the one true explanation of Siva Nataraja.

Kamil Zvebil's work on Nataraja's *ananda tandava* and its Tamil roots titled *Ananda Tandava of Siva- Sadanrttamurti*,²⁶ is a fresh approach to Nataraja that stems from Kulke's earlier assertion. Zvebil brilliantly analyzes the development of Dancing Siva in India that culminates in the icon of Nataraja (King of dance) in south India. He attributes the *karana* as the contributor to the Nataraja icon in his analysis of the *ananda tandava* form.

Another insightful study on the *ananda tandava* icon is David Smith's *The Dance of Siva*,²⁷ in which he examines Siva's dance from the perspective of a 14th century text, the *kuncitagrastava*. Written by Umapati Sivacarya, a priest in the Cidambaram temple, Smith's analysis of its contents and comparisons to iconography, meditation, and related symbolism makes this a valuable contribution to religious studies of South India.

Anthropological studies, such as Frederique Marglin's essays on the *devadasis* of the Jagannath Temple at Puri titled *Wives of the God-king: The Rituals*

25. See Padma Kaimal, "Siva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon" in *Art Bulletin*, College Art association, LXXXI, no.3 (1999), 390-419.

26. Refer to Zvebil in *Ananda Tandava of Siva Sadanrttamurti: The Development of the Concept of Adavallan in the South Indian Textual and Iconographic Tradition* (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998).

of the *Devadasis of Puri*,²⁸ and "Kings and Wives: The Separation of Status and Royal Power,"²⁹ prove invaluable in understanding the relevance of the *devadasi* to the temple and society. Recently, Marglin in "Refining the Body: Transformative Emotion in Ritual Dance,"³⁰ delves deeper into the *devadasi* ritual and its transformative qualities.

The *devadasi* tradition of south India is the subject matter of Saskia Kersenboom's book titled *Nityasumangali: Devadasi Tradition in South India*.³¹ Tracing the early origins and history of the *devadasi* system until its abolition in the nineteenth century, the author brings together information from a wide range of sources in her reconstruction of the *devadasi* phenomenon. These include literary sources: Sanskrit and Tamil, epigraphs, as well as Informants' accounts.

27. See David Smith, *Dance of Siva: Religion, Art, and Poetry in South India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

28. Frederique Marglin, *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

29. See Frederique Marglin, "Kings and Wives: The Separation of Status and Royal Power," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* Vol. 15, nos. 1 & 2 (1981): 155-182.

30. Marglin, "Refining the Body: Transformative Emotion in Ritual Dance," *Divine Passions: Social Construction of Emotion in India* ed. Owen Lynch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

31. Saskia C. Kersenboom, *Nityasumangali: Devadasi Tradition in South India* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1987).

In the realm of temple ritual, Richard Davis's *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*,³² highlights aspects of temple ritual in south India during the Cola period. Lidova's *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*³³ situates the *purovaranga* ritual performed as a prelude to *natya* as synonymous to the *agamic puja* performed in temples.

Architectural, cultural, social, and art historical studies such as those listed above serve as general sources of reference. They provide the fundamental historical background on which the edifice of dance imagery may be developed. The scholarship on dance in south India however, is quite limited. A historiography of dance and dance sculptures helps situate my study within the current state of knowledge on south Indian cultures and art.

The *Natyasastra* treatise on dramaturgy ascribed to the Indian sage Bharata (ca. third-fifth century) is the source for several later accounts. The *Natyasastra* is an exhaustive technical manual dealing with various aspects of acting and mime.

32. Please refer to Richard Davis in *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshipping Siva in Medieval South India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

33. See Natalia Lidova's *Drama and Ritual in Early Hinduism* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1994).

With its emphasis on the art of drama, it discusses in detail related disciplines such as dance, drama, and music. Drama in ancient India articulated elements from all three spheres, and the *Natyasastra* lays down the ground rules or the structure of this form of performing art with the employment of specific terminology and their definitions.

The discovery of the various manuscripts of the *Natyasastra* in India and Nepal during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries highlighted for the first time the presence of an ancient Sanskrit treatise on Hindu drama and theater.³⁴ Linguists and scholars engaged in researching the Hindu theater examined the manuscripts and published selected chapters and sections.³⁵ Several issues relating to the author Bharata, such as his background, regional associations, and other texts remain obscure and unresolved. However, despite these scholarly disagreements regarding the identity and history of Bharata,³⁶ the various manuscripts have been pieced together resulting in a somewhat unified text.

34. William Jones's discovery and subsequent translation of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* in 1789 drew widespread praise and critical acclaim. This aroused the attention of western scholars to Sanskrit literature and drama and led to the discovery of various manuscripts.

35. Early scholarship on the *Natyasastra* consisted primarily of German and French scholars. Among them were Haymann, "Ueber Bharata's *Natyasastram*," in *Nachrichten von der Koeniglichen* (Goetingen: Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, 1874), 86; J. Grosset, *Treatise du Bharata sur la Theatre Text Sanskrit edition critique*, Vol. I, Parte I (Annales de la Universitie de Lyons, 1898). Indian scholarship was quick to follow.

36. Arguments and counter-arguments centered around the attribution of authorship to Bharata. Skepticism regarding the historical presence of a person named Bharata emerged. Scholarship was divided on whether "*Bharata*" stood for an individual or just a school of thought. For information, refer to A. A. Macdonnel, *History of Sanskrit Literature* (New Delhi: Munshiram

The discovery of the *Abhinavabharati*, a commentary on the *Natyastra* by Abhinavagupta (10th-11th century), facilitated this endeavor.³⁷ The *Abhinavabharati* attempts to discuss, clarify and deliberate the contents of the *Natyastra*. Perhaps inspired by the *Natyastra* and the presence of a live theatrical tradition involving dance, texts focusing on dance and drama became more prolific.

The translation and publication of the *Natyastra* in the late nineteenth century energized scholarship, and its application and relevance to contemporary dance, music and extant sculpture came to be explored. *Tandavalaksanam or the Fundamentals of Ancient Hindu Dancing*³⁸ by Naidu and Panthulu pioneered this effort by their comparison of the Cidambaram dance panels to the fourth chapter in the *Natyastra* dealing with the 108 *karanas*.

Ramakrishna Kavi attempts a revised account of the 108-*karana* sculptures in Cidambaram and their correlation to accompanying inscriptions as well in the *Natyastra of Bharatamuni*.³⁹ Kavi's is the first attempt at identifying and

Manoharlal, 1958); A. B. Keith, *Sanskrit Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924); S. K. De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1947), to name a few.

37. M. R. Kavi, ed., *Natyastra, with a commentary of Abhinavagupta* (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental series, 1926), 2nd ed. (1956); Manomohan Ghosh, ed. *Natyastra: A Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics Ascribed to Bharatamuni*, Vols. I and II (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1951).

38. For more information, refer to V. N. Naidu, S. Naidu and V. R. Pantulu, *Tandavalaksnam or the Fundamentals of Indian Dancing* (New Delhi: Munshriam Manoharlal, 1936).

39. See Ramakrishna Kavi, ed., *Natyastra* (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Series, 1956).

comparing the *karana* sculptures from all the four *gopuras* in the Cidambaram temple.

In the list of critical secondary publications, Sivaramamurti's book *Nataraja in Art, Thought, and Literature* sets the trend for future research on the *karanas*.⁴⁰ Bringing together a profusion of elements from the literary, philosophical, artistic and mythological traditions, Sivaramamurti attempts to provide an all-encompassing view of Nataraja. Presenting the *karana* sculptures in the Rajarajesvara Temple at Tanjore and the Sarangapani Temple at Kumbakonam, Sivaramamurti identifies the latter with Vishnu.

These studies laid the ground work for future study. Kavi, in particular, makes a contribution by comparing the 108-*karana* in all four gopuras.

The *karanas* comprised the subject matter of a doctoral dissertation by Padma Subrahmanyam, a dancer and researcher titled *Karanas in Indian Sculpture*.⁴¹ Some of the contents of this unpublished dissertation have been presented in a compilation of the Subrahmanyam's lectures on the topic.

40. Refer to C. Sivaramamurti, *Nataraja in Art, Thought, and Literature* (New Delhi: Lalith Kala Academy, 1975), 42-70.

41. Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karana in Indian Sculpture* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation), (Chidambaram: Annamalai University, 1978).

Subrahmanyam, a dancer herself, has examined the *karanas* within the format of dance. Reconstructing the definitions of the *karanas* mentioned in the *Natyasastra* by using multiple sources, Subrahmanyam in *Bharata's Art :Then and Now*, attempts to identify the various *karana* sculptures.⁴² Adhering to the conventional methodology of identifying the sculptures by correlating to text, Subrahmanyam however provides a perspective that is dance- based.

Unfortunately, in *Bharata's Art: Then and Now*, Subrahmanyam postulates theories and draws inferences without adequate substantiation. For instance, in her analysis of Saivite forms, Subrahmanyam interprets *Gajasamharamurti* as depicting the suppression of Buddhists; Siva Nataraja's tiger skin represents the surrender of Colas to Saivism, and the snake ornament symbolizes the defeat of Nagas. These unsupported claims and conclusions reduce the credibility of her work, specifically in the larger realm of artistic developments in south Indian art. However, given her strong dance background, I assume that her reconstruction of the 108 *karanas* is accurate and reasoned. However, my research goes beyond the scope and content of Subrahmanyam's work by exploring the larger meaning and relevance of the collective 108-*karana* program to Hindu temple's religious practices.

42. See Padma Subrahmanyam, *Bharata's Art: Then and Now* (Bombay: Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, 1979).

Vatsyayan, in her book *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple*⁴³ examines the *karana* depictions at the Visnu temple in Kumbakonam. Although she follows the conventional methodology, she does take into account the movement component of the *karanas* and their inherent contradiction in sculpture. To arrive at a more fulfilling model of sculptural identification, Vatsyayan proposes a new categorization of the individual *karanas* based on the body and feet positions. She then assigns the *karana* sculptures to one of these categories and tries to correlate them to text. In doing so, she confronts the fact that the *karana* sculptures are limited when compared to their textual definitions and reconstructions. She compares some of the Sarangapani *karanas* to representations from the east *gopura* at Cidambaram. In *Cadence and Form*,⁴⁴ Vatsyayan presents her version of the classification of the *karanas* in discerning movement in sculpture.

Vatsyayan had also dealt with the *karana* material in an earlier publication titled *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*.⁴⁵ Writing from a dance

43. See Kapila Vatsyayan, *Dance Sculptures in the Sarangapani Temple* (Madras: South Asian Historical and Epigraphic Research, 1982).

44. Refer to Vatsyayan's "Cadence and Form," in *Discourses on Siva*, ed., Meister (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984).

45. In a book devoted to the role of dance in general, Vatsyayan engages in a discussion of the relationship between dance and related disciplines such as aesthetics, sculpture and music that function as complements to a dance performance. She provides a historical account of ancient literary sources. The *karanas* are interpreted in the chapter dealing with the theory and

perspective, Vatsyayan analyzes the impact of dance on several related disciplines.

More recently, Vatsyayan has written a biography of the author of the *Natyasastra*, titled *Bharata: The Natyasastra*.⁴⁶ Since very little is known of Bharata's antecedents or his regional affiliations, Vatsyayan uses the *Natyasastra* to draw inferences about his vision, world-view, and tries to contextualize the *Natyasastra*. To that extent, the author tries to situate Bharata, and the only text attributed to him, the *Natyasastra*, within the context of the evolving philosophical concepts and trends in Hinduism.

Alessandra Iyer interprets dancing figures in the Prambanan Temple complex in Indonesia as representations of the *karana* sculptural program. In her *Prambanan: Sculpture and Dance in Ancient Java*, she identifies the presence of sixty *karanas* in Candi Siwa, dating from the 9th century.⁴⁷ Using Subrahmanyam's reconstruction model, she interprets the dancing figures depict *karanas* from the *Natyasastra*. Her conclusions, if accurate, place the Javanese *karana* panels as the earliest instance of this imagery since Prambanan predates the Cola material found in south India. Although Iyer claims an Indonesian origin to this motif, she

practice of Indian dance. See Kapila Vatsyayan, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts* (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Academy, 1968), 98-136.

46. Kapila Vatsyayan, *Bharata: The Natyasastra* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academi, 1996).

does not examine the prevalence of dance in ancient Javanese art before Prambanan, or discuss in any detail evidence of later instances. Prambanan appears to stand in isolation in its articulation of the 108-*karana* motif given the absence of contextual information.

The scholarly literature on the *karanas* follows a very repetitive, descriptive model. Focusing on the identification of the imagery and its adherence (or lack thereof) to the text, past scholars have not engaged in more creative attempts to understand this imagery and its wider significance to the art of south India.

However, recent studies focusing on examining the various contexts of Indian dance including *Dance of India*, edited by David Waterhouse⁴⁸ and *Bharata Natyam: A Cultural Perspective*⁴⁹ edited by George Kliger, bring fresh perspectives to dance studies. Both these works analyze the dance traditions of India from the perspective of history, technique, presentation, inter-relationships and cultural practices.

47. Alessandra Iyer, *Prambanan: Sculpture and Dance in Ancient Java--A Study in Dance Iconography* (Bangkok: White Lotus Co., 1998).

48. See *Dance of India*, ed. David Waterhouse South Asian Papers, No. 10 (Mumbai: Popular Publications, 1998) a series of articles that explore and examine Indian dance from various standpoints—technique, performance and anthropology--offering fresh perspectives on its objectives.

49. *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective*, ed. George Kliger (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1993) presents essays that delve into the various aspects of Bharata Natyam, a traditional South Indian dance with ancient roots. Bharata Natyam's structure, objectives,

Works on different kinds of art traditions in south India include Bonnie Wade's *Performing Arts in India: Essays on Music, Dance, and Drama*,⁵⁰ and Richard Frasca's *Theatre of the Mahabharata : Terukkuttu performances in South India*.⁵¹ Phillip Zarilli's contributions to understanding dance is revealed in *The Kathakali Complex: Actor, Performance, and Structure*.⁵² His continued pursuit of the inter-relatedness of ancient traditions in India titled *Towards a Phenomenology of Indian Disciplines of Practice: Meditational, Martial, and Performative*⁵³ lays the groundwork for performance studies.

An indication of the sustained interest in the dance theme is a publication titled *Dancing Divinities in Indian Art: 8th- 12th A. D.*⁵⁴ by Sucharita Khanna. Written from a dance perspective, this book surveys deities associated with dance in the art of India.

relevance to saivite sculpture, and cultural characteristics are examined through penetrating essays.

50. Bonnie Wade, ed., *Performing Arts in India: Essays on Music, Dance, and Drama* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983).

51. Richard Frasca, *The Theater of the Mahabharata: Terukkuttu Performances in South India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

52. Phillip Zarilli, *The Kathakali Complex: Actor, Performance, and Structure* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984).

53. See Phillip Zarrilli, "Towards Phenomenology of Indian Disciplines: Meditational, Martial, and Performative," *Dance of India*, ed. by David Waterhouse (Mumbai: Popular Publications, 1998), 161-175.

54. Sucharita Khanna, *Dancing Divinities in Indian Art, 8th-12th A. D.* (New Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 1999).

Contribution

With few exceptions, studies on dance and the 108-*karana* imagery have focused on a descriptive methodology involving identifying and correlating of sculpture to a textual source. Scholarship has been characterized by examination of a single temple or a small set of temples containing the 108-*karanas* from this standpoint, without taking into account the *karana's* relevance to the temple. This dissertation goes beyond the current level of scholarship on the *karanas* by exploring it from a fresh perspective. First, it provides a survey of the 108-*karana* imagery that appears on South Indian temples in the Cola period and in later dynasties. By attempting to present a definitive chronology to the 108-*karana* imagery, it will provide organization to the study of these representations. Any organized chronological framework for this imagery is an important first step toward further study in the field.

Second, by tracing the development of the 108-*karana* motif, my study explores the meaning and relevance of dance and 108-*karana* to the evolving vocabulary of the South Indian temple. The importance of the dance theme in the artistic productions is expressed in several ways including a profusion of Nataraja images, the emergence of architectural dance structures called *nritta mandapas*, and the multitude of dance sculptures that adorn temples. Therefore, I present dance and the 108-*karana* as agents that are instrumental in

communicating key themes associated with the temple. In doing so, the findings of my study dispute the prevailing notion that dance sculptures not involving deities are merely ornamental motifs used for aesthetic purposes. I suggest that dance imagery, as reflected by the 108-*karana* contain core iconographic elements that are central to a monument's larger iconographic program.

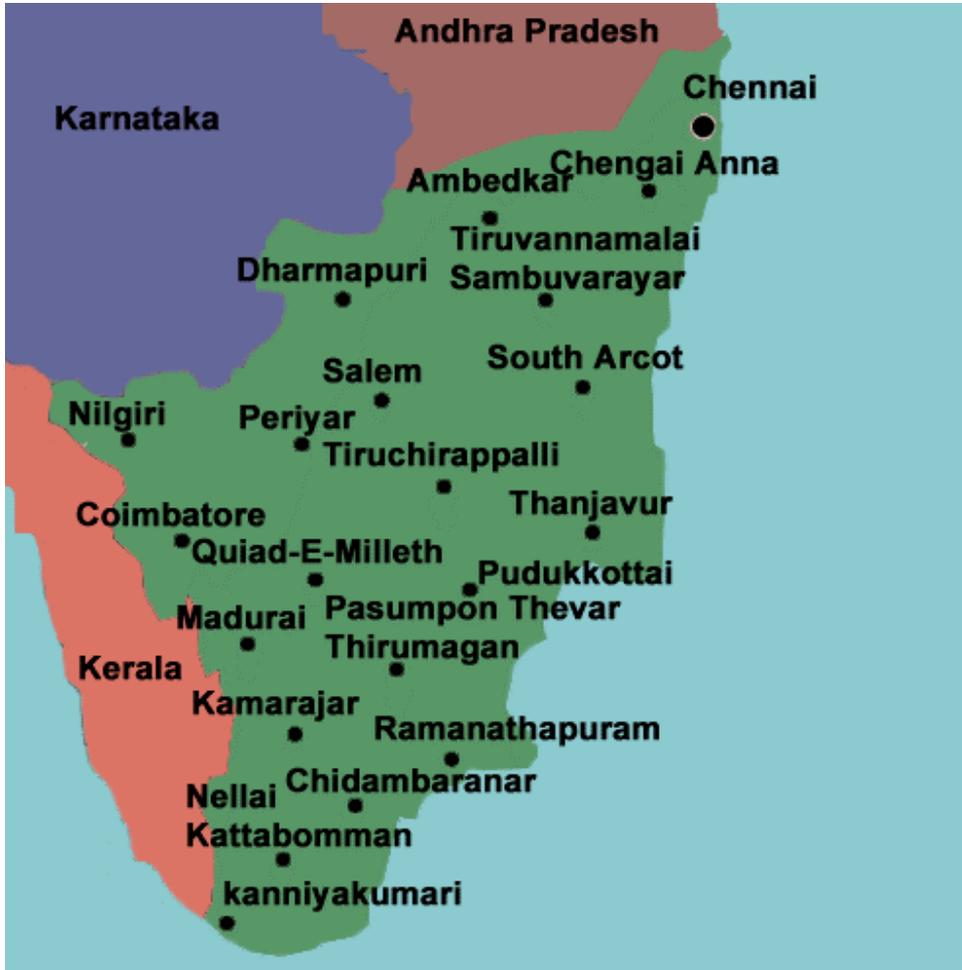


Fig. 1. 1. Map of south India highlighting the state of Tamilnadu. (courtesy: all-indiatravel.com).



Fig. 1.2 Overview of 108 *karana*, south wall, inner corridor, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 1.3 Overview of 108 *karana*, east *gopura*, east façade, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam, later Cola period, 12th-13th centuries.

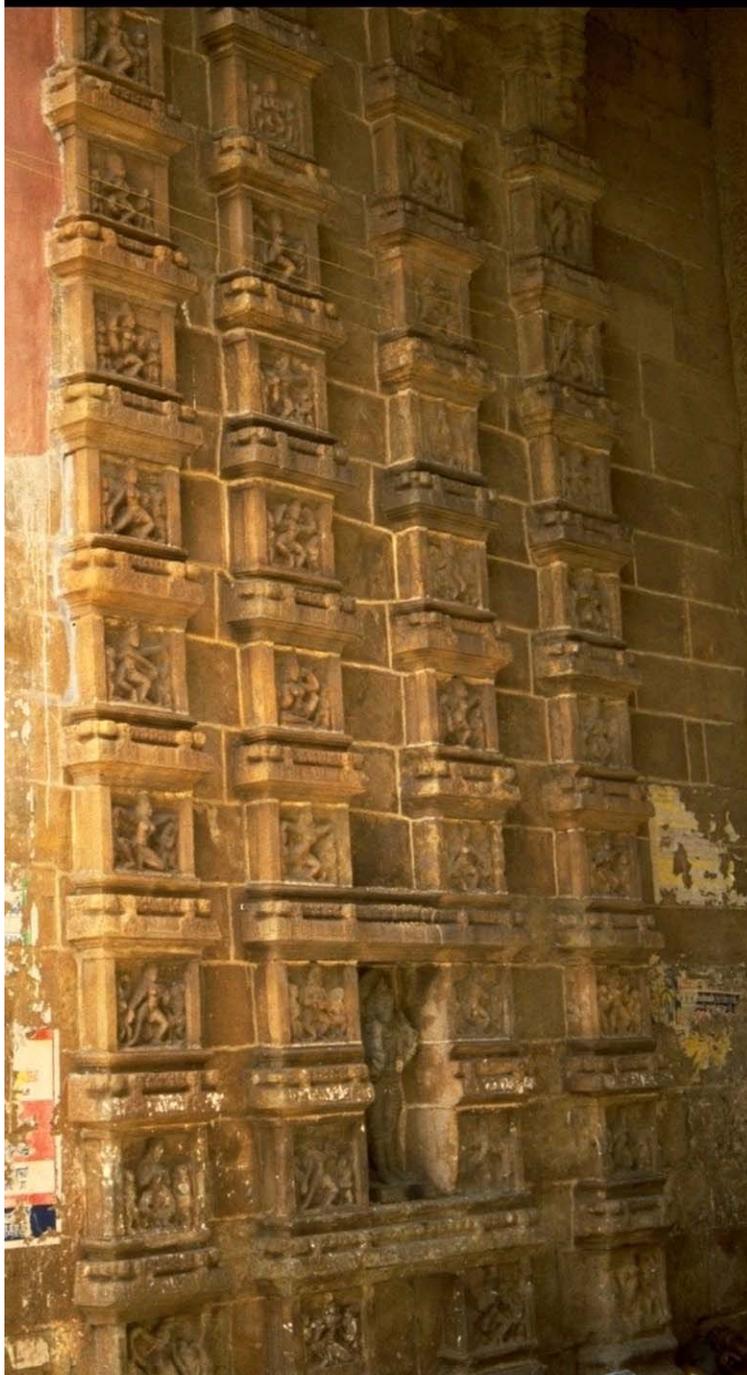


Fig. 1.4 108 *karana*, west *gopura*, northwest wall, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram, later Cola period, 12th-13th centuries.



Fig. 1.5 Overview of 108 *karana*, east *gopura*, southwest wall, Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai, Vijayanagara period, 16th century.



Fig. 1.6 Overview of 108 *karana*, east *gopura*, northwest wall, Vriddhagirsvara Temple, Vriddhachalam, Vijayanagara period, 16th-17th centuries.

CHAPTER 2

THE 108 KARANA IN LITERATURE AND ART

This chapter defines the 108 *karana* and analyzes its contents as documented in the *Natyasastra*. The *karanas'* position in the realm of dance is briefly touched upon in order to situate it within the dance tradition as we know today. I then embark on presenting references to formalistic dance in literature and art of India prior to the 108-*karana*. This chapter presupposes that texts such as the *Natyasastra* are not creating a tradition but documenting a codified version of a pre-existing live dance tradition.

Karana- Meaning, Definition, and Analysis

Karana literally translates as 'doing, producing, or effecting,'¹ and relates to the performance or causing of an action. Derived from the root '*kr*', meaning 'to do', the term *karana* has relevance in several branches of knowledge in ancient India-- Grammar, Music, Astrology and Religion.²

1. See Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit- English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1997), 254.

2. According to Monier-Williams, *karana*, in a social context, refers to a person of mixed caste. *karanas* refer to the eleven astrological divisions of the day; a writer or scribe in Grammar; the posture of an ascetic, a posture in sexual intercourse, the means by which an action is effected; the mind-heart (*antah-karana*), an irrational number in Arithmetic, a beat of time in Music, and a particular position of the fingers. See Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit- English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1997), 254.

Specifically, *karana* denotes the performance of a religious action, leading to the accrual of merit, or *punya*.

In the realm of dance, the *karana* is defined in the *Natyasastra*—an ancient text on dramaturgy-- as “the simultaneous movement of hands and feet while dancing”.³ One hundred and eight *karanas* are first listed and then defined in the *Natyasastra* in the section dealing with the characteristics of the *Tandava*⁴ dance. In this text, a two line verse (*sloka*) presents a concise and pithy definition of each *karana*. These definitions include terminology primarily relating to hand gestures (*hastas*), foot movements (*caris*), and body positions (*mandalas*).

It is important to note that a *karana* in the sphere of dance is not a static posture but a small movement formation that has an initial, intermediate, and

3. This verse appears in the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. v. 30. Also refer to Manomohan Ghosh, *The Natyasastra* (A Treatise on Dramaturgy and Histrionics ascribed to Bharata-muni), Vol. 1&2, (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1951, rev. 3rd ed. 1995), 35; and *Natya Sastra of Bharatamuni*, English translation by a Board of Scholars (New Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986), 34. A similar definition is also found in Adya Rangacharya’s, *The Natyasastra* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996), 23; and N.P. Unni’s *Nataysastra*, 59.

4. The term *tandava* is popularly associated with the dance of Destruction performed by Siva. However, this is not its only interpretation. In the realm of dance, the *tandava* refers to the masculine, energetic and fast-paced dance, which is the opposite of the *lasya*, which stands for feminine and graceful dance. Particularly with reference to this chapter, the *Natyasastra* suggests that the term *Tandava* emerged out of the fact that sage Tandu taught the nuances of this type of dance to Bharata, and hence the name *tandava*. Monier-Williams, in his translation of the word *Tandava*, leaves open the possibility of it being derived from *Tandu*, with a question mark. See Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit- English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1997), 441.

final position.⁵ It is a single, connected movement sequence, and corresponds to a meaningful sentence in verbal communication.

The *karanas* constitute the technical component of dance and function as its fundamental units. By providing a structural framework on which dance formations are built and developed, the *karana* is the very source for stylized movement. Specific and appropriate combinations of *karanas*⁶ give rise to larger formations that enrich the repertoire of movement. This aspect of dance, according to the *Natyasastra*, is called *tandava*, and, along with *abhinaya* or representation, comprises dramatic expression.

In the descriptions of the 108 *karana* and the 32 specific combinations (*angaharas*) contained in the *Natyasastra*, I agree with scholars that see the presence of a formal dance tradition that required serious instruction and training. The governing principles of this tradition—its technical structure,

5. Vatsyayan in “Siva Natesa : Cadence and Form” in *Discourses on Siva*, ed. by Michael Meister (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Publications, 1984), 191-201, makes this important observation. She presents her own categorization of the 108-*karana* based on feet positions in dance. The recognition of *karanas* as movement is important to sculptural studies, for it explains the reasons for the multivalence in *karana* iconography even in the few instances of the 108-*karana* in temples. The sculptor or architect can choose any of the positions, a combination of positions, or even a totally different source than the textual that is the only thing available to us now.

6. Immediately after defining the *karanas*, the *Natyasastra* records that two *karanas* make up a *Nrttamrka*, two, three, or four *Nrttamrkas* constitute an *Angahara*. Continuing the unfolding technical terminology of dance, the *Natyasastra* states that three *karanas* comprise a *Kalapaka*, four *karanas* make up a *mandaka*, five *karanas* constitute a *Sanghataka*, and finally, six, seven, eight, or nine *karanas* constitute an *angahara*. There is little doubt from reading this terminology that the *karanas* are indeed the foundational source for stylized movement. See *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. 30-32.

vocabulary, and its usages are all embedded within the larger framework of *natya*, or dramatic expression.

In the sphere of dance, the *karana*, owing to their emphasis on movement formations, generally falls under the category of *nrtta*, or non-representational dance. *Nrtta* is defined as ‘pure dance’⁷ that does not represent or convey meanings. Rather, *nrtta* manifests the concept of movement and its exploration in traditional Indian dance forms. Precisely for this reason, *nrtta* and its execution is considered to articulate dances’ technical vocabulary and not its communicative component.

In my analysis of the 108-*karana* however, I came to the conclusion that while the *karanas*’ primary expression is dance formations, some of these formations carry specific meanings, i.e., some *karanas* can be used in representation as well. In that sense, I believe that they do not strictly fall under the realm of non-representational dance. Some *karanas* reflect specific actions and reactions that go beyond the conventional *nrtta* format, thereby giving the *karanas*, in my analysis, a duality in expression. I see support to this statement in the *Sangita*

7. While the *Natyasastra* itself does not use the term *Nrtta* and instead elucidates the *karana* and related movement terminology under ‘*tandava*’, several texts that followed apply the term *Nrtta* (not *tandava*) while referring to the *karanas*. For a definition of *nrtta*, refer to Manomohan Ghosh’s *Nandikesvara’s Abhinayadarpanam: A Manual of Gesture and Posture used in Ancient Indian Dance and Drama* (Calcutta: Manish Granthalaya, 1981), 38. Another text, the *Sangita Ratnakara*, dating from 1210-1247 C.E. includes the 108-*karanas* in its chapters on Dance under the title of “*nrttakaranas*” even as it acknowledges the legend of Siva’s transmission of the

Ratnakara's definition of the *karana* as ' a beautiful action of the hand, foot,.. (in combination), which is in keeping with the *rasa* (sentiment).⁸ The presence of the term *rasa* or sentiment, in my opinion, infuses into the *karana* a level of emotional sensitivity, however, minimal.

I shall present a brief analysis of the 108 *karana* terminology employed in the *Natyasastra* and its usages. The first *karana* is *Talapuspaputa*,⁹ literally 'holding the flower cup at level,' depicts the action of holding the flower cup levelly. The *puspaputa* gesture symbolizes the presence of flowers in the dancers' hands that are offered to the presiding deity at the start of a dance performance.¹⁰ It generally indicates the initiation of a religious and auspicious activity.

From here on forward, various actions detailing movements are stated including Turning and Rotation --*valita karana, Vivrtta Karana , Vivartitakam , and Parivrtta karana*; Extensions -- *krantakam, Atikrantam, Viksiptam, Visnukrantam, and* so on; Crossed (*svastika*) positions—*svastika, ardhasvastika, mandala svastika, dik svastika, Vaksah svastika*; Pounding actions—*nikuttaka karana, ardha nikuttaka*

karanas, through sage Tandu to Bharata. See *Sangita Ratnakara of Sarangadeva*, Vol. 4 (Madras: Adyar Library and Research Center, 1976), 90-120.

8. Refer to Raja and Burnier's *Sangita Ratnakara*, Vol.4, Ch.4, v. 548-549,90.

9. The *puspaputa*, or flower bag/cup, is shown by the hands arranged in the shape of the calyx of the flower as a cupped gesture.

10. I know from personal experience that even today, classical dance traditions in India, reflect the practice. The dancer makes her first entry into the stage with flowers (*puspaputa* gesture) in her hands and proceeds directly to the section of the stage where a deity is placed and offers

karana. Additionally, graceful actions -- *lalita karana*, curved and bent positions--
Ancita karana, *Kuncita karana*; needle positions—*suci*, *ardhasuci*, and *sucividdham*;
and vertically elevated foot actions—*lalata tilakam*, *visnukrantam*, are also
articulated through the 108-*karana*.

Animal movements are also expressed in the 108-*karana* repertoire--
Gajakridita karana and *Karihasta* relate to elephant movements, while *mayuralalita*
karana reflects the peacock, *Garudaplutaka karana*—the vulture, *Harinaplutam* --the
deer, *Simhavikridita karana*, the lion and *Grdhravalina karana* translates as
'cowering down as a vulture'. Several *karanas* employ the scorpion or *vrschika*
position—*vrschika karana*, *latavrschika karana*, *vrschika kuttitam* and so on. Actions
relating to snakes abound- *bhujanga trasita* (serpent fright), *bhujanga ancita* (curled
like a serpent), *bhujangalalita* (graceful like a serpent), and *Nagasarpita karana*
(snake bite).

Unsteady gaits owing to intoxication are suggested in *Unmatta karana*,
Skhalita karana, and *Madaskhalita karana*, excellence in *mattali* and *ardha mattali*,
low spirits in the *sannata karana* and finally, the descending Ganges in the
Gangavatarana karana.

It is the presence of these movements that go beyond the traditional non-
representational geometric formations that leads me to suggest that the *karana*

flowers. In the Bharata Natyam repertoire, the *puspaanjali* is performed by the dancer as an

are not just technical expositions of dance. They can also be used as narrative and communicative devices. In other words, they have mixed traits.¹¹ The importance of this statement will be analyzed in a later section of this dissertation.

Perhaps the unique feature of the 108-*karanas* is the legend¹² associated with it. According to the *Natyasastra*, the 108-*karanas* were introduced to the author Bharata by none other than the Hindu god Siva himself. In this account, Siva claims that he employed the *karanas* and their combinations—the *angaharas*-- in his evening dance and their inclusion in *natya* would enrich the latter. Bharata agrees to their inclusion and then Siva orders Tandu to instruct Bharata on the *karanas* and the *angaharas*—hence the name, *Tandava*.

108 karana/ Formal dance in Literature

The term *karana* itself is not known to have been used in early literature. However, words relating to a drama tradition is present in the literature.

Vedic literature provides a few references to dancers/actors as evidenced by the usage of terms such as *nrit* (to dance, to act on the stage), *nrti* (grand or

invocation..

11. I find it interesting that this statement of mine about the *karana* being a mixture of dance movement (*nrtta*) and narrative (abhinaya) ties in with one of its own references, i.e. the *karana* stands for a person of mixed class—an offspring of an inter-caste marriage. See Monier-Williams, 254.

solemn appearance, show), and *nritu*¹³ (“dancing, gesticulating, lively, active”) said of Indra,¹⁴ Asvins, and Maruts.¹⁵ The association of gods to dance dates back to the Vedic literature where Indra , the Asvins, and *apsaras* are described as skilled dancers. Usas, the goddess of dawn is another celestial¹⁶ compared to a dancer in verses rich with lyrical beauty.

Evidence of formal dance is also present in the Epics¹⁷ where skill in dance is attributed to Ravana¹⁸ in the *Ramayana* and to Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*, along

12. The legend of Siva’s performance of the *karanas* and his recommendation of the same to Bharata and Brahma occurs in the beginning of the chapter titled *tandava laksanam*. See *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4, v. 13-17.

13. See Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1997), 568. In addition, refer to Sucharita Khanna’s *Dancing Divinities in Indian Art* (New Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 1999), 3.

14. For a comprehensive documentation of dance references in Sanskrit literature, I recommend Kapila Vatsyayana’s *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts* (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Academy, 1968), 142-261. In the *Rg Veda*, a hymn to Indra describes him as a dancer in battle who has destroyed ninety cities with his thunderbolt. Refer to H.H. Wilson’s *Rg Veda*, Vol. 2, 34. Other references to Indra as one who makes others dance are also present. See *Rg Veda*, Vol. 8, 68. I see in these early references suggestive ties between dance and heroism.

15. A reference to maruths as friendly dancers who dance in gay abandon exists in the *RgVeda* tying the maruths to dance. See Max Muller’s *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 1, 313.

16. A verse describes Usas as ‘like a dancer (*nrturiva*) who adorns herself with rich ornaments, like a maiden whom her mother has decked up....’. See Macdonald’s *Hymns from the Rgveda*, I. 92, verse iv.

17. In both epics, *apsaras* are credited with skills in dance. The *nata*, *nartaka*, and *ganika* are accepted members of society who participate in celebratory activities and are mentioned every time there is a jubilant occasion. See Vatsyayan’s *Classical Indian dance in Literature and Art* (New Delhi : Sangeet Natak Academy, 1968),161-170.

18. Ravana’s court and his palace reverberate with references to dance and music. There are court dancers, his wives are proficient in dancing, and in a later tradition, he himself is credited with being a fine dancer who pleased Siva with his prowess in dance. Even the term *angahara* is used in this section of the *Ramayana* while referring to dancers who even in their sleep, after a tiring session of dance, present dance-like attitudes. See *Ramayana*, *sundara khanda*, 10. 36.

with several other references to dancing.¹⁹ Similarly, Krishna is dancer of the *puranas*, in which the *ras lila* becomes a popular theme. Appearing to be a more spontaneous outpouring of joy and movement rather than one requiring instruction and training, the *rasa* dance is nevertheless proof of dances' affinity to divine beings.

References to performances of gesture and movement during ritual in the *samhita* texts have led to some scholars to suggest that the source of *abhinaya*, representational expression, could lie in these ritual practices.²⁰ The *Vajasaneyi samhita* in particular describes ritual in which the priest is supposed to recite, use appropriate gesture (*mudra*), and even move, according to the verse being chanted. This combined operation does resemble a dramatic performance giving rise to the interpretations of ritual as a likely source for *natya*.

What could be considered as a secure reference to formal and traditional dance is seen in Panini's *Astadhyayi*, dating from the 2nd century B. C.²¹ The

19. Arjuna dons the disguise of a eunuch, Brhannala, who is the dance teacher to the princess of Virata, the region where the Pandavas live during the last year of their exile. Arjuna, prior to getting the appointment at Virata's court, tells the king and queen that he is an expert in *gita* (song), *vadya* (instruments) and *nrtya* (dance). It is obvious that the three disciplines were mutually complementary and inter-related. See *Mahabharata*, virata parva, Ch. 11.

20. Vatsyayan suggests that indeed, the ritual practices documented in the *Vajasaneyi Samhita* may well be the source for *abhinaya*. In her study, she claims that these ritual practices may have provided the dancer/actor with the material that was profound, symbolic, and aesthetic. The mantras that are chanted during a ritual follow a particular rhythm and tone, and together with gestural communication manifest the key elements of *abhinaya*, according to Vatsyayana. See *Classical Indian dance in Literature and Art*, 155.

21. Panini's *Astadhyayi*, Vol. IV, 3, 110.

grammarians refers to *nata-sutras* or actor aphorisms of two authors, Silalin and Krisasva. Students of this school of dramaturgy are referred to by Panini as *sailalinah*. The term *sailalinah*'s closely resembles another term, *sailalah*,²² referring to a ritual teacher of a Vedic school. Therefore, in Panini's reference, one can deduce ties between drama tradition and ritual.

Aphoristic, or *sutra*, literature occupies a significant place in the realm of Sanskrit literature as authoritative ideas and compositions of the wise and the learned. The *sutra* literature is generally considered to be older than the *sastra* literature, and, therefore, this *nata sutra* could in all probability be earlier than the *Natyasastra* itself. Therefore, there is evidence in literature itself to suggest that formalistic dance/drama tradition existed earlier than the *Natyasatra*.

The *Natyasastra*, as the name suggests, is a treatise on *natya* or dramatic art. Its presence today is in the form of several manuscripts which are transcriptions of an oral text, faithful or otherwise. Discovered over a period of decades in far flung parts of India, these transcriptions, or recensions as they are known, have been put together by scholars²³ in order to arrive at a unified text.

22. Efforts to link this Silalin with the *Sailusa* (actor) of the *yajur veda* has been attempted by some scholars. Even Bharata in the *Natyasastra* refers to the *natas* as *Sailalakas*—a term that corresponds to Panini's own *Sailalinah*, or students of the school of Silalin. This reference has led to suggestions that Bharata himself may have been a product of the school of Silalin. The students of the Silalin school resonate with another term—*sailalah*—a ritual teacher of the Brahmanas. It is indeed an interesting convergence of terminology in which students of dramatic art and ritual carry such similar names.

Given this background, its discovery led to heated debate over almost every issue connected to it. First, scholars disagreed on its possible date. There were those who credited it with great antiquity²⁴ and others who were more cautious and dated it from the early part of the Christian Era. Still others claim that it belongs to around the eighth century.

Next, the authorship of the treatise introduced more controversy. Scholarship is still divided as to whether this was written by a single individual or a group of people. Added to this, there are the skeptics who have postulated that *bharata* should be seen not as name of an individual, but a term referring to an actor,²⁵ and so the *Natyasastra* is a manual for actors. The absence of a sage

23. The various manuscripts of the *Natyasastra* were put together piece by piece in order to arrive at a cohesive text. This in itself proved to be a challenge and only after various technical hurdles were surmounted was the material translated and analyzed critically. Currently, there are several editions of the text that are reliable and reflect sound scholarship. I will start with the early publications and present a updated list of some of them. Sivadatta and Pandurang, K. ed., *Natyasastra of Bharatamuni, Kavyamala*, 42 (Bombay : Nirnayasagar Press, 1894); M. R. Kavi, *Natyasastra*, with a commentary of Abhinavagupta (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Series, 1926 & 1956); Manomohan Ghosh's, *Natyasastra: A Treatise on Ancient Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics*, ascribed to Bharatamuni, Vols. I and II (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1951 and 1956); *Natyasastra*, ed. by Manomohan Ghosh, Vols. I and II (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1967 and 1995). The most recent one is *Natyasastra*, Vols. I-IV, by N. P. Unni (New Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1998).

24. The issue of the authorship and dating of this text has been the subject matter of several scholars over the years. Some of the books are: M. Ramakrishna Kavi, *Introduction to the Natyasastra* (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Series, 1926); Macdonnel, *History of Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1958); A. B. Keith, *Sanskrit Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924); S. K. De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1947); M. M. Ghosh, *Introduction to the Natyasastra* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1950); and F. B. J. Kuiper, *Varuna and Vidusaka on the Origin of Sanskrit Drama* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1979).

25. Adya Rangacharya's *The Natyasastra* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996), 346-355.

named Bharata in Hindu mythology is used as evidence to disprove the claim of authorship to an individual with that name.

Many of these issues remain unresolved to a large extent, but this does not affect the outcome of this study. Now, what does the *Natyasastra* contain and what is the methodology used to approach this subject? The *Natyasastra* provides valuable information on all aspects of dramatic art-- namely music, dance and acting. The organization of the contents follows an unusual pattern. The text begins by attributing a divine origin to drama/dance/music (*natya*). Accordingly, Brahma composed the *natyaveda*, incorporating various elements from the four *Vedas*: Words from *Rgveda*, Music from *Samaveda*, movements and make-up from *Yajur Veda*, and emotional acting from *Atharva Veda*. Referring to it as the *Natyaveda*, he entrusts the theory to Bharata commanding him to put in into practice.²⁶

The attribution of divine origin to a treatise is not the first or the only instance in India. A good part of early Indic literature is believed to be of divine inspiration and created by Brahma. In fact, this theme is seen repeatedly in ancient texts. The categorization of dramatic/dance art as a *Veda* is yet another attempt at legitimizing the work and its contents. Obviously this appears to have been a practice followed by the writers of the time.

After explaining this mythical origin to drama and engaging in a discussion of the practitioners in the first chapter, Bharata discusses the characteristics of the play house. The adoration and appeasement of the stage deities is followed rather suddenly by the fourth chapter, titled characteristics of the *tandava* (*Tandava laksanam*), wherein the *karanas* are described as having been performed by Siva himself.²⁷

Apart from the *Karanas*, this chapter also contains explanations of technical terms such as *recakas*, *angaharas*, and *pindibandhas*. Chapters six through thirteen deal with various types of emotions and expressions, and their portrayal by means of the various parts of the body.

Chapters 15 through 19 in the *Natyasastra* address verbal representation and prosody. The ten different kinds of plays are explained in the 20th chapter after which the author begins to enumerate the various elements of a play such as the plot, the styles, and the various modes of bodily expression, both internal and external. Interestingly, chapters 28 to 33 are expositions on music and musical instruments. Finally, the last three chapters revert back to the realm of drama and address miscellaneous issues.

26. *Natyasastra*, Ch. I. Verses 4-25.

27. The fourth chapter is titled *tandava Lakshanam* and is comprised of 329 verses. See *Natyasastra*, Ch. IV, Verses 1-329. Out of this, the *Karanas* are listed in verses 33-54 and explained in verses 60-167.

My own review of the contents of this text reveals several things. First, it is a compilation of mammoth proportions. Second, to its immense credit, on a broad scale it analyzes almost painstakingly even the minutest aspect of these arts and related fields. However, given this kind of analysis, the reader is confronted with an overdose of technical jargon and seemingly incomprehensible terminology. Since the material is dense and loaded, it is also confusing and sometimes contradictory.

The confusion emerges as early as in the distribution of chapters. For instance, much of what is written in the fourth chapter, titled *Tandavalaksanam*, of which *karanas* are also a part, cannot be fully comprehended without understanding chapters 8, 9, and 10 that deal with the movements of the primary, secondary and tertiary parts of the body. In the same vein, Bharata moves from one discipline to the other starting with drama, then to language, music, and finally reverts back to drama revealing a disconnect in the stream of thought and expression. Similarly, there are instances of non-comprehension of technical terms mentioned in the *Natyasastra*. Even when it addresses various definitions, there remains an air of ambiguity and vagueness resulting in multiple interpretations.

Despite the contradictions and confusion, this is no doubt a text of much value and repute and one that stands testimony to the highly advanced system of

theater that must have preceded it. In articulating the various nuances of drama/dance, the *Natyasastra* is a manual that discusses the fundamentals of Hindu theater in meticulous detail and provides an incredible wealth of information on the subject as a whole.

The *Natyasastra* has been credited with reflecting core Hindu beliefs and belief systems. Bharata compares *natya* to a *veda* which is accessible to all castes, thus legitimizing this work in the hall of fame of Sanskrit literature. He also refers to the performance of *natya* to that of a *Yagna*,²⁸ for personal merit and prosperity.

In the south Indian literary tradition, there are ample references to dance indicating its widespread prevalence and popularity. Tamil literary output of the so-called Sangam, or classical, age (100 B.C. – 300 C.E.) points to dance being associated with specific events. Known by several names, including *attam*, *kuthu* and *kunippu*,²⁹ early references to dance in southern India associate it with ritual, royalty, and victory in war.

28. In their interpretation of the *Nataysastra*, scholars such as Tripathi have discussed the cosmic and human links that *natya* contains. For instance, its link to the *vedas* is interpreted as its cosmic significance manifested through its equation to eternal knowledge. Its application and visualization in this world is in the form of the *yagna*. Tripathi provides similarities between the *yagnamandapa* and Bharata's description of the *natyamandapa* with its distribution of various deities and their propitiation. For more information, see R. D. Tripathi's *Lectures on the Nataysastra* (Poona: University of Poona, 1991).

29. Refer to R. Subramanyam's *Heritage of the Tamils* (Madras: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1983), 178.

The ancient Dravidian god Murukan and his consort Valli are connected to the *Vallikkuttu*, a ritual dance mentioned in Sangam period texts. The *Tolkapiyam* (100 B.C. – 300 C.E.) records dances being performed on the battlefield³⁰ in front of and behind a victorious king's chariot. These battle dances are performed in honor of Murugan's mother, the fierce war-goddess Korravai. From the accounts in the *Tolkappiyam*, it is possible to infer the presence of a variety of *kuthus* in the Tamil region—the *kuravai kuthu*, *kazhanilai kuthu*, and *val amalai kuthu*.³¹ All of these *kuthus* are performed as celebrations of royal victories, establishing early the association between dance, royalty, and heroic triumphs in the Tamil region.

This proclivity to dancing at the fall of the enemy envelops religious practices as well, as further revealed in *sangam* literature³² dating from the early

30. This is called *Val amala kuthu*, or a dance with swords raised. This is performed by men in the battlefield at the time when their enemy king is killed. A reference to this dance is found in the *Tolkapiyam*. For more information, refer to M.C. Sarala, *Tamil Ilakkiyamthil Natiya Varalaru (History of Dance in Tamil Literature)* (Trichy: Bharatidasan University, 1999), 28-29.

31. John Asirvadam in *Tamilar Kuthukkal* (Madras: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1985) details several references to dance (*kuthu*) in Tamil literature starting from the Sangam age.

32. The *kalittogai* makes reference to dances (*kuthu*) by Siva and records the *kodukotti* and *pandaragam*. For more information, please refer to *Kalittogai*, Ch. 1, v. 5-9 and 15-17.

centuries of the Christian Era. Here, Siva's association with dance, prevalent in the Sanskrit tradition, is also reflected in south India in the form of *Tripurantaka*.³³ Accordingly, Siva performed the *kodukotti kuthu* in his form as *Ardhanarisvara*. In the same text however, this very *kuthu* is also mentioned as the dance Siva performed after his destruction of the three cities—*tripurantaka*—in front of Uma who beats the time.

Similarly, Siva is also credited with dancing the *pandaranga kuttu*³⁴ on the ashes of the three citadels and the three demons that reigned there.³⁵ Yet another dance that Siva is credited with performing is the *Kapalam*- a dance in which he is adorned with the tiger skin and holds the skull cup in his hands.

Zvelebil rightly draws attention to the visual imagery of Siva's dances in Sangam literature and its resonance to the later phenomenon of the *Ananda Tandava* at Tillai.³⁶ The anthology of *Kalittogai* poems, compiled by

33. Siva's association to dance is recorded in the *Kalittogai* and *Silapadikaram* (ca. 450 C.E.).

34. The *Kalittogai* records the *Pandarangam* and *kapalam* in Ch. 1, v. 8-13. Also, refer to M.C. Sarala, *Tamil Illakiyathil Natiya Varalaru*, 48-49.

35. There exists a reference to the presence of a *Pandarangam* dancer in the Cidambaram region during the Cola period. See David Smith, *The Dance of Siva*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 219.

36. Zvelebil's discussion of the historical background of dance in the Tamil region with a focus on Siva's dances culminating in his form as Nataraja, is lucid and well laid out. The links between early contexts and the developing concept of Siva's *ananda tandava* are emphasized by the author. See Zvelebil's *Ananda tandava of Siva Sadanrttamurti* (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998), 34-45.

Nallantuvanar³⁷ (ca. 350- 400 A.D.) contains an invocatory stanza evoking the visual image of Siva, wherein Zvelebil rightly sees the early seeds of the Nataraja-*Ananda Tandava* idea.

These early references to what appears to be non-formal dance suddenly directs the reader to the presence of a full scale formal system of dance in the *Silappadikaram* (ca. 450 C.E.), the preeminent literary work of the Tamil region. Written by Ilango Adigal, this work documents the prevalence of several *kuthus*, such as *santhi kuthu* and *vinoda kuthu*.³⁸ However, the author's account of Madhavi, the dancer and courtesan's first stage³⁹ performance reveals not only the presence of a formal, structured dance tradition, but also its close ties to the system espoused in the Sanskrit tradition.

