

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Role of Women in Indian Dance and the Impact of Social Change

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### **Abstract:**

*The earliest references to dancing in Indian texts indicate the secular nature of this art form. In course of time, dance in India developed in another direction, where dancing featured as an integral part of ritualistic practice of religion. This ritualistic dancing brought about a new tradition, which found their way into the temple premises of various parts of India. Dance was now performed as an expression of devotion and for the appeasement of Gods and also used as a means of aesthetic pleasure. Participation of woman became an essential feature too.*

*A significant feature of Indian Classical dance tradition is the existence of its distinctive gender forms namely Tandava and Lasya. Presence of women dancers in India can be traced to pre-historic as well as Vedic age. Mythically too, the creation of dance is associated with women. Natyasastra has a detailed description of the creation of nymphs from the minds of Brahma for the sole purpose of practice and performance of Kaisiki (graceful) style of dance. The nymphs or the Apsaras thus created were the first known female dancers associated with the mythical dance history of India. Special importance attached to women's role in Indian dramatic production, which includes dance, is evident in several other references in the Natyasastra. Indian dance and music were known to have undergone a gradual transformation to attain a classical form during the epic period, which continued in the Purana days too. Thus a large number of evidences furnished by literature, epigraphs, sculptural relics and paintings testify to the prevalence of a flourishing tradition of dance and music in India down the ages in different environment and in different forms. This paper attempts to trace the impact of social changes on the role of women in Indian dance tradition as depicted in literary sources belonging to different periods.*

**Keywords:** Indian Dance, Nāṭyaśāstra, role of women, temple dancer (Devadasi), courtesan, Indian History.

### **1. Introduction**

Indian culture is well-known for its strong philosophical foundation, which in turn inextricably connected and interwoven with religion. They form the very essence of sociology and education of Indian life.<sup>1</sup> In this sense dance too has religious and philosophical undertones which formed an inseparable part of religion in ancient India and was essentially a mode of worship. The dance treatises have corroborated this aspect by attributing the art of dance to divine origin.

Presence of women dancers in India can be traced to prehistoric as well as Vedic age. Mythically too, the creation of dance is associated with women. *Nāṭyaśāstra* has a detailed description of the creation of nymphs from the minds of Brahma for the sole purpose of practice and performance of *Kaisikī* (graceful) style of dance. This was done at the insistence of Bharata who argued that "This style cannot be practised properly by men except with the help of women."<sup>2</sup> The nymphs or the *Apsarās*<sup>3</sup> thus created were the first known female dancers associated with the mythical dance history of India. Altogether 23 names of *Apsarās*<sup>3</sup> have been mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

Kapila Vatsyayan observes, "...the ritualistic dancing both in its religious and classical richness, ascends and descends, grows and declines, with the other sociological process of history."<sup>4</sup> The myth concerning the handing over the art of dance by Śiva to Tanduru and then to Bharata, explicitly shows the religious, literary and also the secular aspect of this art.

#### *1.1. Role of Women in Dance*

Presumably dance in pre-historic period had been prevalent as an 'elemental force in the life of man.'<sup>5</sup> However, as society developed and reached an organized level, new dimensions of dance as a profession and also as a source of pleasure and other social purposes came to the fore. The earliest references to dancing in Indian texts indicate the secular nature of this art form. Referring to the Rgvedic hymns, Kapila Vatsyayan points out the different types of development, such as the social dancing and rejoicing on the secular plane; and the dancing attributed to god on the religious and symbolic plane.<sup>6</sup> In course of time, dance in India must have developed in another direction, where dancing featured as an integral part of ritualistic practice of religion. This ritualistic dancing brought about a

new tradition for the female dancers, which found their way into the temple premises in various parts of India. Dance was now performed as an expression of devotion and for the appeasement of Gods and also used as a means of aesthetic pleasure.

