

Evolution the Art of Dance and Role of Devadasis in Odissi Dance

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Abstract: In this paper I will made an attempt to the development of dance in India and Odisha. We tried to make a various sources through which we can studies the history of dance. Paper has made humble attempt to differentiate the various sources through which we can easily understand the evolution of dances to utilizing those sources. There are number of Indian literatures which are reflects the art of dancing and singing. Since the development of script in India, the dance art has been mentioned upto the evolution of the modern dance form has rise in the twentieth century. Besides the literary evidences we have large number of archaeological sources which are mostly found Indian monuments, particularly, popular religious monuments of Hindu and Buddhism. In these monuments there are large number of sculptural art of dance, which are performed by girls (*devadasis*). Odisha is a reach of cultural activities which gives various evidences of ancient and medieval history of the region. The Odissi dance which is developed after independence India was the total dedication of Odishan artist from the evidence lefts surround the region. The large sculptural depiction of devadasis implies to the role of devadasi in Odissi dance.

Keywords: *Devadasi, Odissi dance, Natyasatra, Maharis, Samgita*

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Introduction

Dance was originated with the desire of men to express himself. There are large evidences which grew as a great science with considerable antiquities. It is probably the earliest forms of language for worship where both mantra and *Tantra* are the symbolic gesture. For this reason it has been found great favour with religion and rituals over the country. The celestial beings were greatly associated with it. The tradition of dance in India is very much ancient probably since the Indus civilization or much before. If we take the dance forms of India, we can find different forms of dances prevalent throughout India, mostly influenced with the geographical and environmental factors surrounding over it. In each and every steps of India we have found changes in dance forms. Mostly the changes has been distinguish with the regional variations. The form of dance prevalent in Odisha which is known as *Odissi* dance was recognized as an Indian classical dance in the year 1972, after that it crossed the international boarder. The dance is as old as the civilization itself¹. Though the dance *Odissi* is come into distinguish dance form in 20th century. The dance and music is very early

practiced in Indian society and culture. We should have some ideas about the historical development of dances in India.

Evolution of Dance

The history dance can be traced back to very early civilization. The antiquity of dancing girl excavated at Mahenjo-daro was the earliest historical evidences in India. The terracotta of dancing figurine find in Mahenjo-daro depicts is unknown, but it confirms the existence of dancing in ancient India. After Indus civilization the Aryanised India probably taking the culture of Indus from which they reflected their desires through literatures. The world's oldest texts the Rig Veda² has mentioned the dancing girl, but we did not have confirms the kind of dancing. The Shyam Veda is one of the significant textual evidence in ancient Indian society. Bharata, the father of Indian dancing visualized and expressed the whole of India in the form of dance, music and drama. In his *Natyasastra* he laid basic to Indian dancing. He strengthened what was earlier done by his predecessors. Any classical dance of present India is based on Bharata's principles. According to Rukmini Devi Arundale 'bharatanatyam' includes all forms of dances and dance drama which are in accordance with the *Sastra* as laid down by the sage Bharat³.

As per the Bharata's *Natyasastra* dance was arises of from no specific need, but to beautifying every sense of life⁴. To understand the origin and development of dance we can take the help of various sources such as the Literary sources and Archaeological sources. There are exhaustive literary sources which are gives the information regarding the origin and development of dances in India. The early literature deals with the dance and musics are generally Satric or Classical. We do not have much evidence in the Vedic age. The first work on art was mentioned in *natusutra* by *Silalin* and *Krsasva*, which referred in *Astadhyayi*⁵. The work *Astadhyayi* was dated about 500 B.C.. It is quite indispensable when the Bharata has been written. Though Bharat's work is primarily intended for dramatic arts, he discussed dance in full details. He did great efforts to raise the visual arts to the level of sacred Vedic literature. There are many ancient and medieval literatures which gives us ample evidences to know the growth and development of dance in India as well as the *Odissi* dance in Odisha.

Literary sources

Literary sources are one of the significant Indian historical records. From the very beginning of the Indian civilization, the literary records are left which to understand the history of ancient past are very relevant for. Large numbers of literary records are left which are deals with the dance and music also. The evidence of dance is found since Indus civilization from the bronze statue of dancing girls but due to non-development of script during at that time might not be not found any literary records. The Indian literature has been very much available since the Vedic Age, probably the evolution of script has rich in shape. Since then the Indian literature has been greatly help to historians to understand the ancient past of India. The *Samaveda* and *Yajurveda* are two early texts where for the first time deals with the music and sacrifice in ancient world. In the very beginning the music and sacrifices are very much associated with the religion. So without attachment of religion we cannot understand the purpose of music and sacrifices in India. There are large literary records and *sastras* which are primary base of every classical drama, dance or any other form of art. In India there are generally six forms of classical dances are approved, the *Odissi* is one of them⁶. The dance forms had their regional literary records to prove their individuality apart from the ancient texts like *Natyasastra*, *Abhinaya darpan* and *Samgita*

Ratnakara which are accepted basic texts for all the dances alike in whole of India. All these texts accepted on a general basis which makes Indian dances to have special place in international scene.

The regional texts render individual character to dance it discusses. Now a days there are six form of classical dances which are discussing particularly the relevant literary sources to Odissi dance only. An art form firstly pertaining to Odisha is found in *Natyasatra*. According to Bharata, there are four *Pravrttis*, viz. *Avanti*, *Dakshinatya*, *Pancali* and *Udra-magadhi*⁷. The word *Pravrtti* means mode of living and behavior where Bharata contemplated the drama, dance to be imitation of atmosphere⁸. The *Pravrtti* based on regions, localities according to the environments and climate. Bharata has been rightly presupposed the *Udra*(Odisha)⁹, its individual trait, in composition, production costume, language and behavior to be classified separately. Bharata has been classified many of emotional items which were performed. He also given hints to solo or individual dances. Gradually drama is developed independently. Today, in solo dance of Odissi appeared as *Lasya* which is synonym of *Sukumara anga*.

Bharatarnava of Nandikesvara is one of the on the line of dance but unfortunately lost to us. *Abhinaya Darpan* is a significant work after the Bharata's *Natyasatra*. Basically it deal with dancer and not to an actor. There are group of *Abhinaya* texts but *Abhinaya Darpan* is only texts available and accepted by the dancers throughout India. It deals with the technicalities of dancing which elaborates the physical limbs and their divisions. These two texts were probably written on 4th century B.C. and 2nd century B.C. respectively. Besides that another two texts which were deals with dancing viz. *Samgita* literature and Purana literature. It informed us the development and growth of Indian dancing.

