



Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Janpath, New Delhi 110 001



The Symbiotic Relationship
between Indian Dance and the Yogic Chakras

by

Rekha Tandon



NĀRĪVĀDA

Gender, Culture and Civilization Network



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Dance Routes



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The Symbiotic Relationship between Indian Dance and the Yogic Chakras

Introduction

The fundamental purpose of all classical Indian dance has been union with God through bodily transcendence; in this the technique of dance has served as a route to self-knowledge for centuries. These artistic traditions have taken their present form as regional variations of a mother tradition, nurtured through time in Hindu temple environments, until recent history. Excellence in a contemporary performance of these dance forms is judged by whether it goes beyond merely describing union with God to being experienced on subtler levels, as a ‘coming together of matter and spirit’, for both performer and viewer.¹

In western dance practice, the early American modern dancers Ruth St. Denis, Isadora Duncan, and Martha Graham experimented with how to forge links between matter and spirit through the medium of the dancing body. They did this within a dominant climate of Christianity without reference to a cultural blueprint. This required them to “challenge, criticise, and redefine” what was meant by “matter” and what was meant by “spirit” as “this dualism itself” had “been used to exclude dance from religious life”.² In the process, they articulated individual visions of movements and choreography

as they forged “new links between meaning and form, matter and spirit”. Dance served not as a tried and tested path to self-knowledge, as it had in the Indian context, but as an “openly undertaken inquiry into a multiplicity of private versions of potential meaning”. This ‘open inquiry’ has compelled contemporary dance to continually reinvent itself.

Indian dance in contrast has focused on the sanctity of traditional form, as this is regarded as indispensable for achieving its spiritual end-objective. Today, form has become more important than content. This has given rise to the view amongst both classical dance practitioners and viewers that the only valid way forward for such traditions is in the ‘footsteps of the Guru’. As a result, the classical traditions are regarded as being intrinsically limited in satisfying contemporary requirements for a fulfilling dance practice.

This article seeks to expand this understanding of Indian classical dance technique by addressing the issue of embodiment in the stipulated requirements for ‘correct form’. It suggests that if dance is embodied with the ‘technology’ of yoga, which would seem to have been its original basis, its ‘content’ will be restored. It can then serve as a vehicle for creating choreography that is classical but not traditional, and that successfully meets the requirements of a contemporary dance practice. In this, classical techniques prove their timelessness.³

Dance and Kundalini

In Hindu tantric teachings, which are the bedrock of yogic and Vedic culture, the ‘experience of enlightenment’ was represented by vivid imagery.⁴ Potential human energy coiled in the form of a serpent was located at the base of the spine. This energy, called the Goddess Kundalini, uncoiled and ascended the subtle *sushumna* channel within the spinal cord when enlightenment happened.

Her ascent occurred in the natural course when *pingala* and *ida* (etheric channels located on two sides of *sushumna*), seen as embodiments of the psychic impulse for action and for rest, were balanced.⁵ Swami Satyananda Saraswati, founder of the Bihar School of Yoga states that yogis have described their experience of the Kundalini phenomenon as an “explosion” triggered by equilibrium in energy within subtle body channels, causing the streams of *ida* and *pingala* energy to fuse in the third eye or *ajna chakra*, whereby unconscious areas of the brain experience consciousness.⁶

The Kundalini phenomenon is not known or discussed within the present classical Odissi dance tradition, though its forerunner, Orissan temple dance, was practiced as a tantric ritual for centuries. This was primarily because tantra and “anything tantric” had come to be misunderstood, feared and misrepresented during the course of time. The 20th century Gurus of Odissi however valued the importance of spiritual ideas and used the term moksha (liberation from death with no need and further rebirth), for the concluding item of the five-part Odissi recital they structured.

The movement features of the present Odissi dance tradition indicate that it has an unconscious leaning towards tantra’s image of the ascent of Kundalini. The central vertical dimension of the body, passing through the head and the space between the feet, is traditionally called the *Brahma sutra* or Creator’s meridian, sometimes described as the link between earth and sky. Emphasis is placed on marking rhythms with the lower body held with knees open outwards, while being lowered towards the ground, a device which constantly impacts the base of the spine. Movements of the torso, neck and head are ‘powered’ by this lower body.

