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DANCE AS YOGA: RITUAL OFFERING AND *IMITATIO DEI* IN THE PHYSICAL PRACTICES OF CLASSICAL INDIAN THEATRE

Elisa Ganser

Abstract

In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, two main types of physical practices are described in some detail: the so-called “bodily acting” (*āṅgikābhinaya*) and dance (*ṇṛtta*). Although their building blocks are to a large extent common, their purpose appears to be different: while bodily acting is used for dramatic mimesis, dance is said to produce beauty and to be auspicious. Peculiar to the technique of dance are the one hundred and eight *karaṇas*, complex dance movements that require great coordination, balance and flexibility. Sculptural representations of the *karaṇas* in the mediaeval temples of South India and in Central Java, as well as some interpretations by contemporary dancers, have elicited comparisons with yogic *āsanas*, notwithstanding the fact that the *karaṇas* were first and foremost codified in the context of Sanskrit theatre. More generally, the overlap between dance and yoga-related concepts and practices in antiquity has not been studied in depth. In this chapter, I investigate the connection of dance with the *pūrvavaṅga*, the preliminary rite that precedes the performance of a play, in order to highlight the connection of some of the physical practices described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*’s chapter on dance with ideas of mental cultivation, ritual, and devotion. This connection is particularly evident in the case of the *piṇḍibandhas*, a set of movements of difficult interpretation that present ideological affinities with practices described in early religious sources, especially, but not exclusively, those of Śaiva affiliation. Finally, I argue that this interface between drama and ritual points to a shared ground for practices and beliefs connected with the body in ancient India.

KEYWORDS

Dance, Yoga, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Abhinavabhāratī*, *Karaṇa*, *Piṇḍibandha*, *Tāṇḍava*, *Pūrvavaṅga*, Ritual, Sanskrit Theatre.



Introduction: Physical Practices in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*

Many dance and theatre traditions in India, as we know them today, require tremendous physical exertion by their performers. In Kathakali, actors undergo many years of training starting from a young age, including sessions of daily massage in order to loosen the bodily joints. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam, all the bodily parts are trained separately as well as in combination, including the eyes and their subtle movements and the fingers that form hand gestures. As can be gleaned from these and other contemporary performative practices, instruction takes place mostly orally, and requires the student to reproduce the physical movements executed by the master by way of mimicry. In many cases, the physical training does not include a separate warm-up in the course of one lesson; however, it does involve a certain pedagogical sequencing whereby the single body movements are first trained separately for each limb, in order to prepare the body and mind for the execution of more complex and physically demanding strings of movements and choreographic items. Many of these contemporary practices go back in time and claim historical links with the *Nāṭyaśāstra*—Bharata's seminal "Treatise on Theatre," presumably composed around the beginning of the Common Era—or with later mediaeval texts. These texts, assigned to the genre of the scientific treatise (*śāstra*), do not usually pay much attention to the transmission of the physical practices they codify, and more often assume a prescriptive and almost atemporal attitude, in which the socio-religious background of the practitioners is either totally absent or just indirectly and speculatively retrievable. However, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* remains an indispensable textual source for the study of physical practices in early India, as it contains the very first detailed codification of bodily movement.

The framework in which physical practices are described in Bharata's treatise is the performance of Sanskrit drama. This voluminous text in thirty-seven chapters enshrines several physical practices, such as acting techniques pertaining to the body (*āṅgikābhinaya*), dancing (*nṛtta*), fighting onstage (*ni-/yuddha*), and physical training (*vyāyāma*). The first systematic description of the smallest units of movement is found in the section on bodily acting (*āṅgikābhinaya*), which comprises chapters 8–12 in the GOS edition.¹ This section contains the building blocks for all the other physical practices discussed in the context of theatre. It starts by naming and defining the

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations, chapters, and page numbers refer to the last revised GOS edition (=E₁₍₄₎) of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* [henceforth NS] and the *Abhinavabhāratī* [henceforth ABh]. For the fourth chapter alone, this has been compared with the edition by Madhusudan Shastri (=E₂)—collectively indicated with all the GOS editions (=E₁) as Σ_E—and with the available manuscript sources (D, M₁, T₁, T₄ = Σ_M). Whenever I prefer another manuscript reading to that of the GOS edition, I signal all other variants within square brackets (cf. "Primary sources and manuscripts").

various possibilities for movements of the different limbs, distinguished into minor and major ones.² The definitions are followed by the so-called “usages” (*vinīyoga*), that is, the applications of the various movements of the limbs to a dramatic context. For example, the usages of the *puṣpapuṭa* (“flower cup”) hand gesture are described as follows: “This [gesture is used] to collect, to grasp and bring near things like grains, fruits, and flowers of different types, as well as to fetch and dispense water.”³ This type of description suggests that instructions, in the form of mnemonic verses, might have been used by an actor or theatre master in order to separately study the various possibilities for body movements before applying them. The purpose of the physical practices described under bodily acting is in fact to communicate dramatic meaning in an aesthetically effective way: by giving physical shape to the play’s text, the actor makes it visible and therefore enjoyable to the spectators. This function conforms to the main etymological definition of acting (*abhinaya*) found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*:

The root *nī*, preceded by [the prefix] *abhi-*, has the sense of determining the meanings (*artha*) [of the dramatic text] as directly manifested in front (*ābhimukhya*) [of the spectator]. It is called *abhinaya* because it carries (*nayati*) the objects (*padārtha*) [of theatre to the audience]. And it has been called *abhinaya* since it determines the different meanings, according to practice, in association with the twig limbs (*śākhā*), the major limbs (*aṅga*), and the minor limbs (*upāṅga*).⁴

Accordingly, the bodily and other registers of acting (the vocal, mental, and ornamental) are definitional of theatre, since they convey the emotive states that are embedded in the play’s text:

That nature proper to ordinary experience, associated with pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*duḥkha*), is called theatre (*nāṭya*) when it is conveyed through means of enactment such as the bodily and others (*aṅgādy-abhinaya*).⁵

² The minor limbs (*upāṅga*) consist of the eyes (*netra*), eyebrows (*bhrū*), nose (*nāsa*), lips (*adhara*), cheeks (*kapola*), and chin (*cibuka*). They are opposed to the major limbs (*aṅgas*), i.e. the head (*śīras*), hands (*hasta*), chest (*uras*), sides (*pārśva*), hips (*kaṭi*), and feet (*pāda*) (cf. NŚ 8.13).

³ NŚ 9.151 (*dhānyaphalapuṣpasadrśāny anena nānāvidhāni yuktāni | grāhyāṇy upaneyāni ca toyānayanāpanayane ca ||*).

⁴ NŚ 8.6–7 (*abhipūrvas tu nīndhātur ābhimukhyārthanirṇaye | yasmāt padārthān nayati tasmād abhinayaḥ smṛtaḥ || vibhāvayati yasmāc ca nānārthān hi prayogataḥ | śākhāṅgopāṅgasamyuktas tasmād abhinayaḥ smṛtaḥ ||*).

⁵ NŚ 1.119 (*yo 'yaṁ svabhāvo lokasya sukhaduḥkhasamanvitaḥ | so 'ṅgādyabhinayopeto nāṭyam ity abhidhīyate ||*).

Although the techniques of the body appear to have been codified mainly with a mimetic purpose in view, the same building blocks described in the section on bodily acting are also used to form a separate set of connected movements that constitute the technique of dance, *nṛtta*. Dance can be considered a different bodily technique in that its movements are described following principles that are exclusive to it and go beyond the aesthetic ends of drama.⁶ The main technique of dance consists of *karaṇas*, *aṅgahāras*, *recakas*, and *piṇḍibandhas*. Its description is the object of the fourth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, generally known as *Tāṇḍavādhyāya*, recalling the mythological antecedent linking theatre with Śiva's vehement dance, the *tāṇḍava*. As I will show in this chapter, anticipating some of its conclusions, the special link of dance with the god Śiva brings this physical practice closer to other ideas, developed in India in the first millennium, about the body and its potential as a means for achieving union with the divine.

The Tāṇḍavādhyāya

According to a myth recounted in the fourth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, also known as the “*Tāṇḍavādhyāya*,” dance was introduced into theatre at the suggestion of Śiva and through the intermediary of his assistant Taṇḍu, whence the name *tāṇḍava*. This story is framed by the larger narrative of the origins of theatre. After theatre was created by Brahmā as the “Fifth Veda” and transmitted to Bharata, it was put into practice by the latter and his troupe, comprising his hundred sons as actors, together with Apsarāsas (heavenly nymphs) as dancers and Gandharvas (celestial beings) as musicians. The troupe's first performance was famously interrupted by a group of obstacles, which required the construction of a theatrical building, the installation of deities in its various parts, and their propitiation through rituals in order to assure the protection of the actors and the good outcome of the performance. This narrative resumes in the fourth chapter, where a second performance is put on for Śiva and his retinue on the top of the Himalayas. Satisfied with the performance, Śiva asks Bharata to introduce dance into the preliminary rite (*pūrvaraṅga*) in order to make it variegated:

Oh magnanimous one, you have produced this play well, achieving fame, treating an auspicious topic, righteous and improving the intellect. But I, who dance at the twilight hour, have recollected this dance, embellished by *aṅgahāras* replete with various *karaṇas*. May you use it in the proper way in the course of this *pūrvaraṅga*, when *vardhamānaka* is performed, as

⁶ On the difference between theatre and dance, see Ganser 2022.

well as in the *gītakas* and *āsāritas*. And in the *mahāgītas*, you should properly enact the meanings. This *pūrvaraṅga* that you have performed as “plain” (*śuddha*), once commingled with these [*aṅgahāras* and *karaṇas*], will be known as “variegated” (*citra*).⁷

For this purpose, Śiva called his assistant Taṇḍu and summoned him to instruct Bharata in all the basic movements of dance. The story is followed by the technical instruction in the *karaṇas* and *aṅgahāras*. The largest part of the chapter (covering approximately 230 verses of over 320) consists in a description of bodily movements, or rather of smaller combinations of movements (*karaṇas*) forming longer strings (*aṅgahāras*), which might be regarded as choreographic sequences. After that, there is a short mythological excursus, in vv. 249–253, on the origin of the *piṇḍibandhas* and their definitions. The *piṇḍibandhas* are another set of physical movements of difficult interpretation that I will deal with in detail below.

