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INDIAN DANCING



Ram Gopal: a studio portrait by D'ora

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INDIAN DANCING

by RAM GOPAL

and SEROZH DADACHANJI



WITH 94 ILLUSTRATIONS IN
MONOCHROME

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To my Mother
In Undying Love and Memory

RAM GOPAL

To Freany Dadachanji
Noble Sister—In Homage

SEROZH DADACHANJI

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In thy Dance, Divine Dancer,
Freedom finds its image
And Dreams their forms.
Its cadence weaves the threads of things
And unwinds them for ages;
Charms the atoms' rebellion into beauty,
Gives rhythm to the symphony of stars;
Thrills life with pain and churns up existence
Into surging joys and sorrows.

Rabindranath Tagore

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF INDIAN DANCING



OF ALL the arts, dancing is perhaps the one most attuned to the Infinite, having its essence in Nature itself. Every aspect of creation – man, bird, and beast, flower, fruit, and tree, the wind and the waves – displays a dance pattern known in the language of Indian dance as the *Dainic Nrtya*, or Daily Dance. There is harmony and rhythm in the murmur of the waves, the whispering of the leaves and the grass, the warbling of birds, the humming of insects, and the plaintive notes of the wind.

No wonder, then, that amongst the Hindus, descendants of the Nature-worshipping Aryans who invaded India almost four thousand years ago, dancing is regarded as the most ancient and the proudest of arts. Legend attributes to it even the creation of the world. For it is said that Brahma the Creator, moving forward in three majestic strides, brought into being the earth with his downward stride, space with an upward movement, and the sky with his third stride.

The philosophy of Brahma embraces vast tracts of time and cycles of ages, the human soul moving through countless lives, slowly, calmly working out its salvation, which is *Nirvana*, everlasting peace, Oneness with the Essence of all Being. Thus the Cosmic Wheel turns through numberless evolutions, moving in a perpetual cycle over which presides the Trinity of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva, whose cosmic power brings to life, maintains, and destroys all things in Nature.

THE DANCE OF SHIVA

Shiva is looked upon as the first dancer; hence he is called *Nataraja*, i.e. King or Lord of the Dance, *nata* meaning dance, and *raja* lord

or king. ‘. . . In the sight of Brahma, Nature is inert and cannot dance until Shiva wills it; he rises from his rapture and sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound and lo, matter also dances, appearing as a glory round about him. Dancing, he sustains its manifold phenomena. In the fullness of time, still dancing, he destroys all names and forms by fire and gives new rest.’*

Shiva is like a master conductor, and the *dainic nrtya*, or daily dance, is the eternal response of all creation to his rhythmic force, which combines, in the symbolic Tandava Dance, the *Panchakritya*, or fivefold activities, of as many gods (*pancha*=five; *kritya*=activities): Brahma creating through the action termed *sbrshti* or *avirbhava*; Vishnu preserving by means of *stbhti*; Rudra destroying through *sambara*; Maheshwara conferring illusion by means of *tirobhava*; and Sadashiva releasing the human soul from its cycle of re-births, through *annugraha*.

The most popular representation of Shiva depicts him in a pose suggesting the foregoing actions: The upper right hand holding the sacred drum, or *damaru*, implies creation (‘. . . Thy hand holding the sacred drum has made and ordered the heavens and earth and other worlds and innumerable souls. . . .’) The lower right hand raised aloft in the *pataka* gesture signifies protection (‘. . . Thy lifted hand protects both the conscious and unconscious order of thy creation . . .’). The upper left hand holding a flame symbolizes destruction (‘. . . All these worlds are transformed by thy hand bearing fire.’). The right foot planted on the demon Mayulaga stamps out evil (‘. . . Thy sacred foot planted firmly on the demon Mayulaga stamps out evil and gives an abode to the tired soul struggling in the toils of causality . . .’). The left foot raised aloft signifies release (‘. . . It is that lifted foot that grants eternal bliss to those that approach thee. These five works are indeed thy handiwork’).

Many and fascinating are the legends woven round the Dance of Shiva. One relates that during the season of the *Dakshya Jagna*, or the Sacred Fire Ceremony, offered to King Dakshya, the father of

* From Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's *Dance of Siva*.

Shiva's wife Parvati, the King refrained from inviting his son-in-law to the feast because he frowned upon Shiva's habit of associating with gods and demons alike. Parvati, insulted at the omission of her spouse, immolated herself. Shiva, on finding his wife's corpse, hung it round his shoulders and performed one of his frenzied dances, giving vent to his intense grief.

It is here interesting to note that Shiva and Parvati are often depicted in ancient sculptures, such as those at Mohanjo Daro and Harappa, as one composite figure, half male and half female, known as the *Ardhanarishwara-Nataraja*. Lord Shiva himself wears a man's ornament in one ear and a woman's ornament in the other, showing that since the beginning of time dancing has been a rite performed by both men and women.

In the *Shiva Purana*, it is said that Brahma, being dissatisfied with the *prajapatis* he had assigned to help him in his work of creation, turned to Maheshwara, the God of Illusion, who appeared before him in dual-sex form, on the female half of which Brahma bestowed the responsibility of creation. An ancient *sloka*, or verse, further proves the composite aspect of Shiva and Shakti, or Parvati, by declaring: *Suddha spatika sankasam umadardhadharinam* (Pure as crystal and having Parvati as one half of the body). Thus the *Ardhanarishwara-Nataraja* representation proves that dancing is the domain of men and women alike.

Apart from the purely physical manifestation of the *dainic nrtya* there is the urge to dance resulting from emotional impulses. This urge finds an outlet in ritual dances expressing the fervour of the soul, the dance of the hunter inspired by joy of the chase, and other subjects which infuse the blood with wildness and courage. Havelock Ellis rightly maintains: 'If we are indifferent to the art of dancing, we have failed to understand not merely the supreme manifestation of physical life, but also the supreme symbol of spiritual life.'

Matter, by its very nature, must dance, for, says Collum, 'Matter itself, in its "kinds", is a question of the pattern of the atoms building it up . . . if we think how truly an Indian dance is a question of "patterns" – changing patterns that increasingly melt into one

another – the symbolism of the Dance of Shiva appears to be poetic in that highest sense in which poetry is a perception of the specific significance and beauty that informs an idea or thing and renders it alive and valid. . . . The conception of the Dance of Shiva is innate in Eastern ideas of movement, and therefore of history. . . . Construction and destruction have been accepted as mutually antagonistic realities. But the work done by physicists since Röntgen's accidental discovery, has revealed to us an actual scientific fact fully justifying the Dance of Shiva – which is continuous, and which is both constructive and destructive at one and the same time. . . .'

So we see that the entire world reverberates to the rhythm of Shiva's dancing feet. His aspects are many. He is found represented in the form of five different images: the *Sambara Murti* depicts him in his role of Destroyer (it is only evil and the fetters of illusion that he destroys); the *Dakshina*, or *Bhikhatana Murti*, presents him as a *Yogi* or mendicant; the *Anugraha Murti* as a boon-giver; and the *Nrta Murti* as Lord of the Dance, annihilating time, space, and evil.

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

How did dancing, originally a religious art, become a secular practice? Once again we must go back to the dawn of Indian civilization and learn from mythology.

Knowledge of the four Vedas of the ancient Hindus was the esoteric, jealously guarded preserve of the priesthood or *Brahmins*. The *Kshatriyas*, or warriors, the *Vaisyas*, or merchants, and the *Sudras*, or menials, could not partake of this wisdom; it was exclusively for the Brahman. There was a minor revolt, and Brahma the Creator was petitioned, through Indra – King of the Gods – to invent an art that could be enjoyed by the humblest.

Considering the request reasonable, Brahma went into retreat and, in solitary contemplation, received the inspiration for the Fifth Veda. This new creation was called the *Natya Veda*, or the Book of Knowledge and Drama. It was meant for the delectation of all.

The *Natya Veda* derives its essence from each of the four Vedas, besides being an introduction to a new mode of expression –

Drama. In a way, it is the esoteric knowledge of the priests converted into an exoteric medium. Its components are as follows:

From the *Rig Veda*, or Book of Hymns, it derives its metre that, when hummed or sung in accompaniment to the dancer's movements, can summon the gods to attend the worship of men. From the *Sama Veda*, or Book of Melodies, it has taken enchanting, bewitching music. From the *Yagur Veda*, or Book of Sacrifices, it has adopted the art of *abhinaya*, or mime, through which the dancer can communicate with his audience, whether of gods or of men. Finally, from the *Atharva Veda*, or Book of Spiritual Craft, it has acquired *rasa*, or emotional appeal, and *bhava*, or intellectual appeal, both of which enable the dancer to communicate with all creation.

When Brahma attempted to initiate King Indra into the subtleties of this all-embracing treatise, the King of the Gods found the lore so complicated that he declined the proffered knowledge.

Now, from the abode of gods, the domain of mythology, we must cross the thin borderline into the realm of historical data, according to which Brahma, on Indra's refusal to be instructed, decided to impart the newly devised science to a mortal – the Sage Bharata Muni.

To this sage is attributed the *Natya Shastra*, an enormous work running into thirty-six chapters, treating minutely of dancing, drama, music, grammar, and rhetoric.

Bharata next set about training a group of dancers chosen from the *apsaras*, or celestial dancing girls, and a company of musicians, or *gandharvas*. The first performance of the troupe took place in the presence of Lord Shiva. So impressed was the Divine Dancer with what he saw that he called for his *ganas*, or attendants, and ordered them forthwith to help in putting the finishing touches to the art Bharata had acquired.

It was Tanduv, or Nandikeshwara, who instructed the Sage in the *tandav*, or virile aspects, of the dance art. These vigorous movements are those on which the male dancer must lay stress. The *lasya*, or graceful feminine movements, were imparted to Bharata by Shiva's wife, Parvati. Here, once again, is proof that both *tandav* and *lasya*, or male and female movements, must be acquired in harmony

by every dancer, so as to preserve a balance between vigour and grace.

Parvati also took the beautiful Usha in hand and trained her in the *lasya* aspects of the dance. Usha, in her turn, taught the milkmaids of Dwarakha, and they instructed the maidens of Saurashtra. Thus the art of dancing passed from the gods to man, spreading gradually from land to land, to grace the earth. As Bharata was the first mortal to be initiated into the intricacies of the science of *natya*, or dance-drama, it has now come to be known as *Bharata Natyam*. This term may be applied, in general, to all forms of dancing prevailing in India, whether in the North or the South, the East or the West. However, in recent times, it has come to be applied, in its more restricted sense, to the dances performed in the temples of South India.

Bharata has often been dramatized by authors and playwrights. Kalidasa, one of the *nava ratna*, or Nine Jewels, of the court of King Vikramaditya of the Golden Gupta period, refers to him as the Celestial Playwright in his drama *Vikramorvasi*.

As we have only legend and presumption to go by, we cannot be sure whether it was Bharata who gave his name to the dance art of India after compiling the *Natya Shastra*, or whether it was his proficiency in the arts that won him the name. The Vaishnavite philosopher, Vedanta Desikar, author of the *Sankalpa Suryodaya*, believes that it was due to his mastery of *natya* that Bharata was so called, the name being a combination of the first syllables of the words *bhava* meaning idea, *raga* meaning tune, and *tala* meaning timing.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY

Sprung from the supernatural, associated for ever with the legends of the gods of the Hindu Pantheon, its origin almost obscured in the mists of time, Indian dancing is, in the main, a form of religion. It is worship offered through mime, gesture, and the rhythm of dancing feet. It is for this reason that its purer styles are noted for their grave dignity and austerity.

Bharata's first play at the Court of Indra ended in a fiasco. Its theme was the struggle between demons and deities. While the gods

were well pleased to be painted in rosy tints, the demons were horrified at the lurid overtones in which they were presented. Outraged, they cast their evil spells on the players, who found their senses befogged and themselves deprived of the powers of *natya*.

To this incident dates back the Pole Dance of Indra, its modern counterpart being the chanting of *mantras*, or prayers, before a performance so as to ward off evil. Indra ordered a pole to be wrapped up in cloths of five different colours, each being dedicated to a deity. The first was white for Brahma; next came blue for Vishnu; then green for Shiva; the fourth was red for Kartikeya, the God of War; and last came a multicoloured wrapping for Naga Raj, or King of the Snakes.

Indra's Pole Dance has its counterpart in Western countries, but while revelry and robust fun attend the latter, the former is marked by a singular decorum. The modern Indian dancer substitutes a *puja*, or offering of prayer, for the Pole dance, but the significance remains the same.

From Bharata's *Natya Shastra* it is clear that various styles of dancing existed in India from legendary times, each being, presumably, a modified version of the original. Thus the people of Hastinapur, Panchala, and Kashmir adhered to a form of drama called *Panchala-madhyam*, its name springing from the soil of its birth. In central and eastern India, the Avanti, Malwa, and Sindhu tribes followed the *Avanta* technique. The people of Dakshinapatha, the modern Deccan, favoured their own style called *Dakshinatya*, while the *Oudra-Magadhi* technique flourished among the races of Anga, Nepal, Tamralipta, Astagiri, and Magadha.

Panini, the grammarian who lived almost two thousand five hundred years before Christ, mentions the names of two other dramatists, Shilali and Krishaswa – a proof of the antiquity of the dance-drama of India.

In the Epic Period of Rama and Krishna, *natya* flourished. Hence many of its themes to this day narrate episodes from Valmiki's *Ramayana*, the epic poem of Ram's days. Lord Krishna, yet another incarnation of Vishnu the Preserver, is also a very popular character in dance-drama, wherein he is usually depicted as a playful being

indulging in pranks with the *gopis*, or village maidens, on the banks of the Jumna, or in his love idyll with Radha in the garden of Brindaban (or Vrindavan), while he flaunts a peacock feather in his head-dress and carries a flute in keeping with his calling of cow-herd. The devotional songs dedicated to Krishna by such poets as Vidyapati, Chandidas, Mirabai, and Jayadeva are usually accompanied by dances that follow the verses, often the Vaishnavas, or scholars, themselves dancing as they sing the romantic melodies.

During the days of Buddha, dance-drama flourished, the greatest dramatist of the time being Aswaghosa, while the dancer Ambapalli was also renowned at that time. By the second century A.D., *natya* had a prominent place in the life of the people, despite having, like every art, its detractors. Outstanding among them was Manu the Law Giver, who advised Brahmans to refrain from practising the art.

In the fifth century A.D., during the Golden Gupta Period, the famous *Mahakavi*, or Poet Laureate, Kalidasa, glorified dancing in his dramas *Shakuntala*, *Vikramorvasi*, and others. Indeed the heroine who gives the first-named its title was the offspring of the holy *rishi*, or hermit, Vishwamitra, and the dancing girl Menaka.

Natya declined in popularity after the Gupta Period, but, even so, it was mentioned in famous works such as the *Vishnudharmottaram* of the sixth century A.D. and the *Agnipuranam* of three centuries later. It was at its lowest ebb at the time of the Moghul invasion of North India in the twelfth century.

Until then dancing had been an important part of religious ritual, but amongst the Moghuls, of an alien race and culture, dancing was merely an entertainment. There was now a fusion of the Indian technique and the graceful but flimsy mode of dancing in vogue amongst the Muslims. Thus was inaugurated the Kathak school, which is more sensuous than spiritual.

The South, fortunately, was left unscathed by the Moghul conquest. Hence, Indian dancing at its purest continued to flourish there. The technique was handed down to *nattwanars*, or scholars of dancing, from father to son. In this way, to the present day, the art has been preserved jealously amongst the families of the *Vidwans* Menakshi Sunderam Pillay and the late Ponniah Pillay.

Till recently the South Indian Bharata Natyam had been confined to women only, chiefly *devadasis*, or female temple dancers. These women are the counterparts of the Vestal Virgins of ancient Rome. Like the latter, their lives were originally meant to be dedicated to the gods, but also like the latter their cult degenerated into harlotry.

In recent times male dancers have challenged the monopoly of women in the field of Bharata Natyam. This is as it should be, for we have already seen that the dance art in legend was a blend of *tandav* and *lasya*, vigorous and soft movements.

There was one other part of India that was, at first, spared the Moghul heel. This was Bengal. Here, the *Benisaubar* and *Prasanna Raghab*, both *natya* treatises, were composed just as the conqueror was knocking on the door. But even after the last Hindu ruler of the province had surrendered to the Moghuls, Bengal remained a storehouse of Indian art. Its poets, Vidyapati, Chandidas, and others, kept the flame of Hindu culture burning steadily. Song and dance reached their zenith in the days of Chaitanya, known as the Dancing Saint.

With the advent of the British, dancing, among other arts, suffered a temporary eclipse in the big cities and towns. Alien culture was thrust upon our people to the detriment of our own arts. But in Bengal the poet Tagore kept alive the ancient traditions of art in Shantiniketan, the Abode of Peace, where *guru* and *chela*, master and pupil, drew knowledge from the same fount. In the remote south, in Tanjore and Malabar, amongst the villagers, Bharata Natyam, and Kathakali, the traditional and vigorous dance-drama of Malabar, continued to be practised. The impact of foreign culture often temporarily submerged our arts yet never completely effaced them.

Thus Indian dancing has survived the changing times, century after century. Having its birth in religion, it continues to stir and exalt the spirit. Irrespective of the varied forms it may assume, it will remain, for all time, an expression of Indian religious fervour.

ABHINAYAMKURAM :

THE LANGUAGE OF GESTURES

ONE of the most eloquent of languages is the gesture language defined in Nandikeshwara's *Abhinaya Darpanam* and Bharata's *Natya Shastra*. While the different schools of Indian dancing have different rules, there are some rules that serve as fundamental principles for every technique.

NATYADHARMA AND LOKADHARMA

Dharma means 'code'. *Natyadharmā* and *Lokadharmā* are the principal codes of the Indian dance-drama.

1. *Natyadharmā* is a code or rule of conduct for the artist. It teaches him deportment and how to create sincere appreciation in the audience, not of himself but rather of the purport of the drama.

2. *Lokadharmā* is subsidiary to *natyadharmā*. This code exhorts the player to employ realism for the purpose of swaying his audience. Thus he is called upon not merely to feign sorrow but to work up his emotions to a pitch that will produce genuine grief with its concomitants of real tears and a brow furrowed with anguish.

The chief difference between *natyadharmā* and *lokadharmā* is that the former advocates imaginativeness, the latter realism.

Natya demands of the spectator a basic knowledge of its technique as well as a grounding in Hindu culture, so that he may interpret the drama for himself rather than accept literally the interpretation offered from the stage.

ABHINAYA

There are, in all, four types of dramatic expression derived from the four Vedas and based on the four planes:

1. *Vachik abhinaya*, or verbal expression, such as dialogue in drama. Origin: *The Rig Veda*, or Book of Hymns. Plane: The Audible.

2. *Sattwik abhinaya*, or the interpretation of moods. Origin: *The Atharva Veda*, or Book of Charms. Plane: The Astral.

3. *Angik abhinaya*, or bodily movements, such as action and mime. Origin: *The Yagur Veda*, or Book of Sacrifices. Plane: The Divine.

4. *Abaryya abhinaya*, or decorative effect, such as décor and lighting. Origin: *The Sama Veda*, or Book of Melodies. Plane: The Visual.

COMBINATIONS OF ABHINAYA

There are three forms of *abhinaya*:

(a) *Natya*, or dance-drama, runs the entire gamut of *abhinaya*, including dialogue, interpretation of moods and mime, music, and décor. Thus it covers all the four planes, and endeavours to cause elation in the audience by a blend of aesthetic and physical appeal, stirring the innermost feelings ('built on the heart itself') and enabling the onlooker to extract the fullest joy from the beauty of art and, through it, of life to which it holds a mirror. Only when this subconscious participation in the drama has been evoked can *natya* be said to fulfil its rightful purpose.

(b) *Nrta* is rigid stylization consisting of pure dance movements evoking neither mood nor sentiment. It belongs to the realm of *angik abhinaya* alone, and is thus on the divine plane. The *Alarippu* with which every Bharata Natyam performance opens, and the *Jethiswaram* which follows it, both fall into this category, as do the *Kathakali Thodyyam* and *Purrapadu*.

(c) *Nrtya* is a combination of both *rasa*, or sentiment, and *bhava*, or mood. It is that which produces aesthetic delight in dance-drama. It embraces the *sattwik*, *angik*, and to a lesser extent the *abaryya abhinaya* on the astral, divine, and visual planes.

Natya, *nrta*, and *nrtya* are considered to be potent enough to satisfy a man's *artha* (intellect), his *dharma* (in this context, material self) and his *kama* (emotions).

NRTYA: AN ANALYSIS

Let us examine the three chief features of *nrtya*:

1. The *Sattwik abhinaya* (astral plane).
2. The *Angik abhinaya* (divine plane).
3. The *Aharyya abhinaya* (visual plane).

1. *Sattwik Abhinaya*

Sprung from the Atharva Veda, or Book of Witchcraft, the *sattwik abhinaya* consists of two elements complementary to each other: (a) *Rasa*, or emotional flavour; (b) *Bhava*, or a mood to suit a particular emotion.

RASAS: The primary and most important requirement of *nrtya* (and of *natya* too) is *rasa*, which may be interpreted as emotional flavour or sentiment. The artist must seek to arouse this ecstasy in the spectators so that his emotions and theirs may fuse and become attuned to the spirit of the drama. However, this 'oneness', as we may term it, can be achieved only if the audience itself is keyed to the same pitch as the player. Hence it is laid down that the spectator himself must be *rasa*-conscious, having a knowledge and understanding of the philosophy of the Hindu Pantheon wherein all gods and all creation are part of the Divine Essence – in other words, one with the Creator. *Rasa*, or emotional fusion of the artist and the audience, is comparable with Brahmananda, or Oneness with Brahma the Supreme.

The arousing of *rasa* is described in Nandikeshwara's *Abhinaya Darpanam* as follows: 'Where the hands go, the eyes follow; where go the eyes, there the mind; where the mind is, there is feeling; where there is feeling, there is mood, or *bhava*.' Translated into simpler terms, this means that the arabesques and gestures of the dancer's hands hold the gaze of the spectators whose minds, being carried away by the lively gesture play, become exalted to a mood of rapture.

BHAVAS: While *rasa* is the primary feature of *nrtya*, *bhava* is the secondary and complementary feature. The main difference between the two is that while *rasa* depends purely on imaginative trans-

figuration, *bhava* is more earthly, for it is concerned with creating a mood through physical media.

Rasas express the beginning of a sentiment while *bhavas* complete or round it off either through the agency of *mana*, the brain, or of the *sharira*, the body, or through an action such as the throwing of a stone.

Bhavas may be of four kinds:

(a) *Vibhava*, which is again subdivided into *abalambanam*, and its accessory *udipan*. Thus, love in the Radha-Krishna dance may be expressed through the former, while the latter helps the mood with the external aid of a moonlight setting.

(b) *Anubhava* expresses the effect of a mood such as the ravages of anger or sorrow, or the rapture of love.

(c) *Vyavicharibhava* pertains to temporary changes of settings to fit in with the mood of a particular scene.

(d) *Sattwikbhava* consists of eight standardized movements to express such emotions as joy, fear, or disgust.

RASAS AND BHAVAS: THEIR CONNECTION: Every *rasa* has its accompanying *bhava*. Altogether there are nine *rasas*, or sentiments, with an equal number of complementary moods:

| <i>Rasa</i> (Sentiment) | <i>Bhava</i> (Mood) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Sringara</i> (Eroticism) | <i>Rati</i> (Love) |
| 2. <i>Raudra</i> (Fury) | <i>Krodha</i> (Anger) |
| 3. <i>Veera</i> (Valour) | <i>Utasha</i> (Bravery) |
| 4. <i>Hasya</i> (Satire) | <i>Hasya</i> (Mirth) |
| 5. <i>Karuna</i> (Pathos) | <i>Soka</i> (Compassion) |
| 6. <i>Vibhatsa</i> (Disgust) | <i>Jugupsa</i> (Aversion) |
| 7. <i>Adbhuta</i> (Wonderment) | <i>Ascharya</i> (Amazement) |
| 8. <i>Bhayanaka</i> (Fear) | <i>Bhaya</i> (Fright) |
| 9. <i>Shanta</i> (Serenity) | <i>Shama</i> (Peace) |

Arjuna Kirata, the famous Kathakali drama based on an episode from the *Mahabharata*, provides an excellent illustration of the connection between *rasa* and *bhava*:

The warrior Arjuna, perceiving one of the Kauravas from the enemy side kick his son, who has been fatally wounded, is seized

with fury. Here the player enacting the role of Arjuna assumes the *raudra rasa*, a look of anger. He knits his brow, the pupils of his eyes dilate, he gnashes his teeth. Holding aloft his bow in his left hand (the *sikbara mudra*), he aims arrow after arrow with the right hand (*kapittha mudra*). The action clearly indicates the mood of *krodha*, or anger, which is complementary to the *raudra rasa*.

It is interesting to note how each of the *rasas* is registered on the dancer's countenance:

The *sringara rasa* involves side glances and a look of intense affection suggestive of love or carnal passion.

The *raudra rasa* consists of lifted brow, widened eyes with dilating pupils, and the gnashing of teeth to indicate wrath.

The *veera rasa* is adopted by widening the eyes and assuming a look of dignity while the head is tossed back in a noble manner.

The *hasya rasa* is denoted by a supercilious glance through narrowed slits, the eyebrows being arched and the head slightly tossed in disdain.

The *karuna rasa* consists of glances out of the corner of the eye and a look of tenderness to suggest compassion.

The *vibhatsa rasa* makes the player contract his eyes, lower his chin, pout his lips, and curl them in a gesture of contempt.

The *adbhuta rasa* involves arching of brows and a tremulous smile on the lips, the whole face expressing pleased amazement.

The *bhayanaka rasa* is assumed by rolling the eyes from side to side, dilating the nostrils, and sharply jerking the head and neck to suggest fear.

The *shanta rasa* is expressed by a peaceful look, with eyes shut or turned heavenwards. The whole attitude is one of calm.

2. *Angik Abhinaya*

The *angik abhinaya*, derived from the Yagur Veda, or Book of Sacrifices, portray actions and reflect emotions through movements of the three different parts of the body:

(a) *Anga*, or major portions, including the hands, flanks, legs, head, hips, and chest.

(b) *Pratyanga*, or intermediate parts, such as the neck, shoulders, back, stomach, elbows, thighs, knees, and ankles.

(c) *Upanga*, or minor portions, such as the lips, the mouth, the teeth, the tongue, the nose, the cheeks, and the eyes.

The movements of these various parts are correlated so that when the *anga* move, the *pratyanga* and *upanga* follow suit.

Angik abhinaya is the technique most frequently employed in the dance passages of *nrtya*, either in its natural or theatrical (artificial) movements.

There are three subdivisions of the *angik abhinaya*:

1. *Ankur* movements that include the *rechaka* (movements) of the head, the *dristi*, or glances of the eyes, the movement of the eyebrows and the eyelids, the *addiyam* of the neck, the *rechaka* of the cheeks, the chin, the lips, the face, or movements of any of the intermediary parts of the body such as the shoulders, the waist, or the stomach. Positions of the feet are also included here.