## 2. Objective of the Paper

A large number of evidences furnished by literature, epigraphs, sculptural relics and paintings testify to the prevalence of a flourishing tradition of dance and music in India down the ages in different environment and in different forms. Women always played a very significant role in carrying forward the Indian dance tradition. This paper attempts to trace the impact of social changes on the role of women in Indian dance tradition as depicted in literary sources belonging to different periods.

## 3. Literary Evidence

The earliest possible development of music and dance in India took place during the Vedic period (c. 2000-600 B.C.). This period witnessed emergence of dance as an influential aspect of life. It brought about a simultaneous growth of the intellectual and the aesthetic side of human nature. It is believed that although the Vedic period had witnessed music and dancing practised by both men and women, gradually women began to dominate this sphere of musical accomplishments.<sup>7</sup> In fact the genesis of the role of women in Indian dance can be traced to the various references relating to dance and music in the four *Vedas* (c.3000 B.C.). *Slokas* abound in the four *Vedas* and their *Samhitās*, which mention dance in various references. Among the considerable number of metaphors and similes based on dance, mention may be made of the beautiful description of 'Usha' - the dawn pictured as a dancer in the *Rig Veda*. Here, Usha has been described as a dancer in fine costume displaying her charm.<sup>8</sup> This is perhaps one of the earliest example indicating dance as an accomplished art and a vocation of girls, which motivated the poet to delineate such a lyrical picture. Moreover the epithet of dance applied in various references to Gods, Goddess and *Apsarās* in the other *Vedas* have established the antiquity of this art form and the role played by women in them. References to a number of *Apsarās* and a particular reference to Urvasi strengthen this belief.<sup>9</sup> *Sāma-Veda* set the trend of singing the *Sāmanas* with proper intonation and appropriate gestures to indicate *rāga* and *tāla*.<sup>10</sup> These gestures in ritualistic practices possibly laid the foundation for the *Mudrā* or gesture language in Indian dance. '*Sāmana*' was a kind of assembly for festivity, where women in large numbers used to enjoy themselves in various manners. Young women as well as aged spinster went there in quest of suitable matches. The courtesans also used to make profit by the occasion.<sup>11</sup> It is to be noted that the dances performed in group, in festivities like *Sāmana*, were characterised by folk forms.<sup>12</sup>

The monumental dance treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra* (c. 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.) is the most well-known evidence of the antiquity of a full fledged development of dance, music and drama .

According to the classical tradition in India, Indian dances have been classified into two broad divisions, namely, *Tāndava* and *Lāsyā*. *Abhinaya Darpana* has mentioned *Tāndava* dancing as violent and *Lāsyā* dancing as very sweet. Śiva, the cosmic dancer is known to have originated the *Tāndava* form, which is dominated by vigour. Parvati, on the other hand, is known to be the creator of the soft and gentle *Lāsyā* style. *Nāṭyaśāstra* however, have not stated these twofold divisions of Indian dance. Rather Bharata uses the term *Sukumāra Prayoga* to indicate the gentler form of class dance.<sup>13</sup> Infact, he mentions it merely as the essence of *Lāsyā*, which was the main feature of the dance of Parvati. Awareness of a definite kind of movements required by male and female types of dance to delineate certain sentiment ultimately established *Lāsyā* as a separate style.

*Nāṭyaśāstra* has mentioned occasions as to when dance should not be performed by a woman in a dramatic performance. The occasions mentioned are when a young woman is enraged (*Khanditā*), deceived (*Vipralabdhā*) or separated (from her lover) by a quarrel (*Kālahantaritā*).<sup>14</sup> But exceptions have been allowed if the woman concerned is shown to be pacified at any point of time during the performance. Besides, it has been clearly stated that any love-song mentioning relations between men and women should be followed by delicate body movements (*Angahāras*), full of feminine grace, created by Goddess Parvati.<sup>15</sup>

Special importance attached to women's role in Indian dramatic production, which includes dance, is evident in several other references in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Unlike in ancient Greece or in Medieval Europe, people in ancient India had no scruple in allowing women to take part in them.<sup>16</sup>