The spine is maintained upright while dancing and the limbs are moved symmetrically in space around this axis reflecting

mathematical order and internal harmony. Dance occurs through flexibility of joints more than through strength of muscles and the upper body parts are evenly stressed and relaxed. The effect of dance sequences that use the torso symmetrically is an application of equal pressure on both sides of the lungs. Assuming that this encourages balance in breathing between left and right nostrils, this is significant. Equal patterns of left and right nostril breathing have been perceived to be a prerequisite for harmonizing *ida* and *pingala* energies in the body necessary for the flow of energy in the *sushumna nadi* and the consequential experience of heightened states of consciousness. This is one of the primary objectives of breath control or *pranayam* practice in yoga. These features, by and large, constitute a common approach to dance in the varied Indian dance traditions.

The generally believed objective of Orissan temple dance by *devadasis* was that it was a performance to worship and please God. It constituted a 'mortgage offering of self' to the deity by the female dancer, on behalf of the community of worshippers. Being a tantric ritual however it would also have been a means of becoming God-like through the act of dance as "... according to the very nature of its principles a deity could be adored only by becoming the deity oneself...The unfolding of self-power (*atmashakti*) is to be brought about by self-realisation (*atmadarshana*) which is the aim of *sadhana*."⁷ Hence, in the Shakta tradition, which gave form to the *devadasi* ritual in Orissa's medieval temples, the act of dance could well have been perceived as a means of becoming Shakti for the dancer-*devadasi*; the nature of this phenomenon is being explored here.

Principles of Yoga, the “Witness Self” and the Phenomenon of Dance

A useful starting point is to view the physical practice of dance performed with a spiritual objective within its larger philosophical landscape. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are considered a definitive classical work on the subject of mental disciplines to achieve the end purpose of self-recognition and universal consciousness. Deshpande (1979)'s commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras⁸ draws attention to the idea that yoga was a “means of looking” at reality. He describes these sutras as “statements of fact” arrived at by “alert awareness” about our existential situation, on the part of ancient seekers of enlightenment.

The basic premise on which Patanjali builds his school of thought and practices is that human consciousness comprises of two distinct parts: ‘mundane awareness’ and the ‘existential seer’. Mundane awareness is centred on awareness of the individual self and what it is able to perceive of the world. This self is a complex of ideas about “I” ness, i.e. I am seeing, I am dancing etc. The individual is built around these structures of consciousness. This self has programmed likes and dislikes. Every time the mind exercises choice, it triggers further ideation.

Memory built on the past hence propels the future, and constitutes an entrapping “matrix of temporality”.⁹ In this process man is “bonded” and not free as “The action of freedom imprisoned in perpetual choice making” is a state of bondage. He does not have a natural ability to “not choose”.¹⁰ Freedom from this constraint achieves the goal of yoga. Hence an important step to yoga is free inquiry, where self-consciousness is recognised for what it is - an incorrect point of inquiry because the basic relationship between man and the world around him is conditioned by the limitations of his ideational mind.

Along with this self, we have a witness self or higher Self. Deshpande introduces this Self as the 'existential seer'.¹¹ The yogi exercises free inquiry and investigates the nature of reality in meditation, by tuning into this Self, so that "one's mind remains stationary and only pure perception is allowed to operate on all the impulses emerging out of one's conditioned consciousness".¹² Hence the existential nature between the self and Self is the starting point for meditation on the nature of reality.¹³

Mental alertness to the difference between 'mundane consciousness' and the 'existential seer' required for yoga, have resonance in the discourse on the phenomenology of dance. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone states "The dance comes alive precisely as the dancers are *implicitly* aware of themselves and the form, such that the form moves through them: they are not agents of the form, but its moving centre."¹⁴ ... "It is only as the dancer reflects upon herself apart from the dance that she is no longer with it, and in consequence, destroys the illusion...As soon as she becomes self-conscious, the audience is aware of a separation of the dancer from the dance."¹⁵ In this description, dance "comes alive" when the self is fully engaged in its chosen activity, without the distraction of other self-centred thoughts. This is akin to the state of 'ego-less awareness' in which dance would be performed by the dancer as the 'existential seer'.

