

***Indian Classical Dance –  
One Way to God-Experience  
(The Yoga of Dance)***

**By Guru-Bhakti-Ratna  
Kumari Somashekhari**



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*“The whole universe is a manifestation of ANANDA.  
OM is the source of all Arts and Sciences.  
OM is the source of Rhythm and Movement.  
OM is the source of Nritya, Dance, of Music, Sangeeta.”*

**PARAMAHAMSA OMKARANANDA SARASWATI**

*Indian Classical Dance*  
*– One Way to*  
*God-Experience*  
*(The Yoga of Dance)*

*By Guru-Bhakti-Ratna*  
*Kumari Somashekhari*



*This special Edition is a Compilation of different*  
*Articles, written by Kumari Somashekhari, along*  
*with photos and descriptions by her.*

**Front Cover:**

Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari in a Bharatanatyam dance pose in front of the Omkarananda-Dakshinamurti Mandir under the holy Banyan Tree, in Omkarananda Ashram Himalayas, Muni-ki-Reti, via Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India

# Indian Classical Dance – One Way to God-Experience (The Yoga of Dance)

*By Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari*

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*Dedicated  
with deepest Gratitude  
to my Adorable Sadgurudev  
H.D. Shri Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati*



*I consider it as my greatest good fortune, my greatest good luck and greatest Divine Blessing, that I could meet in person the incomparable Sage, Mystic, Genius and Sampurna Avataara (an Incarnation of God, which is complete, perfect and unsurpassable in each and every aspect), Shri Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati. OM*

ॐ Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari ॐ

# *Dance as a Means for* **GOD-EXPERIENCE**

by Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati

*The soul seeks Oneness  
with the Infinite and the  
Eternal through dance.*

*Dance is a perfect Yoga,  
perfect Meditation, perfect  
Wisdom, perfect Purity,  
perfect Discipline.*

*All are there in Dance.*

*Dance, as a Means for  
God-Experience, is the  
great Method, known to  
mankind, which has been  
revealed by the infinite  
Divine.*



(PARAMAHAMSA OMKARANANDA SARASWATI)



*Kumari Somashekhari with her Adorable Sadgurudev  
Shri Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati*





**SPEECH BY**  
**H.H. MAHANT SHRI SWAMI VISHVESHWARANANDA SARASWATI,**  
**PRESIDENT, OMKARANANDA ASHRAM HIMALAYAS,**  
**ON THE OCCASION OF A BHARATANATYAM TEMPLE-DANCE**  
**PERFORMANCE BY KUMARI SOMASHEKHARI**

Bharatanatyam is an old, ancient Indian Classical Dance originating in Tamil Nadu, South India. It is the most ancient dance of all the traditional dance forms in India.

The Natya Shastra is the oldest surviving text on stage-craft in the world. Bharatanatyam, Odissi Dance, etc. are also called '*artistic Yoga*' or better '*Natya Yoga*'. Legend

says, that Lord Brahma created Pancama Veda, the 5th Veda or '*Natya Veda*'. Lord Brahma gave it to Sage Bharata, who wrote down Natya Shastra. The powerful form of dance derived the name '*Tandava*' from the cosmic dance of Shiva and the graceful dance of Goddess Parvati is called '*Lasya*'.

The Gods and Goddesses – being Dancers Themselves – passed the heavenly dance on to human beings. This dance is still mostly performed by women dancers.

Centuries ago Hindu Temples in South India had Dance-





Priestesses, who were singing, dancing and playing instruments. They spoke Sanskrit and different other languages and they lived the life of highest purity and of supreme divine nature. They lived a celibate life and had no family.

The body and its tendencies, considered an enemy of the spirit and a great obstacle to spiritual realisation, has itself been made a vehicle of the Divine in the discipline of Temple-Dance. The ancient Temple-Dancers were also Priests and apart from dance as worship to the Divinity, they performed their regular Pujas. They were considered as the highest Authorities in the Temples. They were like walking Divinities or Devis.

With the changing of the time and the influence from several forces from outside, this situation drastically changed. It is said that the English system completely avoided the tradition of the divine Priestesses and among these most heavenly dancers, some were losing the purity and the spiritual life-style, and turned later into court dancers, which had no more the same spiritual effect, as it was earlier in the Temples.

But still today, some of the Temples in India allow dancers to give performances in the Temple itself, and our Gurudev Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati revived this tradition again, when he allowed Kumari Somashekhari to give her performances in our Temple in the true system of the ancient time. Her life is highly divine, spiritual and pure and is undoubtedly manifesting that, which was of highest value at that time and is now available right here. ❀





Mahant Shri Swami Vishveshwarananda Saraswati, President, Omkarananda Ashram Himalayas, and Kumari Somashekhari, General Secretary and Bharatanatyam Dancer, in front of the Shrine of Gurudev Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati and Lord Shiva, before the start of Maha-Shivaratri Celebrations in Omkarananda Ashram Himalayas, on 13. February 2018.



Kumari Somashekhari during a Bharatanatyam Performance.

## *Introduction of Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari*

Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari is a direct disciple of H.D. SHRI PARAMAHAMSA OMKARANANDA SARASWATI and the General Secretary of Omkarananda Ashram Himalayas.

She has studied Bharatanatyam and Odissi from prominent Gurus, like Dr. Yamini Krishnamurti, Dr. Minati Mishra and other renowned personalities. She also got intensive training in North-Indian Kathak Dance under various Dance Gurus from Jaipur, Mathura, Calcutta, Lucknow, Benares, etc. and earned a Prabhakar Title for Kathak Dance from Prayag Sangit Samiti, Allahabad (Prayagraj).

She received training in Bharatanatyam Temple-Dances by the Bharatanatyam Guru Shri Deepak Mazumdar, Mumbai.

Kumari Somashekhari has specialized in the devotional aspect of Indian Classical Dance. Her aim is to revive the



*Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari giving a performance at an International NRI-Conference in New Delhi.*

ancient Temple-Style and propagate dance as Sadhana, as a way to God-experience. Her dance is a pure dedication to her beloved Sadgurudev Shri Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati.

Kumari Somashekhari has performed before distinguished gatherings in India and abroad and has been applauded by art lovers and critics for her authentic depiction of moods, for her grace and flawless presentations of various dance forms.

One of her memorable performances was during an India-NRI World Convention when she won spontaneous applause.

