

# Tantric Dances - and their ideations

Even before Sadashiva, who lived seven thousand years ago, there was dance, music and song, but all these were in a disorderly and random manner. The dextrous hands of Sadashiva made dance into a science, rather an articulate science. For this reason Sadashiva was also called 'Nataraja', which means king of the dancers. Sadashiva invested the world of rhythm with *mudra* subtle, symbolic gestures that are characteristic of Oriental dance. Shiva had observed that in the bodies of various creatures the various glands were either over-active or under-active, either over-secreting or under-secreting. As a result these creatures expressed themselves in various ways. After researching all these factors Shiva invented thousands of *mudra*, particular postures which affect certain human glands in a particular way, and thus influences people's minds accordingly.



## TANDAVA

One unique and perfect dance that Shiva invented was *tāndava*. In Sanskrit language *tandu* means "jumping" so *tāndava* means a kind of dance where jumping is the dominant feature. As long as the dancer is off the ground he derives much benefit; when he touches the ground, then those benefits are assimilated by the body. This dance is not only beneficial for the body, it also develops the mind and leads to spiritual elevation.

*Tāndava* expresses the power of life overcoming the powers of death, fear and ignorance. For this reason the dancer should hold in his left hand either a skull (with the middle finger extending into the cranium from below), or a poisonous snake, or if at night time a burning fire-torch - all these represent fear and/or death. The right hand holds a sword, knife, or staff - these symbolizing discrimination, the weapon against ignorance.

*Tāndava* may be done by many people at a time. There is a caller who gives the directions. The arms are always held straight out from the sides. There are two steps in *tāndava*: on "ta" you come down on the flat of your foot for accent, and on "dhin" you come down on your toes for speed. the dance progresses as follows:

### CALLER DANCER

Ready

1,2,3

Ta, Ta, Dhin  
Ta.

Ta, Ta, Dhin  
Ta.

Ta, Ta, Dhin

Come up on your toes

On "3" you jump, kicking your heels against your buttocks, land in a squatting position, your feet pointing in opposite directions (180° apart).

Jump on "dhin"; land on the flat of your feet, in a standing position, on "ta".

On the last "ta" you cock your right foot up to the left and begin the dance on the next call.

On the first "ta" you jump to your right foot and bring the left foot up; on the second "ta" you bring your left knee higher as you hop on your right foot (your knee should go above your waist). For the "dhin, ta" you repeat the process jumping to your left leg. Hop once and swing the leg to each side.

The dance is in three phases of constant acceleration:

1. Ta, ta, dhin, ta - this is slow to get into the proper rhythm.
2. Ta, ta, dhin dhin - accelerated.
3. Dhin, dhin, dhin, dhin, - getting very fast. When going fast begin chanting BĀBĀ NĀM KEVALAM.

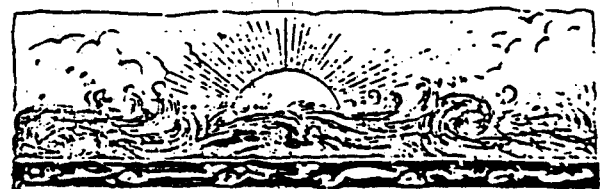
To end the dance the caller yells:

"Stop" - stand straight.

"Final pose" - Repeat the same jump done at the beginning, and then slowly come up to your feet and bring your arms to your sides, holding your weapon always facing up.

There are three variations of increasing difficulty. When the knees cross the navel it is called BRAHMA TANDAVA. If the knees cross the centre of the chest (*Anahata cakra*), it is called VISHNU TANDAVA. When the knees cross the centre of the neck (*Vishuddha cakra*), it is called RUDRA TANDAVA.

This dance is not recommended for females. *Tandava* gives a feeling of beautiful clarity and inner peace. It helps one to overcome ones enemies, fear and death. By stirring up the whole body all systems are energized. It makes one healthy and gives one longevity.



LALIITA MARMIKA: Parvati, who was the spouse of Sadashiva invented a dance to be done along with KIIRTAN (chanting/singing the name of the Supreme). This dance arouses the deepest feelings of love and devotion. In fact there are many instances where the dancer has experienced *samadhi*, a deep state where the mind is absorbed in a state of complete oneness. A great Indian saint of the 15th century, Caetanya Prabhu, experienced so many kinds of *samadhis*, through this dance along with *Hari Kiirtan*. He immortalized *Kiirtan* and gave it status in the spiritual field. This dance dissovles egotism, and prepares the mind for meditation.

