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

DISSERTATION

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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
\textit{gopura}, the 108-\textit{karana} are arranged on vertical pilasters in a sequence that moves
vertically from bottom to top. In addition, the 108 \textit{karana} is present in all four of
the outer \textit{gopuras} that encircle the central shrine.

This study situates the 108–\textit{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 \textit{karana} to the \textit{vimana}, the
\textit{gopura}, and to temple vocabulary. It investigates the 108 \textit{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
\textit{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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I wish to thank my adviser, Susan Huntington, for her guidance, intellectual input and suggestive criticisms in bringing together this dissertation. Her knowledge, approach and interpretation of Indian art have been a source of inspiration to me.

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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.

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. 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

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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.


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, and this version of the karanas is subsequently reiterated in many later texts.

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.

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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 Vriddhagirisvāra Temple at Vriddhachalam (Figs.1.6), both from the Vijayanagara period. The central core of the Vriddhagirisvāra 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—Tirukkodisvāra at Tirukkodikaval, Ardharisvāra at Ulagainallur, Kamphaharesvāra at Tribhuvanam, and Nagesvāra at Kumbakonam—display karana-type arrangements in the gopuras. The Amritaghatesvāra 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 devartiyars, 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

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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 Natyasatra 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


\(^{14}\) Refer to *Agni purana* (Poona: Anandasrama Series, 1900).

sculptural texts such as the *Manasara*\textsuperscript{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.

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-\textit{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

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17. South Indian Inscriptions, Vols. 1-26 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India); South Indian Temple Inscriptions, ed. by T. N. Subrahmanyan (Madras: Government Oriental
\end{flushright}
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\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{19} By compiling a compendium of hundreds of temples belonging to this period, the author has a 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-

\textsuperscript{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).

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. 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.

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. 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. Harle does not analyze the *karana* panels in any of the four *gopuras* of the Cidambaram temple, mentioning that this comprises a separate study.

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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. 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. 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 *cidambramahatmya*, 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

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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. 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,* 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,* in which he examines Siva’s dance from the perspective of a 14th century text, the kuncitagristava. 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*


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.

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In the realm of temple ritual, Richard Davis’s *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, highlights aspects of temple ritual in south India during the Cola period. Lidova’s *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism* situates the purvaranga 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.

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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.\(^\text{34}\) Linguists and scholars engaged in researching the Hindu theater examined the manuscripts and published selected chapters and sections.\(^\text{35}\) 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,\(^\text{36}\) the various manuscripts have been pieced together resulting in a somewhat unified text.

\(^{34}\) William Jones’s discovery and subsequent translation of Kalidas’a *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.


\(^{36}\) 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 *Natyaśāstra* by Abhinavagupta (10th-11th century), facilitated this endeavor. The *Abhinavabharati* attempts to discuss, clarify and deliberate the contents of the *Natyaśāstra*. Perhaps inspired by the *Natyaśāstra* 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 *Natyaśāstra* in the late nineteenth century energized scholarship, and its application and relevance to contemporary dance, music and extant sculpture came to be explored. *Tandavalakṣanam or the Fundamentals of Ancient Hindu Dancing* by Naidu and Panthulu pioneered this effort by their comparison of the Cidambaram dance panels to the fourth chapter in the *Natyaśāstra* 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 *Natyaśāstra of Bharatamuni*. Kavi’s is the first attempt at identifying and

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

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.  

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 groundwork 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*. Some of the contents of this unpublished dissertation have been presented in a compilation of the Subrahmanyam’s lectures on the topic.

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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* 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,* 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.* Writing from a dance

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


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. 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. 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

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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 therof) 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

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 *Theater 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 interrelatedness 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.

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


\(^{54}\) 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. 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, Cidambaram, 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, 16$^{th}$-17$^{th}$ 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,’ 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.

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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”.

One hundred and eight *karanas* are first listed and then defined in the *Natyasastra* in the section dealing with the characteristics of the *Tandava* 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


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,

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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 *Nrttamtrka*, two, three, or four *Nrttamatrakas* 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’ 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 Natvasstra 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). 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 Natyasatra and its usages. The first karana is Talapuspaputa, 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. 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 Pariivrtta karana; Extensions — krantakam, Atikrantam, Viksiptam, Visnukrantam, and so on; Crossed (svastika) positions—svastika, ardhavastika, 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 Grdhralina 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
Gangavatara 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.\textsuperscript{11} The importance of this statement will be analyzed in a later section of this dissertation.

Perhaps the unique feature of the 108-\textit{karanas} is the legend\textsuperscript{12} associated with it. According to the \textit{Natyasastra}, the 108-\textit{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 \textit{karanas} and their combinations—the \textit{angaharas}—in his evening dance and their inclusion in \textit{natya} would enrich the latter. Bharata agrees to their inclusion and then Siva orders Tandu to instruct Bharata on the \textit{karanas} and the \textit{angaharas}—hence the name, \textit{Tandava}.

\textbf{108 \textit{karana/ Formal dance in Literature}}

The term \textit{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 \textit{nrit} (to dance, to act on the stage), \textit{nrti} (grand or invocation).

\textsuperscript{11} I find it interesting that this statement of mine about the \textit{karana} being a mixture of dance movement (\textit{nrtta}) and narrative (\textit{abhinaya}) ties in with one of its own references, i.e. the \textit{karana} stands for a person of mixed class—an offspring of an inter-caste marriage. See Monier-Williams, 254.
solemn appearance, show), and *nrtu*\(^\text{13}\) ("dancing, gesticulating, lively, active") said of Indra,\(^\text{14}\) Asvins, and Maruts.\(^\text{15}\) 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 celestial\(^\text{16}\) compared to a dancer in verses rich with lyrical beauty.

Evidence of formal dance is also present in the Epics\(^\text{17}\) where skill in dance is attributed to Ravana\(^\text{18}\) in the *Ramayana* and to Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*, along
with several other references to dancing. 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. 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. 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.

grammarian 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*,
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 *Natyasatras*.

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 scholars in order to arrive at a unified text.

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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 nats 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 antiquity 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 should be seen not as name of an individual, but a term referring to an actor, and so the is a manual for actors. The absence of a sage

23. The various manuscripts of the 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., , 42 (Bombay : Nirmayagar Press, 1894); M. R. Kavi, , with a commentary of (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Series, 1926 & 1956); Manomohan Ghosh's, , A Treatise on Ancient Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics, ascribed to Bharatamuni, Vols. I and II (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1951 and 1956); , ed. by Manomohan Ghosh, Vols. I and II (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1967 and 1995). The most recent one is , 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); Macdonel, 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).

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 Natyasatra 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 tantrava (Tandava laksanam), wherein the karanas are described as having been performed by Siva himself.\textsuperscript{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 20\textsuperscript{th} 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.

\textsuperscript{26} Natyasastra, Ch. I. Verses 4-25.

\textsuperscript{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 Natyasstra 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 Natyasstra 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, 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, early references to dance in southern India associate it with ritual, royalty, and victory in war.

28. In their interpretation of the Natyasstra, 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 Natyasstra (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 *Tolkkapiyam* (100 B.C. – 300 C.E.) records dances being performed on the battlefield 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 Korraavai. 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*. 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* literature 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 Tolkkapiyam. For more information, refer to M.C. Sarala, *Tamil Ilakkiyamthil Natiya Varalaru (History of Dance in Tamil Literature)* (Trichy: Bharatidasan University, 1999), 28-29.


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*.\textsuperscript{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*\textsuperscript{34} on the ashes of the three citadels and the three demons that reigned there.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{36} The anthology of *Kalittogai* poems, compiled by

\textsuperscript{33} Siva’s association to dance is recorded in the *Kalittogai* and *Silapadikaram* (ca. 450 C.E.).

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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.
Nallantuvanar\textsuperscript{37} (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-\textit{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 \textit{Silappadikaram} (ca. 450 C.E.), the preeminent literary work of the Tamil region. Written by Ilango Adigal, this work documents the prevalence of several \textit{kuthus}, such as \textit{santhi kuthu} and \textit{vinoda kuthu}.\textsuperscript{38} However, the author’s account of Madhavi, the dancer and courtesan’s first stage\textsuperscript{39} 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.

\textsuperscript{37} The description mentions Siva as the dancer of \textit{Kotukutti} and \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{38} Eleven types of \textit{kuttus} (dances) supposedly associated with the southern port city of Puhaar are mentioned in the \textit{Silappaddikaram}. A \textit{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 (\textit{kuthus}) for which the “dancers of puhaar are justly famous throughout the world.” See K. N. Subrahmanyam’s \textit{The Anklet Story: Silappadhikaaram of Ilango Adigal} (Delhi: Agam Prakashan, 1977), 25-28.