Daughters of well-known and highly respected Educationists in Mauritius wrote a beautiful description of Kumari Somashekhari's Temple-Dance Performance, which they saw in the Sri Prasanna Venkateswara Temple, situated at La Laura, Saint Pierre, in a feerique setting, at the foot of Pieter Both, with seven Hills encircling it. In this Temple are serving Priests, trained at Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam's Ved Pathashala. Somashekhari had been specially invited to give her devotional dance-recital as a part of the Puja for Lord Venkateswara:

*“Kumari Somashekhari then performed her dances. She danced in an ecstatic mood and fervour, forgetful of the presence of so many devotees as the hall was packed to its full capacity. She transmitted divine vibrations to all present. She was perfection personified. Divine Grace descended upon her every time she climbed the steps to pay her humble obeisance to Lord Venkateswara. The atmosphere was electrified as the audience applauded each dance and asked for more. The devotees were spellbound at her graceful movements. There was no sign of tension, stress or apprehension, but pure spiritual devotion. She created a social and spiritual awareness whereby the devotees do not become arrogant, assertive and selfish.”* (By Rajalakshmi



& Niranjani Ramgoolam, daughters of Educationists Srimati Kamala & Sri Praveen Ramgoolam, Forest Side, Mauritius)

Kumari Somashekhari's dance has been several times broadcasted in various TV-Channels in India and abroad and has been shown in Indian and Foreign Documentary-Films.


The efforts in her cultural field earned her the prestigious "**Mahila Shiromani Award**". Later on she also received other Awards, like "**Natya Ratna Award**", "**Rashtra Shakti Award**", etc.

On 13th May 2019 Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari was honoured with the "**Bharatiya Shastriya Nritya Shiromani Award for Excellence in Indian Classical Temple Dance and Vedic Culture**" by the Senior Citizen Welfare Organization (Reg.), Rishikesh.

In a grand Function, Kalanidhi Kumari Somashekhari received the "**National Award for Promotion of Art & Culture**", in Film-City, Noida, on 6th October 2023.

Besides her love for Indian Classical Dance, Kumari Somashekhari has a great love for the Indian Classical Music. She received training in Karnatic Vocal Music, playing the Tambura and the Veena, and she also studied Hindustani Vocal Music.

Somashekhari sings devotional songs in different Indian languages, whenever she is asked to do so, like in Hindi, Sanskrit, Brijbhasha, Garhwali, temporary and ancient Tamil and Telugu.

The Honour, Kumari Somashekhari cherishes most, is, that her adorable Sadgurudev Shri Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati blessed her with two Titles: "**Guru-Bhakti-Ratna**" and "**Kalanidhi**". "Kalanidhi" is an attribute of the Supreme Divine Mother Shri Lalita Maha-Tripurasundari and means "Ocean of Arts". "Kalanidhi" is considered the highest Award for Artists. 

# *Indian Classical Dance – One Way to God-Experience (The Yoga of Dance)*

*By Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari*

## **The Purpose of Indian Classical Dance**

Since ancient times Indian Classical Dance was a sacred Art, practised and performed mainly in Temples.

The Indian Classical Dance is basically a Prayer or a Puja, performed by the dancer to beautiful music, adorned with colourful divine dresses and ornaments, for the glorification of the Divine.

It is an eternal, heavenly art, having come from Lord Shiva and Divine Mother Parvati down to earth to inspire and uplift the suffering human beings.

This dance was originally meant to please the Divine and to be a powerful means to bring the dancer as well as the audience back to their final destiny, God-Experience.

Therefore this sacred form of Dance can also be called a “Yoga”, since its aim is the Union of the individual Soul with the Absolute, the Paramatman.

## **Divine Beauty as an Important Aspect of Indian Classical Dance**

Beauty is an essential attribute of the Divine. Absolute Beauty and the Divine are one and the same. The Divinity, the Divine Mother, is indescribably beautiful, aesthetic, tender, sweet, subtle, charming and attractive.

Therefore, in the Indian Classical Dance, which is essentially an expression of Divine Grace and subtle Divine Beauty, very much emphasis is laid upon Beauty and Elegance of the dance-movements as well as the appearance of the dancer.

In ancient times the Temple-Dancer was regarded and worshipped as the living Representative of the Divinity. The real Temple-Dancer was supposed to be highly dignified, pure, of good moral character, very well educated and exclusively devoted to divine ideals and aspirations.

The outer appearance of the Temple-Dancer, the dresses, the jewellery, etc., were arranged in such a way, that everyone got the impression, that not an ordinary human being is dancing, but a vibrant, beautiful, real Divinity.

Even now, in the present performances of Indian Classical Dance, especially in the Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi Dance-Styles, very much emphasis is laid upon the Divine appearance of the dancer. The costumes and ornaments, used in these dances, are extremely beautiful and colourful. The ornaments are so attractive, that they immediately delight the eyes and hearts of the viewers.

### ***The Hidden, Mystical Meanings of some Temple-Dance-Ornaments***

Those attractive dance-ornaments, whose original design is derived from the Temples, are not only beautiful to look at, but they have at the same time a deep mystical meaning.

Some dancers put on their long hair-braid, along the spinal cord, a snake-like shining ornament, called “Jadai Nagam”, which represents the Kundalini Power in the Sushumna Naadi. The Jadai

Nagam ends in three tassels at the base of the spinal cord, the Muladhara Chakra, which is the Seat of Lord Ganesh. The three tassels represent Ida, Pingala and Sushumna or Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati.

Above the hair-braid, at the height of the neck area, white, orange or different coloured flowers are arranged sometimes in such a way, that they resemble the hood of a cobra, which, in this case, is symbolizing the awakened Kundalini Shakti.

Above this, on the upper part of the back of the head, is put a beautiful ornament in the form of a disc, approx. 6 or 7 cm in diameter, on which glittering stones are fixed. This shining disc is usually surrounded with white flowers. Some people say, that this ornament represents the Brahmarandhra or even the Sahasrara Chakra. In Tamil language this circular ornament, worn on the crown of the head, is called “Raakkodi”.

I personally find the following explanation of the spiritual meaning of this shining disc the most beautiful one:



Kumari Somashekhari is wearing a Jada Nagam on her hair-braid. The three red tassels in the end represent Ida, Pingala and Sushumna.