2. *Nrtta*, or standardized movements and poses as, for instance, the various postures for deities to suggest meditation or spiritual calm. There are the *brahmari*, or spiral movements, the *utplavana*, or leaping movements, and the *chari* and *gati*, or gait movements.

3. *Shakha*, or hand movements.

Hasta mudra, or gestures of the hands, play a very important part in Indian dancing. They symbolize either an emotion, a mood, or some object or animal or person. The two most important varieties are:

(a) *Asamyukta*, or single-hand gestures.

(b) *Samyukta*, or double-hand gestures.

Life is imparted to the *hasta mudra* by what are termed the *hasta prana*, literally meaning 'the breath of life'. *Prana* are of several kinds:

Prerita: Fingers turned backwards.

Prasarana, or *Prasarita*: Palm outspread, fingers relaxed or separated.

Kuncita: Fingers curved inward.

Recita: Hand rotating on the forearm.

Punkhita: Hands trembling.

Udvestita: Palm turned upward.

Apavestita: Palm turned downward.

Vyavrtta: Sweeping movement from the wrist.

Bhujanga: Snaky movements of the hands.

These *prana* serve to impregnate the hand gestures with meaning and purpose.

ASAMYUKTA, OR SINGLE-HAND GESTURES: Though the *Natya Shastra* and the *Abhinaya Darpanam* limit themselves to twenty-six and twenty-eight gestures respectively, several more have crept in, swelling the number to thirty. We shall here merely group and name them without detailed descriptions. Examples of how *mudra* may be used to represent various objects are given with each group.

Group I

This group consists of eight *mudras*, whose basic sign is the *Pataka hasta* with the hand held upright, fingers fully extended, and the thumb bent to touch the base of the forefinger as shown in the bottom right-hand photograph on page 93. The other *mudras* are variations of this gesture.

1. *Pataka Hasta* (Flag)
2. *Tripataka Hasta* (Flag in three parts)
3. *Ardha-pataka Hasta* (Half-flag)
4. *Mayura Hasta* (Peacock)
5. *Kartari-mukha Hasta* (Arrow-shaft)
6. *Ardha-Chandra Hasta* (Half-moon)
7. *Suka-tunda Hasta* (Parrot's beak)
8. *Arala Hasta* (Bent or crooked hand)

Examples:

Let us take the basic sign, the *Pataka Hasta*, to illustrate the use of the hands in this group. This particular *mudra* can represent the wind; the abode of the gods; a year; a river; the bosom; holding a sword; beckoning; blessing; and various other actions and objects. It is the position of the hand and its *hasta prana*, i.e. the manner in which the hand is moved or kept still, that indicates the exact meaning of the *mudra*.

The conventional Nataraja pose described in the first chapter shows Shiva's lower right hand in the *pataka* gesture held upright in benediction. In the Kathakali representation of an elephant, the right hand in the *pataka* gesture, held above the head, simulates the flapping of the beast's ear, while the left hand in the same gesture with the palm turned inward and near the waist, suggests the elephant's trunk. This will show what vastly different meanings the same *mudra* may assume with alteration in position and movement.

Group II

The basic sign of this group is the *Musti*, or fist, in which all the fingers are folded, with the thumb resting on the back of them, as depicted in the bottom left-hand photograph on page 90.

1. *Musti Hasta* (Fist)
2. *Sikhara Hasta* (Spire)
3. *Kataka Hasta* (Crab)
4. *Kapittha Hasta* (Wood-apple)
5. *Chandra-kala Hasta* (Digit of the moon)
6. *Suchi Hasta* (Needle)
7. *Tamara-kuda Hasta* (Cock's comb)
8. *Kataka-mukha Hasta* (Crab-face)

Examples:

Again let us take the basic sign of this group to indicate how the gesture may be used. The *musti hasta* may imply a wrathful mood; gripping of the hair; holding reins; or carrying a shield.

A warrior on a battlefield may be shown with his right hand folded in the *musti* gesture and shaken vigorously to indicate his anger against the foe and a threat of revenge. Again, if both the hands assume the same gesture near the waist, they indicate a driver holding the reins of a horse. Once again, it is the position of the hands which changes the meaning.

Group III

The *padmakosa hasta* is the basic sign of this group. It consists of a hollowed palm with fingers slightly apart and cupped. The remaining gestures in the group are variations.

1. *Padmakosa Hasta* (Lotus-bud)
2. *Mukula Hasta* (Flower-bud)
3. *Ardha-suchi Hasta* (Half-needle)
4. *Alapadma Hasta* (Full-blown lotus)
5. *Bhramahara Hasta* (Bee)
6. *Chatura Hasta* (Four-fingered)
7. *Sarpa-sirsa Hasta* (Snake's hood)
8. *Mrga-sirsa Hasta* (Deer)
9. *Simha-mukha Hasta* (Lion's face)
10. *Bana Hasta* (Arrow)
11. *Palli Hasta* (Village)
12. *Hamsasya Hasta* (Swan's bill)
13. *Hamsapaksa Hasta* (Parrot's beak)
14. *Langula* or *Kangula Hasta* (Tail)
15. *Urna-nabha Hasta* (Spider)
16. *Samdamsa Hasta* (Tongs)
17. *Trisula Hasta* (Trident)
18. *Byaghra Hasta* (Tiger)

Examples:

The basic sign of the *padmakosa hasta* can indicate the opening of a lotus; picking up food; strewing flowers.

When a dancer describes a flower bud, he begins with the *mukula hasta* (2), and then indicates its gradual opening with the *padmakosa hasta* (1). If the flower were a lotus, the *alapadma* gesture (4) would follow to suggest the full-blown water-lily. The *padmakosa hasta* of a cupped hand is also used to suggest the picking up of food prior to carrying it to the mouth.

From the examples given, and after a careful study of the photographs on pages 83 to 96, it will be clear that each of the foregoing gestures conveys various meanings depending on the position and manner in which it is used. One more example will suffice: The right hand in the *sikhara mudra* (Group II), poised near the navel, symbolizes Shiva; raised to shoulder level, it implies 'Where?' An alteration in the position of the hand, with no change in the gesture itself, has changed its meaning completely.

SAMYUKTA, OR DOUBLE-HAND GESTURES: Double-hand gestures are, in some cases, a combination of single-hand *mudras*, while in others they are entirely new symbols. The *Natya Shastra* describes only thirteen double-hand gestures and the *Abhinaya Darpanam* refers to twenty-three. The number has since increased. Here are twenty-three such gestures.

1. *Anjali Hasta* (Hands joined)
2. *Swastika Hasta* (Cross)
3. *Kapota Hasta* (Dove)
4. *Dola Hasta* (Swing)
5. *Karkata Hasta* (Crab)
6. *Puspaputa Hasta* (Flower basket)
7. *Shivalinga Hasta* (Phallus)
8. *Katakavardhana Hasta* (Mating)
9. *Utsanga Hasta* (Embrace)
10. *Kartarismastika Hasta* (Crossed scissors)
11. *Sankha Hasta* (Conch)
12. *Sakhata Hasta* (Car)
13. *Samputa Hasta* (Casket)
14. *Chakra Hasta* (Disc)
15. *Pasa Hasta* (Noose)
16. *Matsya Hasta* (Fish)
17. *Kilala Hasta* (Link)
18. *Kurma Hasta* (Tortoise)
19. *Garuda Hasta* (Eagle)
20. *Varaha Hasta* (Boar)
21. *Bherunda Hasta* (A pair of birds)
22. *Nagabhandha Hasta* (A pair of serpents)
23. *Khatva Hasta* (Cot)

Examples:

A few examples will illustrate the use of double-hand gestures:

(a) When the dancer joins his hands in the *anjali samyukta* opposite the breast it denotes salutation to a Brahmin. The same gesture near the face indicates respect paid to a *guru*, or master. If the hands are thus poised near the head, the action implies invocation of the gods.

(b) The *bherunda hasta* (two *kapittha* hands with the tip of the forefinger resting on top of the thumb and the remaining fingers bent inwards, the hands facing each other in front) indicates a pair of birds in dalliance.

(c) The *shivalinga hasta* consists of the right hand in the *sikhara mudra* with the fingers folded inwards and the thumb raised, the base of the hand thus folded resting on the palm of the left hand, the fingers of which are extended horizontally, while the thumb is stretched out. This double-hand gesture symbolizes Shiva's phallus.

(d) The *matsya samyukta*, with the palm of one hand placed on the back of the other, with the thumbs outstretched, signifies a fish.

A more detailed description of these hand gestures, both single and double, cannot be given in a work of the present length. Here we have tried to explain how varied and intricate is the use of *mudras* in Indian dancing. It is this symbolic use of the hands that makes *natya* so rich a lore and so precise a science.

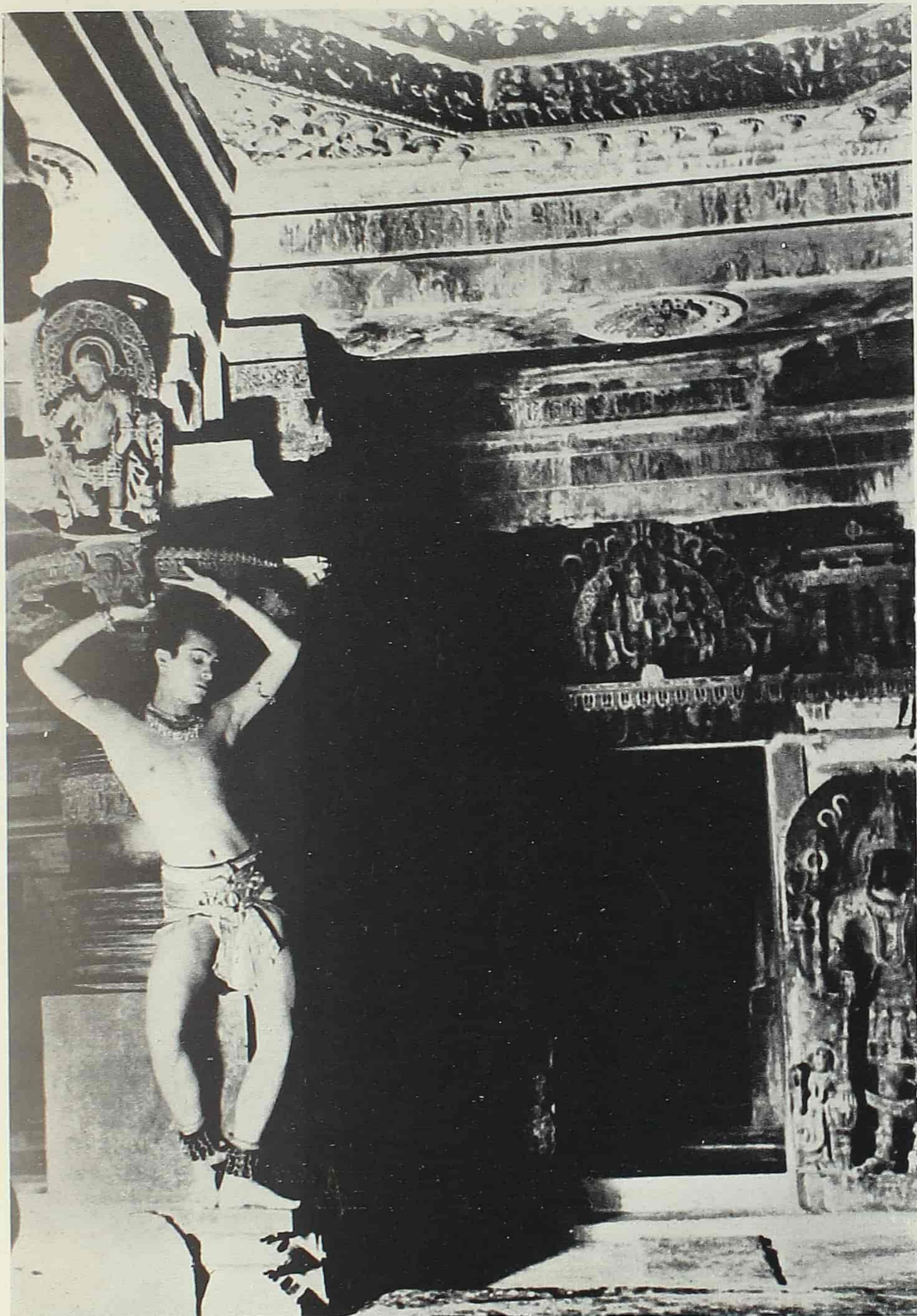
3. *Abharyya Abhinaya*

We now turn to the third and last subdivision of *nrtya* – the *abharyya abhinaya*, which covers the visual plane as opposed to the astral and divine planes of the former two.

Indian dance-drama embodies a harmonious blend of all the arts – acting, dancing, painting, singing, and music. In the *abhinaya* instrumental in achieving this concord, the *abharyya abhinaya* plays a secondary but important role. It aids the presentation of a performance with: (a) Background, or décor. (b) Make-up. (c) Music.

BACKGROUND: Decoration creates the right atmosphere for a dance number. It forges a link between drawing, painting, and the kindred arts, such as dancing and music.

Just as an audience is called upon to be *rasa*-conscious, so must the stage designer have a basic knowledge of the dance technique for which he designs the sets. To create the background for Bharata Natyam, for instance, he must know something about the architectural intricacies of South Indian temples, while for Kathak sets he should have an appreciation of Moghul miniatures and Kangara



Ram Gopal dancing in the temple of Belur, Mysore State. He was the first dancer to perform there for centuries, thus reviving a custom inaugurated by the great Hoysala king and patron of the dance, Vishnuvardana, and his queen, who built the temple a thousand years ago

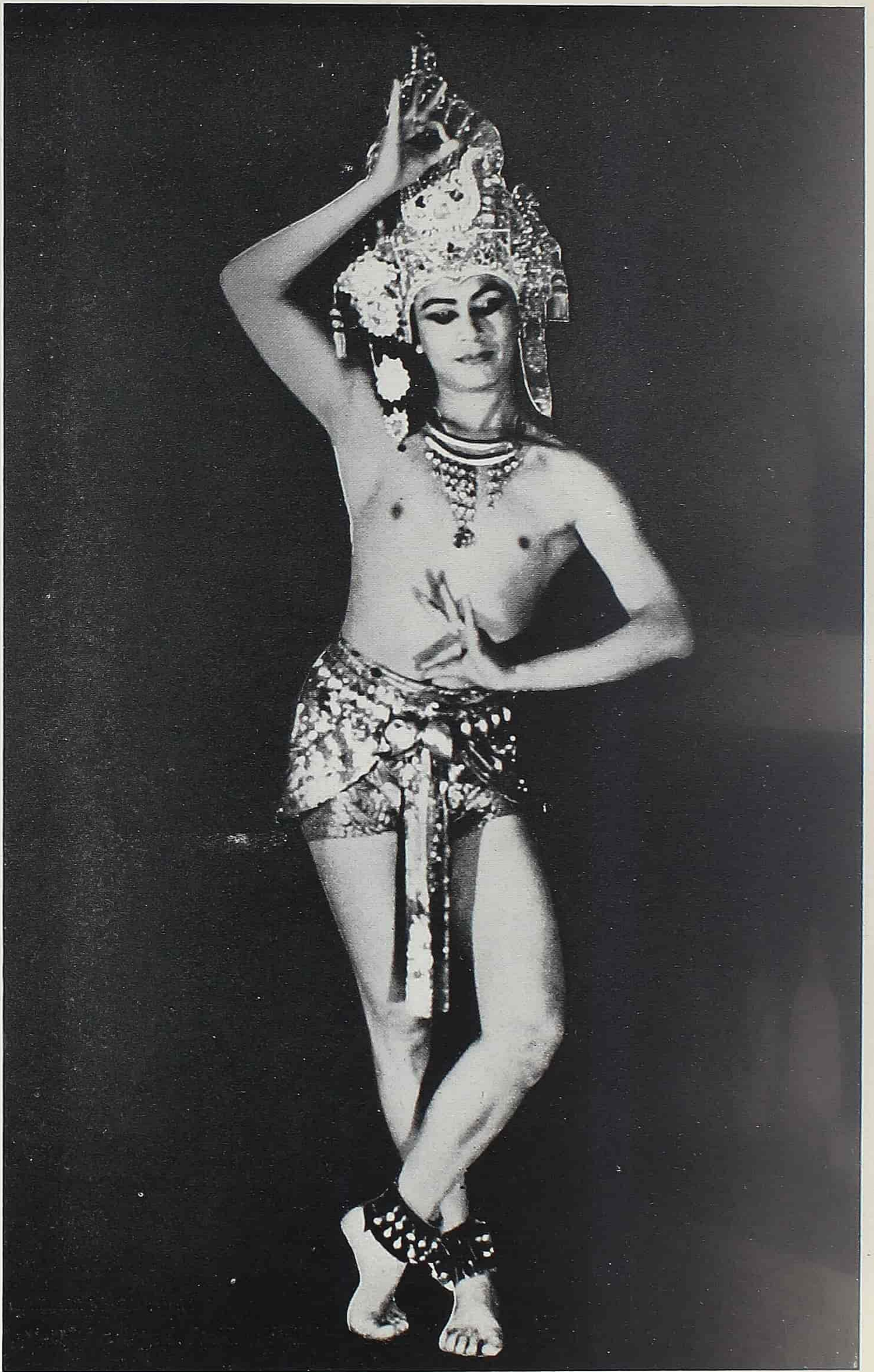


Ram Gopal as King Klana in a Javanese dance. The art of dancing in Java is a very old one and traces its origin to India



Photo: Edward Mandinian

*Ram Gopal as Aja, a young Rajput Prince, in the North Indian Kathak style of dancing,
from his ballet 'The Rajput Serenade of Love'*



Ram Gopal in a sculpturesque dance pose

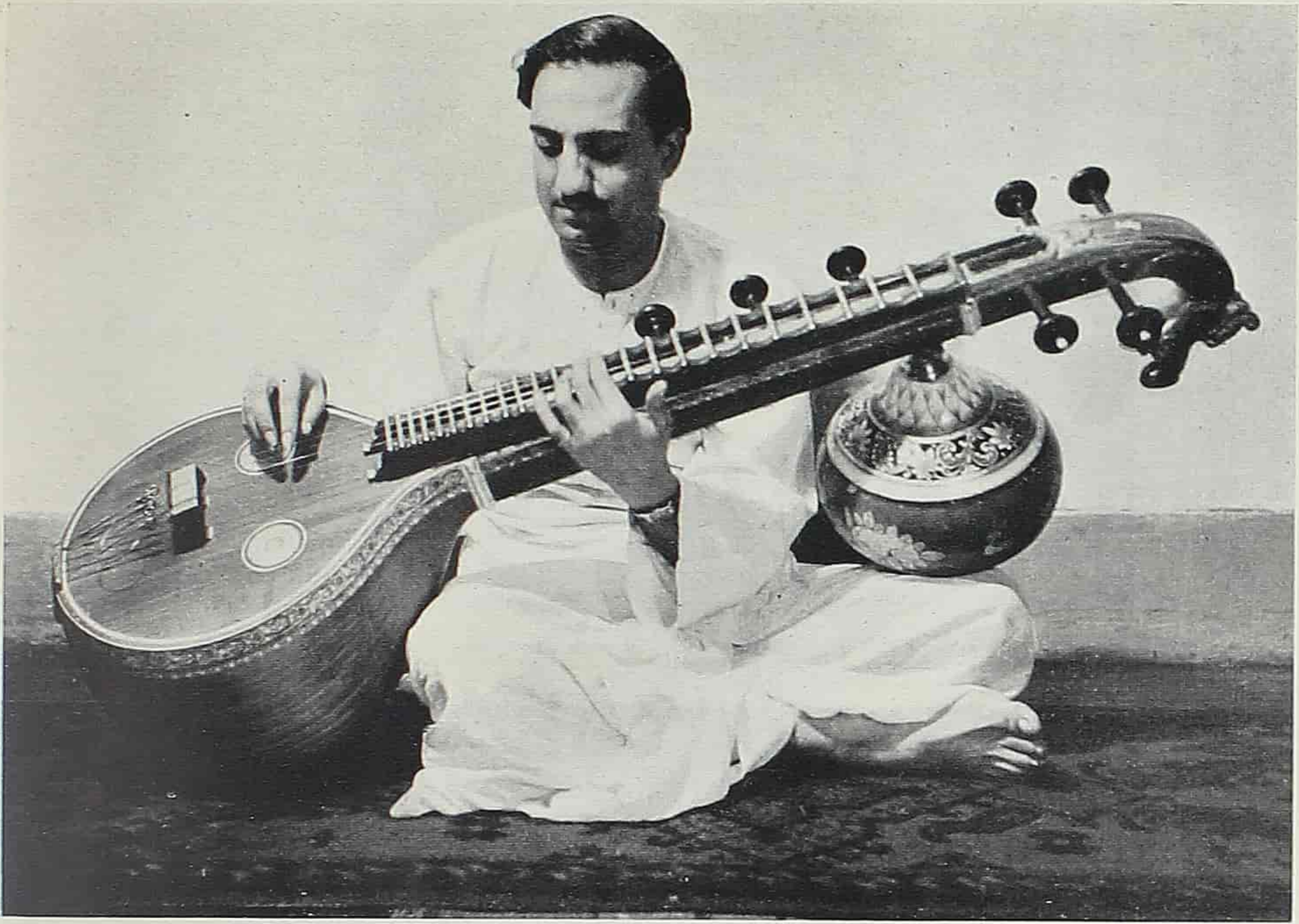


Photo: Jansz

The veena, oldest of stringed instruments, associated with Sarasvati, goddess of music and learning

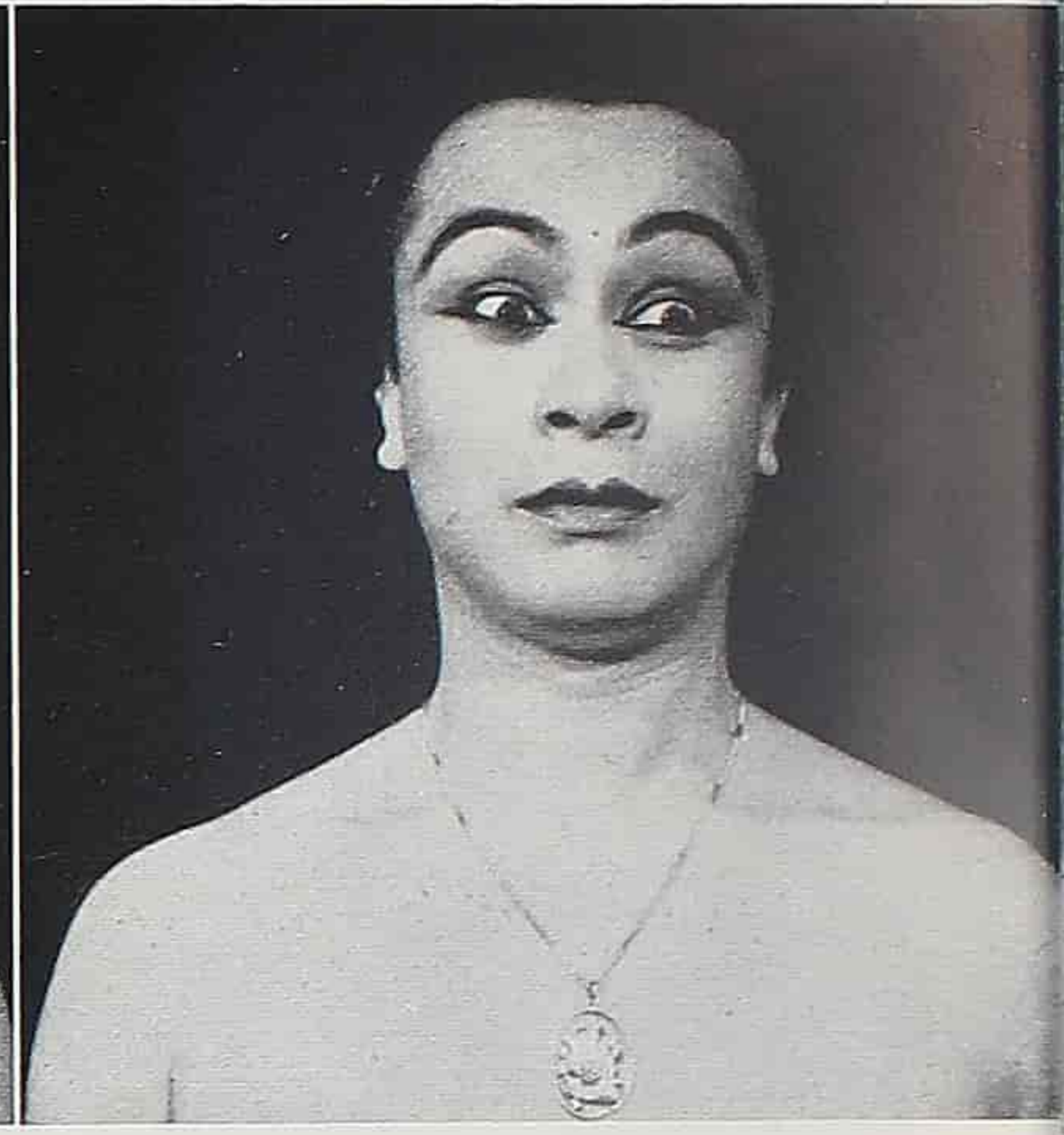


Photo: Jansz

Left to right, the mridangam (or drums), the flute, and the veena. The drummer beats out his rhythms to the pace set by the dancer, improvising various 'thekas', or expressions, with his sticks, palms, fingers, and sometimes even his elbows. Indian music has its origin in religion, and each of the basic notes is supposed to be presided over by a deity