\textsuperscript{39} The \textit{Silapaddikaram} 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 \textit{nritta} (pure dance), \textit{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 \textit{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. 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 Harappan 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

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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 essay 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.” 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


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 *vrschika* (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 dance 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 Kanchipuram (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

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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 Kanchipuram. Therefore, I find it is odd that it should find representation in a Pallava monument in Kanchipuram 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. 10\textsuperscript{th} 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 *Nataysastra* 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.Balasubrahmanyan)

Fig. 2.9 Dancing Ganesa, Central museum, Gwalior, 10th century. (courtesy: Sucharita Khanna).
Fig. 2.10  Siva- Nataraja, Siddhesvara svami Temple, Tirunaraiyar, Sembiyam 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 Cidambaram (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—Cidambaram, Tiruvannamalai, and Vriddhachalam—are mentioned in the tevaram,¹ ancient hymns of Saivite saints, and Cidambaram is also celebrated as the location of Siva’s ananda tandava² dance. The Sarangapani

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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 later 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. 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.

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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), Tiruppatur (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: Bhubabhai 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.

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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 Kanchipuram, 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 Sabhapatli (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, Karuvoor 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 inscriptive records is not. See Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Cola Temples: Rajaraja I to Kuluntunga I (ca. 985-1070)* (Faridabad : Thompson Press, 1975), 26.
The munificence, generosity, and royal attention\textsuperscript{10} 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.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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). 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 wall 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.

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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. Produces 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: Bhlabhai 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

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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, labels inserted by the Archaeological Survey of India 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 Bharatanatyta 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.

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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. 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 hymns 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 vaisnavite 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

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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*. 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.

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 accessible for photography.


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.  

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.

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 grantha³¹ script, they appear to serve as minimalistic labels. However, in my attempt to interpret the

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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.


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 ‘nagarı’ 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.
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. 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.

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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 inhibits 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 swastika (crossed) karanas, such as vaksahswastika (crossed at chest) or dikswastika (crossed in a direction) as well. However, the alidha position

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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 \textit{swatika karanas}. Therefore, this panel is a typical example of the larger Sarangapani \textit{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- \textit{maghur----ala},”\textsuperscript{37} perhaps in reference to the performance of \textit{Mayuralalita} (dance of peacock) \textit{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 coordinate, 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 \textit{argala karana} wherein the weight of the body appears to be supported by the mid-riff and not the legs. But this determination is itself indefinite because \textit{argala} entails the separation of the feet, a feature that does not resonate in this sculpture.

The accompanying relief is inscribed ‘\textit{talasamsphotita}’\textsuperscript{38} referring to the performance of the sixty-ninth \textit{karana}, \textit{talasamsphotita}. However, taking into

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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 *Gangavatara 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 ‘*ardhanikutakkam*’. *Ardhanikutakaka 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 TIlai 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 Natarja 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.

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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. Balasubrahmanyan 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 Balasubrahmanyan 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 plan 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 Younger and Kaimal 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 sites 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 scholars\(^49\) 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 Urudhvatabandava 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, 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. 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

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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

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\(^{53}\) 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 ‘sterotyped’ 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 accommodating 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 trajectory- from bottom to top of each pilaster. Beginning 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 Natyasåstra. 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 (talapusaputa) 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 landscape. It is in

54. The devotional hymnist Sambandar has praised Siva as the Lord of Annamalai, in verses in the Tevaram. The description 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 fire 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 Tiruvanamalai.

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. Its vast landscape is dotted with several small, medium and large shrines, halls, pavilions, and gopuras that belong to various periods.

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56. Francoise 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 Ekamba-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 Vallala\textsuperscript{57} 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-\textit{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 devardiyar 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.\textsuperscript{58} On the east wall of the fourth enclosure is an epigraph corresponding to the 12\textsuperscript{th}-13\textsuperscript{th} C.E., that records the benefactions made by one of the twenty- four devaradiyar of the temple.\textsuperscript{59} This number of devaradiyar is reiterated in yet another thirteenth century inscription.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{58} See \textit{South Indian Inscriptions}, Vol. 8, #116. Yet another inscription mentioning devardiyar is #162 of South Indian Inscriptions, Vol.8, which is engraved on the Vallala gopura, and dates from ca. 1143 C. E.

\textsuperscript{59} See \textit{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

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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 talapuspaputa 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.

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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 talapus paputa 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 *karana* reveal sculptural correspondences to

\(^{61}\) Although the *salabhanjikas* 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
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 Mudukurnru (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 Mudukurnru 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”. 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, inscriptive records

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62. Mutukunru is the Tamil equivalent of Vridhachalam, 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 temple\textsuperscript{64} 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 (\textit{ardhamandapa}) in front of which is the great hall (\textit{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 \textit{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,\textsuperscript{65} and is among the early Nataraja icons. It appears that the Candesvara shrine along with shrines to the goddess Uma Bhattaraki, corresponding to the

\textsuperscript{63} Refer to Poems to Siva: \textit{The Hymns of the Tamil Saints}, 184.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Early Cola Temples (ca. 907-985 C.E.)} (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1971),197-200. Among more recent authors, Kamil Zvelebil’s \textit{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 lader additions. A modest entryway on the east is also attributed to Sembiyam 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) Palamalainatar (Lord of the old hill) reflecting

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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 Balamahigai (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.

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 precints 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).\textsuperscript{68} An important structure in a study of the development of the south Indian gopura, Chandrakumar\textsuperscript{69} records that as many as twenty-eight stone sculptures, including a dancing Ganesa on its niches are coeval to the main structure.

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{South Indian Inscriptions}, Vol. 12, #263.

The Vriddhaambigai or *amman* 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 *amman* 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 it 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 superstructures 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 tiruppadiyum (the holy Saivite verses) in the temple.\textsuperscript{71} An epigraph\textsuperscript{72} coinciding with the reign of Rajendra I records a gift of land for monthly festivals, including the tiruvadirai 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).\textsuperscript{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.


\textsuperscript{71} ARE, 1918, #40.

\textsuperscript{72} ARE, 1918, #54.
An epigraph\textsuperscript{74} dating from ca. 1248 C. E. and registers a gift of gold and silver by a Sembon Manikkam, a \textit{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 \textit{gopuras} is the carving of the 108-\textit{karana} program. The rendition, treatment of detail, and the general design place these \textit{karanas} in the Vijayanagara period. Just as in the Cidambaram temple, the 108-\textit{karana} program is almost identical in all the four \textit{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-\textit{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-\textit{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-\textit{karana} in the east \textit{gopura}, the earliest of the four \textit{gopuras} is discussed first. I follow this discussion with the analysis of panels in the west

\textsuperscript{73} These records correspond to ARE, 1918, #55, #58, #64, and #52.

\textsuperscript{74} A donation of a measure of gold and silver for an ornament to the deity, made by one of the \textit{devaradiyar} of the temple by the name of Sembontriyagi Manikkam, is recorded in this inscription. The use of ‘one of the \textit{devaradiyar}’ terminology could indicate the presence of others,
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 gaining 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 apaviddham 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 Virddhachalam 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. Balasubrahmanyan.)

Fig. 3.6. Façade of vimana. West wall, Rajaraja Temple, Thanjavur, Cola Period, 985-1015 C.E. (courtesy: S.R. Balasubrahmanyan)
Fig. 3.7. Siva-alingamurti, 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. Overview 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 (talapuspaputa), 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 talapuspaputa (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 *gangavataraṇa* (R) karana. 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, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12th –16th centuries.

Fig. 3.27. Nrtta sabha. Nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. 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, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12-13th centuries.
Fig. 3.31. *Bhujangatrasita* (L) and *lalita* (R) *karanas*, west *gopura*, southwest wall, Nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th century.

Fig. 3.32. *Latavrschika* (L) and *cakramandala* (R) *karanas*. West *gopura*, southwest wall, nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 12th-13th centuries.
Fig. 3.33. Overview of 108 *karana*, east *gopura*, southwest wall, Nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 13-14th century onwards.
Fig. 3.34. Overviews of 108-<i>karana</i> program, south <i>gopura</i>, southwest wall, Nataraja Temple, Cidambaram. Cola and later periods, 14<sup>th</sup> 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.)