The texts *Samgita* devoted for dancing a chapter or two, where singing became independent science. The word is derived as consisting of *gita*, *vadya* and *natya*. Thus medieval texts defined *Samgita*. In 12th century A.D. an important work is taken place and work done by Sarangadeva is *Samgita Ratnakara* which is broadly accepted the dancer and musicians throughout India though the *Samgita Ratnakara* is widely accepted how it influence our classical dance i.e. Odissi is not found any particular evidences.

The Purana literature informed us about the history of dancing and fills the gap between the ancient texts and the later regional texts. These works gives us ideas of classical and popular dancing. The dance is essential accomplishment for prince, a young girl and a true courtesan. Two important puranas which gives worth fully in Indian dance are Vishnudharmottara Purana, Agnipurana probably during 5th and 8th century A.D. respectively. These works gives us information about the particular dancing prevalent in their times. There are two other puranas which are presents historical elements describe in dance in Puri are *Brahmapurana* and *Skandapurana*. The *Brahmapuran* gives full account of the famous *rathyatra* of Lord Jagannath at Puri. This was probably Pre-natal period of Odissi dance as we understand today. The dance prevailing in this text is very devotional in nature. In the *Skandapurana* many dance rituals are described. In some instances, it seems that the devadasis are explained as Rambha and *Vesya* of (celestial dancer in Indras court)¹⁰.

Regional Works

Odisha has abundant works on music and dance. There are written many works by odia writers in Sanskrit by 16th century onwards. These works assume a kind of dance forms was accepted. When we analysis their forms in scientifically, we found that the treaties are generally concentrate on *udranrutya*. Some texts are written in odisha dealing with dance after 16th century are Sangita narayana's *Samgitakalplatika*, *Abhinaya darpanadprakash*, *Natyamanorama* and *Abhinaya chandrika*.

All these literature gives ample evidence of development of Odissi dance in Odisha. The *Sangita narayana* is work of Gajapati Naryana deva of Paralakhemundi feudatory state. He was the king of Paralakhemundi in 1718-1767 A.D¹¹ in his work he pay full attention in physical movements of the body. *Samgita kalpalatika*¹² one of the important work on dance by Jadunath Raja Simha. This work shows more odishan element. The treatise comprises of fourteen chapters and the whole works is devoted to dance. The author had discussed on hand gestures on dances. In this book author has deals with pataka, where he tried to explains, the original Odishan utility of gestures by local dancers. The taxts is taking a manual of Odissi dance in that period. The author Yadunath Raja Simha is supposed to be the king of an ex-state of Dharakote in the district of Ganjam of Odisha in 17th century A.D¹³.

Besides that *Natyamanorama* was written by Raghunath Rath which is footstep of *Sangita narayana*. He mentioned various authors in this texts such as Raya Ramananda, Krsnadasa Badajena and many others. Another important text *Abhinaya Chandrika* is one of the magnificent work to enhance the Odissi dance to classical status. This book has key book on Odishan classical dance¹⁴.

In the ancient India two institutions extended patronage to the arts of music and dance are palace and temples. Palaces become the seat of cultural activities which were mostly found in metropolitan cities. At the same times temples played the patron in the rural as well as in main pilgrimages. The temple are preserved various arts as a part of the sixteen offerings made to lord as *sodasapacarar*s. The arts are preserved with dancing figurines of various sculpture on the outer wall of temple. The figurines stood as the evidence for the ages which depicts various style of dance. The artist are also delighted to depicted very effectively the dancing girls on the temple walls. These places become vast establishments and temples flowered into vibrant cultural centers. Through these arts we have get clear evidence of extricable intertwined the art and religion. An intimate relation was established with the dance and religion in the rituals of temple worship in odisha the institution of devdasis or *maharis* who are known as servant of god whose duty was to perform in the temple contributed in perpetuating and preserving the art many texts and addicts which are referrers in this regard.

The earliest inscription is found in Brahmesvara temple at Bhubaneswar on Mahari tradition of Udyotakesari. He was the last king in Kesari dynasty. In the inscription recoded that in 10th century A.D. Udyotakesari's mother Kalavati devi was depicted as beautiful dancing girl.

Another inscription is found in the Meghesvara temple of Bhubanesvar. It is issued by Rajarajadeva II of Ganga dynasty in the later part of 12th century A.D. Now the inscription has been found in the compound of Anantavasudeva temple where referred the dancing girls sacrifice to lord Siva. The consecration of dancing girl is also found in a temple near Niali. Anagabhimadeva who had built many temples during his time his daughter Chandrika is an expert in music and dance. The temple inscription explains the appointment of beautiful dancers in the service of lord Vishnu. Prataparudra deva was issued an inscription on July 1499 A.D. in devotion to lord Jagannath. It has been explained the duties of the dancing girl (*nacuni*) in the inscription. The Telingisamprada dancer was allowed to perform dance in the Puri temple. The dancer were order to perform dance only on Astapadi's Gitagovinda. They were appointed to sing and dance to the tune of Gitagovinda only¹⁵. If the dancer's and singers sings anything than Gitagovinda Gitagovinda they will be sinner's of the lord.

Archaeological Sources

To understand the history of dance and singing architecture is another important source which gives us very good information's. Odisha has large number of monuments which are available throughout

Odisha from that architecture we have found many sources of that time. Generally Odisha had very good number of monuments of Jainism, Buddhism and Hindu feature are available. Further in Hinduism there are various cult developed such as Sakti cult, Saivism, Vaisnavism and Jagannath Cult respectively.

Jaina Manuments

Jaina faith is the earliest historical evidential existed in Odisha. The earliest Jaina monuments appear in the second century B.C. and reached its acme of its prestige and glory in Odisha during the reign of Kharavela of Chedi dynasty. Kharavela was championed for the growth and development of Jainism. The Hatigumpha Inscription¹⁶ of Kharavela is one of the important sources which gives strong evidence of existence of dance and music at that time but also the sculptural in the panel of the caves the absolute development of dance and music. The sculptural feature of Khandagiri and Udayagiri depicted during 2nd century B.C. for first time in India particularly on dance and music. The sculpture of Udayagiri and Khandagiri prevails that dance and music were practiced by women in wide scale. A scene was depicted in the right wing of the lower storey of the Ranigumpha on dance and music which implies that the womens are very engaged in various cultural activities such as dance and music. On the upper storey of Ranigumpha a scene is depicted the performance of dance and music. In the Tatowagumpha No. 2 one of the cut out brackets is found relieved with a vivacious danseuse performing dance with graceful movement of hands and limbs in company of male musician who plays on a beautifully designed harps¹⁷.