37. The description mentions Siva as the dancer of *Kotukutti* and *Pandarangam* dances. It also mentions the drum, the tiger killed by Siva, and Brahma's skull. The text further states that Parvati is watching and providing the rhythm for this dance.

38. Eleven types of *kuttus* (dances) supposedly associated with the southern port city of Puhaar are mentioned in the *Silappadikaram*. A *vidyadhara* and his spouse, from northern India are traveling south to Puhaar to witness the festival of Indra. There, they witness the eleven kinds of dances (*kuthus*) for which the "dancers of puhaar are justly famous throughout the world." See K. N. Subrahmanyam's *The Anklet Story: Silappadhikaaram of Ilango Adigal* (Delhi: Agam Prakashan, 1977), 25-28.

39. The *Silappadikaram* denotes one section titled 'dance debut' in which Madhavi, the courtesan, presents her first stage recital as an accredited dancer (*arangetram*). In this section, there is considerable attention given to the nuances of Madhavi's dance performance. That Madhavi attained formal training in dance is also clearly expressed with mention of words such as *nrtta* (pure dance), *avinaya* (communicative dance), hand gestures, and rhythm in this section of the text. The accompanying music is also described to some extent through terminology that is typically Tamil, not the corresponding Sanskrit terms. See *Silappadikaram: The Ankle Bracelet* translated by Alain Danielou (New York: New Directions Books, 1965), 9-11.

Accordingly, Madhavi underwent training in dance for seven years after which she gave her first public recital. The *Silappadikaram* describes her dance training and, although there is no mention of the term *karana*, words such as *abhinaya* are mentioned. It is possible to discern the incorporation of Sanskritic elements in Tamil literature.

In conclusion, literary accounts of dance in the Tamil region highlight the close associations with royal wars and victories from a very early time in its history. Trance is another important element of dance in the Tamil tradition. Perhaps it is in keeping with these early associations that Siva as *tripurantaka* appears to be a popular theme in this dance expression. It articulates heroism, destruction, and provides the actor with a dramatic outlet that is fierce and trancelike.

In the context of Siva's dance in the Tamil region, Zvelebil proposes a Tamil origin to the word *tandava*. Accordingly, the Tamil word *tantavam* which means 'jumping, leaping' is derived from *tantu* — 'to jump, leap across, dance'.

Therefore, according to Zvelebil, Siva's *tandava* dance - forceful and vibrant - is a south Indian development.⁴⁰ Whether or not the *tandava* dance

originated in the Tamil south, I believe that the regions' proclivity towards dance expression emphasizing heroism, destruction and trance provided a fertile ground for the later development of Nataraja.

108-Karana/formal Dance in Art

I shall present a brief survey of formalistic dance imagery in the art of India prior to the 108-*karana*. This is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of all dance imagery that exists in the region. Rather, it presents a selective chronological list of dance sculptures that employ dance in specific ways to enrich sculptural and symbolic expression.

In art, the great popularity of a collective 108 -*karana* program appears to be a south Indian phenomenon. However, evidence of a formalistic dance tradition is suggested as early as the Harappan⁴¹ civilization and elsewhere in India.

It is with the panels from Bharhut, particularly the Ajatasatru pillar, that evidence to support the contention of an existing formal dance tradition is articulated (Fig. 2.1). Depicting the veneration of the turban relic of the Buddha

41. Zvelebil in *Ananda tandava of Siva Sadanrttamurti*, (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998), 2 mentions this connection. The meaning of the term is given in the *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, 2578.

42. Scholars have identified a female metal sculpture from Harappa as a dancer. Similarly, figures of *yaksis* and *salabhanjikas* from Bharhut are also frequently cited as dance sculptures. Due to the fact that definite associations to dance do not exist in both instances, I do not wish to include them in the body of the text. However, I acknowledge the fact that both of these are recognized as expressive of dance, by scholarship.

by dancers, musicians, and devotees, this panel displays a lively dance performance. Four female dancers perform to the accompaniment of musicians in the lower register. Devotees standing in an upper level seem to witness the dance performance even as they worship the relic enshrined in a monument. The presence of dancers in a relic worship scene suggests to me the possibility that formal dance carried religious associations as early as the 2nd century B.C. From this sculpture, I read formal dance as an activity that was considered appropriate in a religious and ritual setting.

The use of dance for symbolic expression is suggested in a representation present in cave 7 at Aurangabad, a Buddhist monument dating from mid-sixth century (Fig. 2. 2). A group of female performers consisting of a dancer accompanied by six musicians is captured on the wall of the main shrine.

Links to the adoption of elements from the dance tradition is revealed in the formation of the legs (*catura*) and foot (*agratalasancara*) as well as the hand gestures (*mudras* and *hastas*).

Dancing Siva–Natesa, as seen in cave I of Badami (Fig. 2.3.) dating from ca. 575- 85 C.E., recreates Siva’s dance at Kailasa in the presence of accompanists. Nandi and Ganesa are also present as witnesses. The employment of formal dance units, perhaps the *karana*, is indicated in the position of Siva’s legs and feet—the knee and foot turned sideways (*ardhamandala*) and placement of the left

foot (*kuncita*). Natesa's multiple hands display an array of gestures and attributes, some having correspondence to the dance tradition.

Michael Rabi, in his essay⁴² on the dynamics between sculpture and dance as reflected in *Bharata Natyam*, notes that in the multiarmed images of Siva, the presence of the additional hands "conveys a spellbinding sense of continuous motion."⁴³ He also suggests that each additional pair of hands in sculpture impart a distinctive meaning to Siva just as an extended sequence of a *Bharata natyam* dancer's gestures in real time. This observation is very pertinent because these extended dance sequences in *Bharata natyam* are referred to as *kai*, or hands. Typically, each *kai* in *Bharata natyam* would provide another layer of meaning that is unique to the deity, thus further enriching the overall presentation.

The use of elements of dance, possibly the *karana*, in this sculpture articulates movement and, in my view, also aids in communicating at a mythic level. For instance, one of the preeminent stages for Siva's dance performance is his mountain abode of Kailasa. Siva is supposed to have danced in Kailasa with his *gana* accompanists and sometimes, a divine audience. The presence of a

43. Refer to Michael Rabi's *Dynamics of Interaction Between Indian Dance and Sculpture* in *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective*, ed. George Kliger (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1993), 110-136.

44. See Rabi's *Dynamics of Interaction Between Indian Dance and Sculpture* in *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective*, ed. George Kliger (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1993), 124.

dancing Siva, such as this sculpture, situates Kailasa as the sacred location and attempts to recreate the dance performance.

Dynamic dance movement with *karana* elements is also seen in another composition of Natesa, this time from the Kalachuri period in Cave 15 at Ellora (Fig. 2.4.). Siva's legs, positioned to create a square (*catura*) formation, displays the right heel raised in *kuncita*-like attitude. He is multiarmed, with hands communicating by gestures and attributes. In this panel, the mythic message is very prominent with the presence of Parvati, accompanists and even an audience. I read this panel as an attempt to recreate the legend of Siva's divine dance at Kailasa and employing elements of the dance tradition to articulate the theme. Therefore, in a way, elements of the *karana* are used to depict movement even as they communicate the myth.

The theme of Siva- Natesa finds dynamic portrayal in southern India in the Pallava Rajasimhesvara Temple. Currently known by the name Kailasanatha, it is a temple dedicated to Siva as the Lord of Kailasa. Although Nataraja, and not Natesa, is commonly associated with the Tamil south, perhaps some of the finest representations of Siva Natesa are visualized in this temple.

Siva's forceful dance at Kailasa is given visual expression on the west wall façade of the *vimana* (Fig. 2. 5). Occupying the central register is Siva in a dynamic pose, which I read as a variant of the *vrshchika* (scorpion) position of the

Natyasastra. A multitude of hands holds attributes and gestures, some of which are discernable.

The sculpture may be read through the language of dance to show how dance is used to communicate in sculpture. Siva's primary pair of hands is extended to its extreme, that is left vertically above and the right obliquely to the side. Together they appear to suggest expansiveness. The pair of hands that follow immediately display what appears to be the *tripataka* (tri-flag) on the right and the *kataka* (bracelet) gesture on the left, a symbolic representation of the axe and deer attributes of Siva. The third pair of hands displays the drum (*damaru*) in the right and the half-moon (*ardhacandra*) gesture on the corresponding left—symbolic of the drum and crescent moon attributes of Siva. His last pair of hands reveal attributes—a sword and staff with a trident emerging from the back of his head.

I interpret the main theme communicated in this relief as being Siva's all-pervasiveness. The additional pairs of hands are an extended sequence wherein Siva's cosmic nature, heroism, and fierceness are brought forth to enhance his personality.

Flanking Siva on the left is Parvati, obviously witnessing his dance and musical accompanists to his right provide orchestral support. Right below him, *ganas* accompany his dance. Interestingly, Ganesa appears atop Siva seated

inside a *makara torana*. He appears to connect to the scene as well as to the devotees who witness the relief.

When including the supporting figures, I suggest that the larger relief recreates Siva's dynamic evening dance at Kailasa, the *sandhya nrtyam*. This is further supported by its presence in the west wall of the *vimana*, the western direction synonymous with the setting sun and rising twilight (*sandhya*), in a monument dedicated to Siva as the Lord of Kailasa. The use of elements resembling the *karana* in its recreation ties in well with the legend of the 108-*karana* as components of Siva's *sandhya nrtyam*. Therefore, this composition presents the duality of dance imagery, physical and symbolic expression along integrated to mythic recreation.

Yet another relief panel from the Kailasanatha Temple at Kancipuram captures Siva in the midst of a dance in Kailasa (Fig. 2. 6.) as revealed by Brahma and Visnu flanking him on either side. Siva's right leg is raised and extended overhead (*urdhva*) and held aloft by his primary right hand. The extent of the stretch, both upward and downward, suggests in my view, Siva's own expansive nature and omnipresence.

I believe that this panel captures yet another moment of Siva's dance⁴⁴ at Kailasa even as it communicates Siva's own inherent qualities. The employment

of dance elements, even *karana* elements, is revealed in the raised leg, which can be interpreted as a variant of the *lalata tilaka karana*. The raised leg is also called the *urdhva* position in dance, leading to this relief being identified as *urdhva Tandava* by some scholars.

A more typical dancing relief adorns the north/south wall of the Kailasanatha Temple at Kancipuram (Fig. 2.7). With his feet crossed in *svastika* attitude and heels raised in *avahitta*-type position, Siva's primary hands reveal the posture associated with the developing Nataraja, absence of fear (*abhaya*) on the right and elephant hand (*gaja hasta*) on the left. The accompanying gestures and attributes reinforce his cosmic, divine, and fierce qualities.

The theme of dancing Siva is explored further in this composition from the early Cola Brahmapurisvara Temple at Pullamangai (Fig. 2.8). Siva's raised right knee seems derived from the *bhujangatrasa* position in *karana* vocabulary, even as his primary hands reveal the Nataraja posture. Attributes and symbolic gesture displayed in his remaining hands identify and imply the presence of drum and fire in the upper pair of hands; the axe and gesture for antelope in the

44. Kaimal has interpreted this relief as the dance competition between Siva and Parvati in which Siva won by lifting his feet overhead. I do not agree with this interpretation because the dance contest is specific to two sites in the Tamil region—Tiruvalangadu and Cidambaram. Neither of the two is generally associated with either Kailasa or Kancipuram. Therefore, I find it is odd that it should find representation in a Pallava monument in Kancipuram dedicated to Siva as Lord of Kailasa. I received a copy of this essay from Padma Kaimal through personal communication.

second pair; and an unidentified gesture and the trident in the third. Together, they symbolize the divine, cosmic and fierce qualities of Siva.

The presence of a *gana* on Siva's right and an accompanist on his left suggests Siva's dance performance at Kailasa—the mythic environment that seems to pervade the dancing Siva imagery of this time.

Although Siva is the most popularly recognized dancer, he is not alone in the dance sculptural expression. Ganesa, Krishna, and celestial goddesses are also associated with the medium of dance. For instance, a ca. 10th century panel from the State Museum in Gwalior displays Ganesa dancing (Fig. 2.9). Four-armed, with attributes in almost each hand, Ganesa's feet execute the *ardhamandala* dance position with the both feet resting on the toes—corresponding to the *avahittaka* position in the realm of dance. Ganesa's rat is visible on the right while a percussionist appears to be providing support to Ganesa's dance on the left. Sculptures depicting Ganesa dancing display a fair range of dance expression—*kuncita*, *alidha*, and raised knee (*urdha janu*) positions of the feet.

All of these diverse elements—cosmic, mythic, movement, and destruction come together in the form of Siva Nataraja (Fig. 2.10) in the south Indian tradition. By far the most popularly recognized figure, Nataraja develops a canonical niche for himself in the realm of Cola sculptural expression. This

image of Nataraja is an early instance of Nataraja in relation to the *ananda tandava* concept. Belonging to the age of queen Sembiyan Mahadevi, dancing is envisioned in this sculpture in the *bhujangatrasa* pose of the feet and the gestures and attributes of the hands. These gestures and attributes present Siva's status as a fierce cosmic dancer; the dwarf under his feet, his destructive nature; the locks of hair symbolizing his disheveled and fierce appearance.

The mythic content in this iconography is modified in terms of the location and nature of the dance—it moves to Cidambaram in the south and becomes a fierce destructive dance. Despite this change in the iconology of the imagery, the role and function of dance as mover and communicator of messages remains.

Summary

I conclude that the formal dance tradition in India has ancient roots, a contention supported by the *Natyaśāstra* itself, which is a codification of one such tradition. In the art of India, elements of formalistic dance are incorporated to display a performance, depict movement and visualize episodes from legend. By its presence on sacred monuments, such as the relic worship scene in Bharhut and the dancers in Aurangabad caves, formalistic dance's early religious affiliations are also suggested. These early ties are further strengthened with the introduction of Siva as the divine dancer.

In south India, the Tamil's religious belief encompassed Siva as a fierce dancer along with evidence of dance as art and ritual. The pre-existing dance environment in the Tamil south, with its reliance on heroism, trance, and destruction, provided fertile ground for the later development of the concept of Siva as the cosmic dancer and destroyer of enemies.



Fig.2.1 Adoration of the turban relic by dancers. Ajatasatru Pillar, Bharhut, Sunga period, 2nd B.C.E. (courtesy: Sucharita Khanna).



Fig. 2.2 Dancing Scene. cave 7, Aurangabad, ca. mid-sixth century.



Fig. 2.3 Siva-*Natesa*, cave I, Badami, western Calukya period, 575-585 C.E.



Fig. 2.4 Siva- *Natesa*, cave 15, Ellora, Kalacuri period, ca. mid-sixth century.

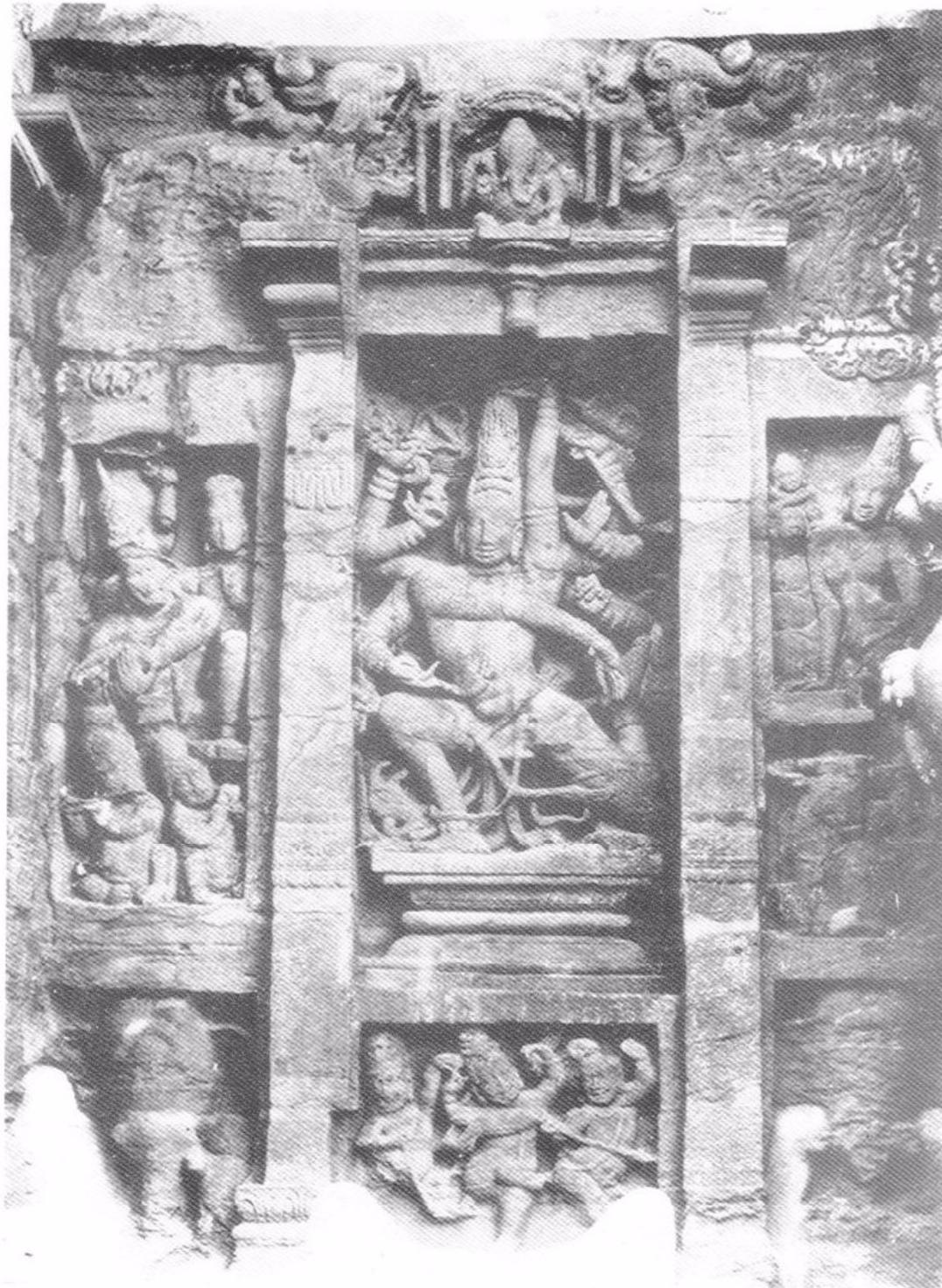


Fig. 2.5 Dancing Siva, *vimana*, west wall, Kailasanatha Temple, Kancipuram, Pallava period, 8th century. (photo courtesy : Sucharita Khanna)



Fig. 2.6 Dancing Siva, south wall, *vimana*, Kailasanatha Temple, Kancipuram, Pallava period, 8th century. (courtesy: Sucharita Khanna)



Fig. 2.7 Dancing Siva, north wall, *vimana*, Kailasanatha Temple Kancipuram, 8th century. (courtesy : Sucharita Khanna)



Fig. 2.8 Dancing Siva, miniature relief on *vimana*, Brahmapurisvara Temple, Pullamangai, early Cola, 9th-10th century. (courtesy: S. R. Balasubrahmanyam)

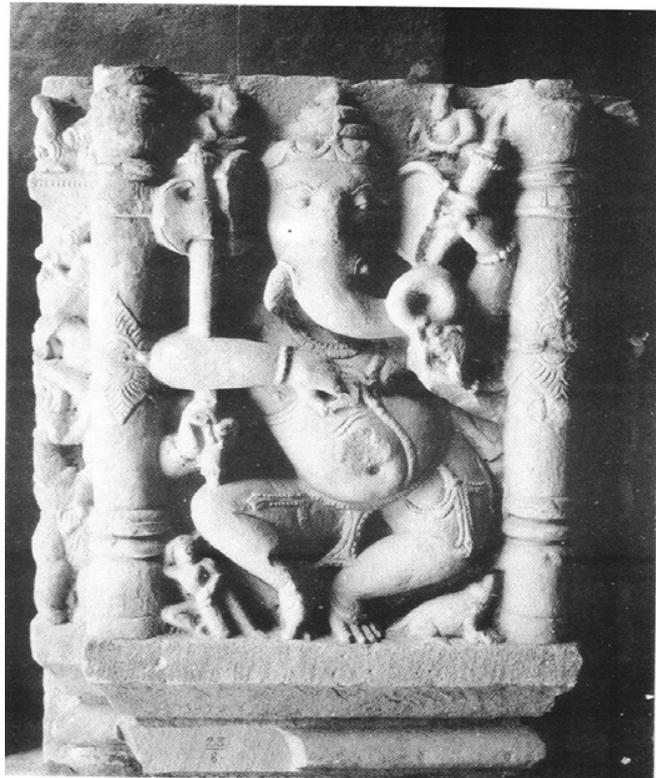


Fig. 2.9 Dancing Ganesa, Central museum, Gwalior, 10th century. (courtesy: Sucharita Khanna).



Fig. 2.10 Siva- Nataraja, Siddhesvara svami Temple, Tirunaraiyar, Sembian age bronze, 10th century (courtesy: S.R. Balasubrahmanyam).

CHAPTER 3

THE 108-KARANA IMAGERY AT THE FIVE TEMPLES

This chapter outlines the chronological development of the 108-*karana* imagery as found on temples of south India. Among the 35 temples surveyed in this study, five contain relief sculptures of the 108-*karana* program. These include the Rajaraja Temple at Thanjavur (985-1015 C.E.); Sarangapani Temple at Kumbakonam (12th–13th century C.E.); Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram (12th-14th century C.E.); Arunacalesvara Temple at Tiruvannamalai (16th century C.E.), and the Vriddhagirisvara Temple at Vriddhachalam (16th-17th century C.E.). In each case, the 108-*karana* carvings are displayed as a group, creating what appears to be a collective dance motif.

Among these five temples, four are Saivite and one is Vaisnavite. Three of the four Saivite sites-- Chidambaram, Tiruvannamalai, and Vriddhachalam—are mentioned in the *tevaram*,¹ ancient hymns of Saivite saints, and Chidambaram is also celebrated as the location of Siva's *ananda tandava*² dance. The Sarangapani

1. The *tevaram* hymns make references to Siva's dancing at Tillai, and describe Tiruvannamalai and Vriddhachalam as sacred hill landscapes. See Indira Peterson's *Poems to Siva: Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 118-122, 154, and 166-172.

Temple at Kumbakonam is the only instance of a Visnu temple containing the 108-*karana* program. However, these carvings appear to be later³ additions that are not part of the original temple construction. I will discuss this further below.

108-KARANA RELIEFS IN THE RAJARAJA TEMPLE-THANJAVUR

Historical Background

The celebrated Rajarajesvara Temple in Thanjavur is one of the largest and most grand monuments of the Cola dynasty (Fig.3.1). Named after its ambitious builder, the Cola monarch Rajaraja I (r.985-1015), this temple is dedicated to Siva and is popularly known as the monument to his form as 'the great Lord', *Brhadesvara*.⁴ Referred to as the 'big temple' by the locals, the Rajaraja Temple is a holy site where ancient traditions of ritual and worship continue to this day. The temple was built to commemorate Rajaraja I's victorious military exploits

2. The *Saiva agamas* mention 108-*tandavas* of Siva, but describe only nine with some detail. Among these, seven get associated with a region/site as well as an activity of Siva. The sites in the south Indian region, other than Cidambaram are Tirunelveli (Kalika *Tandava*-Creation), Tirupattur (Gouri *Tandava*- Maintenance), Madurai (Sandhya *Tandava*-Balance of Creation), Universe (Samhara *Tandava*- Destruction), Kuttralam (Tripura *Tandava*-Purification), Tiruvalankatu (Urdhva *Tandava*-Release), and Cidambaram (*Ananda Tandava*-all five actions).

3. I am in agreement with earlier researchers such as Vatsyayana and Subrahmanyam who had come to this conclusion in their perusal of the *karana* program in the Sarangapani Temple. For more information, please refer to Vatsyayana's *Dance Sculpture in the Sarangapani Temple*, (Madras: SAHER, 1982), and Subrahmanyam's *Bharata's Art :Then and Now*, (Bombay: Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, 1979).

4. A modern appendage, the name *Brihadeesvara* is the Sanskrit equivalent of the Tamil term '*Peria Udaiyar Nayanar*' or the 'Lord of Large Form.'

and it became a monument to his triumphant conquests and territorial consolidation.⁵

Organized within a linear plan (Fig.3. 2) and contained within an enormous rectangular enclosure, the central shrine of the Rajaraja Temple is oriented to the east and enshrines a huge *linga*. Massive in scale, this shrine is laid out at the center of the back of the courtyard, as was customary of temple plans at the time. The *vimana*, which houses the 108-*karana* relief sculptures at this temple, supports an impressive two- tiered wall and a commanding superstructure that rises to a height of over sixty meters(Fig. 3. 3). Consisting of a series of fourteen diminishing tiers and capped by a solid monolithic *sikhara*, the size of the *vimana* demonstrates the emphasis placed on scale and grandeur at this temple.

A vestibule connects the *vimana* to a huge pillared pavilion or *mahamandapa*, which in turn opens up to another hall referred to as the *mukhamandapa*.. In the same axis as the sanctum (*garbhagriha*) and the connecting

5. Rajaraja I's military prowess and accomplishments are extolled in several inscriptions engraved on the temple. In fact, Rajaraja I appears to have introduced a new feature in the contents of the epigraphs -- the *prasasti* or Introduction. This section was used to document his many military achievements as well as religious giving. Rajaraja I's *prasasti*'s are lengthy as they list the many victories of the king over his neighbors and enemies. These introductory sections also contain a list of titles conferred on the king, which again reflect his imperial might and religious devotion. Rajaraja I's imperial titles include *Pandya kulasani* (destroyer of the Pandyas), *Keralantakan* (destroyer of Kerala, referring to the Cera region), *Telunga-kulakalan* (destroyer of the Telugu klan) *Singalantakan* (destroyer of Ceylon), and so on. Other titles include, *Sivapadasekhara* (jewel on Siva's feet), *Jananathan* (Lord of people), and *Ravikula Manikkam* (the jewel of the solar dynasty). One such epigraph that lists Rajaraja I's benefaction to the

pavilions, is present a colossal monolithic representation of Nandi, presently housed in the Nandi *mandapa* and two *gopuras* (Fig.3. 4). Also aligned with the central shrine are two impressive gateways that date to the same period of the temple. Credited with having paved the way for the eventual dominance of the *gopura* in the temple landscape,⁶ the *gopuras* at the Rajaraja temple serve as forerunners to the soaring verticality of this architectural element in later south Indian temples. In form, these *gopuras* replicate several features found in the *vimana*,⁷ such as the raised base, a two-tiered wall, and a pyramidal superstructure with diminishing tiers. The portion corresponding to the *vimana*'s *santum* is replaced in the *gopuras* by an enormous arched gateway or opening in the wall that provides access to the temple complex. Enclosing this impressive array of structures is a pillared courtyard that surrounds the inner.

Rajaraja Temple, provides a chronology of his various victories. For more information and contents of the inscription, refer to SII, Vol. II, I, 1-14.

6. Prior to the advent of the Rajaraja *gopuras*, the entryway into the temple complex was a modest structure that often comprised of an opening in the wall. The Rajasimhesvara Temple at Kancipuram, a product of the earlier Pallava dynasty, suggests for the first time, a possible emphasis on the entryway. However, it is not carried through in temples of early Cola monarchs. It is the Rajaraja Temple *gopuras* that illustrate the concept of an elaborate entryway for the first time in South Indian temple idiom. Harle rightly brings out the importance of the two *gopuras* in the Rajaraja Temple as representing the 'greatest single step forward' in the development of this structure in his meticulous study, *Temple Gateways in South India: The Architecture and Iconography of the Cidambaram Gopuras* (Oxford: Bruno Cassier, 1963), 16-23.

7. Harle, J.C. concludes that the *garbhagriha* of the *vimana* corresponds to the entryway or *dvara* of the *gopura* in his analysis of the forms and origin of the South Indian *gopuras*. Towards this conclusion, he uses the Rajaraja *vimana* and *gopura* as important points in the development of the *gopura*. *Temple Gateways in South India: The Architecture and Iconography of the Cidambaram Gopuras* (Oxford: Bruno Cassier, 1963), 17-23.

Within this expansive courtyard are also shrines dedicated to subsidiary deities. Among them, only the Candikesvara shrine, which is situated to the north of the sanctum, belongs to the original scheme conceived in Rajaraja I's reign. The shrine to the goddess, *Ulugamuludaiya Nachiyar*, presently referred to as Brihannayaki *Amman* and located to the north of the courtyard, dates from about the thirteenth century.⁸

The Subrahmanya shrine, located in the northwest section of the complex is estimated to be a Nayak period addition based on its architectural and sculptural expression. Renovations and repairs were conducted on the Ganapati shrine, the Sabhapathi (Nataraja) *mandapa* as well as the Amman shrine in the early years of the nineteenth century.⁹ Finally, what is perhaps the last addition to the complex is a shrine to honor Rajaraja's mentor, Karuvloor Devar, built at the end of the nineteenth century.

8. The practice of housing the goddess in an independent shrine, away from the main shrine, was not followed during the period of Rajaraja, nor of his successor. Taking into account the Sivakami *Amman* shrine in the Nataraja Temple, considered to be among the earliest of such shrines, this practice is thought to have originated sometime during Kulottunga I's reign (ca. 1070-1125 C. E.). For the Pandyan inscription that records the construction of the temple, See SII, II, no.61.

9. A Marathi language epigraph inscribed by the king, Serforji II, dating to ca. 1801-1802 C. E. documents the repair of existing structures in addition to building some new pavilions. The repairs were necessitated apparently because of British occupation of the temple complex for three decades when it was not in use. The contents of this inscription are cited by Balasubrahmanyam, although its precise location in the published inscriptional records is not. See Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Cola Temples: Rajaraja I to Kulontunga I (ca. 985-1070)* (Faridabad : Thompson Press, 1975), 26.

The munificence, generosity, and royal attention¹⁰ bestowed on this temple by Rajaraja I and his queens, sister Kundavai, and even his entourage of officers is attested to in several lengthy inscriptions engraved in the temple. The colossal architectural landscape of this temple stands as an impressive backdrop to its rich iconographic program that is vibrant, animated and even forceful.

The sculptural program on the lower façade of the *vimana* displays an array of Saivite forms, including Siva as *Bhiksatana*, (the naked ascetic); Virabhadra (the brave warrior), Kalantaka (the destroyer of time), and Nataraja (the king of dance) (Fig. 3. 5). In the niches of the west facade are sculptures of Siva as Harihara; Lingodbhava; and Siva Chandrasekhara (Fig. 3. 6). The northern niches articulate primarily forms of Siva with his consorts; Siva Ardhanarisvara; Siva Gangadhara; Siva Alingana murti along with a standing Siva figure (Fig. 3. 7). My research suggests that the iconographic selection and placement of the Saivite sculptures in the exterior of the *vimana* is deliberate and articulates key concepts that tie in with the sculptural program of the interior of the *vimana*.¹¹

10. The gift, and setting up, of a multitude of deities by Rajaraja I and his queens, is documented in several inscriptions from the temple. For more information, see SII, II, nos. 29, 30, 42, 49, 50, 52, and 84.

11. I detect a certain pattern to the choice and placement of this sculptural program. I explore the larger program in the chapter on dealing with the symbolism of the 108-*karana* iconography (ch. 5) in greater detail.

Correspondingly above the lower tier of niches, the second tier wall façade (Fig.3.8) contains as many as thirty representations of Siva as Tripurantaka (the destroyer of three cities).¹² Here there is no diversity in expression but rather a pronounced unity that highlights the significance of this form of Siva—the vanquisher of the three demons to the architects of the temple.

The vibrant iconography on the *vimana's* exterior façade is matched by what lies inside this area of the temple. The *garbhagriha*, which houses the massive *linga* as well as a bronze image of Nataraja and his consort Parvati, has a two-tier corridor surrounding it. Remnants of Cola paintings along with Nayak paintings enliven the lower tier. The lively *karana* program at the temple is located in the inner corridor of the upper storey wall¹³ of the *vimana*.

Examination of these *karana* sculptures which occupy a central position in the

12. Gary Schwindler was among early scholars to suggest the possible resonance of the Tripurantaka theme to Rajaraja I as a mighty ruler who vanquished many enemies. Schwindler presented a paper at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, in March 1981, titled "Speculations on the Theme of Siva as it Appears During the Reign of Rajaraja I in the Tanjore Area, ca. A. D. 1000." However, the concept of royal and political symbolism in temple building and iconography have captured the attention of several scholars of Cola studies, among them Kulke, Stein, Spencer, and Kaimal, who have helped advanced this theory through their own studies. See Kulke's *Royal Temple Policy and Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdoms* (1978), 125-138; George Spencer's "Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 12 (1969): 42-56; Stein's publications among them, "The Politicized Temples of Southern India," in *The Sacred Center as the Focus of Political Interest*, Vol. 6, Groningen: Groningen Oriental Series, (1992): ; and Kaimal's "Shiva Nataraja : Shifting Meanings of an Icon", *Art Bulletin*, Vol. LXXXI, #3, 390-419.

13. Currently, a rickety metal ladder placed by the ASI provides entry to this section of the monument. Its relative inaccessibility is apparent even today, making one wonder why this location was selected for the *karanas*.

vimana, reveals the critical role that the *karana* imagery plays in iconographically articulating important aspects of Hindu ritual and philosophical thought.¹⁴

Location and Characteristics of the 108-*karana* sculptures

The Rajaraja *karana* carvings were discovered in the 1950's.¹⁵ By that time, the *karana* panels at Cidambaram, discovered in the early part of the 20th century,¹⁶ had received scholarly attention for almost four decades. The fascination with the Cidambaram *karanas* led to their elevation as the standard model of representation of this imagery, in scholarship. Therefore, when the Rajaraja panels were discovered, they were analyzed for their correspondence to textual sources and to the Cidambaram series, despite the fact that the Tanjore panels are earlier.

14. Sculptural articulation of dancing in the temple is enhanced by epigraphic expression as well. In particular is a prolific record, citing the relocation of 400 women to Thanjavur and their settlement in the neighborhood of the temple. Referred to as temple women (*talipendir*), these women comprised the administrative personnel of the temple along with Treasurers, Accountants, Musicians, Dance Masters, and so on. Brought to Thanjavur from various temples, these women were assigned residential quarters in the streets surrounding the temple. Producers of certain lands were assigned as remuneration for services performed by these women, among whom are believed to be dancers as well. A closer look at the names of the women reveals affiliations to royal personages as well as historical and sacred sites. Therefore, 'Rajaraji' and 'Kundavai' mix with Tiruvayyaru (saivite religious site) and Tiruvengadam (Tirupathi, associated with Visnu), and Arangam (Srirangam). For more details, refer to SII, II, #66, 1984.

15. According to Subrahmanyam, the Rajaraja *karanas* were discovered by K.R. Srinivasan in the early fifties and identified by T. N. Ramachandran shortly after that. Please refer to Padma Subrahmanyam's *Bharata's Art: Then and Now* (Bombay: Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, 1979), 58.

16. The presence of the Cidambaram *karana* panels came to light in the year 1914 when the Epigraphic Department copied the inscribed labels that accompanied the dance panels in the east *Gopura*. With the establishment of their relationship to the verses in the *Natyasastra*, the incorporation of the *karana* theme in the temple repertoire was identified.

My study considers the Rajaraja *karanas* as the starting point and subsequent instances of *karana* imagery are compared and contrasted to the Rajaraja *karanas* in order to bring out the evolution of this motif. The following discussion of the *karana* sculptural programs touches on the sculptures' correspondence to text only as needed. It is not the objective to verify in detail, the 'reproduction' of the text in sculpture, since the sculptures are primary sources in their own right.

Illuminated only by small median openings that serve as windows and are the main source of light, this *vimana* corridor containing the *karana* sculptures is entered through a door in the middle of the east façade(Fig. 3.9). The corridor consists of two enclosure walls encompassing a very narrow space between them. The outer enclosure wall is plain and continuous but for three small window openings in the center of each wall. The inner enclosure however, consists of an unbroken wall with an ample plinth and a projecting frieze surmounted by a cornice.¹⁷

The 108-*karana* figures are sculpted on low relief panels on this wall (Fig. 3.10). Arranged in a horizontal sequence at eye level, 81 of the 108- *karanas* are depicted as a continuous series interrupted only by the entrance in the center of

the east wall. The corridor facilitates circumambulation, a central aspect of Hindu worship. Therefore, as the devotee circumambulates this corridor of the Rajaraja *vimana* in the clockwise direction, they see the dance panels at eye-level to the right. The intention to finish the entire program is evidenced by the presence of empty blocks of stone inserted on the wall face for this purpose (Fig.3.11.).

The dancing figures are carved out of roughly hewn rock projecting out of the inner wall. Although the overall height of the rock is the same throughout the composition, the length of the sections vary with some of them being longer and, therefore containing more than one dancing figure. Presently, labels¹⁸ inserted by the Archaeological Survey of India¹⁹ are visible at the bottom of each panel, including the empty blocks of stone. The labels include the number and name of the *karana* as mentioned in the *Natyasastra*.

The 108-*karana* program in the Rajaraja Temple is articulated by four-armed forms of Siva, identified by the presence of paired attributes- the deer and

17. For a systematic and meticulous study of the architecture of the entire monument, please refer to Pierre Pichard's, *Thanjavur: An architectural Study* (New Delhi: Indra Gandhi National Center for the Arts), (Pondicherry: Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, 1995), 56.

18. It is unclear which study the ASI relied on for its labeling of the *karanas* inside the sactum. However, T. N. Ramachandran is supposed to have undertaken a serious study that I believe is still unpublished but was made available to the ASI. Ramachandran had earlier written an article in a newspaper in Madras titled "Dance *Karanas* of Bharatanatya Sculptures in Tanjore and Kumbakonam Temples", *The Mail*, 1970.

axe or the drum and fire in his rear hands. *Ganas* accompany Siva in several of the panels, although they are absent in others. Organized as a continuous series, there are no boundaries or lines dividing each of the figures. The only separation appears in the area where the rocks begin or end. In the larger rocks, there is no separation between the dancing figures. To the viewer who circumambulates, they just unfold gradually.

Analysis of the 108- *karana* Sculptures

The *karana* panels generally correspond to the *karana* sequence elaborated in the *Natyasastra*. The program begins with the first panel (fig. 3.12.) depicting Siva performing the *talapuspaputa karana*, the first formation in the *Natyasastra*. Connoting the offering of flowers at the beginning of a performance, the *talapuspaputa* (holding of flower cup) signifies the demarcation of the stage as a sacred space and the beginning of an auspicious activity. The second panel then, depicts the second *karana* in the *Natyasastra*, the third, *valitoru karana*, and so on, until the last completed panel, which illustrates the 81st *karana* in the *Natyasatra-sarpita*. These sculptural reliefs contain some of the finest examples of dance sculpture found in south Indian art.

19. The ASI fiercely protects this area of the temple. Access to it is severely restricted, photography even more so, and even when all of this has been attained, an ASI official is around throughout the photographic session monitoring the researcher.

For instance, Siva executes the raised knee (*urdhva janu*) position (L) along with the serpent fright (*bhujangatrasita*) pose associated with Nataraja (Fig. 3.13); and energy in the 'raised to the forehead' mode (*lalata tilaka karana*) (Fig. 3.14).

The result of this programtic endeavor is a unique and imaginatively designed composition, which unfolds gradually and illustrates a complex and challenging theme.²⁰ By using pre-existing stylistic and iconographic conventions, and situating the panels in close proximity to one another, the overall effect of the composition is a free flowing dynamic of recognizable forms that imply the movement of dance itself.

KARANA SCULPTURES IN THE SARANGAPANI TEMPLE

Historical Background

The Sarangapani Temple at Kumbakonam, dedicated to Visnu as the 'holder of the *saranga* bow', is a pre-eminent Vaishnavite monument next only to the Ranganatha temple at Srirangam. Kudandai, the ancient name of Kumbakonam, is referred to in early Vaisnavite hymns²¹ as the sacred seat of

20. This is not to say that the panels are consistent and identical throughout the composition. I noticed some reliefs that stand independent of the text, i.e. they do not reveal correspondences to the textual definition. Similarly, inconsistencies, albeit minor, exist in the portrayal in regards to *ganas*. Some reliefs display a pair of *ganas*, some others a single *gana*, and there are still others where *ganas* are totally absent. The same is true of Siva's attributes—present in most panels and absent in others. In a few of the reliefs the hands and attributes appear mixed up and difficult to discern from the neighboring relief.

21. Early vaishnavite saints who have sung the glory of this temple are Bhuttatalwar and Peyalwar, both of whom are ascribed to a period around the 2nd century A. D. Subsequently,

Sarangapani (Visnu as the holder of the *saranga*). The association of several Alwars with this site and form of Visnu is key to its elevation in the Vaisnavite hierarchy. Visnu presides over this temple complex in two forms, as *Adisesa* the immovable deity housed in the main shrine, and as *Sarangapani*, the portable deity.²²

Despite its literary antiquity, the main temple structure as it exists today is attributed to the reign of Vikrama Cola, dating from around the twelfth century.²³ Consisting of a rectangle within a square (Fig. 3.15) and due to expansions taken over time, the temple does not appear to have a unified scheme. The plan of the Sarangapani Temple, as it looks today, exhibits departures from earlier conventions.

Located in the center of the rectangle, the central shrine is a stone structure conceived in the shape of a chariot drawn by a pair of horses and a pair of elephants (Fig.3.16.).²⁴ In accordance with its symbolic associations to the

Perialwar, Andal and Tirumangai, all belonging to a period around the 8th century A. D. have also mentioned this temple in their hymns.

22. The presence of dual forms of Visnu is justified by an interesting foundation legend in which both the forms of Visnu play a role.

23. For a brief survey of this temple, please refer to S. R. Balasubrahmanyam's *Later Cola Temples, Kulottunga I to Rajendra III*, A. D. 1070- 1280 (Faridabad: Mudgala Trust, 1979), 196-199.

24. The Sarangapani Temple is an early instance of the Ratha *vimana* in the Cola architecture, and has been compared to its predecessor, the Amritaghatesvara Temple, a form of Siva. The temple to Siva as Amritaghatesvara in the village of Melakkadambur, near Cidambaram, indicates early origins based on an epigraph, however, its architecture relates to the period of Kulounga I, and is among the earliest instance of the *ratha-vimana*.

divine abode of *vaikunta*, the *vimana* of this temple has two entrances, one in the south known as the *Daksinayana vasal* and the other in the north, known as the *Uttarayana vasal*.²⁵ The wheels of the chariot contain dance imagery in their inner rim (Fig. 3.17.), with the space between the spokes being filled with female dancers flanked by drummers on either side.²⁶

Komalavalli, the consort of Sarangapani, resides in the *Tayar sannidhi*, situated on the southwest part of the first enclosure, and to the right of the south entry or *daksinayana vasal*. Dating from the later phase of Cola architecture, the *Tayar sannidhi* appears to have undergone renovations in later times. A rectangular pillared courtyard surrounds both shrines, large sections of which are enclosed, making the interior dark. This covered section and the ensuing darkness appears, in my mind, to facilitate the convergence of the viewer's attention and concentration on the main deities, contrasting with the more feel of many Saivite shrines. Small areas within this enclosure wall are assigned to the subsidiary deities and forms of Visnu, all of which are in use and not accesible for photography.

25. Balasubrahmanyam records this feature in his section on the Sarangapani Temple in *Later Cola Temples, Kulottunga I to Rajendra III, A. D. 1070- 1280* (Faridabad: Mudgala Trust, 1979), 196-199.

26. This design of a single dancer flanked by a pair of drummers is reminiscent of the base panels of the circumambulatory corridor at the Sivakami Amman shrine in Cidambaram. Whether or not the practice of dancers in spokes of wheels was a standard feature in later phases of Cola architecture needs to be pursued, and if so, the symbolism analyzed.

Pillared pavilions as well as a hall to the Alwar saints, a recent addition, comprise the outer enclosure enduring the hardships of repairs. A hundred pillared hall as well as the *vasanta* pavilion (*mandapa*) located to the north of this area, served as storage space housing logs of wood and concrete.

Aligned with the central shrine and located on the eastern axis is the entrance *gopura* (Fig. 3.18), where the 108- *karana* sculptures are located. Animated by ornamental pilasters and niches, the lower portion of the *gopura* consists of a base and a two-tiered wall, reflecting definite associations to a later phase of Cola art. Dating from Vikrama Cola's rule and his successors, the lower portion of the *gopura* appears to have been part of the original temple plan.²⁷

The superstructure of this *gopura*, however, appears to be a later addition. Consisting of eleven tiers, this pyramidal superstructure is packed with figures carved on all its surfaces. The dense grouping of the figures on the superstructure combined with its overall height places it in the Vijayanagara or even post-Vijayanagara period. Currently displaying whitewash on its façade, this part of the temple has also been repaired and 'beautified' through the addition of paint.

27. Please refer to S. R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Later Cola Temples, Kulottunga I to Rajendra III, A. D. 1070- 1280* (Faridabad: Mudgala Trust, 1979), 198.

This temple has yielded few inscriptions with the vast majority of them dealing with offerings for the performance of rituals and ceremonies.²⁸ In fact, the earliest inscription recorded from this complex is dated to the reign of the Cola king Kulotunga III (ca. 1193 C.E.).²⁹ Present on a detached slab found on the premises of the Sarangapani Temple complex, this epigraph records the setting up of a Nataraja shrine, a deity not associated with the Sarangapani Temple. However, due to the proximity of the inscription, as well as the Sarangapani Temple itself to the *Somalinga* (Somanatha) Temple,³⁰ scholars have suggested that the record perhaps originated in the latter temple.

Fragmentary inscriptions accompany some of the 108-*karana* panels. Recording a name and a number of the *karana* in the Cola *grantha*³¹ script, they appear to serve as minimalistic labels. However, in my attempt to interpret the

28. In the Annual Report on south Indian Epigraphy, three inscriptions were recorded from this temple. Among them were inscriptions ascribed to the Vijayanagara period (#293), and the Nayak period (290). A third is ascribed to the 15th regnal year of Kullotunga Cola, corresponding to ca. A. D. 1193, the reign of Kullotunga III. This third inscription, the oldest record in this temple refers to the setting up of a Nataraja shrine in the adjacent Somanatha Temple, which shares a wall with the Sarangapani monument. For more details on the inscriptions, please refer to ARSIE, 1927, and Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 1954-55.

29. *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy* (ARSIE), 294 of 1927, 49.

30. The Somalinga Temple is located adjacent to the Sarangapani complex and they even share a wall.

31. *Grantha* was the script used in southern India in the writing of Sanskrit verses and text. This was distinct from the '*nagari*' script used in northern India for the same. The '*grantha*' script underwent subtle changes over time, because it is specifically referred to as 'Pallava *grantha*' or 'Cola *grantha*', etc. distinguishing the presence of dynastic differences.

karana reliefs, the accuracy of some of the labels was called into question owing to non-correspondences to sculpture.³²

These inscriptions do not appear in the Archaeological Survey of India's documentation of inscriptions of this temple. Vatsyayan records the inscriptions in her book on the 108-*karana* program of this temple, and this is the source for the 108-*karana* epigraphs.

The dance sculptures in the Sarangapani temple were discovered and reported by a local magazine in 1964.³³ Since then, the 108-*karana* program has been the subject of debate in the scholarly community for three reasons: the uncertain history and chronology of the temple, the uncertain identity of the dancer, and the relevance of the 108-*karana* program- a Saivite theme- in a Vaisnavite shrine.

I address these questions here and in the fifth chapter of this study where I explore the meaning of the 108-*karana* in each of the temples. Vatsyayan has performed a careful study of the 108-*karana* program of this temple.³⁴

The main thrust of Vatsyayan's book was the identification and classification of the 108-*karana* sculptures rather than the *karanas'* larger meaning

32. It is possible that the reliefs were mislabeled by inexperienced sculptors during its insertion on the Sarangapani *gopura* facade itself.

33. Sivaramamurti provides this information while discussing the 108-*karana* sculptures from this temple in his *Nataraja in Art, Thought and Literature* (New Delhi: National Museum, 1974).

and relevance to the temple which are not explored in depth. Nevertheless, Vatsyayan addresses prevailing misconceptions of the chronology of the Sarangapani *karana* reliefs as post-dating the Cidambaram representations.³⁵ She rightly places the Sarangapani *karana* program as a predecessor to the Cidambaram *karanas*. The possibility of contemporaneity between the two exists given the Cidambaram temple's lengthy periods of expansions. However, chronologically the 108-*karana* program depicted on the Sarangapani Temple appears to be the second instance of this imagery in the south Indian vocabulary.

Location and Characteristics of the 108-karana sculptures

The *karana* sculptures are located in the external façade of the outer east *gopura* of the Sarangapani Temple. A massive two-tiered wall supported on a base, the lower portion of the *gopura* has an enormous opening directly in the middle of the façade that functions as the entryway (*dvara*) into the temple complex (Fig. 3.19.). On the walls flanking this doorway, architectural decoration reminiscent of a later phase of Cola art enlivens the surfaces. In between this imposing melee, and to some extent dwarfed by it, runs a continuous series of small relief panels depicting dancing sculptures organized horizontally.

34. See Kapila Vatsyayan, *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple* (Madras: SAHER, 1982).

35. Vatsyayan has proposed that the 108-*karana* program is not native to the Sarangapani Temple, and that its fourteenth century chronology, accepted thus far, has to be revised. *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple* (Madras: SAHER, 1982), 8-10.

The Sarangapani program illustrates 93 of the 108 *karanas*. Arranged horizontally, they run as a continuous belt tying the four *gopura* wall façades together (Fig. 3.20). Inscriptions, some fragmentary, accompany a few of the reliefs. Unlike the Rajaraja *karanas* that project out of the rock surface, the Sarangapani carvings are inserted into the recesses of the surrounding wall and hence, do not protrude from the panel surface. The technique and style of carving, with its treatment of details as well as expression is consistent, and of a superior quality. A remarkable consistency prevails throughout the composition-- in the style of the renditions, depth of dance expression, and workmanship. Panel after panel reveals cohesion in the treatment of core elements, making this a remarkable unified composition, particularly considering the number of these panels. Well -marked boundaries such as the pillars and a *sala*-type roof give the collective motif a further sense of consistency, spatial orientation and distribution.

A two- armed male figure is the dancer executing the *karana* movements (Fig. 3.21). The dancer's facial features are well chiseled and he is adorning a headress, his upper body is bare save for the ornaments around his neck, upper arm, wrist, and chest. Many of the relief panels include one or a pair of *gana* attendants playing musical instruments such as the *mridangam* drum or cymbals.