Fig. 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. Vriddagirisvara Temple, Vriddhachalam. Cola, Vijayanagara and later periods, 10th-17th centuries.
Fig. 3.45. Siva-Nataraja. Sembiyam 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. (courtesy: 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, 16\textsuperscript{th}-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; 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 (nrutta) 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 themseves 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

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1 There have been several editions and translations of the Natyasatra 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

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\(^2\) 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.

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the other hand is all about narration and communication of moods, emotions and sentiments.⁴ Therefore, I interpret nṛtta 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, nṛtta (dance movement) reveals the conception and approach to movement and the use of space⁵ in Indian dance. Consisting of movement sequences, the nṛtta 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. Nṛtta’s inherent conception and structure brings to fore the importance it places on poses.⁶ Hand gestures, or hastas, are

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³ The inclusion of the term ‘pure’ is to bring out the fact that nṛtta 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 Natysastra and including the Sangita Ratnakara by Sarangadeva and the Abhinayadarpana by Nandikesvara. The information gleaned from these sources has been translated and analyzed in several secondary publications.

⁵ For a thorough analysis of nṛtta, particularly with reference to Bharata natyam, please refer to a meticulous study by Judy Van Zile, “Characteristics of Nṛtta in Bharatanatyam”, in Bharatanatyam in Cultural Perspective, (New Delhi: Americal Institute of Indian Studies, 1993), 43-90.

utilized in the sphere of Nṛtta 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 it 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 nṛtta 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).

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 abhinaya¹⁰ 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.

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¹⁰ Starting with the *Natyaasastra* 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 Nirmaya*, Bharatarnavam by an unknown author, *Balaramabharatam* by Balarama vanci, and *Natyadarpana* by Gunachandra and Ramachandra, to name just a few titles.

¹¹ The *Natyaasastra’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. *Natyaasastra by Bharata Muni*, Ch. 8, 7-8. Monier Williams records ‘abhi’ and ‘nin’ 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 Natyasatra, 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,* 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.*

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. In my opinion,

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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 9\(^{th}\) 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

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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 expression\textsuperscript{16} 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 \textit{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 \textit{karanas} and their combinations, the \textit{angaharas} were performed with a text based reconstruction alone. However as the only available source, they do provide a glimpse into the world of \textit{nrtta} in ancient times. I propose that while many of the 108-\textit{karanas} are primarily associated with stylized movement, some of them are infused with elements of communication as well. Therefore, the 108-\textit{karana} theme can be seen as manifesting both aspects of dance, and consequently function as important symbols of expression.

\textsuperscript{16} The inter-connectedness between dance and sculpture is recognized by several earlier scholars based on a much repeated verse in the \textit{Visnudharmottara purana}. Please refer to Priyabala Shah, \textit{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 (\textit{citasutra}), and dance (\textit{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.\(^\text{17}\) Literally translating as ‘doing, effecting or causing,’\(^\text{18}\) *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 *mattrka*, 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.

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 (vartita karana) of the body; pounding (nikuttaka karana) movements; crossed or entwined movements (svastika variations);\(^{21}\) square (catura karana),
mark on forehead (*lalata tilaka karana*), scorpion (*vrschika karana*)\(^{22}\) are a few more of the action-formation. 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 (*gangavataram*),\(^ {26}\) 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

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\(^{22}\) 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 origin\textsuperscript{28} legend of the \textit{karanas}. Accordingly, the \textit{karanas} are aspects of Siva’s evening dance (\textit{sandhya nrtyam}) that Siva recommends for inclusion in the evolving \textit{natya} tradition. He also adds that with the help of the \textit{karanas}, the ‘meaning of great songs’\textsuperscript{29} will be represented. Therefore, encased in a structure that is predetermined and discernible, I suggest that the 108-\textit{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

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

\textsuperscript{29} See \textit{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


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 *Natya* *sastra*. In fact, associations between ritual and gesture as evidenced in the *samhita* texts has led some scholars\(^{33}\) 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 rhythm\(^ {35}\) 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 movements\(^ {36}\) symbolizing the deeds of the deity itself.

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\(^{33}\) 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.

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 Natyasatra. 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. 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 scholars delved into Vedic hymns and ritual in search of clues that would indicate the roots of the mature natya tradition espoused in the Natyasatra. Kuiper was the first

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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).

scholar to approach this material from a different angle—he scrutinized the Natyasastra itself for Vedic associations 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, a prominent theme in vedic literature. He also read the Natyasastra rituals as being the equivalent of the vedic yagna 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, 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. 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.


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.\footnote{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.} 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.\footnote{See Natyasastra, Ch. 2, v. 7-60.}
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 lit 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 Brahmusthana 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 (before stage) - the ritual performed before the staged performance commences. Unlike the earlier rituals that were performed only

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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 Natyasastra, Ch.5.

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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.\footnote{Natyasastra, Ch. 5, v. 56-57.} The purvaranga had two sections— one closed and the other open.\footnote{The Natyasastra, Ch. 5, v. 8-15 lists the constituents of the two sections.} 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 melieu, the purvaranga appears to be a multi-media operation.

The closed section of the purvaranga is preparatory in nature,\footnote{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.} 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.
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

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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 mundi68 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

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65 See Natyasatra, Ch. V, 73-76.
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 Natyasatra, Ch. 5, v. 81.
68 For more information, refer to Natala Lidova’s Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1994), 11.
69 Refer to The Natyasatra, Ch. 5. V. 106-110. This is followed by the ‘stage-door’ segment which is mentioned earlier as well. Natyasasatra, Ch. 5, v. 26, and again in verse 116.
and mahacari\textsuperscript{70}-- wherein the erotic sentiment (srinagar 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.\textsuperscript{71} The Natyasastra states very clearly that the purvaranga is a ‘puja’ to the gods that is conducive to dharma, fame and longevity.\textsuperscript{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 pneumonic 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

\textsuperscript{70} See Natyasastra, Ch. 5, v. 117-135 for description of these two segments.

\textsuperscript{71} The Natyasastra, Ch. 5. V.136-140.

\textsuperscript{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. 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. Similarly, the benedictory segment (naandi) 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

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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. 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

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*. 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

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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,\textsuperscript{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,\textsuperscript{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 sutradhar’s movement within the ritual stage is executed by means of dance steps consisting of the cari movements\textsuperscript{80}, which make-up a karana. Additionally, references to combinations of karana sequences (angaharas) performed on the stage by dancers dressed as goddesses\textsuperscript{81} 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).\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{79} See Natyasastra, ch. IV, v.15.

\textsuperscript{80} Prescribed movements of the feet are referred to as cari movements in Natyasastra and later dance texts.

\textsuperscript{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-fold\(^3\) 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.\(^4\)

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 music\(^5\). 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,

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\(^3\) See *Natyasastra*, Ch. 5. v. 157.

\(^4\) 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.

\(^5\) The two terms appear in the 28\(^{th}\) 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.

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”. As the primary essence of something, rasa is often metaphorically linked to delight and bliss of apprehending and experiencing an emotional flavor aesthetically. 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.

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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 Natym”, 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

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\(^{90}\) 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 Natyasastra itself by virtue of its elucidation in this treatise. See Natyasatra, 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 Natyasastra, starting with the gestures of the head. For more information, refer to The Natyasarta, 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 *Natya*sastra 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

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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)\(^\text{96}\) tugs at the heartstrings and intellect of the dancer and the viewer. Here too, the Natyasatra 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 Natyasatra, 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,’ 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). 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 moods 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 (vyabhicari 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,  

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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 love.\(^{100}\)

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 personna. 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\textsuperscript{103}-- the costumes and jewelry adorned by the dancer.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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. 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 four important categories: the pusta or mask; alankara or ornamentation; anga arcana or painting/make-up of body parts; and finally, sajjiva

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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.

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*). 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.

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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. 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.

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108 See the Natyasastra, ch. 4. Accordingly, Siva is the dancer and transmitter of the karanas and angaharas, by way of Tandu, 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 Tandu\(^{110}\) 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 bliss\(^{111}\) (*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. 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 yuja, translates as ‘yoking’ and ‘mental concentration’ and refers to the integration of body and mind in order to realize an advanced state of

\[\text{I have examined the purvaranga rite and this specific aspect of the ritual in the earlier section on the ritual aspects of dance. For the exact verse corresponding to this statement, please see The Natyasastra, Ch.5, v. 156.}\]

\[\text{Panini in his Astadhyayi refers to presents both these roots as derivatives of the term yoga. See Panini’s Astadhyayi, 3.3.121.}\]
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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{kundalini}. Zarilli\textsuperscript{117} 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 metamorphosis\textsuperscript{118}. 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.

\textsuperscript{115} See Kersenboom’s \textit{Nityasumangali}, P. 295.