Buddhist Monuments

Buddhism is one of the glorious past of Odishan religion. It was mostly spread from 5th century A.D. to 12th century A.D. and reached it zenith during the Bhauma-Kara period. Literally we did not have much evidence on dance and music in Buddhism. The Buddhist architecture and sculpture is largely constrained with the Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri. We have very few reminiscent has been found on dance and music particularly. If we came into across the Buddhist culture it has very less of cultural activity may found or the Buddhist works are adopted by the Hindu in the later. A image of Heruka (god) adorn with garland of human skulls, hold Khatwanga in his hand which is appears in the rigorous dancing pose. The image has been found in Ratnagiri¹⁸. Another image which has been found in Lalitgiri is a female dancer which is shown with grace and rhythm. The culture of Buddhism has been accepted by the all Indian religion in the later period may it cause the lost of Buddhist evidence. Particularly the Sakti cult is accepted most of the goddess of Buddhism.

Sakti Cult

Odisha became strangely mixed up of Buddhism, Saivism, and Saktism particularly during Bhauma period. Although we did not have much architecture of Saktism like Saivism in ancient and Medieval Odisha, the Sakti Cult was developed as two important site in ancient Odisha are Hirapur near Bhubaneswar and RanipurJharial in Bolangir district probably in 7-8th century A.D. These temples are represents various positions of Yogini or sakti images. Here thre are varieties of mother-goddesses are shown along with dancing *Bhairavas tantric pitha* in India first originated and developed in *Udradesa*. Before the depiction on the temple walls we have evidences of depiction of female images in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri of second century B.C. where depicted various posture of dance and music

as well as the various sculptures of *nagini* and *yaksini*. Later on came the *mahisamardini* images, they can be two armed, four armed, eight armed and ten armed. These images gave inspiration to depict the *matrika* images in Odisha. The *matrika* images are developed in Odisha which is found from the sculptural evidence throughout Odisha found near Jajpur and Khinching in Mayurbhanja district. The images of *matrika* have been found in early time in Odishan temple belonged to 7th century A.D. in the northern wall of Jagamohana at Parasuramesvara temple at Bhubaneswar¹⁹. The *yogini* cult was prevalent in Odisha. This is quite evidence found in two temples. One located at Hirapur near Bhubaneswar and another at Ranipur in Jharia at Bolangir district, where we see a variety of mother goddesses are shown along with dancing Bhairava tantric pitha in India first organized and developed in Udradesa. This *matrika* cult continued till 8th century A.D.²⁰

Saivism

There is very close relation between the dance and the religion. The Saivism which gives ample evidences on drama and dance. Siva is called Nataraja or the king of dancer. It is ascertained with various myths and legends. A. Coomarswami gives three interpretations about the dance of Siva. The first is an evening dance in the Himalayas with divine chorus which is described in Shiva Pradosha Stotra. The second is known as Tandava dance belong to his *tamosic* aspects as Bhairava or Vira bhadra. The dance is represented in the ancient sculptures as at Elura, Elephanta and also at Bhubaneswara. This type of dance is pre-Aryan origin. Thirdly the Nandata Dance of Nataraja before the assembly (*sabha*) in the golden hall of Chidambaram of Tillai. This dance represents motif of south Indian copper images of Shri Nataraja. The dance of Siva's dance is three fold which is interpreted the essential significance such as the first is Rhythmic plays as the source all movement within cosmos, which is represented by the Arch: the secondly, the purpose of his dance is to Release the countless souls of men from share of illusion; and thirdly, the place of the dance, Chidambaram, the centre of universe, is within the heart. The devotional dance in India is an outcome of the king-God concept. In the early civilization there was no difference between divinity and royalty. The rule of religion was the foremost which was executed by the kings²¹. According to V. Subramaniam, it is a precise or even approximate date for the evolution of the king-god concept. This concept was accepted widely by the scholars by 12th century in the south India and was gradually beginning to take root in North India. Some scholars pointed that the Devadasi dance is associated with Tantras. Perhaps this is due to prevalence of Devadasi dance in Shiva temple. However, it is also popular in the Vishnu temples like Sri Jagannath temple at Puri and Haygriva Madhava temple of Hazo, Assam. There are large evidences has been left in the sculptural art on the temples of Odisha through which we can get development of dance and music. There are a number of Siva temples throughout Odisha, where the sculptural art has been depicted although there has not much specified little sources can found through the sculpture. Besides the main deity, *parsva-devata*, there are depicted various sculpture on the temple wall, the foremost is the images of *Alasakanyas*. The image of *Alasakanyas* represents the various acts of the society, which mostly depicted on the Hindu literatures. The *Alasakanyas* are taking vary important role in the religious texts of India as well. So through their acts the dance in Indian contexts may come to appear²². From the inscription of the Brahmesvara temple it is known that dancing girls on the temples on 10 century. A detail analysis of the dance-sculptures carved in Shaivite temples of Bhubaneswar and other areas of Odisha built between 7th to 12th century A.D. the Saiva ruler built many noteworthy temples in their times. Probably in sixth century, the Shaivite School of dancing may developed. The sculptural

feature shows the evidences in that centuries like Bharatesvara, Laksmanesvara, Satrughanesvara and Parasuramesvara temples have pointed entrance doors to the west which have two panel showing young dancers and musician holding lute, cymbal and fans. These figurines are mostly found all the Odishan temples which attracted attention of historians. From the poses postures, hand gesture (hastas), leg positions (pada- Vedas) body testify that the form followed the tenets of Natyasatra of Bharata. In 11th century A.D Bhaumakara kings built many temples like Boital, Sisiresvara, in these temple we have witnesses same kind of dancing figures. After the Bhaumakara reign, the Kesari dynasty came to power who were built the towering temple of Lingaraj at Bhubaneswar. This temple was completed by the mother of Udyota Kesari, Kalavati devi as referred earlier dedicated many dancing girls to the temple. Beside it another temple the Rajarani temple in Bhubaneswar, is also find *nayika* who invite the onlooker with their charming smiles at their beautiful poses. These *nayikas* give us impression of dancers frozen in stone²³.