This very attractive looking, glittering round ornament may represent the seat of the “Nectar of Immortality” (the real “Soma”), which is available in every human being, but stored in a sort of a “frozen”, “inactive” state. When, by the Grace of the Sadguru, as a result of utmost purity in heart, selflessness, egolessness and immense devotion to the Divine, this Nectar of Immortality starts “melting”, it flows through innumerable subtle channels and floods the Devotee with indescribable Bliss, a divine Ecstasy, accompanied by unending Peace, Joy and Wisdom.

When this happens, the mortal, individual human being attains Immortality, while living in a physical body.

Great Saints, Mystics and Sages have emphasized, that the conscious experience of Immortality is possible and that by this experience the human being attains the crown of evolution, “Jivanmukti”, the state of a living liberated being.



Kumari Somashekhari during a devotional Dance. The Temple-Dance-Ornament, the shining and glittering disc on the upper part of the head, can be seen here.

Indian Classical Dancers often wear other head-ornaments, derived from the Temple-Tradition, like the sun (on the right side of the head) and the moon (on the left side of the head). Sun and moon are representing “Pingala” and “Ida” (subtle channels, mentioned in the science of Yoga). When Pingala and Ida are united in an enlightened Yogi or Sage, the Nectar of Immortality starts flowing, as mentioned before.

The flowing of the Nectar of Immortality is represented by another beautiful head-ornament, leading in a line along the parting of the hair from the upper part of the head towards the forehead, ending in a pendant and sometimes parting from there towards the temples of the forehead. This ornament is very common in India – not only in Indian Classical Dance – it is worn by Ladies all over India, for joyous and auspicious occasions and festivals. In Tamil language this ornament is called “Netri-Chutti” and in Hindi it is called “Maang-Tikaa”. It often consists of pure gold, silver or any other metal, studded with many shining stones or many small pearls.

The tiny, glittering stones or the small white pearls, seen in this ornament, represent the drops of the flowing Nectar of Immortality.

There are other dance-ornaments, which are having spiritual meanings, too, like for example different necklaces, belts etc., with shining colourful stones in very appealing and attractive designs. These ornaments can indicate the different chakras, the throat-chakra, the heart-chakra, etc.

***See photo on the right:***

In the holy night of Maha-Shivaratri, Kumari Somashekhari is ready for her Temple-Dance Performance in Honour of Lord Shiva.



Standing in front of the holy Shrine of Gurudev Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati and Lord Shiva, Somashekhari holds a fresh Mandara-Flower, dear to Lord Shiva, in her right hand, which she is going to offer to Gurudev and Lord Shiva before starting her dance performance. Somashekhari is wearing exclusively original South Indian Temple-Dance Ornaments. The spiritual meanings of the head and fore-head ornaments have been described before. The long necklace, which Somashekhari is wearing, is called in Tamil Language “Linga Padakkam Mutthu Maalai” (a garland of pearls, with a Shiva-Linga Pendant), which is worn to worship Lord Shiva. Kumari Somashekhari wears for this special holy Function a very beautiful waist-ornament, or girdle, called in Tamil Language “Oddiyaanam”, with subtle, intricate carvings of divine symbols. The main symbol in this girdle is a white glittering Swan (“Hamsa”) in the middle, surrounded by a circle of golden Flames. The divine bird Swan, or Hamsa, stands for Purity, Divine Wisdom and Self-Realization. In the Indian Tradition the holy bird Swan can be depicted in different colours, which indicate different spiritual, mystical meanings, like the blue Swan (Neela Hamsa), the golden Swan (Suvarna Hamsa), and so on. Because that special Swan in Somashekhari’s beautiful waist-ornament, is consisting of tiny white glittering stones, it symbolizes the “Shveta Hamsa” (the white Swan), or “Soma-Hamsa”, which is regarded as the carrier of “Soma”, the Nectar of Supreme Delight and Immortality.

### ***Saintliness or “Inner” Divine Beauty as most Important Requisite for an Indian Classical Dancer***

The above-mentioned explanations concerning the use of beautiful dance-ornaments in Indian Classical Dance, prove, how closely this art is connected to the Temples, to the mystical, Divine Beauty.

But the outer beauty of the dancer, the beautiful ornaments and costumes should not be a pure formality or show. One should never forget, that the outer beauty should remind us of the Beauty of Beauties, God, the living, omnipresent, omnipotent Divine Mother, or the Sadguru.

In order to realize and express real Divine Beauty the dancer must therefore try to become a completely divine personality.

A dancer may be outwardly beautiful and technically perfect, but if he or she is not a saintly or divine personality, one may compare this dancer to a beautiful flower without sweet fragrance. On the other hand, there may be a dancer, who may or may not be outwardly so beautiful or technically perfect, but fully divine. If such a divine dancer performs a dance, the whole world will be attracted to such a person.

### *The Use of Elegant Dance-Movements and Hand-Gestures (Mudras) Refine the Indian Classical Dancer*

The movements of the Indian Classical Dance are very subtle and aesthetic. Usually elegance and grace come only after a long and dedicated practice of this art. Dancers, who have acquired this grace and elegance, can inspire everybody by their charming personality and appearance, even in the “normal” day to day life.

With the help of special hand-gestures, called “Mudras”, the dancers can convey myriads of meanings.

The subtle and soft, but at the same time very clear hand-gestures and movements, are exquisitely counterbalanced by powerful, rhythmic footwork, which gives a lively and ecstatic expression to the dance-performance.



## *Powerful Rhythm and Footwork as Help for One-pointed Concentration*

The sometimes very complicated footwork in the Indian Classical Dances requires a lot of concentration from the dancer, which can be a wonderful help to transcend the mind, forget the individual self and merge with the Supreme Self, the Paramatman, which is the true aim of each Sadhana, also the Indian Classical Dance.

One among many practical examples, how powerful rhythm and footwork is used as means for one-pointed concentration, is the last item of an Odissi Dance performance, which is called “Moksha”, meaning “Liberation”, the release from the cycle of rebirth. Through this item the dancer tries to surrender completely to the Divine through very powerful footwork and ecstatic dance-movements.

The same aspect is seen in other Indian Classical Dances, too, like in the North-Indian Kathak-Dance, and also in Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam.