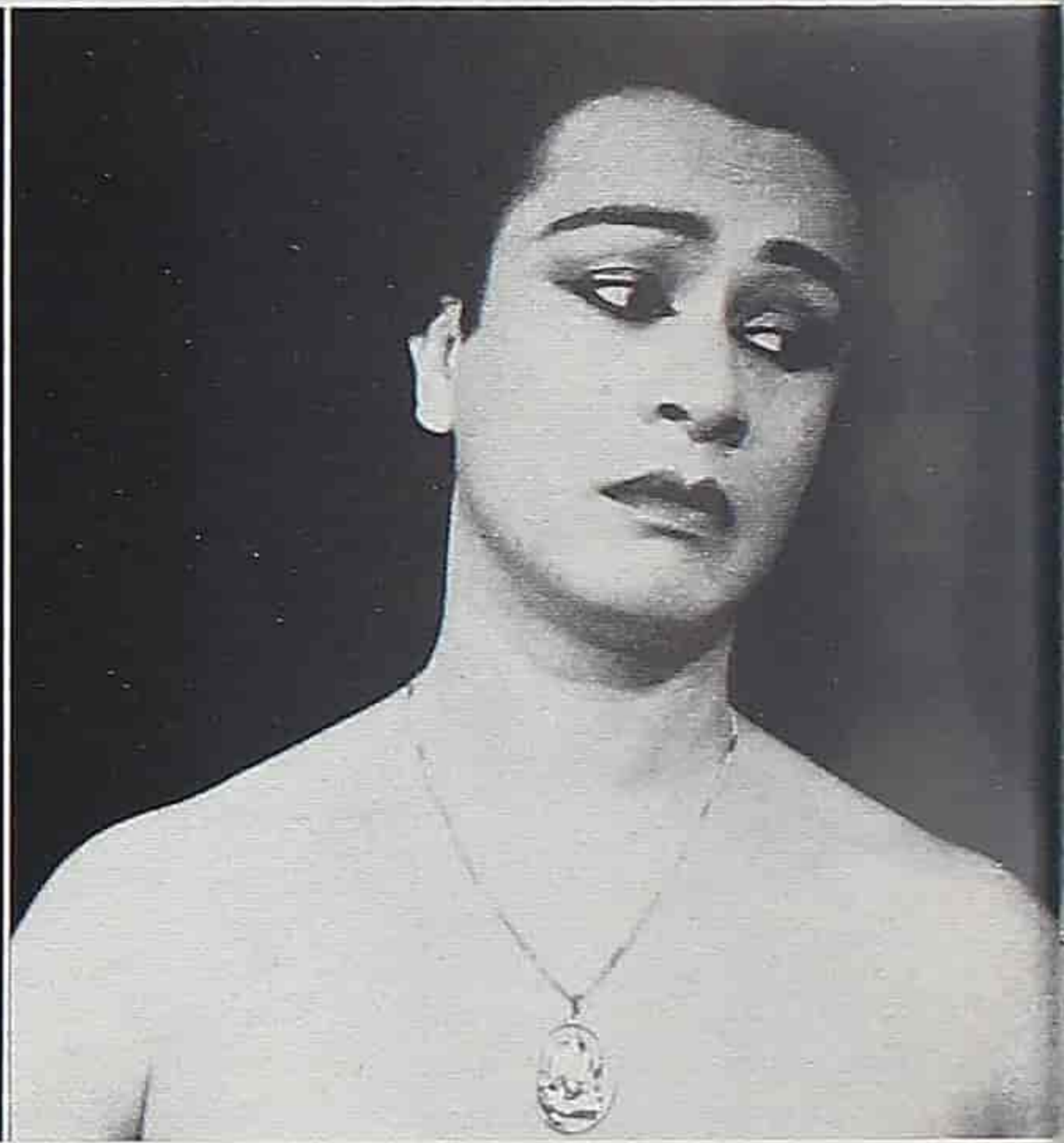
SRINGARA [*Love*]



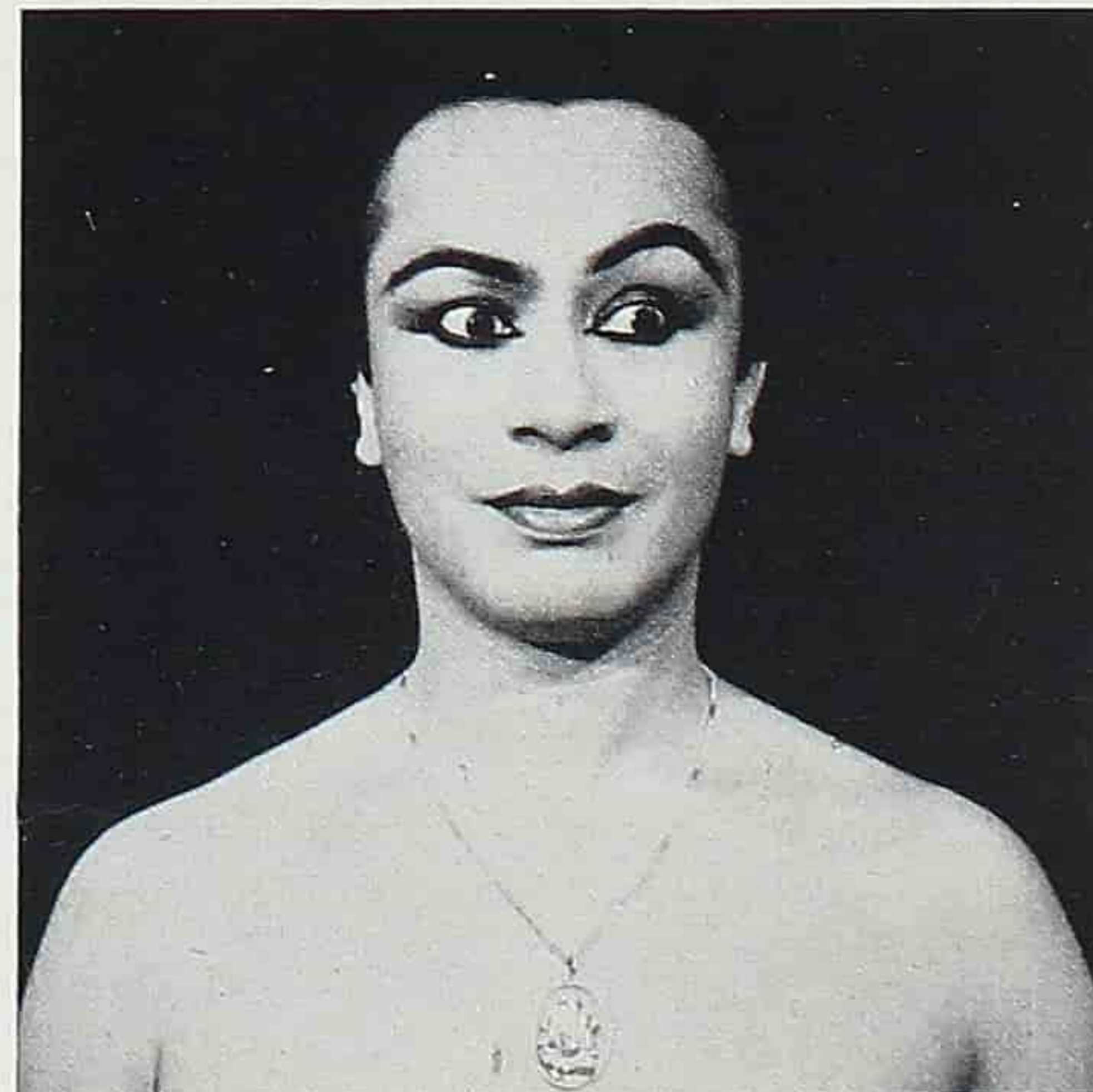
RAUDRA [*Fury*]



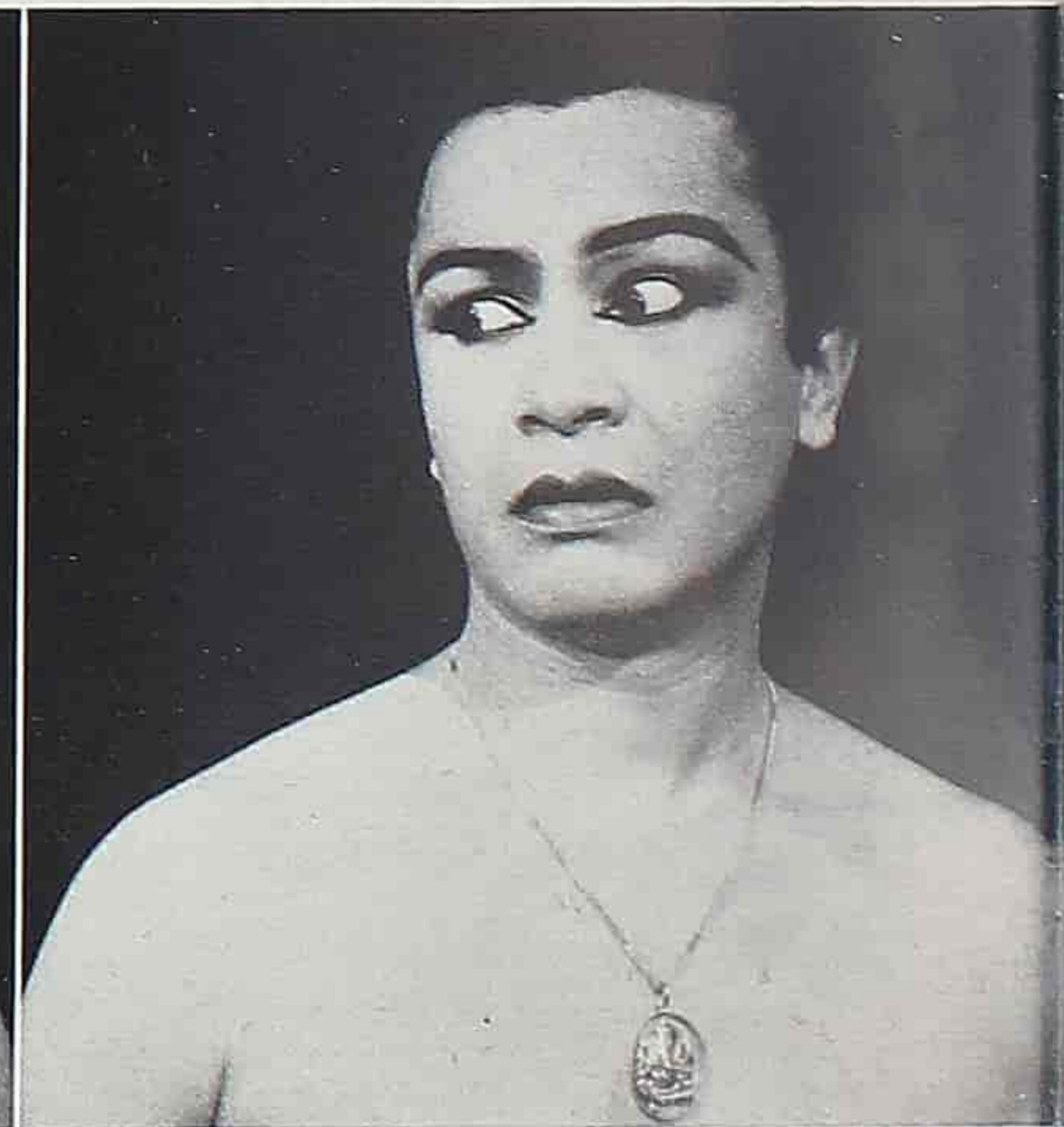
HASYA [*Satire*]



KARUNA [*Pathos*]



ADBHUTA [*Wonderment*]



BHAYANAKA [*Fear*]

THE NINE RASAS OR SENTIMENTS

In all Indian dancing facial expression plays a prominent part, since it is used to convey the sentiment of the theme being danced. There are nine *rasas*, or sentiments, each of which has its accompanying mood. A *rasa* is modified to suit the situation. For example, the *sringara rasa* varies slightly according to whether it is depicting divine, parental, or conjugal love, or the solely erotic mood of Kama, God of Love.

The *sringara rasa* involves side glances and a look of intense affection suggestive of love or carnal passion.

The *raudra rasa* consists of lifted brow, widened eyes with dilating pupils, and the gnashing of teeth to indicate wrath.

The *veera rasa* is adopted by widening the eyes and assuming a look of dignity, while the head is tossed back in a noble manner.

The *hasya rasa* is denoted by a supercilious glance beneath lowered lids, the eyebrows being arched and the head slightly tossed in disdain.

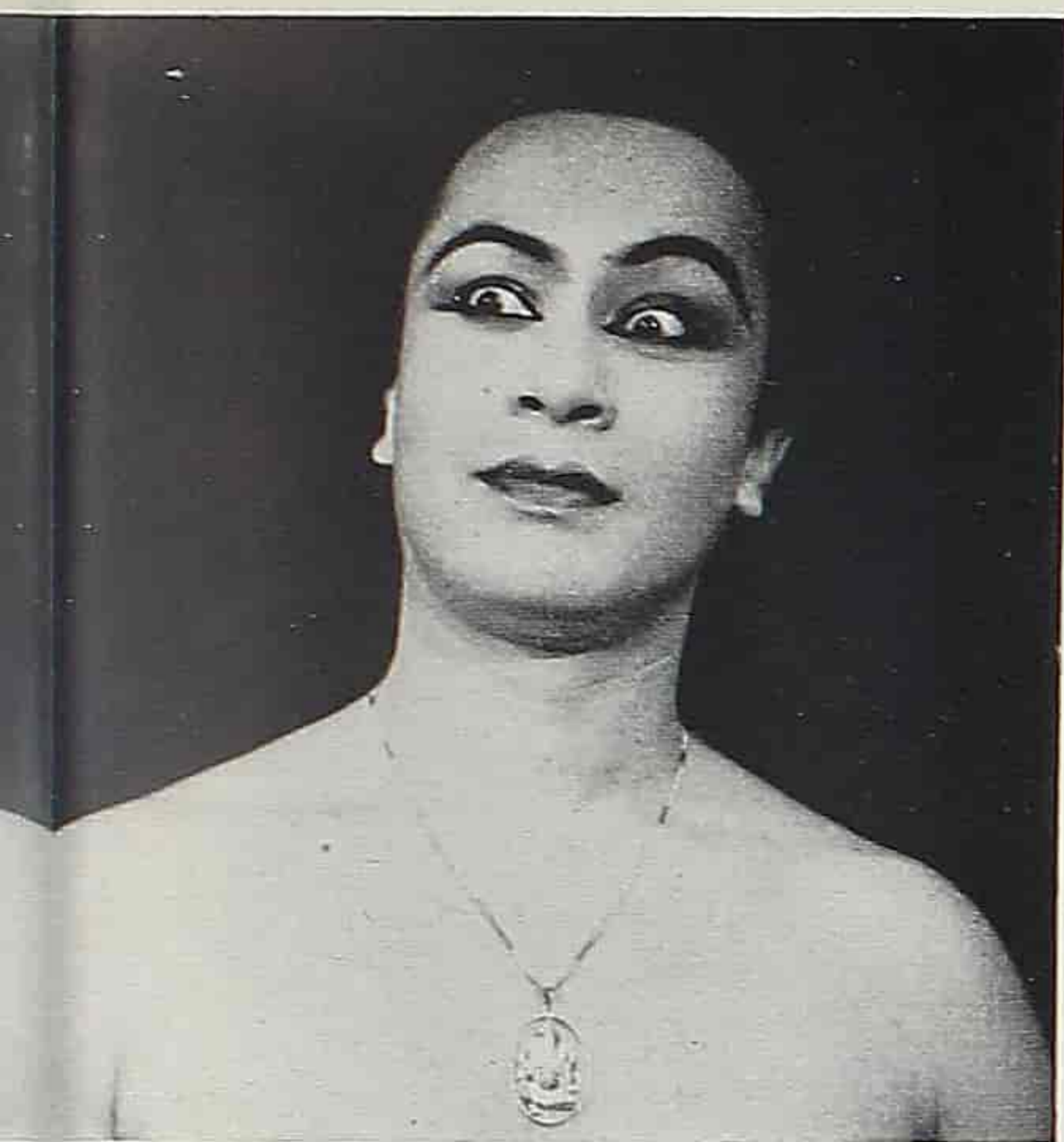
The *karuna rasa* consists of glances out of the corner of the eye and a look of tenderness to suggest compassion.

The *vibhatsa rasa* makes the player contract his eyes, lower his chin, pout his lips, and curl them in a gesture of contempt.

The *adbhuta rasa* involves arching of brows and a tremulous smile on the lips, the whole face expressing pleased amazement.

The *bhayanaka rasa* is assumed by rolling the eyes from side to side, dilating the nostrils, and sharply jerking the head and neck to suggest fear.

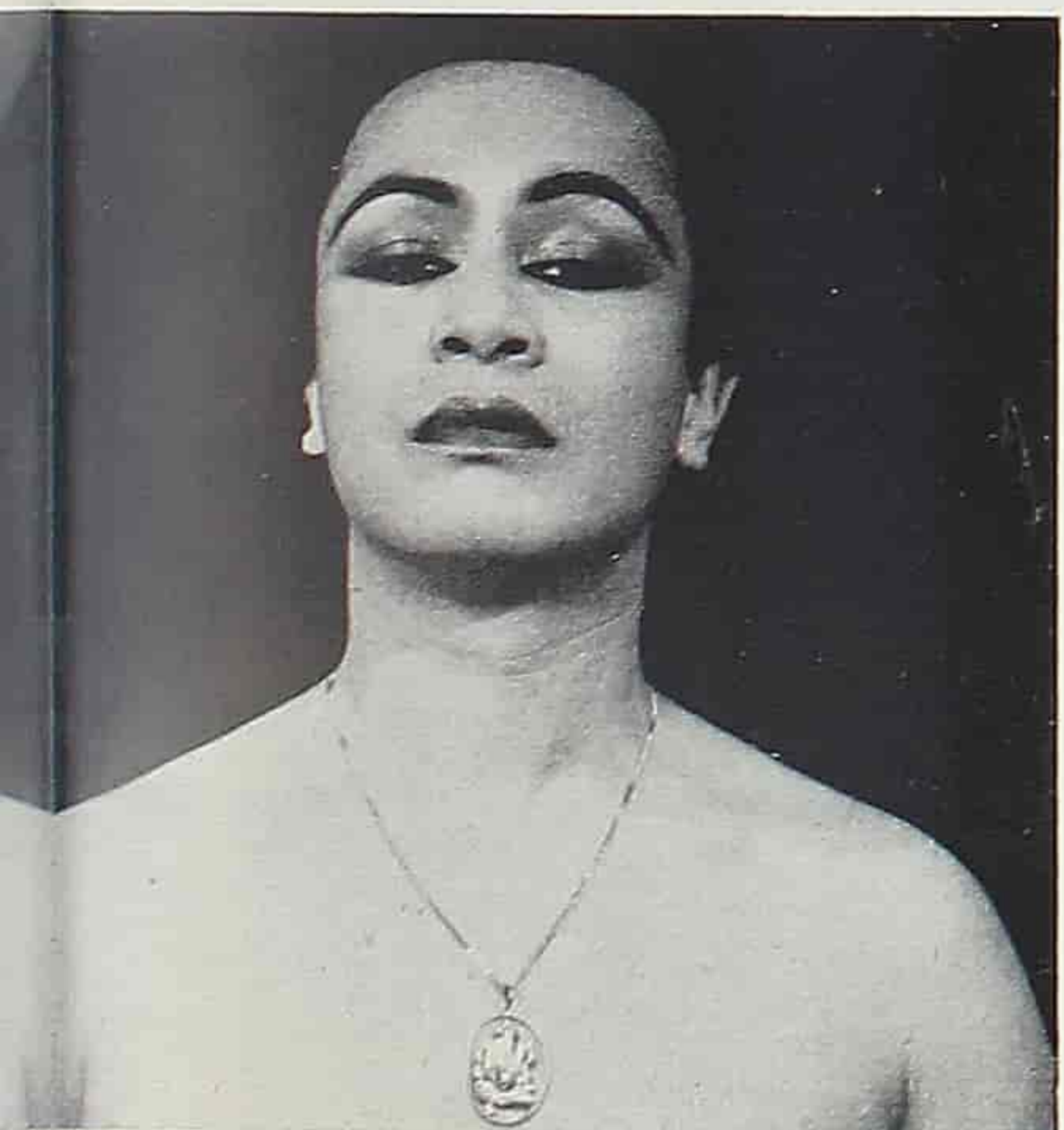
The *shanta rasa* is expressed by a peaceful look, with eyes shut or turned heavenwards. The whole attitude is one of calm.



VEERA [*Valour*]



VIBHATSA [*Disgust*]



SHANTA [*Serenity*]



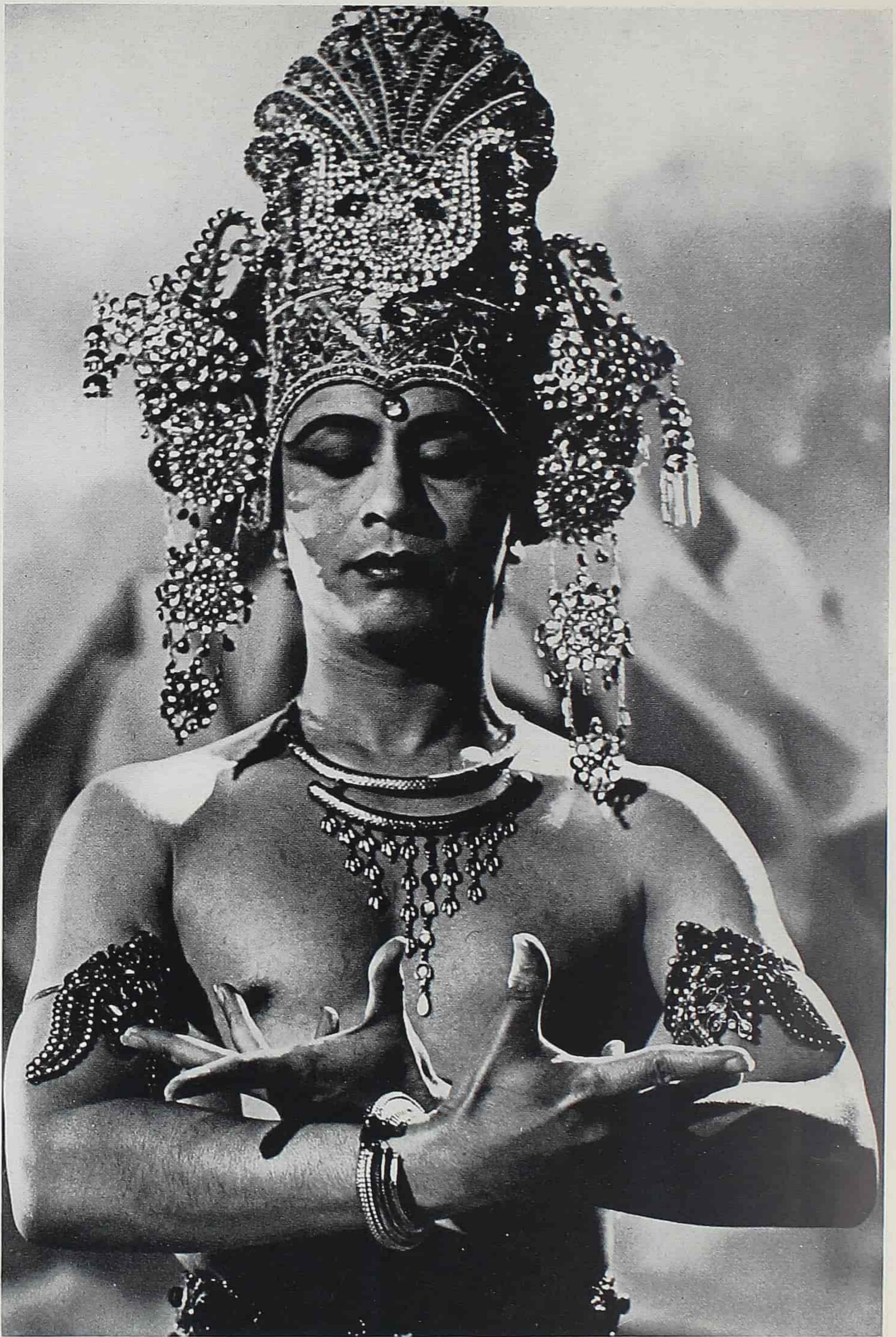
Ram Gopal as Shiva and a former pupil and partner as Parvati, performing a Bharata Natyam dance in which the lyrical 'sringara', or love sentiment, is portrayed



A fresco painting from the great Shiva temple at Tanjore, depicting a young man and two 'devadasis' (dancing girls) performing the sacred flower dance to a deity. The dance pose is used in the present vocabulary of Bharata Natyam. The two musicians, on the right, keep time with the traditional cymbals and 'mridangam' (drums)



Ram Gopal as Krishna, the Blue God, 'Lord of Love, and jewel of the passionate', playing the Divine Melody on his flute



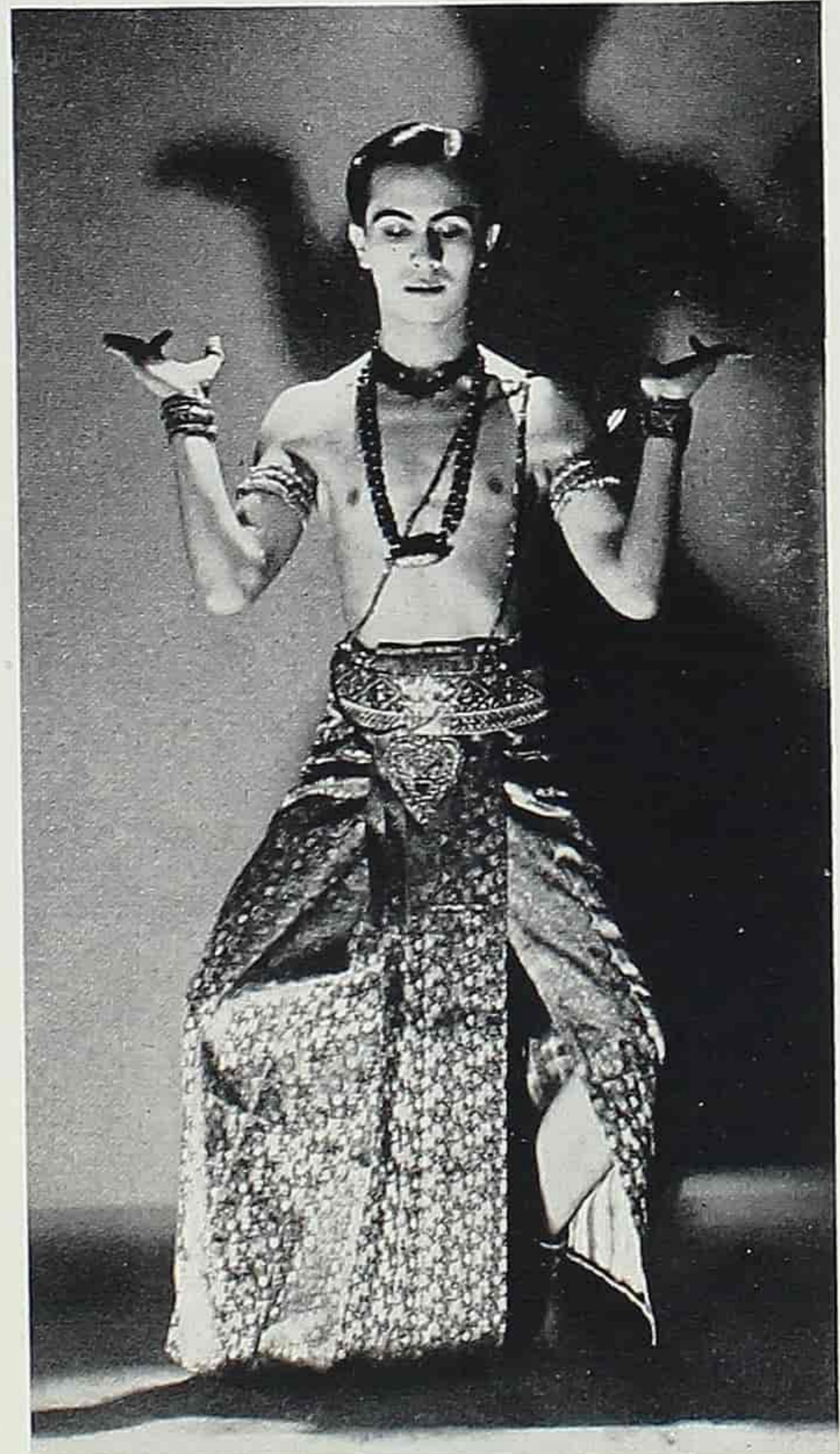
By courtesy Dui Ltd., from the film 'Our India'. Photo: Colin Tait