At this juncture, a group of Ṛṣis, gathered to receive instruction in theatre from Bharata, intervenes with a series of questions about the nature and purpose of dance, and its association with the songs of the preliminary rite.

Given that dramatic acting has been devised by those experts in [theatre] for the sake of attaining [its] objects, why indeed has this dance been devised, [and] what is the nature to which it conforms? It is not connected with the contents of the songs, nor does it bring any object into being. Why has this dance been devised in [connection with] *gītakas* and *āsāritas*?⁸

Bharata’s answer stresses the different nature of dance from acting, since it is a physical practice that pursues different aims than that of the communication of dramatic meaning:

⁷ NS 4.12–16ab (*aho nāṭyam idaṃ samyak tvayā sṛṣṭaṃ mahāmate | yaśasyaṃ ca śubhārthaṃ ca punyaṃ buddhivivardhanam || mayā 'pīdaṃ smṛtaṃ nṛtaṃ sandhyākāleṣu nṛtyatā | nānākaraṇasaṃyuktair aṅgahārair vibhūṣitam || pūrvaraṅgavidhāv asmiṃs tvayā samyak prayojyatām | vardhamānakayogeṣu gīteṣv āsāriteṣu ca || mahāgīteṣu caivārthān samyag evābhineṣyasi | yaś cāyaṃ pūrvaraṅgas tu tvayā śuddhaḥ prayojitaḥ || ebhir vimiśritaś cāyaṃ citro nāma bhaviṣyati |*).

⁸ NS 4.261cd–263ab (*yadā prāptiyartham arthānāṃ tajjñair abhinayaḥ kṛtaḥ || kasmān nṛtaṃ kṛtaṃ hy etad kaṃ svabhāvam apekṣate | na gītākārthasaṃbaddhaṃ na cāpy arthasya bhāvakam || kasmān nṛtaṃ kṛtaṃ hy etad gīteṣv āsāriteṣu ca |*).

On this point, it is said that dance does not indeed conform to any object, but it is meant to generate beauty (*śobhā*); that is why dance has come into use. Generally, everybody likes dance in itself. Moreover, this dance is praised because it is considered auspicious (*maṅgalya*). And on [occasions such as] weddings, the birth of a child, welcoming a new child-in-law, jubilation, success, and so forth, it is a cause of merriment. That is why this dance has come into use.⁹

The rest of the chapter—from v. 270 to the end of the chapter, v. 320—provides details on the application of dance to the *pūrvaraṅga* and its different phases. At the very end, we come across the following statement about a transcendental or extra-worldly result of dance:

maheśvarasya caritaṃ ya idaṃ samprajayet |
sarvāpāpaviśuddhātmā śivalokaṃ sa gacchati || NŚ 4.319 ||

He who performs this action of Maheśvara will,
free from all sins, reach the realm of Śiva.

Before I proceed to the analysis of this passage with the help of textual parallels, I would like to say something about the basic units of dance that are described in the *Tāṇḍavādhyāya*, the *karaṇas*, and some of the common views on their links with yoga.

Imagining Links between Dance and Yoga

The *karaṇas* are the smallest choreographic units of dance, and they are presented in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in the canonical number of one hundred and eight. Their general definition is quite simple, as a *karaṇa* of dance is said to be a combination of hands and feet (NŚ 4.30cd *hastapādasamāyogo nṛttasya karaṇaṃ bhavet |*). Their particular definitions are based on units of movement that are common to bodily acting (*āṅgikābhinaya*), and whose definitions have to be retrieved from the chapters devoted to it.

The following example might suffice, taken from the definition of the first *karaṇa*, called *talapuṣpapuṭa* (“a handful of flowers”):

⁹ NŚ 4.263cd–266ab (*atrocyate na khalv arthaṃ kañcin nṛttam apekṣate || kiṃ tu śobhāṃ prajanayed iti nṛttaṃ pravartitam | prāyeṇa sarvalokasya nṛttam iṣṭaṃ svabhāvataḥ || maṅgalyam iti kṛtvā ca nṛttam etat prakīrtitam | vivāhprasavāvāhpramodābhuyadādiṣu || vinodakāraṇaṃ ceti nṛttam etat pravartitam ||*).

vāme puṣpapuṭaḥ pārśve pādo 'gratalasañcaraḥ ||
tathā ca sannataṃ pārśvaṃ talapuṣpapuṭaṃ bhavet | NŚ 4.61cd–62ab |

Talapuṣpapuṭa: [The] *puṣpapuṭa* [hand] is [held] on the left side,
the foot is *agratalasañcara*, and the side is *nata* (“bent”).

Obviously enough, if one does not already know what a *puṣpapuṭa* hand, an *agratalasañcara* foot, and a *nata* side are, there is no way to form an idea of what the *karaṇa talapuṣpapuṭa* might look like. The chapters on bodily acting come to our help in this regard, yet they also present the movements in the same concise form (Fig. 1):

Puṣpapuṭa hand gesture:

yas tu sarpaśīrāḥ proktas tasyāṅgulinirantaraḥ |
dvitīyaḥ pārśvasaṃśliṣṭaḥ sa tu puṣpapuṭaḥ karaḥ || NŚ 9.150 ||

The [hand gesture] that has been called *sarpaśīras*, with no space between the fingers, and with the other hand close to its side, is [called] the *puṣpapuṭa* hand.

Agratalasañcara foot:

utkṣiptā tu bhavet pārṣṇīḥ prasṛto 'nguṣṭhakas tathā ||
aṅgulyaś cāñcitāḥ sarvāḥ pāde 'gratalasañcare | NŚ 9.273cd–274ab |

In the *agratalasañcara* foot, the heel is raised,
the big toe stretches forward, and all [the other] toes are curved.

Nata side position:

kaṭi bhavet tu vyābhugnā pārśvaṃ ābhugnam eva ca |
tathaivāpasṛtāṃsaṃ ca kiñcit pārśvaṃ nataṃ smṛtam || NŚ 9.235 ||

When the hip is lowered, the side slightly bent,
and one shoulder a little drawn back, the side is called *nata* (“bent”).



Figure 1: *Karaṇa talapuspaputa* [1], Cidambaram, Naṭarāja temple, East Gopura.

Some of the *karaṇas*, apart from embodying principles of aesthetic kinesis—as they are based on bodily grace, symmetry, and balance,¹⁰ as well as rhythm—also seem to be physically quite demanding, requiring great exertion and body flexibility in order to be

¹⁰ These qualities are combined in the concept of *aṅgasauṣṭhava*, lit. “excellence in bodily limbs.” Its definition is found twice in the current GOS edition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, in NŚ 4.60cd–61ab and NŚ 10.92cd–93ab: “When the hips are aligned with the ears, and the elbows, shoulders and head [are aligned with one another], [and] the chest is lifted up, one speaks of ‘excellence’ (*sauṣṭhava*).” This principle was essential to both dance and theatre, as is also confirmed in NŚ 10.90cd–91ab: “All beauty (*śobhā*) is always based on *sauṣṭhava*, for a body devoid of *sauṣṭhava* does not shine either in theatre or in dance.” As remarked in Bansat-Boudon 1992: 264–265, the various occurrences of the term *sauṣṭhava* in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* suggest a body stance that appears natural, but is in reality acquired through exercise and requires harmony and equilibrium to be maintained. On the position of the archer as the embodiment of *sauṣṭhava*, see Bansat-Boudon (ibid.).

executed.¹¹ Some examples of “acrobatic” *karaṇas* can be gleaned from the sculpted representations found in various temples of South India. A particularity of some of these images is that they look very similar to yoga postures, so much so that it is often difficult to establish whether an isolated image displaying such a body stance should be considered a representation of a yogi performing a non-seated *āsana*, or of a dancer performing a *karaṇa*.¹² In the case of the bas-reliefs presented here (Fig. 2–5), it is clear that they represent dancers performing *karaṇas*, since a few temples in India—Bṛhadīśvara at Thanjavur (11th century), Śāraṅgapāṇi at Kumbakonam (12th century), Naṭarāja at Cidambaram (13th century), Virāṭeśvara at Thiruvadigai (15th–16th century),¹³ Aruṇācaleśvara at Thiruvannamalai (16th century), and Vṛddhagiriśvara at Vṛddhacalam (16th century)—and one in Central Java (Prambanan, 9th–10th centuries) present a full iconographic programme of the one hundred and eight *karaṇas*, carved on the interior of the temple doorways (*gopura*) or on a cornice surrounding the outer walls of the temple. These are sometimes accompanied by inscriptions bearing the name of the *karaṇa* depicted and the corresponding verses from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and by smaller figures accompanying the main central figure with instruments, marking it as a dancer.