\textsuperscript{116} Phillip Zarrilli in his exploratory essay on titled “Towards a Phenomenology of Indian Disciplines of Practice: Meditational, Martial, and Performative,” in \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Dance of India}, 161-175.

\textsuperscript{118} Zarrilli, P. “Towards a Phenomenology of Indian Disciplines “, \textit{Dance of India}, 162.
Zarrilli analyses the relationship between the two practices—dance and yoga through the practitioners—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 tradition\(^\text{120}\) 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 (angā) and supporting parts (upangā).\(^\text{121}\) 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.

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\(^{120}\) 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) 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

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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 gestures\textsuperscript{125} 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

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{125} The hand gestures are central to the dance tradition in India. They are enumerated early in the Natyasatra and reiterated in several texts. For more information, refer to the Nataysastra, 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\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{127} Similarly, the measurements used to fix their lengths\textsuperscript{128} is in terms of danda (cubits) is 108, 64, and 32. The largest of them, the theater with 108 cubits

\textsuperscript{126} The 27\textsuperscript{th} chapter in the Natyasastra examines siddhi (success ) and its types- human and divine in the context of drama. See Natyasastra, ch. 27.

\textsuperscript{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.

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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). 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. Carrying strong tantric overtones, both Siva as Bhairava as well as his dance is associated with specific tantric sects, such as the kapalikas,

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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\textsuperscript{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 practices\textsuperscript{133} 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 function\textsuperscript{134} 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

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saivite sects}, (Berkely: University of California Press, 1972), 4.

\textsuperscript{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, \textit{Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saivite sects} (Berkely: University of California Press, 1972).

\textsuperscript{133} The main features of Kapalika worship include the essence of six insignia (\textit{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 \textit{tantra yoga} doctrines. See David Lorenzen’s \textit{Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saivite sects} (Berkely: University of California Press, 1972), pp.2-4.

fluid, 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. 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. 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


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.”

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,  

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and the numerous rotating and revolving (\textit{vartana} and \textit{parivartana}) movements create and visualize curved and circular frames and contours. I see in the performance of \textit{karana} combinations (\textit{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 \textit{karanas} could be transmitters of \textit{yantras}, let me delve deeper into their technique and formations. The first \textit{karana} \textit{talapuspaputa} (holding the flower-cup) initiates the \textit{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- \textit{bhramaraka karana}, \textit{parivritta karana}; extended straight lines – \textit{krantakam} and all the ‘\textit{kranta}’ \textit{karanas}; triangles in \textit{urdhva\textit{janu}} or raised knee \textit{karanas}, a variant of square and triangle- \textit{bhujangaancita} and \textit{bhujangatrasita karanas}; an inverted triangle – scorpion (\textit{vrschika}) \textit{karanas}, and so on.

Vatsyayana has performed a comparison of some dance movements, their relation to space and time, and intrinsic value as abstract \textit{yantras}\textsuperscript{139} in her study

\textsuperscript{138} Refer to Balasaraswati’s “Bharata Natyam” in \textit{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
Natyasatra in the chapter on the Tandava. In the final section of this chapter, the
author discusses ‘pindi’ 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. 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.

Interestingly in the Natyasatra, 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-karana and angahara material, but more so, towards its conclusion. See *The Natyasatra*, Ch. 4. v257-263.


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 device 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 *bijas* 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 by equating them to yantras, bhadrasana, and siksayoga—all three terms pertaining to yoga and meditation. 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 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

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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 Siksa. 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*\(^1\) 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 32\(^2\) that he claims were danced by Siva. Abhinava in his commentary\(^3\) 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*.

\(^1\) See the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4, v. 33-167.

\(^2\) *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.

\(^3\) The 32 *angaharas* are listed and described in the *Natyasastra*, Ch. 4, 28-32 and 173-246.
Following this, Tandu lists and describes the recaka movements\textsuperscript{150} 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.\textsuperscript{151}

Therefore, I interpret the structure of the tandava, as revealed in the Natyaśastra 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).

\textsuperscript{150} See the Natyaśastra, Ch. 4. 247-253.

\textsuperscript{151} See the Natyaśastra, 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 Natyaśastra (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.

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\(^{152}\) 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 *Natyasatra*, 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 (manda) 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-\textit{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, \textit{yogi}c and ritual meaning rooted in traditional Indian dance.

\textbf{Iconography and the Agency of Dance in the \textit{Vimana}: The Rajaraja Temple}

The 108-\textit{karana}, through its legend,\footnote{The Natyasastra. Ch. 4, v. 9-15.} is closely tied to Siva and his dance at \textit{Kailasa}, his mountain home. By its presence in the Rajaraja \textit{vimana}, the 108-\textit{karana} also recalls to the viewer, the legend of its so-called origin in the \textit{Natyasastra}. Just as Siva-Natesa sculptures in the Deccan communicate at a mythic level (see Ch.2), I suggest that the 108-\textit{karana} in the Rajaraja Temple also transmits mythic contents.

Additionally, I maintain that the \textit{karana} iconography in the Rajaraja \textit{vimana} carries symbolic messages as well. When situated within the larger sculptural expression of the \textit{vimana}, the 108-\textit{karana} program helps identify the \textit{vimana} as the symbolic representation of Kailasa- the mountain home of Siva and the sacred site of his dance. In fact, I read the \textit{vimana} itself as Rajaraja’s conception of a
southern Kailasa in which Siva dances the 108-\textit{karana}—the \textit{tandava}—a concept rooted in southern soil.\footnote{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 \textit{tandavam}, pertains not so much to the the Sage/attendat Tandu, but to the Tamil root tantu –’jump over, leap across, dance.’ See Kamil Zvelebil \textit{Ananda Tandava of Siva- Sadanrttamurti} (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998), 1-2.}

I also suggest that the seeds of 108-\textit{karana’s} symbolic relevance to \textit{yogic} energy (\textit{kundalini}) is sown in the Rajaraja Temple by its presence in the upper realms of the \textit{muladhara} region of the \textit{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 \textit{karana} reliefs that enliven the second tier corridor surrounding the \textit{garbhagriha} of the Rajaraja Temple. This corridor vivifies Siva dancing, specifically, dancing the 108-\textit{karanas}. Where is Siva known to have danced? And, in particular danced the 108-\textit{karanas}?

According to literature\footnote{A much documented reference of Siva’s dance in the Himalayas is present in the \textit{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 (\textit{Sandhya} ), had as accompanists the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. See P. Banerji, \textit{Art of Indian dancing}, (New Delhi: 1985 ), 9-10. Also, see Ananda Coomaraswamy’s \textit{Dance of Shiva}, (Bombay: 1948). Another chance reference to Siva’s sandhya nrttyam in Kailasa is found in the Sanskrit play titled \textit{Katha sarita Sagara}. Here in the introduction, there is a} and sculpture, Kailasa was the earliest stage for Siva’s
dance as Natesa (Lord of Dance) prior to his southern manifestation as Nataraja (the king of dance) in Cidambaram. Additionally, the legend of the 108-karana mentioned in the Natyasastra, 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 Bharata 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) 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 evenign dance comprising of karanas and angaharas. The tern used is “Sandhya nrtiyam”.

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South Meru’ (*daksinamueru vitankar*). Scholars have suggested that the Rajaraja Temple is Siva’s southern home based on these inscriptive references to *daksinameru vitankar* 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), 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.

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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 Parameshwari 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 Natas, 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.


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 Nagaswamy\(^{11}\) and Hernault\(^{12}\) 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 spces 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 Pennsylvani 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 Rajarja 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.

\(^{12}\) Francoise 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 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\textsuperscript{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\textsuperscript{14} dancing entities—Tat Purusa, Aghora, Sadyojata, Vamadeva, and Isana.

\textsuperscript{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 Balasubrahmanyan in *Middle Cola Temples* and documents the local name of this deity as Jvara deva, indicating his ‘terrible’ conception.

\textsuperscript{14} Balasubrahmanyan 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.\(^\text{15}\) 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

\(^\text{15}\) Although the literary sources for this legend—the Siva pradosha 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, 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 ardhanarisvara, 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 façade 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

\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\text{ Hernault notes this sculpture as ‘Goddess Vamadeva’ in an attempt to fit the program within the panca brahma doctrine, See The Iconography of the Brhadisvara Temple, P. 5.}\]
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 Balasubrahmanyam\(^\text{17}\) 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

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 anada 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 (Ravanashakranagara 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 multidimensional 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*\(^\text{18}\) dance. Therefore, I maintain that both in and of themselves and as aspects of the *tandava*,\(^\text{19}\) 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 Natyasasra 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 Natyasasra, 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* (sapt *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-Kuttaperumanatikal 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. In a sense, Tripurantaka triggers recollections of royal victories and human accomplishment—exoteric 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


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 *Natyastra*? 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 meditator’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. ii, 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. 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, Harle\textsuperscript{23} 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"\textsuperscript{24} prescribed for the prasada- the central shrine. The Tanjore gopuras stand testimony to such an adaptation, and Harle\textsuperscript{25} outlines in his study how these, along with the prasada of the Rajaraja Temple serve as precursors to the later gopuras.