It can be suggested therefore that the phenomenological experience of dance performed with full involvement, was a means of transcending 'mundane consciousness' and being centred instead in 'witness awareness'. Hence dance performed with 'implicit awareness' as described by Sheets-Johnstone is essentially yogic in nature and is paradoxically experienced with both ego-detachment and fullness by the performer. From the perspective of the audience, Sheets-Johnstone states that "Judgements, beliefs, interpretations are suspended: our experience of the dance is free of any manner of reflection. We are spontaneously and wholly intent upon the form

which appears before us, thoroughly engrossed in its unfolding”.¹⁶ Such audiences are described as being *rasikas* in Indian aesthetic theory, which has a long history of discussing the subject of the transcendence of body by the creation and tasting of *rasa*. Performing and watching performances with the objective of experiencing such detached states of mind was perceived as being spiritually beneficial and would account for the centuries of close association between dance and religion in the Indian tradition.

Odissi's Ritual Legacy

All tantric rituals, of which the *devdasis* dance constituted a part, were performed as a means of experiencing divinity and were essentially of two kinds: *sadhanas* (associated with *yantras*, *mantras*, secret *mudras* and kriya yoga practices) used by adepts and their initiated disciples; and *upasanas*, perceived as devotional offerings which any devotee could make, that are meant to please the deity. As mentioned earlier, the dance ritual was a ‘courtesy to please’ the deity, and had its place along with the food offered to the deity in the temple. In this context it would seem to have been an *upasana*. The Odissi tradition was constructed on the premise that it was so.

Dance performed as *upasana* would be ‘yogic’ according to Patanjali’s description of the term, when performed with *bhakti* (devotion) and full involvement. Through absorption in the act of dance, the dancer disassociated from the sense of “I” ness. In this way a separation of body and consciousness was achieved. This allowed for the recognition of the difference between “mundane consciousness” and the “Witness Self” and the latter’s identification with the deity being addressed. This process required sustained effort for mastery over the mind’s natural inclinations but resulted finally in the body becoming ‘an object of offering’ and consciousness becoming ‘one with Spirit’.

Despite dance being commonly viewed as an *upasana*, it is likely however that the medieval Orissan temple dance ritual was undertaken as conscious tantric *sadhana*. In Jagannath worship, through which dance flourished for centuries, the dancer was the “wife” of the Lord and the traditional symbolism of her sexual union with Him was her dance before the altar. This ritual role makes direct reference to the transmutation of sexual energy into Kundalini energy, a well-known theme in tantric *sadhana*. To those worshippers who viewed it as such, the dance ritual could have served the purpose of a symbolic physical union between the worshipper and the deity it addressed, and understood to represent the internal merging of consciousness with energy. Through the daily performance in the temple of the Gita Govinda, which celebrates the mystic-erotic union of Radha and Krishna, this idea was shared with devotees at large. Sexual intercourse sculpted on temple walls was hence considered auspicious and necessary as it too was an expression of this concept.

Tantric *sadhanas* were concerned with the activation of Kundalini and Her ascent through the spinal *chakras* or ‘vital points’, using *mantra*, *yantra* and *mudra*. All creation was regarded as having manifested from *mantra*, or sound energy, and *mantra* in turn was considered to have the ability to manifest forms of energy and matter. Another central perception was that divine energy was ‘harnessed’ by geometric order, which took the form of geometric cosmic diagrams called *yantras* that became vital tools for ritual. *Mantras* and *yantras* were used along with hand gestures, or *mudras*, to magnify thoughts and cause the act of worship to acquire even greater potency.¹⁷ These together constituted a powerful means of releasing dormant psychic energy and accessing psychologically higher (i.e. more integrated) states of being, which was the essential technique of *sadhana*.