Displaying a finer amount of detail in the portrayal of dance movements, I suggest that the Sarangapani scheme explores the *karana* theme with greater maturity and depth than seen in the Rajaraja Temple. The ease and proficiency in the portrayal of dance movement is accompanied by a departure from adherence to textual prescriptions, a feature seen in the earlier Tanjore panels.³⁶

If one were to follow the Rajaraja pattern of arrangement, the first panel adjacent to the entryway on the left side of east façade would illustrate the first *karana*, and the sequence would be maintained from then on. But that is not the case in this temple. Therefore, the benefit of a framework of an orderly sequence does not exist in the interpretation of these 108-*karanas*.

While the presence in a corridor facilitated circumambulation in the Rajaraja *karanas*, the location of the Sarangapani *karanas* on the *gopura* does inhibit this practice. Further, with the erection of the enclosure wall on the south and north side, it is impossible to circumambulate.

Further, unlike the Tanjore representations that depict the dancer primarily in variants of standing and half- seated (*mandala*) attitudes, the Sarangapani panels display a broader spectrum of movement-- panels depicting

36. In fact, attempts by scholars to identify each of the Sarangapani *karanas* on the basis of a textual reconstruction have proved inadequate before and this is true in my experience as well. The most common non-correspondence pertains to hand movements and gestures. When there is correlation of the hands, it is not followed through in the feet and body. I strongly believe that

seated positions, acrobatic and terrific movements mingle with the more conventional graceful movements and postures.

Analysis of the 108-karana sculptures

The first relief represented to the left of the massive entryway on the east facade of the *gopura* corresponds to the thirty-third *karana* in the *Natyasastra*, *lalita* (Fig. 3.22.). On the right, a two-armed male dancer exhibits the *mandala* position of his legs with his right heel raised off and ground in the *kuncita*-type pounding (*udghattita*) movement. With his right hand thrown across the body in the *kari hasta* gesture, and the left hand placed near his ears in what could be the half-flag or 'ardhapataka' gesture, the dancer flanked by *ganas*, looks over his right shoulder as he strikes the pose.

The dancer in the adjacent panel stands in the *alidha* position of the foot with his hands crossed (*svastika*) in front of his chest in the *pataka* (flag) gesture. At a first glance this relief appears to be the execution of the *karana*, *vyamsita* which involves the *alidha* of the feet. However, the crossed hands is not a feature associated with this movement. If on the other hand, the hand position is considered as the primary element in its identity, then this relief could fall under one of the *svastika* (crossed) *karanas*, such as *vaksahswastika* (crossed at chest) or *dikswastika* (crossed in a direction) as well. However, the *alidha* position

the Sarangapani *karanas* are free of textual bindings and reflect a more active source such as a

of the lower body seen in the sculpture is not associated with any of the *swatika karanas*. Therefore, this panel is a typical example of the larger Sarangapani *karana* program that is characterized by multiple interpretations.

This multiplicity of interpretation continues as we examine the panels further as seen in (Fig. 3.37). The relief on the right is accompanied by an inscription reading “80- *maghur---ala*,”³⁷ perhaps in reference to the performance of *Mayuralalita* (dance of peacock) *karana*. The relief depicts an unusual posture in which the entire body is supported by the sides of the abdomen. Although the number and name in the epigraph coincide, the illustration itself bears little resemblance to the text based reconstruction.

My analysis of the figure and its basic elements reveals greater affinity to the *argala karana* wherein the weight of the body appears to be supported by the midriff and not the legs. But this determination is itself indefinite because *argala* entails the separation of the feet, a feature that does not resonate in this sculpture.

The accompanying relief is inscribed ‘*talasamsphotita*’³⁸ referring to the performance of the sixty-ninth *karana*, *talasamsphotita*. However, taking into

live dance tradition.

37. Please refer to Kapila Vatsyayan, *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple* (Madras: SAHER, 1982), 95.

38. Refer to Kapila Vatsyayan, *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple*, (Madras: SAHER, 1982), 28.

account elements of its technical composition, I believe that this relief illustrates the first *karana*, *Talapuspaputa*.

Two more *karana* reliefs are depicted in the south face of the east wall (Fig.3.24). The sculpture on the right carries an inscription, '*gajagavatam*', perhaps a reference to the *Gangavatarana karana*, which is the one hundred and eighth-*karana* unit. The relief appears to have captured the activity associated with the event- the descent of water. The treatment of the subject matter and its rendition of the dancer in a suspended attitude provide the visual effect of the descent very effectively. The placement of the descent of the Ganges (*gangavatarana*), the 108th *karanas*, according to the *Natyasastra*, in the middle of the composition, again highlights the lack of a sequential arrangement in the Sarangapani *karana* reliefs.

The panel adjacent to this has an inscription '*ardhanikuttakam*'. *Ardhanikuttaka karana* culminates in a position with a pounding (*udghattita*) motion of a foot, and the hands in bracelet (*khatakamukham*) at the chest level and *alapadma* (lotus blossom) gesture at the shoulder.

Taking into account the liveliness of dance expression in the Sarangapani *karanas*, I suggest that a contemporary, live dance tradition as its likely inspiration. This would also explain the absence of correspondence to text, as revealed in the Rajaraja *karana* reliefs. The Sarangapani sculptural program

reveals a maturity and familiarity of dance movement that is unparalleled during its time.

KARANA RELIEFS IN THE NATARAJA TEMPLE- CHIDAMBARAM

Historical Background

Cidambaram is home to the Lord of the cosmic dance, Nataraja (Fig. 3.25.). The widespread popularity of this manifestation of Siva, from at least the Cola period continues to this day, making Cidambaram a key Saivite center throughout India. Literature from around the ninth century³⁹ and popular belief to this day place Cidambaram as the location of Siva Nataraja's *ananda tandava* (dance of vigorous bliss). At least two legends⁴⁰ explain Cidambaram and the Nataraja Temple's association with Siva's cosmic dance.

In the Tamil literary tradition, Cidambaram's antiquity goes back even further as early Saivite hymnists such as Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar, and

39. The *tevaram* hymns of saivite saints include references to this dance as early as the eighth century. Appar in a verse describes Siva as the cosmic dancer, Nataraja. (Appar, IV. 81,4). Also, refer to Indira Peterson's *Poems to Siva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 118.

40. Siva is believed to have performed his cosmic dance when confronted with the wrath of heretic sages of the Tillai region who questioned his authority. Siva disguised as a beggar *bhiksatana* joins forces with Visnu, transformed into the beautiful Mohini, and the two seduce the sages and their wives. The furious sages attempt to destroy Siva through a sacrificial ritual where they unleash their fierce power. Performing the *tandava* dance, Siva suppresses the objects of their fury and the repentant sages atone for their actions. The second legend recognizes the Nataraja Temple as the stage for Siva's *ananda tandava*, which he performs at the behest of two sages, Vyaghrapada and Patanjali.

Manikkavassagar⁴¹ had already extolled its antiquity in the seventh century.

Alluded to as '*Tillai*' in the Saivite hymns, a reference to forest of *tillai* trees (*Excoecaria Agallocha*) present in the vicinity, it is also called as *Puliyur* (town of the tiger). The saints have praised both Tillai and its "dancing god" (*kuttadumdevar*), profusely in their hymns.⁴²

The vast majority of the older buildings that remain in this complex belong to the later Cola monarch Kulottunga I and his successors. However, that the *Cid-sabha* (Fig. 3.26.) was a prominent place of worship during or prior to the reign of Rajaraja I is revealed in a mural painting⁴³ from the Rajaraja Temple, showing a male and two females worshipping Nataraja⁴⁴ in a shrine that resembles the *Cid-sabha* of Cidambaram.

41. Hymns to the dancing god of Tillai are part of the *Tevaram* literature. Eleven hymns in the *Tevaram* are written on this form of Siva by all three of the primary saivite saints, namely Appar, Sambandar, and Sundarar. For a detailed study and analysis of the *Tevaram* collection of poems, refer to Indira Peterson, *Poems to Lord Siva* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

42. These hymns also indicate the presence of multiple deities in this complex, a feature that exists to this day, where Cisnu as Govindaraja shares the central shrine area with Siva Nataraja.

43. Cola murals obstructed by later Nayak paintings were discovered in the inner circumambulatory corridor surrounding the central shrine. The scene of a male accompanied by two females worshipping a Nataraja shrine is among the recovered Cola paintings. Balasubrahmanyam in *Middle Cola Temples*, asserts that Rajaraja I and his queens are depicted offering worship to Nataraja. This view has found acceptance among several later scholars including Dehejia in her *Art of the Imperial Colas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 62.

44. Balasubrahmanyam has included the painting in his book, *Middle Cola Temples*, and other scholars have repeated his identification of the male figure as Rajaraja I and the females as his queens. Padma Kaimal's inclusion of this mural in her essay on "*Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon*," does not delve into the identity of the actors, but presents evidence to support the monument being worshipped as Nataraja shrine in Cidambaram.

Consisting of a series of four enclosures, the temple compound is largely arranged in a rectilinear plan⁴⁵ and encompasses a wide array of structures. Greatly modified in recent times, the innermost enclosure contains the ether *linga* housed in the *cit sabha*, in front of which is the *kanaka sabha* or golden hall, where Nataraja is enshrined.

Both the Hall of Consciousness (*cit-sabha*) and the Golden Hall (*kanaka sabha*) are oriented to the south, a feature that had baffled scholars for a long time. Recent insightful studies by Younger⁴⁶ and Kaimal⁴⁷ have directed scholarly attention to yet another location of Siva's dance- the burial ground as the possible clue to the solving of the mystery of the southern orientation. As the home to the formless ether or *akasa linga*, the Nataraja Temple is one of five sacred sites⁴⁸ associated with the five elements, the *pancabhuta*.

45. The use of the numbering system in this study follows J.C. Harle's *Temple Gateways in South India: The Iconography of the Cidambaram Gopuras* (Oxford: Bruno Cassier, 1963), 32-33. Accordingly, the innermost enclosure consisting of the central shrines is considered as the first enclosure, not the second, as referred to by other authors.

46. The local legend of Siva-bhiksatan and Visnu as Mohini visit to Tillai and its relevance to the theology of Siva Nataraja is mentioned in Younger's book, *Cidamparam: The Home of the Dancing Sivan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 90.

47. Kaimal has presented a revised interpretation of the Nataraja icon according to which, early Nataraja imagery did not reflect the so-called cosmic dance. Rather, it may have represented Siva dancing in the burial ground surrounded by serpents and corpses. She talks about the various 'lives' of the Nataraja icon and its possible meaning to the believers during its development into the ananda tandava concept. For more information, refer to Padma Kaimal's "Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon", *Art Bulletin*, Vol. LXXXI, #3, 1999.

48. The other four sites that, along with cidambaram(ether) are considered to be centers of the five elements are as follows: Earth-Tiruvarur, Water-Tiruvannaikka, Fire-Tiruvannamalai, and Air- Tirukalahasti.

To the west is the shrine to Visnu as Govindaraja. It is smaller than the Siva shrines but oriented to the east, leading some scholars to claim that this is in fact the sanctum of the temple complex. A pillared courtyard containing a series of panels-- some of which contain dancing figures-- surrounds both these shrines. Colonades on raised platforms, with dim lit passageways and a covered roof comprise the second *prakara*.

This *prakara* also contains the famed *Nrtta sabha* or dance hall (3.27.) which enshrines an image of Siva in *urdhvatandava* (uplifted with vigor posture). Some scholars⁴⁹ identify the *nrtta sabha* as the location of Siva's historic dance contest with Kali which he won by raising his foot overhead, the *urdhava tandava* pose. Designed as chariot shaped hall with wheels, the present structure is attributed to the reign of Cola monarch Kulottunga I, however, considerable repairs and alterations have been undertaken in modern times. A hall with 56 pillars, all of them intricately carved, many with dancing figures, the *nrtta sabha* is profusely animated with sculptures carved on pillars and decorations on the ceiling.

A large body of the temple complex is contained within the third enclosure including the four impressive gateways or *gopuras* that provide the

49. Somasundaram Pillai in *The University and its Environs* (Annamalai Nagar, 1955), 72, propounds this theory in his section on the Nataraja Temple. Siva's *Urdhvatandava* icon being the object of worship in the *Nrtta Sabha* does give credence to this assertion. For the legend, please refer to Shulman's *Tamil Temple Myths* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 218-220.

access to this area. The most prominent building in this enclosure is the *amman* shrine (Fig. 3.28.) to Nataraja's consort, Sivakamasundari (Siva's beautiful desire). Located in the northwest part of the third enclosure, the shrine to Sivakami *Amman* dates from the later Cola period,⁵⁰ although evidence of additions in the ensuing Pandya period seem likely.

A pillared cloister running on three sides of the Amman shrine displays dance imagery in its base (Fig. 3.29.). A single female dancer flanked by female drummers, often in dance postures, appears to be the pattern that is repeated in a horizontal order through the entire surface of the wall. This group consisting of one dancer and two drummers exhibits different postures and movements as they program moves along the base. Scholars studying the temple complex have erroneously referred to these as illustrations of the 108 *karanas*.⁵¹ Despite the affinities to *karanas* seen in some panels, not unusual given that the *karanas* are fundamental units, my research suggests that they are representations of the 108-*karana* program, but some other arrangement of dance forms.

50. Based on information gleaned from the *Amman* shrine complex, it appears that Naralokaviran, a general of Kulotunga I and his successor, Vikrama Cola, undertook the construction of this shrine. Additions were also made in the period coinciding with Kulotunga III. Refer to B. Natarajan's *Tillai and Nataraja* (Madras: Mydgala Trust, 1994), 140-142.

51. Several authors such as Balasubrahmanyam, in *Later Cola Temples*; B. Natarajan in *Tillai and Nataraja*; and Somasundaram, *The University's Environs* (Annamalainagar, 1957) refer to this set of panels as yet another instance of the 108 *karana* motif. The affinity to *karanas* seen in some panels is to be expected given that the *karanas* comprise the basic units in dance, and therefore, would be reflected in dance sculptures. This is not however, a conscious attempt to depict the 108-*karana* program.

Four large *gopuras*, present in the four cardinal directions provide the access to this enclosure and to the temple complex at large. Neither aligned to any of the central shrines nor to one another, the lower tier of the *gopuras* reveal architectural affinities to a later phase of Cola art, and it is conceivable that at least these portions of the four *gopuras* were erected approximately around the same time. Their superstructures, however belong to multiple periods ranging from the Pandya, Later Pallava, and in the case of the north *gopura*, even the Vijayanagara period.

Much debate preceded the fixing of the chronology of the four *gopuras* in the third enclosure. The chronology adhered to in this study is as follows: the west *gopura* is the earliest of the four *gopuras*, followed by the east *gopura*, and then the south *gopura*. The north *gopura*, started not very long after the south was initiated was finished during the Vijayanagara period. Harle, in his analysis of the Cidambaram *gopuras* postulated this chronology,⁵² which is what I arrive at in terms of the 108-*karana* program as well.

It is the four *gopuras* and their sculptural expression that comprise the subject matter of this study. For the first time, the 108-*karana* carvings appear within all four of the *gopura* towers. Carved on vertical pilasters protruding out

52. Harle presents this chronology along with very credible evidence and analysis in his *Temple Gateways*, 46-69.

of the wall surface of the inner passage or entryway, are a series of dancer panels arranged vertically.

Location and Characteristics of the 108-karana sculptures

The *karana* sculptures are located in the inner passageway of each of the four entrance *gopuras* in the Nataraja temple and are depicted on vertical pilasters that line the wall surface. For the most part, the representations are identical to one another except for some minor departures in the order of presentation, particularly in the west *Gopura*. Given the striking similarities between the four programs, the possibility of a unified conception cannot be ignored.⁵³ However, it is equally possible that this similarity reflects imitation or copying of the motif by artisans working on later *gopuras*. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to prove decisively, either one or the other.

West Gopura

The inner passageway of the *gopuras* is divided into two sections exactly in the middle. Seven pilasters divided into a series of four and a series of three (Fig.3.30.) protrude out of the wall and extend all the way from the ground to the

53. Harle's study explains that a single plan may have been determined and followed by the architects of the temple with regard to the iconography of the *gopuras*. While documenting the location and identity of saivite and forms adorning the lower and upper-tier of the *gopura*, Harle refers to the similarities in their location at the east, south and north *gopuras*. However, the west tower shows marked departures. Calling it a 'stereotyped' plan, for even directional orientation is not taken into consideration in the placement of some of the figures, Harle supports the presence of a unified plan in the arrangement of the niche figures. Similarly, the 108-*karana* reliefs are almost identical at the east, south, and north *gopuras*. The other possibility is that the later

roof of the passage. The west *gopura* reveals a different organization compared with the other *gopuras*- it displays nine squares to each pilaster resulting in 63 individual panels on each face, bringing the grand total to 126 panels. After accomodating the 108-*karanas*, additional relief panels display groups of devotees in an obvious attempt to fill up the available sculptural space.

The *karana* sequence follows a vertical trajecotory- from bottom to top of each pilaster. Begining at the southeast face, the bottommost panel of the first pilaster depicts the 1st *karana*, *talapuspaputa*, and continues vertically to the 2nd *karana*, then the 3rd *karana*, until it reaches the top of the same pilaster, i.e. the 9th square which corresponds to the 'pounding action' (*Nikuttaka karana*) in the *Natyasastra*. The tenth *karana* denoting the 'partial pounding' (*ardha nikuttaka*) is illustrated in lower panels of the second pilaster, and the sequence continues its vertical ascent till the top of that pilaster, after which it descends to the bottom again.

The same bottom to top vertical ascent continues past the southeast face to the adjacent wall. It then traverses to the opposite (northwestern) wall face and then concludes in the adjacent northeast wall face.

The body of reliefs that animate the 108-*karanas* in the west *gopura* of the Nataraja Temple reveals a fairly dynamic and precise expression. The viewer

architects and sculptors deliberately imitated the earlier *karana* program. Please refer to Harle's,

can see the interpretations of the various *karana* position, such as 'serpent fright' (*bhujangatrasita*) and 'graceful action' (*lalita*) (Fig. 3.31), along with 'curved like scorpion' (*lata vrschika karana*) and 'rotating wheel' (*cakramandala*) (Fig. 3. 32.). The *karana* program continues in the adjacent wall surfaces as it runs through the entire sequence of 108 *karnas*

108 *karana* in East, South and North *gopuras*

In the east, south, and north *gopura*, the distribution of the pilasters is modified and I would say, streamlined to convey the 108-*karana* program more effectively. Instead of nine squares per pilaster resulting in more panels than needed, the pilasters on the east *gopura* are divided into eight squares (Fig. 3.33.). On the whole, each face of the entryway displays two sets of panels- eight rows of three columns and eight rows of four columns, bringing together a total of 56 panels on each wall face, bringing to a total of 112. The four additional panels are used for depicting devotees on each side.

The 108-*karana* program in the east *gopura* is unique because it contains inscriptions on each of the dance panels. Containing a verse from the *Natyasastra* identifying each panel the inscription provides strong proof of the Cidambaram *karana's* reliance on the *Natyasatra*. The 108-*karana* program in the east *gopura* begins in the northwest wall face. Here in the first pilaster (bottom left), the

flower offering (*talapuspaputa*) action is depicted in the lowermost panel. And just as in the west *gopura*, the sequence continues vertically up until the 8th square exhibiting the *mandala svastika* action. The ninth *karana* is depicted in the lower row of the second pilaster and again, the sequence moves forward vertically. The sequence of the *karans* travels a vertical path from bottom to top with dancer panels enlivening the wall surface.

The corresponding northeast wall is enlivened by four pilasters with dancer panels details of which are also provided. Continuing on the opposite southeast wall, the *karana*'s depth and range are articulated within a rigid format.

The same pattern, almost identical is followed in the presentation of the 108-*karana* in the Nataraja Temple's south *gopura* as well (Fig. 3.34.). The *karana* program begins in the bottom panel of the first pilaster on the northeast wall face. Ascending vertically in that pilaster, it moves to the bottom of the second pilaster and travels up again. The vertical ascent of the movement sequence continues throughout the program until its conclusion in the topmost panel of the last pilaster on the opposite southeast wall face.

Similarly, the 108-*karana* program in the north *gopura* follows the same pattern—begins in the bottom of the southwest wall face, moves clockwise to the adjacent wall, then to the opposite northeast wall, and culminating in the northwest wall face.

Analysis of the 108-karana program

The entranceway (*dvara*) of the *gopura* becomes the fixed location of the 108-*karana* program. Evidence of this relocation from the *vimana*, uncertain in the Sarangapani example, is now firmly established in the Nataraja Temple. Moreover, it begins to find expression in each of the four outer *gopuras*. The arrangement is altered: it is now placed vertically and fits well with the soaring verticality of the entranceways.

My analysis shows that an extraordinary thread of consistency prevails throughout the *karana* imagery in all the four-*gopuras*-- consistency in the shape, pattern, format and even representation. Such a premium seems to have been placed in establishing and retaining a uniform look that for the first time, the imagery begins to take on a formalized and structured look. Each square panel is demarcated by the presence of a pavilion- style *sala* roof. The sides of the squares are not imitating pillars, like the Sarangapani *karanas*, but are simple to the point of being plain boundaries.

The dancer is a female, a major departure from the earlier Rajaraja *karanas* as well as the Sarangapani *karana* carvings, signaling what I suggest, as a watershed in the evolution of the 108-*karana* based dance sculpture. From this point on, a female or a pair of females are portrayed as dancing the 108-*karana*.

A two-armed female dancer performs the 108-*karanas* in the Nataraja Temple, often flanked by two human accompanists, not *ganas*, in each panel. They accompanists' play the drum and cymbals and share the limited sculptural space with the dancer.

The redesigned *karana* motif does reflect both old and newer features. Carved in stone, they are represented on pilasters projecting out of the wall face. The connections to a textual tradition are stronger in the Nataraja compositions than in the Sarangapani *karanas*, a tie strengthened by the presence of verses from the *Natyasastra* in the east and west *gopuras*.

Just as its predecessors did, the Cidambaram program tries to capture a single movement that encapsulates the meaning or the primary aspect of a *karana*. The sculptural vocabulary is rich but not as lively and free flowing as the Rajaraja as well as the Sarangapani *karanas*. Despite both the Rajaraja and the Nataraja *karanas* correlating to textual definitions, I note that sculptural correspondences between the two are not significant.

Despite individual panels revealing a sense of movement, adherence to structural and formalistic prescriptions results in a sense of stiffness in the composition. I believe that the enhanced dance vocabulary expressed by the Sarangapani *karanas* appears to have been substituted by a crisp and abbreviated movement vocabulary. In part due to this, although the representations display

uniformity and consistency, they lack depth and the liveliness sculptural expression of the Sarangapani *karanas*. Perhaps merely following the trend towards structure and formalism in south Indian sculpture of the time, the *karana* program is also reflective of its changing face.

108-KARANA RELIEFS IN THE ARUNACHALESVARA TEMPLE, TIRUVANNAMALAI

Historical background

Situated in the north Arcot district of modern Tamilnadu, Tiruvannamalai is a spiritual center and home to one of the largest temple complexes in southern India. Its size rivals its counterparts, such as the Ranganatha Temple at Srirangam and the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai with a vast temple complex that has been a product of constant building and rebuilding over several centuries.

Siva's personification as the 'Lord of the Annamalai' hill, (Tiru Annamalai) is recognized in early Tamil literature of the Saivite saints, the *Tevarams*. Sambandhar,⁵⁴ the Siva devotee-poet extolls the virtues of Siva as the Lord of the Annamalai hill, in his description of this hill lanscape. It is in

54. The devotional hymnist Sambandar has praised Siva as the Lord of Annamalai, in verses in the *Tevaram*. The desription of the site takes on a poetic quality with mention of the elephant

Tiruvannamalai that the *lingodbhava* is manifested in the form of the fiery cosmic *linga*. Tiruvannamalai is the spot where fire, one of the five elements (*pancabhuta*) in Hinduism is believed to manifest itself. Therefore, Tiruvannamalai also has the privilege of being one of the five *pancabhuta sthala* (site of five elements). Another appellation by which this site is referred to is *Arunagiri*, or the crimson mountain, with the crimson symbolizing the element of fire⁵⁵ that the place is associated with. The term *acala* (immovable) along with *arunacala* signifies the immovable fire. However, almost all, if not a majority of the inscriptions from this temple use the name, Lord of Tiruvannamalai.

The Arunachalesvara Temple has seen consistent building activity for the last ten centuries and consequently, stands within a large rectangle that is 465 m long and 225 m wide(Fig. 3.35.). Within this rectangle are five enclosures. The rectangle of the four major car streets comprises the sixth enclosure. An arduous and fascinating pilgrimage circuit around the hill comprises the seventh enclosure.⁵⁶ Its vast landscape is dotted with several small, medium and large shrines, halls, pavilions, and *gopuras* that belong to various periods.

herds, waterfalls, and rocky slopes that echo the beat of drums, and so on. For more information, see *Poems to Siva: The Hymns of Tamil Saints*, 168-171.

55. Narayanaswami, in *Tiruvannamalai* (Madras: Manikavasagar Publications, 1992), 2, offers this translation and explanation that follows.

56. Françoise L Hernault provides a description of the pilgrimage route and the various religious centers associated with it in the section dealing with 'The Mountain' in *Tiruvannamalai*, Pt.2. *L' Archeologie Du Site*, 15-57.

The central shrine enshrines a self-manifest (*swayambu*) *linga*. By virtue of the presence of early epigraphs, the central shrine is considered the oldest structure in this complex, although the shrine reveals evidence of alterations and renovations in modern times (Fig. 3.36.). A vestibule (*antarala*) connects the sanctum to a fairly large half –pavilion or *ardhamandapa*. This pillared pavilion is the access to the central shrine from the east and houses a *yantra* of the mount Meru (Fig. 3.37.).

Symbolically, the *Tiruannamalai* mountain is equated to the Meru and is considered to be the sacred center, much like a *mandala*. The pilgrimage route around the Annamalai mountain is based on the belief that this mountain, like the Meru, forms the central axis around which are located several sacred centers in the cardinal directions. Therefore, a platform of the Meru is installed just outside the main shrine. A huge pavilion, the *mahamandapa* is connected to this central shrine and the *ardhamandapa*, and includes a shrine to Nandi within its confines.

The presence of numerous inscriptions dating from ca. 1030-1040 C.E. in the second enclosure indicates that this portion of the temple complex may have been erected by this time. The goddess shrine to Unnamalai *amman* present in this enclosure was originally built in the twelfth through thirteenth century. However, it was renovated in the sixteenth century, when large- scale building

and renovations were undertaken in the temple. In the nineteenth century, the local community undertook major renovations to the Arunacala Temple including the goddess shrine.

The third enclosure contains shrines to the Lord of sacred spots (fig. 3.38.)- *-Cidambaresvara*, (Lord of Cidambaram), *Jambhukesvara*, or (Lord of the *Jambhu - Tiruvannaika*), and *Ekambaresvara* (Lord of *Ekambara-Ekambareswara* at Kancipuram). The exterior wall facades of all three shrines display Cola period associations in the treatment of pillars, their capitals and the presence of niches. Cola Inscriptions engraved on the walls of some of these shrines suggest that they may have been built during Cola reign.

Today, sanctuaries to Subrahmanya, Nataraja, the 63 Saivite saints and a multitude of *lingas* dwell in the first three enclosures and house a myriad of Saivite imagery, such as *Bhairava*, *Kalarimurti* (destroyer of *kala*), and Somaskanda, to name but a few.

Gopuras dominate the fourth enclosure and a series of *gopuras* are visible from several parts of the temple (fig.3.39.). In conformity with existing convention of the time, the height of these *gopuras* increases with greater distance from the central shrine. Known by various local names, a set of four *gopuras* is aligned with the central shrine on the east. The smallest of them called the Rsi *gopura* is in the second enclosure, followed by the *Kili* (parrot) *gopura* in the third

enclosure, the Vallala⁵⁷ *gopura* in the fourth and finally, the Raja *gopura* in the fifth enclosure (Fig.3.40.). The exterior facades of most of these *gopuras* have also been repaired or renovated over the years and are not reliable indicators of their original scheme as they stand today.

The massive fifth enclosure and its towering gateways were completed by ca. 1570 A.D., an active period in the development of this temple. The *gopuras* of this enclosure contain the 108- *karana* dance program.

A profusion of epigraphs document donations by various kings, officials and devotees to this monument. It appears from these inscriptions that the Tiruvannamalai Temple housed several *devaradiyar* or temple women early in its history. As early as either the 1135 C.E. or 1180 C.E., devadasis attached to this temple provided gold as offerings.⁵⁸ On the east wall of the fourth enclosure is an epigraph corresponding to the 12th-13th C.E., that records the benefactions made by one of the twenty- four *devaradiyar* of the temple.⁵⁹ This number of *devaradiyar* is reiterated in yet another thirteenth century inscription.⁶⁰

57. Believed to be named after the Vijayanagara King Ballala III who reigned from ca. 1291-1342 C.E. Ballala III is known to have patronized building activity in the fourth and fifth enclosures of the temple.

58. See *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. 8, #116. Yet another inscription mentioning *devaradiyar* is #162 of *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol.8, which is engraved on the Vallala *gopura*, and dates from ca. 1143 C. E.

59. See *Annual Report of Epigraphy*, 1945-6, #70.

From these epigraphs, it is apparent that the Tiruvannamalai Temple accommodated large numbers of temple women, which in my opinion increases the likelihood of dancers among them. I believe that a fairly complex system of ritual and worship must have been in place in order to accommodate so many dancers. Rituals and festivals of the temples may have included some kind of dance offering, not unlike the practice of several other temples.

Location and Characteristics of the 108-karana sculptures

The *karana* sculptures adorning the *gopuras* of the Tiruvannamalai and the Vriddhachalam temples appear to have been discovered after the Kumbakonam *karanas*. The presence of the *karana* program in Tiruvannamalai is in the backdrop of a greatly renovated superstructure. Therefore, although the original structure belonged to the Vijayanagara period, evidence of whitewash and repairs on the entire *gopura* is widespread. Despite these later intrusions, my research suggests that the *karana* program has not been affected.

The *karana* program is articulated in the entryways of all four of the Arunachala outermost *gopuras*. They find expression on vertical pilasters that protrude out of the wall surfaces of the inner passageways. The entryway is divided in half and on each wall surface are pilasters carrying relief panels. The number of panels varies distinctly in each *gopura* suggesting different time

60. See ARE, 1902, #530, or SII, Vol. 8, #120. This later Pallava inscriptions mention the

periods for the imagery. I now present my observations regarding the 108-*karana* representations in this temple.

The *karana* program in the east tower- the *raja gopura*- is massive, and presents a phenomenal total of 180 relief panels (Fig. 3.41.). The stupendous eleven- tiered *Raja gopura* has an equally imposing entranceway with ten pilasters protruding on its wall from top to bottom. Situated exactly in the middle, the entranceway displays two sets of five pilasters on each wall surface. Each pilaster is further divided into seven rows of squares, and the 108 *karana* program is depicted on this overwhelming canvas.

The last row, which would be the eighth, is divided into two mini- rows, bringing the total number of panels to 180. The reliefs in the mini-rows appear to correspond to male and female divinities. The remaining 140 panels display the 108-*karana* and related themes on the walls of the passageway. The 108-*karana* program begins with the *talapusaputa karana* illustrated in the bottom of the first pilaster on the northwest wall surface. Just like the *Cidambaram karana* representations, the sequence moves vertically until the topmost pilaster and then starts again the bottom panel of the second pilaster, and so on.

The *karana* sequence moves to the adjacent northeast wall, then the opposite southeast wall face, and finally, ends on the southwest surface.

presence of twenty-four *devaradiyar* again.

Throughout the scheme, there are some repetitions due to the presence of panels in excess of 108, however, there is a certain liveliness to the overall composition.

The north *gopura* presents a similar distribution as the east *gopura*, although there is reduction in the total numbers of panels. Four columns and nine rows of relief panels enliven each wall surface, bringing the total to 144 panels (Fig.3.42.). Out of these, just like the east *gopura*, the bottom two rows articulate gods, goddesses and even a gamut of savite forms. The 108-*karana* program begins in third row of the first pilaster on the southwest wall surface with a female dancer executing the *talapusaputa karana*. It continues in a vertical sequence to the top of the pilaster and then descends to the bottom (3rd row) of the adjacent pilaster from where it moves up again.

The west and south *Gopuras* adhere to a different and seemingly more disorganized scheme. The inner passageways of the west *gopura* display 90 out of 96 relief panels –two sets of 3 columns and 8 rows, and two sets of 3 columns and 7 rows (Fig. 3.43). The discrepancy in the latter is due to leveling of concrete in a way that has obstructed the original scheme. Even within this scheme, it is difficult to identify the *karana* sequence because many of the female dancers appear to share the space with male divinities and dancers including Siva and his manifestations, Kartikeya, and Ganesa. In the midst of this melee, one can discern many of the *karana* positions, however. However, the organization that

characterized the Cidambaram representations or even the *karana* examples of east and north *gopura* are not revealed here.

A different rendition also appears in the south *Gopura* relief program, where female dancers are lost in the larger landscape of male divinities, attendants and miscellaneous themes . While three vertical pilasters support eight columns of panels on three wall surfaces, on the northwest wall face alone displays fifteen rows on three columns of pilasters. There appears no specific reason for this discrepancy and the additional panel spaces are filled with divinities, devotees, a sprinkling of Saivite forms along with female dancers.

Analysis of the 108-karana Sculptures

My analysis of the Arunacala panels show that a female dancer performs the *karanas*, particularly, in the east and north *gopuras* within a restricted square space. The primary focus of the square, the dancer nevertheless generally shares this space with a single human-like accompanist represented either on her right or left. The diminutive accompanist usually plays a percussion instrument.

As revealed in the east *gopura*, the backdrop of the *karana* program displays a move towards intricate ornamentation. The wall surfaces of the inner passageway are replete with decorative and ornamental motifs. Elaborate capitals adorn the pilasters and the surrounding area is filled with ornate roundels and mythological figures. Gone is the simple passageway bereft of any

carving but the *karanas*, and in its place is a virtual panorama of semi-divine characters and motifs enriching the wall. *Salabhanjikas*⁶¹ flank both sides of the passageway and creepers emerging from them form aesthetic roundels inside which are more figures from the Hindu pantheon. Far from being isolated instances, these features are consistent with the trend towards greater ornamentation that was taking place throughout the region.

Displaying sculptural correspondences to the Cidambaram *karanas* both in format and arrangement, the *karana* reliefs in the east and the north *gopura* reflect the vertical sequence that is introduced in the Cidambaram *karana* program. Although the same level of conformity is not revealed in the west and south *gopura* sculptures, by virtue of their presence in the cardinal directions, they too participate in the mandalaic formulation that the four outer *gopuras* provides to the temple.

I see both continuity and change in the design and format of the 108-*karana* represented here when compared with the Cidambaram instances. For the most part, the Arunachalesvara *karanas* reveal sculptural correspondences to

61. Although the *salabhanjika*'s supposedly symbolize fertility, and auspiciousness, in my readings, I came across the identification of these figures as Ganga and Yamuna. The authors of these studies in their brief mention also assert that the vehicles or *vahanas* of the goddesses are also represented, which facilitates the identification. *Makaras* do emerge from the females, but I had understood that as part of the design of the *salabhanjika*. Also I do not recall spotting the depiction of the tortoise associated with Yamuna. Please refer to T. V. Mahalingam's "Studies in South Indian Archaeology, Epigraphy, Architecture, and Sculpture," *Memoirs of the Archeological*

the Cidambaram vocabulary. Similarly, the multiplication of the motif, with its depiction on all four outer *gopuras* of the temple is also repeated here, although not with the same level of precision.

I suggest that the Arunachala reliefs appear more like dance postures than cadences of movement with greater abbreviation and formulaic quality than the Cidambaram instances. With the attention on structure and formalism seeming to outweigh the aesthetics of dance movement, these sculptures seem to lack fluidity and agility and often appear monotonous and unimaginative.

Unlike the Cidambaram *karana* group that displays a unified scheme in the presentation of the 108 *karanas*, the Arunachala group is heterogeneous. However, when we consider the evolution of the *karanas* thus far, the most notable change include the move to the external precincts, the vertical presentation, and most significantly, the use of a female as the dancer. Indeed, the 108-*karana* imagery has moved away from the center of the temple (Rajaraja Temple) to the periphery, the outermost *gopura* (Cidambaram and Arunachala Temple).

Society of South India, no. 2 (Madras: The Archaeological Society of South India Government Museum, 1978), 136.

KARANA SCULPTURES IN THE VRIDDHAGIRISVARA TEMPLE, VRIDDHACHALAM

Historical background

Vriddhachalam is a bustling town situated in South Arcot District on the banks of the Manimukta River. Constituting the northern boundary of the Cola kingdom, Vriddhachalam is home to Siva as 'Lord of the ancient hill' or *Vriddhagirisvarar*. In devotional songs sung by the seventh century Saivite saints, Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar, Vriddhachalm is referred to as *Mudukunru*⁶² (old hill) and is described as a sacred hill landscape.

In fact, evidence pointing to the existence of a temple and rituals to the Siva at *Mudukunru* emerges in a hymn of Sambandar's which mentions that on festival days, "women dance in the hall of the dance to the sound of song and drum".⁶³ Referred to as *Nerkkupai* in inscriptions from the temple, Vriddhachalam is among a list of twenty -two sacred sites associated with the 'middle or central province' of the Tamil kingdom.

The Vriddhachalam Temple's literary antiquity is not exhibited in the architecture of the extant structures (Fig. 3.44.). However, inscriptional records

62. *Mudukunru* is the Tamil equivalent of Vriddhachalam, or ancient mountain. Sambandar in his poem on Vriddhachalam describes it as the lofty mountain on whose slopes the crescent moon sails with the radiant sun. He also describes it as the abode of the 'brahmin who rides the bull'. See Somasundaram's *Tiru Jnanasambandar*, 117-119. Also, refer to Peterson's *Poems to Siva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, 167-168 and 183-184.

from the temple⁶⁴ credit the Cola queen Sembiyan Mahadevi with re-building the main shrine of the Vriddhagirisvara Temple in stone, thereby implying that there existed an earlier structure.

Surrounded by a covered veranda, the sanctum consists of a central shrine, a half-pavilion (*ardhamandapa*) in front of which is the great hall (*mahamandapa*) with access from the side- all located in the first enclosure. Just as in the Rajaraja temple, a small shrine to Candikesvara stands to the north of the main shrine.

Sembiyan's inscription mentions a donation by the queen of jewelry and utensils to the images of goddess *Kuttaperumal* ('dancing god'- Nataraja) and Uma Bhattaraki in this temple (Fig.3.45.). In fact, the bronze Nataraja that is worshipped in this temple to this day is believed to date from the Sembiyan phase,⁶⁵ and is among the early Nataraja icons. It appears that the Candikesvara shrine along with shrines to the goddess Uma Bhattaraki, corresponding to the

63. Refer to Poems to Siva: *The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, 184.

64. This inscription also includes a list of gold and silver ornaments, utensils for ritual and related tasks, and other objects of worship presented to the temple by Sembiyan Mahadevi. Please refer to ARE, 1918, # 47.

65. The inscription is in ARE, 1918, # 48. This antiquity of the Nataraja bronze housed in the precincts of the Vriddhagirisvara Temple is attested to by early as well as recent authors. Balasubrahmanyam in *Early Cola Temples (ca. 907-985 C.E.)* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1971), 197-200. Among more recent authors, Kamil Zvelebil's *Ananda Tandava of Siva Sadanrttamurti*, 15-16, presents a chronology of extant Nataraja imagery both in stone and metal.

Balambigai (young goddess) shrine of today, and Nataraja shrine comprised the original temple complex.⁶⁶

The external façade of the sanctum contains three niches and the Cola iconographic program of Daksinamurti presiding over the south, lingodbhava over the west and Brahma in the north.⁶⁷ The half pavilion (*ardhamandapa*) displays niches in its external façade with sculptures of *Ganapati*, another *nritta* (dancing) *Ganapati* and what is identified as “Om” *Ganapati*, all of whom appear to be later additions. A modest entryway on the east is also attributed to Sembian Mahadevi, and this along with the sanctum and adjoining half-pavilion appears to have been the original conception of the temple.

Various structures added to this temple in subsequent decades expanded the number of shrines and the boundaries of this temple complex. Within the first enclosure itself, which is now fully enclosed save for a small area near the sanctum, are shrines to deities that are later additions. These include shrines to Siva’s form as Small (*Chinna*) Palamainatar (Lord of the old hill) reflecting

Here the Vriddhagirisvara bronze is also included as a representation of the *Ananda Tandava* and is dated to 981 C.E.

66. This information is recorded in the previously mentioned inscription, ARE, 1918, #47. Today, the *Amman* shrine to Vrddhambigai (old goddess) is an independent shrine in the outer enclosure. A small shrine area to Balamabigai (young goddess) is present in an area in the inner precinct. It is possible that this was originally the Uma Bhattaraki shrine referred to in this inscription.

67. See B. Venkataraman’s *Temple Art Under Cola Queens* (Faridabad: Thompson Press (India) Ltd., 1976), 44-46.

seventeenth century features and to Bindu Madhava, another Saivite deity whose shrine seems to have been erected in the nineteenth century. Even among the original structures, the goddess Balambigai (Uma-Bhattaraki) shrine displays evidence of Nayak period alterations. Photography of structures in the first and second enclosure was not permitted during my visit to this temple, therefore, this study relies on the few photos taken by early scholars.

Among the important sculptures in the second enclosure are the celebrated Nataraja shrine and a later addition, the Somaskanda shrine, both in the northern precincts of the Vriddhagirisvara Temple. A *gopura* on the eastern wall is datable to ca. 1186 C.E. based on an inscription from the temple (Fig.3.46).⁶⁸ An important structure in a study of the development of the south Indian *gopura*, Chandrakumar⁶⁹ records that as many as twenty-eight stone sculptures, including a dancing Ganesa on its niches are coeval to the main structure.

68. This inscription concurrent with the reign of later Pallavas furnishes what appears to be the genealogy of the Kadava chiefs. The presence of a date to this record (ca. 1186 C.E.) facilitated the dating of the *gopura* itself. Refer to *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. 12, #263.

69. I came across this reference in an unpublished dissertation by T. Chandrakumar, *Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam: A study of its History, Art, and Architecture* (Madras: University of Madras, 1983), 78. He does not however analyze them in his study. They form the subject matter of K.V. Raman's publication, "Gopura Sculptures of the Vriddhagirisvara Temple" in *Srinidhi: Perspectives in Indian Archaeology, Art and Culture* (Madras: New Era Publications, 1983), 203-212.

The Vriddhaambigai or *amma*n shrine is located in the northwest part of the third enclosure. The original shrine reflects later Cola architectural affinities, although there is evidence of alterations and additions during the Nayak period. Vriddhamabigai (the old goddess) resides in an independent shrine located in the outer precinct of the temple, much like the Sivakami *amma*n shrine in Cidambaram and several other later Cola counterparts. A pillared hall of later construction provides the access to this shrine today. Vijayanagara period pavilions are also contained within this complex as seen in the *kalyana mandapa* and a *citra mandapa* located in the eastern entrance of the temple.

Four *gopuras*, all later additions are aligned in the same axis as the central shrine call attention to the temple. Consisting of seven tiers, the commanding *gopuras* provide access to the temple precincts in the third enclosure. Among them, the east *gopura* appears to be the oldest, and the architectural features on its stone base date it to a period between the twelfth and thirteenth century according to a dating from the later phase of the Cola period. The corresponding base of the west, south, and north *gopuras* however, reflect features associated with the succeeding Vijayanagara dynasty, and it appears that the superstructures⁷⁰ of the four towers were erected under the patronage of the Nayaks of Thanjavur and Senji.

The modest number of inscriptions recorded from this temple document a fairly active temple organization. Among the grants made to the temple, beginning with the famous gifts of Sembiyan, is a host of records coinciding with later Cola, Pandya, and even later Pallava epochs. The contents of these inscriptions detail the donation of cattle (often in large numbers), jewelry, and lamps, in addition to tax-free lands. A lone inscription contemporaneous to the reign of Rajaraja I documents a land grant to pay for musicians reciting the *tiruppadiyam* (the holy Saivite verses) in the temple.⁷¹ An epigraph⁷² coinciding with the reign of Rajendra I records a gift of land for monthly festivals, including the tiruvadira festival and ritual related expenses of the temple.

Direct involvement of the royal family in the development of the Vriddhagirisvara Temple after Sembiyan Mahadevi does seem to reduce although it does not cease totally. Inscriptions beginning with the historical introduction of the king continue to be engraved in the reigns of Rajendra I (ca. 1050), Rajendra II (ca. 1057), Vikrama Cola (ca. 1122) and Rajaraja II (ca. 1152).⁷³ All of these records however, document the sale of land, and offerings of cattle and lamps for the worship by residents of the town.

70. Chandrakumar, *Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation) (Madras: University of Madras, 1983), 87.

71. ARE, 1918, #40.

72. ARE, 1918, #54.

An epigraph⁷⁴ dating from ca. 1248 C. E. and registers a gift of gold and silver by a Sembon Manikkam, a *devaratiyar* (devadasi/temple servant) of the Vriddhagirisvara Temple.

Location and Characteristics of the 108-karana sculptures

The pilasters articulating the inner passageway of all four of the *gopuras* is the carving of the 108-*karana* program. The rendition, treatment of detail, and the general design place these *karanas* in the Vijayanagara period. Just as in the Cidambaram temple, the 108-*karana* program is almost identical in all the four *gopuras*, save for directional orientation. This homogeneity brings up the same issues of chronology that I had to address in the Cidambaram Nataraja Temple. Given that the four sets of 108-*karana* are almost identical to the other, does it follow that they belong to the same time period? Or, is it possible that the later instances of the 108-*karana* were copies of the early representations and hence, their uniformity cannot be considered a reliable indicator of their dating? Both these scenarios are entirely possible.

The 108-*karana* in the east *gopura*, the earliest of the four *gopuras* is discussed first. I follow this discussion with the analysis of panels in the west

73. These records correspond to ARE, 1918, #55, #58, #64, and #52.

74. A donation of a measure of gold and silver for an ornament to the deity, made by one of the *devaradiyar* of the temple by the name of Sembontriyagi Manikkam, is recorded in this inscription. The use of 'one of the *devaradiyar*' terminology could indicate the presence of others,

gopura. The choice of the west *gopura* as the second example in the chronology is based more on south Indian temple conventions than any definite evidence of chronology, for there is not much in terms of epigraphic evidence on the dating. Since most south Indian temples are oriented in the east- west direction, I surmise that the west *gopura* may well have received attention after the east tower. Between the south and north *gopuras*, I analyze the south *gopura* first and conclude with the north. I suggest a unified conception based on their uniformity, and a time span coinciding with a later phase of Vijayanagara rule, when their local chieftans, the Nayaks were gainig supremacy. The homogeneity of the *karana* motif too discourages individual distinctness and features that provide chronological hints.

In the east *gopura*, which is the earliest entry tower in this temple (Fig. 3.47.), the 108-*karanas* are articulated on vertical pilasters articulating the entryways. The Vriddhachalam *karanas* display the same general arrangement and format as the Nataraja Temple *karana* program. A total of 72 panels animate the wall surface with the presence of 6 pilasters divided into 6 rows of squares on each wall. This scheme pervades the entryways of all the four *gopuras* and in so doing, ties them together. So unified is the scheme that I could trace

but it is speculative as of now. This record belongs to ca. A. D. 1248 and corresponds to the fifth regnal year of the later Pallava, Kopperunjinga III. Refer to ARE, 1900, #134.

correspondences between whole wall surfaces in the *gopuras*, not unlike that found in Cidambaram.

A two-armed female performs the 108-*karanas*. The *karana* sequence begins at the bottom row of the first pilaster on the southeastern wall of the east *Gopura* (Fig. 3.48.). The first dancer on the bottom left of the viewer is holding the cupped hand (*puspaputa*) gesture as she stands in the *mandala sthana* with both her knees bent and facing the sides. This is a representation of the first *karana Talapuspaputa*. Adjacent to her and sharing the same panel is illustration of *vartita*, the second *karana* formation.

The sequence appears to continue in the bottom panel of the next column instead of the panel right above. Here in the central panel are two *karanas* that seem to represent the third and fourth *karanas*, *valitoru* and *apavidham* respectively. However, the sequence is disrupted in the corresponding register on the third column, where the pose shown is not the fifth *karana*, *samanakham*. However, evidence of *karana* types such as the 'crossed action' (*svastika*) are displayed in the middle rows of columns supporting the presence of an arrangement that is similar, not identical to the *Natyasastra* sequence.

Notwithstanding the absence of a known sequence and the presence of a different arrangement, I read the Vriddhachalam *karanas* as continuing to follow the vertical bottom to top arrangement. This is because, the first *karana*,

talapuspaputa and the second *karana*, *vartita* are identifiable and located in the bottom register of the first pilaster. Additionally, several of the panels display *karana* positions that can be identified and which are placed in the middle and upper registers, in keeping with the *karana* sequences in literature. Therefore, the presence of *talapuspaputa* and *vartita karanas* in the bottom panel and the vibrant *karana* imagery that pervades above it, support the assertion that the *karana* program starts at the bottom rows and moves upwards in the Vriddhagirisvara temple too. It continues to run to the adjacent wall surface until it culminates in the opposite wall.

The west *gopura*, which is seven tiered and filled with carvings on its superstructure dates from the Vijayanagara and Nayak periods (Fig.3.49.). The 108-*karanas* articulate its entryways in the same distribution as the east *gopura*. A total of 72 panels distributed on 6 columns of pilasters on either wall sides of the entryway walls exhibit the various *karana* positions(Fig.3.50.)

The south *Gopura*, also displaying Vijayanagara and Nayak period affiliations displays an identical set of the 108-*karana* in its entryways(Fig.3.51.).

A near identical set of the 108-*karana* iconography articulates the walls of the doorways of the north *Gopura* as well, with the 108-*karana* beginning in the southwest wall face. Here within the bottom row (left) square panel is represented the first and second *karanas talapuspaputa* and the *vartita*. Just like in

the east *gopura*, the arrangement appears to continue horizontally to the next panel in the same bottom row.

Analysis of the 108-karana sculptures

An analysis of the Vriddhachalam *karanas* reveals a departure from their predecessors at the Nataraja Temple and Arunachala Temple in the display of two dancers in several panels. These dual dancer panels are mixed with the single dancer panels and, together they provide a dynamic visual effect. The squares are demarcated by the presence of the *sala* roof motif displaying Vijayanagara style decoration. Atop the pilasters are carved figures resembling the '*simhamukha*' or lion face motif along with a plethora of semi-divine figures.

As a result of spatial adjustment, the figures in the dual panels are disproportionate and appear in awkward positions. Although at a first glance, one gets the impression that the two dancers depict two stages of movement of each *karana*, they actually depict two *karana* units being squeezed into one square. The Vriddhachalam *karanas* do not appear to express the full range of the *karana* vocabulary. Some sub-groups of the 108-*karana* find repeated expression, while others are not illustrated in depth.