This dance is easy to perform. Arms are to be held out above the horizontal, with palms upward. The elbows should not go below the elbows. The step is 1-2-3 on one toe behind the other heel bend the supporting knee, then 1-2-3 on the other side.

The "*siddha mantra*" which is used in Ananda Marga is BABA NAM KEVALAM, which can be translated as "only the name of the Lord". This ideation can be enhanced by "...where the first syllable "Ba" is uttered, the feeling should be that I am crossing the threshold and entering the new world; and when the last syllable "lam" is uttered, the feeling should be that I have accomplished my duty. If *Kiirtan* is done with these feelings, within 2-3 minutes the effect of *Kiirtan* will have its play." (Shrii Shrii Anandamurti).

There are different ways of doing *Kiirtan*:

NAMA KIIRTAN is to chant the name of the Lord over and over again. There are different forms: Akhanda Kiirtan - *Akhanda* means "endless". This is the *Kiirtan* that is danced around a *puja* (*alta*) table in an anti-clockwise direction. It should be done for at least three hours. There is no limit of time, it can last for some hours, or extend to several days. The length of the chosen time should either be 3 hours, or multiples of three ie 6,9,12,24, etc.

Another form of NAMA KIIRTAN is Nagar Kiirtan which is a collective *kiirtan* danced along the streets of a city or a town.



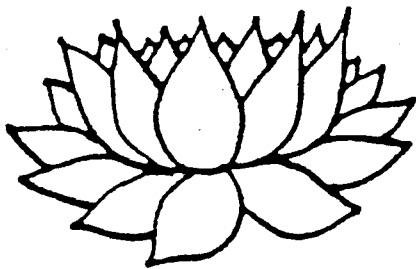
Avartha Kiirtan - *Avartha* means "turning". This form of NAMA KIIRTAN, is danced facing in all the six directions in turn, changing the tune of the *Kiirtan* for each direction. As far as possible, the hands should always be held above shoulder height, preferably stretched above the head. One should dance with the eyes completely closed, concentrating on either the *Ajina Cakra* (pituitary gland) or *Sahasrara Cakra* (pineal gland). When dancing collectively all should use the same *Cakra*. While dancing *Avartha Kiirtan*, there are special ideations for each of the six directions:

- 1st (East): "I am the embodiment of sincerity"
- 2nd (South): "I have an innate love for Supreme"
- 3rd (West): "I am the vital force (fire) of Brahma"
- 4th (North): "I have come to fulfill a great mission".
- 5th (East-up): "I surrender completely" - (feel like a child crying for the mother).
- 6th (East-down): "I exist for the welfare of all."



In NAMA KIIRTAN, the whole siddha mantra should be uttered fully in each phase of the tune to which it is sung - Baba Nam Kevalam - and not a part of it. This is because a siddha mantra must necessarily have eight syllables.

Meditation is a must for psycho-spiritual advancement but it is most difficult to control the mind especially with the increasing complexities of modern society. NAMA KIIRTAN since it engages both motor organs (legs, arms, voice) and sensory organs (ears, skin) is a tremendous help to make our mind one pointed, and clear. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, the Guru of Ananda Marga has given the example of a person who sits for 40 minutes of meditation, but whose mind continually jumps from one thing to another. But if that person had of done 30 minutes of Kiirtan, then 10 minutes of meditation, then the meditation will be of far more worth. He has said that if you are to do 10 minutes meditation, then do 8 minutes kiirtan and 2 minutes of deep meditation.



Other types of KIIRTAN:

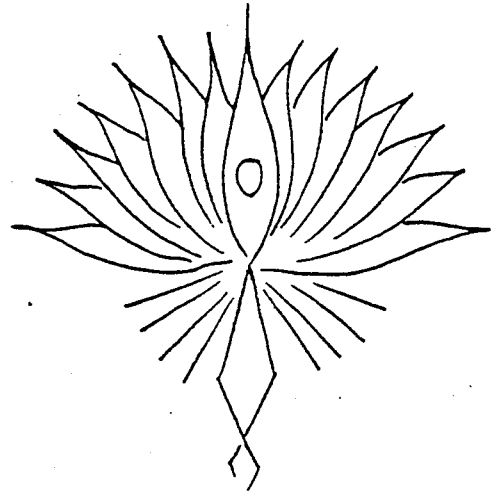
KATHA KIIRTAN: Nama Kiirtan (or songs of the Lord such as Prabhat Samgiita) alternated between stories that arouse intense devotion.

