

***HASTABHINAYA IN ANCIENT SANSKRIT TEXTS AND ITS
APPLICATION IN CONTEMPORARY
INDIAN DANCE***

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From time immemorial, music and dance have been a great source of inspiration to the Indian people. The Vedic age displays ample evidence to prove that Indians, particularly the womenfolk were fond of dance. The Rgveda, Krsnayajurveda, Kausitaki Brahmana etc bear clear evidence of dance performances. Bharata's Natyasastra gives a detailed discussion regarding dance in 7 out of its 36 chapters. Therein the 9th chapter deals with 67 hand gestures. The Abhinayadarpana of Nandikesvara lays down the principles of Hastabhinaya. He believes in 28 single hand 23 double hand gestures, as against 24 single hand and 13 combined hand gestures prescribed by Bharata. The Sangitaratnakara of Sarangadeva is another authentic text on this subject. It discusses about 24 single hand and 13 combined hand gestures. The Agnipurana discusses the subject in a similar fashion as the Natyasastra. The Hastamuktavali is a useful text depicting 30 single hand and 14 double- hand gestures.

The above texts describe the hand gestures and discuss about their application. Present Indian classical dances – Bharatnatyam, Odissi, Kathak, Kathakali, etc follow the rules laid down in the ancient texts. But regarding the application of each hand gesture, a comparative study reveals that Indian classical dance has been simplified over the ages. In the present age a hand gesture does not convey innumerable objects and situations, as was customary in the past. Ancient performers and spectators were so well-versed in the subject, that complete communication between them was possible, with such detailed application of hand gestures. Contemporary Indian Classical dance, has simplified the application of hastabhinaya. Indian creative and folk dance display a furthermore simplification in this matter. Hence it can be noted that contemporary Indian dance avoids much intricacy and congestion and prefers to uphold dance as a smooth and simple mode of communication.

Respected sir,

I hereby send the abstract of my paper and eagerly anticipate your kind approval. I am a member of IASS and I am teaching Sanskrit in under-graduate and post-graduate levels for more than 21 years. Moreover I am an Indian Classical dancer and stage actress. It is my dream to present the above paper in the 14th WSC. I will be grateful if you kindly grant my prayer. Thanking you,

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