The dance is represents the five activities of siva- (*panchackritya*), viz. Shristi (overlooking, Creation, evolution). *Sthiti*(prevention, support), *Samhara*(destruction, evolution), *Tirobhava*(veiling, embodiment, illusion and also giving rest), *Anugraha* (release, Salvation, grace). These separately considered are the activities of the deities Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, mahesvara and Sadashiva. There are various images which are significantly represents the association of dance with Siva cult. Perhaps saivism was flourished in Odisha long before the advent of *mayura* and *lakulisacults*. There are different kinds of nataraja images in Odisha which are different from the south Indian *nataraja* idols. The nataraja images may ranges from 4th century AD to 12th century AD. The Asanpat stone inscription of Keonjharis the earliest Nataraja in Odisha. This is image belong to 4th century AD with eight armed where the uppermost two hands of god hold snake and the lowermost two hands hold lute. Other hands depict *varda-mudra*, *trisula damaru* and *aksamal* respectively. If this quoted by historian is right than this will be history of India. Besides this there are large number of nataraja images found in Odishan temples such as the Nataraja images of 6th century AD are found in Muktesvara temple of Bhubaneswara. The nataraja image also found in the temples of Bharatesvara and Parasuramesvara where twelve armed and ten armed images are seen respectively. The image of many identical *nataraja* has also found on Satrughanesvara temple. It is quite similar to the bronze *nataraja* image of south India. Here the stance, feet position and posture are totally different. The foot position of the icon is raised some times but mostly it is poised on the ground, it is common sight in the contemporary Odissi dance. The hand gesture had no elaboration. Sculptures have taken gestures from Silpasatras. It is named *trisula*, *damaru*, *vina*, *sansara-chakra*, *bhiksapatra*, *khatvanga*. These weapons are represented by *nrttahastas*, as *Pataka*, *ardhapataka*, *kapittha*, *arata*, *sarpasitra*, *alpadma*, *ardhacandra* and *musthi* gestures. These gesture of dancing in Odisha traits make different and special in tandava then south India²⁴.

Vaisnavism

As per the Epigraphical evidences, the Mathara rulers hold a strong belief in Vaisnavism in Odisha probably in 5th century A.D. The Vaisnavism was established a strong hold in Odisha during Ganga rulers. The dynasty was ruler over the vast kingdom extending from the river Ganga in the north to Godavari in the south, and Bay of Bengal to the high land in the west. In order to rule over the country from an advantageous position the Gangas were shifted their capital from old Kalinganagara to Cuttack in the year 1135 A.D. they had ruled for four hundred years. They were not only great conquerors but

also able administrator, great patron of religion, religious institutions, art and architecture as attested by the construction of a number of magnificent temples²⁵. It is believed that Chodagangadeva only renovated the temple of Jagannatha. In the temple shrine various classics are testified through which, it is significant that dancing poses to support the presence of dance. In the 13th century Anangabhimā's daughter built *Muktesvara* temple at Bhubaneswar, where inscribed many such poses of *nayikas*, *apasara*, heavenly musicians and indolent heroines. At the same century the magnificent Sun temple was built by Narasimhadra-I of the Ganga dynasty at Konark. Here there is a magnificent features of *natamandapa* is presented with plinth and pillars and carved with abundant dancing figurines. The Jagamohana has many life size image like *bhairava* and female musicians. These female musicians were represents important sculptures which especially as a part of Odissi dance (*nrtta*). The various poses like *mardala* (drum-player), *manjira* (cymbal player) *vina* (lute player and *venu* (flute player).

From the sculptures of Sun temples the scholars are believed that the models are giving posing to workers to construct such images. These makes clear that there was prevalent dances. Though the dance figures of Sun temples cannot be claimed as present day Odissi form the poses on the temple are also mentioned on the texts of Odishan *Silpasatra*. At the later stage Odishan ruler came under the sage of Jaganntha cult (Vaisnavism). In the 15th century, the Suryavamsi dynasty entitled as Gajapatis the dynasty was start from 1435 AD. Kapilendradeva was the one of the important ruler of the dynasty, who appointed many dancing girls in service of lord Jaganntha. He was succeeded by the legendary Purushottamadeva, who married the southern prince Padmavati of Kanchipuram. A legend was comes from that the dancing girl *mahari* was introduced in the shrines. The matrimonial relation of Purushottamadeva brought a confluence of east and south culture in Odisha. His son Prataprudradeva was a great lover of art. During these period there was great changes taking place in Odisha, the Bhakti movement was also influenced throughout India. In this period, Sri Chaitanya came and settled at Puri. Another important personality of the time Raya Ramananda who was great scholar of Vaisnavism, he wrote the Jagannath *Vallabhanataka*. One of the significant work of Prataprudradeva is he made Gitagovinda as compulsory in the Jagannatha shrines. 'Gitagovinda was made compulsory because 'Madhuryarasa' (conjugal love) was predominant. Raya Ramananda was an ardent follower of Sri Chaitanya thus Gaudiya Vaisnavism started playing an important part on the art scene. Chaitanya Charitamruta is book which discloses the training of Ramananda to devadasis about the intricacies of *Bhakti*, *bhava* and *rasa*²⁶.

During the time of Prataprudradeva, a regulation was made in temples that there are two batches of female dancers. Mina Nayakas were appointed to escort the Devadasis to the temple and back to their homes. Dosandha Nijogas were appointed to guard their houses. The Devadasis or the Maharies were in exclusive groups among them some of for dancing (*nrtta* or *nachuni*) some of for singing (*gauni*). There was no accompaniment of vocal singing to her dance nor she was permitted to sing. Similarly the singer also limited to sing only. There are only one act appointed to a person. Therefore, there was no sequence of Abhinay or interpretative dance in performance of a Devadasi.

