

Thumri

In and around the courts of Lucknow, Rampur, Jaipur, and Delhi, the genres of *tappa* and *thumri*—short love songs—became popular beginning in the 1790s. These were termed light-classical music, since they borrowed from the classical rags and tals, but simplified them and presented them in short versions in a highly ornamented style.

Light classical music also includes *ghazal*, *bhajan*, *git*, and a host of other regional song forms.

In many of these forms, the meaning of the song text is again important, and they are not subjected to the same style of permutation of syllable that characterizes classical music.

Typically *ghazal*, *bhajan*, and *git* are stanzaic forms, while *thumri* and *tappa* may only have a few lines of text.

Generally has a lighter emphasis on the rules of rag, and may only use one or two phrases of a rag.

A limited number of rags, such as *Khammaj*, *Kafi*, *Bhairavi*, *Tilang*, *Gara*, *Pilu*, *Kirwani*, *Kalavati*, *Tilak Kamod*, *Jogiya*, are commonly used in light music

Asthai-antara format is common, but the elaboration is often not with *vistar-tan*, but reframing communicative text in new melodies

Tals are often binary in structure with a number of different *thekas* for each—these often derived from folk drumming, especially *dholak*.

Drummers in these styles are often higher paid than classical drummers.

Laggi sections show off 4/4 drumming with crowd-pleasing fast *ostinato* patterns.

In *thumri*, the *ras-lila* of Lord Krishna is very important, and sometimes interpreted in Kathak dance.

Separation and longing, or *viraha*, is a most important sentiment:

*O my beloved, we fought in the night:
Where have the clouds gone? the moon?
Where has my new-found love gone?
The sky has cleared, stars are scattered about;
Now I shall go to sleep counting them.*

*Krishna, the flute player, the mischievous son of
Nand,
has stolen every heart with his playing;*

*my heart and soul are distracted with yearning,
and tears flow from my eyes.*

or, he plays at the Spring color festival, Hori, with the Gopis:

*I'll play Hori with the flute player,
covering me with colored dyes, tussling and
pulling,
he broke my curd pot;
he shattered my decency—
he teases the women of Braj and unjustly twists
my arm.*

CLASSICAL DANCE

The art of dancing is ancient in India, and has been associated with yoga, theater, and entertainment from ancient times

As a yoga (=“yoke,” or spiritual discipline), it involves:

- learning the control for disciplined movement of the body
- the mastery of a set of classical movements and stances
- the knowledge of whole classes of subtle movements for the eyes and face, head, shoulders, upper torso, arms, and especially, the hands—known as *mudras* and *hastaks*
- the ability to execute intricate rhythms in footwork and gesture the percussive styles and recitations comparable to drumming
- the mastery of a literature of compositions both rhythmic and abstract, which often involve mime
- the dramatic presentation of a great repertoire of stories, primarily those taken from the old mythology, the Hindu epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, as well as the literature of the first millennium (“the Golden Age of Sanskrit”)
- the establishment of a long-term personal practice known as *sadhana*

Dancing figurines have been unearthed in excavations dating from 4000 years ago in Indus Valley cultures

Dance metaphors and dancing demigods are plentiful in the *Vedas*

Most of the major gods in the Hindu pantheon are dancers: Siva is referred to as *Nataraj*, “Lord of the Dance” and Krishna as *Natawari*, “the lord of performance”

Dancers figure prominently in the elaborate temple sculpture throughout India, most of which date from the Hindu period

The early word for dramatic performance is *natya*, from the word *nat*, which means "to dance," "to act," and "to make music"

The seminal treatise on the subject of dance-drama is Bharata's *Natyasastra*, which is usually assigned to the era of around 300 AD but may be as old as the 3rd century BC.

It describes the dance as a gift of Lord Brahma the creator, who answered a prayer of the gods: "Lord give us something which will not only teach us, but also be pleasing to the eyes and to the ears—something that will be accessible to all people."

Brahma agreed—he took the lore of all the Vedas and presented the *Natyaveda*, saying, "It requires persons who are smart, intelligent, observant, and self-controlled."

Bharata goes on to describe how the stage should be constructed, how the deities are installed, how the stage is consecrated, and has exhaustive lists and categories of the plots, and character types, movements, stances, language, and the moods and gestures.

Six of the thirty-six chapters are on music, mostly as it applies to the dramatic performances

Regional styles characterize the dance, but there are six major styles that trace their artistic discipline to the *Natyasastra*:

Kathak is the main style of the courts of North India. Strongly influenced by the Muslim-Hindu fusion in presentation and costume, Kathak is based on the *kathas*, or traditional story-tellers but has a very strong abstract element(s) as well.

Bharatanatyam, a term coined in the 1890s, was the dance of the temples of Tamil Nadu, and was given a strong restructuring by the famous Rukmini Devi in the 1930s. Some trace the history back to the 5th c. BC in early Tamil treatises.

Kuchipudi is from Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, a rhythmic and athletic dance formed in the 18th c. and was central to the outdoor evangelistic style of the troupes of took the sacred stories to the people.

Orissi, largely wiped out, was restructured in the 1950s by the famous Kelucharan Mohapatram, who took many of its poses from the temple friezes of Orissa.

Kathakali is the elaborately costumed dance-drama of Kerala, danced outside in all-night concerts.

Manipuri, is a tribal dance that celebrates the eligibility of the young girls on one hand, and also features rigorous drum-dancing of the professional males on the other.

[Some people include *Mohini Attam*, an exquisite all-female "dance of the enchantress" from Kerala, but it does not follow all the mandates of classicism.

Chau is a masked dance from Orissa, rigorously athletic and almost a martial art; but it, too, is not construed as "classical".]

For a dance to be considered classical, it should be based on the early descriptions of the *Natyasastra* and a related treatise of the 3th century, the *Abhinaya Darpana* ("Mirror of Gesture"). The components include

- 1) *nritta*, "pure dance"
- 2) *natya*, "dramatic dance"
- 3) *nritya*, a combination of these two
- 4) each dancer is expected to enact the roles of both men and women in imitation of Siva's *ardhanarishwara*.

*Yatho hastas that ho dhrushtir
Yatho drushtis that ho manaha
Yatho manas that ho bhavo
Yatho bhavastha tho rasaha*

The eye should follow the hand, the mind should follow the
eye.

Where the mind goes there is expression,
And where there is *bhava* (expression), there is *rasa*.

The British did not recognize the Indian arts as worthy of their new institutional educational processes in India, and the art of dancing became "behind closed doors" of the temple, harem, and brothel, and fell into bad repute by the middle of the 19th century. With the spirit of independence came a revival of the old styles, often with a sense of reorientation of content and a reopening of ancient themes, especially since the dance was taken up as a vehicle of the educated upper and middle class interests and refinements.