

As the musician plays the score of a great composer without alteration, so the dancer performs the dance composed by the gifted choreographer.

One of the greatest and oldest teachers of Bharata Natyam was the late Vidwan Sri Minakshi Sundaram Pillai of Pandanallur. His fundamental style is characterized by precise-co-ordination, vitality, and a courtly grace.

Bharata Natyam was brought to its present form about one hundred years ago by four eminent dance masters and musicians of Tanjore, four brothers,—Chinnaya, Poonnayya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu. The dances were reformed to be performed in a shorter period of time so that various traditional styles of composition could be given in an evening's programme.

*Alarippu*. The conventional order in which programmes are planned places the invocation dance first. The *Alarippu*, which literally means 'flowering' presents the dancer in the role of a devotee. The dance begins with the *anjali* pose of the hands above the head in adoration, followed by gesture patterns of petal-like symmetry and enchanting flexions of neck and shoulder (*rechakas*), to the accompaniment of rhythmic syllables in double and triple time.

*Jatiswaram*. It is a dignified and majestic dance—a *swarasahitya*—composed of melodic patterns of *swaras* which are given visible form in the patterns of the dance. In thus transcribing melodic phrases, gestures and postures have dramatic force in the dance.

*Shabdham* is a form of gesture song in which *abhinaya* is shown in gestures, facial expression and certain dramatic postures. It begins with a *tiramana* (dance pattern) which also forms an occasional interlude. The theme of the song is both devotional and erotic, relating to the divine amours of the gods.

*Varnam* is the most elaborate composition of the dance which calls forth the versatility of the dancer in both dance and *abhinaya*. It is accompanied by music of a high order. Beginning with a *tiramana* in the three *kalas* (tempo) *varnam* is evenly balanced between *abhinaya* and pure dance. The most fascinating element of the *nritya* is the exposition of *sanchari bhava*, depicting the changing moods of love and the various aspects of a love situation. The dancer thus creates a gesture poem of her own to enhance the literal meaning of the poem. The dance reaches its climax in the *Charanam*, or final part, in exquisite dance patterns of great variety and beauty.

A *Padam* is a love song generally concerned with the romances and love situations of the gods. The gesture exposition calls forth the dramatic skill of the dancer in *hasta*