An important aspect of this imagery is that although it appears to correspond to the Cidambaram sculptural scheme, there exist several minor variations that inhibit full agreement between them. I do not suggest that this

non-correspondence to earlier sculpture is disadvantageous to the Vriddhachalam *karanas*. On the contrary, it would be very unlikely that sculptors would be adhering exactly to reliefs that were conceived two centuries ago.

I also propose that the use of paired dancers in a single panel is a measure employed to address the issue of limited space that prevails in the passageways of the Vriddhachalam *gopuras*. For unlike the Cidambaram and the Tiruvannamalai *gopuras* that consisted of a two-tiered wall, the Vriddhachalam *gopuras* display a single tiered wall that stands on a raised plinth. Overall, this provides lesser room for carvings and the architects of the 108-*karanas* may have adopted the dual dancer panel as the alternative formula to accommodate the 108 *karana* motif.

Reliefs containing two dancers do not display any accompanists, given that sculptural space is at a premium. However, single dancer panels almost always display an accompanist and like its predecessors uses hierarchic scaling. This does contrast with the dual dancer reliefs where both the dancers are almost identical in height, facial features, appearance, dress and costumes.

Given the format being employed to express this motif, there is little a sculptor can do to bring out the kinetics of dance movement in the *karanas*. In keeping with the prevailing trends of the time, the *karana* sculptures appear structured and repetitive.

SUMMARY

The 108-*karana* program occupies a central position in the *vimana* in the Rajaraja Temple, the first instance of this collective program in the south Indian temple vocabulary. Siva, accompanied by *ganas* is the dancer of the *karanas* in the Rajaraja temple. However, the 108-*karana* is relocated to the outermost *gopuras* of the temple from the 13th century onwards. It now articulates the inner passageway of the *gopura* where it is represented on pilasters in a vertical arrangement. This vertical format gets standardized enlivening the passageways of all four of the outermost *gopuras*.

With this relocation to the *gopura* and the introduction of a vertical format, the dancer becomes a female accompanied by human-looking accompanists. My research suggests that all the changes—location, format, and dancer-- are intentional and have specific iconographic and iconological relevance.



Fig. 3.1 View of the Rajaraja Temple.(from southeast), Thanjavur, Cola period, 985-1015

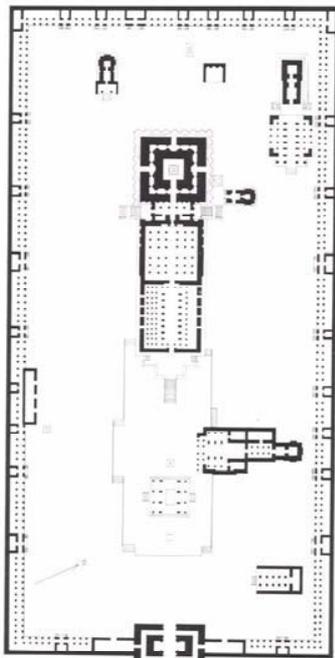


Fig. 3.2 Ground plan of Rajaraja Temple.Thanjavur, Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy : Susan Huntington.)



Fig. 3.3 *Vimana* of Rajaraja Temple. (south façade), Thanjavur, Cola period, 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 3.4 View of Nandi Pavilion and *gopuras*. (from southwest), Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola Period, 985-1015 C.E.

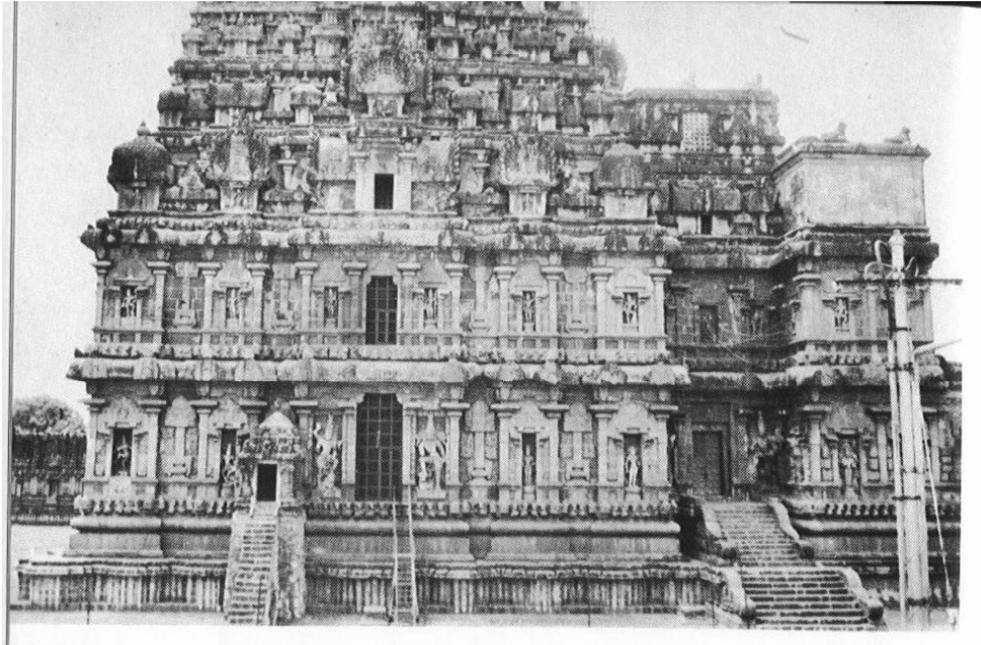


Fig. 3. 5. Façade of *vimana*. South wall, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy: S.R. Balasubrahmanyam.)

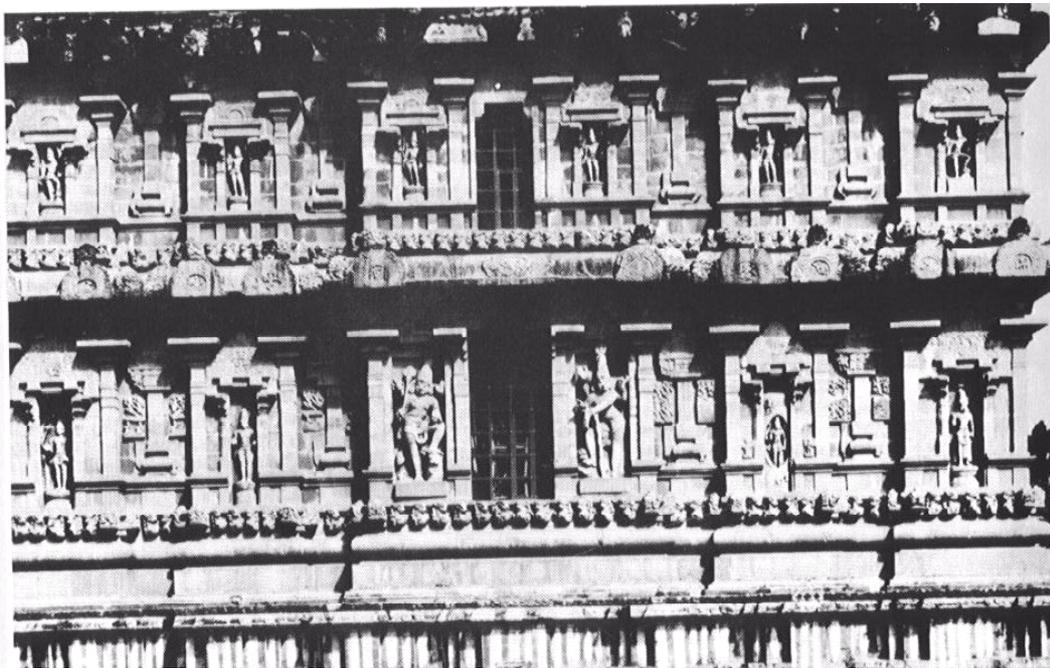


Fig. 3.6. Façade of *vimana*. West wall, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola Period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy : S.R. Balasubrahmanyam)

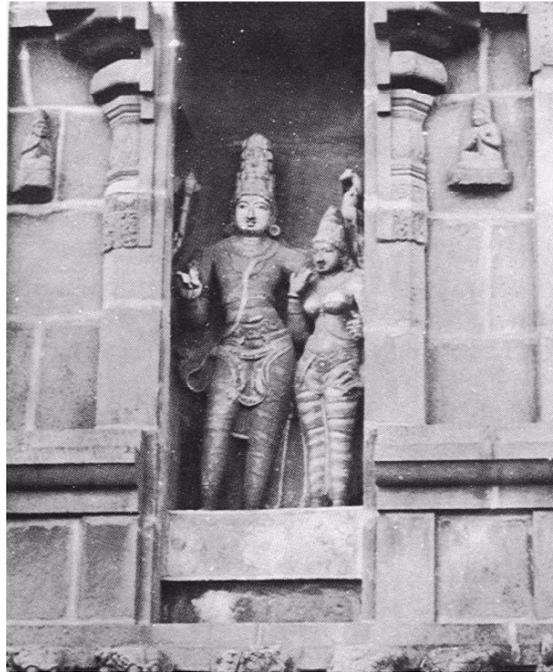


Fig. 3.7. Siva-alinganamurti, north wall, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy : S.R. Balasubrahmanyam.)



Fig. 3.8. East façade of vimana. 2nd tier, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola period, 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 3.9. Overview of 108 *karana*. south wall, inner corridor, *vimana*, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola period, 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 3. 10. Over of 108 *karana*. east wall, inner corridor, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola period. 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 3. 11. *Sarpita karana* (no.81), north wall, inner corridor, *vimana*, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola Period, 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 3.12. First *karana* (*talapusaputa*), east wall, inner corridor, *vimana*, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola period. 985-1015 C.E.

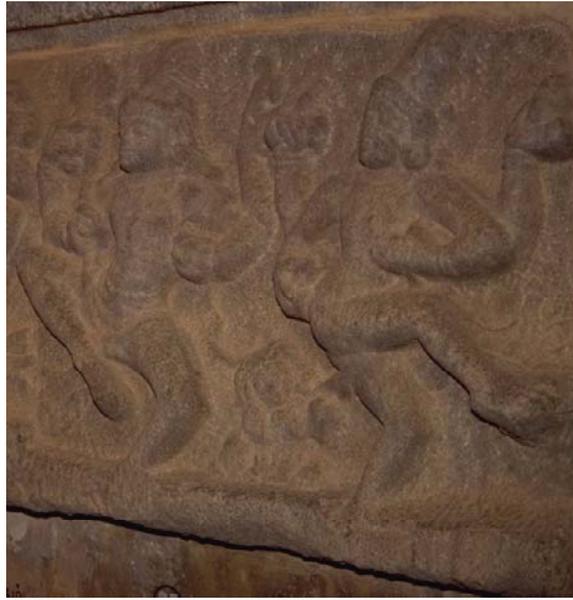


Fig. 3.13. *Urdhva janu* (L) and *bhujangatrasita* (R) *karanas*, south wall, inner corridor, *vimana*, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 3.14. *Lalatatilaka karana*, west wall, inner corridor, *vimana*, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015

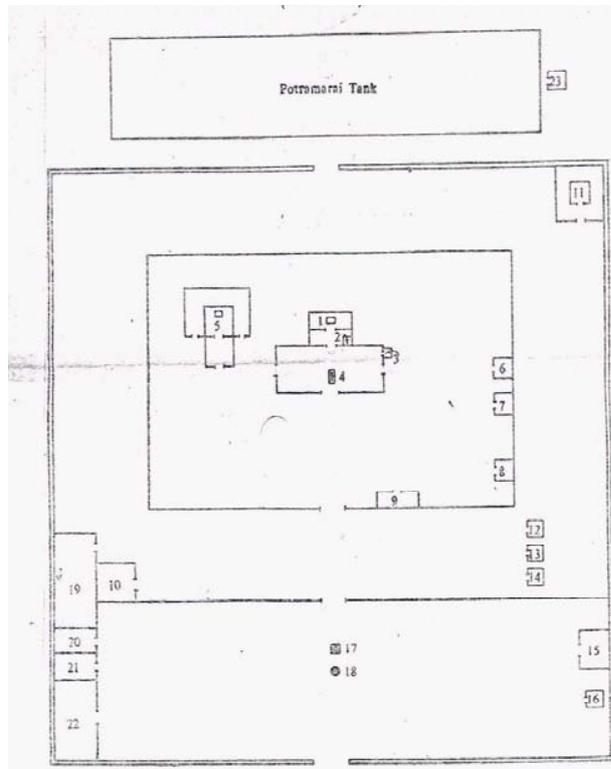


Fig. 3.15. Ground plan of the Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 13th-17th centuries.



Fig. 3.16. *Ratha vimana* (chariot shaped shrine). north wall, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 13th-17th centuries.



Fig. 3.17. Female dancers on wheel of chariot, *vimana*, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 13th-17th centuries.



Fig. 3.18. Outer east *gopura*, east façade, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 13th-17th centuries.



Fig. 3.19. 108- *karana* reliefs flanking the portal. East *gopura*, east façade, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th centuries.



Fig. 3.20. Overview of 108 *karana*. east *gopura*, east wall, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th centuries.



Fig. 3.21. Overview of 108 *karana*. east *gopura*, west façade, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th centuries.



Fig. 3. 22. An unidentified karana (L) and *lalita karana* (R), outer east gopura, east façade, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th centuries.



Fig. 3. 23. Detail of *talapusaputa* (L) and *argala* (R), outer east gopura, east façade, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th centuries.



Fig. 3.24. *Ardhanikuttaka* (L) and *gangavatarana* (R) *karanas*. outer east *gopura*, east façade, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th century.

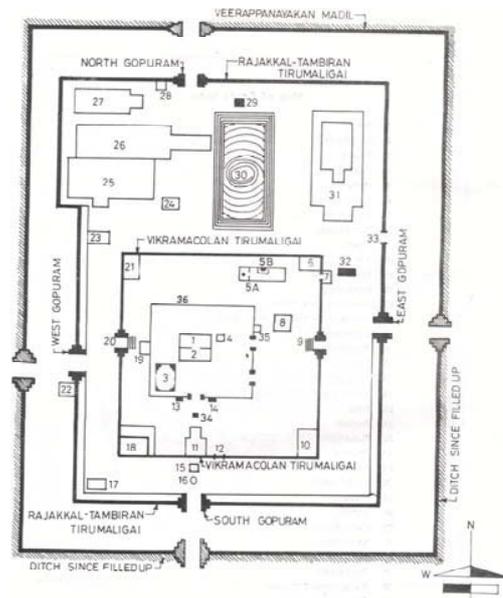


Fig. 3.25. Ground plan of Nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12th -16th centuries.



Fig.3.26. The *Cid sabha* and surrounding structures, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12th –16th centuries.



Fig. 3.27. *Nrtta sabha*. Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12th -16th centuries.

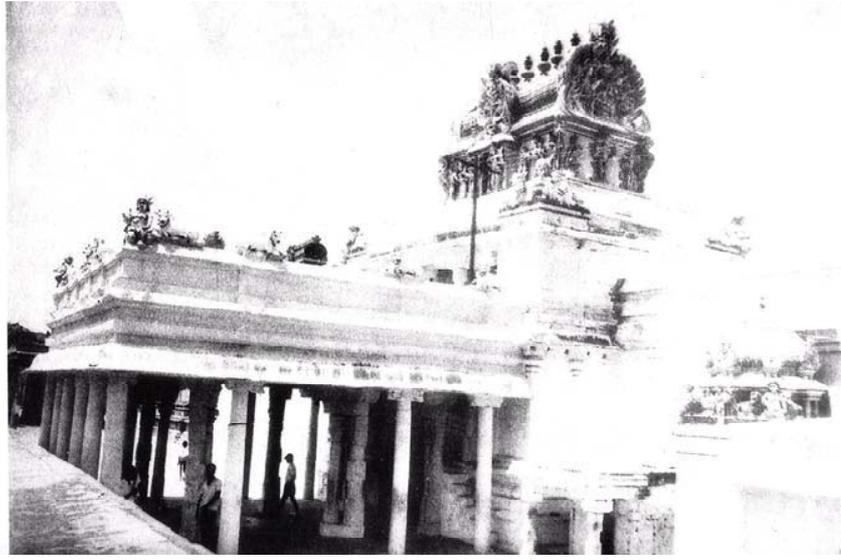


Fig. 3.28. Amman shrine and attached pavilion. 3rd *prakara*, Nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 14th -16th centuries.



Fig. 3.29. Dance reliefs on base of pillared cloister. Amman shrine, west face, Nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 14th -16th centuries.



Fig. 3.30. Overview of 108-*karana* program, west *gopura*, southeast wall, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12-13th centuries.



Fig. 3.31. *Bhujangatrasita* (L) and *lalita* (R) *karanas*, west *gopura*, southwest wall, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th century.



Fig. 3.32. *Latavrschika* (L) and *cakramandala* (R) *karanas*. West *gopura*, southwest wall, nataraja Temple, Chidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12th -13th centuries.



Fig. 3.33. Overview of 108 *karna*, east *gopura*, southwest wall, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram. Cola and later periods, 13-14th century onwards.



Fig. 3.34. Overviews of 108-*karna* program, south *gopura*, southwest wall, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram. Cola and later periods, 14th century onwards.

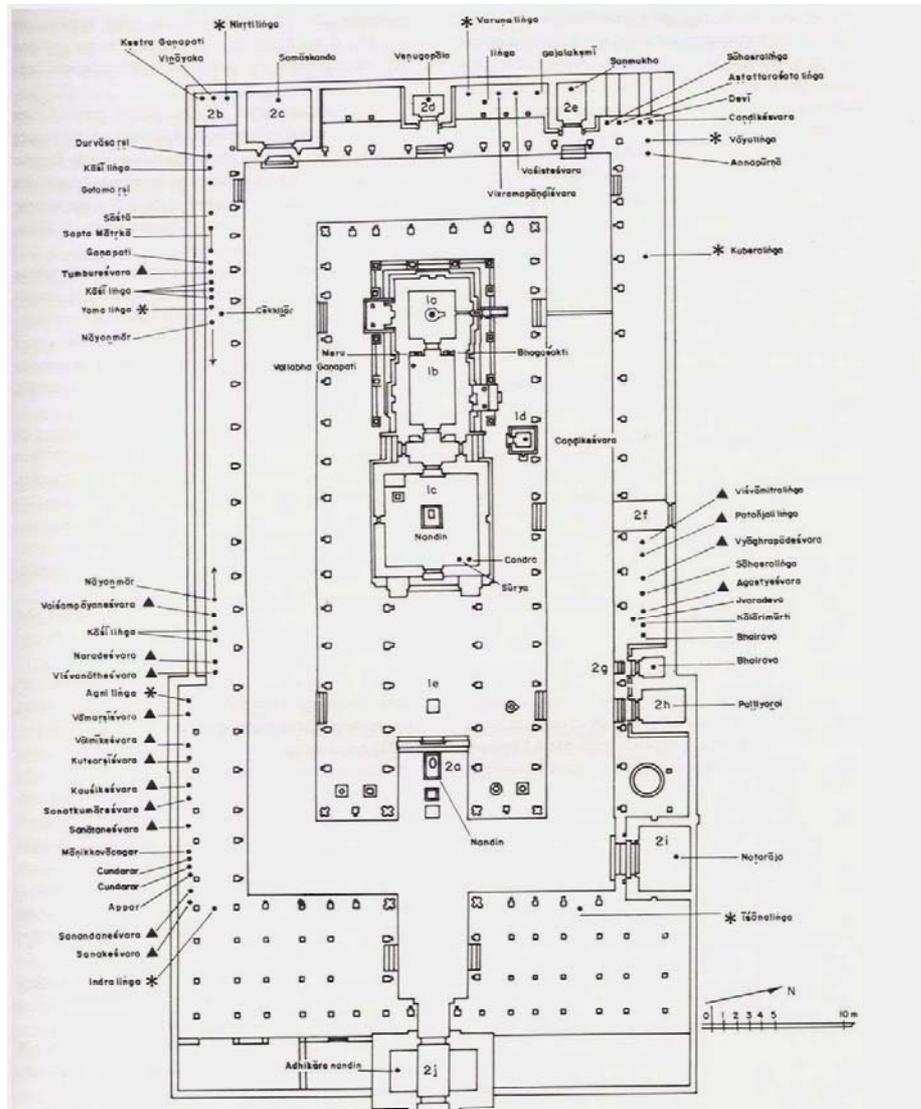


Fig. 3.35. Ground plan. Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola , Vijanagara and later Periods, 10th-17th centuries. (courtesy: Hernault, Pichard, and Deloche.)

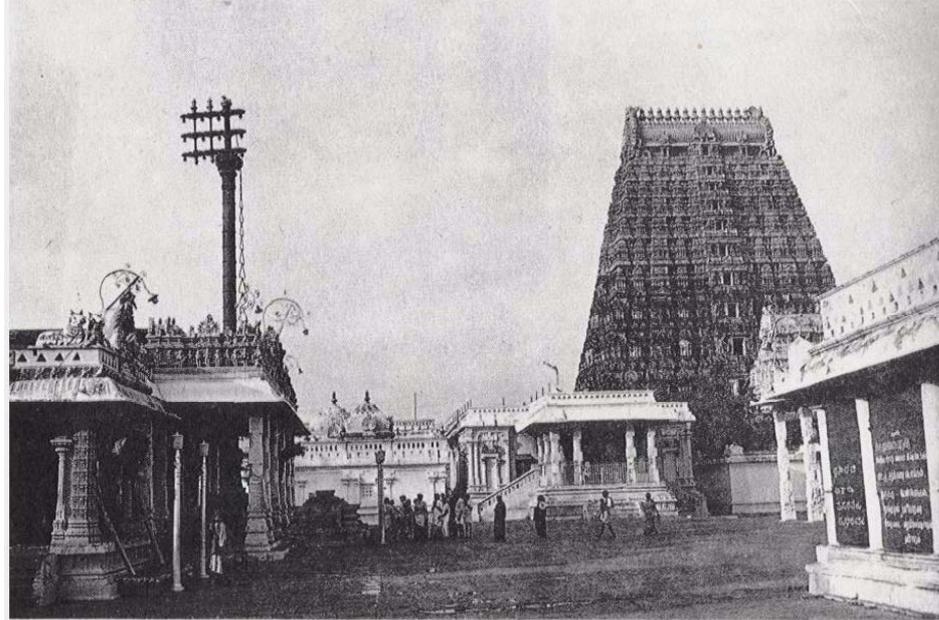


Fig. 3.36. Central shrine and surrounding pavilions. Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola ,Vijanagara and later Periods, 10th-17th centuries. (courtesy: Hernault, Pichard, and Deloche.)

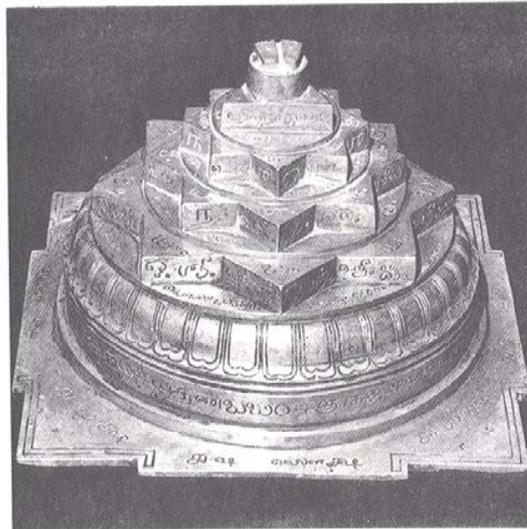


Fig. 3.37. Yantra of Mount Meru. Central shrine, Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola ,Vijanagara and later Periods, 10th-17th centuries. (courtesy: Hernault, Pichard, and Deloche.)

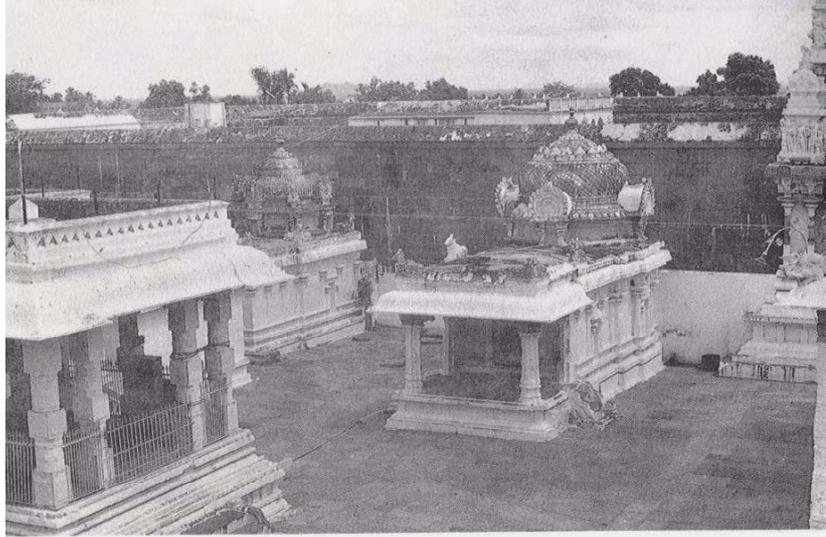


Fig. 3.38. Shrines dedicated to Siva as Lord of sacred sites. Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola, Vijayanagara, and later periods, 10th-17th centuries. (courtesy: Hernault, Pichard, and Deloche.)



3.39. South *gopura* (background) and Killi *gopura* (foreground). Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola, Vijayanagara, and later periods, 10th-17th centuries.

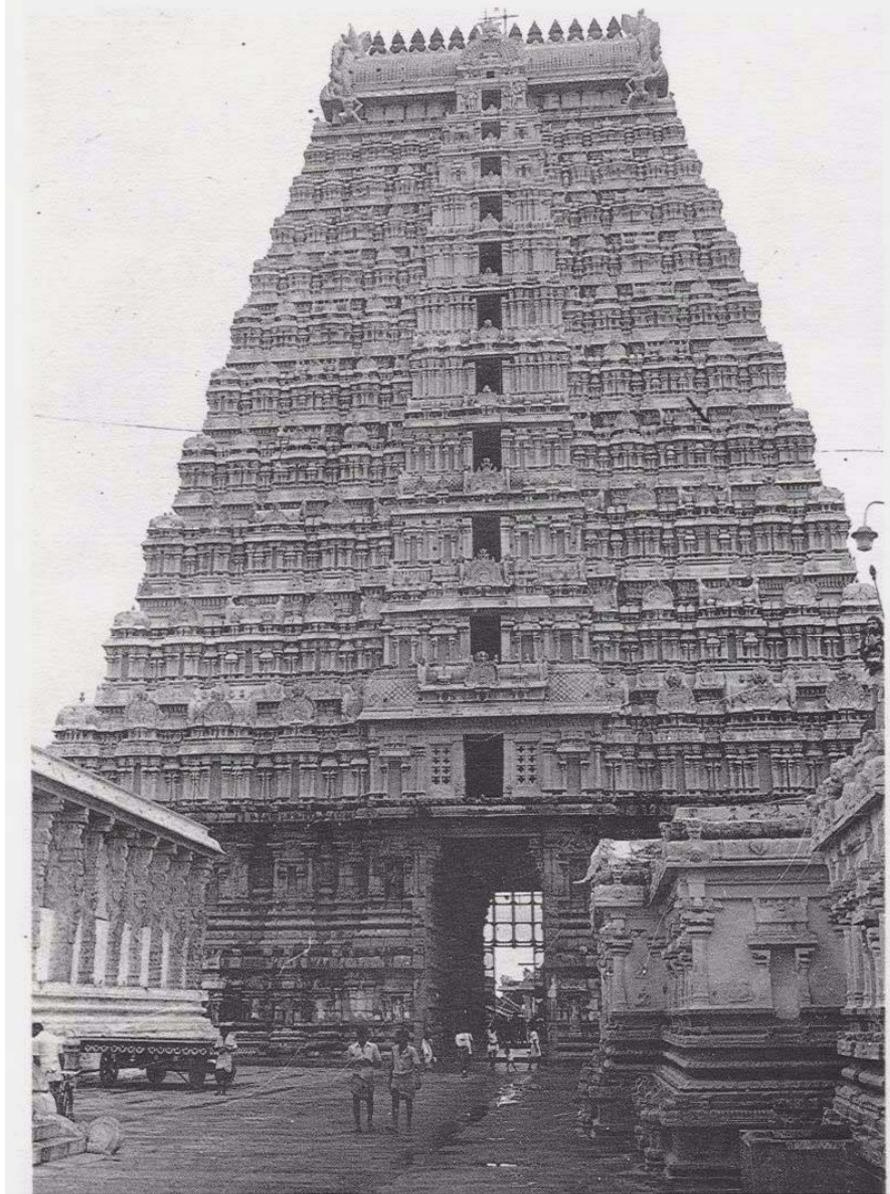


Fig. 3.40. The east Raya *gopura*. (west face), Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola, Vijayanagara, and later periods, 10th-17th centuries.(courtesy: Hernault, Pichard, and Deloche.)

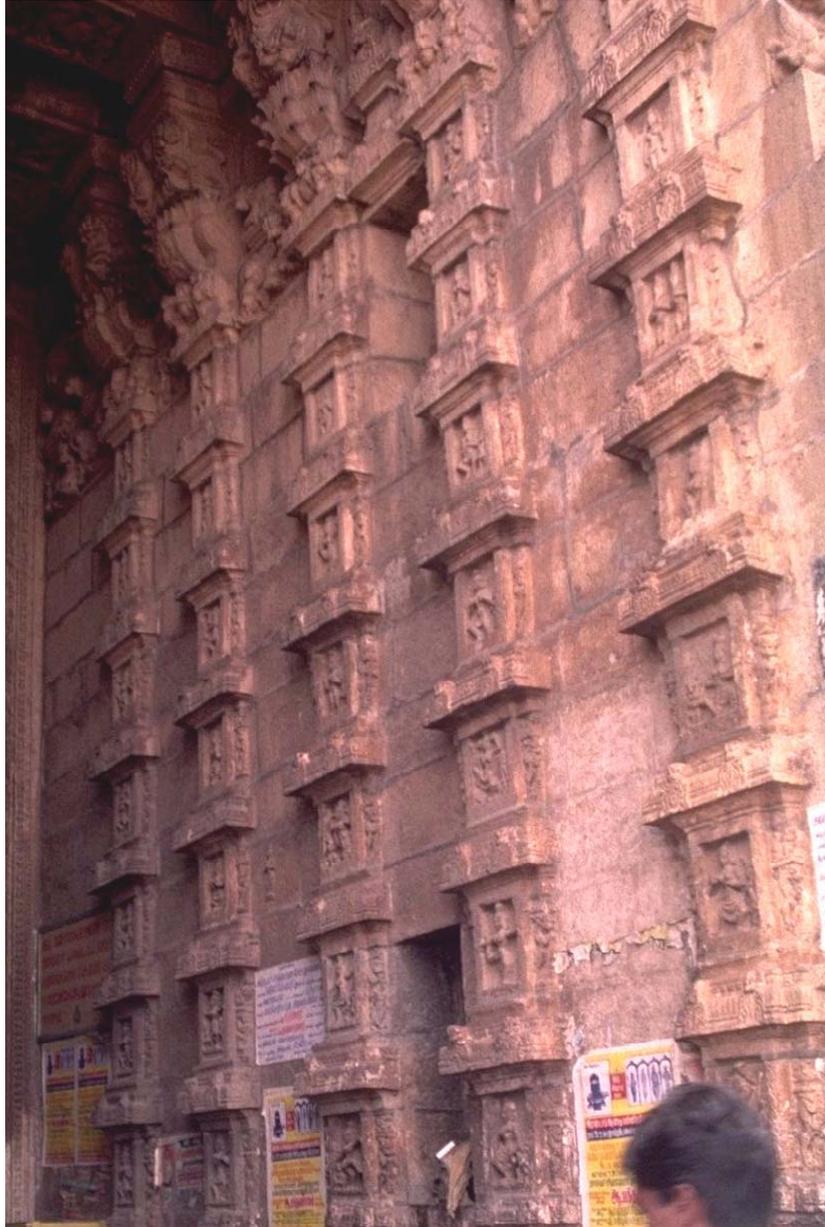


Fig. 3.41. Overview of 108 *karana*. east *gopura*, northeast wall, Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola, Vijayanagara, and later periods, 16th century.



Fig. 3.42. Overview of 108 *karana*. north gopura, northeast wall, Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola, Vijayanagara, and later periods, 16th century.



Fig. 3.43. Overview of 108 *karana*. west gopura, northeast wall, Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai. Cola, Vijayanagara, and later periods, 16th century.

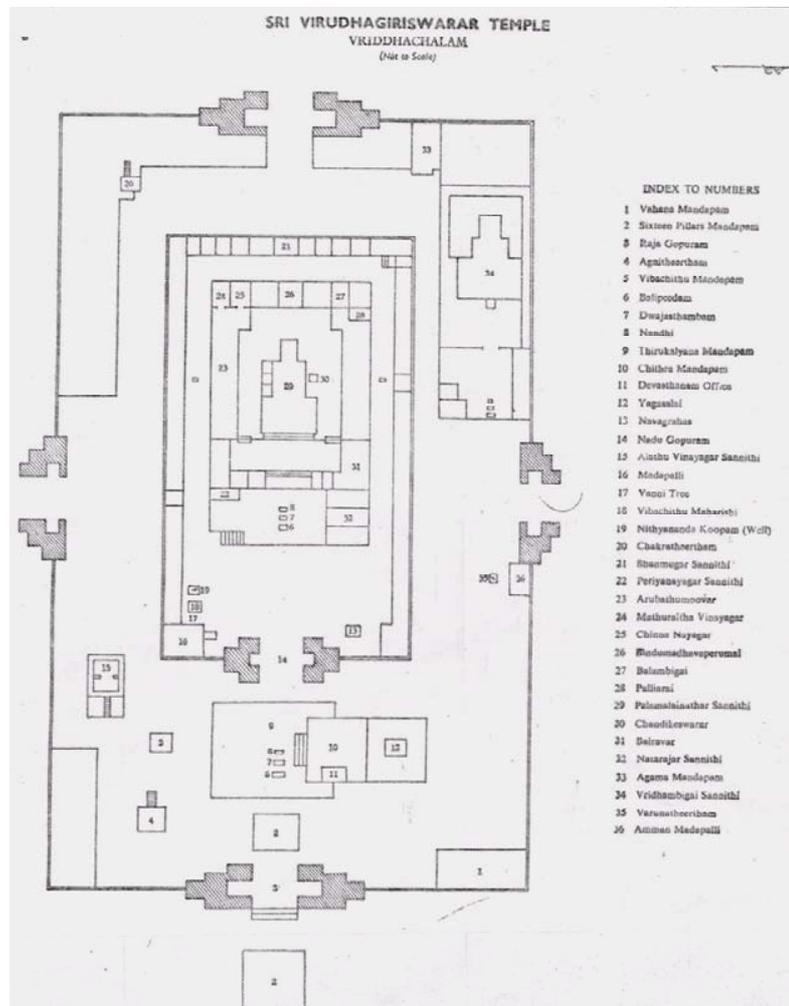


Fig. 3. 44. Ground plan. Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola, Vijayanagara and later periods, 10th-17th centuries.



Fig. 3.45. Siva-Nataraja. Sembayan age bronze, Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola period, 10th century. (courtesy : S. R. Balasubrahmanyam)

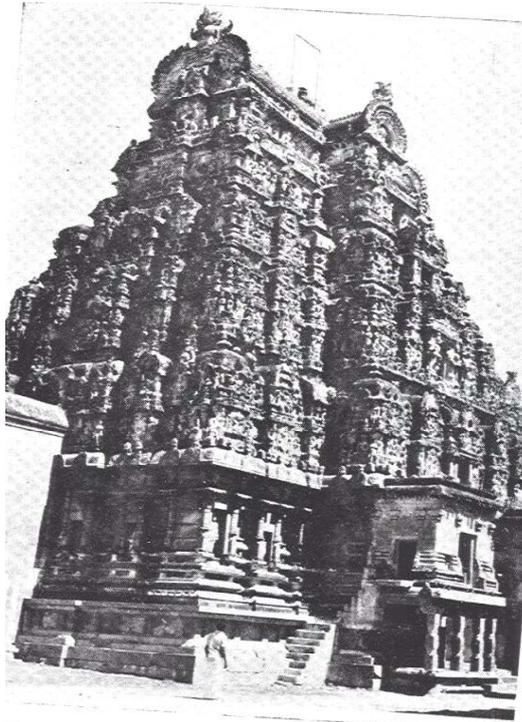


Fig. 3.46. Inner east gopura. (west face), Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola period, 11-12th centuries. (coutesy: K.V. Raman)



Fig. 3.47. East *gopura*. southwest face, Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola, Vijayanagara and later periods, 14th-17th centuries.



Fig. 3.48. Overviews of 108 *karana*. southeast wall, Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola, Vijayanagara and later periods, 16th-17th century.



Fig. 3.49. West *gopura*, southeast face, Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola, Vijayanagara and later periods, 16th-17th century.



Fig. 3.50. Overview of 108 *karana*. southwest wall, Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola, Vijayanagara and later periods, 16th-17th century.



Fig. 3.51. Overview of 108 *karana*. south *gopura*, northeast wall, Vriddhagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola, Vijayanagara and later periods, 16th-17th century.

CHAPTER 4

THE AGENCY OF DANCE AND THE 108 KARANA

This chapter discusses the ways in which Indian dance can be understood as a formal process- an intense visual language involving the body and mind together through the act of movement. My research suggests that this formal process- Indian dance- should be viewed as a valid practice that has agency within the Indian context. It is an agent because it has the power to act and is the prime mover of an act. By its performance, it is a force that effects change. In other words, Indian dance is an active principle that has deep roots in Indian philosophy and has as its highest aspiration some of the most profound aims of Hinduism.

The *natya* texts list and define specific body movements and their permutations. However, I suggest that Indian dance is not simply a collection of movements that go into making up a performance that is undertaken for the audience's entertainment and viewing pleasure. It is vibrant energy that functions as an active principle of change. My research indicates that dance is an agent, or active principle, of movement, communication, ritual, transformation, and meditation.

In pursuing these alternative meanings, my research relies especially on the *Natyasastra* by Bharata;¹ my own knowledge and practice of Bharata Natyam; along with relevant secondary sources in the field of dance, ritual and meditation. This chapter synthesizes information from these sources and presents my reexamination and analysis of the methodology of Indian dance and its close ties to communication, ritual and meditational practice.

This inferences that I draw in this chapter are very significant and are outlined as follows. Built on the edifice of dance formations (*nrtta*) and interpretative dance (*abhinaya/nrtya*), I read the act of dance as the force/energy that results in movement and communication. And, the 108 *karana* as a component of this tradition is one of the means by which movement and communication are effected. Similarly, by their presence as operational elements in the prelude rite of the purvaranga, dance and the 108 *karana* reveal themselves as a ritual activity. The aesthetic goal of evoking *rasa* and the intense, complex methodology of dance performance is an operation to effect a transformation. Finally, with the synthesis of body (*anga*), speech (*vacika*), and mind (*sattvika*), along with physical transformation (*aharya*), the

¹ There have been several editions and translations of the *Natyasastra* including Ramakrishna Kavi, *Natyasastra with commentary of Abhinavagupta*, (Baroda: Gaekward Oriental Series, 1926, 1936, and 1954). Manomohan Ghosh, *The Natyasastra: A Treatise on Indian Dramaturgy ascribed to Bharatamuni* (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1961, 1967, and 1995); Rangacharya's *The Natyasastra: English Translation with Critical notes* (New Delhi: Munshiram

act of dance is the generator of energy that leads to self- realization, akin to yogic meditations.

Dance and 108 *karana*: Agency of Movement and Communication

Although the inextricable link between dance and movement is universally recognized now, the Indian dance tradition has the distinction of advocating movement and communication as its framework right from its ancient roots. I maintain that Indian dances' emphasis on and exploration of nuances of movement and communication accords it a preeminent place in the field of physical and psychological expression. This assertion is supported by elements from within the Indian dance technique itself which I shall outline in the following pages.

According to dance literature, Indian dance is a combination of two distinct aspects- *nrtta* (original dance), and *abhinaya* /*nrtya* (interpretative dance).² *Nrtta* is also defined as "pure" dance since it consists of body movements that do not narrate or articulate themes and ideas.³ *Abhinaya* on

Manoharlal Publishers, 1996). Perhaps the most recent translation is that of K. P. Unni's, *Natyasastra* (New Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1998).

² The presence of two distinct aspects- *nrtta* and *abhinaya* is indicated in the *Natyasastra* itself. However, the text appears to juxtapose '*nrtta*' with '*karana*', and from Bharata's perspective, it appears that *nrtta* was articulated by the *karanas*. See *Natyasastra*, Ch. IV, v.266-275. *Abhinaya* and its usages are examined by Bharata through several sections, See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 6-13. Subsequent authors include all three- *nrtta*, *nrtya* and *natya*, as aspects of dance and refer to Bharata as their source. These include *Sangitaratnakara* of Sarangadeva, Ch.1, 3-4 and Nandikesvara's *Abhinaya darpanam*, Ch. 1, 2-7. In this classification, *nrtya* is still referred to as representational dance while *natya* is defined as a theatrical manifestation.

the other hand is all about narration and communication of moods, emotions and sentiments.⁴ Therefore, I interpret *nrtta* as reflecting dance movement, and *abhinaya/nrtya* as tools that communicate to the viewer. Together, stylized dance movement and communication make up the Indian dance technique.

To elaborate further, *nrtta* (dance movement) reveals the conception and approach to movement and the use of space⁵ in Indian dance. Consisting of movement sequences, the *nrtta* aspect of dance displays dance formations that are woven into the fabric of rhythm. Small units are combined together to create intermediate and large formations of movements revealing the aesthetic of stylized movement expression. *Nrtta's* inherent conception and structure brings to fore the importance it places on poses.⁶ Hand gestures, or *hastas*, are

³ The inclusion of the term 'pure' is to bring out the fact that *nrtta* entails stylized movement only and does not include expressional or narrative features. In much the same way, the reference to its being 'abstract' stems from its lack of a communicative angle despite its strong presence in the dance repertoire. For more information, please refer to Kapila Vatsyayan's *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*, (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1977), 17-19; and Mohan Khokar, *Traditions of Indian Classical Dance*, (New Delhi: Clarion Books, 1984), 59. Also, refer to George Kliger's "Indian Aesthetics and Bharata *Natyam*", in *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective*, ed. George Kliger, (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1993), 26.

⁴ *Abhinaya's* association to communication is discussed in several dance and *natya* texts starting with the *Natyaśāstra* and including the *Sāṅgīta Ratnākara* by Saṅgadeva and the *Abhinayadāraṇa* by Nandikesvara. The information gleaned from these sources has been translated and analyzed in several secondary publications.

⁵ For a thorough analysis of *nrtta*, particularly with reference to Bharata *natyam*, please refer to a meticulous study by Judy Van Zile, "Characteristics of *Nrtta* in Bharatanatyam", in *Bharatanatyam in Cultural Perspective*, (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1993), 43-90.

⁶ Vatsyayan, *Indian Classical Dance* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1974), 8.

utilized in the sphere of *Nrta* more as an aesthetic accompaniment rather than a meaningful attribute.

The continued validity of this terminology in the live dance traditions of India today attests to its significance and endurance. For instance, in Bharata Natyam, a classical dance-form belonging to south India, the smallest movement formation is referred to as *adavu*. It is the *adavus* and its combinations that represent the *nrta* aspect of Bharata Natyam. There are several types of *adavus*, each categorized on the basis of their unique characteristic: steps involving striking of feet (*tattu adavu*), striking with *heel* (*nattu adavu*), jumps (*paydal adavu*),⁷ and so on. When an *adavu* or parts of an *adavu* are strung together with other *adavus*, a *korvai* (cohesive joining) is formed. These *korvais* are introduced into the musical structure and its rhythm.

The Bharata Natyam dance tradition also emphasizes arriving at prescribed destinations.⁸ This emphasis on poses in this style of dance has

⁷ There are several publications that explain and illustrate the repertoire of *adavus* in Bharata Natyam from a performance perspective. See Mohan Khokar's *Adavus in Bharata Natyam*, (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Academy, 1984).

⁸ Judy Van Zile's "Characteristics of Bharata Natyam" in *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by George Kliger. (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1993), 64-65.

earned it the description of being ‘sculpturesque’ and one that is a product of the stringing together of stylized and symbolic poses.⁹

While *nrtta* displays the range and vitality of stylized movement, according to dance and dramatic literature, meaning, symbolism, emotions, and sentiment are all articulated through the *abhinaya*¹⁰ or representational aspect. Used interchangeably with *nrtya*, *abhinaya* alludes to the ‘carrying forward’¹¹ of the meaning to the viewer and is the principal tool of communication in dance. An intricate language of bodily gestures articulates the themes and concepts in a poem /play, thus acting as the agent of communication. I suggest that *abhinaya* is to dance what speech is to a play. In other words, *abhinaya* is the vocabulary and language for meaningful communication.

⁹ Vatsyayan, *Indian Classical Dance*, (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1974), 9.

¹⁰ Starting with the *Natyasastra* and continuing on to almost every text on dance that followed it, *abhinaya* is the preeminent tool of communication. See Saragnadeva’s *Sangita Ratnakara*, Nandikesvara’s *Abhinayadarpanam*, Pundarika Vittala’s *Nartana Nirnaya*, *Bharatarnavam* by an unknown author, *Balaramabharatam* by Balarama vanci, and *Natyadarpana* by Gunachandra and Ramachandra, to name just a few titles.

¹¹ The *Natyasastra*’s explanation of the derivation and meaning of *abhinaya* is complex. Accordingly, the preposition ‘*abhi*’ combined with the root ‘*nin*’ means ‘to come toward’. To this, a suffix ‘*ac*’ is added to obtain the term *abhinaya*. *Natyasastra by Bharata Muni*, Ch. 8, 7-8. Monier Williams records ‘*abhi*’ and ‘*ni*’ as meaning ‘to conduct towards’ or ‘bring near’, and consequently, *abhinaya* as ‘dramatic action’ indicated by gesture. Please refer to Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1997), 64.

The highly intricate theoretical framework on which *abhinaya (nrtya)* is based is documented in the *Natyasastra*,¹² revealing its roots to Indian drama (*natya*). Four categories of *abhinaya*, namely, *angika* or body; *vacika* or speech; *aharya* or ornamentation; and *sattvika* pertaining to deep psychological expressions constitute the vocabulary for communication. The visual language of dance transmits its message through the seamless convergence of these elements.

My analysis of the contents of these chapters has led to me conclude the following; the sections on movement and communication literally dissect the human body and list every possible movement, however big or small. Much analysis of the possibilities of body movement precedes the documentation of the technique. The complexity and sophistication of the theory is revealed in the fact that every movement has a name and is embedded within a larger category. This has resulted in a compilation that is replete with terminology of all kinds for movements of all kinds.

Notwithstanding its pedantic writing style, texts like the *Natyasastra* that deal with the human body expression provide a wealth of information that can be translated in sculptural expression. After all, dance literature deals with poses and positions (*sthanas* and *mandala*), facial expressions and

significantly, hand gestures or *hastas*- all of which are crucial to sculpture, particularly, temple sculpture.

Undoubtedly the most powerful vehicle of communication in *abhinaya* are the hands and Indian dance delves deep into this realm for its portrayal of emotions and expression of sentiments. The gesture language of the Indian dance tradition provides the visual 'word' and meaning to its viewer.

As a vocabulary consisting of 28 single hand (*asamyuta*) and 24 combined hand gestures (*samyuta*) carrying manifold usage, this language is further embellished by the *nrtta hastas*,¹³ so called owing to their employment in the performance of *nrtta* (dance formations) only. Gods, goddesses and planetary deities are all called forth with their own specific *hastas*.¹⁴

The hands (*hastas*) are the life-breath of dance vocabulary not only because they provide the 'words and sentences' for a visual language, but also due to the belief that they are imbued with life and vitality.¹⁵ In my opinion,

¹² Four kinds of *abhinaya* are mentioned in the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 8 v. 10-11

¹³ The *Natyasastra* provides a list and description of the single, combined, and *nrtta* hand gestures in Ch. 9 titled 'Gestures of the hands'. For more information, see *Natyasastra*, Ch. 9, v. 7- 208. This information is repeated as is or with slight alterations in several other dance texts that were compiled subsequently.

¹⁴ The 9th chapter of the *Natyasastra*, deals with hand gestures and their applications. This repertoire is further enhanced in *Abhinaya darpanam*, in which *hastas* for the 10 incarnations of Visnu, the 9 planetary deities, *hastas* denoting the 4 main castes as well as members of a family are all included. Please refer to Manomohan Ghish, *Nandikesvara's Abhinayadarpanam*, (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1981), 48-63.

¹⁵ Instructors of dance emphasize repeatedly during teaching that the *hastas* are 'alive' and potent. During my dance training at Kalakshetra in Chennai, my teacher, Sarada Hoffman

as gestures that are 'alive' during a performance, the hands (*hastas*) are powerful triggers for the evoking of feelings for both the dancer as well as the viewer. Infused with power and energy, the *hasta* is a dancer's subliminal link to the object, person, animal, or divinity portrayed. The hand gestures also substitute for physical attributes displayed in the sculpture of various Indian gods and goddesses.

In conclusion, I restate that the terms *nrtta* and *abhinaya*, so far defined as 'pure dance' and representational dance respectively, broadly refer to movement and communication and together comprise the vocabulary of Indian dance. The body is the instrument that employs both of these aspects in its expression. To the extent where the entire body moves and communicates, the act of dance is the power or force behind it. I interpret dance as the dynamic energy that flows through a predetermined configuration of movement and communication.

I also suggest that dance/*natya* texts, with their penetrating look at body movement and expression would be considered vital tools in the area of

frequently underscored the inherent 'power' of the *hasta* to connect with the deity it signified. In later dance literature, the *hasta* section is referred to as *hasta-pranah*, or the life of the *hasta*. Coomaraswamy's, *The Mirror of Gesture*, (New York: 1936), which is a translation of the *Abhinaya darpana* by Nandikesvara, mentions the presence of '*hastahpranah*'. Manomohan Ghosh, who also translated this text does not include the term explaining the usage of a different manuscript. See Manomohan Ghosh's, *Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikesvara*, (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1981), 48. The *Natyasastra* examination of the hand gestures is titled '*hasta abhinaya*' which would translate as 'carrying forward the meaning with hands'.

sculptural expression¹⁶ as well. With both dance and sculpture using the body as the instrument for communication, the pre-existence of a highly analytical dance terminology would make incorporation of dance into sculpture seem enriching and even inevitable.

In this section, I examine and situate the 108-karana theme within the agency of movement and communication. Although the *karanas* are not included in the traditional dance systems performed today, its reconstruction is made possible by various textual descriptions. It is my belief that we cannot recover fully how *karanas* and their combinations, the *angaharas* were performed with a text based reconstruction alone. However as the only available source, they do provide a glimpse into the world of *nrtta* in ancient times. I propose that while many of the 108-*karanas* are primarily associated with stylized movement, some of them are infused with elements of communication as well. Therefore, the 108-*karana* theme can be seen as manifesting both aspects of dance, and consequently function as important symbols of expression.