Indian dance and music were known to have undergone a gradual transformation to attain a classical form during the epic period, which continued in the *Purāna* days too. In fact the *Rāmāyana* period witnessed the flowering of both the classical and folk forms. Dancing became a part of both worship and entertainment, participated by the professional dancer as well as common people. *Rāmāyana* has references to dancing by women on several planes. The *Apsarās* are specially attributed the art in various episodes. They were an honoured class and their presence was considered auspicious. The epic is also replete with references to and descriptions of dances performed by God and Goddesses. There is a specific reference to 'the mighty city', that is Ayodhya , which contained theatres for the females.<sup>17</sup> In the *Sundarākādam*, there are references to damsels who were sleeping by embracing various instruments, indicating that they are no other than dancers, coming under the sway of sleep.<sup>18</sup> There is also a reference to the coronation ceremony of the 'intelligent and worthy Rama', where the celestials and the *Gandharvas* sang and the *Apsarās* danced.<sup>19</sup> The wives of Ravana were also known to have been proficient in these arts.

*Mahābhārata* too has numerous allusions and descriptions of dancing by women. Reference to celestial dancers who danced for Arjuna, is significant.<sup>20</sup> Arjuna, while in concealment, had impersonated the role of Brihanalla, an eunuch, who had taught the princess of Virata dance and music in a specially constructed *Natyaśālā*.<sup>21</sup>

As for the pre-historic period, some evidences of ritualistic dancing is traced among the sculptural findings in the excavations of Mahenjodaro and Harappa – the two sites of Indus valley civilisation. Historian D.D. Kosambi has referred to a few evidences of dance involving women, which is traced back to pre-historic period. Mention may be made about the *holi* festival that existed in the pre- historic matriarchal stage. A male dancer in woman's garb, known as *Kolinā*<sup>22</sup> used to dance around the *holi* fire. This ancient

tradition is still followed in the great annual *Karangā* festival at Bangalore, where the chief participant has to dress as a woman before officiating.

Kosambi also has referred to a broken pot showing dancers with joined hands, which was discovered during the Navada Toli excavations (2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.). Such dances seem to represent the preliminary stage of the ring dance which is performed by girls around the country, towards the end of monsoon, as the remnant of fertility rites.

As for the temple dancers, the earliest evidence we can have from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Bharata says, "In temples, palaces and houses of army-leaders and other prominent persons, dramatic performances (*prayoga*) are mostly held by women in Men's role."<sup>23</sup> Among other evidences, the most significant one is an inscription (2nd or 3rd century B.C.) in the form of a prose, which can be seen in a cave near Ramgarh in the Vindhya hills. It says, "The excellent Youngman Devadonna, the painter, loved 'Sutanuka' the slave girl of the God."<sup>24</sup>

The double storied Ranigumpha cave in Udayagiri (c.2nd century B.C.)<sup>25</sup> is known to be the precursor of an open theatre hall. A sculpture depicting a girl under a pavilion accompanied by an all female musical orchestra group indicates its use as a theatre. It is also perhaps one of the earliest stone sculptures depicting a female dancing figure.

Another significant discovery relating to women dancer is the terracotta statue of a dancer known as '*Laughing Natī*' (3rd century B.C.) of Pataliputra, belonging to the Mauryan period. Discovery of two more such statues of female dancers or '*Natī*' is important too, whose stances slightly differ from the former one.<sup>26</sup>

The literary historical work *Ārthaśāstra* of Kautilya (c 300 B.C.) provides ample idea about the social status of dancers and actors including facilities accorded to them during the Maurya age. Kautilya devotes a complete chapter with the title *Ganikādhyaksha* (Superintendent of Prostitutes), which throws considerable light on his duties and privileges including the rules and regulations applied to the ganikas.<sup>27</sup> An important point to be noted here is that the dancers, actors, singers, musicians and pimps, all are being classed together. The book also has a very general reference to *devadāsī*, who were associated with temple service.<sup>28</sup>