A vital benefit of intending to use the body as a means of liberation through *sadhana* and working with tantric ideas and tools in classical dance techniques, is that it compels the dance to be embodied from 'inside to outside'. The experience of the movement becomes as important as its external classical form. This ensures somatic thinking and consolidates the vitally important personal reference point needed for excellence in a formal classical dance performance on stage.

Realising the Divine Body

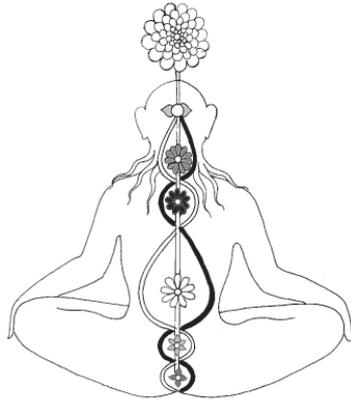


Fig 1: Tantric body map locating spinal chakras

In tantric *sadhanas*, the living physical form of the human body was seen as a multi-layered object, to be used by the *sadhaka* as a 'map of the universe synonymous with the Body of God'. It required to be negotiated like a *yantra* to experience its true nature as *maya*, or changing illusion, and its essence as constant God-bliss. The visible body, made from food and formed by five natural gross elements, was called the 'food sheath', or *annamaya kosha*. Breath permeated the body's material substance and was seen as a body in itself, called the *pranamaya kosha*. The instinctive mind permeated all tissue and was known as the *manomaya kosha*, or 'mind sheath'. The individual's

consciousness, with personalized, changing likes and dislikes, controlled the instinctive mind and comprised the *vijnanamaya kosha*, or 'intellectual body sheath'. 'Bliss' provided a substratum for all these four bodies and was known as the *anandamaya kosha*. Ritual worship was fundamentally a consciousness-expanding process resulting in experiencing the body's substratum of *ananda*, and the tantric body map provided the symbol-based tools for doing this.

The vital energy centres in the body, or *chakras*, were seen as key points for negotiating entry into the body's subtler realms. The most important *chakras* were located in the spinal cord and closely linked the five body sheaths along the length of the central spinal cord. They extended their control via a network of *nadis*, or subtle channels, from the spine to the whole anatomy. The *ida* and *pingala nadis* on the left and right of the spinal cord were central components of this system and permeated the body's bilaterally symmetrical form with bipolar principles. Heat and coolness were regulated through a natural alternating of breath between the right and left nostrils. This affected the quality of life force, or *prana*, flowing through the *nadis*. The right (hot) 'solar' breath stimulated digestion and all activities requiring power and action. The left (cool) 'lunar' breath stimulated thought and feeling.

An essential step in negotiating the body map was developing awareness of its spinal *chakras*. The connection between the five bodies could be realised through different techniques, especially the practice of regulated forms of breathing that drew breath consciously up and down the spine, 'piercing' and clearing a conscious passage through its *chakras*. Hence breath control (or *pranayam*) became central to achieving the integrated functioning of body-mind-consciousness and of attaining self-realisation. As a result of such perceptions, God consciousness was a tangible state to be achieved through *sadhana*, or practicing a

charted course of mental and physical disciplines, and experiencing the body as a multi-layered 'magical illusion'.

The tantric tradition provided a means, through *sadhana*, to act dynamically in response to the yogic teaching (described above) that the chief obstruction to the view of the self as divine was caused by the identification of the individual's mundane consciousness with the ego. The description of the human body as a microcosmic map of the cosmos, complete with *chakras* and their presiding deities, was a diagrammatic arrangement of spiritual power. *Sadhana* using this map provided a means of removing the limiting tendency towards ego-identification, so that the real nature of the self was perceived. This map served as a blueprint of what this spiritual tradition believed the "individual would most certainly grow into" ... "if there were not obstacles and inhibitions" (primarily that of false ego-identification) hindering him "from becoming what he is really meant to be."¹⁸ Repeated psychological impregnation with the image of the deity in ritual by the *sadhaka* is similar to holding Jung's 'end product of Individuation' in mind.