It is probably such a resemblance of acrobatic *karaṇas* to non-seated yoga *āsanas* that has prompted the comparison, in studies on Indian dance, between dance and yoga, although no hint in this direction can be found in the texts of the dramatic tradition.¹⁴ Another major methodological problem with regard to the comparison of *karaṇas* with yoga *āsanas* is that *karaṇas* are not static postures, but have a kinetic nature. Their depictions therefore represent just a frozen moment in a chain of connected movements. Keeping this in mind, it seems quite natural that the representations of individual *karaṇas* could vary considerably from one sculpture to another, so that in the absence of inscriptions or of a clear iconographic programme, it becomes difficult to identify sculptures as *karaṇas*. Moreover, the sculptures available to us from the above-mentioned temples are much later than the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and probably reflect a

¹¹ For a modern attempt at reconstructing the *karaṇa* movements for dance, see Subrahmanyam 2003, with DVD.

¹² On the resemblance of yogic, ascetic, and dancer representations, see for instance Powell 2018.

¹³ On the recent discovery of a group of 108 *karaṇas* of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in Thiruvadigai, see Bennink et al. 2013.

¹⁴ On the comparison of the acrobatic *karaṇas* to yoga *āsanas* and on their practice by certain exponents of modern Bharatanāṭyam dance and in Odissi as *bandha-nṛtya*, see Légeret-Manochhaya 2017: 40–46, and on the propaedeutic use of yoga in their training, *ibid.*: 74.

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Figure 2: *Karaṇa cakramaṇḍala* [53], Cidambaram, Naṭarāja temple, East Gopura.



Figure 3: *Karaṇa argala* [57], Cidambaram, Naṭarāja temple, East Gopura.

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Figure 4: *Karaṇa śakaṭāsya* [107], Cidambaram, Naṭarāja temple, East Gopura.



Figure 5: *Karaṇa gaṅgāvatarāṇa* [108], Cidambaram, Naṭarāja temple, East Gopura.

sculptural tradition rather than a living dance technique.¹⁵

Another common tendency in studies on dance has been to compare dance to yoga in more general terms because of the great flexibility and suppleness of the dancer's and the yogi's body. It is not seldom, in modern studies on dance, that one comes across statements such as the following, by pioneer dance scholar Kapila Vatsyayan (1967: 233):

Like the Indian sculptor, the Indian dancer also does not lay much emphasis on the muscles of the human form, and takes the joints and the fundamental anatomical bone-structure of the human form as its basis: this enables the dancer to achieve the "absolute form," and in so far as the whole process of dancing is considered a *yoga* this is inevitable, for the muscles cannot suggest absolute form and create abstract geometrical patterns easily. The different parts of the body and their respective movements have been analysed with this point in view also: the knee, hip, and shoulder joints constitute the key points from which movement emerges in the lower and upper limbs: the neck joint is the pivot joint responsible for the movements of the head and face.

The idea of the yogic body in Indian art is not exclusive to dance, but found momentum also in the interpretation of sculpture and the sculpted body. For instance, we read in an essay by art historians Dehejia and Harnisch that "this ideal of the yogic body is visibly evident in all Indian sculptures in their smooth non-muscular torsos, expanded chest and shoulders, and relaxed stomachs" (Dehejia and Harnisch 1997: 74). As Dehejia and Harnisch point out (*ibid.*: 75), this view of the yogic body was first developed by Stella Kramrisch, a renowned art historian who was influenced by the Theosophical Society. According to Kramrisch:

Yoga discipline is as much a prerequisite for the Indian artist as was physical discipline for the Greek. It is as though in Indian art the image is embossed from within by the movement of breath, or circulation, through the vital centres of the living being, unimpeded by the gross matter of the actual physical body. A plastic quality results that is as though carried by the living breath with which the image is filled; conducted by the smooth channels of body and limbs. These smooth

¹⁵ For more on the interpretation of sculpted *karaṇas* with references, see Tosato 2017.

channels have a pristine glow and continuity of outline as though what they hold were an equivalent of the breath of God.¹⁶

In a similar vein, we come across a variety of attempts and counter-attempts, even in contemporary practice, to link classical Indian dance with yoga—the label “classical” normally connecting dance with ancient practices and the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.¹⁷ However imaginative and biased they may be, such connections between yoga and dance that are found in scholarly works as well as in coffee table books raise the question of whether a link between yoga—whatever we might intend by this word—and the physical practices recorded in the tradition inaugurated by the *Nāṭyaśāstra* existed in the past. A straightforward and sceptical answer, in line with Bharata’s assertion about the different purposes of dance and dramatic acting within a theatrical performance, would be that acting aims at representing meaning, while dance aims at creating beauty (*śobhā*), and therefore they fulfil complementary aesthetic functions. There is, however, an auspicious function of dance (*maṅgalya*), namely its use in connection with various ceremonial events, which Bharata ascribes to it in addition to beauty (cf. NŚ 4.263cd–266ab). The statement at the end of the *Tāṇḍavādhyāya* that a performer may attain Śivaloka (Śiva’s realm) through dance (cf. NŚ 4.319), and the fact that dance is especially used in the context of the preliminary rite (*pūrvaraṅga*) in theatre (cf. NŚ 4.12–16ab), might indeed point to ideas of religious reward obtained through dance, which call for comparison with yoga praxis. These will be taken up next.

On the Extra-Worldly Results of Dance: Beyond the Display

Bearing in mind the question of whether there might be an older link between the physical practices of dance and yoga, I would like to present some of the findings I uncovered as I delved deeper into the chapter on dance, Abhinavagupta’s interpretation of it, and the details of their contexts, reconstructed with the help of related textual evidence.

As mentioned previously, at the very end of the *Tāṇḍavādhyāya*, we come across a statement that promises the attainment of Śivaloka to the performer of Śiva’s “action” (NŚ 4.319). This *phalaśruti* occurs at the end of the chapter on dance, and since

¹⁶ Stella Kramrisch quoted in Stoler-Miller 1994: 4.

¹⁷ Among non-scholarly publications, see for instance *A Yoga of Indian Classical Dance* (Gupta 2000) or *Karaṇa—Kusumakara, or the Poems of the Body* (Bhatt 2004), which is the author’s declared attempt to link *karaṇas*, yogic postures, and sexual postures.

Śiva's dance is mentioned there as the divine archetype for human dance, it is quite intuitive that by the "action of Maheśvara"—*maheśvarasya caritam*—one should understand his "dance," and not his "deeds," as may be the case in other contexts. This might sound like just another general statement about the benefits to be gained through the knowledge of the text or its practical application, similar to other statements in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* that promise otherworldly results to performers. One famous example is found at the end of the entire *Nāṭyaśāstra*:

Whoever listens uninterruptedly to this [*Nāṭyaśāstra*], as it has been uttered by the Self-born (Brahmā), or whoever learns it and gives a performance in accordance with its teachings, he will obtain the goal of the experts in the Veda, the goal of the performers of sacrifices, the goal of the bestowers of gifts.¹⁸

Statements of this sort can safely be linked to the idea that theatre is the Fifth Veda and a means to reach *dharma*, an idea that is powerfully staged in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*'s self-narrative. Here, the creation of theatre is justified as a means to counteract the corruption of norms and social values, an innovation suitable to an age of decay. This result of theatre, however, is usually seen in connection with drama's ambition to provide its audience with ethical instruction in the aims of men. The spectator witnesses the events of the world as represented directly in front of him, with the victory of the good over the bad, and thus learns to act accordingly.¹⁹ The eulogistic passages on the actors and the theatrical arts, as well as the whole enterprise of creating a *śāstra* on theatre, have generally been regarded by scholars as a reaction to the stiffening of opinions against artists and the theatrical arts, as witnessed in Brahmanic texts from around the same period, such as the *Mānavadharmasāstra*. In these texts, actors are equated to *sūdras* and the lowermost social classes.²⁰ Beyond the influence of a group of Brahmins who attempted to rehabilitate the theatrical arts at a period when drama began emerging as a high literary form—as can be gleaned, for instance, from the plays of Aśvaghoṣa (2nd century CE)—I believe that there is something more specific than a general praise of performance in the fourth chapter's

¹⁸ NŚ 37.26–27 (*ya idaṃ śṛṇuyān nityaṃ proktaṃ cedaṃ svayambhuvā | kuryāt prayogaṃ yaś caivam athavā 'dhītavān naraḥ || yā gatir vedaviduṣāṃ yā gatir yajñakāriṇām | yā gatir dānaśilānām tāṃ gatiṃ prāpnuyād dhi saḥ ||*).

¹⁹ On the connection between drama and *dharma*, see, for example, Bansat-Boudon 2001.

²⁰ This hypothesis was notably expressed by Kane (1971: 22–23). On the social status of actors, see Ganser and Cuneo 2012.

statement on the extra-worldly result of dance. This concerns a religious or spiritual reward that goes to the performer through his own *physical practice*, which I will discuss first in the light of later dramatic sources, and then of religious sources contemporaneous with the text of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

Ideas about an extra-worldly or religious reward of dance are echoed and expressed in a slightly more elaborate way in later texts of the dramatic tradition. In the *Samgītaratnākara*, a 13th-century text on music and dance composed by Śārṅgadeva, the famous image of Śiva as the cosmic dancer is praised as the embodiment of the various acting registers:

āṅgikaṃ bhuvaṇaṃ yasya vācikaṃ sarvavāṇmayam |
āhāryaṃ candratārādi taṃ numaḥ sāttvikaṃ śivam || SR 7.1, *maṅgalaśloka* ||

He whose *body* is the universe, whose *voice* is everything made of speech,
whose ornaments are the moon and the stars, that true Śiva we praise.