\textsuperscript{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 12\textsuperscript{th} century as seen in the east gopura of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{24} See Harle, \textit{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. 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.

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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. 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 Kopperunjiga’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 cakras 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. Paritcularly, 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 puranam29 with allusions to yogic cakras
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
six cakras. While it is true the yogic symbolism is expressed almost universally in

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 cannonical saints that reside and worship in Tillai. Manikkavacakar,33 another revered hymnist describes with religious fervor the Natarja 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 Tirusittrambalam 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*. 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*.

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34 The local sthalapuranam, the *Cidambara Mahatymyam*, II. Also, see David Smith, P. 32.
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.

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 origial 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 temples\(^{37}\) and written about the remarkable similarities they exhibit in terms of art and architecture. Of course, 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.\textsuperscript{38} She is famous for generous donations to the Tiruvarur temple\textsuperscript{39} 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

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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 20\textsuperscript{th} 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. Balasubrahmany).
Fig. 5.9. Siva Ardhanarishvara (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. Balasubrahmanyan).
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 bottom 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 mediatation.

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

7. Tirukodisvara Temple, Tirukkodikkaval.
8. Ardhanarisvara Temple, Ulagainallur.
10. Amritaghatesvara Temple, Melakkadambur.
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.
20. Tyagarajaswamy Temple, Tiruvur.
22. Darbharanyesvara Temple, Tirunallaru.
23. Abhiramesvara Temple, Tiruvamattur.
27. Ramalingesvara Temple, Marangiyur.
28. Pattisvaram Temple, Kumbakonam.
30. Adipurisvara Temple, Tiruvorriyur.
32. Jambhunathevara Temple, Jambhai.
33. Pancanadisvara Temple, Tiruvayyaru.
34. Munkudimisvara Temple, Kalattur.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Rajarajesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Thanjavur, Thanjavur District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Ca. 985-1015. Cola Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva as Brhadesvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• Built by Rajaraja I, the celebrated Cola monach, this temple is regarded as a masterpiece of Cola architecture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Characterized by unprecedented size and scale of construction, the Rajaraja temple prominently displays the incorporation of dance in its sculptural program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lengthy royal order listing the recruitment of 400 temple-women (<em>talipendir</em>) transferred from other shrines to provide services at the Rajaraja temple. (SII. #66).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Same inscription lists male temple servants including dance instructors/conductors, musicians, drummers, and vocalists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Dance/epigraphic evidence of dance activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>Yes. They are present in the <em>vimana</em> of the Rajaraja Temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of 108-karana</td>
<td>• 81 of the 108-<em>karanas</em> are present in the central shrine, in an inner circumabulatory corridor that is right above the sanctum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presence of blank stone panels indicate intention to complete the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The 108-<em>karana</em> program follows a horizontal circumabulatory arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Four armed Siva is the dancer of the <em>karanas</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presence of Siva ‘<em>adavallan</em>’ (skilled dancer) along with the linga in the sanctum of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The door guardian (<em>dvarapala</em>) figures on this temple reflect ties to Nataraja sculptures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Sarangapani Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Kumbakonam. Thanjavur District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Later phase of Cola rule, Vijanagara periods. (12th-16th centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Visnu as ‘Holder of Saranga bow’ (Sarangapani)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• Ancient temple as evidenced by its inclusion in hymns of <em>alwars</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The present structure however is a chariot shaped stone temple belonging to the later phase of Colas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shrines to Vishnu (Main and portable) preside over the shrines to Ambal and the <em>alwars</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 108-karana present on the exterior façade of <em>gopura</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>No apparent vaisnavite connection to dance exists both in the legend as well as architecture of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>No mention of <em>devaradiyar</em> (devadasis) or any dance activity from epigraphs in the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>Yes. They are present in the exterior façade of <em>gopura</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td>• Located on the external façade of the outer East <em>gopura</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td>• Inscriptional fragments accompany some of the panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A horizontal arrangement of the panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A two armed male dancer sometimes accompanied by a gana performs the <em>karanas</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>Presence of dancers in the spokes of the wheels that support the chariot shaped central shrine. Seamingly random presence of dancers in the reliefs that run around the base of the central shrine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Nataraja Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Cidambaram. South Arcot District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>12th-15th century. Cola period (later phase), Pandya and Vijanagara periods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva as Nataraja.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Description | - A highly celebrated monument to Siva Nataraja, this temple is a vibrant religious center.  
- As one of the 7 *tandava* sites, the Nataraja Temple houses the Golden Hall (kanaka sabha), the site of Siva’s dance of bliss (*ananda tandava*).  
- Four enclosures contain shrines to Nataraja, Visnu as Govindaraja, and to Nataraja’s consort, Sivakami Amman. A dance hall (*nṛtta sabha*) enshrines Siva in urdhva *tandava* mode of dance.  
- Dance imagery is widespread in this temple- on relief panels in the base of mandapas, the Amman shrine, the 1000 pillared Hall, as well as the entryways of all four of the outer *gopuras*. |
| Relationship to dance/Evidence of dance activity | - Cidambaram is one of the *sapta tandava* (seven *tandava* sites) of Siva Nataraja, associated with his ananda *tandava* dance.  
- The *karana* panels in the West and East *gopura* entryways are inscribed with verses from the Natyasastra. |
| 108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No) | Yes. They are present in the outermost *gopuras* of this temple. |
| Location of 108-*karana* | - The 108-*karana* sculptural program is located in the entryway of all four outermost *gopuras*.  
- Arranged on pilasters that project from the wall surface, the *karana* sequence moves vertically from bottom to top of each pilaster.  
- A two armed female accompanied by human-like accompanists is the dancer of the *karanas*.  
- Inscriptions accompany several of the panels on the West and East *gopura*. |
<p>| Other Dance imagery at the temple | The dance theme is prominent in this temple—on the base of pavilions, on surfaces of pillars (<em>nṛtta sabha</em>, 1000 pillared hall), as base panels in pillared courtyard (<em>amman shrine</em>), apart from the <em>karana</em> sculptures. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Arunacalesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvannamalai. North Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Cola, Pandya, Vijayanagara, Nayak periods. (10th-16th centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva as Lord Arunachala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A sprawling temple complex to Siva as Lord Arunachala built up over a period of several centuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site of the Fire linga (pancabhuta sthalam).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contained within five large enclosures are shrines to a host of deities and divinities from the Hindu pantheon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Several tall gopuras provide access to various sections of this temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The fifth enclosure has four entry towers in which the 108-karana imagery is present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>The Annamalai Hill in which the temple is situated is sung by the ancient poets of the Tevaram.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inscriptions from the temple indicate the presence of several devaradiyar (devadasi) associated with this temple for centuries (12th-16th centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>Yes. They are present in the entryways of gopuras in the outermost enclosure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</td>
<td>Located in the entryway portals (dvara) of all four outermost gopuras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vertical pilasters project out of gopura wall and reveal square panels containing dancing figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The arrangement is vertical with the sequence starting at the bottom of each pilaster and moving upwards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A two-armed female is the dancer with an accompanist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>Random dance reliefs on pillars and pavilions. Nothing consistent in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Vriddhagirisvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Vriddhachalam. South Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Early phase of Colas, later Colas, Pandyas, Vijayanagara, Nayak Periods. (10th-17th centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva as Lord of the Old Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>- This temple was rebuilt in stone by Cola queen Sembiyani Mahadevi, who also donated images and jewelry for worship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The temple complex includes shrines to Nataraja and Ganesa apart from the Amman shrine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Four large entry towers provide access into this temple and articulate the karana imagery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>- Sung in the Tevaram hymns as a sacred hill landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>Yes. In the gopuras of the outermost enclosure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location&amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</td>
<td>- Located in the entryway portals of all four of outermost gopuras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Follows a vertical arrangement from bottom to top of each pilaster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A two-armed female is the dancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>The Nataraja shrine contains a Sembiyani period Nataraja bronze sculpture that is still worshipped. A Dancing Ganesa is among the relief sculptures along with a painting of a dancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Verattanesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvadi. South Arcot District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Pallava, Cola, and Vijanagara Periods. (9th-16th centuries). Siva as “lord of heroic deed/dance”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>A saivite monument associated with Siva’s heroic deed of burning the three citadels (Tripurantaka).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Central shrine is surrounded by nine attached sub-shrines reminiscent of Pallava Rajasimhesvara Temple at Kanchi has undergone repairs in modern times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epigraphical evidence indicates that the renovation of the temple was undertaken during the reign of Pallava Nripatungavarman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The outer east gopura contains dance sculptures resembling the 108-karanas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>One of the 8 sacred sites associated with Siva’s heroism. The name ‘verattam’ translates both as ‘heroic act’ and ‘heroic dance’. This site is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>associated with Siva as Tripurantaka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epigraphic reference to royal order for performance of dance before the deity by padiyilar and devaradiyar of the temple. The former were to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dance before the lifting of the sacred screen and the latter after its removal during the enthronement of deities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>Karana-type sculptural program in the outer east gopura.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td>Karana-type dance panels are carved in the entryway pilasters of the outer east gopura.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics</td>
<td>Exactly 108 squares are represented on the pilasters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of 108-karana</td>
<td>A lone female is the dancer with an accompanist in a few panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great deal of repetition in the dance poses in the panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No particular sequence can be gleaned by the overall presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Several key karanas, including the first (talapuspaputa) cannot be identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The format, distribution, and number of the imagery has strong ties to the karanas, although the technical vocabulary has not carried through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery</td>
<td>Nothing in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