Classic like *Kāmasūtra* (c. 100 A.D.) has detail reference to the mode of civilisation and cultural activities including dance and music that were prevalent in the contemporary society.<sup>29</sup> The book suggests that there was no bar in the marital status of a woman in receiving training and indulging in dance and music. Dancing, singing and playing of musical instruments were some of the chief requirements not only for a prostitute but also for any married woman wishing to keep her husband's affection. Vatsyayana devotes the chapter III (Book I)<sup>30</sup> to the discussion of the sixty-four arts, eight of which are associated with music and dance. Vatsyayana mentions that the courtesans were expected to develop skill to hold discussions on these arts.<sup>31</sup> However the book does not contain any reference to sacred prostitution or temple dancer.

It is assumed that the custom of dedicating girls to temple and sacred prostitution were commonly in vogue as early as the 6th century A.D.<sup>32</sup> Most of the *Purānas*, composed during this period, refer to such practice and mention that it was customary to arrange singing girls to take part in singing and instrumental music in the temples. However the custom of dedicating dancing girls to the temples must have begun around 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. as is evident from Kalidasa's reference to dancing girls associated with the temple of Mahakala in Ujjayini in *Meghaduta* (I, 35).

*Padma Purāna* commends a custom of purchasing of beautiful girls for their dedication to temples.<sup>33</sup> *Bhabishya Purāna* asserts that "the best way to win Suryaloka is to dedicate a bevy of prostitutes to a solar temple."<sup>34</sup> That such practice was in vogue is evident from the description of Hiuen-Tsang, who mentions about the presence of a large number of sacred prostitutes at the temple of Surya in Multan, in North India, now in Pakistan.<sup>35</sup> *Visnu Purāna* refers to the lineage of the rulers of the Ikshavaku dynasty of Vaishali, originated from the son, known as Vishal, of an *Apsarā* by the name of Alambusha, proficient in the art of music and dance.<sup>36</sup> *Mārkendeya Purāna* too left a significant information and description on the art of dancing, which includes the required features of a perfect danseuse.<sup>37</sup> Here the celestial musicians and the *Apsarās* have been referred to as the dancers of heaven. Among the nymphs, mention has been made of Biswasi, Grtasi, Tilottama, Menaka and their graceful dancing with proper application of gestures, *A'gahāras*, *Bhāva* (emotion or psychological states) and *Rasas* (sentiments).

The Buddhist and the Jain literature are replete with reference to dance and dancers. For example, the Jain *Ādi Purāna* contains the story of Apsara Nilanjana.<sup>38</sup> Mention may be made here of the Sittanavasal cave, which is a Jain temple and the pillars of which are adorned with figures of dancing *Apsarās*.<sup>39</sup>

The *Jātaka* stories and Buddhist legends have mentioned about some accomplished dancers namely, Amrapali or Ambapali, Salvati, Vimla, Padmavati, who commanded considerable admiration in the contemporary society of Pataliputra. Besides, the most accomplished dancer of the year was bestowed with the title of '*Nagar Bandhus*'.<sup>40</sup> These courtesan dancers enjoyed a high status under royal patronage and commanded respect at par with the royal clan. The two chief courtesans of Vaishali and Rajagrha, namely Amrapali and Salvati were known to have been honoured with the title of '*Nagar bandhus*' for their distinguished style of performance. "These chief courtesans had their own train of singers and dancing girls and were as extravagant in charging fees as in spending their earnings."<sup>41</sup> Ambapali has remained a legendary figure in history – a prototype of immensely wealthy, intelligent and honoured class of courtesans. One of the most beautiful Pali poems is attributed to her, who became a Buddhist nun in later life.<sup>42</sup>

Famous Buddhist book *Lalit Bistār* has mentioned about 39 artistic skills, which have taken into its fold the arts of music, dance and drama and even *Lāsya* or female form of dance.<sup>43</sup> References to dance abound in the *Jātaka* stories too. The written accounts of Fa-hien, Hiuen Tsang and Ising refer to the prevalence of music and dance in daily life and have descriptions of groups of 'courtesan dancers' associated with the nobility.