## *Devotion (Bhakti)*

Bhakti plays a great role in the Indian Classical Dance, since the dancer worships the Divine through the dance, tells stories of the Divine through dance, and even has to represent the Divinity in the dance. Here the dancer has to try to identify herself completely with the Divinity and by this the same aim can be achieved, the final merging of the individual self with the Divine Mother or the Absolute, the Paramatman, the Sadguru, which is called “Parabhakti” (the highest state of Devotion).

## *The Immense Educational and Other Values of Indian Classical Dance*

Indian Classical Dance is so immensely rich in divine values that it really deserves to be called a “Sadhana”, a way to God-Experience. It trains the physical, artistic, musical, intellectual, ethical and devotional abilities of a student. If practised properly, it can discipline and heal body and mind, it can inspire and delight through its immense aesthetic appeal and divine beauty and it is also a kind of visible “divine music”. But the most important thing is, that the dancer and the audience are constantly reminded of the Divine, since the dance is performed for the Divine and for glorifying the Divine.

This art can be a powerful inspiration and enrichment for the lives of so many, also for the children. But it should not be misused for selfish purposes, otherwise it will lose its power and beauty.

The immense educational value of the Indian Classical Dance should not be underestimated. The hidden mystic treasures of the Indian Classical Dance, specially the Indian Temple Dance or the Devotional Indian Dance deserve to be appreciated in the whole



world. According to my opinion no other dance in the world has a match to this divine form of dance.

I want to close my short essay about “Indian Classical Dance – One Way to God-Experience” with a small excerpt of a speech, which my Adorable Sadgurudev, Paramahansa Shri Swami Omkarananda Saraswati, gave after an Indian Dance-Performance of a small girl:

*“It was not a dance as such, it was an Adoration of God. Through the movements of her body she worshipped God. It has cosmic dimension. It affects the nature. The society profited, the nature profited, the whole cosmos profited. God is the aim of this dance.*

*“ ‘Rock and Roll’ does not give you happiness. It does not make you a Saint.*

*“This dance is an education in itself. It makes you happy. The rhythms of the Infinite are expressing themselves in this dance.*

*“The Soul of this dance lies in the Hands of the Divine. Be a great devotee of the Divine and you will know all the secrets of this dance, all its metaphysics.”*

**Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati**

Many intuitions and insights concerning the heart-touching mystical aspects of Dance and Music, which may not be found in books, I got only through my Guru Shri Swami Omkarananda’s Grace and Inspirations.

I am immensely grateful to my adorable Sadgurudev Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati, that by His Grace I have got the opportunity to study, practise, perform and teach Indian Classical Dance as a Way to God-Experience. OM.

***Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari***

# *The Importance of Ghoonghroos (Footbells) in Indian Classical Dance*

*by Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari*

“Ghoonghroos” or footbells are one of the most important requisites of an Indian Classical Dancer.

Indian Dancers who are conscious of the sacred purpose and content of their art, worship Ghoonghroos (footbells) as Goddess Saraswati Herself. Before tying the Ghoonghroos on their legs they first offer them to their Guru, so that He may bless them, then they put the footbells with a deep feeling of adoration and reverence to their forehead and heart and then only they tie them to their legs.

Traditional Indian Dancers who are fully aware of the sacred purpose of their Ghoonghroos never throw the Ghoonghroos after the performance on the floor or in some corner; this would be considered by sensible dancers as a sacrilege. In the contrary, after the dance performance or dance practice is over, a traditional Indian Dancer puts the Ghoonghroos lovingly on a special sacred place, ideally on an Aasana (divine seat) in front of the altar of one’s Divinities.

When Ghoonghroos are purchased newly, first Pooja should be made with them and only afterwards one should wear them.

Ghoonghroos play an important role in all the major styles of Indian Classical Dance, except in the Northeastern style “Manipuri”. For all other styles, like Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi and specially for the North Indian Kathak Dance, Ghoonghroos are of



utmost importance. In the contrary to the Western Classical Dance Styles, who try to defy gravity, the Indian Dances are heavenly and still strongly connected to Mother Earth, the Goddess Bhumidevi. The Indian Dancers execute beautiful rhythmic patterns while touching the Mother Earth with the full palm of the feet or the heel or toes. Special musical effects of interesting different rhythmic patterns executed by the dancer's feet are very much enhanced and multiplied by the use of Ghoonghroos.

If Ghoonghroos are not worn by a dancer, the rhythmic sound of the feet can be suppressed by the loud sound of the accompanying music instruments like the Mridanga, Tabla, Pakhawaj and other instruments. So, in order to make the rhythmic play of the dancer's feet properly audible to the audience and also to the musicians, the dancers must wear footbells. In the North Indian Temple Dance Kathak, the dancers wear a lot of heavy footbells on their feet, because this dance style emphasizes beautiful and complicated footwork. It is therefore of utmost importance that an Indian Classical Dancer is at the same time an excellent musician with feeling for exact and subtle rhythmic variations.

The ecstatic rhythmic patterns of the dancers feet can correspond exactly to the accompanying percussion instruments like the Tabla, Mridanga, etc. or the dancers can spontaneously create individual rhythmic patterns within the fixed rhythmic cycle. The exciting beauty of this rhythmic play could not be enjoyed fully by the listeners if the dancers would not wear footbells. In Indian Classical Dance beautiful and graceful movements and beautiful music are inseparable. Dance cannot be thought of without music. Specially the rhythmic patterns of the Temple dance, made audible by the footbells add a powerful, ecstatic, elevating, divine charm to the dancer's performance. The Ghoonghroos can be used by a

skillful dancer to produce different sounds and it is a much liked, popular feature of Kathak Dancers to make their Ghoonghroos sound very loudly, like strong monsoon rain or very mildly, like a few tender raindrops or they can even reduce the sound of the tinkling footbells to the sound of one Ghoonghroo, one bell, only, and then again increase the volume of the resounding footbells from a mild, tender sound to a very strong, thunderous volume.

The footbells, which most of the Indian Classical Dancers use nowadays, are made of brass. They are quite durable and many great dancers are of the opinion, that the older and more used the Ghoonghroos are, the more valuable they become. Therefore much used Ghoonghroos should be preserved very cautiously, since their sound may become sweeter after using them for many years. Only broken Ghoonghroos should be removed and replaced by new ones.