Soon, it became the content of the dance and songs cultivated by the maharis in their ritual services, their dance adopted the Kaishiki Vritti with spiritual as well as amorous love as the theme. The dance became purely Lasya style. It totally discarded the Tandava tradition of dance of the Maharies became soft, lyrical with utmost grace and charm. This tradition dance continued till 16th century A.D. when Sri Chaitanya came and stayed in Odisha. The Vaisnavite saint was a great admirer of Geeta Govinda. His great disciple Rayramananda was an expert in the field of dance drama and music. He wrote

‘Jagannath BallavaNatakam’ in imitation of Geeta Govinda. With the help of the Devadasi he got those two plays enacted in the temple of Lord Jagannath in the form of Dance –drama. In the later part of 16th century, Odisha was attacked by the Nawab of Bengal. They attacked and looted the temple on many occasions. As a result, the ritual service of the temples suspended for many years which affected greatly the tradition of dance and drama of the temple.

After a glorious phase of achievement in history, culture, architecture, literature and many more, Odisha has faced various turmoil with various invasions in the end of 16th century A.D onward like Kalapahada, the mogul were arranged for new *suba* or ruler of Odisha. Marhatha and the British occupation. William Hunter made a record on temple in 1872 where he shows the dancing girls in his period who were danced with rolling eyes. He adds that these dances were indecent ceremonies with gyrations. At present they are no more Maharis service in the temple. Various scholars has been said the witness of maharis performance and met them also. Those statements indicate that the dancing tradition was present what form may be till the present days²⁷.

Gotipua Dance

The Gotipua dance occupy a special status in the history of Odissi dance. The male dancers are the touch bearers to Odissi dance which was in the decaying state. The word ‘Goti’ means one or single and ‘pua’ is a boy. Due to Muslim invasion to Odisha, the Mahari dance was declined. Many main temples of Odisha closed down, the maharis were exploited and slowly they became extinct. To alive the system, the boy dancers were allowed to dance in the temples until adolescence. These dancers are also known as *Akhadapilla* or *Samgitapilla*. The entry of Chaitanya offering himself as sakhi to the lord and wide acceptance of his doctrines by the kings and commoners of Odisha was the main inspiration of those dancers. Gotipua dancers offered themselves as sakhi to the supreme lord Krishna. These dancer slowly depended on this art for earning their daily bread and they travelled from one place to another to spread message of Sri Chaitanya. The Gotipua were adolescents. They dressed as Radha or sakhi and then served the lord by offering themselves to Krishna. It seems that gotipua dancing may started in the rule of Prataprudradev. The king appointed dancing girls to sing and dance gitagovinda only. The main theme of these dancing of these dancers is the love between Radha and Krishna where the Maharis danced art only, until they were ordered to dance gitagovinda in the temple. Apart from this gotipua dancers danced acrobatic dance poses known as Bandha from the Satras of regional origin²⁸.

At present there are very few gotipua dancers were left. Many efforts are being made by the government for their upliftment. These gotipua dancers perform in groups controlled by the guru. They are accompanied with a drum player(mardala) and a cymbal (manjira) player. The dance is very the dance is very much similar to the contemporary Odissi dance. Even today the gotipua dancers perform in the precincts of Jaganntha temple on occasion like Chandanayatra and other ceremonies. Gotipua dancing was in full swing until recently, so to imbibe its characteristics to the odissi dance as it stand today was easier. Gotipua dancing plays a crucial part in the building of odissi dance.

Contribution of Devadasis in the Growth of Odissi Dance

From the above description we have got many evidences that, from the literary sources and sculptural sources, the devadasi was taking important role in the dancing form in Odisha. Like many other classical dances in India Odissi dance is eastern classical dance particularly evolved from Odisha.

In the earlier traditions of Indian dance there were two categories of professional dancers. In the first category, the devadasis who were attached to temple to perform ritual dances. Secondly the public entertainers like Ganika, Baijees and similar class of female dancer who were dancing in the royal courts and public places. The art was never cultured in the family of cultured society. Before 20th century, no Indian dance was known or recognized as classical not it entered the domain of civil culture.

Today the classical dance in Indian cities is totally divorced from the dances roots in the traditional setting of temple worship in the ancient and medieval period. The classical dance was founded through various social reform movements in 20th century. With the creation of this category went the founding such institutions as conservatories, dance schools and research academics on the performing arts²⁹. The term classical does not really translate any indigenous term even though the reformer refers to marga/deshi where the term marga literary means 'the way' and the deshi means 'of the land or place'. Before 20th century the dances were only confined with the sastras like *Natya sastra*, *Abhinaya Darpan*, *Nartana Nirmaya*, *Sangeeta Ratnakara* etc. These were discovered and the professional dances were chastised, re-oriented and co-related with the sastras. Now those dances were raised to the status of classical and then began to be cultivated as an honourable form of art. Though other classical dances like Bharata Natyam, Kathakali, Manipuri and Kathak were established as classical form of dances, Odissi dance was also recognized as a classical form. Odissi came on the stage through professional theatres, namely Annapurna Theatres 'A' group at Puri and 'B' group at Cuttack. The play was produced in 1946 by these groups named 'Kavisurya' by the playwright Ramachandra Mishra. In this *Kavya* there were thirty six songs and each song beginning with a single alphabet. The poet prescribed Raga and Tala for each songs. This *Kavya* became a great resource of Odissi music. The director and producer of the play wished to introduce Odisha style of dancing. So, they picked up a Gotipua Guru and choreographed the dances in traditional Gotipua style³⁰

The word classical does not translate an indigenous term should not misconstrued to mean that Indian dance is neither ancient nor codified. Although Indian dance is more ancient than its western counterpart, it is not familiar among the mass. The evidence depicted from various monuments from sculpture suggests the existence of an already full-blown tradition as early as the second century B.C. The tradition was extensively and comprehensively codified in a Sanskrit text- Bharata's *Natya Satra* which is dated by various scholars around fourth to fifth century A.D. The indisputable antiquities of dance and its status as a 'great tradition' encoded in Sanskrit texts one might ask what motivated Indian reformers to have recourse to a western category to think of their tradition, and to western-type of institutions for its continuation³¹. From the evidence India had very reach in art in Dance from the Vedic age, particularly for the purpose of sacred dances. Since the ancient days India had prevalent the theatrical dance, some time various sources give the evidence of social dances. In both the art dances Indian women are very active role. But mostly the theatrical dances were performed in the place of god and goddesses for worshipping. Dance is considered as one type of worshiping to god. The dance is treated like an offering to god and the movements are like prayers to please the lord³². This type of dance is particularly evolved into the custom of Devadasi system in India. The Indian women too spontaneously and wholeheartedly dedicated themselves to the temples to serve the divinity through their dance. The staus of dancers was placed on a high pedestal since even the common women were entitled with equal staus with the men. At times, the Indian women were even stemmed as '*Yatra naryastupujyante, ramantetatra devata*'³³.