Ram Gopal in the Cosmic Dance of Shiva, depicting creation, which is symbolized by the gesture of 'alapadama' – the opening of a lotus flower. The 'rasa' is 'adbhuta', or wonderment, and shows the gentler aspects of Shiva, as he slowly rises and performs his Dance of the Setting Sun, to the music of flute, veena, and drums, and the chanting of hymns



Photo: Baron

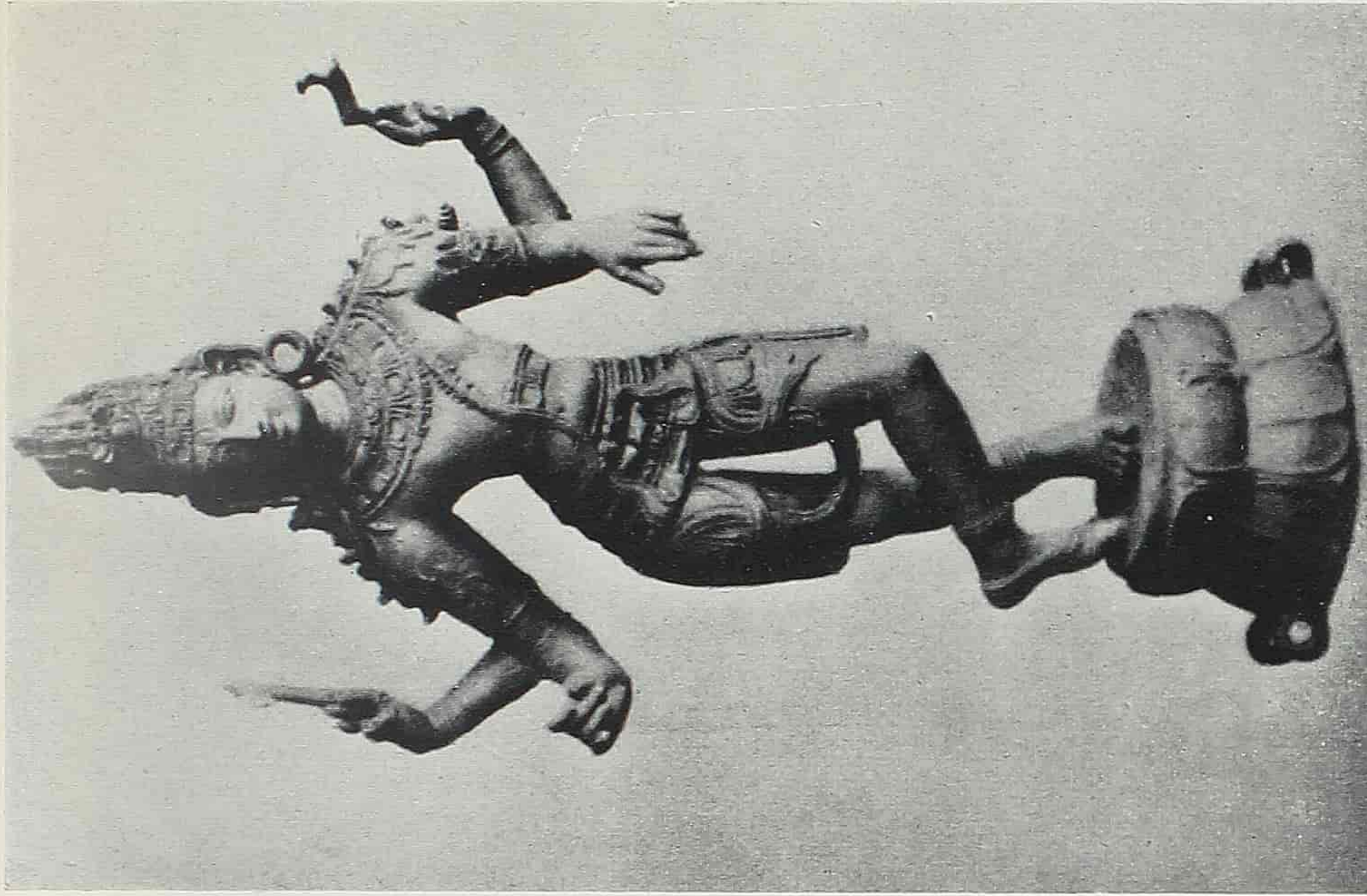
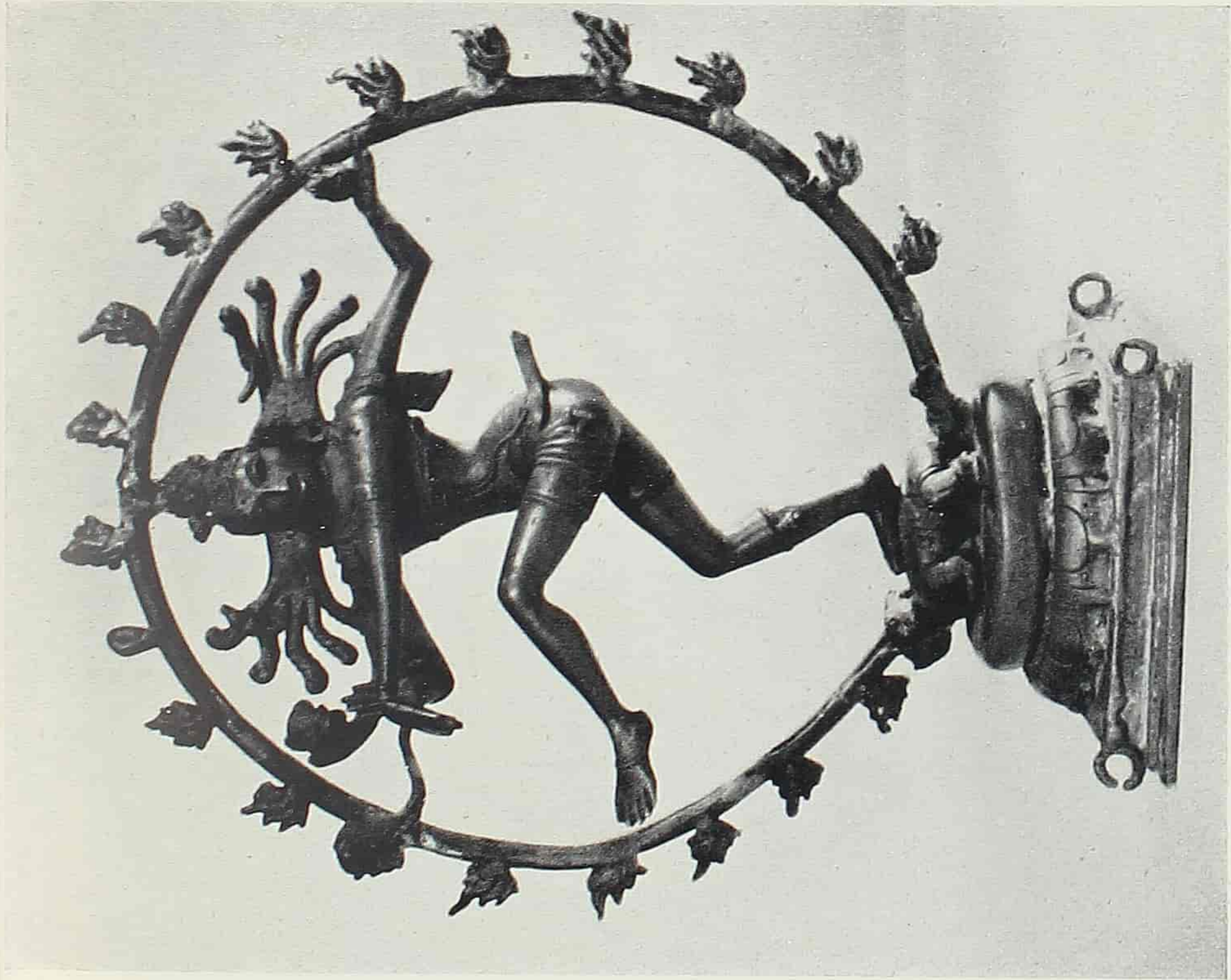
Ram Gopal and Shevanti in a Bharata Natyam 'thillana', reminiscent of the Ajanta frescoes



Left, Ram Gopal as the Garuda, or Golden Eagle, and, right, as the Mayura, or Peacock, preening itself, with tail spread



Ram Gopal as Shiva the Hunter. Shiva takes his bow and arrow and prepares to shoot. The bands are in the 'sikbara mudra' of holding the bow and taking out the arrow, a pose used in both Katbak dancing and in Katbakali miming. Shiva is often depicted as a hunter, notably in many of the sculptures at Ellora and in South Indian temples, and in several of the Kangra paintings.



Left, a tenth-century bronze image in the collection of Ram Gopal – the most famous of the South Indian images of Shiva. It represents the god dancing with matted locks whirling, wearing a cobra as ornament, holding a drum and the sacred fire of life, and promising protection and salvation. His right foot crushes the evil-doer, Egoism, and his left foot releases those who seek salvation from him. Right, an ancient temple bronze from Ceylon, of Shiva in the lyrical Dance of the Setting Sun



Ram Gopal in his famous Cobra Dance. The hands, in 'sarpa-sirsa', suggest a hissing serpent about to strike. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury



Traditional Kathakali characters in the elaborate make-up and fantastic costumes used in this sacred temple dance drama of Malabar. Top, left to right. Ravana, the demon king, a hunter, a young man, and Hanuman, the Monkey God. Centre, young man, Krishna, and Radha. Bottom, a demon, a sage, and Rama.



*The mood of meditation, 'centring on that great life within, the abode of divinity'.
Head of Buddha, from Java*

paintings. The artist must be creative and use considerable imagination, but his creation must be based, however broadly, on the recognized styles; otherwise the note of authenticity would be lost and perhaps the mood of the dancer broken.

The décor must be effective, but not so spectacular and obtrusive that it overshadows the dancer. In the Ballets Russes of Diaghilev, as we shall later note, the sets of Bakst and Roerich often dwarfed the choreography, making it a handmaiden of the art of painting. The purpose of the background is to indicate the time and scene of the action, serving as an introduction to a spectacle rather than being itself the main spectacle.

Apart from painted backgrounds, props are often used in Indian dancing, as for instance the replica of a shrine for a Bharata Natyam number, or of the interior of Moghul courts for Kathak dances. Absolute simplicity of décor, however, can be very effective. A dark backdrop serves to bring into strong relief the figure and costume of the dancer. A row of musical instruments at the back is often employed, but it serves to break the simple line and should therefore be avoided.

In *nrtya* musicians are a part of both the audible and visual effects. As they have to be seen, it is best to arrange them on one side, near the wings. Splitting up their numbers is not usually a good idea but, if it can be done without destroying harmony, they may be placed in two groups in the rear corners of the stage.

LIGHTING: Lighting did not play an important part in Indian dancing until recently. In ancient times the flare from torches sufficed, serving to heighten the weird effect of the costumes and the elaborate make-up. Often a *pradipa*, or lamp, was used to illuminate an improvised stage. The lamp consisted of a thick cotton thread or many strands of threads interwoven and dipped into a vessel filled with mustard oil. The lamp was then placed on a *pilsuj*, or high stand. Candles, limelight, and gas succeeded the mustard-oil lamp.

Modern stagecraft, of course, demands far better lighting. Our dancers, having appeared on the stages of the world, have learnt to

adapt modern stage lighting to suit their art. Footlights, strip, and border lights are used, as in the West. Despite all this, however, lighting still plays a poor role in dance performances, except in the presentations of a few of our leading dancers.

Lighting is one of the most effective aids to illusion. It can make or mar the spectacle of the dance. While flat lighting helps certain numbers, such as the Alarippu in Bharata Natyam, it tends to create monotony and should therefore be sparingly used. Lighting from different angles enhances the effect of a number immeasurably, so long as care is taken to avoid ugly shadows on the backdrop.

Arc lights covered with mica help considerably in heightening the illusory effect if the mica is of a shade that fits in with the ensemble. Mixed white and coloured lights, provided they harmonize, help to produce gradations and combinations of colours that evoke a variety of moods. A spotlight playing on a darkened stage is useful for Indian dances of a light nature not characterized by any technique in particular.

The lighting expert must use his lights with the same loving care and skill as a painter uses his colours. The set designer and the lighting expert must, between them, create a magic world, an atmosphere that will help the audience to achieve the *rasa*-consciousness which the dancer tries to evoke in them.

The trend in modern times is towards realism in décor. This, of course, is not out of place for topical themes such as the Labour-Capital struggle, or the Labour-versus-Machinery ballet made famous by Uday Shankar. Even here there must be some illusion. Dancing – particularly Indian dancing – being mainly symbolic, calls for far more illusion than drama or the opera, where speech and song tell the story. The dancer, being mute, must create with his gesture language a world of illusion, and in this he has the aid of the set designer, the lighting expert, and the musicians, whose arts must harmonize.

MAKE-UP AND ORNAMENTATION: Other aids to illusion are make-up and ornamentation, both of which play an active part in *nrtya*.

Though ornaments of genuine worth, such as gold or silver jewellery, may help a great deal, the average dancer has to content himself with cheaper material. Here again illusion plays a part. The *Natya Shastra* very sensibly lays it down that the ornaments should be light so as not to interfere with the dancer's movements in any way. Bharata's dance treatise prescribes certain ornaments for women and others for men. It is interesting to note the costumes prescribed for different roles. Siddhi women must wear yellow robes, with pearls or emeralds as ornaments. Players appearing as *apsaras*, or celestial maidens, are exhorted to wear gem-studded ornaments and to dress their hair in a bun crowning the head. Women appearing as *gandharvas* (musicians) must flaunt rubies and wear gowns of a vivid red; they must also carry a *veena*. *Vidhyadharis* must be depicted in white with pearls to adorn them. Black robes and blue stones fall to the lot of the women who appear as female *rakshas*, or demons. Green drapery and pearls are assigned to characters representing goddesses. Milkmaids are required to don blue costumes and to plait their hair.

Perhaps the earliest forerunner of Western cosmetics was the facial make-up prescribed in the *Natya Shastra*. Colouring served to differentiate between the characters. Thus *Kshatriyas* (warriors) must appear painted in reddish tints, and *Vaishyas* (merchants) and *Sudras* (menials) in deeper hues. Spotless white is reserved for Brahmans.

Other aids to illusion are beards and moustaches. But here, too, colour is a distinguishing factor: saints and *bhramacharis*, i.e. men who refrain from sexual indulgence, wear long white beards; the sensual and the rakish appear in black beards, while kings and gods wear mixed black and white beards.

Make-up and its rules vary with the different schools of Indian dancing, and are dealt with in the chapters describing those schools. One thing, however, is certain – that make-up is no modern invention but a very ancient device. It has, of course, undergone many transformations in the course of centuries.

MUSIC: Since music helps to create the atmosphere for a dance

performance, it may, despite being on the audible plane, be treated also as a part of the visual plane of the *aharyya abhinaya* of *nrtya*.

The dancer and the orchestra have to work in unison, between them creating a mood. The *Abhinaya Darpanam* lays down the rule that during a dance performance two cymbal players must seat themselves on the right and two *mridanga*, or drum players, must remain on either side of the stage, while a singer must be present with a *tambura*, or drone.

Indian music consists of an infinite variety of sounds, skilfully arranged. While in Western music the harmony is between melodies, in Indian music it is between rhythms. In comparison with the music of India, that of the West has an uneven flow graduating from a gentle *andantino* to a quick *allegretto* and then perhaps broadening into an *allargando* or rising to a *crescendo*. Indian music, on the other hand, though based on melody, has innumerable variations, so subtle and with so many twists to each note, that the inexperienced ear misses the lightning changes.

The octave in Western music rushes on with the force of a torrent; but there are twenty-two notes in Indian music and they glide smoothly, with silvery tones, creating subtle moods and visions. Owing to the profusion of tones, half, quarter tones, and eighths of tones, and the minute differences in the sound of each of them, each sound ever mingling with another with the most delicate of modulations and cadences, the untrained ear is baffled by what sounds to it like a drawn-out wail!

When Indian musicians play together each tunes to the same melody or improvises a background for it. In the East, orchestral music of the Western variety is unknown. Innovators, however, are endeavouring to use counterpoint so that by playing several melodies against contrasting ones, monotony may be relieved.

The Indian musician has two bases on which to improvise – the *tala* and the *raga*:

The *tala* governs the duration of a sound and is beaten out on a variety of drums, each drum regulated to the dancer's pace. It is the dancer who fixes the *tala*; the drummer observes the speed set and meets the dancer at the climax of each beat, in the process impro-

vising various *thekas*, or expressions, with his palms, fingers, or sometimes even his elbows or with sticks. Two dozen *talas* are popular to-day, each having from three to sixteen *matras*, or subdivisions and, in South Indian music, as many as twenty-nine.

The *raga* is a group of notes – rather than a scale in the Western sense – but not quite a melody. *Ragas* are meant to create certain moods and are divided into male and female tunes. There are six *ragas*, or male tunes, each accompanied by five *raginis*, or female tunes, and each possessing eight *putras*, or sons, with a *bharya*, or wife, apiece. In south Indian music, there are seventy-two major *ragas* and many minor ones.

In a work of the present length it is not possible to deal fully with the subject of Indian music. Suffice it to say that Indian music is, in age, younger only than dancing. Its history goes back to two thousand B.C. It shares one thing in common with *natya*: it, too, has its origin in religion, and each of the seven basic notes is supposed to be presided over by a deity.

The religious quality of Indian music is still preserved in the south, but in north Indian music it has been neglected since the Moghul invasion. When music, singing, and dancing blend in harmony in an appropriate setting, the *abaryya abhinaya* is complete for a *nrtya* performance.

BHARATA NATYAM

THE term Bharata Natyam, in its restricted sense, applies to the dance technique evolved in the South of India and practised in the temples of Shiva. It is a highly specialized science with a traditional background and rigid codes and conventions. For many centuries it has been performed only by certain peasant families in the district of Tanjore, these inheritors of the craft being known as *nattuwans*.

Until recently the chief exponents of Bharata Natyam were *devadasis*, or temple girls, specifically dedicated to the task of dancing for the gods. The temple dancer, acquiring her professional knowledge from her *nattuwan*, often forms with him a life-long alliance seldom broken by either party. The institution of the *devadasi* and her offering of prayer through the dance medium has its roots in religion, as is clear from the nature of the vocation. In time, however, Bharata Natyam came under royal patronage and the profession of the *devadasi* degenerated, more or less, into harlotry. This reflected unfavourably on the temple dancer's art, causing it to be looked down upon and outlawed even from the marriage *pandal* (canopy or tent) where it had lingered on.

Fortunately, Bharata Natyam is to-day being slowly restored to its former position. It stands in the forefront of all the classical dance arts now prevalent in India, owing to its religious origin and its highly developed technique. It is, moreover, the form of dance most akin to the code compiled by the Sage Bharata Muni in his famous *Natya Shastra*, from which source it derives its name.

Bharata Natyam skilfully embodies the three primary ingredients of dancing – *bhava*, or mood, *raga*, or music and melody, and *tala*, or timing. All its movements, gestures, and flexions are rigidly stylized. It is a proud art, for it boasts of deriving its *tandav*, or virile aspects, from Tanduv, who taught them, at Shiva's behest, to Bharata, and its *lasya*, or softer movements from Shiva's consort Parvati who

passed them on to Usha, and she to the milkmaids of Dwarakha.

In Malabar, Bharata Natyam is known at *Koothu* because the first historical reference in the *Silappadikarram*, a Tamil work almost two thousand years old, refers to it by that name. Various other treatises such as the *Bharata Choodamani*, again in Tamil, and the *Natanathu Vadya Ranjanam* deal with this art on more or less the same lines as Bharata's celebrated work.

The *Natanathu Vadya Ranjanam* is interesting because, besides providing us with the names of such old masters of the art as Ponnuswamy Annavi, Kalayanswamy Pillay, and Subaraya Annavi, it classifies temple dancers into three types: *rajadasis*, or women who perform before the flagstuffs in temples; *devadasis* who dance before representations of Shiva; and *swadasis* whose services are reserved for special festive occasions.

The exact birthplace of Bharata Natyam is controversial. The argument that it sprang from the Andhra district because the songs that accompany it are in the native dialect of Telegu does not seem sound, since the best Nataraja sculptures are not works of Andhra craftsmanship.

The modern form of Bharata Natyam presentation is the arrangement of four *nattwans* of Pandanallur. They were the brothers Ponniah, Chinniah, Vadivelu, and Sivanandam, who lived in the eighteenth century. One of them, Vadivelu, was responsible for the daring innovation of introducing the violin into Carnatic music. In the house of his great grandson, Ponniah Pillay, yet another hereditary exponent of the art, may still be seen an ivory violin encased in glass, given to the *nattwan* by Swathi Thirunal, a Tanjore ruler.

The *Vidwan* Menakshi Sunderam Pillay of Pandanallur, the greatest living teacher of Bharata Natyam, is a direct descendant of the four brothers. Affectionately known as 'Tata', or Father, by his family and his pupils, this Grand Old Man of the South keeps his rich inheritance alive with religious fervour.

The Pandanallur School is characterized by verve and vigour as opposed to the softening influences that have crept into the art as taught by other *nattwans*, due either to laziness or the misconception that softer movements lend grace to the art. *Vidwan* Pillay's tech-

nique, rich in *adavus*, or sweeping movements, eschews insipidness, working itself out in a throbbing rhythm and skilful patterns of sculpturesque beauty and perfection. The *thirmanams*, or flourishes of the hands, are forceful, while the *rechaka addiyams*, or neck movements, are executed with grace. Robustness is the keynote of this school. Without it, Bharata Natyam becomes an emasculated art.

A BHARATA NATYAM PRESENTATION

Let us now examine a Bharata Natyam recital in detail. It usually consists of: 1. *Nrtya*, including *nrtta*, or pure dance. 2. *Abhinaya*, or gesture play.

The musical accompaniment is of the Carnatic school with the *tala*, or timing, predominating over the *raga*, or melody, in the *nrtta* passages.

1. The *Alarippu* opens every Bharata Natyam performance. The name is derived from the Telegu *alarimpu*, meaning to decorate with flowers. The dance is a pure *nrtta* offering in double and treble rhythms, there being absolute harmony of movement between the head, the hands, and the feet. The body is seen to open out and flower in a series of sculpturesque attitudes.

Hands joined above the head, feet touching, the dancer begins with *rechekas*, or neck movements, with the eyes and the hands acting in unison. The same *rechekas* are later executed in a semi-seated posture, after which, rising, the dancer moves back to the starting position.

2. The *Jethiswaram* is the next number. It is a dance expression of the ideas and impressions evoked by musical sounds. The rhythm of the dance is set to one of five *jethis*, or time beats, which may be 3, 4, 5, 7, or 9. The time-keeper beats out the measure with his *talas*, or cymbals, while the drummer produces a variety of fascinating sounds. The dancer adds to the cadence with his feet, preserving the *tala*. The chief effect of this number is a pleasing harmony of sounds.

In the later movements of the dance, the performer displays, with marked emphasis, the *swarams*, or delicate nuances, which are pronouncedly beautiful in the Pillay technique based on the Kalyani,



Photo: D'ora

Ram Gopal in the Kathak Dance, 'The Rajput Serenade of Love'. The colourful costumes owe their origin to a mingling of Persian and Rajput influences on dress and music. This pose is strongly reminiscent of a Moghul miniature painting

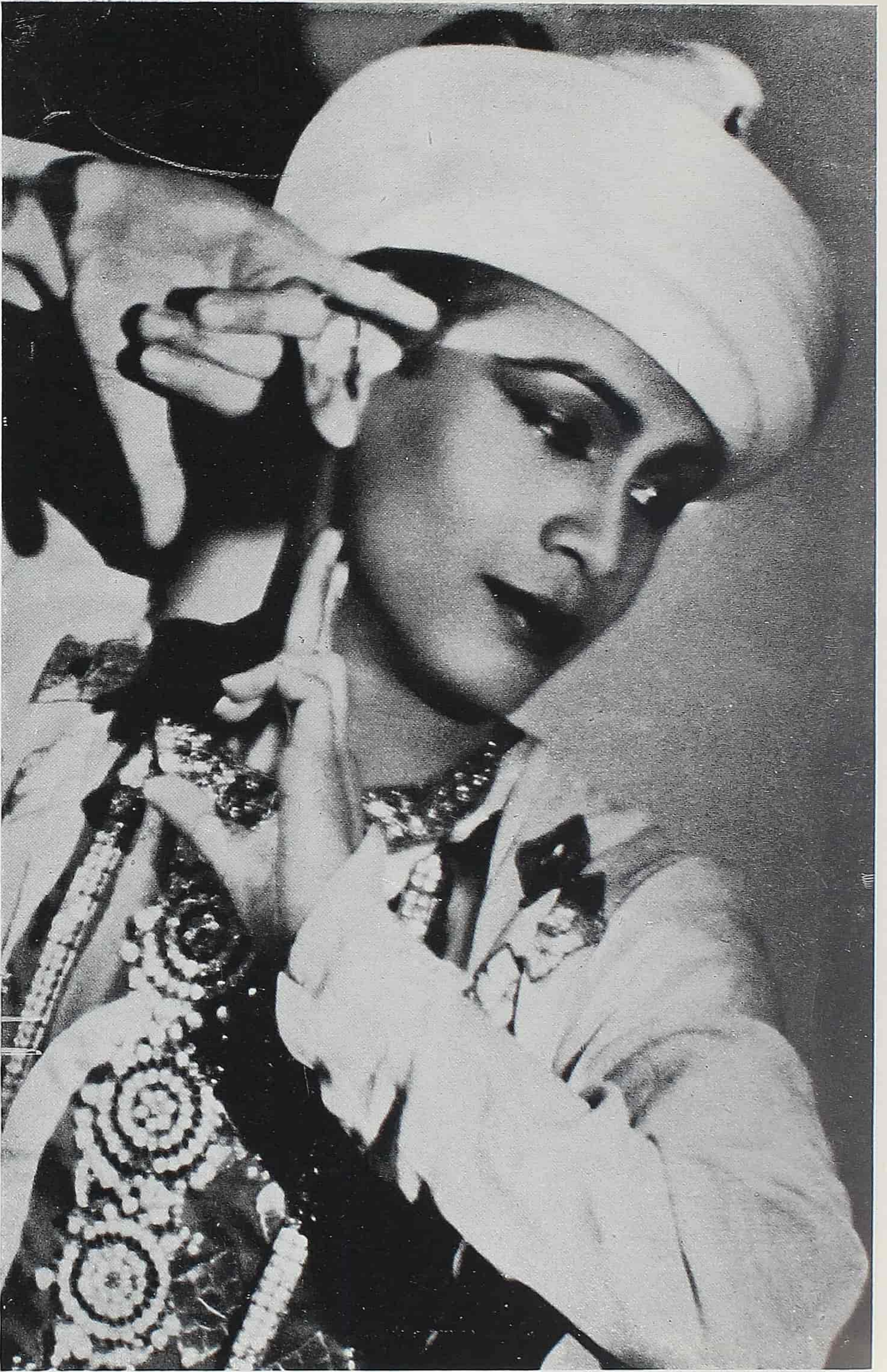


By courtesy of Dui Ltd., from the film 'Our India'. Photo: Colin Tait.