Its exegete Kallinātha, writing in 15th-century Vijayanagara, comments in the *Kalānidhi* as follows:

“Now, eager to explain acting (*nartana*) that, assisted by vocal and instrumental music, is the means for the supreme non-duality, Śārṅgadeva [utters the first verse]” (*atha gītavādyopakāryatvenābhedaśa-yopāyabhūtaṃ nartanaṃ pratipipādayiṣuḥ śārṅgadevaḥ [...]*, vol. 4: 1).

Samgītaratnākara 7.10ab has the following statement on the creation of dramatic arts:

“[Brahmā] produced this triad, conducive to dharma, pleasure, wealth, and liberation” (*vyarīracat trayam idaṃ dharmakāmārthamokṣadam*).

The *Kalānidhi* comments:

“The meaning of the expression ‘this triad’ is: theatre (*nāṭya*), narrative dance (*nṛtya*), and abstract dance (*nṛtta*). Whoever gives a performance will realise whichever aim of mankind he then has in mind” (*idaṃ trayam iti. nāṭyanṛtyanṛttān ity arthaḥ. dharmakāmārthamokṣadam iti. yo yaṃ yaṃ puruṣārtham uddīśya prayuṅkte sa sa tasya sidhyatīty arthaḥ*, vol. 4: 4).

These statements clearly express ideas removed from the belief that theatre should bring results in the sphere of *dharma* only to the spectators: the verb *prayuṅkte*, used in

this context by Kallinātha, makes clear reference to the experience of the performer (*prayoktr*). How did the idea that the aims of man, including *mokṣa*, can be achieved through performance come about, and is this necessarily linked with physical practice?

In a passage similar to the one at the end of the Tāṇḍavādhyāya, an extra-worldly result likewise seems to be connected with the performance of music:

vardhamānaprayoktāro yāsyanti śivagocaram || NŚ 31.73cd ||

Those who perform the *vardhamāna* will reach Śiva's abode.

Before looking at Abhinavagupta's interpretation of this verse, it is important to recall that the *vardhamāna/ka* was mentioned in the context of dance's introduction into the preliminary rite (cf. NŚ 4.14 "May you use it [i.e., dance] in the proper way in the course of this *pūrvaraṅga*, when *vardhamānakas* are performed, as well as in the *gītakas* and *āsāritas*"). The *vardhamāna* is one of the long and complex musical structures performed in the *pūrvaraṅga*, and counts as one of its nineteen limbs. It combines both singing and instrumental music, to the accompaniment of which dance is performed. The *vardhamānaka* is made of four songs of increasing length, called *āsāritas*.²¹ Quite crucially, these *āsāritas* contain, in their lyrical parts, hymns dedicated to Śiva. Bharata gives examples for the lyrics of each *āsārita*, which are none other than praises of Śiva through the naming of attributes that recall his deeds. The text of the first *āsārita* is given as follows:

I take refuge in this world in the overlord of beings, the destroyer of
Bhaga's eyes, praised by the gods, disturber of the gods' sacrifice, fierce,
fear-inspiring, having an elephant's skin as a garment, benevolent, three-
eyed, having dreadlocks resembling flames, having a snake as girdle,
surrounded by thirty Gaṇas, whose deeds are always told by the Daityas,
revered as the husband of Umā, bestowing happiness and desired things,
and venerated by the gods.²²

²¹ On the structure of the *vardhamānaka*, see NŚ 31.74–159ab (Tālādhyāya).

²² NŚ 31.110 (*bhūtādhipatiṃ bhaganetraharaṃ devair vandyam suramakhmathanam |
raudram bhayadam gajacarmapaṭam śambhum tryakṣam jvalananibhajaṭam |
bhujagaṇavarikaram tridaśagaṇavarām daityair nityam paripaṭhitacaritam |
umāpatiṃ namitam abhimatasukhadam śaraṇam suranutam aham iha samupagataḥ ||*).

This example might suffice to highlight two points: on the one hand, not only dance, but also singing can procure otherworldly results; on the other hand, the text of the *āsāritas* that form the *vardhamāna* suggests that the mechanism of reward is triggered by praising the deity. It should be noted, however, that the *vardhamāna* does not consist only of vocal and instrumental music, but is also performed along with the *tāṇḍava*, Śiva's vigorous dance.²³ This connection is stressed by Abhinavagupta as he comments on the link between the performance of the *vardhamāna* and the attainment of Śiva's abode:

[...] those who perform the *vardhamāna* [according to the rules] will reach Śiva's abode, characterised as the attainment of the *summum bonum* that is beyond both visible (*dr̥ṣṭa*) and invisible (*adr̥ṣṭa*) results. [...] By using the plural [in “those who perform”], he means that the result is the same for vocalists, musicians, and dancers.²⁴

According to Abhinavagupta, this supreme result attained by the performers transcends both the visible and invisible spheres, a state of transcendence that, in his theology, usually coincides with the plane of liberation (*apavarga*, *mokṣa*).²⁵ To be sure, it is highly unlikely that dancers and musicians were going about seeking religious rewards (*śivaloka*/*śivagocara*) or liberation like yogis and ascetics. However, we do know that, in other contexts, certain groups of ascetics used singing and dance in their ritual praxis. A comparison with early religious sources might help throw light on the connection between dance and extra-worldly results in the dramatic sources.

²³ See NŚ 5.13: “At this point, one should employ either a song (*gītaka*) belonging to the group starting with the *madraka*, or else the *vardhamāna*, when the *tāṇḍava* is performed” (*gītānāṃ madrakādīnām ekaṃ yojyaṃ tu gītakam | vardhamānam athāpīha tāṇḍavaṃ yatra yujyate ||*).

²⁴ ABh ad NŚ 31.73, vol. 4: 191 ([...] *vardhamānaṃ ye prayuñjate te śivagocaraṃ dr̥ṣṭādr̥ṣṭāparaḥśreyahprāpti-lakṣaṇaṃ yāsyanti*. [...] *bahuvacanaprayogeṇa gātrvādakanartakānāṃ tulyaphalatvam āha*).

²⁵ This could be compared to *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 3.113–115 (5th century), where, as Lath notices (1978: 119–120, 135), the seven *gītakas* common to NŚ 31.200cd–201ab, as well as a number of other songs, are said to lead the ascetic to liberation (*mokṣa*), at least in the vulgate transmitted in the 12th-century *Mitākṣara* (see Olivelle 2019: 352, n. 54), which moreover adds the *āsāritas* and the *vardhamānaka* to this list. The whole passage on music and liberation (vv. 112–116) with its different versions—alternating the readings *yogamārga*- and *mokṣamārga*- in v. 115 as goal of musical practice—deserve a separate study. Moreover, these verses are quoted by Abhinavagupta in the *Abhinavabhāratī* and they show intertextual links with the *Dattilam* (8th century). The importance these texts attribute to attention (*avadhāna*), a term common to the vocabulary of yoga, should be pointed out, but cannot be given due treatment in the limited space of this paper, whose focus is on dance and physical practices. For more on the ritual role of music in dramatic sources, see Lath 1978 and Ganser 2020.

Dance as Ritual Offering and *imitatio dei* in Religious Texts

An early ascetic Śaiva source, the *Pāśupatasūtra*, includes singing and dance in the Pāśupata mode of worship. Kauṇḍinya's (4th or 5th century CE?) commentary on the famous statement in *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.8 makes reference to the *Gāndharvaśāstra* and *Nāṭyaśāstra*:²⁶

Pāśupatasūtra 1.8:

hasitagītanṛttadumḍumkāranamaskārajapyopahāreṇopatiṣṭhet

One should worship [Śiva] with offerings of laughter, song, and dance by making the *ḍumḍum* sound, prostrating oneself, and muttering.

Pañcārthabhāṣya ad loc.:

gītam api gāndharvaśāstrasamayānabhiṣvaṅgeṇa [...] nṛttam api nāṭyaśāstra-samayānabhiṣvaṅgeṇa

[During worship,] singing should not follow the science of music (*gāndharvaśāstra*) [...] [and] dancing should not follow the science of theatre (*nāṭyaśāstra*).

As Bakker explains it, in *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.8, “the initiated ascetic identifies himself with the deity of his devotion by imitating him, an *imitatio dei* that is enacted in the liturgy within the temple. This concerns some aspects of Śiva that are known from the corpus of mythological Sanskrit texts, and this mythology clearly informs the conduct of the ascetic” (2014: 544). The *imitatio dei* described here is in fact based both on mythological associations—Śiva is the dancer deity par excellence, the Naṭarāja, and laughter, or, better, boisterous laughter, is one of his characteristic features—as well as on antinomian behaviours, such as bellowing, that are connected with more archaic religious practices.²⁷ As I show below, the idea of worshipping the gods through mimesis, or *imitatio dei*, can also be found in one of the physical practices described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, that of the *piṇḍibandhas*, a fact that illustrates one of the fundamental functions of dance in the *pūrvaraṅga*. As to Kauṇḍinya's statement that in Pāśupata worship, dancing does not follow the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, it might be interpreted as

²⁶ The *Pāśupatasūtra* is difficult to date, but it might have been composed around the first centuries of the Common Era. See Bisschop 2014.