Because of easy availability, reasonable cost, good durability



**Kumari Somashekhari in a Classical Bharatanatyam Pose depicting Goddess Parvati. Her big Kathak-Ghoonghroos can be seen on a soft Aasana.**

and strong sound, brass Ghoonghroos are used by the majority of Indian Classical Dancers. Some dancers also like to use tiny silver bells in addition to their brass Ghoonghroos. Silver bells have a very sweet and attractive sound. They sound much more beautiful and heavenly than brass Ghoonghroos, but for getting sufficient loud sound, a lot of silver bells have to be used. Some experts are of the opinion that the sound of brass Ghoonghroos, which is quite powerful, attracts Gandharvas, whereas the sweet sound of silver bells attracts Goddess Saraswati and the sound of bells, made out of real Gold, attracts the Goddess Mahalakshmi.

Usually Ghoonghroos should not be shared with anybody, but it is considered a blessing and honour for the dance student, if one's Dance teacher or Guru is wearing the Ghoonghroos and then returning them back to the student.

There are several methods of tying Ghoonghroos to one's legs. The North Indian Kathak dancers use many Ghoonghroos (at least 100 for each leg) which are usually fixed on one strong long cotton-string. According to ancient Shastras Ghoonghroos should be fixed on one blue-coloured cotton-string with knots, not underneath each Ghoonghroo, but in between each Ghoonghroo.

It is nowadays the custom among many Bharatanatyam and Odissi dancers to wear Ghoonghroos which are not fixed on a long cotton-string, but on a leather, plastic or a thick cloth pad. Considering the purity and Ahimsa aspect (aspect of non-violence) of our sacred Temple Dances, it is definitely better not to wear Ghoonghroos which are fixed on leather pads. It may be quite convenient to wear Ghoonghroos, fixed on pads, because it doesn't take much time to tie them. But they have one disadvantage; they often don't remain at one place but move around the ankles, which doesn't look so nice.

Therefore dancers with much experience in different Indian Classical Dance styles prefer Ghoonghroos tied on cotton-strings. It is an art in itself to tie a long cotton-string with Ghoonghroos to one's legs in such a way, that each Ghoonghroo can be seen and that the string doesn't become loose or open during a dance performance. Such a Ghoonghroo string has to be wound carefully from down to up around the leg like a "snake" and it has to be fixed tightly on the upper most portion in such a way that it is neither too loose (so that the string will not fall down) and also not too tight (otherwise it will be painful).

The tying of Ghoonghroos on a cotton-string must be learned from a professional dancer. If the Ghoonghroos are not fixed properly the whole dance performance can be disturbed.

Indian Classical Dance and Music are of Divine Origin. They can cast a divine spell on the audience and transport it into a world of heavenly Bliss. The sweet sound of the rhythmic play of the Ghoonghroos of a skillful dancer can create a lot of joy in the hearts of listeners, it attracts and charms heavenly beings, human beings and the whole nature.





*A Short Reflection upon the Common Features  
of Two Ways to God-Experience:  
Indian Classical Dance & Music and Shri Vidya*

*By Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari*

God is Beauty and Beauty is God.

Truth is Beauty and Beauty is Truth.

Truth, Bliss and Beauty, **Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram**, or Peace, Bliss and Beauty, **Shantam-Shivam-Sundaram** are three faces of the all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful Divinity.

Indian Classical Dance and Music and the path of Shri Vidya beautifully suit together. They are even integral parts of each other.

Divine Beauty, Bliss and Peace are essential features in the Shri Vidya Upasana as well as in the Art of Indian Classical Dance and Music.

A real artist and seeker of the Truth is a worshipper of infinite, divine Beauty, a beauty, which finds its fulfilment only in the Beauty, which is the Divine, the Absolute, the Divine Mother Maha-Tripurasundari, the Sadgurudev.

An Indian Classical Dancer and Musician should search and incorporate in his or her art this Divine Beauty, otherwise his or her art will lack its true Essence.

Indian Classical Dance and Music is Beauty –

Beauty in inner Divine Feeling

Beauty in fragrant Devotion and surrender to the **Divine**

Beauty in powerful, lively and ecstatic rhythm

Beauty in lovely, heart-touching melodies

Beauty in sweetness and purity of expression

Beauty in dignified and graceful movements  
Beauty in colourful costumes and shining jewellery

One of the most striking similarities between the Sadhana of Indian Classical Dance and Music and the Sadhana of Shri Vidya is the worship of infinite Divine Purity, Beauty and Bliss (Ananda), the Divine Mother Maha-Tripurasundari, and the incorporation of Her qualities in one's heart, character and life.

A great Shri Vidya Upasaka, Sri T.V. Kapali Sastry, writes in his book, "Quintessence of Sri Vidya":

*"Whatever the path the aspirant follows, there are certain basic requisites for the Sadhana to be successful. The Goddess of Sri Vidya is the Mother of Beauty and Bliss, the Mother of Love and Grace. One who follows the path of Sri Vidya should be a worshipper of beauty and grace. He should reject ugliness in all its forms. He should not only shun the outer ugliness but also ugliness in thought, word and deed."*

*(T.V. Kapali Sastry, Quintessence of Sri Vidya, page 21)*

Real Beauty is only possible, if the "heart is beautiful", that means if it is full of love, purity, understanding, peace and devotion. Outer beauty gains life, radiance and charm only through the "inner" divine beauty.

**Purity, Beauty and Bliss (Ananda)** are also the most dominant and touching qualities of a presentation of a Divine Indian Classical Dance and Music performance.

Like Indian Classical Dance and Music, Shri Vidya is a Sadhana; the true aim of both Sadhanas is to attain God-Experience, Jivanmukti (the state of a living liberated man).