Traditionally, the seventh type of *devadasis* *Rudra ganika* or *Gopika* who were generally employed to sing and dance throughout India. Traditionally the last category of *dasi* are regarded as proto-type of *devadasis*. All the categories of *devadasis* were inducted in the temples in ancient India to identify and explain the practices as well as the various modes through which women were incorporated into the temple. Generally the girls were brought under the control of the temple by the customs. This perception probably have attributed to the changing socio-economic scenario during latter part of ancient period³⁴. The earliest reference to the custom was found in Kannada speaking regions dated back to eight century in the Bijapur district³⁵. The references are increasing throughout India in the later part with development of temple constructions and reach its zenith in the tenth century. The Epigraphical evidence reveals that the custom was widespread throughout the region but had a solid basis in Dharwar, Bijapur, Hasan, Belgaum, Bellary, Mysore, South Canara, Bangalore, Tumkur and Chitradurga. According to A.K. Prasad, inscriptions from Dharwar district were scattered in the nine taluks of Navalgund, Havari, Hirekerur, Ranebennar, Srihati, Hubli, Dambal, Bankapur, and Ron. There are many inscriptions which gives evidence of custom such as Mulbagal, Molur and Boweringpet in Kolar district, Belur in Hasan district and Hadagalli in Bellary district. such as in Telugu speaking regions, the custom was popular in Krishna, Guntur and Nellore districts. The earliest references to the custom in this region belonged to seventh century at Nellore district³⁶. There are number of evidences relating to customs in Bapatla, Tenali and Sattenapalle taluks of Guntur district. The other important regions were Bhimavaram, Draksharaman and Palakollu in the Godavari district, Simanchalam and Duttada in Vishakhapatnam and Srikurmam in Ganjam district³⁷.

Dancing and singing culture was one of the identity of ancient Indian culture which are mostly associated with temples. It was vital to reflect on the dancing in the secular world as against those in the temple as the identity of temple women which is reconstructed during the latter nineteenth and twentieth century in the term of ‘*nautch*’ and ‘prostitution’. In this period women not dedicated to temples but proficient in dance and music rendered services to the nobility and elite in small princely states. Dancing women in most princely states enjoyed privileged status as well as an influential role in politics and palace administration³⁸.

The dance of Devadasis or dancing girls is considered as an inseparable part of the worship at various Hindu Temples. Unlike the devadasi system in other part of India, the Devadasis in Odishan temple was prevalent in the ancient and medieval period. There is an evidences that during the Somavamsi period the Devadasi system was prevalent which is evident from the Brahmesvara inscription³⁹. With the increasing secularization of the decorative program and temple rituals it is evident that the temple was becoming a centre of social-cultural activities and was not limited to religious worship. That the devadasis played an increasingly important role in these activities is evident in temple *prasasti-karas* as well as literary accounts⁴⁰. The dance sculptures has been highly depicted on the temples of Odisha and reach its zenith at Konark temple.

The ritual dancing is a part of religious services in temple since the very beginning of civilizations. Which indicate from the various sculptural representations like the dancing girl of Mahenjodaro of India, in the early civilization other than India like Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece has reflect their dance form several thousand year before. In Sumer beautiful women were associated to every temple, who formed part of the god’s household⁴¹. In the *naptya-griha* shown in the Ajanta mural painting, with surprisingly similar pillars supporting the superstructure. Here we are greatly helped in our dating by the fact that this superstructure is ornamented with the well known Zikkurat or stepped tower motifs

imported from Mesopotamia and used only in the earliest monuments of Buddhism. In the quite later rather than in the Buddhist the art on the Vaital Deula probably dated 600 A.D. According to the great scholar Charls Fabris⁴² the dance is caught, however primitive the work, and must be looked upon as the earliest extent representation of Odissi dancing. As per Bharata's text the *natyasatra*, that in his days there existed an Odra-Magadhi style of dancing-the earliest reference Odissi. In the dance scene of Amaravati than Bharhut has been attempted to depicts where a distinct elements of nobility in the erect dancing pose of the *nartaki*. As per the gesture of the *nartaki*, the right hand is in the *pataka-hasta*, a well known hand gesture of Odissi⁴³. Than the dancing girls has been depicted various temples of India.

The devadasi tradition was mostly prevalent in the Hindu temples of southern India. The costume of devadasi was prevalent in most parts of India. They are named in various name but the work is the same purpose. The system was begin in Indian society for the religious hegemony. In the early society of India symbolisms, religious and psychic was based on hand in hand. The magic, fear and awe that all plays to formulating the first conscious religious beliefs, side by side with more philosophic and ethical considerations. Various scholars believe that patriarchal social set up of India strengthened this hold. The patriarchal society had from early days, decided on a caste hierarchy with Brahmins at the top.

The origin of the custom is traced to the ritual dancing which formed an integral part of the ritual service of gods and goddess. A dance was performed with the intention of moving the deity was considered to be the real form of prayer and hence its popularity many ancient people of the world⁴⁴ If we consider the Indian perspective of dance then it is go back to Indus Valley civilizations, where we had got the evidence of dancing girl image of bronze. The bronze image unearthed by Sir Mortimer Wheeler from Mahenjodaro, is one of the authenticated Indus figurine. Various scholars believe that the figurine in Indus Valley indicates that the dancing girl is a representative of a temple dancers and prostitutions, which is mostly existed in the Middle Eastern Civilization. It is an important feature of later Hindu culture not proved⁴⁵. Moti Chandra has said a sacred prostitute carrying out the duties with the precinct of the temple of some mother goddess⁴⁶. Besides the bronze figurine, many clay figurine of dancing girl has been excavated from ancient cities of Mahenjodaro and Harappa. From these evidence, it is quite clear that the dancing girls were mostly connected with the religious ritual. But due to insufficient evidence no historian or scholars has come to conclusion that there was existed the dancing girl of temple. These practice has been completely vanished from the Indus Valley to 6th century A.D. when the institution was completely developed, as well as the temple construction was eminent at that time.