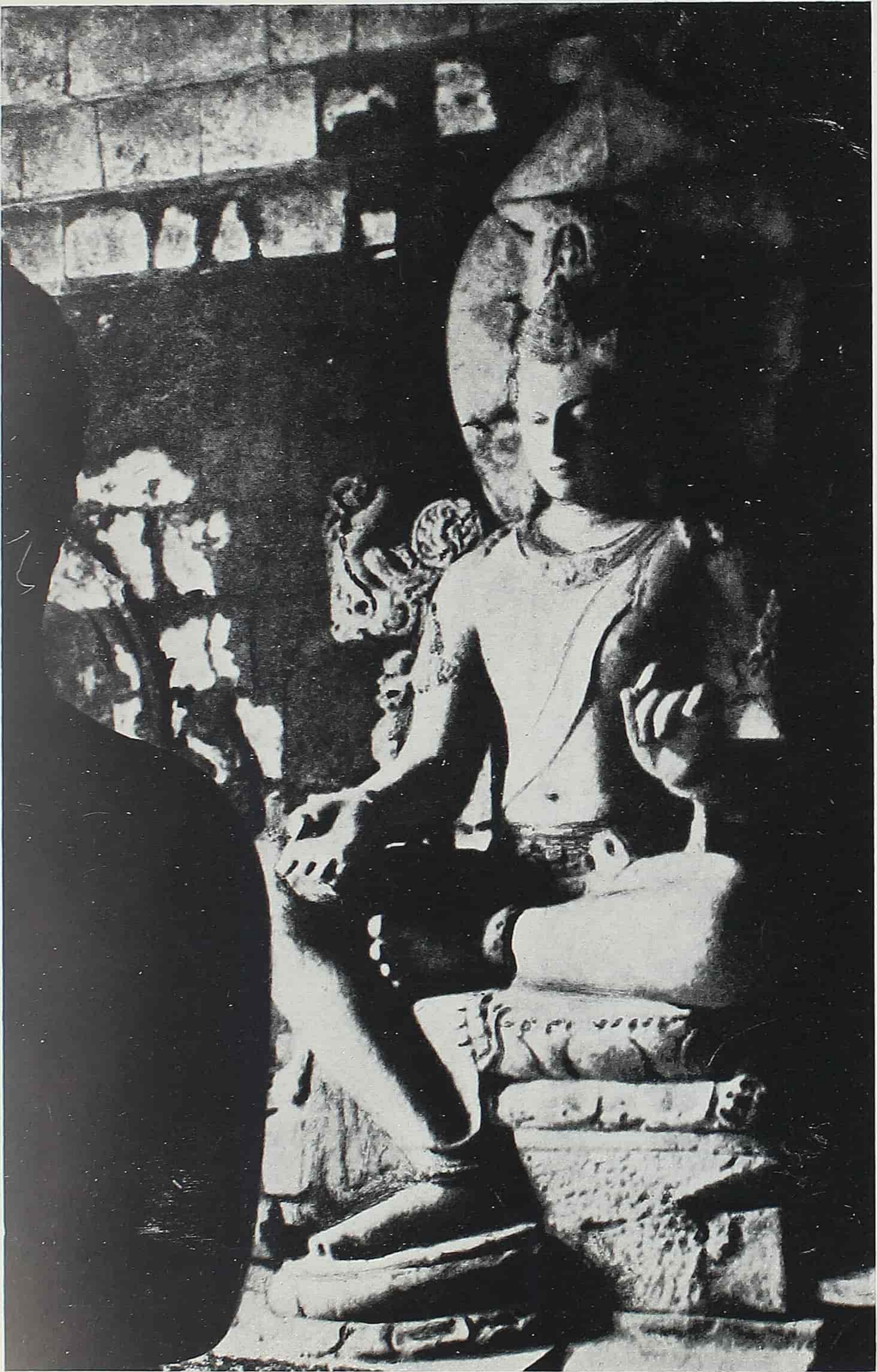
Ram Gopal and Shevanti in the lyrical Kathak Radha-Krishna duet. This exquisite and popular dance has a deeper significance than many recognize. Radha, seated on the bank of the Jumna, symbolizes Life on the margin of Eternity. When she removes the trinkets round her throat and wrists, it is Life cleansing itself of impurities. Anointing herself with sandal paste, she then decks her person with her jewels, that are now no longer a noose but serve as adornments – Life, with accumulated virtues awaiting the call of the Divine. Krishna's flute sounds and he beckons, but she turns away coyly – Life faltering on the threshold of Eternity. Krishna takes her arm. Overcoming her shyness she allows herself to be led by him – Life mingling with its Divine Essence



Kumudini, brilliant young Kathak dancer, displays the grace and beauty, in pose and costume, of this great dance style of Northern India



*Aja, the Rajput Prince, asking his beautiful bride to remove her veils and reveal her face, in
'The Rajput Serenade of Love'*



The Great One, the Law Giver. The left hand is in the 'kapittha mudra', the right in a straight 'hasta pataka' which, combined, signify giving, preaching, praying



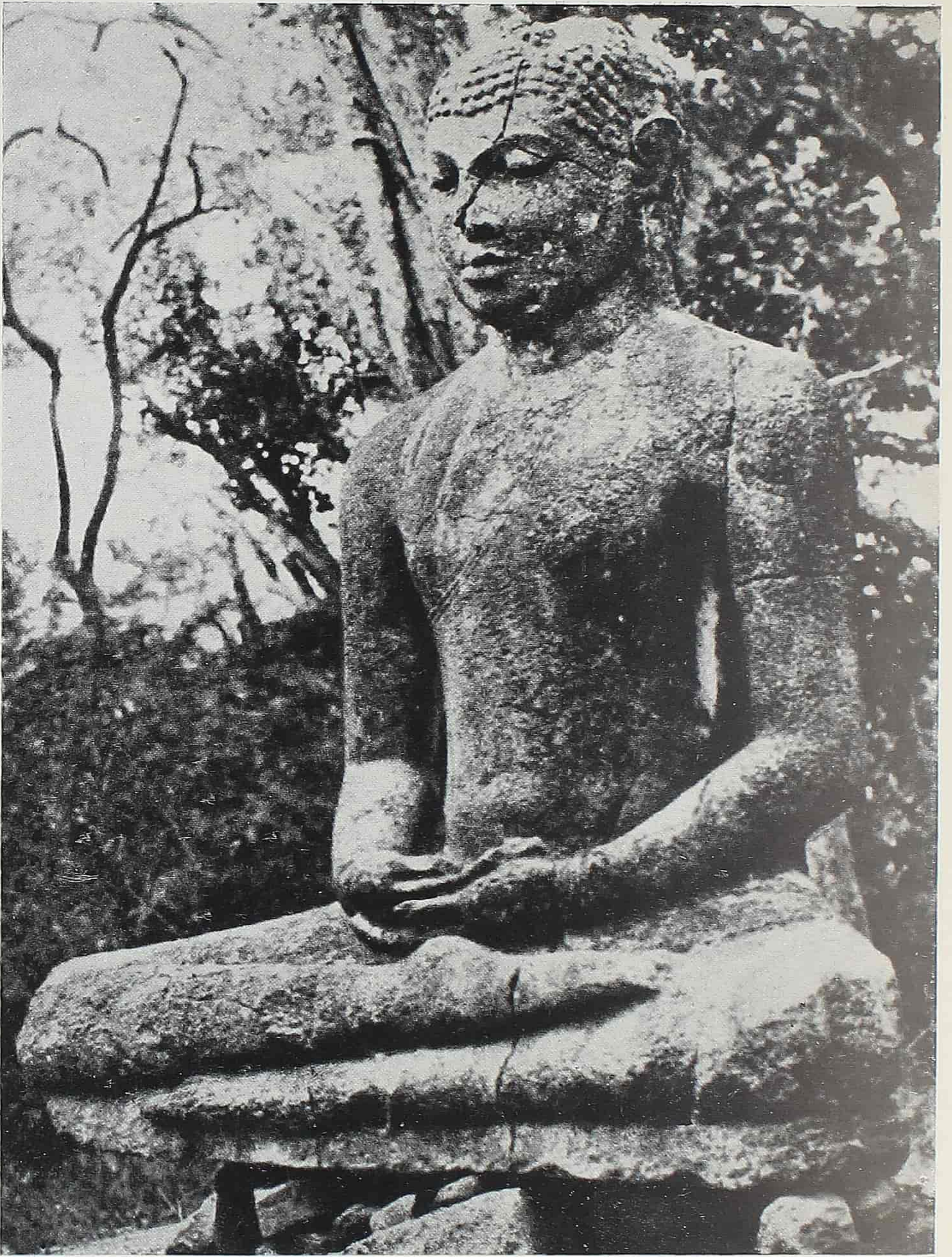
Photo: Rivkin

Shevanti and Rajeshwar, pupils of Ram Gopal, as a peasant and his playmate in a Manipuri folk dance



Drawing by Kay Ambrose

Ram Gopal and a pupil in the Manipuri dance of Radha and Krishna. These traditional costumes and headdress are especially beautiful and elaborate



The mood of peace and untroubled calm; a second-century image of Lord Buddha from Ceylon. The quiet power and 'inward gaze' are conveyed in the mood and spiritual feeling of Ram Gopal's 'Dance of the Setting Sun'

Bhairavi, Chakravagam, Todi Vasanta, and Sankarabaranam *ragas*.

3. The third item is the *Sabdam*. It is an interpretative dance, expressing through *abhinaya*, or mime, the purport of a hymn of devotion, or a romantic lyric. While the *Bhakti*, or devotional *rasa*, predominates in the *Sabdam*, this dance can also interpret other *rasas*, or sentiments.

The *Sabdam* concentrates on *abhinaya*, or acting, and the feet play a less important part than the hands and body. The *Sarasajaksulu*, in which are portrayed Krishna and the *gopis*, and the *Venuda*, a hymn to the Blue God, are fine examples of the intricate but eloquent gesture language of Bharata Natyam.

4. The *Varnam*, the longest of all the dances, is rather elaborate. In it, both *nrtta*, or pure dance, and *abhinaya*, or acting, play equal parts. Love is usually the theme of the *Varnam*. The dance ends in a furious tempo with quickly changing patterns of the feet and rapid *thirmanams*.

The *Todi Varnam*, the *Kalyani Varnam*, and the *Ragamalika Varnam*, are three of the most popular varieties of the *Varnam*. From these we have selected the last to illustrate this type of dance:

The dancer starts off on a slow tempo, assuming a series of poses which gradually quicken. Then come *thirmanams*, or flourishes of the hands, getting faster and faster, and the *nrtta* ends, after several leaps and bends, on three pronounced beats of the feet.

Now follows the *abhinaya* portion of the *Varnam*. The acting dramatizes a single theme, but in various ways, according to what is known as the *sanchari bhava*. For example, the singer chants: 'Why dost thou slumber, O Lord of the City of Sri Ranga?' The dancer seeks to interpret the refrain in different ways through the language of mime, lending it colour and sweetness, thus: (a) 'Why dost Thou slumber in Thy Yogasayana on a bed of Durba grass, O Beautiful One who takest of the ten *avatars*?' Or (b) 'Why dost Thou slumber on Thy bed of a banyan leaf, O Lord who, as Vamana, measured the universe in three paces?' Or (c) 'Why, on the thousand-hooded serpent, sleepest Thou, O wearer of the conch and the disc?'

This variation of the *samcari*, or *sanchari bhava*, lends warmth to the entire *Varnam*. The *abhinaya*, though intricate, at least to the

uninitiated, is soothing after the cataract-like movements immediately preceding it.

The songs of Thayagaraja, Jayadev, Kshetrajna, and Arunacala-kavi lend themselves well to this mode of interpretation. Songs expressed in mime are known as *padams*.

5. Finally, we come to the fifth and last number on the programme – the *Thillana*. This is, strictly speaking, a foreign element that has crept into Bharata Natyam. It is derived from the *ragas* of North Indian *ustads*, or composer-teachers, and has existed in its present form for only a century. Finding these *Thillanas* most pleasing, the *nattuwans* wove them into the existing South Indian dance fabric.

In the *Thillana* we again have pure *nrtta* in different *talas*. The variety known as *Chilakottu* is usually danced to the *adi tal*, or eight-beat rhythm, while that known as *Kaikalakottu* follows double timing or four times the regular beat. The dance is set to one of several *ragas* including the Sankarabaranam, the Kafi, the Todi, and the Kannada.

A Sanskrit verse picturesquely describes the *Thillana Adi Tal* depicting a dance of Krishna: 'Krishna the Blue God dances in all varieties of moods and steps. His head sways, his eyebrows move and pose in all the arts of a clever dancer. The motion of his waist makes the girdle sing and the anklets jingle. One fancies that one is listening to the sweet voice of a pair of geese, as they nestle in dalliance. The bangles glitter and the rings shoot their shining rays. When with passion he moves his arms, with what grace the movements blend! Now he dances with the gait of girls and now in a manner of his own. The Lord of Love is the jewel of the passionate and he builds his dance in the depths of ecstasy.'

MUSIC, COSTUME, AND MAKE-UP

The chief musical instruments in Bharata Natyam are the *mridangam* and a pair of cymbals. The *vidwan* sets the refrain, which is repeated by the chorus, if any. The cymbals provide the timing, while the *mridangam* supplies fractional measures of the broad beats. The dancer follows the *mridangam* and cymbals. A *tambura* is often incor-

porated in the orchestra to provide the *swara*, or scale for the refrain.

The costume consists of a *dboti* for both male and female dancers. It is usually of brocade or shimmering silk or satin. It fits snugly above the ankles and is pleated along the legs, which it encases. Over the *dboti*, in the middle, is a pleated or frilled cloth hanging from the waist to perhaps the knees. The upper part of the male dancer's body remains bare save for a necklace; women, of course, wear a tight-fitting *choli*, or bodice, of the same colour and material as the *dboti*.

Armlets, wristlets or bangles, earrings, and necklaces serve to enhance the dancer's appearance. Women wear a *veni*, or semi-circle of real or artificial flowers round the bun or plait of the hair. In the centre of the forehead a *tika*, or dot, is impressed.

SUMMING UP

The ancient art of Bharata Natyam, so forceful in its power, so finished in its technique, must be saved from those who would reduce its robust strength and vigour. Too often *nattuvans* are interested in this dignified art only as a commercial proposition. The only way of saving it from degradation seems to be to weed out the many undesirable elements that have crept in.

When Bharata Natyam adheres to tradition it brings the artist and the spectator into contact with all that is best and purest in Indian culture. It exalts the mind and refreshes the spirit. It is now in a stage of rebirth and the odium resulting from its having been the monopoly of the *devadasi* is, fortunately, fast disappearing.

It is well to bear in mind that, despite its classicism, Bharata Natyam is an art with vast possibilities for new expressions, so long as these fit into the old pattern and are not just the individual eccentricities or vulgarities of particular dancers. New motifs can, of course, be produced only by those with a sound knowledge of the basic principles of the art.

Bharata Natyam is amongst the finest of our art treasures, the noblest of our inheritances. It is up to us to tend it with loving care.

KATHAKALI

KATHAKALI means, literally, musical dance-drama (katha=dance-drama; kali=music). Its technique is complicated, the result of long evolution and, like Kerala or Malabar, the lands of its origin, it is exotic in the extreme, potent with the magic still practised on that remote coastal strip in the south-west of India, with its perfumed casuarina copses, palm-fringed lagoons and scented breezes, its ebony-skinned peasants, and its proud aristocracy of Nambudris who would not permit even the shadow of the poor 'untouchable' to darken their path.

The origin of Kathakali may be traced back to the fifteenth or sixteenth century, when the Rajah of Kottarakkara is believed to have co-ordinated the folk dances of Kerala and given them their present form, which embodies much of the essence of the Bharata Natyam technique.

Kathakali is a tapestry of complicated design through which is woven the thread of occultism. Though it dates back but a few hundred years, it obviously derived from primitive worship and witchcraft. The mating of cosmic and mystic forces has given rise to a complex, colourful dance form – a *drishyakava*, or poem in action.

Animal and bird life are faithfully portrayed in Kathakali dances; of this type the Peacock Dance is the best known and appreciated. In this representation of the strutting, decoratively plumaged bird, with all its preening moods and gestures, can be seen the affinity of the Kathakali technique with Nature.

All the dances in Kathakali, both tribal and spectacular, adhere to the basic laws of physical rhythm. The choreography is involved and stylized, with all the beauty of line and form that graces ancient sculpture. In days gone by, Kathakali was called *Ramnattam*, because it portrayed the events of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, whose hero is,

of course, Ram, an *avatar*, or incarnation, of Vishnu the Preserver.

The other important epic which serves as a theme for Kathakali dances is the *Mahabharata*. These two mighty heroic poems of ancient India are cleverly narrated through a gesture language all-embracing in its scope. There is a symbol for every representation of gods and personages as well as for the smallest of actions. It is a formidable task to acquire a deep knowledge of all the *mudras* and their permutations. The Kathakali dancer's training is therefore long and laborious.

Stylization in Kathakali is a rigid code. The characters are well defined, and divided into three distinct groups:

- (a) *Sattvik*, or virtuous characters.
- (b) *Rajsik*, or heroic characters.
- (c) *Tamsik*, or destructive, diabolic ones.

GENERAL PATTERN

It is impossible in a concise work to name all the movements and gestures encountered in Kathakali. But we may take a peep at the general panorama the technique presents:

As in Bharata Natyam, the elaborate *abhinaya* cover the four planes: *vachika* (of the voice); *sattvika* (of the mind); *angika* (of the body); and *aharyya* (of deportment and décor).

There are *lasya*, or feminine, and *tandav*, or masculine, movements as in the other schools. The vigorous movements are usually in the *vir* or *bira rasa* (heroic mood), while the softer movements depict the *sringara rasa* (erotic mood).

Gestures in Kathakali are of three kinds:

1. *Prakritik*, or natural gestures.
2. *Pratirupi*, or imitative gestures.
3. *Prasariti*, or amplified gestures.

An idea of the intricate pattern of Kathakali may be obtained from the fact that there are four varieties of actions of the head, eight of looks, thirty-six kinds of glances of the eyes, six movements of the mouth, nine neck movements, six ways each of moving the chin, the lips, the cheeks, and the nose. The eyelids may be

moved in nine different ways, while the eyeballs have also their nine individual movements.

Kathakali hand gestures are of twenty-four varieties for single-hand poses and forty for double-hand poses. They are akin to the gestures outlined in the *Natya Shastra*, but many of them are very varied, as may be observed from the plates on pages 83 to 96, showing comparisons of Bharata Natyam and Kathakali representations.

COSTUME, MAKE-UP, AND DÉCOR

Make-up and costume in Kathakali are elaborate, and take hours of preparation. Masks that give almost a ghoulish effect are generally used. The face itself is painted vividly so that the expressions it assumes may be clearly visible.

The colouring of the face varies according to the character portrayed. A faint green is used for *sattvik*, or virtuous and noble characters: their opposites, the *tamsik* or *raksha* characters, have layers of *chutti*, or white lines of rice paste, outlining the face from one ear to the other, with the nose reddened and a white spot on the tip of it as large as a marble; such vicious characters wear red beards. For women, the colouring is white on a base of yellowish red.

Kathakali costumes have a barbaric splendour. A series of scarfs is woven round the neck, while the skirt is full and billowing. On the head is balanced a tall cone backed by a circular ring of the same material, both being painted in bright colours.

The garments are cumbersome, but they lend a spectacular, almost awe-inspiring, effect to a Kathakali performance, heightened by the eloquent mime in its *nrtya* which predominates over the pure *nrtta*, though the latter is vigorous in itself. Women do not normally take part in Kathakali, the female roles being taken by men, who perform the *lasya* movements. Although the pure Kathakali dance in its *lasya* style and in certain aspects may be taught to women, they cannot dance a sixteen-hour ballet, and consequently they are exempted by tradition from the study of pure Kathakali. The *bhayanaka* and *vibhatsa rasas* mimed by the dancers are almost perfect in their interpretative qualities and are some of the best specimens of the art of *natya*.

Kathakali is meant to be performed in the open air and does not lend itself to the limitations of the modern stage, unless the setting is arranged with the best of taste, though many young Indian dancers have adapted it to new settings which, alas, deprives it of its grandeur. The setting is simplicity itself, consisting of a *shamiana*, or improvised canopy, propped up by four crude poles or bamboo sticks. A large bell-metal lamp illumines the stage with a soft light.

A KATHAKALI PERFORMANCE

The performance is announced all over the village by *kelikottu*, or beating of a drum, at about the hour of sunset. When the audience is gathered, *vandanaslokam* and *thodayam*, i.e. prayer and dance music, are played behind the curtain. This ended, a cacophony of drums and trumpets, called *purrapadu*, heralds the entry of the players – about twelve dancers, four singers, and four drummers.

The recital starts with a musical prelude lasting three hours, from six to nine o'clock. This is known as *melappada*, or a musical contest between the player of the *chenda*, a cylindrical drum hung from the neck, and the performer on the *maddalam*, a small variety of drum.

When the music ends, the dancers rise and give their performance, which lasts about five hours. All the characters are fantastically garbed, those portraying *apsaras*, or celestial dancing girls, wearing wooden masks and very large garments, while those who appear as demons have their faces outlined with *chutti*, or rice paste. Only those enacting the roles of *rishis*, or hermits, are dressed plainly.

The music accompanying the drama is very much like that in Bharata Natyam; it, too, includes the throbbing of temple drums. The full implications and effect of Kathakali are not easily appreciated by those unacquainted with the Kathakali technique and its traditions.

SUMMING UP

The Kerala Kalamandalam, the poet Vallathol's dance academy in Malabar, is the largest centre in India to-day for the training of Kathakali dancers. In it Kunjukurup of Thakazhi, Ravunni Menon

of Pattambi, and Narayan Nair of Kavalapara, three of the foremost *gurus*, have helped to train many pupils, some of whom have, unfortunately, cheapened the technique with vulgar innovations.

Ragini Devi and Gopinath, trained in the Kerala Kalamandalam, have done much to bring Kathakali to the people of the cities. Instead of presenting it in the traditional way, they have adopted the method of portraying a few scenes lifted from the Kathakali epics. Thus, the highly complicated art can be enjoyed by those without a thorough knowledge of it.

A highly specialized technique, the histrionic art of Malabar is a perfect blend of elements borrowed from various sources. It seems to incorporate the best that each school has to offer. Through Kathakali, the fusion of the arts of painting, sculpture, and dancing, as well as of drama, may be splendidly achieved. If the cumbersome costumes could be modified and the duration of a performance curtailed, this dance form would be eminently acceptable to the average audience.

KATHAK

THE dance art of the North is the complete antithesis of that of the South of India. The austerity and dignity that govern Bharata Natyam, steeped as it is in religious tradition, give place to a sensuous, dynamic quality expressive of *joie de vivre*. This is not surprising, for Kathak is the hybrid offspring of vastly different cultures.

While in the south dancing developed as a part of the life of the community and was associated with spiritual values, in the north the art was evolved purely for the pleasure of a people who revelled in outdoor pursuits and convivial living. Kathak, the love-child of Moghul-Hindu union, retains to a far greater degree the zest for life and the sensuality which it derives from its Arabic strain than the severity of the Hindu school. The main difference between the two gesture languages is that whereas the eloquence of Bharata Natyam is in its elaborate hand gestures, Kathak lays stress mostly on footwork.

The Kathak school owes its survival to Brindadin and to Kalkaprasad Maharaj. The three sons of Kalkaprasad – Achchanand, Lachchu, and Shambhu Maharaj – have in modern times preserved the old tradition inherited from their ancestors.

The home of Kathak, then, is the hardy north. In the Punjab, the United Provinces, Jaipur, and many of the States of Central India this type of dancing is, naturally enough, in great favour. With the rebirth of dancing as a whole, Kathak is also acquiring popularity amongst the people of the south, particularly among the 'smarter sets', to whom the tinsel-like charm and delicacy of the technique are far more understandable and pleasing than the austerity and rigid principles of Bharata Natyam, or the complicated pattern of Kathakali.

THE COMPOSITION OF KATHAK

Kathak is divided into two parts:

- (1) *Torahs*, comprising footwork, which is the most important part of Kathak.
- (2) *Gaths*, or gestures.

TORAHS

The swifter the *torahs*, the more skilled the dancer. The hands play very little part here; how they are used is often left to the discretion of the dancer. There are *torahs* for men and *torahs* for women, these being derived, supposedly, from Shiva and Parvati.

What exactly is a *torah*? It is composed of syllables with no inherent meaning in them. These syllables provide the rhythm for the dancer's feet while keeping within the *tala*, or timing. When *dobas*, or verses, are sung, the footwork is accompanied by gestures to interpret the meaning of the songs.

Tukaras or *paranas* are dance metres which form a part of every *torah*. They are complex, and with the increase in *laya*, or rhythm, and *tal*, or beats, they become swifter. These dance metres have perforce to follow the *bols*, or beats, of the *tabla*, or drum. Each *tukra*, which means literally a piece or bit, interprets in footwork a single word of the verse being sung at the time of the dance. It is obvious from this how swiftly it must be executed.

The dance measures in Kathak are known as *layas*. They are of three kinds:

- (a) *Vilubita*, or slow measures.
- (b) *Madhija*, or medium speed measures.
- (c) *Druta*, or rapid measures.

The *tala*, or time measures, accentuate, as it were, each syllable of a verse, thus helping the footwork to correspond with the accompanying melody. A single *tala*, composed of a collection of beats, one for every syllable, is known as an *avard*.

The *avard* can again be split into three parts:

- (a) *Talas*, or accented measures.
- (b) *Khalis*, or blank measures.
- (c) *Sama*, or the final rhythm.

It is at the *sama* that the climax of a verse is reached and it is then that the singer and the *tabla* players unite their efforts. The drummer starts off first, drumming any verse selected by the dancer, who interprets the meaning of it, whirling around till the rhythm reaches its crescendo. The face of the dancer remains grave and it is only when the wail of the *sarangi* (an instrument producing sounds not unlike those of a bagpipe) predominates that she enters into the second part of the dance – *gaths*.

GATHS

Gaths, or gestures, are, in Kathak, of the simplest variety. They interpret ordinary actions such as the washing of the face, the wearing of bangles, or the carrying of a pitcher poised on the head.