Dancing with the Tantric Body Map

Intending the dance as an offering to God, using the medium of body movements, gestures, music and literature as tools to this end, is an effective means of infusing the dancer with the larger power and personality of the deity. The process facilitates an expansion of consciousness where 'ego-identification' with the self is progressively dropped, and 'true identification' with the Self/deity becomes consequently a lived experience. This process is greatly facilitated by: viewing the body as a *yantra*; viewing the act of dancing abstract movement patterns as a process of drawing virtual *yantras* in space; and projecting movement from spinal *chakras*. These tasks function as elements in the process of embodying dance as *sadhana*.

Embodying geometric form as *yantras*

In the language of *yantras*, the triangle defined a taut, dynamic energy field and signified the element fire; the square was recognized as embodying the attributes of Earth and of representing stability; water was represented by the crescent moon; air was represented by the circle. Ether, the subtlest element, was signified by the *bindu*, or dot. These geometric forms were used in different combinations and served to bring the five elements together to represent specific natural forces. Geometric form underpins classical Indian dance as an unconscious scaffolding and, if consciously embodied as a *yantra*, gives dance tremendous power and energy.



Fig 2a: Chowk



Fig 2b: Tribhanga

Reverence for geometric shape and form can be seen in Odissi's body designs and spatial patterns. The two basic body pivots of Odissi are strong geometric shapes (*chowk*, or square, and *tribhanga*, or the 'triangular three bends'), both formed by a lowering of the body towards the earth. Due to this, the Odissi dancer's kinesphere

can be described as being 'condensed' and 'concentrated'. The limbs move within the kinesphere in their natural zones on prescribed paths or 'lines of stress' forming a constantly varying network of geometrically forming virtual lines. Movement phrases are punctuated by held, still positions; a phenomenon reflective of Odissi's strong roots in temple sculpture. These approaches to movement are maintained as an almost constant feature throughout the duration of the dancing process. If these 'virtual spatial progressions'¹⁹ could be remembered, the form created would be akin to a *yantra*, divisible into squares, circles and triangles.



Fig 3: Movement pathways

The feet, mapped along the front-back, right-left axis on the floor plane, produces short, primarily linear and some curved, geometric traces. This geometry is reflected in the three dimensional spatial frame of the whole lower body where movement pathways conform to straight and curved lines, maintaining a fixed set of distances from the body's central axes. They are almost always symmetrical and originate from, and return to, a constant centre within the pelvis. The upper body, similarly mapped, produces in comparison

longer, curvilinear geometric traces, effectively creating the illusion of expansiveness. Individual movements of the torso, arms, hands, neck, head and eyes, also trace pathways that follow a distinct set of proportions and directions from the central cross of axes. As in the case of the lower body, their geometry also creates largely symmetric forms, thereby engaging the body in a balanced manner on both sides of the spinal cord. Movements here seemingly originate at different centres within a central line linking torso/neck/head to the centre of the lower body in the pelvis, concurrent with the spinal cord. Almost every instant of any given movement phrase, can be seen to conform to an underlying geometric plan and flow.

Spatial progressions of the body are mostly made while retaining the pivotal body designs of *chowk* and *tribhanga*. These progressions often terminate in a variation of the basic first motifs. In doing this, fixed points at determined intervals from each other are established in the kinesphere as 'stations', and are constantly touched along the movement pathway. By repeating this principle, the pathways and 'stations' of the kinesphere are reiterated, creating a 'virtual, geometric, charged space', around the performer. When these movements are intended as a means of reaching out to Divinity through 'lines of force' articulated as a virtual embodiment of *yantras*, it allows the dancing body to be experienced as a 'prism' through which the dancer intuits her oneness with the 'energetic substratum and its resolutions', governing all life. It makes dancing a means of acquiring 'resonance with the laws of the universe', thereby functioning as a corporeal form of tantric meditation.²⁰

Projecting movement from spinal *chakras*

Skill in dance forms like Odissi is reflected in an intuitive balance of energy usage between exertion and rest in the articulation of any movement sequence.²¹ These sequences are complex movement patterns performed 'effortlessly' to definite rhythmic cycles. It was

found through practice during the course of this exploration that developing awareness of *chakras*, using tantric meditative exercises,²² was a highly useful and interesting means of focusing awareness in the body. It served as a 'mental warm up' for dance. Centering movement at spinal *chakras* enhanced 'fine tuning' and power in movement delivery for dance.