PADA KIIRTAN - Kiirtan like poetry; singing about the Lord, telling about the qualities of the Lord.

PALA KIIRTAN; - Many persons take different roles, longer programs with different dialogues.

KAOSHIKII: This dance was given by Shrii Shrii Anandamurti when some sisters requested him for a special dance for sisters, like the Tándava which he taught for brothers.

Kaoshikii Nrtya, the dance of Kaoshikii, has all the positive effects of Tándava minus its negative effects on the female physique and psyche. Tandava stimulates the male hormone testosterone and if women dance it they develop male characteristics. Males can also dance Kaoshikii, but it benefits women to a greater, larger extent.

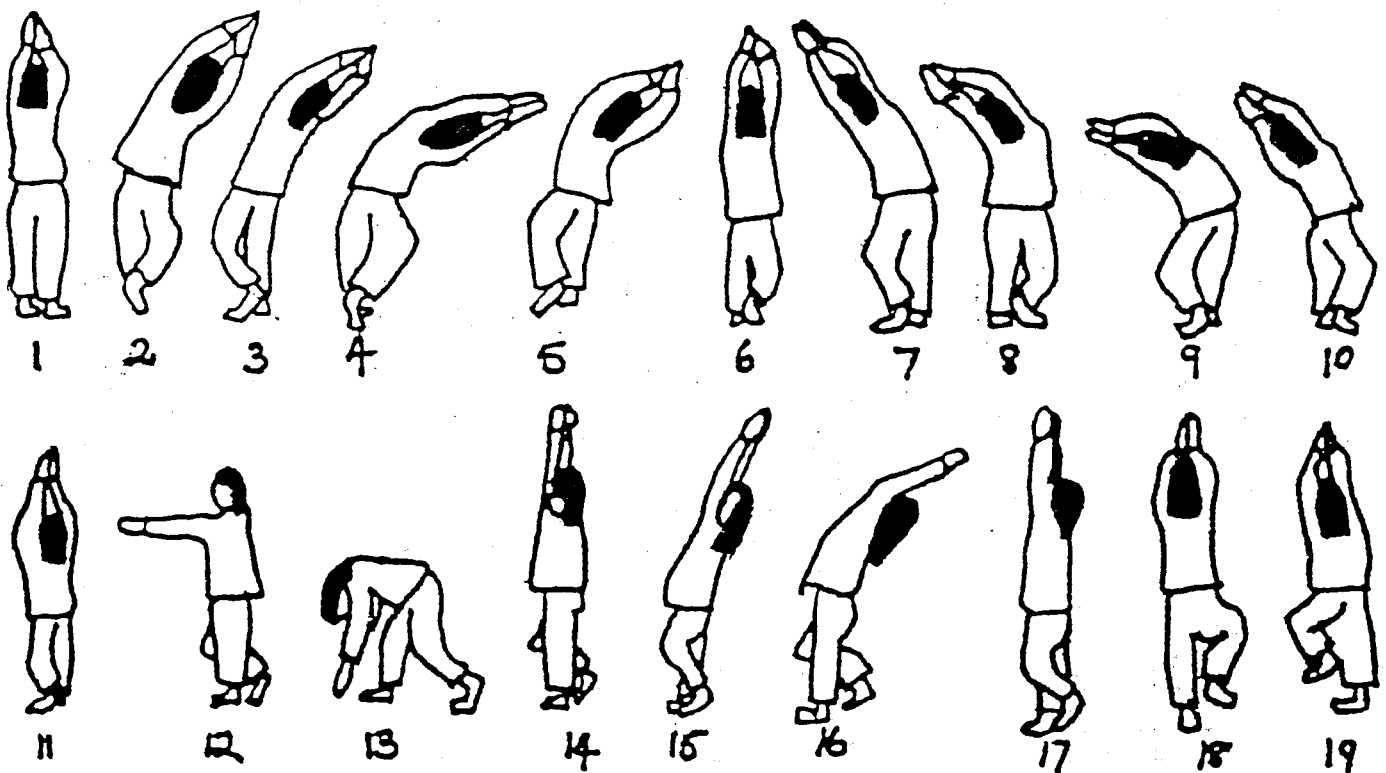


PHYSICAL BENEFITS: Kaoshikii was evolved considering the impact of different glands and tissues of the body. It is a thorough exercise for the whole body.