298
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Tirukodisvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tirukkodikaval, Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Pallava, Early Pandya, Muttaryar, Cola periods. (9th-14th centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reveals the circular vimana - generally a early pandya feature, atop the central shrine. Epigraphs from the adjoining pavilion (mahamandapa) suggest building activity in the later phase of Cola rule as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inscriptions record a fairly active administration that was in place throughout its early years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Its iconography includes representations of the seven sages (sapta risis) on the niches of the external facades of the central shrine and adjoining pavilion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>• An epigraphic reference to Nataraja as ‘kutadum devar’ (Lord who dances) and “adavallan” (versatile dancer), and documentation of the bathing of the icon during auspicious months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This temple was included in my field list based on a survey of secondary literature and photo archives in Pennsylvania.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>• Karana-type imagery found in gopura.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location&amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</td>
<td>• Karana-type pabnels are engraved on the entryway pilasters of the outer east gopura.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appear to be inserts that may belong to a later period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An assorted milieu of figures populate the square panels—a procession of horses and elephants, folk themes, Krishna and gopis, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Although the karana format of vertical pilasters divided into rows of square panels is articulated, there is no sense of the presence of the 108-karana theme in this instance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>Nataraja Shrine. Nothing else in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Ardhanaresvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Ulagainallur. South Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date/ Period</strong></td>
<td>Cola, Vijayanaga periods. (13th - 16th centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Deity of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Siva as Ardhnarisvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>- A Siva temple largely unused and located in a remote village within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the Kallakurichi Taluk boundary limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Little is known about this temple. However, the earliest recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inscription from this temple belongs to Kullotunga III, a king who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ruled in the final years of Cola dynasty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- During my visit, this dilapidated temple was locked and I was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unable to photograph the interior of the monument. Only the outer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>east gopura could be documented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Karana-type imagery is carved in the entryway pilasters of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>outer east gopura.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>A 13th century inscription from the temple documents the names of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity**</td>
<td>women who were to sing and dance before the deity during certain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>festivals to be held in the month of margali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>108-Karana sculptures</strong></td>
<td>- Karana-type sculptural program is articulated in the entryway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td>pilasters of the East entry tower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location &amp; Characteristics of</strong></td>
<td>- Closely follows the 108-karana format and design. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>108-karana/karana-type</strong></td>
<td>columns of pilasters are divided into 6 rows of panels on each wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>surface. A total of 72 panels enliven both sides of the passageway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The program is characterized by dancer panels that repeat as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>as panels containing a medley of non-dancing figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Taking into account the content of the panels, it is not the unified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>108-karana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Dance imagery</strong></td>
<td>Nothing in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CATEGORY</strong></td>
<td><strong>DETAILS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Somanathar Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Palyarai. Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Probably dating from the mid-12th –14th century. Colas, Pandyas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Description                      | • 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 *gopura* 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 *gopura*.                                                                                                                                 |
| Relationship to dance/            | 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 *karanas* by S.R. Balasubrahmanyan in his Later Cola Temples. |
| Evidence of dance activity        | *Karana*-type imagery in *gopura*.                                                                                                                                 |
| 108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)    | • Dance imagery represented in the inner passageway of falling east *gopura*.  
  • 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 Hiranyakashyapu.  
  • It is apparent that the 108-*karana* format/design is being used to express other subject-matter too.                                                                 |
<p>| Location&amp; Characteristics of      |                                                                                                                                                  |
| 108-<em>karana</em>                     | Nothing in particular.                                                                                                                                 |
| Other Dance imagery at the temple |                                                                                                                                                  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Amritaghatesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Melakadambur. South Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Built during the reign of Cola Kulottunga I (12th century).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A Siva temple of immense beauty and richness nestled in an obscure village near Cidambaram in South Arcot district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentioned in the hymns of Appar (7th century), the extant building dates from the later Cola king Kulottunga I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oriented to the east, the central shrine of this temple reflects a chariot pulled by caparisoned horses and contains an attached pavilion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A rich profusion of sculptural imagery—reliefs, free-standing sculpture and bracket figures—articulate the vibrant fabric of the walls of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>Reveals a rich sculptural repertoire of dance imagery, however, it does not conform to the 108-\textit{karana} theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance</td>
<td>This temple was included in the survey based on my examination of the photo archive at Pennsylvania.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-\textit{Karana}</td>
<td>\textit{Karana}-type imagery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics</td>
<td>Dance sculptures resonate throughout the body of the central shrine and the attached pavilion: relief carvings, niche figures, and bracket figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of 108-\textit{karana}</td>
<td>On entering and surveying the temple, the widespread and emphatic presence of dance is apparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>However, this does not appear to be an instance of the more unified 108-\textit{karana}.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery</td>
<td>A Pala-style metal sculpture of Siva dancing on Nandi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Kampaharesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tirubhuvanam. Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>13th century. Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• Considered as one of the last great Cola temples, the Kampahesvara Temple was built during the reign of Kulottunga III.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The central shrine topped by an impressive superstructure, 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Currently two gopuras are present on the east side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>This temple has been credited with having dance imagery, specifically, the 108-karana 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>Karana-type imagery found in the entryway to the first enclosure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td>• The first enclosure contains most of the main structures of the temple complex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The entryway into this enclosure, now largely obstructed by later expansion reveals remnants of a sculptural program like the karanas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vertical pilasters protrude off the wall surface and reveal square panels containing dancing figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What little is left of this passageway is further obliterated by paint and whitewash. However, the karana-type imagery could perhaps date from the later phase of the Cola period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the</td>
<td>• Dance imagery is found on horizontal base panels around the central shrine and adjoining pavilions. These panels enliven the façade of the base of the garbhagriha, the attached mandapa, and the pavilion in front.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temple</td>
<td>• This set of dance reliefs are situated along with narrative reliefs from Saivite mythology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Horizontal dancer panels are also found in the wall façade of the ratha-mandapa containing the somaskanda shrine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Nagesvaraswami Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Kumbakonam. Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Early Phase of Colas, Colas, Vijaynagar periods. (9th-17th centuries.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>- 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Later additions include a pavilion, anandatandavamurti mandapa, shaped like a chariot (ratha mandapa) as well as the main entrance gopura in the east.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dance sculptures found on the both these later structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>This temple comprised the site study based on my survey of sculptures in the Photo archives of the AIIS at Pennsylvania.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>Karana-type imagery present in the outer east gopura.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td>- The outer eastern entryway contains 44 panels on pilasters depicting female dancers alone without accompanists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The representation is repetitive and displays only minor variations among one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Thick lime wash paint on the walls of entryway has also obliterated some of the details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>The ratha mandapa to Siva as ananda tandava murti 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Meenakshi Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Madurai. Madurai District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Pandya, Nayak periods. (10th-18th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Description            | - Madurai is one of the sites where Siva danced the *tandava*. Specifically, it is associated with his *Sandhya tandavam*. The dance hall is called the *rajata sabha* 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 (*gopuras*) that reveal the planning and execution of a complex and developing temple tradition.  
- Four large *gopura* towers provide entry into the temple complex from the four directions. |
| Relationship to dance/ | - Madurai is the site of Siva’s *sandhya tandavam*.  
- Siva dances with his right foot raised off the ground, as opposed to the conventional Nataraja imagery found everywhere else in India. |
| Evidence of dance       |                                                                                                                                       |
| activity               |                                                                                                                                       |
| 108-Karana sculptures  | Evidence of intent to sculpt the *karana* program in 3 of the 4 outermost *gopuras*, however, there are no sculptures.               |
| (Yes/No)               |                                                                                                                                       |
| Location& Characteristics of 108-karana | - Three of the four outer *gopuras*, namely, the West, East and South towers reveal the adoption of the 108-*karana* 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-*karana* in these entryways.  
- I suggest that just as in Cidambaram, Tiruvannamalai, and Vriddhachalam, all four of the outer *gopuras* in Madurai may have carried the 108-*karana*. |