The Odissi technique is characterized by the lower body held open at the hip with the feet striking the floor in bound rhythmic patterns, while the upper body is used fluidly along the dorsal, transverse and sagittal planes; the body always moves therefore as two separate units. Movements are almost always articulated along direct, geometrically definable directions of space from the central axis or spinal cord. The hands and fingers form a series of gestures that serve to create and hold virtual lines, extending from this central axis into the body's kinesphere. This effect is underlined by virtual projections created through eye focus, extending far beyond the lines formed by the hand gestures. The lower body is 'grounded' by its 'heavy weight stamping' and generates different kinds of energy templates, or 'acoustic spaces', within which upper body movement is accordingly performed. The upper body can hence be seen to 'feed' from lower body 'energy impulses'.

This mechanism can also be experienced as a 'system of energy transactions', where movement from both the upper and lower body are controlled at the 'points of origination of movement' in the central axis of the body within the spinal cord. The feet are powered by their 'point of origination' of movement somewhere in the pelvis; this energy, amplified by footwork in the lower body, impacts the spinal cord in return and can be felt as being 'distributed' to the 'points of origin of movement' in the central axis of the torso. From here it is projected by the upper body through both bound and free flow, depending on the specific requirements of the choreography.

Odissi's upper and lower body units are felt as centred in their own separate 'points of origination of movement' along the body's central axis. These power centres in the spinal cord coincide with *chakra* points. Consider for example, a common upper body act in Odissi of extending the arms forward as if reaching out to a deity/inviting the deity into an embrace. Concentration at the heart *chakra*, while embodying this action, serves to 'fine-tune' the balance of both arms on the body's central axis/spinal cord and traditional heart centre, or *anahat chakra*, the seat of emotions. Greater focus at *anahata* induces greater integrity, performance energy and lightness, allowing the movement to seem spontaneous and effortless. Meditative practices in tantra develop awareness of *chakras* as the seats of the deities. Awareness of the heart *chakra* as the seat of a deity makes any act of touching, or mentally focusing, the mind at the heart a source of power to be used, while extending the arms in any direction through out the dancing process. In this respect, developing awareness of a *chakra* point, and consolidating its power by using it as the point of origin of movement during dance, is essentially another means of 'establishing divinity' within the body.

Indian dance forms like Odissi and the yogic *chakra* system exist in a symbiotic relationship with each other. Dancing, using *chakras* as 'points in the spinal cord for mental focus while embodying movement', works towards achieving yoga's objective of their 'activation', through the principle of concentrating the mind at these points. Furthermore, when performing with this focus, dance comes across to the viewer as having powerful performance energy.

Concluding Remarks

The principle in tantra of working with a self-created set of symbols to actualize individual potential is a powerful idea in developing excellence in any body-centred discipline from any culture. A disciple in today's "traditionally structured" Odissi *gurukuls*, whether in Bhubaneswar, Orissa or for that matter abroad, is required to be subservient to the Guru and to the teaching. Most often, this results in the disciple having to forfeit the vital process of a personal/subjective exploration of the dance technique being taught and learnt, often resulting in a severance with the individual student's creativity. An important benefit of working with the 'tantric body map' in such situations is that the process grooms the body for independent 'somatic thinking'. This provides the vitally important personal reference point needed by any dancer to achieve excellence by actualizing her/his personal potential. Aiming for spiritual transcendence through the process of dance and incorporating yogic disciplines into the working process will ensure the further flowering of such traditions in the 21st. century.