Kaoshikii Nrtya extends life: women who dance regularly will remain fit and healthy till at least the age of 80. The spinal column will become flexible - a stiff spine is indicative of advancing old age.

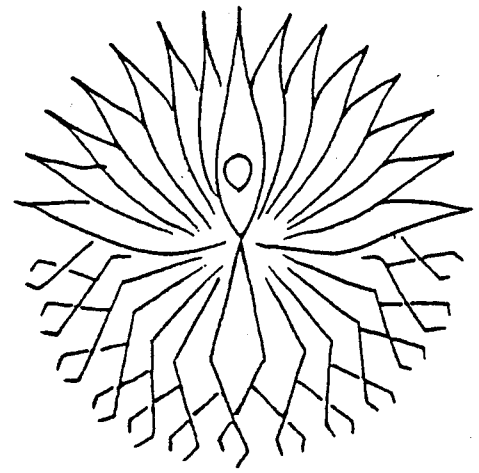
Another benefit is that it makes child-delivery more easy and reduces the pain involved in the birth. Pregnant women may practice the dance up to advanced stages of pregnancy, depending on her physical condition.

The knees and hip-joints are also strengthened by the two forceful steps which end the dance. Also, body fat is reduced. The dance acts as an antidote to many kinds of disease.



MENTAL BENEFITS: Self-expression, confidence and fulfillment are some of the mental benefits. Also many complexes and emotions which plague the mind can also be overcome and controlled. When inventing the dance Shrii Shrii Anandamurti said "all over the world women are subdued, they are considered second-grade citizens in every country. If they practise this dance, they will not remain subdued anymore. This is not the inner secret of the dance, but it is my inner motive."

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS: The mental ideation that is central to the dance is based on the idea of striving to reach a spiritual goal - to realize the relationship between oneself and the Cosmic Self. The dancer imagines himself or herself to be like a lotus flower, initially in bud, with its petals gradually unfolding and opening outwards to reveal the finer and finer layers of petals underneath and the ultimate subtlety of the centre. This thought is reflected in the dancer's body as it moves to the sides, forwards and backwards from the initial upright stance. The name Kaoshikii derives from the Samskrita word kosa which means "layer of the mind".



The ideation is as follows:  
 First: "Pranam to the Lord", I am seeking the link between microcosm and macrocosm.  
 Second: (movement to the right side) "I know the right way to request you".  
 Third, to the left: "I know how to fulfill Your commands".  
 Fourth, front: "I surrender to You"  
 Fifth, backwards: "I am ready to undergo all difficulties"  
 Sixth, stamp feet: "Lord, I repeat your rhythm"



Ac Nityapremananda Avt.

## Imagine

by Liila

Imagine a society in which each minority group is valued for the unique expression of culture they bring to the greater whole.

Imagine a society where prisons are places of real rehabilitation and not of punishment. Where hospitals are places of light and life and healing, and the removal of the real causes of dis-ease.

Imagine a society in which each person does that work through which they can express their true potential. In which ability and not paper qualifications are important.

Imagine a society in which men and women take completely equal responsibility for child care and the upkeep of the home. Where women

as well as men are encouraged to develop leadership, courage and independence. Where men as well as women are encouraged to develop gentleness, compassion and selflessness.

Imagine a society in which the children are told of the horrible and almost unimaginable past in which many of the earth's people died of malnutrition. For in this society each had the minimum needs necessary for life, and there are none who accumulate at the expense of others.

Imagine a society in which nature is revered and agriculture works in harmony with the earth. Where the past damage of pollution and ecological disaster are slowly but steadily being repaired. Imagine children who cannot believe

it is true that people once ate the flesh of dead animals and experimented on living creatures.

Imagine a society in which many many people are trying to find their inner essence through spiritual practices and selfless service. In which the leadership of society is entrusted to such people, free of any selfish motives.

Yet this is no fairy land. Struggle against any oppressive or exploitative tendencies must continue. There is no point reached where one can say "here is peace, here is perfection." Rather society is in continuous movement.

Imagine a society in which there is continuous movement forwards of humanity on the physical, mental and spiritual planes.

If we can imagine it we can build it.