¹⁶ The inter-connectedness between dance and sculpture is recognized by several earlier scholars based on a much repeated verse in the *Visnudharmottara purana*. Please refer to Priyabala Shah, *Visnudharmottara Purana*, (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Institute, 1961), 3. In this passage, in response to a question about making forms of gods that manifest the deity, Markandeya states that a knowledge of painting (*citrasutra*), and dance (*nrtta sastra*), among others are essential.

As the earliest documentation of *nrtta* in the performing art tradition of India, the 108-*karana* is the precursor to the *adavu* of Bharata natyam.¹⁷ Literally translating as 'doing, effecting or causing,'¹⁸ *karana* is synonymous with motion and in my view, a befitting indicator of movement. The presence of 108-*karanas* indicates the performance of 108 different actions or movements. I read a dual role into the *karanas*- as primary movers/doers of specific actions; and as a source that is instrumental in causing/creating more complex movement.

As the smallest movement sequence in dance, the *karana* constitutes the smallest unit of movement. And we know that groups of *karanas* when strung together make up a garland of parts (*angahara*), just as the *adavus* when strung together in a pattern constitute a *korvai*.

Therefore, the *karana* is the principal source for dance movement and constitutes the foundation on which the edifice of *nrtta* stands. Several levels of larger sequences are created by the joining together of the *karanas*, such as 2 *karanas* constituting a *matrka*, 3 *karanas* a *kalapaka*, 4 *karanas* a *sandhaka*, and 5

¹⁷ Although scholars have recognized the *adavu* in Bharata *Natyam* as the equivalent of the *karana* in ancient dance, few have pursued it any deeper because of dissimilarities in the technicalities of the two. While the *adavu* falls within the parameters of *Nrtta*, and so does the *karana*, neither are similar to the other.

¹⁸ Monier- Williams, *A Sanskrit- English Dictionary*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1997), 254.

karanas a *samghataka*. The combination of 6, 7, 8, or 9 *karanas* constitutes an *angahara* (garland of parts).¹⁹

In order to better comprehend the integral elements of the *karana*, my inquiry into its definitions in the *Natyasastra* indicates primarily the following movements- the feet (*pada karmani*), a single leg (*cari*), and postures of the legs (*sthana*), along with hand gestures (*hastas*- includes single, combined and *nrtta* gestures.) In some instances, the application of related body movements is also indicated depending on the specific action that is performed.

What do *karanas* do? The 108-*karana* is a group of 108 formations that denote the performance of specific actions.²⁰ I present a brief analysis some of the different movements that the *karana* portrays from among the list of 108 *karanas*.

The first *karana* depicts the 'holding of flower-cup (*talapuspaputa karana*) and symbolizes the dancer offering flowers as an auspicious start of a recital. Rotation (*varita karana*) of the body; pounding (*nikuttaka karana*) movements; crossed or entwined movements (*svastika* variations);²¹ square (*catura karana*),

¹⁹ *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4, 30-32.

²⁰ For the verses on the 108-*karana*, refer to *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. 39-172.

²¹ For *swastika* actions, see *The Natyasastra*, ch. 4, v. 66, 67, 72, 74, 75, 76, 81.

mark on forehead (*lalata tilaka karana*), scorpion (*vrshika karana*)²² are a few more of the action-formations. Extensions (*krantam*)²³ and their types, such as *visnukrantam* (reference to extension of Visnu's leg as *Trivikrama*), raised knee (*urdhva janu* positions),²⁴ birth (*janitam karana*),²⁵ and descent of Ganga (*gangavataranam*),²⁶ are still other *karanas* denoting specific actions.

Stylized reproductions of animal movements are indicated in the *karanas* such as *gajakrida* (elephant-play), *simhakrida* (lion-play), and *Grdhravalinakam* (cowering like a vulture).²⁷ Similarly, movements pertaining to 'fright of snake' (*bhujangatrasa karana*), 'curled like a snake' (*bhujanancita karana*), intoxication (*mattalli karana*), low spirits or depression (*sannata karana*), and agitation (*lolita karana*), apart from conceptualizing physical actions, carry an implication of inner feelings and sentiments as well.

Therefore, I propose that the *karanas* have a duality about them- they are primarily dance formations, however, some of them can also

²² Refer to *The Natyasatra*, ch. 4, v. 103, 105, 106.

²³ Movements entailing extensions or *krantam* are described in the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4, v. 110, 117, 122, 138, and 159.

²⁴ Refer to *The Natyasatra*, ch. 4, v. 84.

²⁵ See *The Natyasatra*, ch. 4, v. 143.

²⁶ Refer to *The Natyasatra*, ch. 4, v. 167.

²⁷ *The Natyasatra*, Ch. 4, v. 127-148.

carry/reflect/portray emotional states. They reveal the method of depicting through abstract physical movement, particular traits (such as animal movement) or states of mind (agitation, intoxication, and so on.) In the latter role, they serve as instruments communicating the physical appearance of emotional states.

My interpretation of duality finds support in the *Natyasastra* itself, specifically in the so-called origin²⁸ legend of the *karanas*. Accordingly, the *karanas* are aspects of Siva's evening dance (*sandhya nrtyam*) that Siva recommends for inclusion in the evolving *natya* tradition. He also adds that with the help of the *karanas*, the 'meaning of great songs'²⁹ will be represented. Therefore, encased in a structure that is predetermined and discernible, I suggest that the 108-*karana* facilitate both movement and communication.

Dance and 108 karana : Agency of Ritual

It is generally recognized that ritual is performed to achieve specific goals and objectives. Ritual uses a structured and abbreviated language of symbolic communication and by virtue of its content and delivery, entails the transformation of the participants. As a "culturally constructed system

²⁸ The so-called origin of the *karanas* is mentioned in the fourth chapter of the *Natyasastra*. Siva recalls that in his *Sandhya nrtyam* he employs *karanas* and *angaharas*, and these would be suitable for *natya* as well. See the *natyasastra*, Ch. 4, v. 13-17.

²⁹ See *Natyasastra*, ch. 4. V. 14.

consisting of patterned and ordered sequences and acts,"³⁰ rituals are also grounded in cosmological and ideological constructs. The sheer performative nature of ritual results in the transformation of the participants and in the sense of a staged performance that includes other media, the participants experience the event intensively.³¹

The strong ties between dance and ritual in India is recognized primarily in the form of the *devadasi* and her function in the temple. The ritualistic dance performed by the *devadasi* in the temples of Orissa and southern India have been meticulously documented and analyzed by scholars who have successfully reconstructed the multi-dimensional role of the *devadasi* and the dance itself as an important aspect of ritual.³² As important models laying out the interactions between dance and ritual in temple worship, these works have enormous relevance and credibility. It is my belief however that

³⁰ For a superb and well thought out analysis of ritual and its constituents, please refer to Stanley Tambiah's "A Performative approach to Ritual." *Proceedings of the British Academy*, n. 65 (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 113-169.

³¹ Stanley Tambiah's "A Performative approach to Ritual." *Proceedings of the British Academy*, n. 65 (London: Oxford University Press, 1981) P. 119.

³² Several scholars such as Kersenboom, Amrit Srinivasan, and Frederique Marglin have studied the subject of ritualistic ties between dance and temple as manifested in the *devadasi*. For more information, please refer to *Nityasumangali: Devadasi Tradition in South India* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1987 & 1998), and Marglin's *Wives of the God-King: The rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), and still recently, Marglin's "Refining the body : Transformative Emotion in Ritual Dance" in *Divine Passions : The Social Construction of Emotion in India*, ed. By Owen Lynch. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 212-238.

they unwittingly place these connections relatively late in Indian history, owing to their reliance on the *devadasi* as the primary source.

I suggest that these interactions precede the *devadasi* by several centuries as reflected in their presence in the *Natyasastra*. In fact, associations between ritual and gesture as evidenced in the *samhita* texts has led some scholars³³ to suggest that *abhinaya* may have been an outgrowth of earlier ritual usage. Ritual performances recorded in *Vajasaneyi Samhita* recreate what appears to be dynamic, multi-media operations.³⁴ Invariably accompanied by gesture, the *mantras* were apparently recited to a special rhythm³⁵ and accompanied by gestures of the body that denoted the meaning and significance of the verses being chanted. Moreover, some of the rituals even required the priest to act and enact certain movements³⁶ symbolizing the deeds of the deity itself.

³³ Vatsyayana in *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts* (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Academi, 1977), pp. 154-155, makes this connection and assertion which has since found acceptance among many Indian scholars.

³⁴ For more information, refer to Griffiths Translation and Commentary of the *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, Book, 2, IX, 22.

³⁵ Some verses contain terminology related to 'meters' that were used in beating of the drums and rhythmic accompaniments in their descriptions of ritual performance. See *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, Book II, v. 25.

³⁶ According to the *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, while performing a ritual to Visnu, the priest actually takes three steps symbolically reenacting Visnu's three strides. The strides are to be made following specific rhythmic patterns. See *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, vol.2, ch.9, v. 25, and ch. 10, v. 19.

These early and tenuous strains take on a more concrete manifestation in the *Natyasastra*. I state that the *Natyasastra* is not the beginning of dance/drama, but a text that documents preexisting artistic activity. I would like to present and analyze information on dance- ritual contained in it. I see the text itself as the strong evidence of prevailing ritual practices related to dramatic expression.

This section draws descriptive data from the *Natyasastra* and situates it within the larger framework of sacred ritual. Within this ritual framework, I investigate the role of dance as a significant rite that ties the various components of the ritual together. I see dance as being infused in the ritual structure, wherein it is expressed through the use of stylized movement and communicative gesture. In arriving at this interpretation, I have relied especially upon the *Natyasastra* itself apart from scholarly works of Kuiper,³⁷ Vatsyayana,³⁸ and Lidova,³⁹ who have explored this area with new perspectives and fresh insights before me.

³⁷ See F.B.J. Kuiper in *Varuna and Vidusaka: On the origin of Sanskrit Drama* (New York: 1979).

³⁸ Kapila Vatsyayana in *The Square and Circle of Indian Arts* (New Delhi: Roli books International, 1983).

³⁹ For more information, refer to Natalia Lidova's *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1994).

At least three kinds of ritual can be gleaned from the *Natyasastra*. The first details rites accompanying the foundation of a theater, the second, its consecration, and finally, the *purvaranga*- a ritual ceremony performed immediately before a drama (*natya*) unfolds.⁴⁰ Understandably, the foundation and consecration rituals are performed only once while the *purvaranga* is performed every time there is a dramatic presentation.

I believe that, at this point, some contextual background on prior investigations of these rituals by scholars and their interpretations regarding the origin/emergence of *natya* needs to be introduced. Early scholars⁴¹ delved into Vedic hymns and ritual in search of clues that would indicate the roots of the mature *natya* tradition espoused in the *Natyasastra*. Kuiper⁴² was the first

⁴⁰ The second chapter in the *Natyasastra* titled 'construction of the Theater' discusses the rituals associated with the foundation of a Theater; the third chapter deals with the 'Worship of the Gods on Stage' where rituals performed after theater construction are undertaken. The *purvaranga* ritual is dealt with in the fifth chapter (immediately following the chapter on the *tandava*). For more information, see Manomohan Ghosh, *The Natyasastra : A Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics ascribed to Bharatamuni*, vols. I&II, (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1951, 1967, &1995). For a more recent translation, please refer to N. P. Unni's *Natyasastra* , Vol.1-4, (New Delhi: Nag Publishers), 1998.

⁴¹ Early scholars who read vedic ritualism as the root of drama include Max Muller in *Rig – Veda-Samhita*, translation and explanation, Vol. 1, 1869 ; Sylvain Levi's *Le theater indien*, (Paris, 1890); and Keith A.B. *The Sanskrit Drama in its Origins, Development, Theory and Practice*, (London: 1924).

⁴² Refer to F.B.J. Kuiper in *Varuna and Vidusaka: On the origin of Sanskrit Drama* (New York: 1979).

scholar to approach this material from a different angle—he scrutinized the *Natyasastra* itself for Vedic associations⁴³ and affinities.

Kuiper concluded that the first dramas mentioned in the *Natyasastra* were visual representations of Vedic cosmogony that recreated Indra's struggle with the *asuras*,⁴⁴ a prominent theme in vedic literature. He also read the *Natyasastra* rituals as being the equivalent of the vedic *yagna*⁴⁵ in their structure, performance and more so, by the use of the term *veda* in the text itself. This interpretation was embraced by several Indologists, among them Vatsyayan,⁴⁶ who followed it up with more penetrative studies on the Vedic affiliations of *natya*.

Lidova's research however calls into question this interpretation and proposes an alternate source for the *Natyasastra* rituals-- the agamic tradition that is post-vedic wherein the *puja* became the system of worship.⁴⁷ I am in

⁴³ The *Natyasastra*, like several ancient Indian texts, claims a vedic source and content. It is supposed to be the 5th veda that contains key elements of other four vedas. Text from Rg Veda, gestural representation from Yajur veda, music from Sama veda, and aesthetic emotions from the Atharva veda, were combined to 'create' the *Natyaveda*. This creation he handed over to Bharata and his sons to develop, refine and pass on. See the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 1, .4-25.

⁴⁴ F.B.J. Kuiper, *Varuna and Vidusaka: On the origin of Sanskrit Drama* (New York: 1979), pp.113-114.

⁴⁵ F.B.J. Kuiper, *Varuna and Vidusaka: On the origin of Sanskrit Drama* (New York: 1979), P.122.

⁴⁶ Please refer to Vatsyayan, *The Square and the Circle of Indian Arts* (New Delhi: Roli Publications, 1983.)

agreement with Lidova's findings about *Natyasastra's* agamic mentality revealed in its elucidation of rituals connected to drama. However, I would hasten to add that even the agamas, by virtue of their place in the evolutionary cycle, carried through some vedic traits while discarding others. Therefore, I suggest that although the *natya* tradition is clearly agamic, inherently it embraces some vedic elements as well.

Let us first examine the foundation ritual described in the *Natyasastra*.⁴⁸ According to the text, the establishment of the theater involved first the selection of a suitable site and its measurement followed by a formal ceremony performed by the *natyacarya* (master of *natya*). In this ceremony performed with musical instruments and offerings to guardian deities, the *natyacarya* lays the ritual foundation of the theater edifice. After this, the pillars of the theater are raised, in all four, representing the four main castes in Hinduism. Finally, the stage is set-up. The inside of the theater is compared to a cavernous mountain that houses all the elements necessary for a theatrical presentation.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Lidova in *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1994), pp.42-52, puts forth a lucid analysis of the purvaranga as analogous to the agamic puja.

⁴⁸ See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 2, v. 7-60.

⁴⁹ The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 2, v. 80.

Lidova rightly draws parallels to agamic foundation rituals of temples that closely follow several of these sequences leaving little doubt about the closeness of the ritual systems. I would like to point out that even the comparison of the theater to a cave and mountain is analogous to the *vimana's* symbolic associations.

Almost as a continuation, the second ritual mentioned in the treatise relates to the *puja* offered to the gods of the stage.⁵⁰ In this ritual, the *acarya* or an initiated master of the *natya* again plays the role of the ritual specialist. Reciting *mantras*, the teacher pays obeisance to the various deities-gods, goddesses and celestials and requests their protection and support for the safety of the theater and success of the play.⁵¹ He then installs the gods in their respective *mandalaic* positions, with Brahma in the middle. Siva, Visnu, Kartikeya, and Surya occupy the east along with their supporters.⁵² Following prescriptions, gods are installed in the other directions as well,⁵³ and prayers (*puja*) offered to them. After this, the *jarjara* is worshipped and the sacrificial

⁵⁰ The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 3, v. 1-102.

⁵¹ The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 3, v. 10-13.

⁵² The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 3, v. 21-25.

⁵³ The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 3, v. 26-35.

fire (*homa*) is lit⁵⁴ and ceremonies performed before it. Finally, with the illumination of the stage by the *acharya*, the consecration ceremony concludes.

This is yet another ritual scheme that brings to mind descriptions of consecratory rituals performed in the temple. In my opinion, the fact that the theater was considered analogous to a sacred site where divinities were invited to reside and transmit their benevolence itself, points to a shared framework between *natya* and the temple from very ancient times. For instance, corresponding to the sanctum in a temple is the stage of the theater with Brahma placed in its center. The *mandalaic* arrangement and propitiation of the deities from the external to the internal- directional gods in the exterior and the *Brahmasthanana* in the core, mirrors the placement of deities in the *vastupurusa mandala* of the temple. Both these rituals- foundation and consecration- dealt with the physical edifice of the theater and did not involve elements of dance in their execution.

The third ritual, extremely significant to this study is called the *purvaranga*⁵⁵ (before stage) - the ritual performed before the staged performance commences. Unlike the earlier rituals that were performed only

⁵⁴ The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 3, v. 82.

⁵⁵ An entire chapter is devoted to the performance of the *purvaranga* rite and its variants in the *Natyasastra*. For more information, please refer to *Nataysastra*, Ch.5.

once, the *purvaranga* was performed every time a *natya* was staged, prior to its actual commencement.

Before analyzing the contents of the *purvaranga*, I will briefly describe its method of performance. According to the *Natyasastra*, the ultimate goal of the *purvaranga* was the propitiation of all deities leading to a successful performance.⁵⁶ The *purvaranga* had two sections-- one closed and the other open.⁵⁷ The initial segment of the *puja* was performed on the stage with the curtain closed, while the same curtain was opened during the second half of the *puja*. Comprising an elaborately structured ritual scheme that included music and dance in its milieu, the *purvaranga* appears to be a multi-media operation.

The closed section of the *purvaranga* is preparatory in nature,⁵⁸ wherein the musician and instrumentalists enter the orchestra area and take their seats. They also begin to gently sound-check the various instruments in preparation for the open section of the *purvaranga*.

⁵⁶ *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, v. 56-57.

⁵⁷ The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, v. 8-15 lists the constituents of the two sections.

⁵⁸ With the curtain still closed, musical instruments are arranged in prescribed order and the musician arrives at the orchestra pit and commences singing. One by one, each of the instruments- drums, wind-instrument (flute/bugle) and string-instrument (lute) are played in accompaniment. Refer to *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5. V. 16-20.

The *sutradhara* (holder of the chord) is the ritual specialist in the open segment of the *purvaranga* rites.⁵⁹ The *sutradhara*, as the name suggests, is the stage manager who superintends the play by piecing the various acts together. A reconstruction of this ritual from the *Natyasastra* reveals the following sequence- as soon as the curtain is drawn dance is performed to specified songs.⁶⁰ This is followed by the entry of the *sutradhara* with flowers along with a pair of assistants with a pitcher and the staff or *jarjara*.⁶¹

In course of this segment, the *sutradhara* demarcates the *Brahma mandala* with relevant hand gestures (*hastas*) and offers flowers.⁶² Then executing stylized movement (*caris*),⁶³ he goes round the *Brahma mandala*⁶⁴ carrying out ablutions with the pitcher and the *jarjara*. Continuing his stylized motion (*suci cari*- a dance movement), and carrying the *jarjara*, the *sutradhara* pays respects

⁵⁹ Literally translates as the 'holder of the chord/string', the *sutradhara* is the master of the play who keeps it all together by his frequent appearances with the introduction of play, characters and narration of the various acts in the play. He binds the play together and also interacts with the audience.

⁶⁰ The text documents the performance of dance to specific song types –*madraka* and *vardhamanaka*- as the initial act of the 'open' *purvaranga*. See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5. V. 12-13.

⁶¹ The entry of the *sutradhara* and assistants and their ritual actions begin in the second rotation (*parivartana*) and continue throughout the *purvaranga*. See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5. V. 66-68.

⁶² The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5. V. 73-76.

⁶³ *Caris* referring to foot movements are characteristic of *karanas* and are inherently part of dance movement. Specific *cari* movements are mentioned as being done by the *sutradhara* and his assistants in the *purvaranga* whenever a change of place is necessitated on the stage.

⁶⁴ The verse states unambiguously that offering of flowers are made in the *Brahma mandala* as Brahma himself occupies the center of the stage. Further, Brahma referred to as 'grandfather'

to the four directional deities and finally to the Hindu triad- Siva, Visnu and Brahma.⁶⁵ Throughout these motions, the *sutradhara* executes prescribed *cari* movements that are embedded in rhythm as well.⁶⁶ The raising of the *jarjara*, Indra's banner and weapon forms a key part of the open ritual since it symbolically provided protection for the *natya* from demons.⁶⁷

In this context, Lidova in her study interprets a deeper symbolism to its presence as a representation of the principal vertical axis of the ritual space, symbolically associated with the axis *mundi*⁶⁸ of the imaginary world.

The benedictory segment (*naandi*) involves verses seeking protection for various parties followed by the *rangadvara* (stage door)⁶⁹ portion wherein for the first time, aspects of body movement (*angika*) and speech (*vacika*) are introduced by the *sutradhara*. This is followed by two dramatic stages—*cari*

(*pitamaha*) is also venerated with 'attractive/charming' hand gestures. See *Natyasastra*, Ch. V, 73-76.

⁶⁵ See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, v. 91-99.

⁶⁶ The descriptions of the rite include information on rhythm (*tala*) and tempo (*laya*) of the songs sung in the background as the *sutradhara* performs his ritual duties.

⁶⁷ The *jarjara* or staff makes its presence in two of the three rituals mentioned in the treatise, namely, the consecration rite and *purvaranga*. In both these rites, it is associated with protection and removal of obstacles. Refer to *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, v. 81.

⁶⁸ For more information, refer to Natalia Lidova's *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1994), 11.

⁶⁹ Refer to The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5. V. 106-110. This is followed by the 'stage-door' segment which is mentioned earlier as well. *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, v. 26, and again in verse 116.

and *mahacari*⁷⁰-- wherein the erotic sentiment (*sringara rasa*) and furious sentiment (*raudra*) are enacted by the *sutradhara*. Symbolically representing Uma and Siva respectively, these two portions conclude with a humorous discussion of the play and its plot itself by the *sutradhara* accompanied by the jester (*vidusaka*) and an assistant.⁷¹ The *Natyasastra* states very clearly that the *purvaranga* is a 'puja' to the gods that is conducive to *dharma*, fame and longevity.⁷²

My analysis of this rite, also referred to as the pure (*suddha*) type of *purvaranga* reveals the following facts: it is a highly technical and structured system. Combining *mantras* along with pneumatic syllables, music with dance, rhythm and meter, movement along ritual specifications, and even humorous presentation, the *purvaranga* is an eclectic sound and visual experience.

Significantly, it employs aspects of dance-- stylized movement and communicative gesture-- in its very framework. Both in the performance of the portions of this rite as well as in the transition from one segment to another, stylized movement is executed by the *sutradhara*. In fact, the open

⁷⁰ See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, v. 117-135 for description of these two segments.

⁷¹ *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 5. V.136-140.

⁷² *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, 57-58.

section of this rite is initiated by dance and I read an infusion of dance, somewhat more subtly throughout its structure.

Dance is introduced explicitly in an alternate type of the *purvaranga* rite- the mixed (*citra*) variety.⁷³ According to the text, the mixed *purvaranga* entailed female dancers dressed as goddesses appear on stage after the demarcation of the *Brahma mandala*, perform various *angaharas* and sacralize it with flowers.⁷⁴ Similarly, the benedictory segment (*naandi*)⁷⁵ of this rite involved the performance of aspects of the *tandava* dance in between the various verses.

I characterize dance as an intrinsic component of the *purvaranga* rite based on an examination of its variant types. In doing so, it affirms the ritualistic traits of dance from a very early period, well before the *devadasi*. In these instances, dance presentation is more than an offering, it is integral to the ritual structure- i.e. dance is ritual.

I suggest that precisely due to its inherent ritualistic mentality, it may have been incorporated into the evolving temple vocabulary in the ensuing

⁷³ The treatise mentions two kinds of *purvaranga* rites, namely pure or *suddha* and mixed (*citra*). The mixed variety of *purvaranga* laid greater emphasis on dance elements than the 'pure' variety.

⁷⁴ *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, 153-156.

⁷⁵ The verses states unambiguously that aspects of *tandava* dance be introduced between the benedictory stanzas numbering either eight or twelve. *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, v. 157-158.

periods. Within the temple landscape, it reveals itself in sculpture and as an offering to the deity in the daily *puja*.

In her study, Lidova proposes that the iconic cult reflected in anthropomorphic imagery may in fact have received material shape of gods' appearance through the enactment of *Natya*.⁷⁶ She qualifies this statement by pointing to the fact that images of gods did not exist in vedic ritualism making their appearance in the post-vedic age. Therefore, vedic ritual could not have been the source for the emergence of statues and sculpture of gods. The *natya* tradition with its reliance almost entirely on divine personages as the heroes, heroines, and villains as well as its insistence on the actors 'becoming' these divinities-both body and soul, may have served as good model for the development of the sculptural tradition.

Although this theory seems plausible, I do not believe that there is convincing evidence to substantiate it. Among the several questions that arise from this supposition is whether or not something like this could have been a pan-Indic feature or a local phenomenon that gained rapid acceptance. With distinct regional expressions revealing both local and pan-Indic elements, it

⁷⁶ See Lidova, *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1994), 104.

remains questionable whether the *natya* tradition could have uniformly influenced all the regional schools.

However, I do propose that the conventional thinking of traditional Indian dance as performance and entertainment has to be re-examined in light of evidence pointing to its solid roots in ritual. I also suggest that its ritualistic resonance make it well suited to embody and communicate emerging religious expression. And, with the temple attempting to give form and shape developing religious ideas, the visual language of dance/*natya* would have been a rich resource to draw from. Therefore, I propose that scholarship needs to rethink the dynamics between traditional dance and ritual, along with that of the dancer/actor and the ritual specialist.

The 108-*karanas*' ties and relevance to ritual, particularly, the *purvaranga* is spelt out right from its so-called inception in the *Natyasastra*.⁷⁷ According to this version that is reiterated in subsequent literature revealing its general acceptance, Siva is the dancer and transmitter of dance to Bharata. After witnessing a play (*natya*) on the burning of *tripura* (three cities) by Bharata and his students, Siva recommends that they incorporate aspects of his own evening dance (*sandhya nrtyam*) to the *natya*. These aspects include 108

⁷⁷ This relates to the legend that is associated with the origin of the *karanas* according to the *Natyasastra*. This legend is alluded to in varying degrees in dance literature that followed the *Natyasastra*. For more information, please refer to *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. v. 9-17.

individual *karana* units and 32 combined formations (*angaharas*) among others,⁷⁸ all of which fall under the category of *tandava* dance. Specifically stating that the *karanas* and *angaharas* are appropriate for use in *purvaranga* rites,⁷⁹ Siva adds that they can enhance the meanings of songs as well.

This connection is firmly established in the *purvaranga* descriptions that follow in the subsequent chapter. The *sutradhara*'s movement within the ritual stage is executed by means of dance steps consisting of the *cari* movements⁸⁰, which make-up a *karana*. Additionally, references to combinations of *karana* sequences (*angaharas*) performed on the stage by dancers dressed as goddesses⁸¹ appears again in the 'mixed' prelude rites.

Yet another reference to the execution of *karanas* in the *purvaranga* rites alludes to the performance of dance formations interspersed with benedictory verses (*naandi*).⁸² I regard this particular verse as very significant because I read it as one that brings out the relationship between the *karana*, *tandava* and the *purvaranga*. Accordingly, Bharata states that “ the wise that want a mixed

⁷⁸ These include the 4 major joint movements (*recaka*) and the 'pindi' or insignias of deities, which along with the *karanas* and *angaharas*. See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4.

⁷⁹ See *Natyasastra*, ch. IV, v.15.

⁸⁰ Prescribed movements of the feet are referred to as *cari* movements in *Natyasastra* and later dance texts.

⁸¹ This specific verse occurs in the section on the *citra purvaranga*, See *Natyasastra*, Ch. V, 156.

purvaranga should employ *tandava* dance with its *pindi*, *recaka*, *angahara*, *apanyasa* and *nyasa* in between the *naandi* stanza....”

Although the term ‘*karana*’ is not used in this verse that presents the five-fold⁸³ vocabulary of the *tandava*, I believe its presence is implied in more than one context. First, the *angaharas* themselves comprise select *karana* combinations. Second, the terms, ‘*nyasa*’ and ‘*apanyasa*’ find presence only in a later chapter on music.⁸⁴

To better understand their relevance in the realm of dance, which is where they are mentioned here, I propose to look at their literal meaning. The word *nyasa* literally translates as ‘putting down in’, or ‘placing or fixing’ something, and also relates to the lowest scale or final tone in music⁸⁵. That is, it stands for a basic, bottommost possible tonal feature or a basic/ fundamental position—which is what the 108-*karanas* are in the sphere of dance. Therefore,

⁸² See *Natyaśāstra*, Ch. 5. v. 157.

⁸³ I believe that this verse stating, rather subtly, the presence of a five-fold categorization of *tandava* in terms of dance is very significant and I re-examine it from the perspective of yoga and meditation in a later segment of this chapter.

⁸⁴ The two terms appear in the 28th chapter of the treatise that deals with musical notes and pitch. They are intrinsically entwined in the theoretical framework of musical notes and pitch, a highly complex system in and of itself. There is no allusion to the *tandava* or even dance in this section which is intense with musical theory. Both *nyasa* and *apanyasa* are embedded in the fabric of music with its own nuances and terminologies.

⁸⁵ See Monier- Williams A *Sanskrit- English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, rep. 1997), 576.

I interpret '*nyasa*' in this verse as referring to the *karana* - the basic unit of the *tandava*.

As intrinsic elements of the *tandava* that is an important component of, even germane to the *purvaranga*, I read the *karanas* also being as innate to the *purvaranga* rite as well. The 108 *karana* are actions that, by virtue of their execution entail the successful performance of a ritual activity.

Dance and 108-karana as Agent of Transformation

Dance in the western context, and in modern times even in the Indian concert scene, is perceived as stage performances that displays the artistry of the dancer and her mastery over the dance. Much of its depth and profoundness-the vibrant currents of Hindu devotion and the philosophy behind it are not transmitted or not comprehended by the dancer and the audience. Chief among this relates to the goal and purpose of dance, and for that matter, all performing arts in India- to evoke *rasa*.

What is *rasa*? What makes it unique and how does one experience it? *Rasa*, derived from the root, *ras*, literally means, "flavor", "juice", or "sap".⁸⁶ As the primary essence of something, *rasa* is often metaphorically linked to delight and bliss of apprehending and experiencing an emotional flavor aesthetically.⁸⁷ Here the emotional situation itself, as the object of aesthetic experience is also referred to as *rasa*.

To elaborate this further, in everyday life, we go through several emotional situations-- some intense and emotional and others less so. These mundane everyday situations are considered ordinary (*laukika*) responses.

⁸⁶ Monier Williams *A Sanskrit- English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, rep. 1997), 869.

⁸⁷ George Kliger's essay on "Indian Aesthetics and Bharata Natyam", in *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective*, 22.

However, an aesthetic experience makes it extraordinary (*alaukika*) by virtue of its being refined, polished, and cultured. Extraordinary because it has to be “experienced by us as impersonal... and find the emotional situation intrinsically interesting so that we become so absorbed in its contemplation as to forget ourselves in it”.⁸⁸

This extraordinary (*alaukika*) response is also translated as transcendental because of its leading to pure joy and bliss compared to the foretaste of man’s goal in life- the *ananda* (bliss) of realizing the ultimate truth,⁸⁹ at least for the duration of the play, musical performance or poem.

When applied to dance, I maintain that *rasa* is felt and expressed by the dancer in the portrayal of the emotional content of the poem, and in/by this state of involvement, she invokes a similar response in her viewer towards the deity of the poem.

In effect, the dancer transcends her own individual identity and becomes the deity or devotee that she is portraying. Once she herself is thus transformed, she/he experiences and expresses the emotions and sentiments of the deity as if they were her/his own. By the dancer’s total immersion in the

⁸⁸ Refer to George Kliger’s “Indian Aesthetics and Bharata *Natyam*”, in *Bharata Natyam in Cultural perspective*, 22.

⁸⁹ The commentator Abhinavagupta discusses the nuances of *rasa* and its universal nature in his *Abhinavabharathi*. For an English translation of these excerpts, refer to J.L Masson and M.V.

poem and its emotional content, she brings forth the same response in her viewer, who is also changed by the power of the dancer's own emotional experiences. Therefore, both the dancer and the viewer are merged into the same reality of sentiments- a state that requires the viewer to also transcend his personal identity. It is a transformation that is creation itself.⁹⁰

How is such a transformation and transcendent bliss brought about? How can the dancer transcend her identity and how does she attempt to draw out such a response in her audience? The answers, I believe, lie in the intricate and complex theoretical vocabulary of dance and drama- specifically in the terms *abhinaya* and *bhava*, and all that they personify. Originating from the root 'abhi' or to carry forward,⁹¹ *abhinaya* is the vehicle of visual expression in all its permutations.

Bharata in the *Natyasastra* mentions four kinds of *abhinaya*⁹²-- *angika* *abhinaya*, relating to the movements of the various parts of the *anga* (body): *vacika*

Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture: The Rasadhyaya of the Natyasastra*, (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute), 1970, pp. 72-74.

⁹⁰ For an insightful and superb elucidation of the concept of transformation as creation, specifically in the realm of poetry and music in India, please refer to Mukund Lath's *Transformation as Creation: Essays in the History, Theory, and Aesthetics of Indian Music, Dance and Theater* (New Delhi: Aditya Publication, 1998), 16-38.

⁹¹ An elaborate and seemingly complicated explanation about 'abhinaya's' derivation is provided in the *Natyasastra* and reiterated in all other texts. Accordingly, 'abhi' is the preposition which means 'to come face to face', or 'ascertained'. When combining 'abhi' to the root 'nin' which stands for 'obtaining or achieving something', *abhinaya* translates as that which is carried toward successfully. See N.P. Unni's *The Natyasastra*, (New Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1998), 231.

abhinaya, or the use of speech and song; *aharya abhinaya*, relating to dress and make-up; and *sattvika abhinaya*, consistent with expressions of emotions. While scholars have rightly explained that the tradition finds expression through these four technical elements, I would like to add that it is through the appropriate synthesis of elements from these *abhinayas* that the dancer/actor transforms her identity and attempts to evoke a response in her audience. That is how the four *abhinayas* function as vehicles for the experiencing of *rasa*.

Let me explain how the body and mind of a person are approached in this dramatic visual language, for I believe that it is the approach to the subject matter that reveals the goals of an activity. Physical movements of body parts such as the hands, feet, eyes, neck, hip, waist, and so on constitute *angika* (body communication).⁹³ The portrayal of feelings and emotions- superficial and deep- constitutes the *sattvika* (psychological/mental communication).⁹⁴ These aspects of *abhinaya* are employed simultaneously and in proper conjunction with one another to bring out the pathos or the passion of a particular situation.

⁹² The concept of *abhinaya* and its four aspects is already prevalent in the period of the *Natyaśāstra* itself by virtue of its elucidation in this treatise. See *Natyaśāstra*, Ch. 8, v.9-11.

⁹³ The range and extent of movements of the *anga* (body) are examined and elaborated through several chapters in the *Natyaśāstra*, starting with the gestures of the head. For more information, refer to *The Natyaśāstra*, ch. 8-11.

⁹⁴ *Sattvika* or 'pure' communication has relevance in the vast sphere of internal emotions: as *sattvika abhinaya*, it communicates the pure, unadulterated inner feelings; and as *sattvika bhava*, it denotes actual emotional states that involve the concentration of the mind.

For instance, let us aim the spotlight on the face and its expressions: the eyes, cheeks, lips, and chin make up the physical movements even as the dancer portrays deep inner feelings such as joy, sorrow, anger, and so on. Both *angika* (physical/outer) and *sattvika* (mental/inner) are in play; they support and complement one another even as one is physical and symbolic and other spiritual and real.

In its exploration and exposition of the potential of the body elements (*anga*) in communication, the *Natyasastra* and the texts that follow it are meticulous to the point of being pedantic and tedious. However, even in this mass of technical jargon, one cannot but notice the degree of research and analysis that must have preceded such a codification. The sheer profusion and penetration of the contents emphasizes my earlier statement that the *Natyasastra* is to be seen not as the creator of the *natya* tradition, despite its own claims, but as one that presents an existing tradition in a cohesive manner.

Sections on body (*angika*) movements,⁹⁵ in the *Natyasastra* reflect a terminology for literally every part of the human anatomy. I suggest that this

⁹⁵ Movements of minor limbs such as the head, eyes, eye-lids, eyebrows, cheeks, chin, lips, nose, mouth and neck are discussed in the 8th chapter; the various hand gestures in the 9th chapter; movements relating to the chest, belly, shanks, and feet in the following chapter; movements pertaining to a single foot at a time, or *cari*-types are dealt with in the 11th chapter along with a section on the various *sthana* or standing postures; *mandala*-formations that arise from the performance of *cari* combinations are articulated in the 12th chapter, and finally, the various gaits (*gatis*) are explored in the 13th chapter of the *Natyasastra*. In each case, their literal form is explained followed by their application in various dramatic situations.

microscopic penetration of the extent of physical movement provides the raw material for the transformation of the dancer in course of the recital. In fact, I believe that because transformation is inherent to the aspirations of the dancer, the dissection of the body for communicative movement is essential to make it a reality.

The expansive sphere of internal expression (*sattvika abhinaya*)⁹⁶ tugs at the heartstrings and intellect of the dancer and the viewer. Here too, the *Natyasastra* exhibits a highly sophisticated knowledge of the breadth and range of human emotions- their causes and consequences, and their portrayal leading to evoking *rasa*. I propose that it is with transformation as the ultimate goal that the sections on internal communication (*sattvika abhinaya*) are organized and elaborated. Once again, the contents, its assiduous layout, and innate structure point in the direction of a transformation of the performer.

In order to understand the nuances of dance communication, one needs to delve into the world of *natya* and its incredible vocabulary. It is a language that makes one discover the nature, richness, and complexity of emotions. *Bhava*, a term used concomitantly with *rasa* constitutes the actual emotion itself. Derived

⁹⁶ From the documentation present in the *Natyasastra*, we are aware of 8 *rasas* (sentiments), 8 corresponding permanent moods (*sthayi bhava*), 8 more *sattvika* or involuntary evidence of deep internal feelings, and 33 transitory states of emotion (*vyabhicari bhava*), an interplay of which provides the 'flavor' of the drama and brings it life.

from the root 'bhu' translating as 'to become,'⁹⁷ *bhavas* convey to the audience the meaning of the poem. I state that the use of the root 'to become' , and not just 'to convey, or act' itself speaks to the transformation of the performer.

Two major states of emotion are analyzed in the *Natyasastra*- stable emotions (*sthayi bhava*) and transitory emotions (*vyabhicari bhava*).⁹⁸ Stable emotions (*sthayi bhava*) acquired as a result of experiences in past lives is dominant, permanent, and latent in all of us. Accordingly, human beings experience eight dominant moods⁹⁹ at various situations in life. They are *rati* (sexual love), *hasa* (laughter), *soka* (sorrow), *krodha* (anger), *utsaha* (fortitude/enthusiasm), *bhaya* (fear), *jugupsa* (disgust), and *vismaya* (astonishment and wonder).

When under the influence of one of these dominant states of emotion, a person is automatically subjected to the transitory states (*vyabhcari bhava*) associated with that particular dominant mood. To give an idea of how this works, let us consider two brief examples: when love (*rati/sringara*) is the dominant emotion, some of the transitory feelings we may encounter are hope,

⁹⁷ The *Natyasastra* deals exhaustively on the facets of *bhava* in its seventh chapter. The excruciating detail of thought and experience that it explains, analyzes and scrutinizes reveals an advanced and sophisticated dramatic tradition. See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 7. The verses pertaining to the various *bhavas* is included in this chapter. *Natyasastra*, Ch.7, v. 2-14.

⁹⁸ See the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 7, v. 13-43; and for a list of transitory states, refer to v. 45-145

anxiety, longing, confidence, elation, and so on. These transitory states arise out of love but also manifest the dominant mood of love¹⁰⁰.

In the same manner, sorrow (*soka*) is a dominant/permanent emotion that can be caused by bereavement, loss of wealth, or misfortune of some sort. It is manifested by lamentation, shedding of tears, trembling of limbs, and paleness of the face-- all transitory emotions.¹⁰¹

A principal aspect in *bhava* or emotions is involuntary expressions (*sattvika bhava*)¹⁰² pertaining to deep, inner psychological responses. They are considered involuntary because they arise spontaneously and involve the subconscious mind. These include emotional states like trembling, weeping, fainting, and changes of color that require an elevated level of personal involvement, and thereby a transformation of persona. It would be impossible to just enact several of these responses without actually experiencing its effects. And I reiterate that it is only through the dancer's own transformation and reincarnation that she/he will be able to evoke a similar response in her audience. The technique and method of dramatic arts outlined in the *Natyasastra* is intense

⁹⁹ A ninth stage is included in later texts, namely, *nirveda* (world-weariness) or *sama* (equanimity) depending on the text.

¹⁰⁰ The dominant and transitory emotions (*bhavas*) associated with "love" are developed and presented in this section. For more information, refer to *Natyasastra*, Ch.7, v.18.

¹⁰¹ See *Natyasastra*, Ch.7, v.21.

¹⁰² The *sattvika bhavas* are examined in the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 7, 146-153.

and it is this intensity that propels the imagination to transcend to advanced states of consciousness.

I also propose that had acting or enacting been the primary goal of Indian dance/drama, this level of meticulous and painstaking analysis of emotions and its manifestations would be unnecessary. In reality, transformation is built into the edifice of ancient Indian dance and drama. This transformation, wrought by the body movement (*anga*) and inner emotions (*sattvika*) is complemented by *aharya abhinaya*¹⁰³-- the costumes and jewelry adorned by the dancer.¹⁰⁴

Characterized by grandeur, even extravagance, I attribute *aharya abhinaya* as a prime mover in the transformatory process, particularly of the viewer. For not only do the costumes and jewelry provide a dazzling visual effect, they also transport the viewer and the dancer to a different time and space. They present the dancer as a different individual belonging to a different realm.

There exist practical justifications as well in this assertion of mine, for had individual performance been the sole criterion, costumes and jewelry would be designed to complement and enhance all aspects of the performance. However, that is not always the case with Indian dance where the sheer extravagance of the

¹⁰³ *Aharya* translating as ornaments or decoration relates to costume, make-up, and jewelry in the Indian dance tradition. Its consideration as one of the aspects of *abhinaya* elevates its role and declares its enormous significance. See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 23.

¹⁰⁴ See *Natyasastra*, Ch.7, v.21.

costumes and jewelry is not typically conducive to execution of the intricate movements associated with the dance.

This is due to the fact that the costumes are inspired by and attempt to recreate gods and goddesses from an ancient past. They are not necessarily to enhance the personal identity of the dancer but to recreate her transformed persona as the deity, devotee, or heroine of the poem being portrayed.

A fascinating look into the world of costumes and make-up-- their techniques, methods, and goals is contained in the *Natyasastra*.¹⁰⁵ They are approached in terms of how they trigger feelings, emotions, and reactions in the viewer. By treating this theme in much the same manner as *rasa*, *bhava* or *abhinaya*, Bharatha succeeds in elevating the significance of costumes to the overall appreciation of drama and its contents.

According to the treatise, *aharya* (decoration) is understood within the framework of four¹⁰⁶ important categories: the *pusta* or mask; *alankara* or ornamentation; *anga arcana* or painting/make-up of body parts; and finally, *sajjiva*

¹⁰⁵ An entire chapter is devoted to costumes and make-up in the *Natyasastra*, wherein the reader is introduced to the theory and method of costuming and make-up. The manner and perspective from which *aharya* (dress and ornaments) are approached so that they represent and complement the actor/dancer as well as the audience are detailed. The form, dress and ornaments, colors to be used, as well as the use of accessories (*chauris*, umbrellas, banner/staff, water-pots, and so on) along with weapons and even animals by the actors, brings to mind parallels with the sculptural tradition of gods, their form and ornamentation, their attributes, and *vahanas* (vehicles). See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 23.

¹⁰⁶ See The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 23, v. 1-4. For a detailed and accurate enumeration of the *Natyasastra* text, refer to K.P. Unni's *Natyasastra* (New Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1998), 601-636.

or possessed with life. Once again, there is profusion of detail and variety in the elucidation of each of these categories and their employment to best create the visual effect on the viewer. I find several aspects of this chapter, particularly those that discuss *sajjiva* (with life) decorations resonate strikingly to Indic sculptural conventions.

For instance, the live (*sajjiva*) objects include animals, and even weapons such as javelin, spear and lance; Indra's banner (*jarjara*), the facial mask, the staff (*danda*), the umbrella (*chatra*), fly whisk (*camara*), flag (*dhwaja*), and water-pot (*bhrngara*).¹⁰⁷ All of these *vahanas*, weapons and attributes are obviously included to create the perfect 'vision' of the *natya*. I believe that the vision resonates with the idea of divine sight or *darsan* in Indian sculpture where *vahanas*, attributes and weapons identify and personify the deity. Moreover, that these weapons are considered to be *sajjiva* or imbued with life, they appear a lot closer to their sculptural counterparts. However, since *aharya abhinaya* and sculptural conventions is not the focus of this dissertation, I will not be pursuing it further. I would however, like to remind the reader about the various levels of inter-connectedness between the two traditions.

¹⁰⁷ The author of the *Natyasastra* deals with the subject-matter of Costumes and Make-up in the 23rd chapter well after his discussion on the expressional components of *natya*. However, there is no let-up in the meticulous and pedantic treatment of the theme. For information on the *sajjiva* aspect of Ornamentation, particularly relating to weapons and attributes, refer to The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 23, v.159-179.

The forcefulness and magnificence of the costumes as well as jewelry makes it unique to dance/*natya* presentation. Much of the jewelry is not used for other occasions be they special or simple. I maintain that the costumes and jewelry utilized in dance are an integral part of the transformation of the individual, the viewer, space and time.

Given our understanding of dance as an agent of transformation, I would like to present my examination of the 108-*karana* within this paradigm. How would the 108-*karana* relate as an instrument in the process of metamorphosis?

First, the 108-*karana* being 108 specific types of formations is embedded within the larger framework of *nrtta* or pure dance, which is one aspect of the dance tradition. Since transformation is inherent in the larger goal of the tradition, and its structure consists of devices that aid/trigger this transformation, I read the 108-*karana* as facilitators in the transformatory process.

Second, the 108-*karana* have tangible associations to Siva's dance, the *tandava*, going by the version of the *Natyasastra*¹⁰⁸. Here too, Siva has already used them in his 'evening-dance', the *sandhya nrtyam*. Therefore, it would not be wrong to surmise that *sandhya nrtyam* has associations to the *tandava* dance.

¹⁰⁸ See the *Natyasastra*, ch. 4. Accordingly, Siva is the dancer and transmitter of the *karanas* and *angaharas*, by way of Tandua, to Bharata and his entourage.

Although the popular perception of the *tandava* is its fierce and wrathful quality, there is no such ferocity or destruction in the *karana* and *angahara* descriptions of the *Natyasastra*.¹⁰⁹ Combined with Siva's personal involvement in the performance and transmission of knowledge of *karanas* and its constituents to Tandu, I read the *Sandhya nrtyam* as a technical and intellectual aspect of the *tandava*. Apparently, sage Tandu¹¹⁰ embellished this product with music thereby giving it shape and structure and imparted the knowledge to Bharata- hence its name *Tandava*.

Siva's associations to *tandava* go beyond this reference to the *Sandhya nrtyam* and reflect a wide scale of activities, among them: as Bhairava, he performs a wild dance in the cremation ground; and as Nataraja he performs the dance of bliss¹¹¹ (*ananda tandava*).

The different *tandavas* of Siva are united in the fact that they embody and entail transformation of Siva. Be it Bhairava's wild and fearful dance in the

¹⁰⁹ A chance reference to Siva's destruction of Daksa's sacrifice, there still no evidence of the rage and anger that typically characterize the *tandava*. For this exact verse, refer to *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4, v. 256.

¹¹⁰ Among the different interpretations of the term *tandava* is the one offered in the *Natyasastra*, where a sage and devotee of Siva named Tandu is credited with giving the proper shape and form to dance and transmitted the same to the author Bharata. See *The Natyasastra*, Ch.4., v.264-265.

¹¹¹ In the Tamil tradition, Siva is believed to have performed seven *tandavas*. Each of these dances is associated with a particular site and purpose in the Tamil country. For a recent publication providing a list of the *sapta tandava* sites, refer to Kamil Zvelebil, *Ananda Tandava of Siva Sadanrttamurti* (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies), 1998, 3.

cremation ground or Nataraja's dance of bliss (*ananda tandava*) in Tillai, the idea that transformation takes place is germane to the *tandava*. Therefore, by association to the *tandava*, I read the *karanas* as also agents of transformation.

In this context, a suggestion of the transformational character of the *karanas* and the *angaharas* is found in the *Natyasastra*'s itself. In course of *purvaranga* ritual, at a prescribed moment of time, dancers dressed as goddesses come on the stage and perform *angaharas*.¹¹² Going by Indic *natya* conventions, I interpret the statement that dancers dressed as goddesses means 'dancers become goddesses', i.e. they transform into divinities, and it is in this transformed state that they perform the *angaharas*. Therefore, in this verse, the *angaharas* (that are made up of *karanas*) are associated with transformation and also with divine players.

Dance and 108-karana: Agency of Yogic Meditation

Dance, with its roots in ritual and as a channel for transformation is intrinsically linked to yogic processes as well. *Yoga*, derived from two roots, *yujir* and *yujja*,¹¹³ translates as 'yoking' and 'mental concentration' and refers to the integration of body and mind in order to realize an advanced state of

¹¹² I have examined the *purvaranga* rite and this specific aspect of the ritual in the earlier section on the ritual aspects of dance. For the exact verse corresponding to this statement, please see *The Natyasastra*, Ch.5, v. 156.

¹¹³ Panini in his *Astadhyayi* refers to presents both these roots as derivatives of the term *yoga*. See Panini's *Astadhyayi*, 3.3.121.

consciousness. This realization attained through rigorous physical and mental discipline involves the flow of energy from the base of the spine (*muladhara cakra*), all the way to the forehead, the realm of the *sahasrara cakra* or ultimate knowledge.¹¹⁴

The spinal column is the central channel (*susumna nadi*) through which the *kundalini* (coiled serpent symbolizing dormant energy) makes its upward journey. In course of its ascent, *kundalini* awakens various centers in the human body (*cakras*) each representing an aspect of consciousness. Finally, it reaches the region of the head, the *sahasrara*, leading to the awakening of the inner consciousness and the attainment of enlightenment. This vertical path taken by *kundalini* is in itself suggestive of total surrender, i.e. complete transformation of self-abnegation. However, this spiritual journey can be accomplished only when the human body and the mind are integrated towards one goal.