Endnotes

- ¹ In the western world "... the relationship between meaning and form is mutable, optional, elective, (and individual).... In fact adherence to a particular meaning as attached to shape/form/ image is considered a decorative rather than an Artful act - and the very measure of creativity is supposed to be a piecing together of new links between meaning and form, matter and spirit.... One might say that a Western approach to Dance (and Art) offers not knowledge openly undertaken inquiry into a multiplicity of private versions of potential meaning..." Statements made by Hadass Harel, Arts Psychotherapist and PhD candidate, in an email discussion with this author.
- ² Statement made on email to this author by Kimerer L. LaMothe, author of Nietzsche's Dancers: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and the Revaluation of Christian values. "Duncan, for example, developed her dance as a practice of awakening "soul." "Soul" for her was a physical consciousness, a sensory awareness of herself as one moment in the infinite rhythmic movement of the universe.... Dance, for her... is thus itself "religion" because it enables us to have and communicate an experience of matter itself as divine....Graham, by contrast, inspired by the tradition of yoga, created a dance technique based on the rhythms of breathing." ... "Their work has been picked up by some practitioners of "sacred dance" or "liturgical dance" in largely Christian settings, and all within the past 100 years."Ibid
- ³ In my opinion, the most significant contributions to formulating a new vision for Indian dance have been from Chandralekha in Bharatnatyam and Daksha Seth whose primary discipline was Kathak, but who subsequently worked intensively with martial arts. Other influential artists have been, and still are, Leela Samson in Bharatnatyam, Kumudini Lakhia and Aditi Mangaldas in Kathak. What is of interest to this article is their common engagement in varying degrees with the principles of hatha yoga. Works created during the course of this author's practice-based PhD at Laban, London completed in 2005 (more information on website www.danceroutes.com) have stemmed from a similar search.
- ⁴ the Saradatilaka of Lakshmana-desikendra, c. 11th century AD, for instance.
- ⁵ "The autonomic nervous system has two components of sympathetic and parasympathetic nerves which have a reciprocal relationship, one being active while the other is passive. In yogic terms, this corresponds to the *ida* and *pingala nadis*. The sympathetic nerves (*pingala nadi*) are responsible for excitation and arousal, while the parasympathetic nerves (*ida nadi*) are responsible for relaxation... the right nostril is linked to *pingala nadi* and the left nostril is linked to *ida nadi*. " Described by Swami Niranjanad of the Bihar School of Yoga in *Prana Pranayam Prana Vidya*, pp.28-29
- ⁶ Kundalini Tantra p341

- ⁷ NN Bhattacharya (1999: 40)
- ⁸ Deshpande (1st Indian edition), pp.1-3
- ⁹ Ibid p30
- ¹⁰ Ibid p21
- ¹¹ Ibid p3
- ¹² Ibid p7
- ¹³ Ibid p9
- ¹⁴ M Sheets-Johnstone (1979: 6) 2nd edition
- ¹⁵ Ibid p39
- ¹⁶ Ibid p4
- ¹⁷ "... Experience shows that gesture emphasises and intensifies thought... The body is made to move with the thought." Woodroffe in Sakti & Sakta p304
- ¹⁸ C.G. Jung introduced the concept of psychic energy as libido and its transformation in the human being through the process of "Individuation". According to Jung, each individual is naturally driven to actualise his or her real nature through the "instinct of Individuation" if unobstructed in becoming what he was meant to be. CG Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, p4.
- ¹⁹ 'Spatial progression' and 'virtual spatial forms' were concepts put forward by Valerie Preston-Dunlop as part of her theory of the Manner of Materialisation of Movement in Choreological Studies.
- ²⁰ These ideas have been shaped by: a study of Laban's writings on Choreutics outlining his view of ordered movement in dance; and Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan's pioneering writings on the fundamental principles of Indian dance techniques, particularly their common approach to privileging an upright symmetrical body.
- ²¹ For Laban's description of skill in movement see, Effort p5
- ²² The primary resource materials used by me to study these practices and adapt them for dance were publications of the Bihar School of Yoga. This is a well recognised, research and training centre in yoga and tantra founded by Swami Satyananda Saraswati in 1963.

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The series on individual essays by distinguished scholars, initiated by the Gender, Culture and Civilization Network of the IGNCA, serve as one more lens to alter the older, albeit reductive frame on women's culture in India. The short but succinct papers are meant to initiate critical reflection and creative dialogue on multiple dimensions of women's culture.

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