It is only when the *gaths* begin that the dancer abandons her gravity of countenance and her face becomes the mirror of many moods indicative of the contents of the chosen verse. As in the *sanchari bhava* of Bharata Natyam, the dancer may render one phrase in a variety of different ways. For instance, taking the line, 'In worship I bow to Thee, O Ram!', she may begin her adoration of Ram with a supplicatory gesture but, finding it unheeded, she may resort to coquetry with eyes and hands to lure the gaze of Ram towards herself.

Though Kathak is of not more than a few hundred years' growth, legends cling to it, derived of course from the Hindu part of its parentage. The swiftness of the *torabs* is explained by one such legend:

At the celebration of a feast in Indra's court, the gods and goddesses entered into a dance competition with one another. Parvati's *torabs* were so swift that they won her the prize; but so indignant was Shiva at his consort's victory, that he entered into rivalry with her, and for every *torab* she executed, he performed a faster one. Yet each time Parvati's were faster than her lord's, till he threatened to do his dance of destruction, when she wisely allowed him supremacy.

The themes of most Kathak dances concern themselves with

Lord Krishna and the myths woven around this frolicsome deity. Perhaps the most popular of all of them is the romantic episode of Radha and Krishna, portraying their courtship, their lovers' quarrels, and their frolics in the moonlit garden of Brindaban (or Vrindavan).

Village life is also often depicted in Kathak dances – boys flying kites, milkmaids milking their cows, girls plucking flowers and weaving garlands out of them, and so on.

There is very little stylization in Kathak, hence there is plenty of room for improvisation. A few standardized gestures for the representation of various objects do exist: for example, outstretched palms with hands interlocked in the vicinity of the forehead indicate a peacock, while Krishna is depicted in the act of lifting Mount Meru by the finger of one hand being pressed into the palm of the other. Various actions such as bathing or reaping also have their fixed representations.

At the start of a Kathak dance the body is rigidly composed, almost as though it were petrified. The feet are crossed, the right hand stretched out level with the shoulder, the left hand held above the head, which is kept erect. When the *tabla* begins its rhythm, the glassy eye becomes aglow, the arm trembles like a leaf in the wind, and the dancer begins the whirling movements of the dance.

Again legend explains the static pose: Shiva once wished to confer upon a demon any favour desired by the *raksha*, who cunningly asked for Shiva's *kura*, or bangle, which had the power, when held above the head and accompanied by a magic formula, of disintegrating the body. The *kura* won, the demon planned to destroy Shiva and take the latter's consort for his own spouse. While Shiva was being chased by the demon the artful Parvati started to praise the *raksha's* grace, begging him to display his skill as a dancer.

Overcome by Parvati's blandishments, the foolish demon started to dance, lifting the hand holding the bangle above his head. At that moment, Parvati recited the magic formula, whereupon Shiva's pursuer crumbled into ashes. The opening posture of the Kathak dance resembles that of the demon in the moment of his annihilation, and is a reminder of Shiva's narrow escape.

SUMMING UP

In music, movement, and plan Kathak lacks the wealth of finished artistry and technique that Bharata Natyam and Kathakali both possess, but it has grace and delicacy. It is rather like a Moghul minaret, elegant and beautiful but with no very solid foundation. Romanticism is the burden of it, and its appeal is therefore purely lyrical. It is no wonder that it found so much favour in the courts of the Moghuls, particularly of Akbar the Great; those rulers were aesthetes *par excellence*, as monuments such as the Taj Mahal at Agra, the Jumma Masjid at Delhi, and other Moghul buildings testify.

Kathak is, in the main, a *lasya*, or feminine, art. From its superficial aspects has sprung a degenerate style known as the Indian *nautch*. This employs merely the sensuous elements in Kathak, and is used by *nautch* girls with the sole purpose of arousing the baser passions.

Apart from the leading exponents of Kathak, who have already been mentioned, the late Menaka must take credit for having brought Kathak into prominence in the big cities of India and throughout the Western world. At Menaka's dance centre in Khandala, now disbanded, were trained many young dancers, among whom Damayanti Joshi is best known. Of the younger generation, Kumudini Jayaker is the most outstanding performer of the powerful pure Kathak technique; she excels in Kathak itself, and does not use it simply as a medium for performing ballet-items. Sadhona Bose, the Indian film star, did much, in the early 'forties, to popularize the North Indian school.

Kathak, with its tinsel charm, comes as a change that gratifies the senses after the deeper and more spiritual experience of the sterner dance forms. The creative artist may nevertheless find in Kathak opportunities to produce new and ever-changing shades of beauty and movement.

MANIPURI

EVERY dance form creates its own aura, exhales its particular atmosphere. Bharata Natyam has solemnity and spiritual grandeur. Kathakali delves into the metaphysical and creates from it an eerie world of enchantment. Kathak stimulates the senses as with the cloying smell of exotic blooms. But Manipuri is the dance form that reaches the heart of Nature, and epitomizes its beauty and its richness.

While of comparatively recent growth, Manipuri is, in essence, a relic of the Nature worship of the early Aryans who probably descended, originally, from the Polar regions. There they worshipped the sun in the three stages of its Polar cycle, to which may be traced the origin of the Holy Hindu Trinity of Brahma (the creative force of the rising sun), Vishnu (the preservative aspect of the sun fully risen), and Shiva (the barrenness or destructiveness resulting from the long Polar sunset).

Manipuri dances, light, gay, and full of warmth and sunshine, grace the seasonal festivals of India. They mirror all the joyous moods of spring and summer as if in thanks for the bounty of creation. They have their roots in folk art, which is simply the spontaneous expression of a people's realization of humanity's need for harmony with Nature. Hence it is that in Indian mythology the gods are allocated an abode on the roof of the world, and the Ganges is revered as sacred Mother Ganga.

The origin of Manipuri is to be found once again in legend. Roughly five centuries ago, there was famine among the Naga tribes of Manipur in the far eastern corner of India, brought about by evil spirits. Then the Goddess of Might appeared to the tribal chief, advising him that the visitation could be banished by propitiating the gods through music and dance. The people of the district, young and old, joined in the ceremony, their joyous cele-

bration putting the demons to flight, and a rich harvest being their reward.

Manipuri dances are usually performed at springtime during the Vasanta-utsava and Holi festivals. *Holi* is noted as the Festival of Colours, when the people spray one another's clothes with varying dyes, celebrating the dawn of spring with its yield of luscious fruit and scarlet flower, its incitement of the passions of the young.

In course of time *holi* became sublimated through the efforts of the adherents of the Vaishnavite cult into a ritual that had none of the ribaldry of the original celebration. Thus was inaugurated the *Ras-Leela* dance, perpetuating the earthly life of Lord Krishna. The story goes that, in the early eighteenth century, Maharaj Jai Singh, the ruler of Manipur, had a vision wherein Vishnu appeared before him and exhorted him to have his godly figure carved from the trunk of a certain tree. The event was marked by a feast that is celebrated every year at springtime.

The *Ras-Leela* dance shows Krishna and the *gopis* of Vraja frolicking in the garden of Brindaban on a moonlit night. In the scented groves humming with insects, redolent with the perfume of *mallika* flowers, the *murli*, or flute, of Krishna, the cowherd, sounds on the gentle breeze, blowing softly from the river Jumna. Krishna, his headdress decked with a peacock feather, his neck garlanded with flowers, stands under the *kadamba* tree, playing his divine melody.

Lord Krishna symbolizes the Eternal Lover. 'He danced and danced,' explains a verse, 'and so quick was he that each maiden found him by her side, each imagining him to be her wooer. He was here, there, everywhere; between every two of them there was a Krishna. They all danced and sang, for the Lord was in their midst. As they danced, the little bells in their anklets gave forth a jingling, honeyed sound. Thus they sported under the *Kadamba* tree, near the flowing Jumna, among the humming bees and fragrant flowers, under the silver canopy of the moon-flooded sky.'

The *Ras-Leela* has been a popular theme with artists, particularly those of the Kangara School. The story is told in their lovely, delicately tinted miniatures. Singers and saints, such as Govindas and Bhakta Surdas, have also rhapsodized over it.

Manipuri is soft and graceful, resembling Nature in her kinder aspects. The dancers appear like corn stirring in the breeze, or waves rippling in soft undulations. They are as one with Nature. The dances are not characterized by the vigour of Bharata Natyam or of Kathakali, nor by the extreme swiftness of Kathak. They are as light as thistledown.

In Manipur the village girls seem to imbibe dancing with their mothers' milk. Their limbs are supple, and grace and ease mark all their movements. Their natural ability is encouraged and developed in various State-supported institutions, this being the only part of India where such a system prevails. Every Manipuri village has a temple dedicated either to Chaitanya, the Dancing Saint, or to Krishna-Radha or Krishna-Balarama. Attached to each temple is a dancing hall known as a *nautch ghar*.

Manipuri dances are composed either for male dancers or for male and female dancers jointly, the latter being, generally, unmarried girls. In the famous *Ras-Leela*, the most popular dance of this school, all the artists are girls except the man who takes the role of Krishna.

MUSIC, COSTUMES, AND ENSEMBLES

The musical accompaniment to Manipuri dances is played on an instrument rather like a guitar called the *khol*, and the *mridangam* and *dholak*. The dancers often sing while performing but sometimes the singing is done by a chorus whose members do not join in the dance. When the drummer and the dancer together execute certain quick *talas*, each in his own medium, the tempo of the dance increases and the quick rhythmic pattern is enchanting to watch.

The costumes are very picturesque, as can be seen from the photograph on page 62 and the sketch on page 63. The women wear a tight-fitting conical cap of black velvet or other material, trimmed with a border of synthetic pearls, under a thin white veil. Modern dancers often discard the cap in favour of a bun on top and to the side of the head, and haloed with flowers. The *choli*, or tight-fitting bodice, is usually of velvet, with tight sleeves trimmed with gold embroidery. The *gagra*, or flounced skirt, is of a striking colour,

SAMYUKTA
OR DOUBLE-HAND GESTURES

POSES BY RAM GOPAL

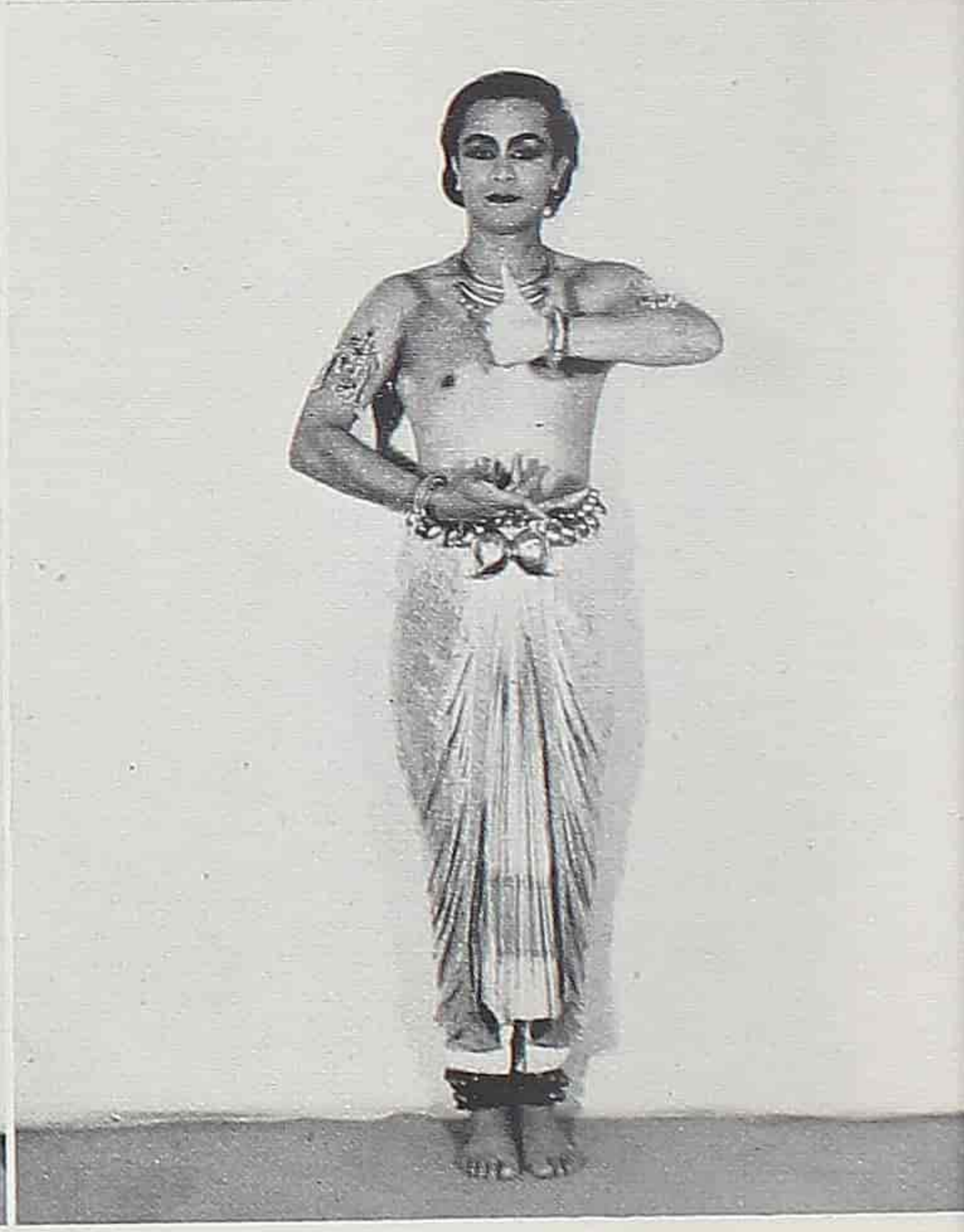
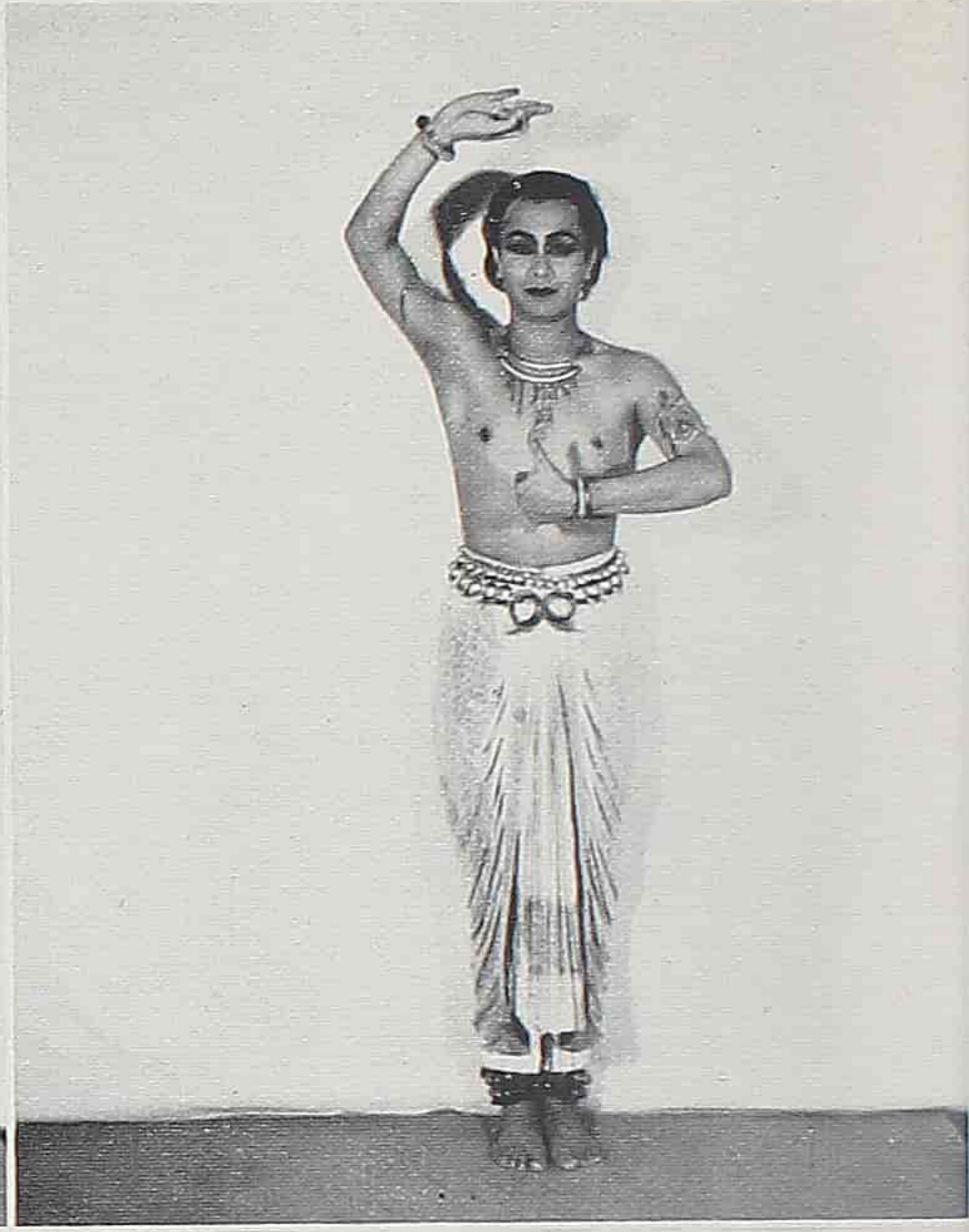
*As suggested by Gurus Kunjukurup and Chandu Panika (Kathakali), and
Gurus Madhuramba and Menakshi Sundaram Pillay (Bharata Natyam)*

CASTES AND RELATIONSHIPS



Above, Kathakali: Left, a Brahman. Both hands in 'kartari-mukha' held horizontally, the gesture describing the Brahman's sacred thread worn over the left shoulder and diagonally across the torso. The 'rasa' is 'shanta', or peace. Right, a Kshatriya. The left hand in 'musti', with the thumb raised (the 'sikharā' of Bharata Natyam), the right in 'hamsapaksa', with the thumb away from the fingers. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, a Brahman. Both hands in 'sikharā'. The 'rasa' is 'shanta', or peace. Right, the left hand in 'sikharā', the right in 'ardha-chandra' ('pataka' may also be used), the pose suggesting a warrior. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour.

CASTES AND RELATIONSHIPS



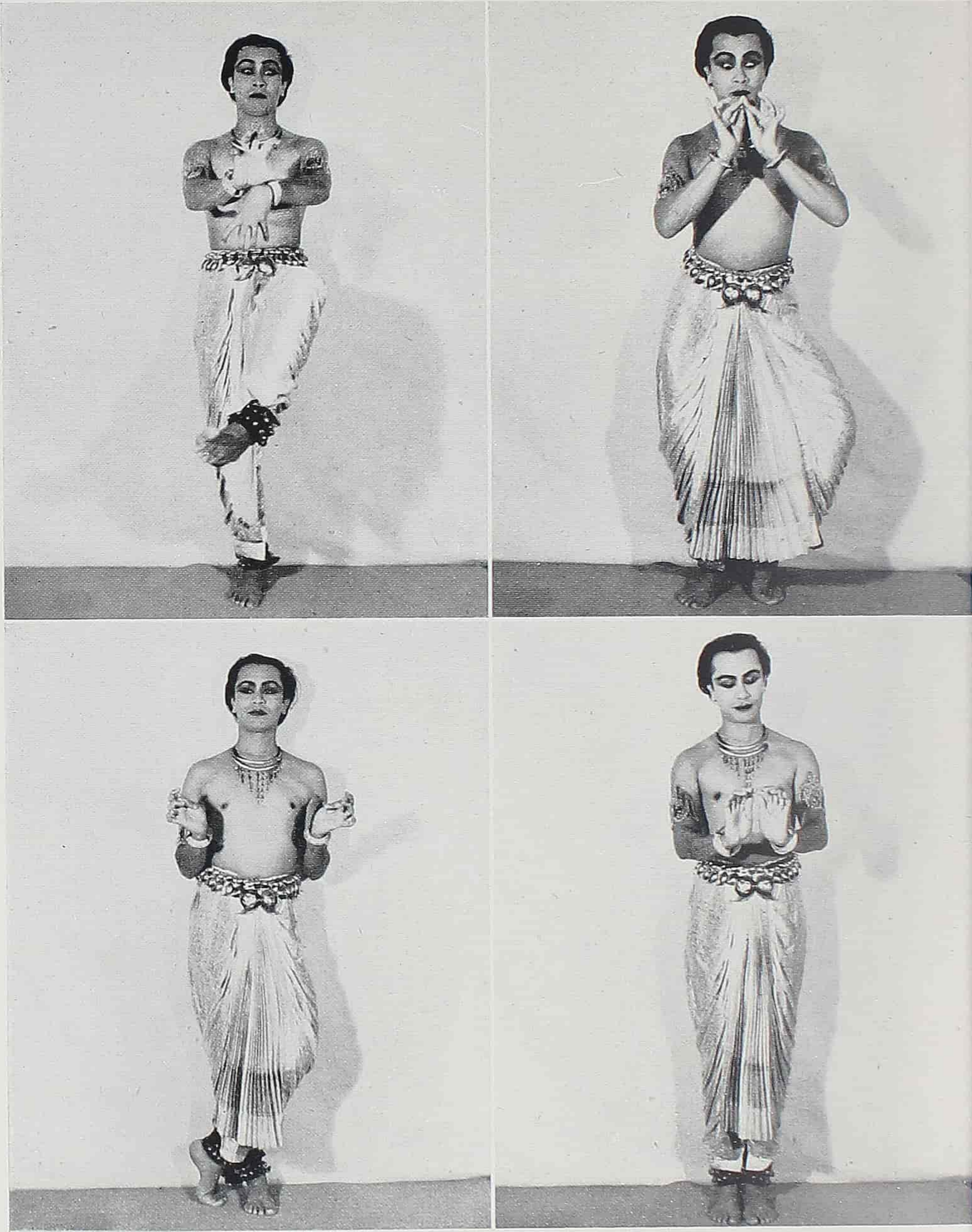
Above, Kathakali: Left, Mother. Both hands in 'kataka'. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love. Right, Father. The left hand in 'musti', with thumb raised, the right in 'mudrakhya'. The 'rasa' is 'shanta', or peace. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Mother. The right hand in 'mrga-sirsa', slightly modified. This hand may also be in 'ardha-chandra' near the stomach, with the right hand in 'samdamsa' above it. The 'rasa' is 'shanta', or peace. Right, Father. The left hand in 'sikhara', the right in 'alapadma', resting on the belly. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love.

CASTES AND RELATIONSHIPS



Above, Kathakali: Left, Wife. Both hands are in 'hamsasya'. The 'mukula-musti' may also be used as a symbol for wife. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love. Right, 'husband'. The thumb of the left hand is gripped by the fingers of the right hand in 'musti', thus suggesting the husband's union with his wife. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Wife. The right hand in 'hamsasya', the left in 'mrga-sirsa'. The 'rasa' is 'shanta', or peace. Right, Husband. The left hand in 'sikharā', the phallic symbol, and the right in 'hamsasya', the former standing for the husband and the latter for the wife, the two together conveying the idea of union of man and wife. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love.

BIRDS, BEASTS, AND THE LOWER CREATION



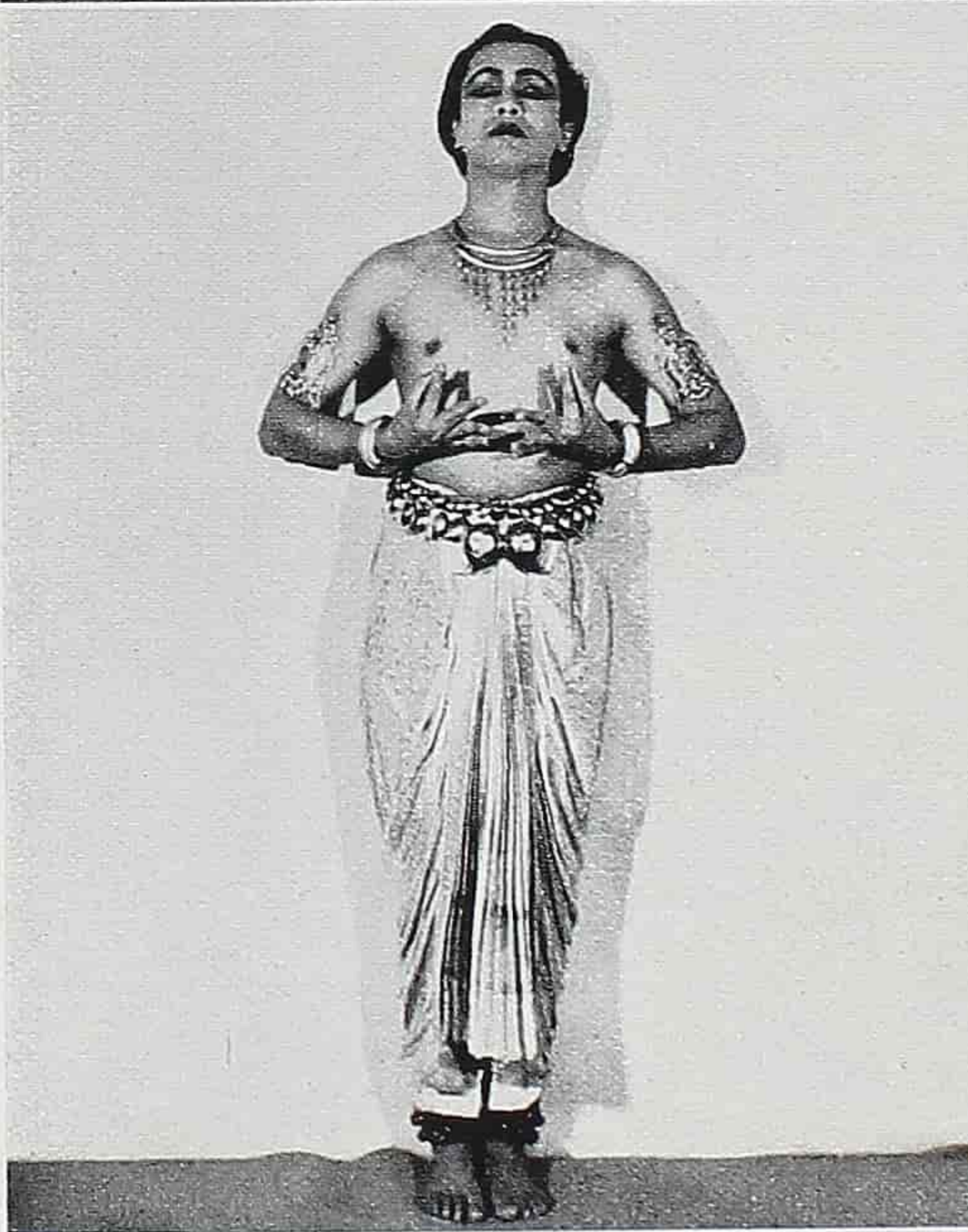
Above, Kathakali: Left, Tiger. Both hands are in 'urna-nabha', the left suggesting one paw planted firmly on the ground, the right depicting a paw raised in the act of striking or springing forward. The whole pose suggests a tiger stalking his prey. Right, Cobra. Both hands are in 'sarpa-sirsa', slightly modified, near the lips, suggesting a hissing serpent or one with its fangs ready to strike. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Tiger. Both hands in 'simha-mukha', which conveys the impression of the tiger's face or head. Right, Cobra. Both hands in 'sarpa-sirsa', depicting the cobra's spread hood. The 'rasas' are 'raudra', or fury.