Just as *yoga* requires the body as praxis, dance also requires the body to be the instrument of stylistic expression¹¹⁵ leading to the evoking of *rasa*. And, I state that just as in *yoga*, this vehicle of self-realization is transformed during the dance performance. Zarrilli rightly contends that both dance and *yoga* use the

¹¹⁴ The concept of yogic meditation involving *kundalini* is central to both Hindu and Buddhist religious practice. Several yogic texts from both these disciplines describe the various meditations and their goals. See Kumar Kaul's *Aspects of Yoga* (New Delhi: D. K. Publishers Distributors, 1994), 80-84.

body as the primary medium for the harnessing of energy and awakening of the senses.¹¹⁶ The spinal column as the central supporting frame is maintained in its natural supporting line in dance- a position that facilitates the unrestrained breathing and flow of energy.

In yogic meditations, it is this central axis of the body that serves as the passageway for the rising *kundalini*. Zarilli¹¹⁷ analyzes the interconnectedness of meditation, performing arts and the martial arts since all these reflect similar structure, method and goals. Significantly, Zarilli notes that all three disciplines entail a personal metamorphosis¹¹⁸. Accordingly, while the yogi enters the spiritual path leaving behind all social obligations and thus is altered right from the beginning, the practitioners of performing arts acquire this altered persona by doing specific actions that transform their identity.

¹¹⁵ See Kersenboom's *Nityasumangali*, P. 295.

¹¹⁶ Phillip Zarrilli in his exploratory essay on titled "Towards a Phenomenology of Indian Disciplines of Practice: Meditational, Martial, and Performative," in *Dance of India*, (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1998), 165, discusses what in his opinion are preliminary inferences regarding the similarities between the performing arts and meditation.

¹¹⁷ Phillip zarrilli has recently published excerpts from a paper that examines the fundamental alterations arising out of 'doing' specific acts, such as a performance, and meditation in a highly structured manner. Essentially analyzing them through the lens of personal transformation that each of these 'acts' entail, Zarrilli also suggests the close ties between each tradition. For more information, please refer to Phillip Zarrilli's "Towards a Phenomenology of Indian Disciplines of Practice: Meditational, Martial, and Performative" in *Dance of India*, 161-175.

¹¹⁸ Zarrilli, P. "Towards a Phenomenology of Indian Disciplines", *Dance of India*, 162.

Zarrilli analyses the relationship between the two practices- dance and *yoga* through the practitioners¹¹⁹ -the dancer and the *yogi*. He concludes that both the dancer and yogi gains access to energy by the repetitive performance of actions and movements that constitute the structure of each discipline. With the *guru* (teacher) as the source for the knowledge and the practice itself as the power, the harnessing of the energy occurs when the practitioner is able to become one with the practice and movements itself, leading to success.

While Zarrilli's study focuses on the performative aspect of dance and its resonance to *yoga*, I wish to delve deeper- into the very framework of dance that mirrors yogic values. The innate structure of dance displays a yogic mentality in its approach to dance/natya expression.

We have already discussed how dance is movement and communication. *Abhinaya*, the communicative part is the language, the link between the dancer and the viewer. It is through the elements of *abhinaya* that the dancer transforms herself, her space, and her audience to recreate the aesthetic enjoyment of the divine.

I propose that *abhinaya* is approached through the yogic formula of the Body, Speech, and Mind in *natya*. Accordingly, there exist four sources of

abhinaya, among them – Body (*angika*), Speech (*vacika*), and the Mind. The fourth *abhinaya*, ornamentation (*aharya*) is necessary to the visual art of *natya*. However, as reiterated by me in the previous section, *aharya* emphasizes and promotes the transformatory process- of the dancer and participant in their aesthetic journey. This transformation is essential for the evoking and experiencing of *rasa*, the ultimate objective of dance. Such a transformation is intrinsic to yogic practice as well in the yogi's quest for an ultimate reality.

In its 'awakening' of the body to facilitate bodily expression (*angika abhinaya*), the dance tradition¹²⁰ dissects the body in mind-boggling detail that is heavy on terminology. For instance, in the *Natyasastra*, the body is divided into two categories- primary parts (*anga*) and supporting parts (*upanga*).¹²¹ The primary parts comprise the head, the hands, the hips, chest, sides, and feet; and the supporting parts (*upanga*) consist of the eyes, eyebrows, nose, lips, cheeks, and chin. I see the range and depth of the movements discussed in the *angika* section as awakening and participation of the entire body in the process of dance.

¹¹⁹ See Phillip Zarrilli's "Towards a Phenomenology of Indian Disciplines of Practice: Meditational, Martial, and Performative" in *Dance of India*, ed. By David Waterhouse, (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1998), 163.

¹²⁰ Elements of *angika* (bodily) expression are discussed in the *Natyasastra* over several chapters, beginning with chapter-8. The classification of the limbs into *anga* (major) and *upanga* (minor/supporting) limbs is mentioned in the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 8, v. 12-13.

¹²¹ In dance literature that follows the *Natyasastra*, there is a third category- the *pratyanga* or the subordinate parts. See Manomohan Ghosh's *Abhinaya Darpana* by Nandikesvara, and Raja and Burnier, *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarangadeva.

Speech (*vacika*)¹²² in the context of dance refers to verse and its vocal rendition. When *angika* employs the body as the instrument of communication, *vacika* complements it with spoken language. *Vacika* by involving words and music triggers the sound impulses in the sensory realm. As the word and verse of dance, I suggest that it is comparable to *mantras* in ritual and meditation- the vocal music and syllables that stimulate the senses into an awareness of and participation in the ongoing event.

When given a role analogous to the *mantra* in ritual and yogic meditation, *vacika* becomes a powerful tool in the eventual realization of spiritual goals of dance, i.e. awakening of the inner consciousness. It also complements dance by providing the vocal accompaniment for visual expression. The language of dance is better understood with the verses that accompany it, and as a corollary, verse is infused with energy and life when given visual expression in dance.

Perhaps the most significant component involves the awakening of the mind- the *sattvika abhinaya*. The term *sattva* translates as white or pure, and in the context of dance refers to the portrayal of the inner states of emotion. *Sattvika*

¹²² *Vacika* in the form of prose, poetry, and music in relation to the dramatic arts is discussed at length in the form of several chapters in the *Natyasastra*. In fact, the sections on body movement (*angika abhinaya*) is immediately followed by sections on language and its uses. After a brief 'detour' into elements of *aharya* (ornamentation) and *siddhi* (success), musical instruments of various kinds, and vocal music itself are explored in the final chapters of the *Natyasastra*. For sections on prose and meter, please refer to *Natyasastra*, ch.15-19. For a better understanding of the nuances of music- both vocal and instrumental, please refer to the *Natyasastra*, ch. 28-33.

expression is to be deep and psychological- the dancer/actor portrays feelings, sentiments, and emotions by awakening the inner recesses of the mind where these sentiments reside. In a dance performance, the *sattvika abhinaya* pertains to the “infusion of the soul, life, and feeling into the performance,”¹²³ leading to the evoking of *rasa* through suggestive expressions.

The fourth dimension of dramatic expression relates to ornamentation (*aharya*). This expression has been discussed in some depth in the earlier section on transformation. I would like to reiterate my earlier finding that the lavish costumes and jewelry aid the dancer and the participant alike in undergoing a transformation and experiencing the aesthetic flavor of the dance.

I suggest that the ‘yoking’ together of the body (*anga*), speech (*vacika*) and mind (*sattvika*) along with *aharya* (transformation) results in an experience that is at the same time Performance and Meditation.

I also hold that the transformatory process-- essential for both towards attaining spiritual success-- is further assisted by another tool- the *mudra* in *yoga*, and *hasta* in dance. According to yogic practice,¹²⁴ *mudra* depends on the *yogi*'s control of his breath and mind. The continued use and practice of the *mudras*

¹²³ Refer to George Kliger's “Indian Aesthetics and Bharata *Natyam*” in *Bharata Natyam in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by George Kliger. (New Delhi: Americal Institute of Indian Studies, 1993), P. 33.

leads to the eventual awakening of the *kundalini*. These *mudras* when used appropriately and in a harmonious way bear the seal for the liberation of the yogin. *Mudras* are infused with life and meaning and when held in fixed combinations signify various activities and attributes. They are potent symbols of the divine entity that are charged with power and energy

The *hasta* or hand gestures¹²⁵ perform the same role in the realm of dance. They are highly technical and structured representing numerous aspects in everyday life that is animate and inanimate. Refined combinations of various gesture leads to formations of visual sentences. They convey and communicate the relevant *bhava* and *rasa* (sentiment) and assist in triggering responses in participants.

A *hasta* is not merely holding of the hand in a particular way, on the contrary, it is believed to be alive and infused with the energy and vitality of the divinity, idea, or object that it conveys. In fact, later dance literature refers to *hastas* as *hasta-prana* or the life breadth of a particular gesture. Along with *vacika* (poetry/ verse), the *hastas* furnish the backdrop against which the dexterous nuances of *abhinaya* elicits a subjective response (*rasa*) in the participants. In this

¹²⁴ Refer to Yogi Pranavananda's *Pure Yoga : A translation from Sanskrit into English the tantric work, the Gheranda Samhita*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1992), P. 69.

¹²⁵ The hand gestures are central to the dance tradition in India. They are enumerated early in the *Natyastra* and reiterated in several texts. For more information, refer to the *Natyastra*, Ch. 9.

role, the *hastas* along with the verse (*vacika*) perform the function of *mudras* and *mantras* in yogic practice.

Another feature of commonality in the yogic and dance tradition is that both aim at *siddhi*¹²⁶ or spiritual success as the final goal. While *siddhi* generally relates to the successful accomplishment of objectives, it also stands for the attainment of super-natural and spiritual success, arising out of the performance of ritual and meditational actions. Success perceived in terms of '*siddhi*' is closely linked to the realm of religious, ritual, and yogic meditations. In this context, its use as the goal of a dramatic performance extends its sway into the realm of the performing arts as well, even as it brings to its fold the *natya* tradition of ancient India along with its various components.

The employment of yogic terminology also pervades other areas of dance, particularly, in the building of the theater. In its discussion on the different plans for erecting a theater, the shapes recommended are rectangular (also oblong), square, and triangle-shaped---bringing to mind shapes and patterns most used in *yantras*.¹²⁷ Similarly, the measurements used to fix their lengths¹²⁸ is in terms of *danda* (cubits) is 108, 64, and 32.. The largest of them, the theater with 108 cubits

¹²⁶ The 27th chapter in the *Natyasastra* examines *siddhi* (success) and its types- human and divine in the context of drama. See *Nataysastra*, ch. 27.

¹²⁷ See The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 2, v. 7-8.

is appropriate for gods, the next for kings, and the smallest for people. The shapes as well as the numbers evoke memories of temple ground plans- the *vastupurusa mandala*; of meditational *yantras*; and ritual diagrams. One can notice the use of such shapes in the ground plan of temples and related religious structures as well, further cementing their relationship.

In art, perhaps the finest articulation of the indivisibility of dance and *yoga* is Siva. In course of my readings, I conclude that Siva is the ultimate yogic dancer. As the Supreme *yogi* and the cosmic dancer, Siva harmonizes the core aspects of both these systems. He is the *yogi* who dances in the evening (*sandhya*) in kailasa; at night in the cremation ground; and in the morning and forever in Cidambaram. In doing so, Siva actualizes and pronounces his adeptness in yogic and dance practices. In fact, yogic associations have been attributed to all of these events and sites. The *sandhya-nrtyam* is also alluded to as Siva's yogic¹²⁹ dance; the dance in the cremation ground resonates with tantric ideals and imagery, and finally, Cidambaram, the stage for Siva's dance of bliss (*ananda tandava*), is charged with yogic energy and potency.

¹²⁸ See The *Natyasastra*, Ch. 2, v. 9. The designation of the larger theaters to with 108 *hasta* or *danda* to gods, and so is mentioned in *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 2. V. 10-13.

¹²⁹ In my readings, I came upon the classification of Siva's evening dance (*sandhya nrtyam*) as his yogic dance. Please refer to Rajee Narayan, *Natyasastra mala : the basics of Natyasastra*, (Bombay: Jayasri Rao, 1993), P. 38.

Mountains carry yogic associations by virtue of their being abodes of gods. For example, Kailasa is the mountain abode of Siva as *yogi* and the location of his evening dance (*Sandhya-nrtyam*).¹³⁰ In Indic literature and legend, several mountains are considered sacred because they host a bevy of gods and goddesses- Kailasa, Meru, Vaikuntha. Mountains are also the sites that sages withdrew to, to perform yogic penance, as they provided the isolation required for intense meditation and austerities.

In temple architecture, the verticality of the *vimanas* is directly linked to them being symbolic representation of mountains, either Meru or Kailasa. These very same *vimanas* are also superimposed as representing the body of the meditating *yogin*, once again associating the sacred mountain to sacred practice.

Tantric *yoga* associations follow Siva's dance in the graveyard. Siva's dance in the cremation ground in the form of Bhairava in his manifestation as the terrible Lord. As the dance that overcomes the fear of Death and death itself, Bhairava carries a skull cup, a garland of skeletons and even a dead body underneath his feet.¹³¹ Carrying strong tantric overtones, both Siva as Bhairava as well as his dance is associated with specific tantric sects, such as the *kapalikas*,

¹³⁰ A reference to this evening dance in Kailasa with a divine chorus is found in the *Siva Pradosa Sutra*, which is quoted in Coomaraswamy's essay on *The Dance of Siva* (New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1968).

*kalamukhas*¹³² and *Pasupathas*. As heretic sects that questioned mainstream religious beliefs and adopted unconventional modes of worship and ritual, these tantric sects however, had resolute ties to yogic practices¹³³ as the means to liberation.

In recent literature, there have been attempts to connect the *devadasi* to tantric ritual and practices using the multivalent imagery of Kali- the fierce and erotic goddess. In Marglin's anthropological study of the transformative function¹³⁴ of ritual in the Jagannatha Temple at Puri, she records a *sakta* informant mentioning that the *devadasi's* dance constituted the fifth *pancamakara* offering- namely sexual union. She further states that this dance termed as the 'leavings of kali' was performed with the sole purpose of acquiring the sexual

¹³¹ Lorenzen notes that several Sanskrit sources claim that the Kapalikas, a Hindu tantric sect worshipped Bhairava- Siva and his consort. Please refer to David Lorenzen's *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saivite sects*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 4.

¹³² For an in-depth look of the possible origin, geographical spread and religious practices of the kapalikas and kalamukhas, please refer to David Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saivite sects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

¹³³ The main features of Kapalika worship include the essence of six insgnia (*mudrika-satka*), proficiency in the highest mudra (here referring to five 'Ma' sounds in tantric ritual), and meditation on Self as seated in the vulva. The last of the characteristics, i.e. meditation on Self as seated in vulva has associations to Buddhist *tantra yoga* doctrines. See David Lorenzen's *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saivite sects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp.2-4.

¹³⁴ See Marglin's "Refining the Body: Transformative Emotion in Ritual Dance," in *Divine Passions: The Social construction of Emotion in India*, ed. Owen Lynch., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), P. 218.

fluid,¹³⁵ thereby associating Kali and the *devadasi* and importantly, Kali and dance.

In Tamil legend and mythology too, Kali does carry associations to dance, particularly in the myth relating to her dance contest with Siva wherein she is defeated.¹³⁶ She then splits into benign and wrathful forms, with the former residing with her husband in the precincts of the Cidambaram temple, while the latter takes up a separate dwelling in the outskirts of the city. Kali's duality as both tranquil and fierce is read into the *devadasi's* own dichotomy as the sacred and erotic, and auspicious and inauspicious.

Kersenboom brings out the interconnectedness between the function of the *devadasi* in a temple with her actual role in the ritual reflecting yogic/tantric associations; and thereby, the *devadasis'* own links to yogic practices.¹³⁷ Accordingly, the daily and annual *pujas* performed in the Thyagarajesvara Temple at Tiruvarur and the *devadasis'* own part in it reveal a conjunction of both agamic and tantric concepts of time and appropriate activity. Although Kersenboom's study relates to the *devadasi* tradition of the 19th and early 20th

¹³⁵ See Marglin's "Refining the Body: Transformative Emotion in Ritual Dance," in *Divine Passions: The Social construction of Emotion in India*, ed. Owen Lynch., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), P. 219-220.

¹³⁶ See Shulman's *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 214-223.

centuries, I believe that it has much to offer in terms of the architectural, artistic, religious and yogic dimensions of dance itself to the temple. It is true that much has changed in Indian art today, however, the core message remains unchanged: the ideal of the dancer as a yogic practitioner, as a ritualist and devotee.

Perhaps it is appropriate to quote Balasaraswati, a dancer and *devadasi* of renown. “ Bharata Natyam is an art which consecrates the body....The *yogi* by controlling his breath and modifying his body acquires the halo of sanctity. Even so the dancer, who dissolves her identity in rhythm and music makes her body an instrument, at least for the duration of the dance, for the experience and expression of the spirit.”¹³⁸

Embedded within the framework of *angika abhinaya*, the 108-*karana* and their combinations, the *karanas* partake of the larger legacy of dance as an agent of *yoga*. Their performance, along with *abhinaya* and *bhava*, kindles the awakening of the dancer’s own sub-consciousness attempting to evoke *rasa* in the participant.

The 108-*karana* themselves generate geometric shapes that recall abstract *yantras*. For instance, the *caturasara* or square position, the *trystra-* or triangular,

¹³⁷ See Kersenboom’s *Nityasumangali: Devadasi Tradition in South India* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasadass, 1987 &1998), P. 94.

and the numerous rotating and revolving (*vartana* and *parivartana*) movements create and visualize curved and circular frames and contours. I see in the performance of *karana* combinations (*angaharas*) creates a virtual reality or a 'virtual' pattern that is not actual, but one that consists of clear outlines recognized and registered in the imagination of the viewer. I state that these patterns drawn into the mind can be powerful aids in the experiencing of artistic and aesthetic bliss, perhaps leading to realization of the divine.

To provide an idea of how the *karanas* could be transmitters of *yantras*, let me delve deeper into their technique and formations. The first *karana talapuspaputa* (holding the flower-cup) initiates the *karanas* and corresponds to the offering of flowers prior to dance as an act of prayer and consecration. A series of formations that recreate and redefine various shapes and patterns, such as circular- *bhramaraka karana*, *parivrita karana*; extended straight lines –*krantakam* and all the '*kranta*' *karanas*; triangles in *urdhvajanu* or raised knee *karanas*, a variant of square and triangle- *bhujangaancita* and *bhujangatrasita karanas*; an inverted triangle – scorpion (*vrschika*) *karanas*, and so on.

Vatsyayana has performed a comparison of some dance movements, their relation to space and time, and intrinsic value as abstract *yantras*¹³⁹ in her study

¹³⁸ Refer to Balasaraswati's "Bharata Natyam" in *NCPA Quarterly journal*, vo. 5, Bombay, 1976.

related to the presence of squares and circles in Indian arts. Specifically, she discusses the *bhujangatrasita* mode of dance, reflected in Siva Nataraja images and interprets the lines and axis within the format of the *yantras*.

Allusions to and use of *yoga* related terminology pervades the theoretical framework of the 108-*karana* and its combinations profusely detailed in the *Natyasastra* in the chapter on the *Tandava*. In the final section of this chapter, the author discusses 'pindi'¹⁴⁰ or insignia's of various divinities. The word *pindi* is literally translated as 'lump or ball', usually of food that is concentrated and pressed together as an offering.¹⁴¹ The term *pindi* itself has plural connotations and associations to several disciplines. Particularly, in the realm of meditation, *pindis* refer to gesticulations used in the silent prayers on both real and divine knowledge.¹⁴²

Interestingly in the *Natyasastra*, they are formulated in a similar fashion as insignias of each deity. They are concentrated and pithy gestures pressed together from *karanas*, *angaharas* and *recakas*, supposedly performed by Siva and

¹³⁹ Vatsyayana's *The Square and Circle in Indian Arts* (New Delhi: Roli Books International, 1983), 53-59, offers glimpses into potential vedic elements in the art of India, and specifically looks at pure dance formations (*nrtta*) in the backdrop of geometric shapes recalling *yantras*.

¹⁴⁰ The *pindi* is discussed in the same chapter as the 108-*karanas* and *angahara* material, but more so, towards its conclusion. See *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. v257-263.

¹⁴¹ Monier Williams, *Sanskrit- English Dictionary*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1997), 626.

¹⁴² Monier- Williams includes its 'meaning' to in the sphere of meditation. See *Sanskrit- English Dictionary*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1997), P. 626.

Parvathi. To give a backdrop of their emergence in the *Natyasastra*: the *ganas* witness Siva and Parvati dance to musical accompaniments and devise the *pindis*¹⁴³ (insignias) of deities based on the movements and gestures of the divine dance.

These *pindis* consist of weapons, vehicles, and emblems associated with a deity that remind the viewer and participant of the deity and the concept he/she personifies. Therefore, the *linga* as the *pindi* for Siva, *simhavahini* (Lion as vehicle) for Candika, *garudavahana* (Garuda as vehicle) for Visnu, the lotus for Brahma, *rupa* (beautiful form) for Sri, *dhara* (current) for Ganga, the trident for Rudra, are some of the emblems that are mentioned.

Transposed to meditation, the *pindis*, in my view correspond to the *bija* syllables, as they embody and identify in a single gesture the 'whole' deity. As concise and distinct signs that personify a deity and his/her characteristics, *pindis* are infused with the deity's energy, and act as potent symbols of his power and attainments. Additionally, as an abbreviated mass of traits and characteristics of a deity, the *pindi* by virtue of its singularity takes on an almost esoteric stature and relevance and a presence at the apex of this edifice of the *tandava*.

¹⁴³ See *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. V. 257.

While still in the realm of the *pindis*, Bharata explains the rationale behind the origin of the *pindis*¹⁴⁴ by equating them to *yantras*, *bhadrasana*, and *siksayoga*-- all three terms pertaining to *yoga* and meditation.¹⁴⁵ *Yantras* are meditational tools, the *bhadrasana* is the seat on which the yogin sits during his meditation and finally, *siksayoga* relates to the practice of gaining control of the body by the repeated performance of *asanas* or yogic postures. The *karanas* and *angaharas* could well fall under the realm of *siksayoga* as they are physical exercises that harness the energy in the human body by means of structured, controlled movements.

I propose that the *tandava* dance mentioned in the *Natyasastra* and its constituents are also arranged deliberately as generators and movers of yogic energy with a large base and gradually tapering vertical raise. To elaborate further, the *Natyasastra* mentions and describes 108 *karanas*¹⁴⁶ as the fundamental, core formations, despite the fact that taking into account the definition of the *karana* as the movement of hands and feet in dance, there can obviously be a lot

¹⁴⁴ Please refer to *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. 295-296.

¹⁴⁵ Mukund Lath in an incisive study attempts to analyze musical terms and their meaning to the kundalini map, as elucidated by the 12th century Musicologist/author Sarangadeva in *Sangita Ratnakara*. The musical notes and tones produced by the various parts of the body is seen through the prism of a stringed harp. This body-harp has the string (*nadi*) wherein different tones are produced. Lath analyzes Sarangadeva's account of *svara* (notes) to an earlier account given in Panini's *Siksha*. In analyzing the origin of *pindi*, Lath mentions it as an agent of yogic energy. For more information, please refer to Mukund Lath's *Transformation as Creation* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1998), pp. 257-261.

more combinations. However, Tandu confines himself to 108 that Siva performed.

The next point of description is the *angaharas* that are defined as combinations of *karanas*, not randomly, but in particular ways. These methods of combination (*yojana*) are not mentioned in the *Natyasastra*, however, Abhinava's commentary mentions 64 *yojanas*¹⁴⁷ or the 'appropriate arranging' of the 108-*karanas* to form larger formations or *angaharas*. Even here, given that there are at least 64 methods by which *karanas* could be effectively strung together, one would anticipate several such permutations (*angaharas*), however, Tandu describes only 32¹⁴⁸ that he claims were danced by Siva. Abhinava in his commentary¹⁴⁹ throws more light on the specificity of the 32 *angaharas* by saying that only these have greater significance in creating the ritual effect that leads to *svarga* (heaven), by using the term *adrsta*.

¹⁴⁶ See the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4, v. 33-167.

¹⁴⁷ *Abhinavabharati* by Abhinavagupta, (A commentary on the *Natyasastra*), Ch. 4, 27. Also, refer to Mukund Lath, in *Transformation as Creation*, (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1998), pp. 73-75.

¹⁴⁸ The 32 *angaharas* are listed and described in the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. 28-32 and 173-246.

¹⁴⁹ Abhinava states that once the 108-*karanas* are known, there is endless possibilities of making *angaharas* using the 64 appropriate combinations (*yojana*). However, only 32 are described with individual names given that they carry greater importance in the creation of *adrsta*. See *Abhinavagupta's Abhinavabharathi: A commentary of the Natyasastra*, ch. 4, 27.

Following this, Tandu lists and describes the *recaka* movements¹⁵⁰ numbering 4, and finally the *pindi*'s -- sole abbreviations or seals are enumerated.

Therefore, if the numbers are considered, we see the 108-*karanas*, the 64 *yojanas*, 32 *angaharas*, 4 *recakas*, and finally the *pindi* with its singular identity are discussed. Although, Tandu mentions the insignia (sign) for 17 deities, their distinctness is emphasized. That they are sole representatives of the deity and are not combined to form other formations or concepts is very clearly expressed. In fact, Bharata adds that those deities not mentioned by him may also be accorded emblems and recommends the signs on their flagstaff as their seal.¹⁵¹

Therefore, I interpret the structure of the *tandava*, as revealed in the *Natyasastra* is arranged as a triangle with a broad base that is tapering vertically and converging at the apex- the shape associated with yogic meditation. When transposed to the body of the meditating yogin, I read the 108-*karana* would form the base or the level of the *muladhara* and the other *cakras* would correspond to the *yojanas*, the *angaharas*, and the *recakas*. Finally, the *pindi* corresponds to the region of the *sahasrara cakra*- esoteric, singular, and consciousness (Fig. 4.1).

¹⁵⁰ See the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. 247-253.

¹⁵¹ See the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4. V. 263. In fact, Abhinava's commentary on this section clarifies it further by stating that the *pindis* apart from being insignias or weapons also stand for the *karana* or *angahara* used for explaining the concept. See K. P. Unni's *The Natyasastra (Text with Introduction, Translation and Indices)*, vol. 2, p. 103.

The *Natyasastra* itself acknowledges the presence of a five-fold structure to the *tandava* by a reference to the same in the section dealing with the drama-ritual—the *purvaranga*.¹⁵² Accordingly, the benedictory (*naandi*) segment of the *purvaranga* entails the performance of *tandava*,¹⁵³ comprising of *pindi*, *recaka*, *angahara*, *apanyasa*, and *nyasa*. The last two terms appear incongruous in some ways, because they comprise terminology relating to music that finds presence in the 28th chapter of the *Natyasastra*. In a sense this could well have been an error in the text itself.

However, there are at least two things that I would like to state with regard to this. First, regardless of the disagreement in terminology, I see in this reference an acknowledgment of the presence of a five-tiered structure to the *tandava* dance. Also, in this structure, the presence of *angaharas* automatically draws the *karanas* into its fold despite the absence of the usage of the actual term.

Second, the term *nyasa*, in its meaning and function relates to the lowest tonal point in music,¹⁵⁴ a fundamental tonal note, not unlike the *karana* in dance

¹⁵² In the section on '108 *karana* and ritual' of this chapter, I had discussed this reference about the five-fold classification of the *tandava* in the *purvaranga* section. It appears in the description of the 'mixed' *purvaranga* rite wherein there is considerable inclusion of dance elements in the ritual performance. See the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, 157.

¹⁵³ This verse has been discussed in the same chapter while dealing with 108-karana and ritual. I had then given my interpretation of the term 'nyasa' and how it relates to the *karana*. See *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 5, 157.

which can relate to the fundamental unit of movement. The *apanyasa*¹⁵⁵ appear to be the next tonal level from the *nyasa*. Therefore, I suggest that at one level, they could still correlate to the *karana* and the 'yojana' that express the bottom tiers of the *tandava* triangle.

Summary

The popular perception of dance as a performing art wherein individual virtuosity and mass appeal are the key interacting forces is not pertinent to the Indian context. Indian dance, by virtue of its conception and its methodology manifests central themes and concepts of Hinduism- such as devotion, meditation, ritual and worship and transformation. It is a formal process whose performance generates the energy and vitality needed to effect material change in the dancer and the participants. By virtue of being the active energy of change and alteration, dancing is associated with ritual, transformation and meditation.

The dance tradition with its intricate and elaborate vocabulary is an instrument that effects movement and communication. As an integral component of ritual, dance activity corresponds to ritual activity. Additionally, I

¹⁵⁴ See Monier Williams, *Sanskrit- English Dictionary*, P. 572. Also refer to the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 28, v.100-103. The verses indicate that both *nyasa* and *apanyasa* come under the category of low pitch.

¹⁵⁵ The *apanyasa*, also a part of the low pitch (mandra) follows the *nyasa* as the next level of low pitch and tone. Even in looking at the literal meaning, the prefix 'ap' means a 'reduction or deterioration', obviously in comparison to whatever preceded it. See Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit- English Dictionary*, P. 49.

state that a dance performance corresponds to a ritual performance. In order to effect a transformation, essential to dance, ritual and meditation, the dancer employs the tools of dance communication and expression.

All of these characteristics of dance make it especially relevant to the Hindu temple. The temple attempts to communicate legend and mythology through its sculpture. We also know that it articulates ideas, themes and concepts from Hindu philosophy both in its architecture and sculpture. Additionally, ritual is the very essence of worship in the temple tradition of India. Both architectural elements as well as ritual worship entail the transformation of the devotee. Most importantly, meditation in the form of yoga is central to Hindu devotional practice. I state that the dance tradition is relevant to all of these goals of the temple and is a rich source for the temple to dip into for visualizing its themes.



Fig. 4.1: The fivefold aspect of the *tandava* dance

CHAPTER 5

SYMBOLISM OF THE 108 KARANA IN THE FIVE TEMPLES

This chapter explores the meaning and symbolism of the 108-*karana* sculptures' to the iconographic program of the temple. By situating the 108-*karana* theme within the larger religious expression of the temple, this chapter disputes the prevailing notion that dance imagery is primarily ornamental and used only for aesthetic purposes. I suggest that dance imagery, as revealed by the 108-*karana*, contain core iconographic elements that are central to a monument's larger iconographic program.

In the previous chapter, I examined the agency of dance and the 108 *karana* in articulating fundamental concepts of Hindu belief and philosophy. I state that Dance is an integral component of Hindu religious practice. Additionally, by analyzing the 108 *karana* within the framework of dance, I provide a context to the 108 *karana* theme and highlight its unique relevance to Hindu worship. In this section, I take this idea a step further by employing the agency of dance in deriving the meaning of the 108-*karana* programs in the five temples under consideration.

I conclude that dance imagery found on temples is not simply random samplings of images that function as decorative motifs. Instead, dance sculpture and 108-*karana* in particular, like other iconographic elements, were selected for particular iconographic and iconological purposes. Their placement in the temple was intentional and deliberate, and I suggest with specific ritual meanings that make them integral parts of the temple iconography. They are imbued with profound mythic, *yogic* and ritual meaning rooted in traditional Indian dance.

Iconography and the Agency of Dance in the *Vimana*: The Rajaraja Temple

The 108-*karana*, through its legend,¹ is closely tied to Siva and his dance at *Kailasa*, his mountain home. By its presence in the Rajaraja *vimana*, the 108-*karana* also recalls to the viewer, the legend of its so-called origin in the *Natyasastra*. Just as Siva-Natesa sculptures in the Deccan communicate at a mythic level (see Ch.2), I suggest that the 108-*karana* in the Rajaraja Temple also transmits mythic contents.

Additionally, I maintain that the *karana* iconography in the Rajaraja *vimana* carries symbolic messages as well. When situated within the larger sculptural expression of the *vimana*, the 108-*karana* program helps identify the *vimana* as the symbolic representation of *Kailasa*- the mountain home of Siva and the sacred site of his dance. In fact, I read the *vimana* itself as Rajaraja's conception of a

¹ The *Natyasastra*. Ch. 4, v. 9-15.

southern Kailasa in which Siva dances the 108-*karana*—the *tandava*—a concept rooted in southern soil.²

I also suggest that the seeds of 108-*karana*'s symbolic relevance to *yogic* energy (*kundalini*) is sown in the Rajaraja Temple by its presence in the upper realms of the *muladhara* region of the *vimana*. This idea is clearly expressed through greater visual elaboration in the Nataraja, Arunachala and the Vriddhagirisvara Temples, an assertion I will be elucidating in the following pages.

Four- armed Siva is the performer in the 81 *karana* reliefs that enliven the second tier corridor surrounding the *garbhagriha* of the Rajaraja Temple. This corridor vivifies Siva dancing, specifically, dancing the 108-*karanas*. Where is Siva known to have danced? And, in particular danced the 108-*karanas*?

According to literature³ and sculpture, Kailasa was the earliest stage for Siva's

² Increasingly, scholars credit the Tamil south as the region where the concept of Siva and his ananda tandava took root and developed. Based on literature- both Tamil and Sanskrit and the Art of the Dravidian people, scholars such as Zvelebil have postulated that the word tandavam, pertains not so much to the Sage/attendat Tandu, but to the Tamil root tantu –' jump over, leap across, dance.' See Kamil Zvelebil *Ananda Tandava of Siva- Sadanrttamurti* (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998), 1-2.

³ A much documented reference of Siva's dance in the Himalayas is present in the *Siva Pradosha Stotra* which describes the setting of Siva's dance." Placing the mother of the three worlds on a golden throne,.... , Sulapani dances on the heights of Kailasa, and all the gods gather around him." It appears that this dance which was performed during the twilight hours (*Sandhya*), had as accompanists the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. See P. Banerji, *Art of Indian dancing*, (New Delhi: 1985), 9-10. Also, see Ananda Coomaraswamy's *Dance of Shiva*, (Bombay: 1948). Another chance reference to Siva's sandhya nrtyam in Kailasa is found in the Sanskrit play titled *Katha sarita Sagara*. Here in the introduction, there is a

dance as Natesa (Lord of Dance) prior to his southern manifestation as Nataraja (the king of dance) in Cidambaram.⁴ Additionally, the legend of the 108-*karana* mentioned in the *Natyasastra*,⁵ further places Kailasa as its staging ground because the *karanas* comprised Siva's evening (*sandhya*)- dance performed in Kailasa. Moreover, even the account of the elucidation of *karanas* in the *Natyasastra* is supposed to have taken place in Kailasa after Bharata⁶ and his students presented their *natya* to Siva. Therefore, the presence of the 108-*karana* resonates with legendary and mythic contexts.

That the *vimana* was conceptualized as a mountain-home is further supported by inscriptional references to Siva as *Mahameru Vitankar* (Lord of the great Meru)⁷ residing in the temple. The suggestion of a direct link between the Rajaraja *vimana* and a mountain is also seen in accounts stating Siva as 'Lord of

brief reference to Siva dancing in the Kailasa during twilight witnessed by Parvathi and other celestial beings.

⁴ Dancing images of Siva Natesa go back very early in Indian art. Natesa's dance is recreated in the 5th-6th century cave temples of Badami and Aihole, and the 8th century Ellora cave temple. Natesa is ubiquitous in the Orissan temples as well and in the southern region, scenes of Siva's dance with Parvati as witness and ganas as accompanists recreate this scene with vitality in the Pallava temples of Kancipuram. A similar illustration consisting of celestial accompanists and divine audience, prominent among them Parvati, witnessing Siva's dance is seen in caves of the 8th century from Tirupparamkunran, near Madurai.

⁵ See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4, v.

⁶ According to the legend in the *Natyasastra*, Bharata and his entourage, accompanied by Brahma the so-called 'Creator' of *Natya* come to Kailasa to present it to Siva and his entourage. It is after seeing the *natya* presentation and pleased with it that Siva suggests that they also incorporate movements he (Siva) uses in his evening dance comprising of *karanas* and *angaharas*. The term used is "Sandhya nrttam".

South Meru' (*daksinameru vitankar*).⁸ Scholars have suggested that the Rajaraja Temple is Siva's southern home based on these inscriptional references to *daksinameru vitankar*⁹ alone.

However, I demonstrate the expression of this theme and other related contexts by my interpretation of the larger *vimana* iconographic program. I maintain that the ubiquitous presence of *adavallan* (versatile dancer),¹⁰ the Tamil term for Siva Nataraja—a south Indian phenomenon, attests to a prominent southern slant to the iconography. Additionally, I suggest that illustrations of southern Saivite legends in the iconography adds further weight to the assertion of the Rajaraja Temple as the Southern Kailasa.

⁷ According to inscriptions, Rajaraja himself installed an image of Mahameru Vitankar. See SII, vol. 2, no.

⁸ Several inscriptions from the temple mention 'daksina meru vitankar' and his consort, Uma Paramaeshvari as beneficiaries of royal attention. Rajaraja I is also credited with setting up the image of *Mahameru Vitankar* (Lord of the Great Meru), and *Tanjai Vitankar* (lord of Thanjavur). Uma Parameshwari is mentioned as the consort of all of them. She is also mentioned as the consort of Adavallar, a south Indian equivalent of Natesa, an obvious favorite of Rajaraja, going by the ubiquitousness of his presence in this temple. One inscription uses the term '*Adavallar Daksinameru Vitankar*' which translates as 'the versatile dancer and Lord of southern Meru', suggesting perhaps that they are one and the same. In any case, the presence of Siva as 'Lord of Meru', the Lord of Southern Meru' and as "the lord of Thanjavur" prompts me to suggest that this temple may be an attempt to situate and elevate Thanjavur as the site of the southern Meru. For detailed readings, refer to SII, vol. 2, no.1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 29, 24.

⁹ Nagaswami in "Brhadeesvara: An iconographic Study" in *Discourses on Siva*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 170-181, infers this connection based on the *daksinameru* reference. Similarly, Richard Davis in *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshipping Siva in Medieval India*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5 also documents this inference.

¹⁰ *Adavallan* is mentioned in several inscriptions. Images of Adavallan are installed, the weight measure of this temple is called adavallan, and incidentally, it is considered equal to a 'rajakesari', perhaps another weight measure, but more prominently, the royal title of Rajaraja himself. See SII, vol. 2.

In the architectural and sculptural program of the Rajaraja *vimana*, one can see historical precedents as well as innovative communicative devices. The architecture of the Rajaraja *vimana* consists of a base, a two tiered supporting wall, and the towering superstructure (Fig. 5.1). Contained within its precincts today in the womb- chamber is a stone linga and a metal Nataraja with consort- the objects of worship. A wide array of Saivite imagery enlivens the interior and exterior spaces that surround the *garbhagriha*. Although the variety and richness of the iconography appears somewhat random I detect a pattern and deliberateness to it.

The sanctum of the enshrines a massive linga and is surrounded by a circumambulatory corridor (Fig.5.2). Three massive sculptures aligned with the central shrine adorn its south, west, and north wall. The corresponding east wall is bereft of imagery but provides access to the corridor, and the overall organization suggests a mandalaic formulation.

Based on the south Indian iconographic convention of augmenting aspects of the central deity in successive layers of a temple, I suggest that the sculpture in the inner corridor embody core principles that are expanded on and reinforced in the external facades. To clarify further, the iconography of the exterior wall façade of the first tier is directly related to the sculpture in the inner corridor in the same level. Similarly, there exists an association between the inner realms of

the second storey and the corresponding external façade. It is exactly in this equation that I will be elucidating further on my points.

In this I read the sculptures and their placement differently from scholars such as Nagaswamy¹¹ and Hernault¹² who have also undertaken an analysis of this program.

On the East wall, there is no niche sculpture *per se* in the inner corridor as this is the entrance to the corridor itself. Therefore, when looking in, the viewer sees the massive linga along with Nataraja (Fig.5.3) and his consort enshrined in the sanctum.

The corresponding east exterior façade displays *Lingodbhava* and *Tripurantaka* (Fig. 5.4) in two of its niches, while sculptures of standing Siva adorn the remaining spaces along with the sun (*surya*) and moon (*candra*), who

¹¹ Nagaswamy's "Iconography and Significance of the Brhadisvara Temple, Tanjavur", in *Discourses on Siva*, ed. by Michael Meister, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 170-181, provides an interpretation of the overall symbolism of the temple from the perspective of Saiva doctrine—the Saiva Siddhanta. Drawing upon epigraphic evidence in the temple on Rajaraja and Saiva teachers, Nagaswamy suggests their influence on the iconography of the temple. He makes some important statements, such as the Rajaraja Temple's following of the *vastupurusa mandala* in its layout, the presence of Siva as Lord of *daksinameru*, even as he notes the overriding presence of dance in the sculpture and epigraphs of the temple. However, his attempts to connect the temple to a text—the *Makutagama*—which belongs to a later date and is also considered too corrupt to be fully recoverable makes his interpretations somewhat uncertain at this time.

¹² Françoise L' Hernault's, *The Iconography of the Brhadisvara Temple*, ed. Lalit Gujral, (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts, 2002), documents the sculptures in the sanctuary tower and other parts of the temple. While it contains a few analytical elements, for the most part, it is a text that catalogs and documents the sculptural imagery of the temple. Nagaswamy himself is credited with coordinating a part of the project, however, his earlier interpretations are not referenced here. However, this monograph interprets the *vimana*

provide a cosmic symbolism to the structure. Assuming that the *linga* in the sanctum is a pointer to the imagery of this wall, I see *lingodhbhava* fit in as the source/seed of all things. I read *lingodhbhava* as signifying birth and the creative power of Siva.

I interpret the presence of *tripurantaka* in this particular eastern wall as symbolizing the the death of evil, thereby highlighting death and the destructive energy of Siva. Taken along with *lingodhbhava*, I suggest the articulation of the idea of birth/ creation along with its opposite, death and destruction, balanced by the potent sanctum in the center—a philosophical expression ubiquitous in saivism.

Secondary reasons for the inclusion of *tripurantaka* in the all-important east wall could be the popularity of this manifestation in literature and art—both in greater India as well as the Tamil south. Moreover, Rajaraja’s own appeal for *Tripurantaka*, in whom the king appears to have seen himself (discussed earlier in ch.3) led to *Tripurantaka*’s preeminence, and his presence in the east wall may be an expression of his supremacy as well.

Moving on to the south side-- in the lower inner corridor, the center of the southern quadrant is occupied by a large sculpture of Siva-- two armed and seated on a platform (Fig. 5.5). Holding a sword in his right hand and the trident

sculptures as representing the doctrine of *panca brahma*, where Siva is composed of five

in his left, this sculpture is identified as *Rudra*¹³-- the angry one. *Rudra* is the malevolent form of Siva as the destroyer of enemies, and I suggest that it is this context of Siva-- as the destroyer that finds manifestation in the niches of the southern external façade. Let us examine the imagery of the corresponding southern external wall façade.

The external niches on the south wall contain Siva *bhiksatana*- the slayer of the creator God- Brahma, and *Virabhadra*- the great warrior articulating the southeastern section (Fig. 5.6). On the corresponding southwestern niches are Siva *Kalantaka*- the destroyer of *kala*, and Nataraja- the cosmic dancer and destroyer of the demon, *apasmara*. I state that this quadrant articulates Siva's valor and victory over gods and sages of the pantheon who defy his wishes.

Continuing on a circumambulatory path, we now move to the western side of the *vimana*. In the inner circumambulatory corridor, a sculpture of a 10-armed Siva *Natesa* fills the niche space (Fig. 5.7). Parvati's presence to Siva's left and Visnu as accompanist on his right convey the image of Siva-*Natesa*¹⁴ dancing

entities—Tat Purusa, Aghora, Sadyojata, Vamadeva, and Isana.

¹³ Refer to Francoise L' Hernault's *The Iconography of the Brhadisvara Temple*, ed. Lalit Gujral, (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts, 2002), 5. Hernault calls it Rudra-Aghora, the latter a reference to Aghora Siva who is also known to carry warlike attributes—the sword and trident. Also, both Balasubrahmanyam in *Middle Cola Temples* and documents the local name of this deity as Jvara deva, indicating his 'terrible' conception.

¹⁴ Balasubrahmanyam interprets this sculpture as Sadyojata in *Middle Cola Temples*, (Faridabad:1975), an interpretation I do not adopt readily. This is definitely a dancing Siva sculpture, a *nrttamurti*. Nagaswamy recognizes that and states so in "Iconography and Significance of the Brhadisvara Temple", in *Discourses on Siva*, P. 178. However, the

in Kailasa, a sculptural precursor to Siva- Nataraja. Siva's dance in Kailasa is the *sandhya nrtyam*, his evening dance that is evidently witnessed by a divine audience and orchestra, and finds mention in the *Natyasastra* and other texts. Therefore, this sculpture illustrates *Natesa* and in my view, his *sandhya nrtyam*, hence its presence in the western quadrant- the region of the setting sun and the bearer of twilight (*sandhya*).

According to legend, Siva danced in Kailasa accompanied by a divine orchestra that included all the gods in the pantheon-- Visnu played the drum, Indra the flute, and Brahma the cymbals.¹⁵ It was a dance of joy and beauty that won acclaim from the divine audience that witnessed it. It was an event that brought together all the gods and goddesses, particularly, the triad- Siva, Visnu, and Brahma in a single enterprise, signifying a certain harmonious relationship between them. In this legend, strains of Siva's preeminence, by virtue of Visnu

interpretation and explanation that follows caters to his reliance on the Makutagama text. Hernault's monograph *The Iconography of the Brhadisvara Temple*, synthesizes the two terms and calls this sculpture, *Dancing Siva- Sadyojata*. It is my feeling that the authors of this book are attempting to insert the iconography of this temple into the *pancha brahma* concept even though the imagery does not necessarily correlate to it. For instance, in the attempt to identify the specific *tandava*, the suggestion is that this may represent Siva's *Tripura tandava*, despite the author's own acknowledgement that *Skanda*, an intergral part of the *Tripura tandava* myth is absent in the sculpture. I believe that there is confusion in the interpretation of this sculpture.

¹⁵ Although the literary sources for this legend—the *Siva pradoshā Stotra*—is much quoted by scholars, I believe the strongest supporter of this theme is in art. *Natesa* sculpture represented in the caves of Badami, Aihole, and Ellora visualize and recreate this event in an accurate manner. These sculptures are identified as Siva in *catura* and *lalita* mode of dance—both *karana* positions. This theme of gods witnessing Siva's dance and being accompanists persists for a long time in south India where it continues all the way to the Vijayanagara and Nayak schools.

and Brahma's somewhat supporting role as accompanists, merges seamlessly with the thread of congeniality that goes into a shared endeavor.

I maintain that the external niche sculptures on the corresponding west wall reflect Saivite contexts that convey these ideas (Fig.5.8). In the niche located in the southwest resides Harihara- a composite form of Siva and Visnu. Harihara symbolizes the convergence of the Saivite and Vaisnavite philosophy whereby the combined deity shares the attributes and the power of both gods creating a unity that blends the two streams together. In this instance, Siva and Visnu are equal partners and even one and the same.

In the niche that follows is a sculpture of Siva as *Lingodbhava*, wherein Visnu and Brahma are key players. In leading a futile search for Siva's beginning and end, Visnu and Brahma are significant in that they help prove Siva's omnipresence. This is yet another event, not unlike Siva's dance at Kailasa, where Visnu and Brahma are used to promote Siva's preeminence.

The two niches that enliven the west wall on its northern side carry sculptures of Siva as *Candrasekhara* or the lord of the moon. I interpret *Candrasekhara*'s placement in the west to the moon's own association to the western quarter, a region where the setting sun makes the rising moon visible.

Moving on to the north wall-- the interior niche sculpture in the circumambulatory corridor is the goddess seated on a lotus platform and holding

a rosary and lotus in her hands. I maintain that the northern quadrant of this cosmic dwelling belongs to the goddess,¹⁶ an idea reinforced by the Saivite imagery that on the corresponding exterior wall. The themes projected on this side of the exterior facade predominantly resonate with the concept relating Siva with the goddess.

Siva ardhhanarisvara, a form that integrates Siva with his female power, *Sakti*, the goddess (Fig. 5.9), shares the wall space with Siva-*Gangadhara*- the bearer of the mighty Ganga river. Siva's loving embrace of parvati in his form as *Siva-alingana murti* enlivens another niche on the same wall.

However, the presence of Siva with sword and shield on this wall surface, perhaps a manifestation of the warrior, Virabhadra disrupts the continuity of this scheme. Despite this, the fact that three of the four niche sculptures in the exterior of the north wall resonate themes of Siva's parity with the goddess makes this the predominant theme on the northern facade of this temple.

The proclivity to display martial power within a religious setting, as reflected by several tripurantakas, is further strengthened by the door-guardians (*dvarapala*) figures that abound in this temple (Fig. 5.10). The *dvarapalas*, paired together on either side of entrances, are striking in their iconography and

¹⁶ Hernault notes this sculpture as 'Goddess Vamadeva' in an attempt to fit the program within the panca brahma doctrine, See *The Iconography of the Bhadrisvara Temple*, P. 5.

widespread presence in the temple. As guardians of the doorways, they are brave warriors, whose responsibility it is to safeguard and protect the heavenly abode.

Their visualization in the iconography is unique and innovative. Fanged and four-armed, the *dvarapalas* lean on an axe, their weapon with one leg raised, reminiscent of Siva Nataraja's *bhujangatrasa* pose. Even their primary pair of hands are recall Nataraja's conception, with the *abhaya* gesture substituted by a variant of the *kataka* (bracelet) gesture. Appearing prominently both in number and rendition, the *dvarapalas* are an important theme in the Rajaraja Temple. Their proximity to Nataraja- their employment of dance attitude adds more weight to these representations.

I suggest that the *dvarapala*'s significance to the patrons and architects of this temple stems from their military capabilities, a theme that resonated with Rajaraja I. As protectors of the monument and its residents, the *dvarapalas* share a kings' primary duty—protection of his people. Additionally, I maintain that the use of dance elements in the iconography of the *dvarapala* may be rooted in the south Indian dance tradition's association with battle and heroic themes. The history of dance in south India is replete with references to warrior and celebratory battle dances (Ch. 2). Therefore, I propose that dance must have

been seen as an appropriate medium- an agent- for visualizing the *dvarapala* in sculpture.

Returning briefly to the inner corridor, the Cola paintings that remain visible in are really quite fragmentary in nature and not conducive as evidence in and of itself. However, they certainly provide information that supports and reinforces already prevalent contexts (Fig. 5.11). In exploring the themes of the exposed murals, I suggest that they too reiterate the idea of the Rajaraja *vimana* conceptualized as Siva's mountainous dwelling. In the absence of access to these realms, I have relied on accounts by Balasubrahmanyam¹⁷ and Dhaky's documentation of the mural paintings.

The first Cola painting that stands exposed is on the south of the corridor where Balasubrahman records and describes the presence of *yoga-daksinamurti*, the *yogic* variant of Siva as *daksinamurti* who resides in Kailasa.