²⁷ On the elements of Pāśupata worship already attributed to Śiva in the Anuśāsanaparvan of the *Mahābhārata*, see Aciri 2018: 5, n. 10, and on the Atharvavedic antecedents for bellowing, see Acharya 2014.

emphasising the ecstatic character of the dance of the Śaiva ascetic, in contrast to the controlled movements executed by the actor on stage. In Pāśupata practice, in fact, dancing in a frenzied way has the purpose of strengthening the identity between the devotee and the deity.²⁸

In *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.8, dancing is described as a ritual offering (*upahāra*), an idea that, as noted by Törzsök (2016: 456 and n. 21), is also found in Tantric texts, for instance in the *Niśvāsamukha* 4.72 (Kafle 2020: 353), as well as in lay contexts, such as the *Skandapurāṇa*. The *Śivadharmasaṅgraha*, a source of lay Śaiva practice indebted to the *Niśvāsamukha*, is another example that may be conceptually linked to the attainment of extra-worldly results through the performance of dance and music in the *pūrvaraṅga*.²⁹

He [worships Śiva] with food offerings and umbrellas, banners, mirrors, canopies; with offerings of bells and fly-whisks, or ornaments and milk porridge; with gold, jewels, clothes, fragrances, incense, and ointments; with songs, music, and dance, and by making the *hudum* sound and with hymns.³⁰

The idea that songs, music, and dance can be used as religious offerings in Śiva worship alongside the usual substances became a common phenomenon in mediaeval India in connection with temple practice. Starting from around the 6th to 7th century, dance and music are mentioned as elements of the worship of the Buddha, Jina, and Hindu gods in temple inscriptions.³¹ One may further recall the evidence found in literature, such as the famous dance scene in Kālidāsa's (4th or 5th century?) *Meghadūta* 34–36, where dancers are seen at the dusk service performing in front of Śiva's icon at the temple of Mahākāla in Ujjain. The *Kuṭṭanīmata*, an 8th-century text composed in Kashmir, describes a troupe of actresses attached to a temple in Varanasi performing classical Sanskrit theatre on the temple premises.³² This evidence might be relevant in

²⁸ See Hara 2002: 216ff., quoted in Törzsök 2016: 461, n. 42.

²⁹ A. K. Acharya has dated the *Śivadharmasaṅgraha*, part of the Śivadharm corpus, to the 9th/10th centuries, as noted in Kafle 2020: 113, n. 289. Following D. Goodall, Kafle situates the redaction of the *Niśvāsamukha* sometime during the 7th century (ibid.: 32).

³⁰ ŚDhS 5.30–31 (*yas tu naivedyacchatraiś ca dhvajādarśavitānakaiḥ | ghaṇṭācāmaradānena alaṃkāraudanena vā || suvarṇamaṇivastraiś ca gandhadhūpopalepanaiḥ | gītavāditranṛttaiś ca hudumkarastavena ca ||*).

³¹ See, for example, Schmiedchen 2014: 199–200, n. 744.

³² Goodall 2018 discusses these two literary texts, along with other textual and epigraphic evidence from across South and South-East Asia, which, from about the 7th century, point to the presence of women serv-

connection with the question about the public spaces where various practitioners of different physical practices, such as yogis, ascetics, and dancers, might have come into contact and inspired each other. Another piece of evidence for using performance for religious purposes comes from the *Śivadharmasāstra*, the earliest layer of the Śivadharm corpus, which has been dated to around the 6th to 7th centuries.³³ In it, a kind of performance is prescribed as part of the eightfold devotion to Śiva:

[The eightfold devotion consists of] affection towards Śiva's devotees, rejoicing in the worship [offered by others], worshipping Śiva himself with devotion, using bodily movements (*aṅgaceṣṭana*) for Śiva's sake, having devotion while telling (or listening to?) stories about Śiva, [showing the affective] alterations of the voice, eyes, and limbs, thinking of Śiva at all times, and not living off his revenue.³⁴

The passage suggests that the practice of performing by means of the body (*aṅgaceṣṭana*), possibly involving a kind of theatrical performance or dance, was used for devotional purposes.³⁵

Such ideas, coming from early Śaiva texts, might have interplayed with similar views, expressed in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, about dancing and singing hymns to Śiva in the *pūrvaraṅga*. The *pūrvaraṅga*, in fact, is conceptualised in this very text as a ritual, a *pūjā*

ants attached to temples who practised dance within their precincts.

³³ On the *Śivadharmasāstra* and its date, see Bisschop 2018.

³⁴ ŚDhŚ 1.26–27 (*madbhaktajanavātsalyaṃ pūjāyāṃ cānumodanam | svayam abhyarcanaṃ bhaktyā mamārthe cāṅgaceṣṭanam || matkathāśravaṇe bhaktiḥ svaranetrāṅgavikriyā | mamānusmaraṇaṃ nityaṃ yo na mām upajīvati ||*).

³⁵ Other scholars interpret *aṅgaceṣṭita* as “the work of the body (for the sake of devotion)” (Schwartz 2012: 212); “movement of the body (physical work) for Śiva” (Bisschop 2019: 170, n. 22); “carrying out physical work for Śiva” (Mirnig 2019: 477, n. 28). However, *aṅgaceṣṭita* is frequently used in the texts of the dramatic tradition as a term indicating movements performed on stage in general. Similarly, if the compound *matkathāśravaṇe* is broken up as *matkathā-āśravaṇe*, it could also indicate the act of retelling Śiva's deeds as a part of the devotional path. I am also not sure why *bhaktisvaranetrāṅgavikriyā* should be understood as “transformation of voice, eyes and limbs (possession)” (Bisschop *ibid.*) and I would be more inclined to interpret the compound, along with Mirnig (*ibid.*), as “being visibly affected by the devotion to Śiva (e.g., trembling)”. *Āṅgavikāra* (here *āṅgavikriyā*) is a term used in dramatic sources to indicate the *sāttvikabhāvas*, the display of the outer symptoms of strong emotions, on which see footnote 41 below. The three elements given as “*mamārthe cāṅgaceṣṭanam || matkathāśravaṇe bhaktiḥ svaranetrāṅgavikriyā*” could then possibly be interpreted as a sort of enactment of Śiva's deeds involving the three means of acting codified in the dramatic tradition: bodily (*āṅgikābhinaya*, here *aṅgaceṣṭana*), vocal (*vācikābhinaya*, here *kathā-āśravaṇa*), and psychophysical (*sāttvikābhinaya*, here *āṅgavikriyā*).

of the deities of the stage.³⁶ Moreover, in the *pūrvaraṅga*, dance entertains a special connection with Śiva worship by means of the *vardhamāna*, a musical structure in which his hymns are sung. Thus, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* to some extent reflects common beliefs about embodied practice whereby performance, and in particular bodily and musical performance, is not conceived sheerly in terms of its aesthetic results.

In the next section, I will have a closer look at the practice of dance and its connection with the preliminary rite in order to provide a *ratio* for the mechanisms of reward for the attainment of extra-worldly results—such as the protection from the obstacles,³⁷ the realm of Śiva, or even liberation—through bodily practice in the texts of the dramatic tradition.

Karaṇas, Aṅgahāras, Recakas, and Piṇḍibandhas

Since the larger category of “dance” (*nṛtta*), which until now has been dealt with as a single entity, includes several techniques in the specialised context of the dramatic tradition, it will not be out of place to first provide an overview of these. As mentioned previously, the *karaṇas* are the building blocks of dance. Their representation in a programmatic series of sculptures is much later than the text of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, though this may be useful in giving us some general idea of their visual realisation, provided it is kept in mind that *karaṇas* are not static poses, but movements of the body from an initial to a final position, which the sculptures can only attempt to freeze mid-sequence.

The longer units of movement, which are formed by stringing together a fixed sequence of four to fifteen *karaṇas*, are called *aṅgahāras*, thirty-two of which are recorded in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. *Aṅgahāras* are the dance sequences that Śiva asked Bharata to perform in the preliminary rite in connection with some of its songs. Abhinavagupta provides an etymology of *aṅgahāra* (in the singular) as the displacement of the limbs that is proper to Śiva, playing on the double meaning of *hāra* (“displacement” or “belonging to Hara,” i.e., Śiva):

³⁶ See, for instance, NŚ 5.55: *sarvadaivatapūjārhaṃ sarvadaivatapūjanam | dhanyaṃ yaśasyam āyuṣyaṃ pūrvaraṅgapravartanam ||* “The execution of the *pūrvaraṅga*—the worship of all the deities [of the stage]—is worth praise by all the gods: it bestows wealth, confers renown, and ensures a long life.” In my translation of the word *pūjā* in the first compound, I follow ABh ad NŚ 5.55, vol. 1: 225: *sarvair daivataiḥ pūjārhaṃ praśaṃsanīyam*.

³⁷ On protection from the obstacles as an invisible result produced through the satisfaction of the gods of the stage by means of performing the various limbs of the *pūrvaraṅga*, see Ganser 2016.