BIRDS, BEASTS, AND THE LOWER CREATION



Above, Kathakali: Left, Lion. Both hands in 'pataka', one over the other, suggesting a lion tearing his prey with his claws. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury. Right, Eagle. Hands combined in the Kathakali 'hamsasya', or 'kapittha', hands interlocked, palms touching. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Lion. The left hand in 'simba-mukha', literally, a lion's face or head. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury. Right, Eagle. Two 'ardha-chandra' hands joined in the Garuda 'samyukta' suggesting the two wings of an eagle, with the thumbs representing the head and beak. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury.

ACTIONS



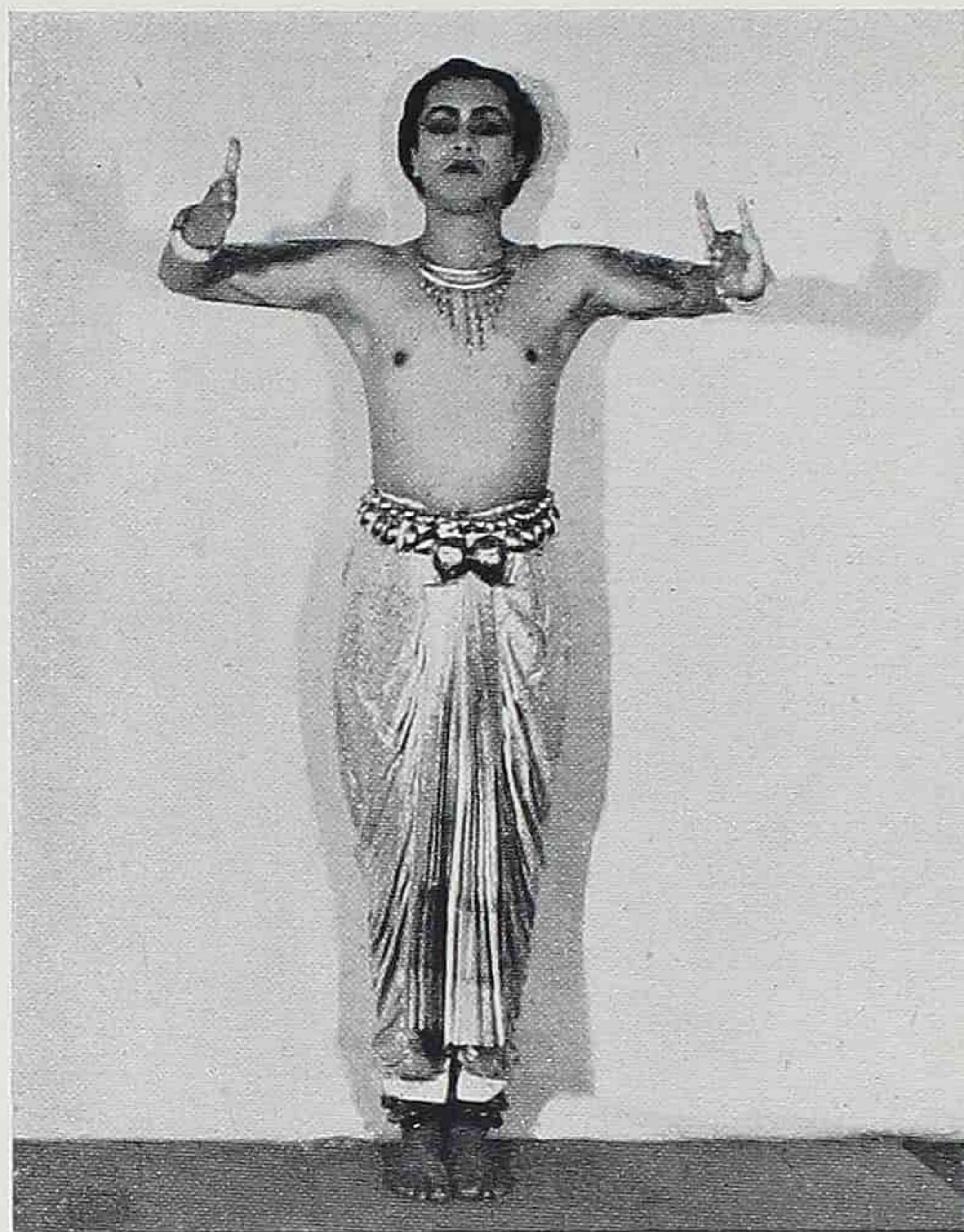
Above, Kathakali: Left, Death. Both the hands are in 'suchi-mukha', one raised, the other level with the waist. The 'rasa' is 'shanti', or peace. Right, Marriage. Two 'pataka' hands interlocked. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Death. Both hands are in 'hamsasya'. The 'rasa' is 'shanti', or peace. Right, Marriage. Two 'hamsasya' hands in the act of tying the ceremonial marriage thread round the neck. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love.

ACTIONS



Above, Kathakali: Left, How Beautiful! The right hand in 'ardha-chandra', the left in 'mudrakhya'. The 'rasa' is 'adbhuta', or wonderment, and may also be interpreted as 'sringara', or love. Right, Putting on a Ring. The left hand in 'pataka', with the right hand in 'mudrakhya', slipping the ring over the raised finger of the 'pataka' hand. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, How Beautiful! The right hand is in 'alapadma', describing beauty, while the 'rasa' is again 'adbhuta' or 'sringara'. Right, Putting on a Ring. The right hand in 'katakamukha', with the little and ring fingers raised placing the ring on the appropriate finger of the left hand. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love.

DEITIES



Above, Kathakali: Left, Shiva. The left hand in 'mrga-sirsa', the right in the Kathakali 'hamsa-paksa', with thumbs raised high. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour. Right, Brahma. The right hand in 'mudrakhya' and the left in 'pallava'. The 'rasa' is 'shanta', or peace. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Shiva. The right hand in 'sikhara', the left in 'simhamukha', representing Shiva astride the bull, his favourite mount. Thus any god of the Hindu Pantheon may be depicted with the sikhara on top of the 'hasta', or hand, symbolizing his favoured steed. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury. Right, Brahma. The right hand in 'hamsasya', the left in 'chatura'. The 'rasa' is 'shanta', or peace.

DEITIES



Above, Kathakali: Left, Ganesha, the Elephant God. The right hand in 'bhramara' symbolizes the ear, the left being in 'kataka-mukha'. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour. Right, Indra. The right hand in 'musti', the left in 'suchi', suggesting Indra hurling thunderbolts from the sky. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Ganesha. Both hands in 'kapittha' near the waist; alternatively, they may be placed on the thighs. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour. Right, Indra. Two 'tripataka' hands folded in the 'samyukta' gesture of the swastika. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury.

DEITIES



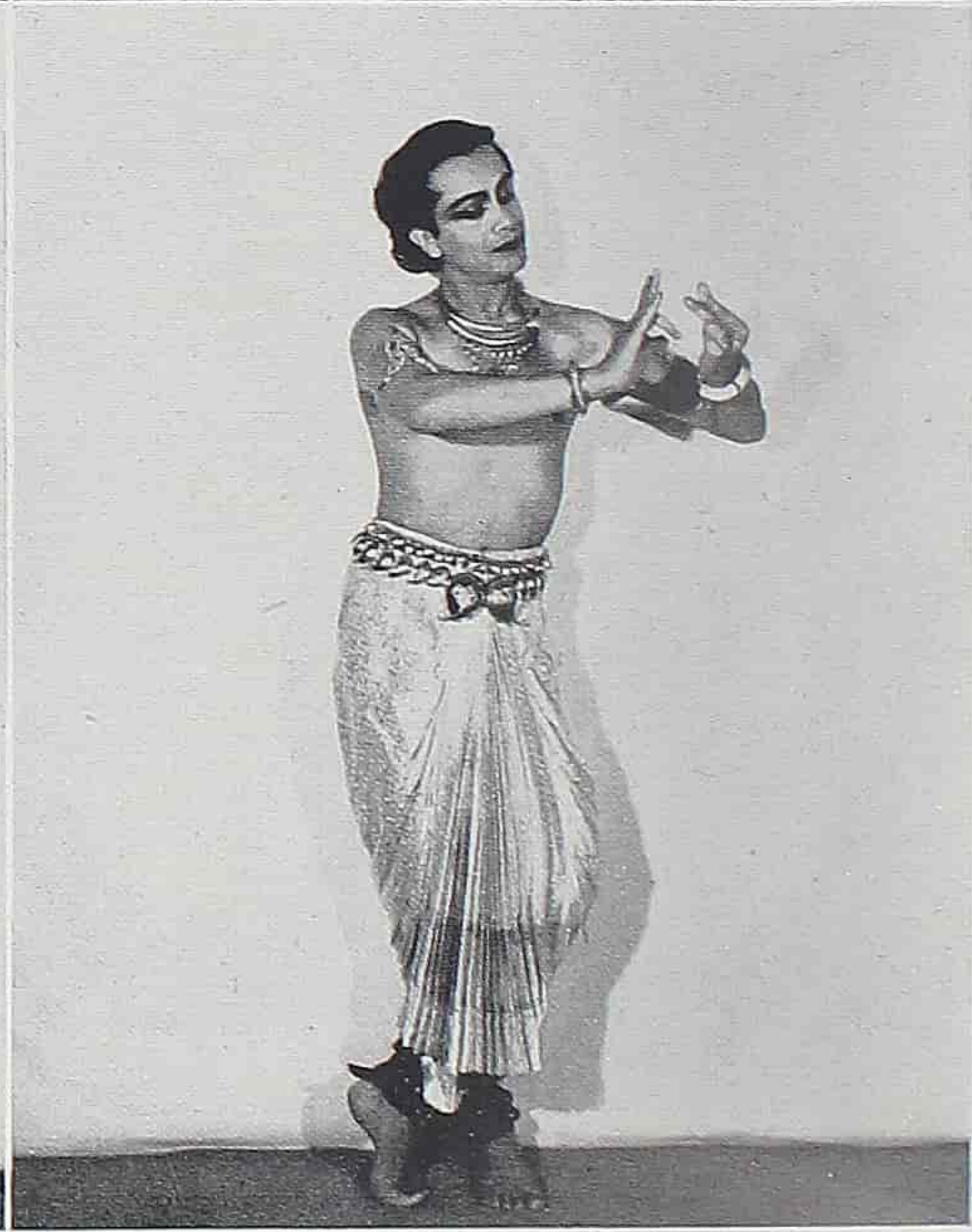
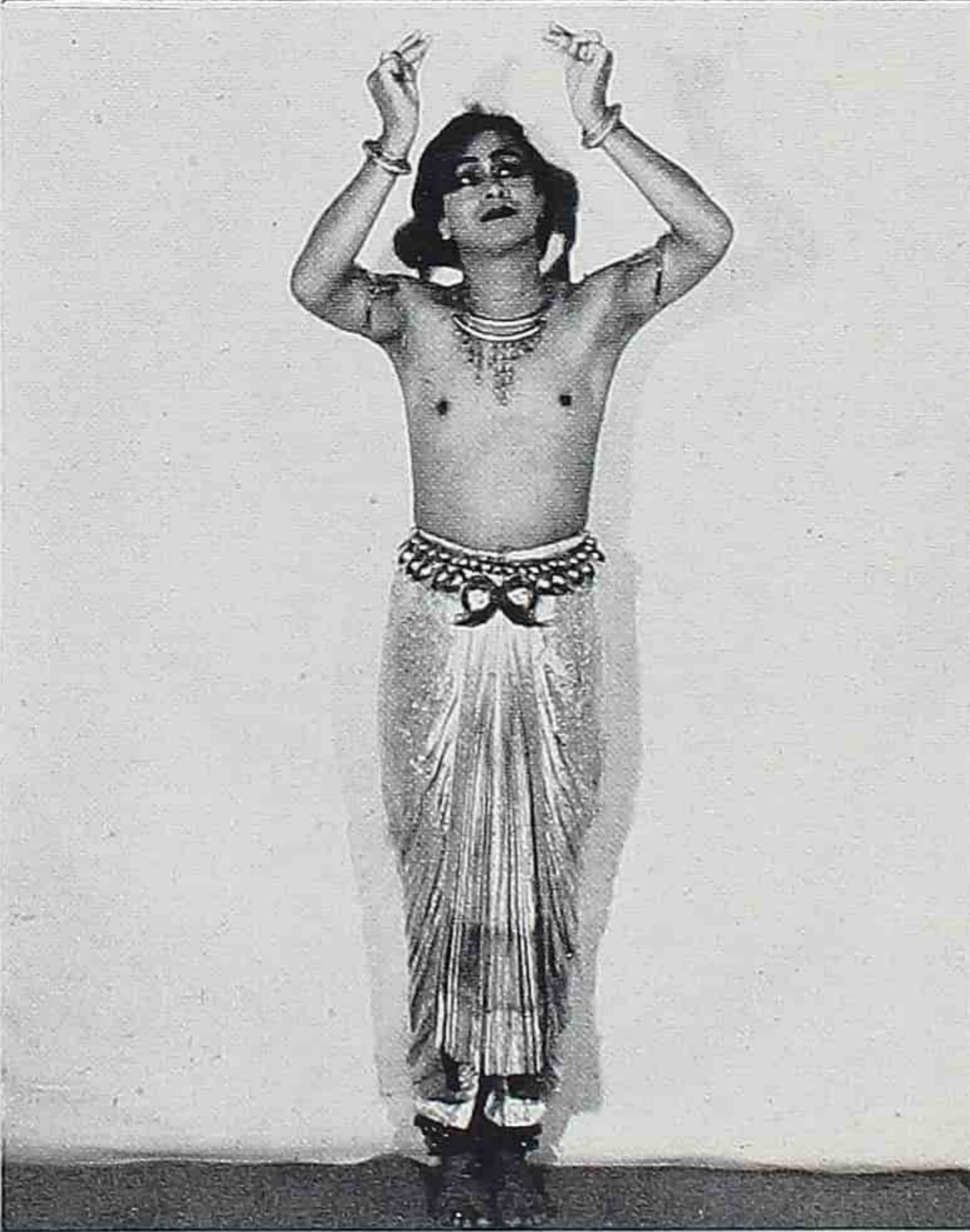
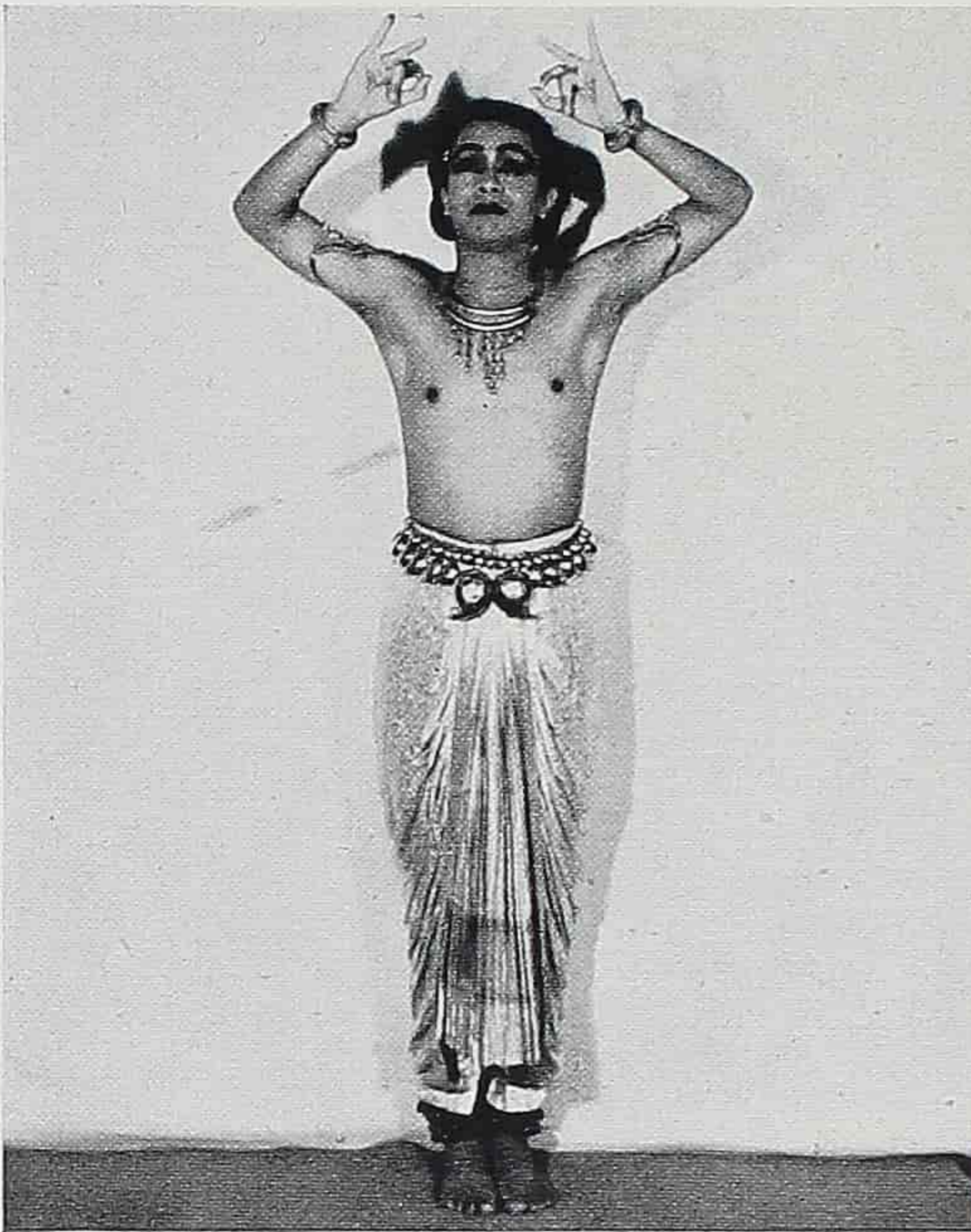
Above, Kathakali: Left, Krishna playing his flute. Both hands in 'mrga-sirsa'. Two kataka hands may also be used. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love. Right, Rama. The left hand in 'musti' with thumb raised high (this would be the 'sikhara' of Bharata Natyam), and the right in 'kataka'. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Krishna playing his flute. The hands in the Bharata Natyam 'mrga-sirsa'. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love. Right, Rama. The left hand in 'sikhara', the right in 'kapittha'. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour.

DEITIES



Above, Kathakali: Left, Kama. Both hands in 'matsya samyukta', level with the breast. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or erotic love. Right, Pursurama. The left hand in 'musti' with thumb raised (this would be the 'sikharā' of Bharata Natyam); the right hand in 'hamsapaksa', with thumb raised high. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Kama. The left hand in 'sikharā' and the right in 'kataka-mukha'. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or erotic love. Right, Pursurama. The right hand in 'ardha-chandra' and the left folded on the hip. The 'rasa' is 'veera', or valour.

PLANETS AND ELEMENTS



Above, Kathakali: Left, Star. Both hands in 'kataka', describing the twinkling of the stars. The 'rasa' is 'adbhuta', or wonderment. Right, Fire. Two 'hamsapaksa' hands. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury, the pose conveying the impression of a steadily mounting fire. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Star. Both hands are in 'kataka-mukha', again giving the impression of a twinkling star. The 'rasa' is 'adbhuta', or wonderment. Right, Fire. The left hand in 'langula', the right in 'tripataka', conveying the idea of a fire being lighted. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury.

PLANETS AND ELEMENTS



Above, Kathakali: Left, Thunder. Both hands in 'musti'. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury. The pose suggests a hurtling thunderbolt. Right, Lightning. The left hand in 'musti', the right in 'suchi-mukha', the pose simulating a streak of lightning. This may also be depicted by two 'pataka' hands. The 'rasa' is 'bhayanaka', or fear. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Thunder. The left hand in 'musti', poised on the forehead, the right hand being a modified 'alapadma' gesture for which could be substituted the chandra-kala 'mudra'. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury. Right, Lightning. The left hand in 'ardha-pataka', the right in 'suchi'. The 'rasa' is 'bhayanaka', or fear.

SPEECH



Above, Kathakali: Get Out! The left hand in 'musti', the right in 'suchi'. The 'rasa' is 'raudra', or fury. Below, Bharata Natyam: Left, Come hither! The left hand in 'pataka' pointing at a person, the right also in 'pataka' with the little finger raised, the hand in a beckoning gesture. The 'rasa' is 'sringara', or love. Right, Speak! The right hand in 'chandra-kala' near the lips, entreating or demanding speech. The 'rasa' is 'adbhuta', or wonderment.

yellow, red, or green, and usually of silk, with a wide border at the bottom of the skirt consisting of a design of sequins. Tiny square, round, or oval mirrors are scattered all over the skirt, which has a transparent muslin garment over it, embroidered with silver thread. As the dancers swirl round, the flashing mirrors reflecting the light produce a striking effect.

The male dancer wears a *dhoti* with embroidered bands across his chest ending in flaps that fall over both hips. In the *Ras-Leela*, Krishna is gorgeously attired in a pleated *dhoti* of gold or yellow silk, the chest being covered with glittering necklaces, while wristlets and armlets adorn the arms.

The *Ras* dances go on for several hours at a stretch, the accompaniment being the songs of Vaishnava poets, such as Jayadeva, whose verses are very popular. The honeyed melodies of Meera, Krishna's devout disciple, are also greatly in vogue. The ritualistic, as opposed to the merely spectacular, dances have Krishna as the central figure. He dominates the scene in the *Dol Jatra* performed in spring, and the *Jhulan* in the monsoon, or season of the rains.

Manipuri dancers firmly believe that when they dance the gods descend to earth to join their revelry. Thus the very name *Laitoraba* signifies 'sporting or making merry with the gods'. Girls, gaily dressed, begin the dance with offerings of flowers and fruits. The men then join in and pick their partners, dancing the story of Khamba, the poor boy who fell in love with the princess Thaibi. Actually, this dance is the Hara-Parvati done in the Manipuri technique. It is very robust.

The animism of the Manipuris, preceding their conversion to Hinduism, has left its stamp on their dance art, and in the *Lai Hairobi* it is pronounced. This is an annual ceremony performed in every village for the purpose of propitiating its *Lai*, i.e. God's seat, or the dwelling of Lam.

SUMMING UP

The Naga tribes of Manipur are a superstitious people and most of their rituals are meant to propitiate the spirits that are supposed to infest the jungles and streams of their land.

Many of the numbers are stylized, among them *nartakrasa*, the *basant rasa*, and the *kunga rasa* of the *Nrtya Lila*. The limb movements are often interpretative. The rhythm to which they are performed is soft and subtle in contrast with their acrobatics, an outlet for the martial instincts of the clan.

Manipuri owes much of its popularity to the revivalist efforts of Rabindranath Tagore, who used this technique for his musical plays such as *Shap Mochan*, *Nateer Puja*, and *The Kingdom of Cards*. At Shantiniketan, Tagore encouraged the art and invited Naba Kumar, one of its best exponents, to impart his knowledge to the dance pupils there. Gowrie, the daughter of the well-known artist Nandalal Bose, has also done much to popularize Manipuri all over India and in Ceylon. In Rajputana and Gujerat in particular, Manipuri is held in great favour.

With its grace and sweetness, devoid of either sensuality or austerity, Manipuri is a thing of joy and beauty and supremely adaptable to group dancing. Conforming to but a few stylized gestures, it allows great latitude to the creative artist, and is a medium very suitable for the progressive choreographer.

EASTERN AND WESTERN DANCE FORMS COMPARED

AFTER this brief introduction to the various forms and aspects of Indian dancing, let us consider some of the differences between the choreographic art of the East and that of the West.

AGE

European ballet, the most popular form of stage dancing in the West, is a comparatively modern art. Its history, dating back to the seventeenth century, when Louis XIV of France gave it his patronage by opening the Académie de la Danse, is but a fragment of the entire history of European dancing, which may be traced back to the Greeks and the Romans. Moreover, ballet has undergone considerable transformation since the days of the Bourbons, achieving, perhaps, its zenith with the Imperial School of the Russians.

Classical Indian dancing, on the other hand, goes back to the beginning of time itself, with Lord Shiva's Dance starting the cosmic cycle of creation, destruction, and preservation. While legend cannot be entirely reliable as a guide, the fact that the source of Indian dancing is found in mythology proves its antiquity. And it has not been found necessary to alter fundamentally the technique of dancing as expounded by Bharata in his famous *Natya Shastra*. Even Kathak, one of the youngest schools of Indian dancing, goes back in origin farther than the beginnings of Western ballet.

EMOTIONAL APPEAL VERSUS MECHANICAL VIRTUOSITY

Indian dancing has its germ in religion. It is still closely bound up with Hindu thought and philosophy. Hence it has a profundity not to be found in ballet, a spiritual fervour missing from the Western

dance art, which, since the days of the Greeks, has thrown off whatever traces of religion clung to it, and has come to be admired not so much for the emotion it arouses as for its beauty and purity of line.

Ballet is remarkable for its skilled footwork, its *pirouettes* and *entrechats*. It relies on broad gestures and a minimum of facial expressions; in fact, the latter are often entirely absent and the dancer's face appears more like that of an automaton or a mummy. In India, centuries of refinement and minute stylization have resulted in the dancer's every gesture containing a wealth of meaning. The hands are eloquent and the face reflects a thousand fleeting emotions. This *abhinaya*, or expression, while it colours every dance performance, also leaves room for *nrtta*, or pure dance movement. The mime imparts life to the mechanics of the dance. It seldom does so in ballet. It is this lack of intense emotionalism that makes Western dancers often resemble puppets.

Technique is all very well – and none could be more stringent than that of Bharata Natyam or Kathakali; but the Western technique appears, to some extent, to stifle the spirit which gives life to dancing, the result perhaps of a misconception of the ancient Greeks' belief that 'the most beautiful creation of a High God is the human body', and therefore stresses form and motion above emotional content.

INNER AND OUTER CONSCIOUSNESS

We have seen that the *Natya Shastra* lays great emphasis on the creation of *rasa*, i.e. the emotional fervour that the artist must arouse in the spectator so as to enable him to become one with the spirit of the drama. This 'singleness' or 'oneness' is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of *natya*. In Western ballet, however, no such demand is made on the artist or the audience. The dancer appeals primarily to the senses, while the spirit remains untouched. Thus, 'technique, so necessary in the expression of any art, comes to the point of overdevelopment; being created for the betterment of expression, it over-leaps itself and stifles expression to its own glorification.'¹

¹ Arnold Haskell, *Ballet Panorama*.