*“Again, the ultimate goal of the Sadhana of Sri Vidya is Self-Realisation, the realisation of one’s Self as the Goddess Herself. This is the culmination of all paths, the consummation of all transformations.”*

*(T.V. Kapali Sastry, Quintessence of Sri Vidya, page 3)*

*“Such is the greatness of the Vidya of the Divine Mother that it is mentioned without any description or attribute. It is simply called Sri Vidya, Sri being a prefix to denote auspiciousness. It is the knowledge, the only knowledge that matters. The Tantric holds that knowledge about sculpture, etc. is no knowledge at all; Sri Vidya leading to liberation, moksha, is alone fit to be called as the Knowledge.”*

*(T.V. Kapali Sastry, Quintessence of Sri Vidya, page 4 & 5)*

In the same way, only technical knowledge of Indian Classical Dance and Music does not help to gain the highest goal of life, Liberation or Jivanmukti. Indian Classical Dance and Music must be practised as a real Sadhana, a way leading to God-Experience. Therefore the worship of the Divine with the aim of melting one’s limited personality into the Infinite, the Paramatman, must occupy the first rank. The Art of Indian Classical Dance and Music ideally lends itself to this aim because of its divine origin and also because this art was integrated in the sacred temple rituals since ancient times. The poojas in the temples were not complete without recitals of Divine Dances and Music for the Divinities. For all auspicious occasions performances of Divine Classical Dance and Music was a must. The pure Indian Classical Temple Dancers were educated to sing, dance, live, dress and behave themselves in such a beautiful, dignified and divine way, that they not only increased the devotion of the onlookers and pleased the Divinities,

but they seemed to have transformed themselves into living Gods and Goddesses.

In the history of our great Bharat Mata, India, we come across so many saintly singers and dancers like Shri Aandaal, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mirabai, Tulsidas, Surdas, Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Shyama Shastri and many many others, known or unknown, who have attained and expressed the Divine by their devotional songs and dances.



H.D. Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati

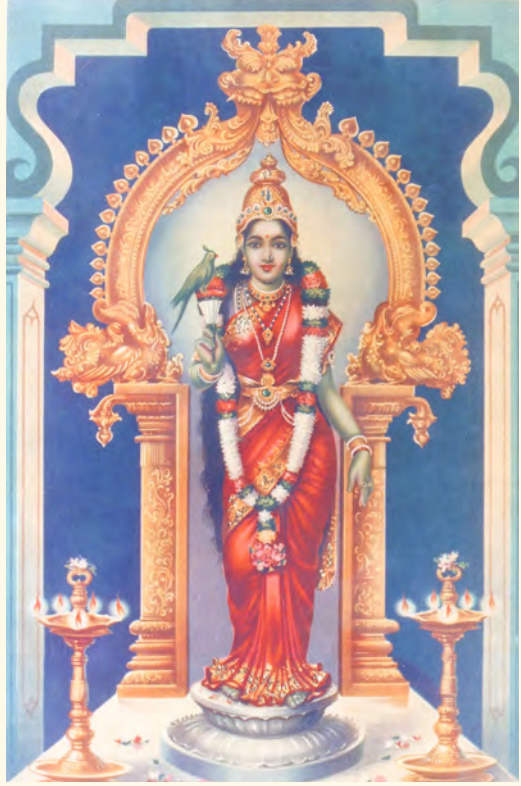
When this was possible in the past, then why it should not be possible today, too?

God is always present. He is not present less today than He was hundreds or thousands of years ago. God is omnipresent, all-knowing, all-loving. He can react to any form of worship by which we approach Him, why not also through Divine Dance and Music or through the practice of Shri Vidya?

I want to close my short reflection upon the common features of Indian Classical Dance and Music and Shri Vidya with an excerpt



of a speech, which my adorable Sadgurudev Parahamasa Omkarananda Saraswati held in Omkarananda Ashram, after a dance performance of my dance students Bala and Radha. The children had performed a Bharatanatyam dance, describing the infinite Wisdom, Power and Beauty of the Divine Mother Shri Lalita Maha-Tripurasundari:



*“The children have now applied God to life. They have described the nature of the Truth. What is the Truth? Truth is the source of all Divine Powers. You say: ‘GOD’. From where has God come? There must be something from which God has emanated. You say: ‘The world’. There must be something from where the world has emanated. You say: ‘Life’. There must be some source for life. You say: ‘Intelligence, reason, joy, happiness, peace, wealth.’ From where have all these come? Who is the Source?*

*“The children said in the song, in the dance, that that Supreme Light called Shri Devi, Shri Vidya, that Supreme Light is the Source of all Gods and Goddesses, all the elements, that the science speaks of.*

*“You may send satellites into the space, you may plant your flags on every planet, you may explain the theory of relativity of Einstein, you may work as the most skilled surgeon in the clinics, you may produce Beethovens and Bachs and Kants and Goethes. From where do all these come? By whom are all these sustained? Where are all these gone?”*

*“That from which all these come, that in which all these subsist, that in which all these dissolve themselves, is the supreme Light – supreme Power – Shakti – Shakti is Power – Power of every kind – and Power of powers – Power in Power.*

*“This God, whom the children described through their dance, is supreme Beauty. It is Breath of Life. It is the quintessence of Existence – it is the pulse beat in my heart. It is the movement of my Intelligence. It is the Power in my words. It is the substance in the meaning of my words. It is the happiness which you are seeking for. It is the wealth which you would like to possess. It is all that is beautiful in nature. It is music. What is God? God is music. God is Shri Vidya. Shri Vidya is music. Shri Vidya is fullness of life.*

*“Life’s fullness lies in experiencing this boundless Light, which is everywhere.”*

**– Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati**





# *Mudras* *in* *Indian* *Classical Dance*

By  
Guru-Bhakti-Ratna  
Kumari Somashekhari

*“Every little gesture of the hand, every Mudra has a deep meaning –  
the entire philosophy of life is contained in these gestures.  
They convey a whole history of God’s self-manifestation in the universe.”*  
– Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati

## **Definition of “Mudra”**

The Vedic Hymns, Mantras and Mystical Syllables are the Life- and Light-giving Forces of the Vedic Culture. The recitation of the Hymns, Mantras and Mystical Syllables are sometimes accompanied by hand gestures and hand movements. These hand gestures are called “Mudras”.

Some people are of the opinion that the word “Mudra” is denoting a “seal”, meaning hereby, that the hand gesture places a seal or puts a finishing touch to the Mantra, with which it is linked.

Others say that it comes from the Sanskrit word “*Mud*”, meaning “*Joy*” or “*Bliss*”. This Bliss is attained through the divine powers of the Mudras or hand gestures, which emphasize and intensify the concentration on the Divine and attract the Blessings of the Divine.

Shri Vidya Upasakas know, that certain sacred hand gestures or Mudras are a Source of Joy not only for themselves, but also for the Divinities worshipped.