Flanking the Natesa sculpture on the West wall are three episodes depicting the story of Sundaramurti, one of the Tamil Saivite saints' ascent to Kailasa. Siva and Parvati witnessing a dance performance along their entourage portray Kailasa itself. The entire episode delves on Sundaramurti's ascent to

¹⁷ See See Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Cola Temples : Rajaraja I to Kulottunga I*, (Faridabad: Thomson Press, 1975), pp. 29-36. Dhaky in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Artchitecture* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), appears to folow Balasubrahmanyam's version as well.

Kailasa—supporting my contention that *vimana* is Kailasa. A mural illustrating three people worshipping Nataraja enlivens the wall space adjacent to the Siva-Natesa sculpture on the west wall.

I find that along with references to Kailasa, dance is also a dominant theme in this corridor occupied by Natesa. Dance is portrayed in the Sundaramurti episode while depicting Kailasa; and Nataraja, the dancer of the *ananda tandava* is illustrated in the adjacent wall. Both Natesa and Nataraja embody Siva's manifestation as the Cosmic dancer: while Kailasa is the stage for Natesa's dance, Cidambaram is the sacred southern center of Nataraja's *ananda tandava*.

A pictorial depiction of Siva Tripurantaka animates the northern wall. As one of the preeminent contexts of Siva and also one that appears to have been close to Rajaraja heart, Tripurantaka illustrates Siva's most dynamic and dramatic victory over his enemies. On the opposite wall is represented the episode of Siva's subjugation of the demon-king Ravana in his attempt to lift Kailasa (Ravananugraha murti). This is yet another theme that reiterates Siva's superiority over his enemies. It is also pertinent to my interpretation of the *vimana* as representing the Kailasa mountain. Several of the episodes pictured in the murals are associated with Kailasa.

In all, the fragmentary nature of the Cola period murals impedes the understanding of a definite iconographic program. However, there is pictorial evidence suggesting themes that articulate Siva's exploits- as the *yogi*, the dancer, and the victor, a majority of which resonates with events at Kailasa, sometimes with a southern flavor.

The entire first storey of the *vimana* 'residence' thus manifests Siva's multi-dimensional contexts that are well recognized, accessible, and illustrate the larger pool of Saivite ideas. They articulate his northern and southern metaphors thereby bringing out his pan-Indic sphere of influence. This residence displays several of his exoteric qualities in its main iconographic space and in my view lays the foundation on which the upper- tier and its iconographic program rests (Fig.5.12).

As opposed to the first tier's manifold renditions, the second tier of the *vimana* exhibits a remarkably focused sculptural program. Here enclosed within a small and narrow space run the horizontal band of 81 *karana* relief sculptures (Fig. 5.13).

In the corresponding exterior wall are 32 niches, all of them containing images of Siva as *Tripurantaka*- a uniformly consistent theme (Fig. 5.14). Just as the 108-*karana* is the lone theme in the interior corridor, *Siva-Tripurantaka* is the lone sculpture repeated over and over in the exterior niches emphasizing its

significance. And, just as Siva's form as the divine dancer is pivotal to the overall iconography, so also, his manifestation as a dynamic warrior paramount to the sculptural expression of the temple.

The 108-*karanas*' characterize 108 fundamental movements that illustrate elements of the *tandava*¹⁸ dance. Therefore, I maintain that both in and of themselves and as aspects of the *tandava*,¹⁹ the *karanas* symbolize active movement. I suggest that Siva's dance of the 108-*karana* in the inner and upper realms signifies the *tandava*- powerful, transformatory, and esoteric. It is the single most important dance activity that embodies cosmic creation, destruction and transformation making it especially appealing to include in temple iconography.

The numerous tripurantaka sculptures that adorn the niches are not all alike in their iconographic conception. However, they revealing only minor

¹⁸ The 108 *karanas*' earliest presence in extant literature is the *Natyasastra* wherein they are listed in a chapter titled *tandava laksanam* or the 'Characteristics of the *tandava*'. In the realm of dance literature, the *karanas* association to *tandava* is securely established. The presence of Siva as the dancer of the *karanas* further strengthens this connection between Siva's *tandava* and the 108-*karanas*. See *The Natyasastra*, Ch. 4.

¹⁹ *Tandava* is widely recognized as the cosmic dance of Siva. In the southern region, Siva is associated with the performance of 7 *tandavas* (*sapta tandava*) and six of them are linked to specific locations in southern India today. (The seventh is supposed to be in the hearts of all devotees). In dance literature, *tandava* is a technical reference to dance movements reflecting vibrancy and forcefulness. The connection between *karanas* and sage *Tandu* are reiterated in some texts, but not in others. For information on the *tandava* sites, please refer to Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Ananda- Tandava of Siva Sadaanrttamurti : The development of the concept of Adavallan-Kuttaperumanatikai in the south Indian Textual and Iconographic Tradition*, (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998). Much of dance literature contains references to *tandava* as a technical aspect of dance along with *lasya*. For references to *tandava* in dance literature, some

variations in their presentation. All of the tripurantakas display four arms. The rear pair of hands carry attributes—the trident (*trisul*) on the right hand and a staff (*danda*) on the corresponding left hand. This pair of attributes is articulated uniformly in every tripurantaka sculpture. He carries a bow in his left hand and an arrow in the corresponding right hand. Tripurantaka's attitude is also fairly consistent throughout the myriad sculptures: he stands straight (*sama*) and erect in all of them. In some figures, the left leg is raised and placed on a platform—sometimes resembling the head of a demon. This is the only variation seen in an otherwise uniform portrayal.

Schwindler interprets the emphasis on *Tripurantaka* in the Rajaraja Temple as reflecting Siva's military exploits as well as Rajaraja's own martial successes.²⁰ In a sense, Tripurantaka triggers recollections of royal victories and human accomplishment—exotic and unambiguous.

I also discovered an interesting connection between the *karanas* and tripurantaka in the legend of the 108 *karana* mentioned in the *Natyasastra*. Brahma and Bharata make their way to Kailasa to present their 'creation'—*natya* to Siva and his retinue. Once there, they enact a play titled *tripuradaha* or

recommendations are Sangitaratnakara, vol. 4, Nartananirnaya, vol. 3, and Bharatarnava of Nandikesvara, ed. by Vasudeva Sastri, (Thanjavur: Saraswathi Mahal Library Society, 1989).

²⁰ The importance given to Rajaraja I and even his successor's military accomplishments in the epigraphs of this temple clearly state the intent to project the king's military might and invincibility. Several of the royal orders begin with introductions where royal victories are recorded and praised, regardless of the fact that the benefactions are largely religious offerings.

'burning of *tripura*' obviously recreating Siva's heroic act of destruction of the three cities and demons residing there. It is after witnessing this play that Siva suggests the incorporation of the 108 *karana* and its constituents into *natya*.

Intriguingly, the 108-*karana*'s presence in the Rajaraja *vimana* along with *Tripurantaka* triggers the possibility of links to this legend. Could this be a recreation of Siva's dance of the 108 *karana* in Kailasa mentioned in the *Natyasastra*? Moreover, Siva *Tripurantaka* is also the dancer of the Tamils. And, the *tandava* has strong associations to southern India. While there is as yet inadequate sculptural substantiation to support this contention, the presence of Siva's dance/*tandava* along with Siva's preeminent act of destruction ties them together.

The *vimanas*' distinct physical resemblance to mountains is a fact that pervades all of ancient Indic architecture. However, there lies a more discreet connection to this rising physical structure that operates at a more meta-physical and spiritual plane (Fig.5.15). That is the fact that the *vimanas*, in their entirety personify the body of a meditating *yogin*. The centers (*cakras*) in the body of the *yogin* are conceptualized as the median openings in the superstructure. The vertical placement of the *cakras* is reproduced symbolically in the diminishing tiers of the *vimana* superstructure.

When read under the prism of yogic meditation, the *vimana* of a temple is divided into the various realms. Accordingly, the sanctum of the temple is the realm of the *muladhara* or foundational source consisting of raw energy. It is a region filled with spiritual power and potency that needs to be realized by the mediator, i.e. it contains the raw material required for the mediator's spiritual awakening. It is analogous to the *muladharacakra* of the *kundalini yoga* system where all energy lies concentrated in the bottom of the spine waiting to be nudged into awakening.

The physical structure of the *vimana*- the base and wall that contain the central shrine are regions that manifest the presence of this raw energy waiting to be stimulated. The superstructure-- starting with the lower tiers and rising pyramid encase various *cakras*—the energy vortices along the spine. Each of these vortices representing a level of being within the mediator is visualized in the *vimana* superstructure as median openings at each succeeding tier. Put together, the entire *vimana*- from base to finial represents vertical levels of *yogic* meditational attainment.

In this structural framework, the 108 *karana*, present in the inner precincts of upper tier falls in the realm of the *muladharacakra*- the foundational source. I maintain that 108-*karanas'* inclusion in this spiritually potent area is deliberate and stems from the acknowledgment of their intrinsic resonance to *yogic*

principles. Given my prior discussion on the agency of dance-- its *yogic* methodology and performance being analogous to meditational experience-- the presence of a dance theme in the *muladhara* realm of the temple is incredibly innovative.

Dance was, therefore, integral to the temple, both in terms of iconography and functionality. The presence of dancers and dance teachers in the temple administration evidenced in much repeated epigraph recorded during Rajaraja I's tenure attests to dance's functional presence in the temple. Even under Rajendra II (1058 B.C.E), we know of the continued performance in this temple of a play—the *Rajarajesvara Natakam*, during the festival season.²¹

I read another very significant *yogic* connection, this time between the 108-*karana* and the *muladhara*—the foundational source. We already know that the *karanas* are fundamental movement patterns that form the basis for movement and communicative sequences. Therefore, the *karana* is a foundational source for movement formations. One needs to dip into the pool of the *karana* in order to animate and create stylized movement.

²¹ See Annual Reports on Epigraphy, no.29, 1897, and South Indian Inscriptions, vol. li, no.67, pp. 303-307. According to this inscription, king Rajendra II in his sixth regnal year, which corresponds to 1058 B.C.E., assigned a daily allowance of paddy to Vijaya Rajendra Acharyan, the lead Instructor of a drama troupe for the performance of the *Rajarajesvara Natakam* by his actors.

In other words, I state that the *karana* can be defined as the foundational source for movement—the *muladhara* of movement. Given their primacy in the sphere of movement; Siva’s legendary associations to their performance; and importantly, their relationship to *tandava*—which is itself a physical manifestation of deep *yogic* symbolism—the 108-*karana* carry enormous import in physical and symbolic expression.

Iconography and Agency of Dance in the Gopura: The Nataraja Temple, Arunachala Temple, and Vriddhagirisvara Temples

Chronologically, the second instance of the 108-*karana* is the relief sculptures on the Vishnu Temple at Kumbakonam. However, as mentioned before, this program is not native to the Sarangapani Temple or the outer east *gopura* where it finds presence. Instead, they appear to have been transplanted at an unknown time to the Sarangapani Temple. Due to this important fact, the Sarangapani Temple *karanas* do not facilitate accuracy with regard to the continuity and change that characterize the larger *karana* program. Therefore, they are discussed after this section.

Here, I examine the *karana* programs of the other three temples, namely Nataraja, Arunachala, and Vriddhagirisvara Temples respectively. The integration of the three temples in this investigation is due to several similarities the programs’ display-- similarity in location, general arrangement, and most

importantly, in their symbolism. Moreover, all three of these temples reflect Siva's ties to mountains—Cidambaram is a cosmic mountain, Arunacala resides in the Annamalai mountain, and Siva as the 'Lord of the old hill' resides in Vriddhachalam. Mentioned in the sacred hymns of Saivite saints, these temples also reflect a steady expansion in architecture and iconography during the course of south Indian history.

The first significant change is in the location of the 108-*karana* imagery. From its central location in the *vimana* of the Rajaraja Temple, the 108-*karana* program is relocated to the periphery of the temple, specifically to the outermost *gopuras*. Arranged on vertical pilasters in the inner passage, the *karana* reliefs are contained within square panels. In all three of these temples, the 108-*karana* animates not just one but all four of the outermost *gopuras* that provide access to the inner precincts of the temple. With the presence of four *karana* programs in the gateways surrounding the central shrine, I read an emerging mandalaic pattern that suggests a connection between the four entryways and the central shrine.

The second crucial modification in the 108-*karana* in the *gopuras* is its organization—vertical and moving from the bottom to top, i.e. the 108-*karana* sequence starts at the bottom of a pilaster and moves upwards. Once it reaches the top, it continues from the bottom of the adjacent pilaster upwards. This

becomes a very important feature in my analysis of the meaning of the 108-*karana* program.

Third, this relocation of the *karana* to the outermost realm of the temple also coincides with the change in the identity of the dancer—females flanked by accompanists. Unlike the Rajaraja Temple where Siva himself is the dancer accompanied by *ganas*, the dancer in the *gopura* panels is a female whose identity is unclear.

An important note of convergence between the Rajaraja *karanas* and the later *karana* programs in the *gopuras* is in the accompanying sculptural program. In the Rajaraja Temple, the *karana* occupied an inner realm while sharing the external facades with forms of Siva. In much the same way, the *gopura karanas* occupy the inner passageway even as the forms of Siva enliven the external facades. Although the iconographic scheme in the *gopura* is not identical to the Rajaraja *vimana*, the resonance of the larger theme, i.e. Saivite forms manifesting the exterior, reveals the continuity of some trends. Forms of Siva manifest the external niche facades of all the Cidambaram *gopuras* and a few of the Arunachalesvara *gopura* niches. However, the niches in the Vriddhagirisvara Temple are bereft of sculptures, although their presence suggests an intent to place sculptures.

The *karanas'* presence in the *gopuras* of Cidambaram coincides with the prominence of these structures in south Indian temple iconography.²² The sudden shift in focus on the *gopura* from the *vimana* resulted in the former's impressive development. The preeminence of the *gopuras* and their soaring verticality gave them visual prominence over the *vimanas*.

In his exploration of the *gopura*—its antecedents, events leading up to its sudden, assertive prominence, and iconometric sources, Harle²³ made an important discovery. The literature detailing the iconometry of the *gopuras*, far from being original conceptions, turned out to be, in Harle's own words "crude and mechanical transpositions"²⁴ prescribed for the *prasada*- the central shrine. The Tanjore *gopuras* stand testimony to such an adaptation, and Harle²⁵ outlines in his study how these, along with the *prasada* of the Rajaraja Temple serve as precursors to the later *gopuras*.

²² Early *gopuras* were small openings in the entrance sometimes accompanied by a single storied architectural construct on the lintel. The Rajaraja *gopuras* were the first instance of the *gopura* displaying a definite presence and identity in the temple architecture. *Gopura* architecture and sculpture became more mature in 12th century as seen in the east *gopura* of the 2nd enclosure in Vriddhachalam (ca. 1186 C.E.) as well as the Darasuram *gopura* by Rajaraja II, finally reaching its peak in the Cidambaram temple. The Vijayanagara kings who were followed by the Nayaka rulers transformed the *gopura* into a veritable sculptural gallery with a soaring verticality and profusion of imagery.

²³ Harle's methodical study titled *Temple Gateways in South India: The Architecture and Iconography of Cidambaram gopuras*, (Oxford: Bruno Casirer), 1963, throws light on the evolution of *gopuras* in south India even as he focuses on the Four *gopuras* at Cidambaram.

²⁴ See Harle, *Temple Gateways in South India*, P. 18.

According to his study, the *gopuras* imitate the *vimanas* in architectural and iconometric features. Perhaps the most significant finding in this study is the fact the area correlating to the *garbhagriha* of the shrine is the entryway opening of the *gopura*²⁶. Circumambulatory corridors in the shape of vestibules, just like those that surround the *garbhagriha* of the Rajaraja *vimana*, manifest in the *gopura* in the interior of its two tiered wall. Harle concludes on the basis of architectural precepts, the large *gopura*'s entryway (*dvara*) with its vestibule is the central shrine, which in the *gopura* serves as an entrance.

It is interesting that the 108-*karana* is represented in the Cidambaram, Tiruvannamalai, and Vriddhachalam temples in these very entryways. I state that the *karanas*' relocation to the *gopuras*, which hitherto seemed disconnected to their earlier presence in the *vimana* is a deliberate and logical development. With most of the temples already constructed, later kings and patrons may well have looked to the *gopura*- with its associations to the *vimana* as the structure where their own imprints may lie. I also believe that this development ties the Tanjore *karana* closer to the later instances of this program.

²⁵ Harle discusses the architectural features of the pair of Tanjore gopuras and brings out the features that were continued and developed in later gopuras. See Harle, *Temple Gateways in south India*, pp. 1-26.

²⁶ Harle notes this important point on the basis on architectural similarities between elements of the *vimana* and the evolving *gopura*. See Harle, P. 21. Earlier, he notes the similarity in terminology as well with this region in the *gopura* being referred to as *grabh griha* or *nali geha* in architectural *sastras*. Harle, P. 2.

While still in the context of the 108 *karanas* articulating the entryway portals of the *gopura*, I discovered yet another critical and interesting connection between the temple and *natya*. In the section on the agency of *natya* to ritual (Ch.4), I had analyzed in depth a rite known as the *purvaranga*. A prelude to the actual *natya*, the *purvaranga* consisted of a multi-media ritual presentation that heralded the enactment of the central plot. I had seen in its ritualistic structure elements of dance that are intermingled with better known temple rites. In fact, the 108-*karana* are directly associated through their legend to the *purvaranga* rite.

An analogy may be drawn between the *purvaranga* and the *gopura*: the former is a prelude to the drama much like the way the *gopura* is a prelude to the *vimana*. The *gopuras* introduce the devotee to the devotional space and prod him into a spiritual journey. Clearly, the *purvaranga* rite is based on exactly the same principle where it directs the audience to the actors and central plot of the play. The 108-*karana* is common to both these enterprises—ritual and the physical structure.

The *purvaranga* begins with preparatory acts involving music and dance and gradually entails the demarcation and propitiation of the center, the *Brahma mandala*. I see parallels in the temple where the *gopura* with its soaring verticality and glimpses of sculpture directs the devotee gradually towards the inner realms and finally to the center- the sanctum. I see relationship between the central

shrine and the *gopura*, that I have just discussed, and the ties between the *purvaranga* and the actual play (Fig. 5.16).

I believe what is even more telling is the fact that the *karana* reliefs on the *gopuras* display female dancers, not Siva, along with accompanists. In the *purvaranga* rite, we know that female dancers dressed as goddesses performed *karanas* and *angaharas* on the stage to the accompaniment of music. Perhaps, herein lies the other possibility for introduction of female dancers in 108-*karanas* represented on the *gopuras*.

Assuming that the *purvaranga* is the *gopura*, then female dancers who comprise an integral part of the *purvaranga* could be shown in the *gopura* as dancer panels. This assertion is further strengthened by the fact that these dancers performed *karanas* and *angaharas* in the *purvaranga*, which is exactly what they do in the *gopura* entryways as well.

I strongly believe that this assertion, when explored in depth, will bring about more information on the dynamics of the *natya* and temple traditions. The presence of the 108-*karana*, for that matter, any form of dance imagery appears very consistent with the concept of the *gopura* as the *purvaranga* for dance was one of the acts that constituted the *purvaranga* ritual. That it should now find presence in the *gopura* *dvara*, the gateway to the temple reflects the extent to which the dance tradition was germane to the developing temple vocabulary.

Symbolism and the Yogin: Relationship between *Vimana* and *Gopura*

Along with the transference of architectural, iconometric, and sculptural conventions from the *vimana* to the *gopura*, there may have occurred a transfer of the symbolism as well. I therefore suggest that the relocation of the *karana* to the *gopura* carried with it, meaning and symbolism it espoused in its original home, i.e. as the cosmic mountain and the *yogic* body. I read the *gopura* as symbolizing a cosmic mountain and also the potent realm of yogic energy. Additionally, the *gopura* is the manifestation of a prelude, indicating the beginning of an activity—in this case spiritual—and pointing to the central theme, the *vimana*.

My first point of transference of the cosmic mountain symbolism to the *gopura* is supported by the so-called Tripurantaka inscription.²⁷ Accordingly, Kopperunjinga, a pious general and loyal patron claims to have built the East *gopura* of the Nataraja Temple resembling 'Mount Meru'. The epigraph further indicates that this endeavor is made possible by the riches obtained from the success of his military conquests and defeat of enemies. One is immediately reminded of the Rajaraja Temple with its references to a southern Meru (*daksinameru vitankar*) in the *vimana*. Looked at from that perspective, the Tanjore

²⁷ This inscription does not have a date but gives a series of Kopperunjinga's largesse to various temples in the region. At least one of these donations finds further corroboration giving this inscription some credibility. See SII, iv, no.1341, 1342, 1342-b. Also, see ARS 198 of 1905. This inscription also states that the decoration on the four sides of the *gopura* were also made by booty acquired by subduing enemies from the four quarters and from riches used in his *tularohana* ceremony—a ceremony where the king is weighed against precious materials.

vimana and the East *gopura* of Nataraja Temple share common traits— allusions to Meru mountain, architecture, forms of Siva in the external facades and finally, the 108-*karana*.

My second point is that, just as in the case of the Rajaraja Temple where the *karana* was empowered by its presence in the sanctum and simultaneously graced the space with its symbolic potency, I regard the *karanas* in the Nataraja, Arunachala and Vriddhagirisvara Temple do the same to the *gopura*. They infuse it with spiritual and *yogic* power and potency.

With this scenario in mind, I read the 108-*karana* in the *gopuras* of the Nataraja, Arunachala, and Vriddhagirisvara Temple as residing in its *muladhara* level- its foundational source (Fig. 5.17). By virtue of their presence in an area of the *gopura* that corresponds to the *garbhagriha* --the foundational source, the 108-*karana* become a part of this energy. I interpret them as visual symbols of the foundational source-- the *muladhara*, as they are conceived almost as illustrations of this powerful, all pervading energy.

This brings the *karanas*' of the *gopuras* closer to the Tanjore *karanas* as they seem to fall within a pattern of evolutionary development. Their relevance as symbols of the foundational source is further strengthened by the fact that the 108-*karana* are in the realm of dance indeed fundamental units. They are the building blocks on which stylized dance movement is based. As manifestations

of movement, they are also sources of energy, vibrant energy at that. Therefore, they are credible articulators of movement and energy.

My interpretation of the *karana* iconography as the symbolic and visual manifestation of the rise of energy from the *muladhara* realm is also supported by its innovative architectural organization—its verticality. The vertical lines of movement extending from bottom to top in each pilaster is a deliberate and conscious effort to indicate the vertical rising of movement and energy.

In fact, I find that the whole conception of the 108-*karana* as representing the movement of *yogic* energy is expressed with greater clarity in these instances of the *karana*. The *karana* program in the *gopuras* not only brings out more effectively the foundational nature of the *karanas*, but also identifies the location of this rising energy – the central channel. I interpret that the inner passageway of the *gopuras* bearing the 108-*karana* program as embodying the *susumna nadi*—the central channel through which the awakened *kundalini* energy flows during its vertical ascent.

The *gopura* architecture resembles the pyramidal *vimana* in its entirety revealing the presence of gradually rising tiers with central openings in each succeeding tier. In the symbolism of the *vimana*, these central openings comprise the various *scakras* or vortices that are located in the body of the meditating *yogin*.

They are physically and psychologically aligned with the central channel as they come to life when the *kundalini* energy flows through them.

I propose from my analysis that this symbolism pertains to the later south Indian *gopuras* as well, at least from the time when they gained pre-eminence over the *vimana* as the single most visible entity in the temple complex. I believe that this link which may have been speculative before is made tangible and credible with the presence of the *karana* imagery in the passageways. The *karanas*, far from being ornamental additions are central in determining the larger symbolism of the *gopura* itself. They reverberate with religious and spiritual underpinnings that go beyond their assumed role as aesthetic decorative motifs.

Again, I would like to reiterate the dance tradition's relevance—both pictorial and symbolic to the illustration of concepts in the Hindu temple tradition, particularly in south India. I reiterate here my earlier discussion on dances' agency to movement and communication as well meditation, and its incorporation and integration in temple expression.

The temples themselves reveal ties to *yogic* practice in Saivite literature. Particularly, Cidambaram's *yogic* associations are profuse and prolific in literature. The *Cidamabara Mahatmyam*,²⁸ espousing the foundational legend of

²⁸ See Cidambaram Mahatmyam, 15. 31-9. These verses draw an analogy between the earth and the body. Various tirthas in India are situated on the body cakras wherein Tillai is

the town and site of Siva's *ananda tandava* presents an account of saiva *tirthas* in the Indic region on the basis of the *yogic* body. According to this account, which of course is obviously biased in favor of Cidambaram, the sacred site resides in the heart center and is paramount to spiritual success. Yet another account of Siva's dance in Tillai is present in the *koyil puranam*²⁹ with allusions to *yogiccakras* and references to Tillai being *acakra* through which the *susumna nadi* travels in its vertical ascent.

Arunachala Temple shares this *yogic* platform along with Tillai in a more fully developed sequence of *tirthas-cakras* documented in the *Vyagharapura Mahatmya*.³⁰ In this account, Tillai is the heart center (*Anahata*) while Arunachala resides in the *Manipuracakra*. Smith records another reference to the *kundalini* map in the festival ritual text of the Cidambaram temple- the *citsabhesotsava sutra*,³¹ where the six critical annual festivals of the temple are likened to the *sixcakras*. While it is true the *yogic* symbolism is expressed almost universally in

placed in the heart cakra. This account is further corroborated, perhaps repeated with lesser complexity in the Suta samhita where a discussion of the *tirthas* interprets Cidambaram as the heart. See Suta Samhita, Jnanayogakhanda II.50b-52.56. Also refer to David Smith's *The Dance of Siva: Religion, Art, and Poetry in South India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 82-83.

²⁹ *Koyil Puranam, Patanjali Carrukam* 70-72.

³⁰ Refer to *Vyaghrapura Mahatmyam*, ch. 15, 18-33. In this list, Varanasi is the only northern site, the other five being sites in the Tamil region. Also refer to David Smith, *Dance of Siva*, P.83.

³¹ Smith, *Dance of Siva*, pp.

every Hindu temple, a few among them are considered especially sacred from this perspective.

These three temples have the distinction of being included in the hymns of the Saivite saints, the Nayanmars. Tillai (Cidambaram) and its devotees are praised in the hymns of these saints and later manuscripts of the *tevaram* hymns were recovered in the Cidambaram temple by efforts of Cola king Rajaraja I.³² Sundaramurti, a prominent Saivite hymnist of the *tevaram* refers to himself as the slave of the 63 canonical saints that reside and worship in Tillai. Manikkavacakar,³³ another revered hymnist describes with religious fervor the Nataraja temple, its rituals and Siva's dance there along with frequent references to the community of 3000 priests that grace the temple.

My third point is that 108-*karana* theme reveals ties to Siva's manifestations as the lord of mountains. For example, both the Arunachala and the Vriddhagirisvara Temples are mentioned in the *Tevaram* hymns as sacred hill landscapes. In keeping with this, Tiru annamalai, or the sacred Annamalai mountain is the site where Siva resides as Arunachalesvara- the unmoving light--

³² There is some disagreement among scholars as to whether it was indeed Rajaraja I who, along with Nambi Andar Nambi discovered the *tevaram* manuscripts in the Cidambaram temple.

³³ The last of the hymnist saiva saints, Manikkavasagar is also the composer of the Tiruvasagam and Tirusitrambalam at Cidambaram. His rapturously devotional poems on Nataraja have been studied by several scholars for information on Saiva bhakti. See Ramakrishna Aiyer, *The Economy of a south Indian Temple, Cidambaram: Annamalai University Press, 1946*, 23.

fire linga enshrined in this temple. Similarly, the Vriddhagirisvara Temple in the city of Vriddhachalam enshrines a linga named for Siva as the 'Lord of the old hill/mountain'. The term *vriddhachalam* translates as 'old and unmoving', just as *arunachala* translates as the 'fire that does not move'.

In fact, resonance to hills and mountains in the foundation legends of the all three of the temples is another factor that unifies them further. Even Cidambaram carries associations to mountains — as being situated on a subterranean mountain whose base rests in the world of *nagas*.³⁴ In fact, immersed in the sea of legends associated with the dancing Siva and Cidambaram is one where Patanjali, in his quest to reach Cidambaram and witness Siva's dance descends to the subterranean world of the *nagas*, enters a vertical tunnel leading up into Cidambaram.

I read the making up of a *kundalini* map even in this narrative: the subterranean *nagas* analogous to *kundalini*-- the snake (*naga*) coiled at the bottom of the spine. Moreover, the tunnel leading upwards, I interpret as the central channel-- the *susumna nadi*. This tunnel leads atop the mountain to Cidambaram, which I believe is a proclamation of Cidambaram as the realm of the *sahasrara*.

³⁴ The local sthalapuram, the *Cidambara Mahatmyam*, II. Also, see David Smith, P. 32.
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In this context, the presence of 4 near-identical outer *gopuras* in all these temples highlights yet another commonality that resonates with the sacred mountain theme that I have been discussing so far.

Architectural treatises such as the *Manasara* document that temple plans reflecting the presence of four entryways in its outer enclosure articulate the *Kailasa*-type of ground plan. Should that be the case, the Nataraja, Arunachala and Vriddhagirisvara Temples reveal the adoption of this concept in their building. Interestingly, the outermost *prakara* in the Vriddhagirisvara Temple³⁵ is still alluded to as the *kailasa prakara*, suggesting that the entire complex may well be considered as Siva's mountain home.

The strong associations to mountains in the legend, literature, and architecture of these temples draws is back to the Rajaraja Temple with its own brand of sacred geographical allusions in its architecture and sculpture. I believe in all of these temples, the 108-*karanas* identify and justify the symbolic association to mountains. I also believe that on the one hand, the *karana* depictions can lead the reader towards *Kailasa*- the mountain as the physical space. On the other, they draw the viewer into mental constructs of the cosmic mountain of meditational energy and experience that is deeply spiritual.

³⁵ T. Chandrakumar in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation titled *Vriddhagirisvara Temple at Vriddhachalam: A Study of its History, Art and Architecture* (Madras: University of Madras, 1986),

Siva, Visnu and the 108 *karana* : The Sarangapani Temple at Kumbakonam

In more ways than one, the *karana* program in the Sarangapani Temple stands alone. For one, the reliefs are transplants that are not native to the temple or structure of presence, which in this case is the façade of the outer East *gopura*.

Second, the *karana* program itself with its strong Saivite origin and development does not resonate with Vaisnavite doctrine. Particularly, associations to the *tandava* dance pushes the 108-*karana* theme even more further into the Saivite camp. Therefore, its presence in a Visnu temple dedicated to his form as the *Sarangapani* (holder of the *Saranga* bow) finds no perceptible connections.

Most likely, the *karana* reliefs were reclaimed from another monument. It is difficult to identify the original home of these *karanas*, although one can surmise that it must have been a monument to Siva. Scholars such as Vatsyayan have speculated that the *karanas* may have belonged to the neighboring Somesvara Temple³⁶, which is adjacent to the Saragapani and even shares a wall with it. While this is possible, I did not find evidence to support such a contention while at Kumbakonam.

65. In fact, he adds that the circumambulation of this courtyard symbolically confers on the devotees the fruits of having gone around Kailasa.

³⁶ Vatsyayana in *Dance sculptures in the Sarangapani Temple*, (New Delhi: SAHER), 1-5, has provided her interpretation on the possible original home of the Sarangapani *karana* reliefs. My own visit to the Someshvara Temple did not convince me that it may have intended to be the original recipient of the 108-*karanas*. Vatsyayana documents the discovery of two more *karana* stone reliefs in the near-by Ramaswamy Temple in Kumbakonam. She is justifiably ambivalent about the reliefs nativity to this shrine as well, dedicated to Visnu.

I would like to include a few of my observations regarding this set of *karanas*. As I mentioned before, in terms of content, consistency and quality, these reliefs are of a superior category. It does appear to me by looking at the current presentation that they were designed to fit a horizontal format, not the vertical one that the Nataraja and subsequent instances exhibit. Given that, the *gopura* may not have been their intended home. In all likelihood, they may have been meant to adorn a shrine, maybe even a central shrine, just like the Rajaraja Temple. To me, it appears like an attempt to adopt the Rajaraja scheme, not necessarily to imitate it but develop its expression.

One temple that reveals this trend is the Siva temple at Gangaikondacolapuram built by Rajaraja I's son and successor Rajendra I. Scholars have studied the two temples³⁷ and written about the remarkable similarities they exhibit in terms of art and architecture. Ofcourse, the Gangai Temple does not contain the *karana* program in its sanctum space.

I suggest, without much evidence at this point, that perhaps the Sarangapani reliefs were meant for the Gangai Temple, but owing to unknown reasons, found their way to Kumbakonam. Rajendra I is known to have

³⁷ Several studies have been undertaken to bring out the similarities between the two temples with regard to architecture and sculptural expression. Among them, Pierre Picard, *Tanjavur Brihadisvara: An Architectural Study* (Pondicherry: Ecole de francoise, 1995), Meister and Dhaky's *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvani Press 1983) and Hernault's *The Iconography of the Brihadeesvara Temple*, (New Delhi: IGNCA),

patronized singing and dancing as well, in fact, there is an account in the Tyagaraja Temple at Tiruvarur claiming that he had a 'favorite mistress' by name of Paravai Nankaiyar who was a *devadasi* at the Tiruvarur temple.³⁸ She is famous for generous donations to the Tiruvarur temple³⁹ that enabled it to rebuild many of its structures in stone.

Perhaps, this association to a dancer can explain at least partially, the reason for the superior dance expression of the Sarangapani reliefs.

Unlike the Rajaraja reliefs that could be traced easily to a text, the Sarangapani *karanas* appear to answer more to an active tradition. They appear more lively and spontaneous in their rendition apart from revealing a greater variety and depth elucidation of the *karanas*. The few inscriptions that are available are only partially helpful in identifying individual *karana* formations, however, they do provide us the evidence that indeed the 108-*karana* was the

2002. The two temples are described in great detail by S. R. Balasubrahmanian in Middle Cola Temples, A. D. 985-1070 (Faridabad: Thompson Press, 1975.)

³⁸ See S. Ponnusamy, Sri Thyagaraja Temple, Tiruvarur, (Tamilnadu: State Department of Archaeology), 1972, p. 33-34. The dancer carried the title 'anukki' or 'one who is intimate' and is known to have commanded considerable respect. Kersenboom, in Nityasumangali: The Devadasi Tradition in South India (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1897), 27, identifies her as a court dancer, not a temple dancer.

³⁹ Paravai donated ornaments including gold, rubies, pearls and diamonds to the temple. She is also supposed to have provided gold for the gilding of the vimana as well as the shrine to Siva as Vitivitankar. An inscription dating from the 20th regnal year of Rajendra states that the king arrived at the doors of the shrine in a chariot accompanied by Paravai at his side. For more information, see S.Ponnuswamy, *Sri Thyagaraja Temple, Tiruvarur* (Tamilnadu: State Department of Archaeology, 1972), 33-34.

theme being represented. However, this interpretation is still more speculative than substantial.

Despite the fact that the Sarangapani *karanas* do not fit into any of the *karana* groupings, they are still valid to this study. The Sarangapani *karanas* are essential in understanding the chronological development of this imagery.

Additionally, the fragmentary inscriptions that some of them carry offers clues to the presence of a textual tradition with regard to the *karanas*. Moreover, as the only other instance of a male dancer performing the *karanas*, the Sarangapani *karanas* reflect continuing ties to divinities.

Even in their relocation to the *gopura*, the Sarangapani *karanas* are still located in the larger realm of the foundational source, the *muladharacakra*. In doing so, they indicate an awareness of the 108 *karanas* own relevance to the *gopura*. Additionally, the Sarangapani *karana* program manifests another instance of a well developed 108 *karana* iconography.

However, their rearrangement on the *gopura* façade of the Sarangapani Temple does not reflect a thorough understanding of this program by later architects. Although their location in the outer façade can be correlated generally to the corresponding inner corridor of the Thanjavur *vimana*, their haphazard arrangement leaves no room for the unfolding of a sequence.

The Sarangapani Temple is definitely not the original home of the *karana* program due to the 108 *karanas'* own firm ties to Siva.

SUMMARY

I conclude that the iconography of the 108 *karana* is an integral component of temple expression. The 108 *karana* have relevance in sculptural programs and also convey symbolic messages. They have a specific role in the larger iconography of the temple and are deliberately chosen for their effectiveness in articulating key concepts of the Hindu temple. While within the realm of the *vimana*, they reiterate the structure's association to a cosmic mountain. Similarly, their presence in the inner and upper tier of the sanctum reflects their agency in symbolizing vibrant spiritual energy.

Their relocation to the *gopura* is deliberate and makes their communication more effective. Given our knowledge of the *gopura* replicating architectural and iconographic features of the *vimana*, it is the presence of the *karanas* that indicates the transference of symbolism as well.

This transference of symbolism relates to both the *gopura* as a cosmic mountain and as the seat of cosmic energy. The 108 *karanas* agency lies in visualizing the rising energy from the foundational source. The 108 *karanas* being the foundational source of movement are ideal agents to convey this volatile energy. Their arrangement on vertical pilasters with the sequence

moving from bottom to top illustrates the vertical ascent of the yogic energy after its awakening. Perhaps, the most interesting aspect is that the inner passageway of the *gopura* corresponds to the central channel (*susumna nadi*) through which the rising *kundalini* flow to the centers above.

Yet another relationship between the *vimana* and the *gopura* lies in the fact that the latter functions as a prelude to the former, much like the prelude ritual in ancient Indian drama (*natya*) which was a precursor to the central plot of a play.



Fig. 5.1. View of the central shrine. south face, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E.

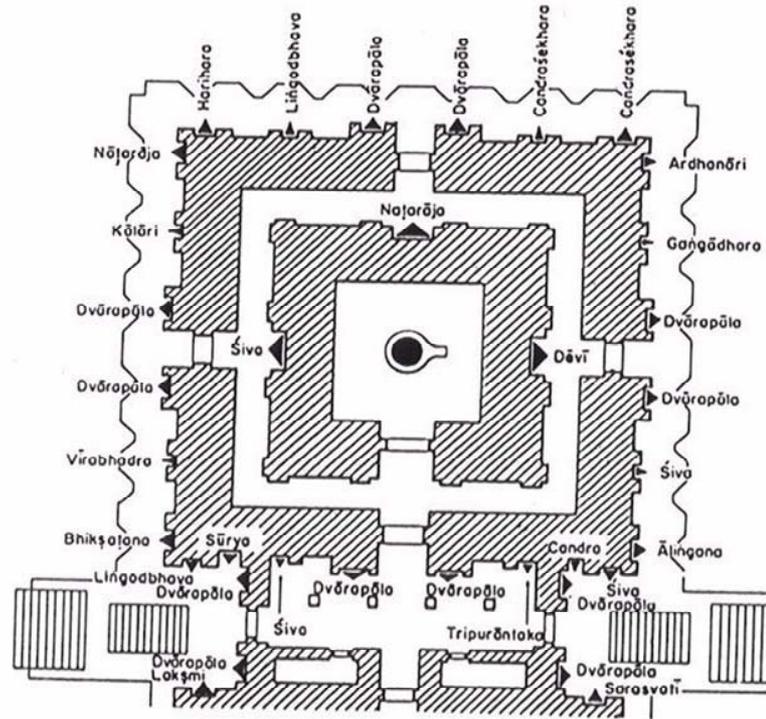


Fig.5.2 Iconographic layout of the ground floor of the *vimana*, Rajarajesvara Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy: Hernault)



Fig. 5.3. Nataraja enshrined in sanctum along with *linga*. (center and east), Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola period, 985-1015. (courtesy : S. R. Balasubrahmanyam)

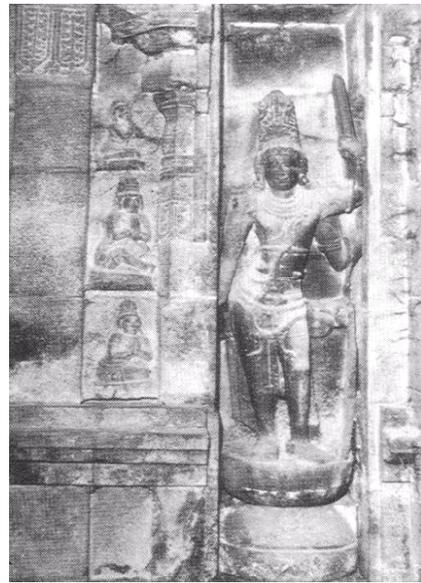
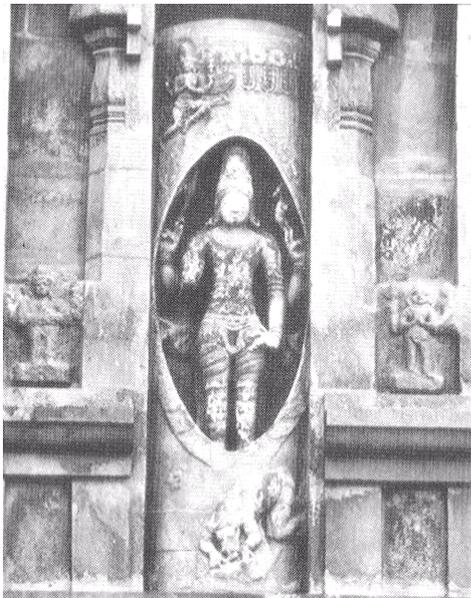


Fig. 5.4. Lingodbhava (L) and Tripurantaka (R), *vimana*, east façade, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy: Hernault)



Fig. 5.5. Siva as Rudra, south niche sculpture, *vimana*, 1st tier inner corridor, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy: Hernault).

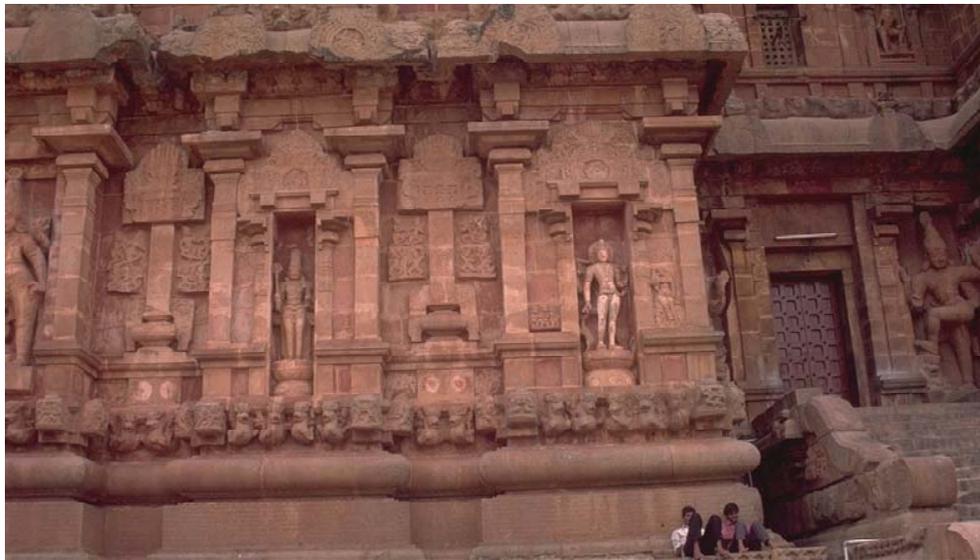


Fig. 5.6. External facades displaying virabhadra (L) and bhiksatana (R), *vimana*, south façade, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 5.7. Siva- Natesa, *vimana*, 1st tier inner corridor, west wall niche, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy: Hernault).

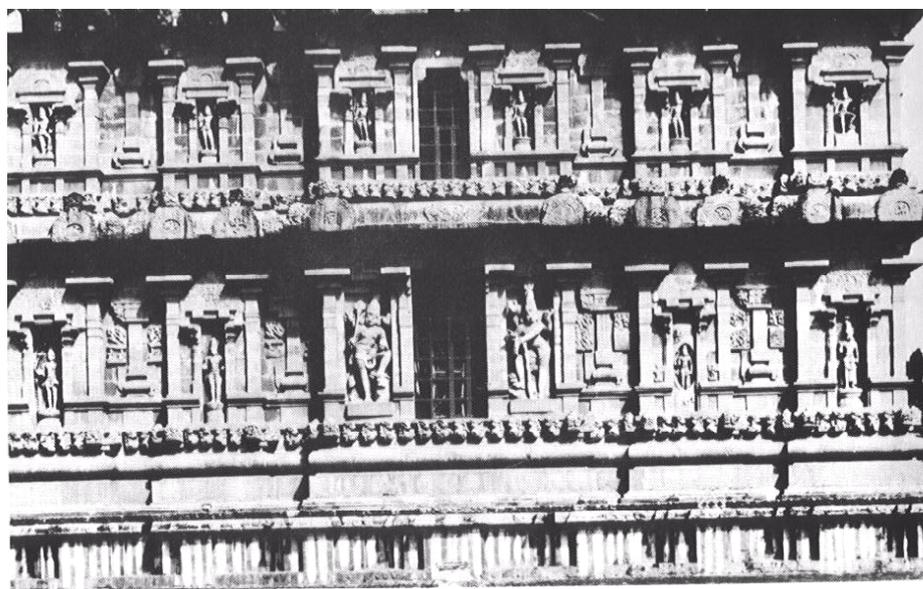


Fig. 5.8. Detail of Saivite forms, *vimana*, west façade, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C. E. (courtesy : S. R. Balasubrahmanyam).

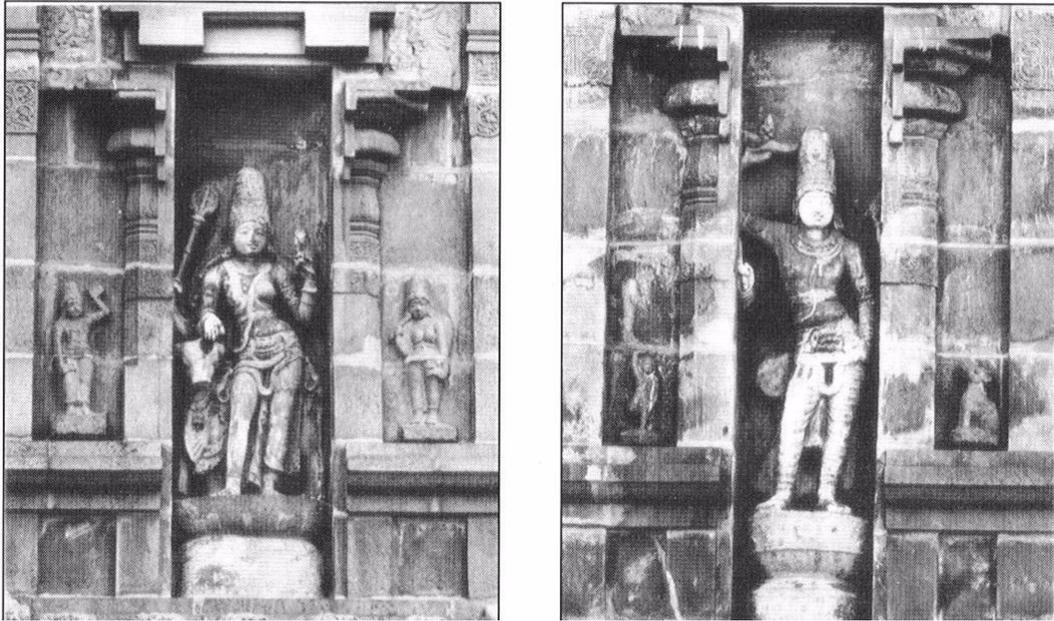


Fig. 5.9. Siva Ardhanarisvara (L) and Gangadhara (R) on *vimana*, North wall façade, , Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy : Hernault)



Fig. 5.10. *Dvarapalas* (door guardians) on *gopura* façade, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C. E. (courtesy : S.R. Balasubrahmanyam).

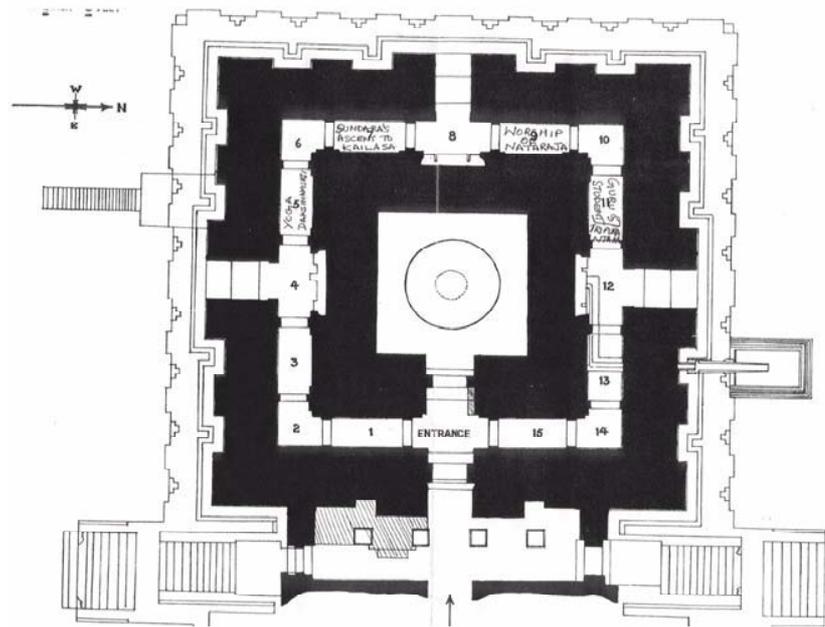


Fig. 5.11. Distribution of themes in mural paintings, *vimana*, 1st tier inner corridor, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C. E. (courtesy : Balasubrahmanyam).

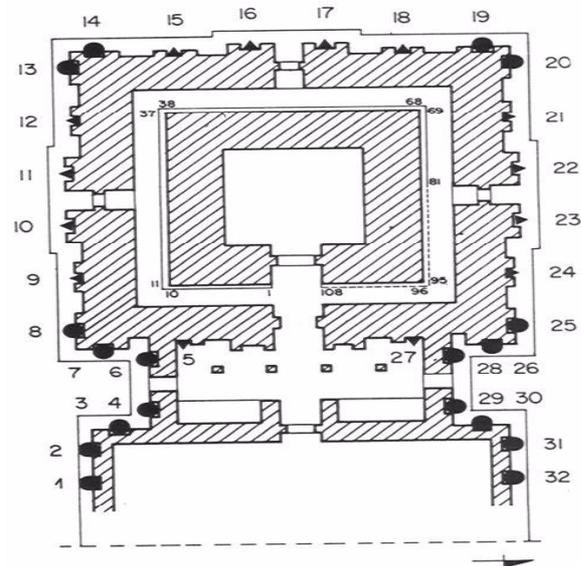


Fig. 5.12. Layout of iconography in upper tier, *vimana*, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy: Hernault)



5. 13. The 108-*karana* sculptures inside the *vimana*, upper tier, inner corridor, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E.