### 3.1. Indian Historical Evidence

In this context mention may be made that during the reign of Kumar Bhaskaravarman who ruled Kāmarūpa or ancient Assam during the period c.600 – 650 A.D. Hiuen-Tsāng was entertained with music in his court almost every day for one month.<sup>44</sup> Reference may also be made to a didactic poem *Kūttanīmatam* or *Śambhalimatam*, composed in about c.755-786 A.D. by Damodargupta, the chief minister of king Jayapida of Kashmir. The poet mentions that a courtesan who was adept in dance and music, and was concubine of the king Kumar Bhaskaravarman, died on his funeral pyre.<sup>45</sup>

Thus Indian history has been a witness to a regular practice of court dancing during the regimes of different dynasties. Patronage to singers and dancers was a common feature in the courts of the ancient and medieval periods. Names of some of the court dancers found mention in many of the historical accounts and other writings. However, in some cases the status of the courtesans was no different from the concubines. Yet they were adored by the society as custodians of fine arts, which were meant to be exclusive accomplishments of the courtesans. Besides dancing and singing they were required to wait upon the kings and courtiers and had to perform several other duties. Dancing girls were also employed for espionage purpose. The flourishing tradition of musical arts and other cultural activities during the Gupta era is well-known. "Dancing saloons, specially constructed for the purpose seem to have formed an integral part of the royal palace."<sup>46</sup>

With temple building gaining patronage under the Pallava and Calukya kings (6th and 8th century respectively) and further development under the Chola dynasty, temple dancing too gained some momentum. *Devadāsīs* or the temple dancers were granted lands and emoluments by the king and enjoyed certain hereditary rights protected by the royalty.<sup>47</sup> The Chola king Rajaraja is known to have employed 400 *devadāsīs* in the Brihadeswara temple of Tanjore and also allotted luxurious quarters in the four streets surrounding the temple. They were also granted tax-free lands. "The enchanting forms and matchless dancing of the devadasis" complemented the temples with exquisite sculptures. Their temple service also became an additional source of income for the shrines.<sup>48</sup>

The *devadāsīs* were not allowed to marry and were supposed to constitute marriage with the main deity. The ceremony varied from region to region. Besides, they were the only specialized group of women taking part in the rituals and festivals of the temples. This cult of dedicating girls to temples prevailed all over India in different forms and names, such as – *Māhārīs* in Orissa, *Natīs* in Assam, *Muralīs* in Maharashtra, *Bogāms* in Andhra Pradesh and *Jogatīs* or *Bāsavīs* in Karnataka. There is ample evidence of their presence in different temples throughout varying historical periods. However this tradition had a derogatory impact on the moral conduct of the dancers and spiritual atmosphere in the premises.

Kalhan mentions in *Rājataranginī* about a devadasi called Kamala, who was taken away by the Kashmiri king Jayapida Pundravardhan from the Kartikeya temple of Bengal.<sup>49</sup> Mention also may be made of Devadasi tradition during the reign of another Kashmiri king Lalitaditya (800 A.D.).<sup>50</sup>

According to historical account "The famous temple of Somnatha had 500 dancing girls attached to it to provide music in the daily rituals for the appeasements of Gods."<sup>51</sup>

### 3.2. Travelogues

Many foreign travellers have left behind significant description of temple dancers in their travel accounts. Domingo Paes, a member of the Portuguese embassy, who visited the kingdom of Vijayanagar during the reign of Krishna Deva Raya (1509 -1529), gave description of an idol that matches the description of Lord Ganesh. According to his account, "This idol was attended by dancing girls who fed it and danced before it, and also dedicated their daughters to it."<sup>52</sup> He also observed that any highborn man enjoyed the privilege of visiting them without restriction. Those dancing girls were provided with quarters and were allowed to sit and even chew betel in the presence of the king's wives.