There are many Indian literatures which are clearly refers on this matters. The Jogimara Cava inscription⁴⁷ mentions the love of Devadonna a painter for the *devadasi* Sutanuka. Another painting at Ramgarh hill, located near Banaras shows a man seated under a tree having dancing girls and musician at his feet⁴⁸. In the *Arthasatra* described the detail life and duties of dancing girls⁴⁹. The Buddhist text Samyukta Nikaya mentions that the devadasis are said to have received share of food crops⁵⁰. In fifth century A.D Kalidasa has referred girls are dancing at Mahakala temple at Ujjaini, during the evening worship of Siva. The temple girls circnctures tinkling with dance steps, their hands weary with yak tails fans. He has also describes the glamour, dress and rhythmic dance of these girls. Kalidasa, play Mallavikagnimitra describes the dance of the courtesan Mallavika in the royal court⁵¹. From the reference we can conclude that in the early India dance was took place in both temples and courts.

According to the *Kathasaritasagara* of Somadeva, a dancing girl was employed in a temple at Mathura where it explains that the devadasi system was widely prevalent in that region⁵². In the 13th century a traveler named Chau Ju Kua estimated that there were twenty thousand girls singing, serving and offering flowers to deity in Gujarat. The inscription of Nilakantheswara temple at Kalanjara refers that dancing girls were attached to temple of Chandellas about 50 miles from Khajuraho⁵³. An inscription of dated 1012 AD at Bayana, northern part of Khajuraho refers that Devadasis offered by a queen to the temple of Visnu.⁵⁴

The culturally India was much prominent after the Gupta period, both in Vedic Brahminical religion and Buddhism dominant religion in India. Naturally the temples and monasteries were playing a very important role as centres of mass socio-intellectual activities. These institutions had developed a strong hold on the peoples lives. The system was patronized by the rulers and rich, especially the merchant class. By the Post-Gupta periods, religion and religious institutions were slowly becoming political strongholds. The cultural and intellectual activities generated by the temples were corollaries to these more important roles, where the *devadasis* were important subjects of the temple's world. The devadasi system was popular and widespread in India, it is not much popular in Northern India as in South India.

In south India devadasi system was a common feature in almost all major Brahminical temples, particularly in the Saivite ones. The institutions system was probably appeared on the religious scene of south India around fourth-fifth century A.D. it reached its climax in the tenth-eleventh centuries. As a matter of prestige temples are employed good number of devadasi. In course of time it spread very rapidly in South India that they emerged as a separate sub-caste, with their own traditions, rules of behavior and etiquette. After 14th centuries onwards, the institution became gradually declined. The system was much popular during the feudal ages.

The Devadasis with their great skill in dance and music enchanted the mind of devotees and public, who gathered in the temple. Their company with gods also add glamour and colour to the religious functions. They received land grants by kings, temples and gifts in kind by kings, nobles and other individuals of rich and priestly class or regular payments as members of the staff of the temple. They were directly dependent either on the kings or the temples, which were again controlled by the rulers, for their patronizations⁵⁵. In such conditions, it was prerogative of the kings to have the pleasure of their company with the blessings of the priests, who even sent Devadasis sometimes to the kings to solicit grants for the temples. The kings were deified as earthly god was the most deserving candidate for devadasis charms. Therefore, the kings or royal males treated the devadasis as their servants who were forced to offer everything they possessed to the former⁵⁶. That practices probably have evolved the sacred prostitution to rise the as early as 9th century A.D. Emitted the system, the institution became grows in the society, sponsoring by the rulers, the feudal lords, chieftains, priests, officials and rich men's also took advantages of the system. In course of time, *devadasis* treated as objects of their personal desires or carnal pleasures.

In the part of Odishan perspective the dance is one of the cultural activities from the very ancient days which is reflect on the cave of Hatigumpha and Ranigumpha probably in 1st century B.C.- 1 century A.D. There are various literary evidences also refers on the dances. Kharavela had clearly mentioned in his inscriptions about the dance and music as well as the artist had made carved magnificent scene of dance and music on the cave. If we think that is there any devadasi practice during the Kharavala or not it is quite difficult but it is sure that during the first century this Odisha land is great culture in the

art and music. The dance exhibit of TatwaGumpha No2 shows the aesthetic taste in their costume and ornaments, particularly in their hairstyles. Particularly the hairstyle of female dancer is very elaborate and bears close resemblance with present day hairstyle of Odissi⁵⁷. From the sculptural representations and epigraphic records indicates that there was a particular mode of dancing and professional female musicians and dancers. They were performed dance for the entertainment of king and general public. Due to nonsufficient of evidences cannot prove the continuity the tradition. Further we did not find any of the records regarding dances, in sculptural or any epigraphy has been available till the 6th century A.D. After this period we can find the Buddhist and Tantric deities sculptured in dancing attitudes. Exclusively dance and dancer scene has rarely seen hence after. The scholars presumed that the dance received religious sanction in the Buddhist and Tantric shrines where the devotees themselves were enjoined to sing and dance.

The growth of Saivism in Odisha, implies the starting of dance as a ritual service. In the early temples the deities were usually assign as the dancers on the temple sculptures in 6-7th century. Such as the Nataraja (dancing Siva) appear in all front facades in medallion. Besides the image of dancing Siva, we generally find the dancing Ganesa, and panels of male dancers eloquent of distinct school of dancing⁵⁸. The female dancers were very rarely found in early temples of Bhubaneswar namely, Satruganeswar, Rameswar, Parsurameswar, Boitala, Markandeswar, Sisireswar and Swarnajaleswar which were built around 7th to 8th century A.D. These elaborate scene of male dancers and musicians and dancing Nataraja testifies that male predominance in dance quite contrast to the earlier tradition of female predominance as shown in the caves of Khandagir and Udayagiri. The poses they depict, the feet positions and the hand-gestures are very close to the description of some Karanas, Pandavas and Hastas in NatyaSatras of Bharata⁵⁹. The system of dancing girls was started in Odisha in 10th century A.D. The Inscription of Brahmeswar and Megheswar temple of Bhubaneswar shows the earlier evidence of dancing girl in the temples. Following the earlier traditions the inscriptions are corroborated by sculptural representations of dancing girls in different poses. The Brahmeswar temple alone provides us with two elaborate scenes of dance and a large variety of beautiful poses by female dancers which still remain as an inspiration to Odissi dancers. The other temple of Bhubaneswar which provides us with more number of dance sculptures are Mukteswar, Rajarani and Lingaraja. All the dance sculptures in these temples bear eloquent testimony of the distinct school of dance that prescribed by the dancing girls of time. Generally these sculptures helped us immensely to reconstruct the present form of Odissi dance when its tradition was almost lost.