<p>| Other Dance imagery at | 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. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Vedaranyesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvalangatu. North Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Pallava, Cola period, and Vijayanagara Periods. (9th-16th centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Description                    | - Temple associated with the dance contest between Siva and Parvati, where Parvati was defeated by Siva in the urdhva (raised) tandava mode of dance.  
- Main shrine enshrines a linga and is surrounded by shrines to Ganapti and Subrahmanya.  
- The ratna sabha is the hall where Siva performs the urdhva tandava.  
- Shrines to Devi and Karaikkal Ammaiayar, share the temple space with sculptures of sapta matrikas, some nayanmaras, 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.  
- 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 sapta tandava sites, where Siva performed the urdhva tandavam in the Ratna sabha.  
- Since this is the site of the urdhva tandava, Siva-Nataraja in the urdhvavatandava mode is present in the ratna sabha. Additionally, modern stucco images depicting five dance halls (panca sabha) herald the devotee at an inner entranceway. |
<p>| Relationship to dance/         |                                                                                                                                          |
| Evidence of dance activity     |                                                                                                                                 |
| 108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No) | No. But the outer east gopura reveals remnants of the 108-karana design and format. The pilasters, only a pair of each wall, support empty square panels. |
| Location&amp; Characteristics of   |                                                                                                                                          |
| 108-karana                     |                                                                                                                                          |
| Other Dance imagery at the     |                                                                                                                                          |
| temple                         |                                                                                                                                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Nelliappar Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tirunelveli. Tirunelveli District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Cola period, Vijanagara, Naik Periods. (13th-18th centuries) Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>- Tirunelveli is one of the sacred sites associated with Siva’s tandava dance— the Kalika tandava—in the copper Hall (tamra sabha) of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A huge temple complex to Siva as Nelliappar and his consort Katimathi. Natarajar, refered to as Sabhapati, finds dual presence in the Nellai Govindan shrine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The complex displays several architectural addtions such as the Swing (oonjal) pavilion, the 1000 pillared hall, and the Nandi pavilion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The pillared hall adjacent to the main shrine is credited with being musically aligned. A tap with the knuckels is supposed to result in the sound of the 7 musical notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>- Tirunelveli is the site of Siva’s Kalika tandava, and the stage on which he is supposed to have performed this dance is believed to be the tamra sabha (Copper Hall) of the Nellaippar Temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location&amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>Nataraja as Sabhapathi (Chinna and chandana) dances in the mandapa which houses the Copper Hall. Apart from that, there is no other dance imagery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Tirukutralanatha Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Kuttralam. Tirunelveli District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date &amp; Period</strong></td>
<td>Cola, Vijayanagara and modern renovations. (13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Deity of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Site of Siva’s <em>Tripura Tandava</em> and the home of the <em>citra sabha</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Temple is built on a hill named Tirukuda mountain and is currently famous for a water falls in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Siva as Kuttrala nathar presides over several shrines—to candesvara, Amman, Ganesa, the saptamatrkas, Subrahmanya and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The <em>citra sabha</em> (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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to dance/Evidence of dance activity</strong></td>
<td>One of the <em>sapta tandava</em> (<em>seven tandava</em>) sites, specifically, the <em>tripura tandava</em>, the stage for which is the <em>citra sabha</em> associated with this temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>108-Karana sculptures</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location&amp;Characteristics of 108-karana</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Dance imagery at the temple</strong></td>
<td>The <em>citra sabha</em> contains murals of dancing Siva and Kali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruthalinathar Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruputthur, Madurai District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Cola and Vijayanagara (13(^{th})-16(^{th}) centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Description                     | • Associated with Siva’s *Gowri tandava*.  
• This temple complex consists of four enclosures within which are shrines to Subrahmanya, Yoga- Bhairava, the sapta matrikas, daksinamurti, and to the Amman, Soundarya Nayaki.  
• A single *gopura* provides access to the inner portals of the temple.  
• Tiruputthur is one of the sapta-*tandava* sites associated with Siva-Nataraja.  
• Nataraja is supposed to have performed the Gouri-*Tandavam* in the *Sira sabha* of this temple.  
• Image enshrined in the ‘*adavallen* (Expert dancer) *sabha*’ has Parvati and Nandi as witness and accompanist to dancing Siva. |
<p>| Relationship to dance/          |                                                                                                                                 |
| Evidence of dance activity      |                                                                                                                                 |
| 108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)  | No.                                                                                                                                 |
| Location &amp; Characteristics of   | None.                                                                                                                                 |
| 108-karana                      |                                                                                                                                 |
| Other Dance imagery at the      | Apart from Nataraja and specifically, the image in the dance hall, there is no other specific dance imagery. |
| temple                          |                                                                                                                                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Mahalingaswami Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvidaimarudur. Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Date/ Period              | Early Colas, Cola and Vijanagara periods. (9th-16th centuries)  
| Main Deity of Temple      | Siva.                                                                                                                                 |
| Description               | An active saivite center dating from an early phase of Cola rule as evidenced by epiprahs 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 alternations, 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 medly of architectural units and no obvious sculptural links.  
|                           | A good section of the temple revealed painting during my visit further removing it from its orginal expression.  
<p>|                           | A sprawling temple with shrines, pavilions, gopura entryways, and a temple tank, the Mahalingaswamy Temple reveals little of its early glory today. |
| Relationship to dance     | 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 taipusam festival, three associated with the bathing of the deity, and three more commencing during the festival of vaikasi-Tiruvadirai. |
| Evidence of dance activity|                                                                                                                                              |
| 108-Karana sculptures     | No                                                                                                                                 |
| (Yes/No)                  | None.                                                                                                                                 |
| Location &amp; Characteristics of 108-karana |                                                                                                                                 |
| Other Dance imagery       | Nothing in particular.                                                                                                                                 |
| at the temple             |                                                                                                                                              |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Bhuvaraha Swamy Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Srimushnam. South Arcot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Period</td>
<td>Vijayanagara and Nayak Periods. (15th-17th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Visnu in his boar incarnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Located to the northwest of Cidambaram, this temple is dedicated to Visnu in his incarnation of the boat protecting the earth goddess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visnu’s consort, Ambhujavalli finds presence in her own shrine within the temple complex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The temple houses small shrines in vaisanvate saints and pillared pavilions articulating vibrant sculptural expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Rajagopura in the east heralds the entrance to the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>No. However, the entrance of the main gopura reveals the presence of the pilasters with rows of square panels, exactly like the 108-karana 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Tyagarajaswami Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvarur. Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Cola, Vijayanagara and Nayak periods. (10th-18th centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>- Tiruvarur is a much revered town in ancient saivite hymns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It is home to a sprawling temple complex to Siva as Tyagaraja.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tyagaraja is the portable deity who shares the sanctum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with Valmikinatha, the main deity of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In addition to the double shrine that comprises the sanctum,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the temple complex also houses the ambal shrine and shrines to sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It is apparent from the architecture of the current temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that it has underwent several expansions and alterations at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>various times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- According to legend, this temple is site of the ajapa dance,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>which is believed to be associated with yogic practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Atleast 3 inscriptions from the temple document dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by the devaradiyar of the temple on festive occasions in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the main shrine. The inscriptions record the Lord Vidivitankan as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>having ‘witnessed’ the dance performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- This temple is known to have had an active group of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dancing devadasis in its administration until the abolition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the practice in modern days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- During my visit, I talked to an Oduvar (reciter of hymns) and an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instrumentalist (bari nayanam player), both serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in the temple for generations. They described the role of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the dancing dasi in the temple ritual as well as religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>processions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location&amp; Characteristics</td>
<td>The widespread presence of pillared pavilions containing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of 108-karana</td>
<td>narrative scenes includes dance scenes as well. However, no other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery</td>