There are obviously, then, certain fundamental differences between Indian and Western classical dancing. The one, while not entirely neglecting outer forms, seeks to arouse the 'inner consciousness'; the other appeals to the 'outer consciousness'. This is not surprising since, even in religion and *yoga*, while the Oriental sinks into *dhyana*, or meditation, the Western mind searches for external aids to bring solace to the spirit. The inner shrine of the Hindu temple and the soaring spire of the Christian church well symbolize these contrasting religious attitudes.

However, apart from ballet, we do find in the history of Western dancing attempts to give expression to 'the urge within'. In comparatively recent times the foremost exponent of what came to be known as the cult of 'free dancing' was the American Isadora Duncan who, scorning technique, astounded Europe with her dance expositions inspired 'from within'. In spirit though not in form (nearly all Indian dancing being highly stylized), her dances perhaps came nearest to those of India.

ART VERSUS INDIVIDUALITY

Natyadharma, or the code for Indian dancing, lays it down that the dancer must be the vehicle of his art, propagating its beauty and its *vinijoga*, or meaning, but never allowing himself or his personality to overshadow it. In Western dancing, on the other hand, it has become the practice to encourage individuality to the point where it is almost a fetish and dwarfs the art of which the dancer should be only the willing instrument. This 'star' system, while it allows the virtuoso to bask in the limelight, often deprives the rest of the company of its due, thrusting it into the background and thus preventing the 'finish' that can result only from absolute co-operation from the entire company.

The main difference, then, between the Western dancer and his Indian counterpart is that the former uses his art as a handmaiden to attend on him, while the latter dedicates himself to the service of his art, allowing it to use him as its vehicle.

SUBJECTS

Mythology has turned out to be an unprofitable field for the Western choreographer. Fokine's *Narcisse* and *Daphnis and Chloe*, the latter accompanied by a Ravel score, failed to grip audiences. Ninette de Valois's *Prometheus* to Beethoven's score, and the ballet production of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, suffered a like fate. The one outstanding success of a ballet based on a myth was Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, and then, we are told, its popularity was due to 'its original treatment *en profil* and the *succès de scandale* of its first presentation'.

Indian dancing favours legendary themes, as we have already noted. The *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* epics provide many settings in which the dancers assume the roles of mythological deities. This is why Eastern dances are austere and reverential, and the dancer seems carried away by the very spirit of the gods he interprets, becoming completely absorbed in the performance. The European dancer, on the other hand, occasionally appears detached and mechanical, as if his body were on the stage to perform routine technicalities while his mind is far away.

Another point of difference is that the Indian dancer creates enjoyment in his audience by himself extracting the fullest pleasure from his dance, while the Western dancer sometimes consciously strives 'to please the public'. Hence the flimsiness and tinsel fabric of many modern ballet themes, which sometimes resemble acrobatics.

HARMONY VERSUS DISUNITY

In both European and Indian dancing the aim is fusion of the sister arts of music, painting, and dancing. This harmony is more easily obtained in Eastern *natya* than in Western dancing.

Indian dance sets are usually very simple, but those of the West are inclined to be elaborate. The tendency in Russian ballet to subjugate the choreography to the décor dates back to the period (1909-1914) when Diaghilev, with his love of painting and his connoisseur's taste, gathered around him such masters of the brush as Benois, Bakst, Golovine, and Roerich. Examine the ballet *Petrouchka* which belongs to this period. Says Serge Lifar of it:

‘. . . the choreographer’s (Fokine’s) role in this ballet is almost negligible, to such an extent that its production could, strictly speaking, have been achieved without his taking part in it. The painter (Benois) would have sufficed to dispose on the stage the vari-coloured masses of danseurs and danseuses dressed in picturesque costumes. . . .’

Again, writing of the ballet *Parade*, Lifar observes cryptically: ‘. . . what is *Parade* but a Picasso painting in motion?’ Similarly, to our mind, Leslie Hurry’s décor for *Hamlet*, with its bloody hands and dripping daggers, serves to overshadow Helpmann’s dancing.

As with painting, so with music. Diaghilev, one-time pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, had such a passion for music that he allowed Stravinsky’s score to subjugate Fokine’s choreography, notably in *Le Sacre du Printemps* and *Noces*. Similarly, Prokofiev’s score for *Le Fils Prodigue* made dancing subservient to the music. Thus, instead of the music being made to suit the choreography, it was the latter that had to submit to a ‘despotic bondage’.

Time does not seem to have altered the tendency to adapt ballet to existing music. ‘Ballet’, declares Haskell, ‘still depends for sixty per cent of its repertoire on the selection and arrangement of already existing music.’

The music for Indian dancing fortunately corresponds to the development of the dance action, so that there is perfect harmony between the dancer and the musician. Thus the *sanchari bhava* of Bharata Natyam and the Kathak *gaths* interpret a single phrase of the accompanying melody with exactitude. The arts are made to blend in Indian dancing and the disharmony noticeable in many of the Ballets Russes compositions, wherein choreography is subservient to music and painting, is conspicuous by its absence.

While the history of Western dancing glitters with such names as Camargo, Noverre, Taglioni, Pavlova, Duncan, and Nijinsky, and of course, the *maestro* Cecchetti, and Diaghilev, the great impresario, Indian dancing has been preserved with reverence in remote corners of the country by craftsmen whose names have mostly perished with them. But their art, tended with loving care, survives. It is above names and personages. Therein is its greatest strength.

THE REVIVAL OF INDIAN DANCING

THE art of Indian dancing, reputedly divine in origin, was, as we have seen, an elaborate science almost at the dawn of the country's civilization. In the course of centuries it has survived many ups and downs. Its worst eclipse started with the Moghul invasion and ended with the last years of British rule in India.

Foreign cultural aggression led to the neglect of our indigenous arts, resulting in a love of alien culture to the detriment of our own. Consequently, among the young people of the 'smart set' of India to-day, Western ball-room dancing is far more popular than Indian classical dances. But, despite all kinds of upheavals – social, political, and economic – our dance art was never completely annihilated. It survived in obscurity the ravages of time and of neglect. Those who kept the flame burning were not the products of our schools and colleges, but simple sons and daughters of the soil, living in remote villages.

In the palm-fringed land of Malabar, the peasants of Kerala went on dancing the dances that were their traditional heritage. It is from here that the ancient art of Kathakali springs. It owes its survival to *gurus* such as Kunjukurup of Thakazhi, Narayan Nair of Kavala-para, Ravunni Menon of Pattambi, and their pupils, Madhavan, Haridas, and Gopinath. Less than twenty years ago, the poet Vallathol, translator of the *Puranas* and of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, went to live among these people and opened the Kerala Kalamandalam, an art centre intended to revive and unify many of the national arts of Kerala or Malabar.

In Tanjore, also in the south of India and far from the great centres of modern civilization, the Bharata Natyam technique was

jealously guarded by *vidwans*, or scholars, whose proud inheritance was this art practised in the temples of Shiva.

The history of the renaissance of Indian dancing must record in bold letters the names of such venerable men as Menakshi Sunderam Pillay, the late *Vidwan* Ponniah Pillay, Muthukumaran, Chokalingam, and female exponents like Madhuramba and Gowrie. It is they who saved Bharata Natyam from oblivion.

Up in the north the comparatively young art of Kathak, dating back only a few hundred years, was tended almost as if it were a holy fire by Brindadin and Kalkaprasad Maharaj. The latter's three sons, Lachchu, Achchanand, and Shambhu Maharaj, continued to practise the art that was theirs by virtue of lineage. To this company also belong Jylal, Sundar, and Hanuman Prasad.

In Assam, Manipuri has been kept alive by the efforts of exponents such as Amobi Singh, Naba Kumar, and the young Bipin.

It was only in the twenties of the present century that members of the upper classes started to take an interest in the oldest of Indian arts. They went to the masters in their remote villages and brought back sufficient knowledge of the technique to teach the city dwellers.

SOME PIONEERS

Among the early pioneers who took Indian dancing from town to town and beyond the frontiers of the country was the late Menaka. Wife of Colonel Sir S. Sokhey, a scientist and Director of the Haffkine Institute, a woman of breeding and refinement, Menaka was not content with the life of the idle rich. She defied the convention which ranked dancing as the monopoly of *devadasis* and harlots, and acquired a thorough knowledge of the technique of Kathak. Her solo numbers such as Usha, The Dance of Devotion, and The Moghul Serenade won high praise wherever she went. But, an admirer of the Russian Ballet, her heart was set on presenting to the world similar spectacular dance themes based on Indian myths.

Menaka's first ballet was the *Ras-Leela*; her most ambitious was based on Kalidasa's *Agnimitramalavika*. She achieved the height of her triumph when, with her troupe, she won the International

Dance Trophy, many years ago. Her name must go down as the first Indian woman of breeding to blaze the trail for society women to follow into the realms of classical art.

Probably the finest female exponent of Bharata Natyam to-day is Bala Saraswati, still in her twenties. She is no light, slim fawn, but a healthy, buxom South Indian girl born of a family of professional dancing girls. Though of the present generation, she has acquired absolute mastery of the old technique.

Bala's greatest skill lies in her *abhinaya*. Her *rasas* and *bhavas* are well-nigh perfect. There is so much grace in her movements, so much verve in her facial expressions, that her wonderful skill transcends her physical limitations and all who watch her are bewitched by her art.

There is, after all, something to be said for the artistic ideals which were responsible for the old custom of dedicating women like Bala to the service of the temple gods. It should be remembered that though *devadasi* came to mean 'a bad woman', the term had originally meant 'servant of god'. The *devadasi*, from the time of the *arangetral*, or dance initiation, is taken in hand by her *nattuvan*, or teacher, and often so strong a bond binds the two that it remains a life-long partnership. From such stock Bala sprang. The name of her family has been highly honoured for generations; her grandmother, Veena Dhanam, was a musician of renown, while the latter's own grandmother was, like Bala, a great dancer.

Rukmini Devi had a very different upbringing. Born of a family of Brahmans, she came, as a young girl, under the influence of Annie Besant the Theosophist. In her, as in Menaka, there was a strong streak of the rebel, for she married the late Dr Arundale, an English Theosophist, at a time when such intermarriages were frowned upon.

Rukmini has great personal magnetism and she performed Bharata Natyam with nimbleness and grace. The serene beauty of her face made her *rasas* a joy to see. She has not the same lightness of movement as in her earlier days but she will always be remembered for her pioneering efforts to further the artistic emancipation of her sex, and for the Kalakshetra, her cultural centre in Adiar.

Among those who have popularized Kathakali, Gopinath of Travancore must be placed in the front rank. Trained with Krishnan, Madhavan, and Haridas, under the tutelage of Kunjukurup and Narayan Nair, Gopinath evinced a rare sense of *tala*, or timing, from the earliest days of his novitiate. Learning his art from Cochinites, he was a victim of prejudice, being himself a Travancorean. But his luck turned when he partnered Ragini Devi, an American whom he trained himself.

Gopinath was amongst the first to lift Kathakali items from an entire ballet theme and to present them as solo numbers – a form of presentation much easier for the uninitiated city audiences to appreciate. His annual appearances at the Madras Music Academy and the Fine Art Society are events.

Recently, Gopinath, like Madhavan, has begun to introduce his own improvisations into the old technique. The danger here is that if the creators do not conform in the least to the traditional science the art is apt to become cheapened.

Finally, we come to Uday Shankar, well known in the West, perhaps better in America than in Europe. He started out as an art student under Sir William Rothenstein, but fate brought him under the influence of Pavlova, who took him as her partner for the Radha-Krishna number she had added to her repertoire.

To be a partner of the world-famed Pavlova was a splendid start for an unknown youth. From then Shankar went from strength to strength, taking as his partner Simkie, a French girl who became one of the best-known female dancers in India. While the classical technique is not unknown to him, he has always chosen to be what one may term a free-thinker in the realm of dancing. He has displayed no fondness for classicism, but believes rather in escaping conventional rigidness and in mixing the various styles and forms of dancing, both Eastern and Western.

Shankar has a number of fine creations to his credit, the most notable being his two ballets, *The Rhythm of Life* and *Labour Versus Machinery*. They are examples of his use of art to mirror contemporary problems; in other words, Shankar seems to subscribe to the Marxian belief that art must serve political and social propaganda.

Recently Shankar attempted to present his dances through the medium of the film, but, not being well versed in this technique, his first film venture *Kalpana*, portraying an artist's Utopia, fell between the two stools of choreographic and filmic representation, satisfying neither dance lovers nor film-fans.

Shankar's dance centre at Almora was disbanded for various reasons. There are many difficulties in keeping such a place going in India. There is, however, no doubt that Uday Shankar is assured a prominent position in the history of the renaissance of Indian dancing because he belongs to that small band of men and women who have made the art known and loved in the East as well as the West.

Among the revivalists may be mentioned Rabindranath Tagore. He did much to encourage Indian dancing, but the dance-dramas he composed emphasized the lyrics more than the dancing, which thus became subservient to the singing. At his school movements absolutely free from stylization were introduced. The dancer was to move his or her limbs exactly as he or she liked, so long as the actions were consonant with the meaning of the lyrics sung.

In a fleeting survey such as the present, it has been possible to mention only a few of the pioneers who have helped to revive the glory of Indian dancing. An examination now of the general state of affairs in the dance world of India is not out of place.

Social ostracism of the artist, due to the peculiar prejudice of the bourgeoisie, has gradually disappeared, because so many of the popular artists themselves have come from families considered 'respectable'. Nevertheless, if the artist is no longer looked upon as an outright freak, he is still treated as a plaything, a tonic for jaded nerves. As in Paris, New York, Berlin or London, so also in Delhi, Lucknow, Bombay, and the other big cities of India, the artist is regarded as an exotic creature to be gazed at curiously and with whom to beguile an hour of boredom.

Despite all the lionizing, reserved, incidentally, only for the famous and the notorious, the artist still stands isolated from the rest of the world.

A revival of dancing has certainly begun; but national con-

sciousness has not yet awakened to appreciation and encouragement of the art. Theatre managers are notorious for forcing dancers to 'popularize' their performances by cutting down classical numbers in favour of flimsy dances that appeal to unenlightened tastes. To a great extent the dancer still has to fall back on private patronage. As Philistinism is rife among those who pull the purse-strings, the dancer's plea for aid turns out to be a cry in the wilderness. When he does manage to make himself heard, he must dance to the tune of those who pay the fee and, more often than not, the tune called is far from elevated!

Dancing, and all art, must become part of life if it is to serve it. It must reflect not merely the artist's individuality and skill, but must also hold a mirror to the contemporary life of the nation, to the social and cultural conscience of the community.

The dance technique of ancient times has a finished pattern because, like other arts, it belongs to an age when art was wedded to life. Thus the *devadasi* dancing in her temple was in those days no object of impertinent scrutiny but a part of the daily fabric of life, like the mason who helped to build monuments or the sculptors who carved beauty out of the Ellora rocks and perpetuated heroic themes in the caves of Ajanta. If dancing is to progress it must be allowed to develop in the air of freedom, not be stifled by the artist's having to pander to degraded tastes. The artist, be he famous or a nonentity, must be accepted as an ordinary working member of society, who, like any craftsman or member of a profession, has his contribution to make to the good of the community.

Any age is judged by its cultural attainments, but these must be related to the life of the time. Classicism has its place, but we must seek inspiration from the present as well as from the past, from life as well as from fantasy. The dancer must come down to earth and his art must reflect his own times. Industrialization and vested interests have shorn the modern world of much beauty. The dancer must join with fellow artists in restoring that beauty.

It is a diseased social order that neglects the artist and lets him go a-begging, for it thus restricts his contribution to the welfare of the community. Since we are all products of our environment,

society by its treatment of the artist moulds him for better or for worse. The cultural expression of a period is bound up with its social structure, and posterity, when it judges the dead artist's accomplishments, will thereby judge his age.

Why do mythological themes dominate the dancing stage of India? Because the dancer, baffled by this chaotic age that only half owns him, seeks to escape into the distant past and to create a dream world where respect and respite are his. This is what has led Indian dancing into a blind alley, causing it to conform to hide-bound tradition, killing the creative urge on which alone progress can depend.

Tradition is a wonderful thing, but we must use it as the central theme round which new patterns may be woven. Even Bharata Natyam, though rigid in technique, can be explored and adapted to modern trends. In art as in life revolution is a painful process, but one absolutely necessary to growth.

How then can art find its proper place in life? Where dancing is concerned, while we must not forsake our prayer through the dance, we must bring dancing into synthesis with life. There must be a concordance of the arts and crafts, and humanity's struggles, its fears, hopes, and joys must be reflected in modern dancing as well as the passivity and serenity of godly beings. This is where Shankar's ballet, *Labour Versus Machinery*, serves a useful purpose, touching a facet of modern life, tackling one of its problems, highly coloured though the solution offered may be, due to the creator's own vivid imaginativeness.

The dancer must leave his temple shrine and join in the stream of life. His must be the finger pointing the distant vision, linking the physical and the metaphysical, expressing the half articulate longings of the soul.

STATE SUPPORT

While the dancer and his fellow artists must work to free art of the fetters that bind it, the State should also play its part in helping art to find its proper place in life. Every social structure is the handiwork of a particular régime, so problems of national importance

can best be tackled with the aid of those who produce the system.

Individual dancers such as Menaka, Shankar, and Rukmini Devi have not succeeded in making their art centres truly nationalistic. The fault is not theirs. The problem is too vast in a sprawling country like India for an individual to tackle. A State Dance Academy, with centres in all the provinces, is what is needed to restore the art to its former glory.

The State should grant the dancer certain facilities. It should build national theatres where he and his brother artists may perform. At present, obtaining a theatre for a show is purely a commercial enterprise. Dancing and its allied art of drama have become not necessary recreation, but luxuries. The system of State Support, but without totalitarian tendencies, would be ideal. Under such a system the dancer would no longer be looked upon as a luxury, but as a useful member of the community, providing it with legitimate recreation.

The State can help the dancer to forsake his ivory tower or thatched hut, his Himalayan heights or his pit of Yama, and come and live amongst his fellow men, reflecting their lives through the medium of his art. For Indian dancing, this is no unattainable ideal. In the renaissance on whose threshold we stand, dancing must elevate the taste of the masses, without, of course, losing touch with the fundamental things of life.

Our *vidwans* and *gurus*, such as Menakshi Sunderam Pillay and Kunjukurup, and many others who live in obscurity, keeping traditions alive, should be persuaded to come out of their retreats and the State should employ their vast store of knowledge.

The poet works at his metre alone; the painter wields his brush in solitude; sufficient to the musician is his melody. Only the dancer can bring about a concordance of these arts, for as we have already seen, he works on all four planes – the divine, the astral, the audible, and the visible. He can bring together the singer, the musician, the painter and the art of Nataraja, presenting thus a composite picture, a harmonious fusion of the different arts.

In India it is often impossible for the dancer to find the musicians and designers he needs. At present, every dancer with a troupe has

to act as his own talent-scout, producer, director, business manager, and virtuoso! There should be State centres where all four arts are encouraged. For the advancement of Indian dancing one of the most necessary measures is the opening of a department within a Central Dance Academy that would train promising choreographers.

SUMMING UP

The technique of Nataraja is so finished that its classical form will persist despite changing styles; but it is imperative to re-assess it in terms of contemporary life, to assimilate, if possible, the old with the new, using the traditional technique as a solid foundation. The pioneers have, often at great personal sacrifice, paved the way for those who follow. The good work must continue.

Dancing, like other arts, can brave all frontiers and link nation with nation. Says Sylvan Levi: 'From Persia to the China Seas, from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales, and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and to hold her place amongst the great nations summarizing and symbolizing the Spirit of Humanity.'

GLOSSARY

For convenient reference, and to supplement the explanations given in the text, meanings of Indian terms used in this book are given below. It should be appreciated that the meaning sometimes depends on context and that, while a term may have more than one meaning, more than one word may also be used to express the same thing. Terms vary, too, with dialects and schools of dancing. It would require a treatise in itself to deal comprehensively with all these variations. The glossary has therefore been kept within the scope of this book.

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|---|--|
| <i>Abhinaya</i> , expression gesture play mime | <i>Ascharya</i> , amazement |
| <i>Adavus</i> , a dance movement of arms and legs and head moving in co-ordinated rhythm | <i>Atharva Veda</i> , Book of Spiritual Craft Book of Charms |
| <i>Addiyams</i> , movements of the hands or other parts of the body | <i>Avard</i> , a single <i>tala</i> in Kathak |
| <i>Adbhuta</i> , mood of wonderment | <i>Avatar</i> , incarnation |
| <i>Aharyya</i> , of deportment and décor | <i>Bhakti</i> , devotional <i>rasa</i> (sentiment) |
| <i>Aharyya abhinaya</i> , decorative effect such as décor and lighting | <i>Bharya</i> , wife |
| <i>Anga</i> , major parts [of the body], in- cluding hands, flanks, legs, head, hips, and chest | <i>Bhava</i> , intellectualism, mood, idea |
| <i>Angika</i> , of the body | <i>Bhaya</i> , fright |
| <i>Angik abhinaya</i> , bodily movements such as action and mime | <i>Bhayanaka</i> , fear |
| <i>Annugraha</i> , Sadashiva releasing the human soul from its cycle of re-births, through <i>an- nugraha</i> | <i>Bhramacharis</i> , [and saints] i.e. men who refrain from sexual in- dulgence |
| <i>Apsaras</i> , celestial dancing girls | <i>Bols</i> , rhythmic sequences used in Kathak dancing |
| <i>Arangetral</i> , dance initiation | <i>Brahmins</i> , priests |
| <i>Ardhanariswara</i> , aspect of half woman, half man | <i>Brahmari</i> , spiral movements |
| <i>Artha</i> , intellect | <i>Chari</i> , gait movements |
| <i>Asamyukta</i> , single-hand gestures | <i>Chela</i> , pupil |
| | <i>Chenda</i> , a cylindrical drum hung from the neck |
| | <i>Choli</i> , bodice |
| | <i>Chutti</i> , rice-flour paste make-up used by Kathakali male dancers only |
| | <i>Dainic nrtya</i> , daily dance |
| | <i>Damaru</i> , drum |
| | <i>Dakshya Jagna</i> , Sacred Fire Ceremony |

GLOSSARY

- Devadasis*, female temple dancers
Dharma, 'code' or rule
 material self
Dhoti, drape worn by men from the
 waist down
Dhyana, meditation
Dohas, verses
Drishyakava, poem
- Gagra*, flounced skirt of from 15 to 20
 yards worn by women in North
 India
Ganas, attendants
Gandharvas, company of musicians
Gaths, gestures
Gati, gait movements
Gopis, village maidens
Guru, master
- Hasta*, hand
Hasta mudra, gestures of the hands
Hasta prana, 'life breathed into the
 hand'
Hasya, mirth, satire
- Jethis*, time beats in which head, arms,
 and legs are used
Jugupsa, aversion
- Kali*, music
Kama, emotions
Karuna, pathos
Katha, dance drama
Khol, an instrument rather like a guitar
Kritya, activities
Krodha, anger
Kshatriyas, warriors
Kura, bangle
- Lasya*, graceful feminine movements
Laya, rhythm
Lokadharmas, code of Indian dance-
 drama enjoining natural-
 ness
- Maddalam*, a small variety of drum
Mana, the brain
Mantras, prayers
Matras, sub-divisions
- Melappadma*, musical contest
Mridanga, drum players
Mudra, gesture
Murli, flute
Musti, fist
- Nata*, dance
Nattuwan, teacher
Nattuwanars, scholars of dancing
Natya, dance-drama
Natyadharmas, code of Indian dance-
 drama advocating imag-
 inateness
Natya Veda, Book of Knowledge and
 Drama
Nautch, name applied to popular danc-
 ing
Nautch ghar, a dancing hall attached to
 each temple is known as
 a nautch ghar
Nava ratna, Nine Jewels
Nrtta, rigid stylization
 pure dance
Nrtya, form of *abhinaya* producing
 aesthetic delight. It incorpor-
 ates *bhava* and *rasa*
- Padams*, songs expressed in mime
Pancha, five
Pandal, canopy or tent
Parana, dance metre
Pilsuj, high stand
Pradipa, lamp
Prajapatis, messengers of Brahma
Prana, air, breath
Pataka, gesture signifying protection
Pratyanga, intermediate parts [of the
 body] such as the neck,
 shoulders, back, stomach,
 elbows, thighs, knees, and
 ankles
Puja, offering of prayer
Purana, legend or history
Purrapadu, a cacophony of drums and
 trumpets
Putras, sons
- Raga*, tune
Ragas, male tunes
Raginis, female tunes

GLOSSARY

- Raja*, lord or king
Rajadavis, women who perform before the flagstaffs in temples
Rajsik, heroic characters
Rakshas, demons
Rasa, a sentiment
 emotional fervour
Rati, love
Raudra, fury
Raudra rasa, mood of fury
Rechaka addiyams, movements of neck, hands, or other parts of the body
Rig Veda, Book of Hymns
Rishi, hermit
- Sama Veda*, Book of Melodies
Samhara, Rudra destroying through *samhara*
Samyukta, double-hand gestures
Sarangi, stringed instrument producing sounds not unlike those of the bagpipe
Sattvika, of the mind
 virtuous characters
Sattwik abhinaya, the interpretation of moods
Shakha, hand movements
Shama, peace
Shamiana, improvised canopy
Shanta, serenity
Shanti, peace
Sharira, the body
Shristi and avirbhava, Brahma creating through the action termed *shristi* or *avirbhava*
- Sloka*, verse
Soka, compassion
Sringara, eroticism
Shrshti, Vishnu preserving by means of *sthtiti*
Sudras, menials
Swadasis, those dancers whose services are reserved for special festive occasions
Swamis, holy men
Swara, scale
Swarams, delicate nuances
- Tabla*, a pair of drums
Tal, small cymbals
Tala, timing; also refers to the tiny cymbals used in Bharata Natyam
Tambura, four-stringed instrument
Tamsik, destructive, diabolic characters
Tandav, vigorous masculine dance movements
Thekas, expressions
Thirmanams, combinations of dance movements of entire body
Tika, a dot
Tirobhava, Maheshwera conferring illusion by means of *tirobhava*
Torabs, rhythmic timing and footwork used in Kathak dancing
Tukra, dance metre showing 'a piece or bit'
- Upanga*, minor portions [of the body] such as the lips, the mouth, the teeth, the tongue, the nose, the cheeks, and the eyes
Ustads, composer-teachers
Utasha, bravery
Uttplavana, leaping movements
Vachika, of the voice
Vachik abhinaya, verbal expression such as dialogue in drama
Vaishya, merchants
Vandanaslokam and thodayam, prayer and dance music
Veera, valour
Veni, semi-circle of real or artificial flowers round the bun or plait of the hair
Vibhatsa, disgust
Vidhyadharis, female celestial holders of wisdom
Vidwans, scholars
Vilubita, slow measures
 also *madhija*, medium-speed measures
 druta, rapid measures
Viniyoga, meaning
Vir or *bira rasa*, heroic mood
Yagur Veda, Book of Sacrifices

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