Fig. 5. 14. Siva as Tripurantaka on the *vimana* façade, east façade, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur. Cola period, 985-1015 C.E.

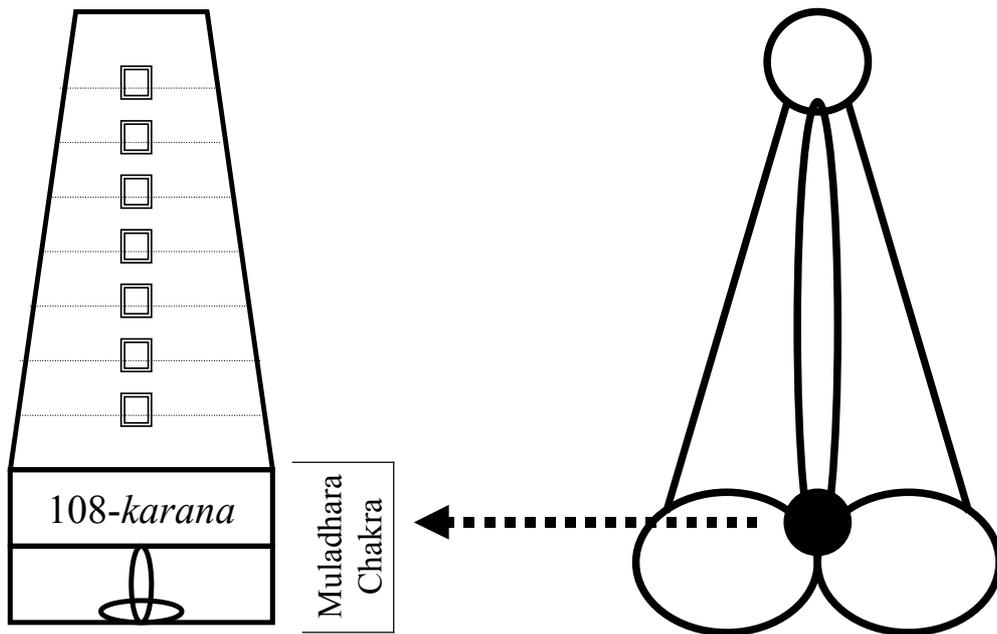


Fig. 5.15. The central shrine as realm of the foundational source, a conceptualized drawing of the Rajaraja *garbhagriha* (with the 108 *karana*) as the realm of the *muladhara* that corresponds to the *muladhara cakra* in a meditating yogin. The 108-*karana* program as the foundational source (*muladhara*) of movement (energy).

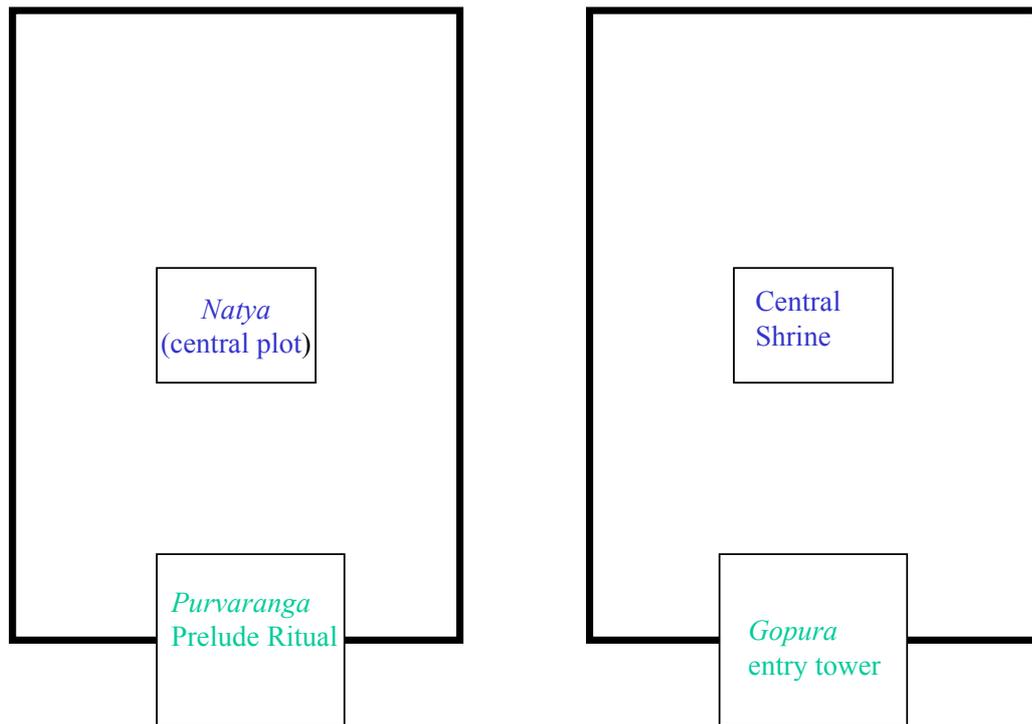


Fig. 5.16. The relationship between *natya* performance and ritual worship reflected in temple architecture through the 108-*karana* program. The *gopura* as prelude to the central shrine just as the *purvaranga* (stage ritual employing dance) is a prelude to the central plot of play.

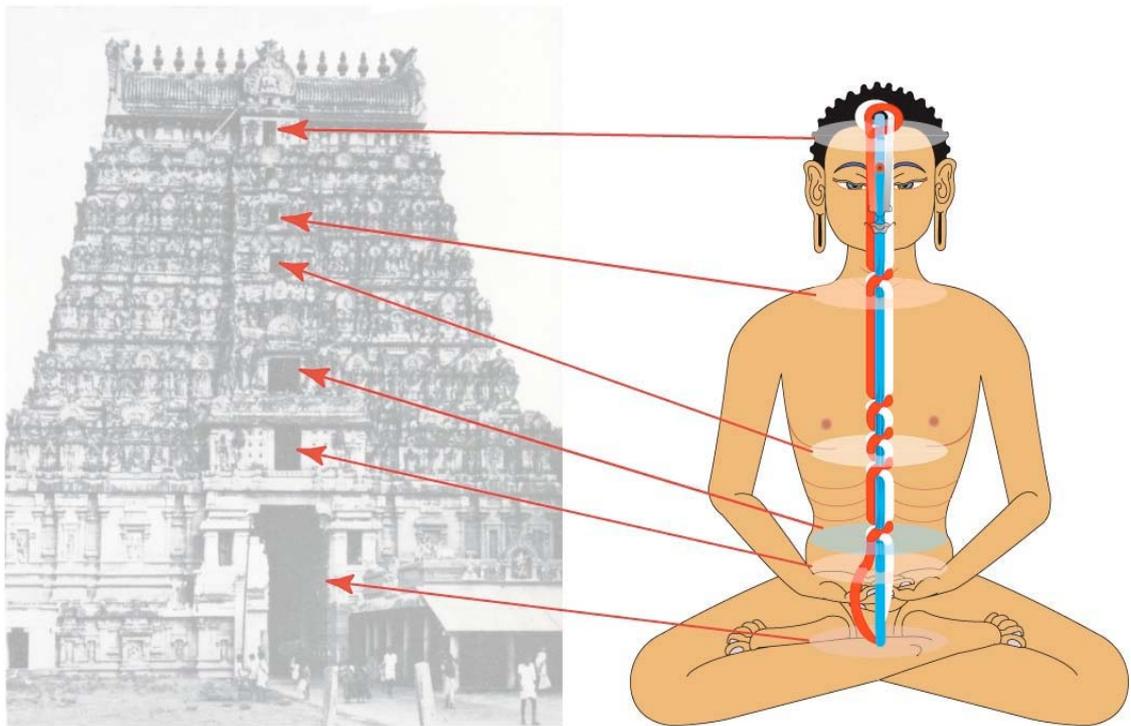


Fig. 5.17. The gopura as the manifestation of meditational energy. The two tiered wall and entryway as the realm of the foundational source (*muladhara*). The 108 karana illustrates the *muladhara* and its vertical botom to top arrangement indicates the movement of energy from the *muladhara* center to the upper *cakras*. (Drawing courtesy: John C. Huntington).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

My study shows that dance sculptures, as reflected by the 108-*karana* program, are not merely decorative motifs that are included in the temple for aesthetic appeal. On the contrary, they articulate core iconographic elements that are central to a monument's larger iconographic program. They have meaning and relevance in the temple and enrich the vocabulary of the temple by their presence. Far from being tasteful additions to the temple, they manifest a well developed iconography that is relevant in temple expression.

The 108-*karana* iconography is solidly Saivite in affiliation. Siva is associated with its performance and transmission in legend and in art. In fact, evidence of this legend is revealed in the 108-*karana's* presence in the Rajaraja Temple at Thanjavur. At Thanjavur, the 108-*karana's* location in the *vimana* reflects its connections to the nucleus of the temple. Throughout its evolution, the 108-*karana* iconography maintains its validity as a manifestation of core concepts in Hindu belief and worship.

Like the dance tradition itself, the 108-*karana* reliefs have agency in the temple. They facilitate communication—both physical and symbolic--- enriching the scope of temple expression. They are imbued with profound ritual and yogic meanings that constitute central concepts in the Hindu worship (Fig.5.17). As fundamental movement that generates energy, they reveal agency in meditational practice. My research suggests that Indian dance, and particularly the 108-*karana*, is a valid practice that has agency within the Indian context as agents of movement, communication, ritual and mediation.

The dance tradition's importance to ritual performance, revealed in the prelude rites (*purvaranga*) translates as the 108 *karana*'s agency in the temple. Just as the prelude ceremony, of which dance and 108 *karana* were components, ushers the viewer to the kernel of the play, the *gopura* in a temple ushers the devotee towards the central shrine (Fig.5.16). The *gopura*'s physical, sculptural, and symbolic likeness to this nucleus makes it an ideal prelude, and with the 108-*karana* program in its entryways establishes its firm relationship to the center.

Precisely for all of these reasons, I conclude that the location and placement of the 108-*karana* imagery in the temples is deliberate and intentional. Furthermore, the location and placement reflect specific yogic meanings that the *karanas* articulate, making them an integral part of temple iconography. Both in the *vimana* (Fig. 5.15) and in the *gopuras* (Fig.5.17) of the other temples, the

location of the 108-*karana* corresponds to the foundational source (*muladhara*) realm of the structure. As the foundational source of movement symbolizing the active principle and energy, the 108-*karanas* are expressions of *kundalini* that resides in the *muladhara cakra*. Their upward movement is suggested by their placement in a vertical arrangement from bottom to top on pilasters in the entryways of the *gopuras*.

I state that the 108-*karana* program, with its multi-faceted expressions is an ideal choice for illustrating components of the temple vocabulary of south India. Its richness and complexity gives it enormous scope in the realm of sculptural expression.

It is notable that out of the 34 temples surveyed in this project, only 5 of them had an identifiable set of *karanas*. Nine others revealed either an intent to carve the *karanas*, or had *karana*-type imagery in the entryway of the east *gopuras*. Therefore, in all 14 out of 34 temples revealed the presence of *karana* or *karana*-type imagery, which in itself is not a large presence. Given the sheer number of temples in south India, it is obvious that the 108-*karanas* are limited in terms of popular presence.

That said however, the distribution of the 14 temples in my study showed that while they were all unified by the fact that 13 of them were Siva temples, they were otherwise independent of one another. They did not all fall into any

particular regional groupings mentioned in literature, such as the seven- *tandava* (*sapta tandava*) or the five- *tandava* (*panca tandava*) sites. Similarly, instances of the *karana*-type imagery reveals that they can be represented on a single *gopura* too, not necessarily in all four entryways. They also reflect an even spread geographically with temples in South Arcot, North Arcot, Madurai, and Thanjavur districts in Tamilnadu.

Therefore, I suggest that although they appear at select temples only, they are not constrained by pre-determined literary groupings of temples or sites. Rather, they go beyond these groupings as their primary relevance to temples is in articulating broader themes in Hinduism.

It is this primary relevance of the 108-*karana* theme to Hindu temple expression that firmly establishes this program not as a motif but as a core iconography. In light of my findings, the prevailing notion that dance imagery not involving deities is merely ornamental and without specific meaning needs to be reexamined. In fact, on the basis of my study, I conclude that all dance imagery in India has to be revisited and examined from the perspective of meaningful expressions, in order to arrive at their true significance.

APPENDIX

Temple Survey List

Thirty- four temples were surveyed for this study. They are listed below.

5 temples with 108-karana program

1. Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur.
2. Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam.
3. Nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. (*tandava* site)
4. Arunacalesvara Temple, Tiruvannamalai.
5. Vriddhagirisvara Temple , Virddhachalam.

9 temples with Karana-type imagery

6. Veerattanesvara Temple, Tiruvadigai.
7. Tirukodisvara Temple, Tirukkodikkaval.
8. Ardhanarisvara Temple, Ulagainallur.
9. Somanathar Temple, Palayarai.
10. Amritaghatesvara Temple, Melakkadambur.
11. Kamphaharesvara Temple, Tribhuvanam.
12. Nagesvara Temple, Kumbakonam
13. Meenakshi Temple, Madurai. (*tandava* site)
14. Vedaranyesvara Temple, Tiruvalangadu (*tandava* site)

20 Other temples in the survey

15. Nelliappar Temple, Tirunelveli. (*tandava* site)
16. Tiru Kuttralanathar Temple, Kuttralam. (*tandava* site)
17. Tiruthalinathar Temple, Tiruputhur (*tandava* site)
18. Mahalingaswami Temple, Tiruvidaimarudur.
19. Bhuvahaswamy Temple, Srimushnam.
20. Tyagarajaswamy Temple, Tiruvarur.
21. Amritaghtesvara Temple, Tirukadaiyur.
22. Darbharanyesvara Temple, Tirunallaru.
23. Abhiramesvara Temple, Tiruvamattur.
24. Sivalokanathesvara Temple, Gramam.
25. Vyaghrapurisvara Temple, Siddhilingamadam.
26. Veerattanesvara Temple, Kilur.

27. Ramalingesvara Temple, Marangiyur.
28. Pattisvaram Temple, Kumbakonam.
29. Apatsahayesvara Temple, Tiruvadaturai.
30. Adipurisvara Temple, Tiruvorriyur.
31. Veerattanesvara Temple, Vazhuvoor.
32. Jambhunathevara Temple, Jambhai.
33. Pancanadisvara Temple, Tiruvayyaru.
34. Munkudimisvara Temple, Kalattur.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Rajarajesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Thanjavur, Thanjavur District
Date & Period	Ca. 985-1015. Cola Period
Main Deity of Temple	Siva as Brhadesvara
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built by Rajaraja I, the celebrated Cola monarch, this temple is regarded as a masterpiece of Cola architecture. • Organized on a linear plan and contained within a rectangular enclosure, the Rajaraja Temple is a forerunner to innovative architectural and sculptural characteristics adopted by later Tamil kings and dynasties. • Characterized by unprecedented size and scale of construction, the Rajaraja temple prominently displays the incorporation of dance in its sculptural program.
Relationship to Dance/epigraphic evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy royal order listing the recruitment of 400 temple-women (<i>talipendir</i>) transferred from other shrines to provide services at the Rajaraja temple. (SII. #66). • Same inscription lists male temple servants including dance instructors/conductors, musicians, drummers, and vocalists.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	Yes. They are present in the <i>vimana</i> of the Rajaraja Temple.
Location of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81 of the 108-<i>karanas</i> are present in the central shrine, in an inner circumambulatory corridor that is right above the sanctum. • Presence of blank stone panels indicate intention to complete the program. • The 108-<i>karana</i> program follows a horizontal circumambulatory arrangement. • Four armed Siva is the dancer of the <i>karanas</i>.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of Siva '<i>adavallan</i>' (skilled dancer) along with the linga in the sanctum of the temple. • The door guardian (<i>dvarapala</i>) figures on this temple reflect ties to Nataraja sculptures.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	<i>Sarangapani Temple</i>
Location of Temple	Kumbakonam. Thanjavur District
Date & Period	Later phase of Cola rule, Vijanagara periods. (12 th -16 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple Description	<p>Visnu as ‘Holder of <i>Saranga</i> bow’ (<i>Sarangapani</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient temple as evidenced by its inclusion in hymns of <i>alwars</i>. • The present structure however is a chariot shaped stone temple belonging to the later phase of Colas. • Shrines to Vishnu (Main and portable) preside over the shrines to Ambal and the <i>alwars</i>. • 108-<i>karana</i> present on the exterior façade of <i>gopura</i>.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No apparent vaisnavite connection to dance exists both in the legend as well as architecture of the temple. • No mention of <i>devaradiyar</i> (<i>devadasis</i>) or any dance activity from epigraphs in the temple.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	Yes. They are present in the exterior façade of <i>gopura</i> .
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located on the external façade of the outer East <i>gopura</i>. • Inscriptional fragments accompany some of the panels. • A horizontal arrangement of the panels. • A two armed male dancer sometimes accompanied by a gana performs the <i>karanas</i>.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Presence of dancers in the spokes of the wheels that support the chariot shaped central shrine. Seemingly random presence of dancers in the reliefs that run around the base of the central shrine.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple Location of Temple Date & Period	Nataraja Temple Cidambaram. South Arcot District 12 th -15 th century. Cola period (later phase), Pandya and Vijanagara periods.
Main Deity of Temple Description	Siva as Nataraja. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A highly celebrated monument to Siva Nataraja, this temple is a vibrant religious center. • As one of the 7 <i>tandava</i> sites, the Nataraja Temple houses the Golden Hall (<i>kanaka sabha</i>), the site of Siva's dance of bliss (<i>ananda tandava</i>). • Four enclosures contain shrines to Nataraja, Visnu as Govindaraja, and to Nataraja's consort, Sivakami Amman. A dance hall (<i>nrtta sabha</i>) enshrines Siva in <i>urdhva tandava</i> mode of dance. • Dance imagery is widespread in this temple- on relief panels in the base of mandapas, the <i>Ammanshrine</i>, the 1000 pillared Hall, as well as the entryways of all four of the outer <i>gopuras</i>.
Relationship to dance/Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cidambaram is one of the <i>sapta tandava</i> (seven <i>tandava</i> sites) of Siva Nataraja, associated with his <i>ananda tandava</i> dance. • The <i>karana</i> panels in the West and East <i>gopura</i> entryways are inscribed with verses from the <i>Natyasastra</i>.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	Yes. They are present in the outermost <i>gopuras</i> of this temple.
Location of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 108-<i>karana</i> sculptural program is located in the entryway of all four outermost <i>gopuras</i>. • Arranged on pilasters that project from the wall surface, the <i>karana</i> sequence moves vertically from bottom to top of each pilaster. • A two armed female accompanied by human-like accompanists is the dancer of the <i>karanas</i>. • Inscriptions accompany several of the panels on the West and East <i>gopura</i>.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	The dance theme is prominent in this temple—on the base of pavilions, on surfaces of pillars (<i>nrtta sabha</i> , 1000 pillared hall), as base panels in pillared courtyard (<i>amman</i> shrine), apart from the <i>karana</i> sculptures.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Arunacalesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Tiruvannamalai. North Arcot District.
Date & Period	Cola, Pandya, Vijayanagara, Nayak periods. (10 th -16 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple	Siva as Lord Arunachala
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sprawling temple complex to Siva as Lord Arunachala built up over a period of several centuries. • Site of the Fire <i>linga</i> (<i>pancabhuta sthalam</i>). • Contained within five large enclosures are shrines to a host of deities and divinities from the Hindu pantheon. • Several tall <i>gopuras</i> provide access to various sections of this temple. • The fifth enclosure has four entry towers in which the 108-<i>karana</i> imagery is present.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annamalai Hill in which the temple is situated is sung by the ancient poets of the <i>Tevaram</i>. • Inscriptions from the temple indicate the presence of a several <i>devaradiyar</i> (<i>devadasi</i>) associated with this temple for centuries (12th-16th centuries).
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	Yes. They are present in the entryways of <i>gopuras</i> in the outermost enclosure.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in the entryway portals (<i>dvara</i>) of all four outermost <i>gopuras</i>. • Vertical pilasters project out of <i>gopura</i> wall and reveal square panels containing dancing figures. • The arrangement is vertical with the sequence starting at the bottom of each pilaster and moving upwards. • A two-armed female is the dancer with an accompanist.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Random dance reliefs on pillars and pavolions. Nothing consistent in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Vriddhagirisvara Temple
Location of Temple	Vriddhachalam. South Arcot District.
Date & Period	Early phase of Colas, later Colas, Pandyas, Vijayanagara, Nayak Periods. (10 th -17 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple	Siva as Lord of the Old Hill
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This temple was rebuilt in stone by Cola queen Sembiyan Mahadevi, who also donated images and jewelry for worship. • The temple complex includes shrines to Nataraja and Ganesa apart from the <i>Ammanshrine</i>. • Four large entry towers provide access into this temple and articulate the <i>karana</i> imagery.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sung in the <i>Tevaram</i> hymns as a sacred hill landscape. • References to the presence of devardiyar in the temple in epigraphs.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	Yes. In the <i>gopuras</i> of the outermost enclosure.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in the entryway portals of all four of outermost <i>gopuras</i>. • Follows a vertical arrangement from bottom to top of each pilaster. • A two-armed female is the dancer.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	The Nataraja shrine contains a Sembiyan period Nataraja bronze sculpture that is still worshipped. A Dancing Ganesa is among the relief sculptures along with a painting of a dancer.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple Location of Temple Date & Period Main Deity of Temple Description	Verattanesvara Temple Tiruvadi. South Arcot District Pallava, Cola, and Vijanagara Periods. (9 th -16 th centuries). Siva as “lord of heroic deed/dance”.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A saivite monument associated with Siva’s heroic deed of burning the three citadels (<i>Tripurantaka</i>). • Central shrine is surrounded by nine attached sub-shrines reminiscent of Pallava Rajasimhesvara Temple at Kanchi has undergone repairs in modern times. • Epigraphical evidence indicates that the renovation of the temple was undertaken during the reign of Pallava Nripatungavarman. • The outer east <i>gopura</i> contains dance sculptures resembling the 108-<i>karanas</i>. • One of the 8 sacred sites associated with Siva’s heroism. The name ‘<i>verattam</i>’ translates both as ‘heroic act’ and ‘heroic dance’. This site is associated with Siva as Tripurantaka. • Epigraphic reference to royal order for performance of dance before the deity by <i>padiyilar</i> and <i>devaradiyar</i> of the temple. The former were to dance before the lifting of the sacred screen and the latter after its removal during the enthronement of deities.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No) Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	<i>Karana</i> -type sculptural program in the outer east <i>gopura</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Karana</i>-type dance panels are carved in the entryway pilasters of the outer east <i>gopura</i>. • Exactly 108 squares are represented on the pilasters. • A lone female is the dancer with an accompanist in a few panels. • Great deal of repetition in the dance poses in the panels. • No particular sequence can be gleaned by the overall presentation. • Several key <i>karanas</i>, including the first (<i>talapusaputa</i>) cannot be identified. • The format, distribution, and number of the imagery has strong ties to the <i>karanas</i>, although the technical vocabulary has not carried through.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple Location of Temple Date/ Period	Tirukodisvara Temple Tirukkodikaval. Thanjavur District. Pallava, Early Pandya, Muttaryar, Cola periods. (9 th -14 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple Description	Siva <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears to be a brick temple dating from the Pallava/early Pandya time that was rebuilt in stone by the Cola queen Sembiyan Mahadevi in the 10th century. • Reveals the circular <i>vimana</i>- generally a early pandya feature, atop the central shrine. Epigraphs from the adjoining pavilion (<i>mahamandapa</i>) suggest building activity in the later phase of Cola rule as well. • Inscriptions record a fairly active administration that was in place throughout its early years. • Its iconography includes representations of the seven sages (<i>sapta risis</i>) on the niches of the external facades of the central shrine and adjoining pavilion.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An epigraphic reference to Nataraja as ‘<i>kutadum devar</i>’ (Lord who dances) and ‘<i>adavallan</i>’ (versatile dancer), and documentation of the bathing of the icon during auspicious months. • This temple was included in my field list based on a survey of secondary literature and photo archives in Pennsylvania.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No) Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Karana</i>-type imagery found in <i>gopura</i>. • <i>Karana</i>-type pabnels are engraved on the entryway pilasters of the outer east <i>gopura</i>. • Appear to be inserts that may belong to a later period. • An assorted milieu of figures populate the square panels—a procession of horses and elephants, folk themes, Krishna and gopis, and so on. • Although the <i>karana</i> format of vertical pilasters divided into rows of square panels is articulated, there is no sense of the presence of the 108-<i>karana</i> theme in this instance.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nataraja Shrine. Nothing else in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple Location of Temple Date/ Period Main Deity of Temple Description	Ardhanaresvara Temple Ulagainallur. South Arcot District. Cola, Vijayanaga periods. (13 th -16 th centuries). Siva as Ardhnarisvara
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity 108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Siva temple largely unused and located in a remote village within the Kallakurichi Taluk boundary limits. • Little is known about this temple. However, the earliest recorded inscription from this temple belongs to Kullotunga III, a king who ruled in the final years of Cola dynasty. • During my visit, this dilapidated temple was locked and I was unable to photograph the interior of the monument. Only the outer east <i>gopura</i> could be documented. • <i>Karana</i>-type imagery is carved in the entryway pilasters of the outer east <i>gopura</i>.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana/karana-type	A 13 th century inscription from the temple documents the names of women who were to sing and dance before the deity during certain festivals to be held in the month of margali. <i>Karana</i> -type imagery on <i>gopura</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A <i>karana</i>-type sculptural program is articulated in the entryway pilasters of the East entry tower. • Closely follows the 108-<i>karana</i> format and design. 6 columns of pilasters are divided into 6 rows of panels on each wall surface. A total of 72 panels enliven both sides of the passageway. • The program is characterized by dancer panels that repeat as well as panels containing a medley of non-dancing figures. • Taking into account the content of the panels, it is not the unified 108-<i>karana</i>.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Somanathar Temple
Location of Temple	Palyarai. Thanjavur District.
Date & Period	Probably dating from the mid-12 th –14 th century. Colas, Pandyas.
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formerly the capital city of the Colas, Palayarai today is a sleepy little village located 11 kms southeast of Kumbakonam. • The main shrine consists of a sanctum and an attached vestibule. • The outer enclosure is in ruins with only the base and wall of the <i>gopura</i> standing. The superstructure is badly damaged and only the first tier is left. • Evidence of dance imagery is present in the inner passageway of this <i>gopura</i>.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	While there is no direct connection to dance or any dance activity, this temple was included in the field survey based on a reference to presence of <i>karanas</i> by S.R. Balasubrahmanyam in his Later Cola Temples.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	<i>Karana</i> -type imagery in <i>gopura</i> .
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance imagery represented in the inner passageway of falling east <i>gopura</i>. • Two columns of pilasters, one with 9 rows and the other with 10 rows, displays a medley of themes. • Dancing panels share the space with gods, goddesses and drummers. • Panels also include narratives such the Narasaimha's destruction of Hiranyaksayapu. • It is apparent that the 108-<i>karana</i> format/design is being used to express other subject-matter too.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Amritaghatesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Melakadambur. South Arcot District.
Date & Period	Built during the reign of Cola Kulottunga I (12 th century).
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Siva temple of immense beauty and richness nestled in an obscure village near Cidambaram in South Arcot district. • Mentioned in the hymns of Appar (7th century), the extant building dates from the later Cola king Kulottunga I. • Oriented to the east, the central shrine of this temple reflects a chariot pulled by caparisoned horses and contains an attached pavilion. • A rich profusion of sculptural imagery—reliefs, free-standing sculpture and bracket figures—articulate the vibrant fabric of the walls of the temple.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reveals a rich sculptural repertoire of dance imagery, however, it does not conform to the 108-<i>karana</i> theme. • This temple was included in the survey based on my examination of the photo archive at Pennsylvania.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	<i>Karana</i> - type imagery.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance sculptures resonate throughout the body of the central shrine and the attached pavilion: relief carvings, niche figures, and bracket figures. • On entering and surveying the temple, the widespread and emphatic presence of dance is apparent. • However, this does not appear to be an instance of the more unified 108-<i>karana</i>.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	A Pala-style metal sculpture of Siva dancing on Nandi.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple Location of Temple Date & Period Main Deity of Temple Description	Kampaharesvara Temple Tirubhuvanam. Thanjavur District. 13 th century. Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara. Siva <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered as one of the last great Cola temples, the Kampahesvara Temple was built during the reign of Kulottunga III. • The central shrine topped by an impressive suerpstructure, and shrines to Candikevara, Devi, and Sarabhamurti are located in the first enclosure. On the south side of this enclosure is a ratha-mandapa housing Siva as Somaskanda. • Currently two <i>gopuras</i> are present on the east side.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	This temple has been credited with having dance imagery, specifically, the 108- <i>karana</i> by some scholars who have surveyed it. Therefore, it was included in my field study. However, there exist no direct correlation to dance in the legend or running of this temple.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No) Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	<i>Karana</i> -type imagery found in the entryway to the first enclosure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first enclosure contains most of the main structures of the temple complex. • The entryway into this enclosure, now largely obstructed by later expansion reveals remnants of a sculptural program like the <i>karanas</i>. • Vertical pilasters protrude off the wall surface and reveal square panels containing dancing figures. • What little is left of this passageway is further obliterated by paint and whitewash. However, the <i>karana</i>-type imagery could perhaps date from the later phase of the Cola period.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance imagery is found on horizotal base panels around the central shrine and adjoining pavilions. These panels enliven the façade of the base of the <i>garbhagriha</i>, the attached mandapa, and the pavilion in front. • This set of dance reliefs are situated along with narrative reliefs from Saivite mythology. • Horizontal dancer panels are also found in the wall façade of the <i>ratha-madapa</i> containng the somaskanda shrine.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Nagesvaraswami Temple
Location of Temple	Kumbakonam. Thanjavur District.
Date & Period	Early Phase of Colas, Colas, Vijanayagara periods. (9 th -17 th centuries.)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first enclosure containing the central shrine and adjoining pavilions belongs to the early Cola period, and is known for the superb quality of its free-standing niche sculptures. • Later additions include a pavilion, anandatandavamurti mandapa, shaped like a chariot (<i>ratha mandapa</i>) as well as the main entrance <i>gopura</i> in the east. • Dance sculptures found on the both these later structures.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	This temple comprised the site study based on my survey of sculptures in the Photo archives of the AIIS at Pennsylvania.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	<i>Karana</i> -type imagery present in the outer east <i>gopura</i> .
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outer eastern entryway contains 44 panels on pilasters depicting female dancers alone without accompanists. • The representation is repetitive and displays only minor variations among one another. • Thick lime wash paint on the walls of entryway has also obliterated some of the details.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	The <i>ratha mandapa</i> to Siva as <i>ananda tandava murti</i> reveals reliefs of dancing women on its base. This imagery on the base panels appears to form a band around the walls of the shrine.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple Location of Temple Date & Period Main Deity of Temple Description	Meenakshi Temple Madurai. Madurai District Pandya, Nayak periods. (10 th -18 th centuries) Siva
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madurai is one of the sites where Siva danced the <i>tandava</i>. Specifically, it is associated with his Sandhya <i>tandavam</i>. The dance hall is called the <i>rajata sabha</i> or the silver Hall. • A sprawling and highly active temple complex housing large and small shrines to a host of saivite divinities, the Meenakshi Temple was destroyed in 1310 during Malik Kafur's expedition to Madurai. It was rebuilt on an ambitious scale by the Nayak kings. • This vast temple complex contains several pillared pavilions, halls and towers (<i>gopuras</i>) that reveal the planning and execution of a complex and developing temple tradition. • Four large <i>gopura</i> towers provide entry into the temple complex from the four directions.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madurai is the site of Siva's <i>sandhya tandavam</i>. • Siva dances with his right foot raised off the ground, as opposed to the conventional Nataraja imagery found everywhere else in India.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No) Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	Evidence of intent to sculpt the <i>karana</i> program in 3 of the 4 outermost <i>gopuras</i> , however, there are no sculptures.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three of the four outer <i>gopuras</i>, namely, the West, East and South towers reveal the adoption of the 108-<i>karana</i> design in its entryway walls. • Vertical pilasters supporting rows of square panels protrude from the wall surface. • However, the panels are largely empty and uncarved. The completion of the background design however strongly suggests that there was an intent to carve the 108-<i>karana</i> in these entryways. • I suggest that just as in Cidambaram, Tiruvannamalai, and Vriddhachalam, all four of the outer <i>gopuras</i> in Madurai may have carried the 108-<i>karana</i>.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Given the vastness of the complex, profusion of sculptural imagery, and Nataraja's close association to this site and temple, there are scattered dance sculptures all over the temple.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Vedaranyesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Tiruvalangatu. North Arcot District.
Date & Period	Pallava, Cola period, and Vijayanagara Periods. (9 th -16 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temple associated with the dance contest between Siva and Parvati, where Parvati was defeated by Siva in the <i>urdhva</i> (raised) <i>tandava</i> mode of dance. • Main shrine enshrines a linga and is surrounded by shrines to Ganapati and Subrahmanya. • The ratna sabha is the hall where Siva performs the <i>urdhva tandava</i>. • Shrines to Devi and Karaikkal Ammaiyaar, share the temple space with sculptures of <i>sapta matrkas</i>, some <i>nayanmaras</i>, and forms of Nandi. • A Kali shrine is present in the outskirts of the town, in keeping with the legend that after defeat, Parvati as Kali moved to the outskirts of the town.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiruvalangadu is the site of the famous dance contest between Siva and Parvati, where Siva supposedly raised his leg overhead, an act that Parvati refused to replicate, out of modesty. An angry Parvati resides in the outskirts of the town as the defeated but defiant Kali. A more submissive and benevolent parvati resides in the Devi shrine within the temple complex. • The temple is among the <i>sapta tandava</i> sites, where Siva performed the <i>urdhava tandavam</i> in the Ratna sabha.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No. But the outer east <i>gopura</i> reveals remnants of the 108- <i>karana</i> design and format. The pilasters, only a pair of each wall, support empty square panels.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Since this is the site of the <i>urdhava tandava</i> , Siva-Nataraja in the <i>urdhavatandava</i> mode is present in the ratna sabha. Additionally, modern stucco images depicting five dance halls (<i>panca sabha</i>) herald the devotee at an inner entranceway.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Nelliappar Temple
Location of Temple	Tirunelveli. Tirunelveli District
Date & Period	Cola period, Vijanagara, Naik Periods. (13 th -18 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tirunelveli is one of the sacred sites associated with Siva's <i>tandava</i> dance-- the <i>Kalika tandava</i>—in the copper Hall (<i>tamra sabha</i>) of the temple. • A huge temple complex to Siva as Nelliappar and his consort Katimathi. Natarajar, referred to as <i>Sabhapati</i>, finds dual presence in the Nellai Govindan shrine. • The complex displays several architectural additions such as the Swing (<i>oonjal</i>) pavilion, the 1000 pillared hall, and the Nandi pavilion. • The pillared hall adjacent to the main shrine is credited with being musically aligned. A tap with the knuckles is supposed to result in the sound of the 7 musical notes.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tirunelveli is the site of Siva's <i>Kalika tandava</i>, and the stage on which he is supposed to have performed this dance is believed to be the <i>tamra sabha</i> (Copper Hall) of the Nelliappar Temple.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nataraja as <i>Sabhapati</i> (<i>Chinna and chandana</i>) dances in the <i>mandapa</i> which houses the Copper Hall. Apart from that, there is no other dance imagery.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Tirukutralanatha Temple
Location of Temple	Kuttralam. Tirunelveli District
Date & Period	Cola, Vijayanagara and modern renovations. (13 th -18 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site of Siva's <i>Tripura Tandava</i> and the home of the <i>citra sabha</i>. • The Temple is built on a hill named Tirukuda mountain and is currently famous for a water falls in the area. • Siva as Kuttrala nathar presides over several shrines—to candesvara, Amman, Ganesa, the saptamatrkas, Subrahmanya and so on. • The <i>citra sabha</i> (Hall of paintings) is somewhat independent of the main shrine and is replete with murals of Siva Nataraja, of Kali, Subrahmanya and deities in Saivite poetry and legend.
Relationship to dance/	One of the <i>sapta tandava</i> (<i>seven tandava</i>) sites, specifically,
Evidence of dance	the <i>tripura tandava</i> , the stage for which is the <i>citra sabha</i>
activity	associated with this temple.
108-Karana sculptures	No
(Yes/No)	
Location&	No
Characteristics of	
108-karana	
Other Dance imagery	The <i>citra sabha</i> contains murals of dancing Siva and Kali.
at the temple	

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Tiruthalinathar Temple
Location of Temple	Tiruputthur. Madurai District.
Date & Period	Cola and Vijayanagara (13 th -16 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated with Siva's <i>Gowri tandavam</i>. • This temple complex consists of four enclosures within which are shrines to Subrahmanya, Yoga- Bhairava, the sapta matrkas, daksinamurti, and to the Amman, Soundarya Nayaki. • A single <i>gopura</i> provides access to the inner portals of the temple.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiruputthur is one of the sapta-<i>tandava</i> sites associated with Siva-Nataraja. • Nataraja is supposed to have performed the Gouri-<i>Tandavam</i> in the <i>Sira sabha</i> of this temple. • Image enshrined in the '<i>adavallan</i> (Expert dancer) <i>sabha</i>' has Parvati and Nandi as witness and accompanist to dancing Siva.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Apart from Nataraja and specifically, the image in the dance hall, there is no other specific dance imagery.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple Location of Temple Date/ Period Main Deity of Temple Description	Mahalingaswami Temple Tiruvidaimarudur. Thanjavur District. Early Colas, Cola and Vijanagara periods. (9 th -16 th centuries) Siva. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An active saivite center dating from an early phase of Cola rule as evidenced by epigraphs dating from Aditya II (ca. 968-969). • An active temple administration that was benefitting by generous royal benefactions from the early Cola kings is apparent. • The main shrine and attached pavilions have all undergone alterations, most recently by the local community, and much of its early roots are obscured. • The temple, as it stands today, is an amalgamation of several smaller shrines to saivite deities and divinities that were constructed at various times. The result is a medley of architectural units and no obvious sculptural links. • A good section of the temple revealed painting during my visit further removing it from its original expression. • A sprawling temple with shrines, pavilions, <i>gopura</i> entryways, and a temple tank, the Mahalingaswami Temple reveals little of its early glory today.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	Epigraph dating from Aditya II's reign (ca. 968-9) documents a provision made by the administrators of the temple to pay for a dancer in the temple. The dancer was required to perform seven dances annually: one on <i>taipusam</i> festival, three associated with the bathing of the deity, and three more commencing during the festival of <i>vaikasi-Tiruvadira</i> .
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Bhuvараha Swamy Temple
Location of Temple	Srimushnam. South Arcot.
Date & Period	Vijayanagara and Nayak Periods. (15 th -17 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Visnu in his boar incarnation
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the northwest of Cidambaram, this temple is dedicated to Visnu in his incarnation of the boat protecting the earth goddess. • Visnu’s consort, Ambhujavalli finds presence in her own shrine within the temple complex. • The temple houses small shrines in vaisanvate saints and pillared pavilions articulating vibrant sculptural expression. • A Rajagopuram in the east heralds the entrance to the temple.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	This temple was included in the study after a survey of sculpture in the photographic archive of the American Institute of Indian Studies in University of Pennsylvania.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No. However, the entrway of the main <i>gopura</i> reveals the presence of the pilasters with rows of square panels, exactly like the 108- <i>karana</i> design. But the imagery contained within the panel does not comprise a cogent dance series at all. They include an assortment of semi-divine, divine, and attendant figures.
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None
Other Dance imagery at the temple	None.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple Location of Temple Date/ Period Main Deity of Temple Description	Tyagarajaswami Temple Tiruvarur. Thanjavur District. Cola, Vijayanagara and Nayak periods. (10 th -18 th centuries). Siva
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiruvarur is a much revered town in ancient saivite hymns. • It is home to a sprawling temple complex to Siva as Tyagaraja. • Tyagaraja is the portable deity who shares the sanctum with Valmikinatha, the main deity of the temple. • In addition to the double shrine that comprises the sanctum, the temple complex also houses the ambal shrine and shrines to sacred spots. • It is apparent from the architecture of the current temple that it has underwent several expansions and alterations at various times. • According to legend, this temple is site of the ajapa dance, which is believed to be associated with yogic practice. • Atleast 3 inscriptions from the temple document dancing by the <i>devaradiyar</i> of the temple on festive occasions in the main shrine. The inscriptions record the Lord Vidivitanakan as having ‘witnessed’ the dance performance. • This temple is known to have had an active group of dancing <i>devadasis</i> in its administration until the abolition of the practice in modern days. • During my visit, I talked to an <i>Oduvar</i> (reciter of hymns) and an Instrumentalist (<i>bari nayanam</i> player), both serving in the temple for generations. They described the role of the dancing <i>dasi</i> in the temple ritual as well as religious processions.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana Other Dance imagery at the temple	None. The widespread presence of pillared pavilions containing narrative scenes includes dance scenes as well. However, no other systematic array of dance imagery.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Amritaghtesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Tirukadaiyur. Near Thanjavur District.
Date/ Period	Cola, Vijayanagara, Nayak periods. (12 th -17 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A monument that existed in the later phase of Cola rule according to temple epigraphs, is now a relatively modern structure that is associated with a couple's 60th birthday celebrations. • Siva as presides over shrines to Ganapati, <i>Amrtiaghatesvara</i> Ambal, and to other saivite divinities.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	A 13 th century record documenting the appointment of a dance master/musician (<i>nattuvanilai</i>) in the temple, along with information on his remuneration.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	None.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Darbharanyesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Tirunallaru. Thanjavur District (now included in Pondicherry).
Date/ Period	Cola, Vijayanagara, Pandya, and Pallavas. (10 th -17 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This temple to Siva is now famous as the site of saturn (<i>sani</i>), a planetary deity, attracting the most pilgrims. • The temple is sanctified in the hymns of the saivite saints, although the architecture of the current temple reveals affiliations to the Cola style of architecture. • Apart from the main shrine dedicated to Siva as <i>Darbharanyesvara</i>, the temple complex consists of three enclosures and a <i>gopura</i> in the east. • Within its confines are shrines to Tyagaraja, Devi, and the navagrhas (particularly, saturn), along with other minor divinities.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	An inscriptional reference during the period of the Cola monarch Rajadhiraj I, mentioning arrangements for enacting an <i>aryakuttu</i> (perhaps a dance-drama) in five acts during certain festive occasions.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	None

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Abhiramaesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Tiruvamattur. South Arcot District
Date/ Period	Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara. (12 th -16 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A neglected temple situated in the remote village of Tiruvamattur, this monument reflects associations to productions that emerged during the later phase of Cola rule. • It has been expanded in successive periods including the modern day. • The main shrine consists of the sanctum and attached pavilions. The <i>amman</i> shrine is not just independent but is also a separate complex, just outside the Siva temple. • A <i>gopura</i> in the east entryway provides access to the inner realms of the temple complex.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	A thirteenth century inscription that documents the presence of a temple <i>devaradiyar</i> and her kin's donation.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	None.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Sivalokanathesvara Temple/ Gramaradhanatha Temple
Location of Temple	Gramam. South Arcot District.
Date/ Period	Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara periods. (13 th -16 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small temple located in a remote village near Tirukkoyilur town. • Inscriptions dating from Rajaraja I and his immediate successors are present in the temple along with several Vijayanagara period records. • The main shrine and attached pavilions preside over the Devi shrine and shrines to minor deities. The <i>sapta matrkas</i> find presence in a section of the temple.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	An inscription daitng from ca. 1207 registers a gift of a village to a <i>devaradiyar</i> of the temple in return for singing and dancing services provided by her.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	None.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Vyaghrapurisvara Temple
Location of Temple	Siddhilingamadam. South Arcot District.
Date/ Period	Cola and Vijayanagara periods (9 th -15 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temple appears to be established during the early phase of Cola rule by Parantaka I. • Rajaraja I is supposed to have set up the Nataraja image in this temple. • The central shrine and attached pavilions reflect architectural elements from a later phase of Cola rule, as they appear to be rebuilt by stone during Kulottunga I's tenure. A pillared verandah encloses the main shrine area. • A shrine to the sage <i>Vyaghrapada</i> along with an area for the sapta matrkas series comprise the other highlights of this temple.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	An inscription dating from ca. 975 records a gift of land to a <i>devaradiyar</i> of the temple and her descendants in return for her dancing in the presence of the processional deity as he was prepared to be taken out.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nataraja image in the shrine. Nothing else in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Verattanesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Kilur. South Arcot District.
Date/ Period	Cola, Vijayanagara, and Nayak periods. (10 th -17 th centuries).
Main Deity of Temple	Siva
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fairly active temple that has undergone much renovation in recent times. • One of the ‘eight heroic deeds’ (<i>asta verattam</i>) sites associated with Siva’s destruction of the demon Andhaka. • The sanctum is attached to a pillared pavilion and the entire structure is enclosed by a pillared verandah. • A number of subsidiary shrines, including the <i>navagraha</i>, are contained within this enclosure which is itself covered and dark in several places.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	An inscription from the temple dating from Rajaraja I ‘s tenure registers the presence of 32 <i>devaradiyar</i> in the temple for worship.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Ramalingesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Marangiyur. South Arcot District.
Date/ Period	Now uncertain. The current temple is a make-shift structure.
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A temple that is in total ruins, the Ramalingesvara Temple consists of a make-shift sanctum brought together by falling and broken fragments of stone pillars. • Nestled on the banks of the Pennai river, locals attribute the destruction of the temple to the changing course of the Pennai river. • Stone pillars belonging perhaps to a pavilion lie on the dry river bed.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	An epigraph (ca. 1184) from the temple states that a temple <i>devaradiyar</i> sponsored the construction of a hall and entryway in the temple
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	None
Other Dance imagery at the temple	None.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Pattisvaram Temple
Location of Temple	Kumbakonam. Thanjavur District.
Date/ Period	Later Colas, Vijayanagara, and Nayak periods. 12 th -17 th centuries.
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sacred temple sanctified by the saivite saint Appar, and a site popularly associated with Nayak kings, the Pattisvaram Temple today reveals little testimony of its antiquity. • Although Siva is the presiding deity of the temple, today, a protective form of Durga, called Visnu Durga has taken centerstage relegating both the Siva and the <i>Ammanshrines</i> to the background.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	This temple was included in the site list after a survey of sculptures at the photographic archives of the University of Pennsylvania.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None
Other Dance imagery at the temple	An intricately carved wooden door belonging to recent times contains dancers. Nothing else in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Apatsahayesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Tiruvaduturai. Thanjavur District.
Date/ Period	Cola period. (9 th -14 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small and ancient temple located in a sleepy town in the vicinity of Kumbakonam. • The central shrine and attached pavilion reveals traces of early Cola characteristics, although there is some evidence of later alterations. • The current structure has two enclosures with a <i>gopura</i> in the east.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	An epigraph from the temple mentions that in the the 46 th year of Kulttuunga I's reign, provision was made for singers and dancers in the <i>nanavidha nataka salai</i> (hall for various theatrical events).
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing else in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Adipurisvara Temple.
Location of Temple	Tiruvorriyur. North Arcot District.
Date/ Period	Cola, Vijayanagara periods. (9 th -18 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tituvorriyur, located 18 kms north of Madras (Chennai) is an ancient town sung by the Nayanmars of the 7th and 8th centuries. • Epigraphs from the temple indicate that the main shrine to Adipurisvara was constructed during the reign of Cola king Rajendra I. • The temple has expanded considerably over the centuries with the introduction of newer shrines and structures. • It now houses several subsidiary shrines, 5 mathas, and 5 pavilions within its confines.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	Epigraphs document the dedication of 12 <i>devaradiyar</i> for services to the goddess Gouri. Other inscriptions from the temple also indicate a strong contingent of <i>devaradiyar</i> in the temple.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	None.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	None
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Verattanesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Vazhuvoor. Thanjavur District
Date/ Period	Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara periods. (13 th -16 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva in one of his “heroic deeds”.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated with Siva’s ‘<i>veera attam</i>’ (heroic deed/dance) specifically concerned with Siva’s flaying of Gajasura and dancing with the flayed skin. • A temple of considerable antiquity based on its mention by the 7th century saint Appar, the Veerattanesvara Temple articulates no trace of its antiquity. • It is largely bereft of any embellishment and barely reveals sculptural expression as well. • The extant structures possibly date from the later phase of Colas or perhaps even the following Vijayanaga period.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	This temple was included in the study based on a reference I found in India describing this as a site where Siva performed his ‘heroic dance’.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Jambhunathesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Jambhai. South Arcot District.
Date/ Period	Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara periods. (12 th -16 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dilapidated but impressive temple largely falling apart due to neglect, the Jambhunathesvara Temple sits on the banks of the Pennai river. • A neglected central shrine and attached pillared pavilion are dark and infested with bats. • The <i>ammanshrine</i> to Akhilandesvari is located in the second enclosure.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	An epigraph from the temple suggesting the presence of a <i>devardiyal</i> and the families role in the construction of a <i>nrtta mandapa</i> (dance hall) within the temple complex.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None
Other Dance imagery at the temple	None.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Pancanadisvara Temple
Location of Temple	Tiruvayyaru. Thanjavur District.
Date/ Period	Cola, Vijayanagara Periods. (10 th -18 th centuries)
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referred to as <i>ten Kailasam</i> (southern Kailasa), the <i>Pancanadisvara</i> Temple has considerable antiquity. • According to epigraphs, the already celebrated shrine to Siva was rebuilt in stone by the Cola king Rajendra I. He and his queens are believed to have been generous donors to this temple. • The temple has undergone so much expansion that it is a collection of small structures from various periods and dynasties. • The <i>Ammanshrine</i>, the North Kailasa (<i>uttara Kailasa</i>) shrine and niches supporting the nayanmanr saints further enliven the architectural and sculptural landscape of the temple. • Presently, a site associated with the Musician saint Tyagaraja and the location for the annual gathering of South Indian musicians on this anniversary.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	This temple was included in the field list based on information gleaned in India. Also, its strong associations to traditional music gave it a general aura in the realm of performing arts including dance.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No.
Location & Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Name of Temple	Munkudimesvara Temple
Location of Temple	Kalattur. Chingelpet District. (12 th -18 th centuries)
Date/ Period	Later Cola but evidence of later alterations.
Main Deity of Temple	Siva.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oriented to the east, the Munkudimisvara Temple consists of a simple sanctum preceding which is a pillared pavilion. • Surrounding this structure on three sides is an open circumambulatory passage and on the east is an enclosed mandapa. • The <i>Amman</i> shrine is present in the northern side of the temple. • This temple is currently administered by the Archaeological Survey of India.
Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity	Atleast three records from this temple dating as early as the ca. 1190, documenting donations by the <i>devaradiyar</i> of the temple.
108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)	No
Location& Characteristics of 108-karana	None.
Other Dance imagery at the temple	Nothing in particular.

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