The Mudras, performed along with the Mantras or Mystical Syllables, combine elegance with Mysticism. They purify, energize and divinize the spiritual aspirant in a similar way as the recitation of Mantras.

## ***Mudras in Indian Classical Dance***

Mudras play a very important role in the Indian Classical Dance.

There are single hand gestures, called “*Asamyukta Hastaah*” (hands, not united), which can be executed either by the right hand only, or the left hand only, or by both hands simultaneously (without combining the two hands).

There are also gestures, which are formed by uniting both the hands, they are called “*Samyukta Hastaah*” (united or combined hands).

According to the ancient scripture “*Abhinaya Darpana*” (Nandikeshwara) there are 28 single hand gestures and 24 united hand gestures. All these different hand gestures or Mudras are frequently used in Indian Classical Dance forms, specially in Bharatanatyam. There are even special hand gestures or Mudras which denote all the Gods and Goddesses (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Parvati, etc.), the four different castes (Brahmana, Kshatriya, etc.), different relations (mother, daughter,

etc.), the nine planets (sun, moon, etc.), rivers (Ganga, Yamuna, etc.), animals (lion, deer, etc.) and so many things more.

Any sincere student of Indian Classical Dance has to learn by heart all the 28 single and 24 combined Mudras. Each of these Mudras has a Sanskrit name. When a student is showing the Mudras, he or she also has to recite the corresponding Sanskrit names along with them. It is like learning an audiovisual alphabet or a language. Since the Mudras can convey myriads of meanings, the “*Viniyoga*” (Usage) of each Mudra should be practised, so that one gets the knowledge of how Mudras are used in different contexts and thereby acquire different meanings. When a dance student has learned and understood all the different Mudras and the many meanings, which they can express, he or she can immediately make out the meaning of any performance of Indian Classical Dance, without having been told in detail, which story the dance unfolds.

Here is a short example of how Mudras in Indian Classical Dance can be used:

The first hand gesture in the alphabet of the Mudras is “*Pataaka*”,



Somashekhari is showing the parrot. This holy bird symbolizes the Divine Wisdom of the Vedas.



Children, learning Indian Classical Dance and Mudras during their summer holidays in Omkarananda Ashram Himalayas from Kumari Somashekhari. From left to right: Neha (from Omkarananda Nagar, Muni-ki-Reti, Rishikesh), Prachi (from Lucknow), Pinky (from Omkarananda Nagar, Muni-ki-Reti, Rishikesh) and Samyukta (from Chennai).



Here the children demonstrate the Mudra "*Ardhachandra*", which means "*Half-Moon*". If the fingers of the right hand in "*Ardhachandra*" are pointing upwards, this Mudra is also called "*Abhaya Hasta*", the fear-removing, blessing and protecting hand gesture, and if the fingers of the left hand of the same Mudra are pointing downwards, it is called "*Varadaa*", the hand gesture of granting boons, material and spiritual wealth. Often Parvati Devi is depicted with these two hand gestures.

which means literally "*Flag*". It is called "*Flag*", because it actually looks like that and so it is easy for the students to remember and make that Mudra if the teacher orders them to show "*Pataaka*". In the Mudra "*Pataaka*" all fingers are straight and extended and close together. Only the thumb is slightly bent towards the base of the index finger. By moving the right hand or the left hand or both hands simultaneously in the "*Pataaka*" Mudra, many different

meanings can be expressed in the dance, like: *“the beginning of dance”, “clouds”, “forest”, “night”, “river”, “wind”, “entering a street”, “waves”, “opening the door”, “taking an oath”, “to bless somebody”,* and many other things. With only one single hand gesture a dancer can convey so many things!

There is another Mudra from the Mudra alphabet which I want to mention here, *“Suchi”*. *“Suchi”* means literally *“Needle”*. This Mudra exactly looks like a needle. The index finger is extended and straight and all the other fingers, including the thumb, are bent towards the palm. Many things can be shown with the *“Suchi”* Mudra: *“searching something”, “to contemplate”, “scolding somebody”, “making a hair braid”, “playing a temple drum”,* etc. Even highly mystical or metaphysical things can be expressed with this simple *“Suchi”* Mudra, for example, when one or both hands in this Mudra are held a bit over the head level and the wrists execute



Showing *“Alapadma”*, the fully blooming Lotus, with both hands, and arms stretched upwards, can depict *“the sky”, “happiness”,* etc.



The children practise a variety of “*Katakaamukha*”, a Mudra, which is often used to depict Lakshmi or Parvati Devi.

soft, circular movements, the creating or sustaining Divine Power of the wondrous universes, the galaxies, is depicted.

When the right hand in the “*Suchi*” Mudra is held in front of the chest (in front of the “*spiritual heart*”) and moved slowly up above the head level, this Mudra indicates “*Paramashiva*” or “*Parabrahma*”, the Undivided, the One without a second, the Absolute.



# OMKARANANDA JAYANTI

25. DECEMBER 2021



A new batch of Kumari Somashekhari's dance-students is enthusiastically performing devotional Indian Classical Dance in Honour of Sadgurudev Shri Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati. Here one can see them depicting Lord Rama, holding bow and arrow, ready to shoot the arrow.

The children depict this with two special Mudras: The right hand is in the "*Katakaamukha Mudra*", by which the children have demonstrated the "*drawing of the bowstring*", and the left hand shows the "*Shikhara Mudra*", which means here "*holding the bow*".

From left to right: Kumari Gargee, Kumari Arpita and Kumari Manasvee.



## The Creative and Educational Aspect of Mudras

Children as well as adults enjoy the multitude of things, which can be shown by using the Mudras. With a few changes of finger positions a flying bird can be shown or a swimming fish, a dancing peacock, a honeybee hovering over a flower, the tender waves of a calm river or the ferocious waves of the ocean, clouds, the sun, the rain, lightning, the beauty of the moon, the tenderness, grace and beauty of women, playing of various music instruments, and so many things more.

If dancers have thorough knowledge of Mudras and sufficient experience, how to apply them in dance, they can choreograph easily new dances to Bhajans, Vandanas or any subject of their choice and they can understand to a great extent Indian Classical Dance items of other artists, even if they see them for the first time.



Samyukta from Chennai learns the graceful style of walking from Kumari Somashekhari, using “*Dola Hasta*” with the right hand and “*Mrigashirsha*” or “*Chatura Hasta*” on the left shoulder.