<td>systematic array of dance imagery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Amritagthesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tirukadaiyur. Near Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Cola, Vijayanagara, Nayak periods. (12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>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 60&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; birthday celebrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Siva as presides over shrines to Ganapati, Amrtiaghatesvara Ambal, and to other saivite divinites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>A 13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; century record documenting the appointment of a dance master/musician (nattuvanilai) in the temple, along with information on his remuneration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Darbharanyesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tirunallaru. Thanjavur District (now included in Pondicherry).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Cola, Vijayanagara, Pandya, and Pallavas. (10th-17th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• This temple to Siva is now famous as the site of saturn (sani), a planetary deity, attracting the most pilgrims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Apart from the main shrine dedicated to Siva as Darbharanyesvara, the temple complex consists of three enclosures and a gopura in the east.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Within its confines are shrines to Tyagaraja, Devi, and the navaghras (particularly, saturn), along with other minor divinities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>An inscriptive reference during the period of the Cola monarch Rajadhiraj I, mentioning arrangements for enacting an aryakuttu (perhaps a dance-drama) in five acts during certain festive occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location&amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Abhiramaesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvamattur. South Arcot District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara. (12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It has been expanded in successive periods including the modern day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The main shrine consists of the sanctum and attached pavilions. The &lt;i&gt;amman&lt;/i&gt; shrine is not just independent but is also a separate complex, just outside the Siva temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A &lt;i&gt;gopura&lt;/i&gt; in the east entryway provides access to the inner realms of the temple complex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>A thirteenth century inscription that documents the presence of a temple &lt;i&gt;devaradiyar&lt;/i&gt; and her kin’s donation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-&lt;i&gt;Karana&lt;/i&gt; sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of 108-&lt;i&gt;karana&lt;/i&gt;</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Sivalokanathesvara Temple/ Gramaradhanatha Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Gramam. South Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Later phase of Colas, Vijanayagara periods. (13th-16th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• A small temple located in a remote village near Tirukkoilur town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inscriptions dating from Rajaraja I and his immediate successors are present in the temple along with several Vijayanagara period records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The main shrine and attached pavilions preside over the Devi shrine and shrines to minor deities. The <em>sapta matrikas</em> find presence in a section of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>An inscription dating from ca. 1207 registers a gift of a village to a <em>devaradiyar</em> of the temple in return for singing and dancing services provided by her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Vyaghrapurisvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Siddhilingamadam. South Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Cola and Vijayanagara periods (9th -15th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>- Temple appears to be established during the early phase of Cola rule by Parantaka I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Rajaraja I is supposed to have set up the Nataraja image in this temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A shrine to the sage Vyaghrapada along with an area for the sapta matrkas series comprise the other highlights of this temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>An inscription dating from ca. 975 records a gift of land to a devaradiyar 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location&amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>Nataraja image in the shrine. Nothing else in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Verattanesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Kilur. South Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Cola, Vijayanagara, and Nayak periods. (10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; centuries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A fairly active temple that has undergone much renovation in recent times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One of the ‘eight heroic deeds’(<em>asta verattam</em>) sites associated with Siva’s destruction of the demon Andhaka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sanctum is attached to a pillared pavilion and the entire structure is enclosed by a pillared verandah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A number of subsidiary shrines, including the <em>navagraha</em>, are contained within this enclosure which is itself covered and dark in several places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>An inscription from the temple dating from Rajaraja I’s tenure registers the presence of 32 <em>devaradiyar</em> in the temple for worship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>Nothing in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Ramalingesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Marangiyur. South Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Now uncertain. The current temple is a make-shift structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Description               | - 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.                                                                                                                                 |
<p>| Relationship to dance/    | An epigraph (ca. 1184) from the temple states that a temple <em>devaradiyar</em> sponsored the construction of a hall and entryway in the temple. |
| Evidence of dance         | No.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| activity                  | None                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 108-Karana sculptures     | None                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| (Yes/No)                  | None                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Location &amp; Characteristics of 108-karana | None.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Other Dance imagery       | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| at the temple             | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CATEGORY</strong></th>
<th><strong>DETAILS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Pattisvaram Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Kumbakonam. Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date/ Period</strong></td>
<td>Later Colas, Vijayanagara, and Nayak periods. 12th-17th centuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Deity of Temple</strong></td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Description** | • 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 Ammanshrines to the background. |
<p>| <strong>Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity</strong> | This temple was included in the site list after a survey of sculptures at the photographic archives of the University of Pennsylvania. |
| <strong>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</strong> | No |
| <strong>Location &amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</strong> | None |
| <strong>Other Dance imagery at the temple</strong> | An intricately carved wooden door belonging to recent times contains dancers. Nothing else in particular. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Apatsahayesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvaduturai. Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Cola period. (9(^{th})-14(^{th}) centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A small and ancient temple located in a sleepy town in the vicinity of Kumbakonam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The central shrine and attached pavilion reveals traces of early Cola characteristics, although there is some evidence of later alterations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The current structure has two enclosures with a gopura in the east.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>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 nanavidha nataka salai (hall for various theatrical events).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location&amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the</td>
<td>Nothing else in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Adipurisvara Temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvorriyur. North Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Cola, Vijayanagara periods. (9\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Tituvorriyur, located 18 kms north of Madras (Chennai) is an ancient town sung by the Nayanmars of the 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} centuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epigraphs from the temple indicate that the main shrine to Adipurisvara was constructed during the reign of Cola king Rajendra I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The temple has expanded considerably over the centuries with the introduction of newer shrines and structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It now houses several subsidiary shrines, 5 mathas, and 5 pavilions within its confines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/ Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>Epigraphs document the dedication of 12 devardiyar for services to the goddess Gouri. Other inscriptions from the temple also indicate a strong contingent of devaradiyar in the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of 108-karana</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td>Nothing in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Verattanesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Vazhuvoor. Thanjavur District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara periods. (13th-16th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva in one of his “heroic deeds”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>- Associated with Siva’s ‘veera attam’ (heroic deed/dance) specifically concerned with Siva’s flaying of Gajasura and dancing with the flayed skin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A temple of considerable antiquity based on its mention by the 7th century saint Appar, the Veerattanesvara Temple articulates no trace of its antiquity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It is largely bereft of any embellishment and barely reveals sculptural expression as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The extant structures possibly date from the later phase of Colas or perhaps even the following Vijayanaga period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance</td>
<td>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’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location&amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the</td>
<td>Nothing in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Jambhunathesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Jambhai. South Arcot District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Later phase of Colas, Vijayanagara periods. (12th-16th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• A dilapidated but impressive temple largely falling apart due to neglect, the Jambhunathesvara Temple sits on the banks of the Pennai river.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A neglected central shrine and attached pillared pavilion are dark and infested with bats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The amman shrine to Akhilandesvari is located in the second enclosure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>An epigraph from the temple suggesting the presence of a devardiyal and the families role in the construction of a nrtta mandapa (dance hall) within the temple complex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures (Yes/No)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Pancanadisvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Tiruvayyaru. Thanjavur District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Cola, Vijayanagara Periods. (10th-18th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>• Referred to as <em>ten Kailasam</em> (southern Kailasa), the <em>Pancanadisvara</em> Temple has considerable antiquity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The temple has undergone so much expansion that it is a collection of small structures from various periods and dynasties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The <em>Ammanshrine</em>, the North Kailasa (<em>uttara Kailasa</em>) shrine and niches supporting the nayanmanr saints further enliven the architectural and sculptural landscape of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presently, a site associated with the Musician saint Tyagaraja and the location for the annual gathering of South Indian musicians on this anniversary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-karana</td>
<td>Nothing in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Temple</td>
<td>Munkudimesvara Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Temple</td>
<td>Kalattur. Chingelpet District. (12th-18th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/ Period</td>
<td>Later Cola but evidence of later alterations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Deity of Temple</td>
<td>Siva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Oriented to the east, the Munkudimisvara Temple consists of a simple sanctum preceding which is a pillared pavilion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surrounding this structure on three sides is an open circumambulatory passage and on the east is an enclosed mandapa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Amman shrine is present in the northern side of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This temple is currently administered by the Archaeological Survey of India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to dance/</td>
<td>Atleast three records from this temple dating as early as the ca. 1190, documenting donations by the devaradiyar of the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of dance activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108-Karana sculptures</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; Characteristics</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of 108-karana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance imagery at the</td>
<td>Nothing in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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