Āṅgahāra is the way in which the limbs attain a different position that is suitable in space. Furthermore, [the etymological derivation implies that] this displacement (*hāra*), i.e. a performance, refers to Śiva (*Hara*). “*Āṅgahāra*” is [his] displacement, brought about (*nirvartya*) by the limbs (*āṅga*). This is what will be stated [in NŚ 4.319]: “[He who performs] this action of Maheśvara [will, free from all sins, reach the realm of Śiva].”³⁸

Significantly, Bharata’s exegete connects this etymology with the extra-worldly result of performance mentioned at the end of the *Tāṇḍavādhyāya*, thereby clarifying that the “action of Maheśvara” there is none other than dance. The first *āṅgahāra* in the list, called *sthirahasta*, is said in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* to be agreeable to Śiva (*harapriya*), and it is formed by nine different *karāṇas* executed conjointly (*yogataḥ*).³⁹ While Abhinavagupta takes the expression *yogataḥ* to mean that some intermediate movements have to be added between one *karāṇa* and the other so that there is no rupture in the string of movements, he also reports another view, according to which, “this [*āṅgahāra*] aims at pleasing the blessed one also thanks to *yoga*, i.e. thanks to the intense absorption (*samādhi*) [of the dancer].”⁴⁰ This alternative interpretation suggests that at least some felt dancing, in certain contexts, to be akin to a yogic practice, which requires from the practitioner (here “the dancer”) both physical training as well as mental concentration or absorption, possibly on Śiva himself.⁴¹ Although Abhinavagupta does not refute this alternative interpretation here, in his later explanation of the *piṇḍibandhas*, he will argue that dance indeed delights the deities insofar as it gives visual shape, through movement, to their various attributes.

³⁸ ABh ad NŚ 4.27cd, vol. 1: 89 (*āṅgānām deśāntare samucite prāpaṇaprakāro ’ṅgahārah. harasya cāyaṃ hārah prayogaḥ. āṅganirvartyo hāro ’ṅgahārah. yad vakṣyati—‘maheśvarasya caritaṃ ya idam’ iti*).

³⁹ NŚ 4.174cd–177ab (*prasāryotkṣīpya ca karau samapādaṃ prayojayet || vyaṃsitāpasṛtaṃ savyaṃ hastam ūrdhvaṃ prasārayet | pratyālīḍhaṃ tataḥ kuryāt tathaiva ca nikuṭṭakam || ūrūdvṛttaṃ tataḥ kuryād ākṣiptaṃ svastikaṃ tataḥ | nitambaṃ karihastam ca kaṭicchinnaṃ ca yogataḥ || sthirahasto bhaved evaṃ āṅgahāro harapriyaḥ |*).

⁴⁰ ABh ad NŚ 4.176cd–177ab, vol. 1: 139 (*anye tu yogāt samādhau apy ayaṃ bhagavataḥ prītaya iti vyācakṣate*).

⁴¹ Another passage in the *Abhinavabhāratī* refers to practices common to yoga, or at least employs a similar vocabulary, in the context of the actor’s training. ABh ad NŚ 1.23, vol. 1: 17, in fact, refers to an unidentified, earlier source and to a secret teaching that recommends a technique involving the manipulation of breath (*prāṇa*) in order to produce the symptoms of intense emotional affections on the body, such as crying, trembling, fainting, etc. These psychophysical reactions are called *sāttvikābhāvas*. On this use of *prāṇa* for conveying emotions dramatically, see Cuneo and Ganser 2022. On *sattva*, *sāttvikābhāvas*, and *sāttvikābhīnaya*, see also Bansat-Boudon 1991 and Malinar 2010.

As to the other category of dance movements, called *recakas*, these are listed as four by Bharata: there are *recakas* of the feet, hips, hands, and neck (cf. NŚ 4.174cd–177ab). Their brief descriptions single out movements that did not find canonisation in the chapters on bodily enactment, possibly due to their abstract and non-mimetic character. Abhinavagupta never quite clearly states what *recakas* are, but mentions Tumburu as an authority in connection with them. Despite an evident break in the tradition with respect to the performance of *recakas*, Abhinavagupta feels compelled to justify their inclusion in the treatise as dance units. Their separate mention is explained by the fact that *recakas* have a separate invisible result, and their use is said to be confined to performances in which delicate music prevails, thus suggesting their graceful character.⁴²

The last category of bodily movements that participate in dance is the *piṇḍibandhas*. These movements are quite relevant for the discussion of the otherworldly results of physical practices; however, the existing scholarship on dance seems entirely to have missed their purport. Generally, *piṇḍibandhas* are considered to be group dances, and to display continuities with later folk dances performed in group choreographic formation. It is true that *piṇḍibandhas* are described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, exclusively in connection with the *pūrvaraṅga*, in places where one or more dancers make their entries. However, I do not believe that viewing them simply as collective group dances does justice to this lost practice. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the *piṇḍibandhas* are mentioned together with an account of their origins, which connects them with Śaiva mythology. The relevant verses introducing them read as follows:

Having seen Śaṅkara dancing with *recakas* and *aṅgahāras* and Pārvaṭī dancing in the delicate manner—with Maheśvara, who, [accompanied] by the sound of all [kinds of] percussion, such as *mṛdaṅga*, *bherī*, *paṭaha*, *bhāṇḍa*, *diṇḍima*, *gomukha*, *paṇavas*, and *darduras*, following the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice, started to dance in the twilight hour, with various *aṅgahāras* governed by tempo and rhythm—the Gaṇas, headed by Nandin and Bhadra, saw the *piṇḍibandhas* in those [dance

⁴² ABh ad NŚ 4.248cd–249ab, vol. 1: 161–162 (*prthagadrṣṭārthatākhyāpanārthaṃ* [corr. Raghavan E₁₍₄₎, *prthagdrṣṭa*° E₁₍₁₎ E₁₍₂₎] *caiṣāṃ karaṇāṅgahārāntarbhūtānām apy upādānam. sukumāragītavādyapradhāne ca prayoga eṣāṃ prayogaḥ*.) I follow Raghavan (1980: 187), who first proposed to emend *prthagadrṣṭā* to *prthagadrṣṭa*° on the basis of Jāyasenāpati's *Nṛttaratnāvalī*, where *recakas* are qualified, most probably on the basis of an original reading *adrṣṭa* in the *Abhinavabhāratī*, as *puṇyasampattiḥetu-* (NR 4.376: *prayuktāḥ puṇyasampattiḥetavo recakā ime* |). The verses containing the definitions of the four *recakas* are omitted in several manuscripts, and are not commented upon by Abhinavagupta, who most probably did not read them. On visible and invisible results in dance, see Ganser 2016.

movements], gave names to the *piṇḍīs*, and made *bandhas* of them, together with [their] definitions.⁴³

This myth traces the creation of the *piṇḍibandhas* to the Gaṇas of Śiva, his attendants, who are often represented in sculpture as dwarfs playing musical instruments. The Gaṇas see the shapes of the *piṇḍīs*—what are usually considered “lumps,” coagulations of different elements bound together (*bandha*)—in the dance performed by Śiva together with Pārvatī. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* limits itself to listing the names of the *piṇḍīs* in association with the various deities with which they are linked:

Īśvara’s (Śiva’s) *piṇḍī* is the *aiśvarī* (“the Supreme”) and that of Nandin is the *paṭṭasī* (“the Spear”). Caṇḍikā’s *piṇḍī* is [the] *siṃhavāhinī* (“the Lion-Mount”), Viṣṇu’s is the *tārṅśya* (Garuḍa), Svayambhū’s (Brahmā’s) the *padma* (“Lotus”). Śakra’s (Indra’s) *piṇḍī* is *airāvātī* (“the Elephant”), that of Manmatha is *jhaṣa* (“the Fish”), Kumāra’s is the *śikhin* (Peacock), [and] Śrī’s the *rūpa* (“the Handsome”). That of Jāhnavī (Gaṅgā) is *dhāra* (“the Stream”) and Yama’s is *pāśa* (“the Noose”). Varuṇa’s is *nadī* (“the River”) and that of Dhanada (Kubera) is the *yākṣī*. Bala[rāma]’s *piṇḍī* is the *hala* (“the Plough”) and that of Bhogin (Śeṣa) is the *sarpa* (“the Snake”). Gaṇeśvara’s is the Great *piṇḍī*, destroyer of Dakṣa’s sacrifice. That of the enemy of Andhaka (Śiva) is *raudrī* (“the Fearsome”), resembling a trident in shape. In this way, in the case of other deities as well, according to the sequence, the *piṇḍibandhas* are to be used as attributes, together with [their] identifying marks.⁴⁴

In order to explain the technical term *piṇḍibandha* in its theatrical *avatāra*, Abhinavagupta first offers two different analyses for the compound, both equally possible and mutually inclusive. The first takes into account the spectator’s perspective,

⁴³ NS 4.249cd–253ab (*recakair aṅgahāraiś ca nṛtyantaṃ vīkṣya śaṅkaram || sukumāraprayogeṇa nṛtyantīm caiva pārvatīm | mṛdaṅgabherīpaṭahair bandhādīṇḍimagomukhaiḥ || paṇavair darduraiś caiva sarvātodyaiḥ pravāditaiḥ | dakṣayajñe vinihate sandhyākāle maheśvaraḥ || nānāṅgahāraiḥ prānṛtyal layatālavaśānugaiḥ | piṇḍibandhāṃs tato dṛṣṭvā nandibhadramukhā gaṇāḥ || cakrus te nāma piṇḍināṃ bandham āsāṃ salakṣaṇam ||*).