Another Portuguese man, Fernao Naniz recorded similar observation about the *devadāsī* tradition of Vijayanagar.

During the reign of Elizabeth I in Britain, Methwold - a visitor to the kingdom of Golkonda noticed the *devadāsīs* being trained from early childhood. He also mentions that they were invited to formal public functions as well as to social gatherings and celebrations of all kinds.<sup>53</sup>

In Orissa, a royal order used to regulate the services of the *Māhārīs* or the temple dancers. The order also prohibited them from dancing in any festival other than those of Lord Jagannath.<sup>54</sup>

The tradition of *devadāsī* and that of the classical dancers engaged in the sole purpose of entertainment had in all probability developed and was prevalent in the contemporary society in their distinct form and character. However, both classes of dancers showed their commitment to the profession and had undergone enduring training to be proficient in these arts. The accomplished women were also known to be employed in the espionage service. They worked hard to preserve the rich tradition of Indian dance in different forms and style.

## 4. Mughal Period

Dancing and music were greatly patronized during Mughal era too, particularly in the courts of Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.), Jahangir (1605- 1627) and Shahjahan (1627-1657 A.D.).

The Mughal assimilated their own ideology and cultural traits in the contemporary music and brought about an innovative transformation in the Kathak dance form. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in South India too the Vijayanagar Empire, particularly the kingdom of Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1529A.D.) had witnessed remarkable development in dance and music.

Significantly, during later period of the Mughal era, a significant change was observed in the attitude of the Mughal Badshahs towards dance. Dance had become more a luxurious entertainment than an aesthetic art form. The sense of devotion, which had dominated the

*Kathak* dance in the initial stages of its development, was lost. Sensual gestures and body movements replaced the original grandeur and beauty of the dance form and began to be influenced by folk elements.

Experts in the field trained the dancers during Akbar's reign. The courtesans also had to follow a number of rules to adapt to the contemporary custom and to keep up the dignity of dance and dancers alike.<sup>55</sup> It is said that "During Muslim rule in north India the courtesans of Agra, Delhi and Lucknow were justly famous for their culture and refinement."<sup>56</sup> These courtesans, better known as *Tāwāifs*, were regarded as a sophisticated class of dancers, who were mostly Muslims, but obviously owed much to the *devadāsīs*. Their respectful status is evident from the fact that the sons of the upper-class families were sent to them to imbibe education in culture and refinement. This trend continued till the early decades of the twentieth century. The glorious tradition of dancing had gradually suffered a setback and faced a visible change in status of the dancers and musicians in the later period of the Mughal era. Although they were greatly patronized in the courts of the emperors, dancers suffered from disrepute because of their immoral activities. Prostitution became a way of their life. On the other hand, the priests, patrons and nobilities alike had long exploited the temple dancers. Dances were now performed solely for entertainment. It turned into a specific domain of luxury for the aristocracy. The religious element was known to have survived only in South India during this period of crisis. However, in spite of the humiliation and poverty, the *devadāsī* families "tenaciously held on to the theoretical background and set a standard for both the practice and theory of music and dance."<sup>57</sup> They, with the co-operation of their pupils, had kept alive the dance heritage through the centuries. Thus dance continued to grow in India in different form and style even in the face of social prejudice against the women dancers during the subsequent period. But with the coming of the British, the whole dance scenario changed as the British authority failed to appreciate the art. This cultural gap apparently affected the prevalent dance scenario and the aesthetic value attached to it.

Besides, the British administrators and the Indian Princes were pressurized by the Victorian Missionary ladies and also many western educated Indians to stop temple prostitution. Eventually Mysore state stopped the tradition of dedication of *devadāsīs* in 1910 and Travancore State stopped it in 1930.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, the degenerated form was practised by the so-called 'nautch' girls in the North and the *Sādir* in the South.