The rule of Imperial Gangas was one of the magnificent development in patron of religion, art, architecture and culture. Their 400 years of rule over Odisha from 11th century to 14th century is one of the golden era of the Odishan culture, religion art and architecture. During this period, they built the magnificent temple of Jagannath at Puri and the Sun temple at Konark. From the epigraphic records it gives the evidences that they are also served a large number of dancing girls to these temples for glorification. The epigraphic records are again corroborated by profuse sculptural representations of dancing girls and dancers in both temples. In the Bhogamandap of the temple there is one scene of dance where a female dancer is seen performing '*Bandha Nrutya*' in front of the king who is seated on a raised platform surrounded by servant-girls holding umbrella, fly-whisk etc. this testifies that the dance being performed in the royal courts also. The Gajapati rulers had also accept the culture left by the Gangas. They came to power in 15th century regulated the service of Devadasis or Maharis. The Inscription of temples dated 1499 A.D indicated to Jagannath, the powerful king of the dynasty issued

an orders regulating the dance of the two batches of female dancers. Devadasis or the Maharis were in exclusive group, some for dancing (*nachuni*) and some for singing (*gauni*).

The history of Odissi dance is largely the history of Devadasis (dancing girls) attached to almost all the important shrine of Odisha. There are number of inscriptions refers the consecration of dancing girls to the temples. The practice of inducting dancing girls in honour of gods was at one time prevalent throughout India and began in Odisha with growth of Siva temples at Bhubaneswar. According to the Megheswar temple inscription dated 1045-1190 AD, where describes the induction of dancing girls in the temples that whose eye-lashes constitute the very essence of captivating the whole world, whose very gait brings about a complete stillness in the activities of the three worlds, whose bangles bejeweled with precious stones serve as un-arranged candles during the dance, whose deer-eyed maidens are offered in devotion to lord Siva.

In Odisha, the history of the dancing girls known as Maharis were attached to the shrine of Jagannatha at Puri by the powerful Ganga rulers in the early 12th century A.D. Chodaganga Deva. He is patron of art and architecture and is credited to have built the famous temple of Jagannath. He was introduced as well as appointed a number of devadasi for the ritual services of the deity. Towards the close of the Ganga rule, king Rajaraja Deva appointed twenty dancing girls for service in the temple of Jagannath.

After Ganga, another dynasty come to power in Odisha in 1435 by the Solar dynasty with Kapilendra Deva who regulated the service of the girls. He was succeeded by his son Purosottama deva. His wife Padmavati, of her own accord enlisted herself as a Mahari (dancing girls) to serve the lord Jagannath, and it is recorded that later. She was honoured by temple as a Gopa Sari according to the custom of the temple. The inscription on dated 1499 A.D by Prataprudra deva, the son of Purushottam regulated the performance of dancing. According to ordinance the dancing girls were to dance and sing only from the Geeta-Govinda at the food offerings (*Bhoga*) in the Jaganath temple. One of the Prataprudra Deva, known as Ramananda Ray was highly esteemed Vaishnvide, who was a great servant in the field of dance, drama, music and poetry. He used to import regular training in various aspects of dance and drama to the devadasis of Jagannath temple.

Dancing was not only confined to the devadasis. It is as an art of honour it was also practiced by princesses as evident from the commemorative inscription of the Ananta Basudeva temple dated 1278 AD at Bhubaneswar. The poet Umapati composed the *prasasti* in praise of princess Chandrika. By the end of 16th century AD, Odisha had lost her independence and successively came under the rule of Bhois, Pathans, Mughals, Marathas and finally the British. In the 300 hundred years, the political life of Odisha has been turmoil in this affected greatly on the Odishan social life, cultural life, religious life, economic life of the people. The devadasi institution has ceased due to the turmoil of the political history and endangered by the continues invasion by the outsiders. The technically mature and well codified dance, that demanded a long laborious training began to wane. During the turmoil period, the devadasi dance was transferred into the 'Gotipua' and 'Sakhipila' (young boys dressed as girls took its place catering to the low-taste of the general public.

Dance in India is accordance with the ancient scripture or *NatyaShatra* is called the classical dance. The dance culture was revived before the attainment of Independence, the effort for revival of Odissi started only after that. Odissi dance entered into prominence as a classical dance in the early fifties. Eminent gurus as Guru Pankaj Charan Das, Kelucharan Mohapatra, Debaprasad Das and Mayadhara Rout appeared in the field of Odissi dance as dancers and dance directors.the first inter university youth festival was held in New Delhi in 1954. It was presented by D.N. Pattanaik

and Priyambada Mohanty. It drew attention of eminent scholars like Charles Fabri and Mohan Khokar, Indrani Rehman is the first dancer to popularize Odissi in national and International level. The eminent personality who were strengthened the Odissi dance on national and international levels are KabichandraKelucharan Pattanaik, Guru Pankajachara Das, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, Guru Debaprasad Das, Guru Mayadhara Rout and Sanjukta Panigrahi⁵⁹.

The evolution of Odissi dance, is the continuous development of Odia culture, which evolved the tremendous popularity in India as well as the world. The dancing culture is one of the significant role in Odishan society very early date. There are many evidential records which are help to reconstruction of the dance form. From the very ancient days a large evidences has been left through, literary sources, and archaeological sources. To take all these important sources the Odissi dance became formed. Most importantly the socio-culture of Odisha provides much strength to continued the culture. Various sources which help to reconstruct the Odissi dance in the post independence period. It was the hard work of the artists to get this outcome of Odisha who had make the dance a one of popular classical dance in India and abroad. The devadasi are taking important role in the development of Odissi dance. From the various ancient texts, religious rituals which clearly reflects the existence of devadasi in the various forms which is dance and singing form is one of them. Various religious texts and sculptural features shows the existence of girls in the various duties as devadasi. The devadasi dances and musics are originated because to keep the god happy. That system was gradually practiced by the rulers who were the descendant of gods and it was continued upto 16th century A.D. The dancing and singing was a components of Indian society, it has changed through the ages. The girls are recognized sacred in Indian society, that came as factor for the highly participation of girls in the religious and cultural aspects. These girls are particularly known as Devadasi, they are highly reputed than the common women. They are taking important part in the socio, cultural, religious and political spear. Such like the dance is particularly originated from the devadasi.

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