⁴⁴ NS 4.253cd–259ab (*īśvarasyeśvarī piṇḍī nandinaś cāpi paṭṭasī || caṇḍikāyā bhavet piṇḍī tathā vai siṃhavāhinī | tārkṣyapiṇḍī bhaved viṣṇoḥ padmapiṇḍī svayambhuvāḥ || śakrasyairāvātī piṇḍī jhaṣapiṇḍī tu mānmathī | śikhipiṇḍī kumārasya rūpapiṇḍī bhavecchriyāḥ || dhārāpiṇḍī ca jāhnavyāḥ pāśapiṇḍī yamasya ca | vāruṇī ca nadipiṇḍī yākṣī syād dhanadasya tu || halapiṇḍī balasyāpi sarpapiṇḍī tu bhoginām | gāṇeśvarī mahāpiṇḍī dakṣayajñāvimardini || triśūlākṛtiśamsthānā raudrī syād andhakadvīṣaḥ | evam anyāsv api tathā devatāsu yathākramam || dhvajabhūtāḥ prayoktavyāḥ piṇḍibandhāḥ sacihnakāḥ ||*). In v. 259b, I translate the text corrected according to the Abhinavabhāratī, which reads *sacihnakāḥ*, instead of *sucihnaitāḥ* in the edition (cf. footnote 49 below).

and defines the *piṇḍibandha* as the particular configuration that is formed in the spectator's mind. The second gloss accounts for the dancer's perspective, and emphasises the fact that *piṇḍis* are formed through a combination of various dance movements, such as *karaṇas*, *aṅgahāras*, and *recakas*:

Piṇḍibandha is a particular configuration (*ākṛti*) that is put together (*badhyate*) by means of a cluster (*piṇḍi*), namely a close combination of the location (*ādhāra*), bodily limbs (*aṅga*), and so forth. [Put together], that is, made to enter the mind in a subtle manner, or the space [of the stage area] or the like, complete with all its parts. The word *piṇḍi* is a partial designation for [*piṇḍibandha*]. †[...]† The term *piṇḍibandha* also refers to the [instrument] by means of which [the *piṇḍi*] is formed (*ābadhyate*), i.e. the [various] *karaṇas*, *aṅgahāras*, etc.⁴⁵

As the names assigned to the *piṇḍis* suggest, these configurations made of dance movements reproduce various aspects of the deities. Abhinavagupta explains that in the case of Śiva, his *piṇḍi*, called *aiśvarī*, is named first, since the lord has to be satisfied first by reason of his importance. This *piṇḍi* represents the god's unmanifest form (*avyakta*), expressed by the word *Īśvara* in unqualified form (*nirviśeṣa*), and it has the shape of his *liṅga* (*śivaliṅgākṛti*). Nandin comes immediately after Śiva, since he is the principal entity responsible for providing the definitions of the *piṇḍis*. His *piṇḍi* is called *paṭṭasī*, a kind of spear usually associated with him, which Abhinavagupta considers to be a weapon in the form of a trident.⁴⁶ The last *piṇḍi* enumerated in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, called *raudrī*, is attributed to the enemy of Andhaka, another name for Rudra, and is said to have the shape of a trident. According to Abhinavagupta, this *piṇḍibandha* refers to Śiva's manifest form.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ ABh ad NŚ 4.253cd–258ab, vol. 1: 166 (*piṇḍi yādhārāṅgādisaṅghātaḥ* [D M₁ T₁, yādhārādī' T₄, ādhārāṅgādī' Σ_E] *tayā badhyate buddhau praveśyate tanubhāvena sakalayā* [Σ_M Σ_E, om. E₁₍₄₎] *vā vyomādāv iti piṇḍibandha ākṛtviśeṣaḥ. tasyaikadeśābhidhānaṃ piṇḍīti. †yadi vā piṇḍiviśiṣṭāny eva *tāny āheti* [T₄ Σ_E, tānyā iti D M₁ T₁]†, *ābadhyate punar aneneti piṇḍibandhaḥ karaṇāṅgahārādīḥ*.) It is not crystal clear what the sentence between cruxes (*yadi vā piṇḍiviśiṣṭāny eva tāny āheti*) means, since there is no neuter substantive in this passage to which the demonstrative *tāni* might refer. The text also looks corrupt at this point; therefore, I have left the sentence between cruxes untranslated.

⁴⁶ Cf. ABh ad NŚ 4.253cd–258ab, vol. 1: 165–166 (*bhagavata eva prādhānyāt paritoṣaṇīyateti tasyāvyaktaṃ yad īśvaraśabdānirviśeṣarūpaṃ* [D M₁, īśvaraśabdo vācyānirviśeṣo rūpaṃ T₁, īśvaravācyāṃ nirviśeṣaṃ rūpaṃ T₄, īśvaraśabdavācyāṃ nirviśeṣaṃ rūpaṃ Σ_E], *tasya tādrśa eva śivaliṅgākṛtiḥ piṇḍibandhaḥ. paramēśvarānantaraṃ ca prādhānabhūtasya piṇḍibandhalakṣaṇavidhāyino nandinaḥ. paṭṭasaḥ* [M₁ E₁, paṭṭisaḥ D T₁ T₄, paṭṭasī E₁₍₁₎]^v *ubhayatra trisūlākṛtir āyudhaviśeṣaḥ*.)

⁴⁷ Cf. ABh ad NŚ 4.253cd–258ab, vol. 1: 166 (*ante ca bhagavata eva vyaktarūpasya piṇḍibandho bhaviṣyati*).

The commentator explains how the *piṇḍibandhas* function in theatrical practice by evoking the worship of the different deities in the *pūrvaraṅga*. Various deities are in fact imagined to have been installed in and to preside over the various parts of the stage. These must be worshipped by means of dance, using bodily movements suggestive of their attributes and thus of their deeds:

[In this way,] in the case of other [deities as well, according to the sequence, the *piṇḍibandhas* are to be used as attributes, together with their identifying marks].⁴⁸

[The *piṇḍibandhas* should be performed] also in the case of the other [deities] who must be worshipped as indicated in the third chapter [of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*]. With this intention, [Bharata says that they have to be performed] “according to the sequence”. [They are to be performed] as having the shape of the particular banner (*dhvaja*), the oblation used for worship (*pūjāhuti*), the weapon (*āyudha*), and the mount (*vāhana*), together with their identifying marks, i.e. also characterised (*upalakṣita*) by any of the shapes (*rūpa*) suggestive of [their] actions etc. Here is what is meant: one should satisfy the so-called “deities” (*devatā*) by dancing in front of them. And in the middle of that [dance], one should perform bodily movements imitative of the weapon, the mount, the actions, the emotive states, and so forth, connected with the [deity to be worshipped].⁴⁹

With this passage, we are reminded of the additional function of dance in the *pūrvaraṅga*, besides that of making it variegated (*citra*)⁵⁰—namely, to satisfy the deities. Dancing, says Abhinavagupta, satisfies the deities not by its sheer multifariousness, but insofar as, by means of the production of the *piṇḍibandhas*, their attributes are

⁴⁸ NŚ 4.258cd–259ab. For the Sanskrit text of this verse, see above, footnote 44.

⁴⁹ ABh ad NŚ 4.258cd–259ab, vol. 1: 166 (*anyāsv iti tṛtīyādhyāye pūjyātvena nirūpitāsu. tadabhiprāyeṇaiva yathākramam ity uktam. dhvajapūjāhutyāyudhavāhanaviśeṣarūpāḥ. sacihnakā* [Σ_E, *svacihnakā* Σ_M] *ity anenāpi kenacit karmādisūcakena rūpeṇopalakṣitāḥ. etad uktaṁ bhavati—yā kācid devatety ucyate tasyāḥ paścān nṛtena paritoṣaṇaṁ kāryam. tanmadhye ca tadīyāyudhavāhanakarmabhāvādyanukārī aṅgaprayogo vidheyah*).

⁵⁰ This is the original function for which Śiva had introduced dance into the *pūrvaraṅga*, according to NŚ 4.16ab, on which see footnote 9 above.

reproduced.⁵¹ Abhinavagupta provides some telling examples of how *karaṇas* and *aṅgahāras* are used to form *piṇḍibandhas*:

With the [*karaṇa*] *nistambhita*—[described as being performed with] the hand placed at the centre of the forehead (*tilaka*), etc.—[the dancer brings about] delight in the lord. With the [*karaṇa nikuṭṭaka*]—[described as being performed with] the two hands in *nikuṭṭita*, etc.—the body produces the shape of a trident, [while] the [*karaṇa*] *garuḍaplutaka* indicates a way of moving (*gati*) [appropriate to one] with the form of *tārṅśya* (Garuḍa). The *piṇḍī* called *dhāra* (“the Stream”) [is formed] with the [*karaṇa*] *gaṅgāvatarāṇa*, [and] the *piṇḍī* of Bhogin (i.e., the Snake) with the *karaṇa* *nāgāpasarpita*. The *aṅgahāra* [*sthiraḥasta*]—[performed with] the two arms stretched forth and then thrown up, etc.—produces aerial and terrestrial *piṇḍis* such as “the Trident,” “the śivaliṅga,” etc.⁵²