"Famous tawaifs such as Gauhar Jan were instrumental in the maintenance and continuation of Kathak, even as it was officially denigrated by the prevailing political opinion."<sup>59</sup> By the mid thirties of the twentieth century, with the effort of the great personalities and art lovers like E. Krishna Iyer, Rabindranath Tagore, Rukmini Devi Arundale, Uday Shankar, Ram Gopal and other artists following them, Indian dance was back on an exalted position. They pioneered the movement of revival and reconstruction from fragments of antiquity, to bring about the contemporary dance styles. Among the pioneers, Rukmini Devi Arundale is known to have sanitised the '*Sādir*', now popular as *Bhāratnāṭyam*, by "eliminating the erotic element- shringer, and infused it with the bhakti ras."<sup>60</sup> Dance critic Ashik Khokar observes, "Rukmini was the catalyst, who ushered in change and prescription and appreciation of a form that was on the decline."<sup>61</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

One significant aspect that emerges from Indian dance scenario is that – India always saw an abundance of women dance practitioners and male gurus in all ages. This trend is very much in vogue. The connoisseurs of the art of dancing are carrying forward the glorious tradition with harmonious blending of art, religion and philosophy that comprises the sacred tradition of Indian culture.

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- xli. A.S. Altekar, op.cit. p.181.
- xlii. A.L.Basham, op.cit. p.456.
- xlili. Shovana Narayan, Dance Legacy of Pataliputra, p.10
- xliv. Samuel Beal, The Life of Hiuen Tsiang, p.171
- xlv. T.M.Tripathi, ed. Kuttanī Matam or Shāmbhalī- Matam, śloka 561, p.187.  
H.K. Borpujari opines that the episode is improbable and the identity of the king mentioned is also doubtful. (CHA, Vol. I, p.226)  
P.C. Chaudhury too echoes similar opinion in The History of Civilisation of Assam, p.324.
- xlvi. Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed. :The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. III, p.586.
- xlvii. Ragini Devi, op.cit. p.47.
- xlviii. Rina Singh and Raginald Massey, op.cit. p.55.
- xlix. R.S.Pandit, trans. Kalhan's Rājataranginī, IV, verse 424, pp. 156-157.
- l. Ibid. Verses 269-270, p.142.
- li. A.S.Altekar, op.cit. p.183.
- lii. Rina Singh and Reginald Massey, op.cit. pp. 56-57.
- liii. Ibid. P.57.
- liv. Sadasiva Ratha Sharma, op.cit. p.23.  
"The order prohibits the Maharis from having physical contact with men. They should not dance in any festival except those of Lord Jagannath. After initiation into vaisnavism they should adorn their body with marks of Tilak and Kali and should take Tulsi Kanthi. They should not take food cooked at home nor should they speak to any male on the days they are to dance before the Lord. ...While dancing they should not look at the pilgrim audience. They should not look at the pilgrim audience. They should dance according to the directions in the Sastra and think themselves as the servants of the Lord....."
- lv. Ram Avatar Veer, op.cit. Vol.I, p.129.  
Accordingly, a dancing or a singing girl was not allowed to expose any part of the body except her face, hand and feet. She was required to be conscious and careful in order to not to raise her legs during performance. Curiously enough, she was forbidden from displaying the palms of her hands in a standing posture, as such a gesture was considered to be a symbol of disrespect. Moreover, after striking the heel on the ground during performance, she could not raise her feet upward facing the court and the audience. Jumping was taboo too. The dancing girls were barred from casting glance on or communicate with any male audience. No dancing girl could take the liberty of turning their back to the audience. Moreover, certain dancing postures or gestures were not allowed during performance on the pretext that they were objectionable.
- lvi. Reginald and Jamila Massey, The Music of India, p.29.
- lvii. Ibid. P. 31
- lviii. Ibid. P. 31
- lix. Wikipedia.
- lx.S.Sahaya Ranjit, "Rhythm Divine" in India Today, March 8, 2004, p.75, ed. Aroon Purie.
- lxi. Ibid.