To be sure, Bharata’s text does not warrant an interpretation of the *piṇḍibandhas* as comprising single *karaṇas* or *aṅgahāras* that have some kind of pictorial or iconic value. However, some of their names, and the qualification that “they must be used as attributes” (*dhvajabhūtāḥ prayoktavyāḥ*, NŚ 4.259a), suggest that a representational use of the *piṇḍibandhas* was already intended in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Unfortunately, there is no way to ascertain what these movements originally consisted of and what exactly they

⁵¹ Cf. Abhinavagupta’s response to an objector who, taking multifariousness (*vaicitrya*) in its most immediate sense of “tangible beauty,” wonders whether the role of dance in the *pūrvaraṅga* should be limited to this. ABh *avataṇikā* ad NŚ 4.249cd–253ab, vol. 1: 161–162: “[Someone might object:] If it is so [that dance is alluring by nature], are the *karaṇas*, *aṅgahāras*, and *recakas* used in the *pūrvaraṅga* merely because they make it variegated? [Abhinavagupta:] We claim that this is not the case. [Objector:] How else [are they used]? [Abhinavagupta:] In order to satisfy the deities. [Objector:] But this is also connected with [their] multifariousness, and nothing else! [Abhinavagupta:] Only insofar as [the gods are satisfied] by means of the production of the *piṇḍibandhas*, which are reproductions (*pratīkṛti*) of the attributes of different deities.” (*nanv evaṃ karaṇāṅgahārarecakāḥ kiṃ *pūrvaraṅga eva* [E₁₍₂₎]^{PC}, *pūrvaraṅgān eva* D M₁ T₁ E₁₍₁₎, *pūrvaraṅgāne* D^{Pa} T₇, *pūrvaraṅgaṅgāne* E₂] *vaicitryakāritvamātreṇaivopayujyante. *neti brūmaḥ* [E₁₍₂₎]^{PC}, *neha prastumaḥ* D M₁ E₁₍₁₎, *noha brūmaḥ* D^{Pa} T₁ T₆, *na iti prastumaḥ* E₂]. *katham tarhi. devatāparitoṣakatvenāpi. tad api ca vaicitryamātrāt. yāvat tattaddevatādhvajapratīkṛtibhūtapīṇḍibandhaniṣpattidvāreṇa* [...].)

⁵² ABh ad NŚ 4.258cd–259ab, vol. 1: 166–167 (*ata eva ‘pādāgrasthitayā’ ity atra talapuṣpapuṭakaraṇena karmaviśeṣaṇasūcakena* [T₄, *karmaṇā viśeṣaḥ* D M₁ T₁ E₁₍₂₎ E₁₍₄₎, *karmaṇā viśeṣaṇaḥ* E₁₍₁₎, *karmaviśeṣaḥ* E₂] *bhagavatyāḥ paritoṣaṇam sampādyate. ‘tilake ca karaḥ sthāpya’ iti nistambhitena* [conj., (...)bhitenā bhagavataḥ D M₁, *nisumbhitena* T₁, *abhinayena* Σ_E] *bhagavataḥ paritoṣaḥ. ‘nikuṭṭitau yadā hastau’ ity anena *triśūlākṛtir yā kāyasampattiḥ* [Σ_E, *triśūlākṛtiyakāyaḥ* D M₁ T₁ E₁₍₁₎] *garuḍaplutakena tārṅśyākāragatisūcanam. gaṅgāvatarāṇena dhārāpiṇḍī. nāgāpasarpitenā bhogīpiṇḍī. ‘prasāryotkṣipyā ca karau’ ity aṅgahāreṇa ākāśīyabhasmatrīśūlaśivaliṅgādipiṇḍiṇiṣpattiḥ* [conj., *ākāryābhaumaḥ* D M₁ T₁ E₁^{AC}, *ādharīyābhaumaḥ* E₁^{PC}, *ākāryābhasmaḥ* E₂]).

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Figure 6: *Karaṇa nikuṭṭaka* [9], Cidambaram, Nāṭarāja temple, East Gopura.



Figure 7: *Karaṇa garuḍaplutaka* [70], Cidambaram, Nāṭarāja temple, East Gopura.

were meant for; Abhinavagupta's statement thus appears as a later interpretation to make sense of a lost practice.

As can be easily seen in the *karaṇa* sculptures, keeping all methodological caveats in mind, the logic for combining specific *piṇḍibandhas* with *karaṇas* and *aṅgahāras* is mimetic. The *piṇḍī* called *raudrī*, connected with Rudra, resembles a trident in shape. It indicates Rudra's weapon and is executed by the *karaṇa nikūṭṭaka* (Fig. 6). Viṣṇu's *piṇḍī* is *tārksya* (Garuḍa), clearly indicating his mount through the *karaṇa garuḍaplutaka* (Fig. 7). The *piṇḍī* of the Gaṅgā, called *dhāra* ("the Stream"), is formed with the *gaṅgāvatarāṇa* (Fig. 5), one of the acrobatic *karaṇas*, and likely indicates the divine river in the action of streaming down from heaven, as told in the corresponding myth. The crucial thing here is that *piṇḍibandhas* are used to worship the deities, since they reproduce and represent something of the gods, and as such, they produce delight in them and are means of satisfying them. This function of dancing in the *pūrvaraṅga* combines aspects of both the ritual offering and *imitatio dei* seen in other religious sources.

Conclusion

The practice of dance in ritual contexts was certainly well known in Abhinavagupta's time, as reflected, for instance, by his statement that, besides adding variety to the *pūrvaraṅga* for the pleasure of the spectators, dance also results in the satisfaction of the deities, just like incense, ointments, and the usual offerings used in ritual.⁵³ It has been shown that the idea of worshipping the gods through the performing arts, on a par with other pleasurable substances used as ritual offerings, gained momentum in the textual sources of the earlier period, as is also supported by epigraphic material. This practice appears to be attested in Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu contexts from the second half of the first millennium.

Abhinavagupta's explanation of the practice of the *piṇḍibandhas* contains something in addition to such ritual uses of the performing arts, since in theatre, the mechanism of reward is triggered by the visual reproduction of the attributes of the various deities through the shapes assumed by the dancing body. As I have suggested, by looking at some parallels in early religious sources, the mimetic principle also seems to be at play there, and is therefore not a particularity of theatre. Elements other than dance also participate in this idea of "celebrative" mimesis, such as the singing of hymns to the

⁵³ ABh ad NŚ 5.7, vol. 1: 207: *nṛttam apy atra vaicitryakāritvena praviśat [...] devatāparitoṣaṇaphalam dhūpa-vilepanādīdānavat.*

gods, whereby the performer pleases the deities by commemorating their deeds. Such a function might be even attributed to Sanskrit theatre as a whole, since the plays are often retellings of the stories of the gods. Yet there is something both particular to dance and specifically Śaiva surrounding Bharata's idea of an otherworldly result that the performer attains: by the mere activity of dancing, in fact, one re-enacts—and thereby commemorates—the principal activity of Śiva the cosmic dancer. This concept could underlie the *Nāṭyaśāstra* verse that promises the dancer the attainment of Śivaloka, and it might reflect shared ideas about the function of dancing in Śaiva ritual contexts, which are older than Abhinavagupta's more general interpretation of dance as a praise of the gods through the pictorial or iconic value of the *piṇḍibandhas*. Such early ideas may tentatively be linked with the *imitatio dei* prescribed in the *Pāśupatasūtra*. Despite surface commonalities, however, there are important differences too, since in the *Pāśupatasūtra*, the initiated ascetic aims at identifying himself with the deity through mimesis, possibly also including states of trance or possession,⁵⁴ while the dancer/actor of the dramatic tradition described by Bharata does not pursue such a state of identity; on the contrary, he is in total control of his body and mind at all moments through his mastery of the *śāstra* and strenuous psychophysical training.⁵⁵

Coming back to the question of whether there is a link between dance and yoga in the ancient texts of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition, which would justify and sustain a comparison between their physical practices, such as *karaṇas* and standing *āsanas*, it is hoped that the present investigation has contributed to discounting, on the one hand, the more straightforward interpretation of the dancer as a yogi, and on the other, that of the dancer as a mere entertainer pursuing aesthetic aims. The very place of dance in the ritual that is the *pūrvaraṅga*, the role of the *piṇḍibandhas* in it, and the statements about the otherworldly results of dance for the performer, read in the light of early religious sources and literary texts, suggest that even in theatre, since its first codification, dancing was conceived as being a physical practice that could secure extra-ordinary results for its performers. This was achieved primarily thanks to its role as a ritual offering, connected with the mimetic potential of some of its movements, and secondarily due to its mythological link with the divine archetype of Śiva the dancer. To conclude, a variety of sources from the first millennium expressed ideas of mental cultivation, ritual, and devotion, in connection with physical performance at the interface of drama and ritual. This overlap points to a shared ground for practices and

⁵⁴ This is suggested by Bakker, for instance, when he says, “The *imitatio dei* practice of the aspirant consists in laughing loudly, bellowing, and singing and dancing in trance at the right side of the cult image in the sanctum in worship of God” (2014: 521–522).

⁵⁵ On the self-control required by an actor throughout the performance, see Cuneo and Ganser 2022.

beliefs about the body as an instrument for religious experience—practices and beliefs whose links with yoga as a philosophical system and orthopraxy deserve further exploration.

Acknowledgements

This article is an outcome of the project “Performing Arts and Religious Practices in Classical and Medieval Sanskrit Literature,” carried out at the Department of Indian Studies, Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, University of Zurich (funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation).

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