## *The Healing Powers of Mudras*

Mudras have definitely healing powers. By stretching or bending the fingers or exerting pressure on fingertips or palms, unbalanced energies in body and mind, causing diseases, can be balanced, tensions can be released. By practising Mudras properly, blocked energy can be released and flow freely. Hereby accumulated toxins are removed and the bodily system is purified and harmonized.

## *The Mystical Aspect of Mudras*

From the statues and pictures of the Gods and Goddesses we can see that Their hands are all formed in beautiful definite Mudras.



Somashekhari and her students Neha and Pinky with the “Anjali Mudra” through which the Divine is worshipped and glorified

The hand expressions of the Divinities are never casual or in an ordinary human way. One can take the example of any Divinity, be it Lord Shiva or Ganeshji or Lakshmiji or Parvati Devi, etc.

Mudras play a most important role in Shri Vidya, the worship of the Supreme Divine Mother, Shri Lalita Maha-Tripurasundari, the Goddess of Infinite Love, Infinite Purity, Infinite Beauty, Power, Sweetness and Tenderness. When the Goddess is worshipped and invoked through special Bija Mantras, corresponding hand gestures have to be performed. These sacred Mudras multiply the effects of the Bija Mantras. The combination of Mantra recitation and simultaneous performance of the corresponding Mudras helps the sincere and pure-hearted devotees to progress very fast on the spiritual path till the aim, the spiritual union with one's Ishta-Devata, is reached. The Bija Mantras and their corresponding Mudras are secret and can be learned only after special initiations. The conditions for learning these Mantras and Mudras are utmost



Kumari Arpita, dance-student of Kumari Somashekhari, during her first Solo Temple-Dance performance in the Omkarananda-Kamakshi-Devi Mandir. Here one can see Arpita in the pose of Lord Shiva Nataraja.

outer and inner purity, otherwise the sacred Mantras and Mudras will have an adverse effect. If they are practised with low, selfish, sensual and passionate motives, they will lead fast to one's destruction.

Often we get glimpses of the mystical aspect of the Mudras in the Indian Classical Dance, too, specially where the different Gods and Goddesses are depicted, but also in the purely rhythmic, so-called abstract portions of the Indian Classical Dance. Here the emphasis is on powerful foot-work and graceful body-movements. No special story is told, but Mudras are used to beautify the rhythmic and graceful movements in this abstract form of dance.

Usually dance experts are of the opinion that in the pure rhythmic portion of Indian Classical Dance (like in Jathiswaram,



Kumari Somashekhari, Director, Omkarananda Saraswati Natya Kala Academy, is trying to teach to her students the perfect way of an Indian Classical Dance Performance. From left to right: Kumari Avya, Kumari Arpita, Kumari Somashekhari, Kumari Gargee and Kumari Manasvee.



Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari performing dance during Omkarananda Mahotsava Celebrations.

Tillana, etc.) Mudras do not convey any special meaning, but have just decorative purpose. I do not fully agree with this view. Of course, Mudras in the rhythmic part of dance have definitely an aesthetic charm and appeal, but they also exert subtle energies on the physical as well as the spiritual level. Here a strong parallel can be observed between the role of the Mudras in the Shri Vidya worship and in the Indian Classical Dance, which is also a form of worship.

In ancient times, Temple Dancers used to dance in front of the Deities to the recitation of Bija Mantras. Unfortunately, the practice



of these sacred dances has come out of vogue. The Mudras, which the dancers have performed along with the Bija Mantras, may have resembled the sacred Mudras, which are used for example in the Shri Vidya Upasana.

Sometimes glimpses of these Mudras can still be seen in the so-called abstract or rhythmic portions of Bharatanatyam Dance. I want to give one practical example for this:

When the finger tip of the index finger of the “Suchi” Mudra is slightly bent a Mudra, called “Ankusha”, is derived. This Mudra is not specially mentioned in the Dance-Mudra-Alphabet, though it resembles the “Taamrachuda” Mudra. “Ankusha” Mudra has a great importance in the rhythmic, non-story telling dance part. “Ankusha” Mudra is a mystical Mudra, used specially by Shri Vidya Upasakas, since the most beautiful, enchanting Goddess, Shri Lalita Maha-Tripurasundari, is holding one “Ankush” (goad) in Her right hand. It is an important Mudra,

Somashekhari in a classical Kathak Dance pose using the “Hamsaasya Mudra” with both hands.





which attracts material and spiritual success and influence. In the rhythmic portions of Bharatanatyam Dance sometimes this Mudra is used at the shoulder, near the face. It looks really attractive and charming.

I want to throw light upon another practical example for the mystical or metaphysical aspect of Mudras in the rhythmic “abstract” portions of Indian Classical Dance, this time from the North-Indian Temple Dance, Kathak. Very often a special Mudra is used in the Kathak Dance, which is called “*Kamal ghumaanaa*”, which is Hindi and literally means “*to turn around the Lotus*”.

For this one has to make “*Araala Mudra*” with both hands, combine the wrists of both hands in front of the chest (in front of the spiritual heart) and turn them around continuously in a soft manner. The Heart Lotus, situated on a very subtle level, is not static, but consists of brilliant, moving light waves, sound and fragrance, and can be shown on the material level with the Kathak Dance Mudra “*Kamal ghumaanaa*”.

I feel, that in the so-called abstract, purely rhythmic part of the Indian Classical Dances, the Mudras, used along with the rhythmic steps and the graceful poses, execute and transmit a certain spiritual power.

Though these Mudras don’t convey a specific story in this context, they radiate an irresistible charm and a dignified, divine beauty. Here, in this context, we may compare the abstract, non-story telling Mudras with the Bija Mantras, which can not be easily translated into human words or human conceptions, but still are real and are fully charged with divine powers.

Many facts about the metaphysical meanings of the Mudras in the Indian Classical Dance have been forgotten over the centuries. The dancers are often taught these Mudras along with the

movements and rhythmic steps without learning the deeper meanings behind them. They execute the beautiful Mudras along with the dance movements just for the beauty sake. But some of the dancers may be intuitively aware, even if they are not specially taught about it, that certain Mudras or dance gestures generate a considerable divine, subtle power or energy, besides looking elegant and beautiful. This is what makes our Indian Classical Dance so special and differentiates it from other dances in the world.

The Mantras and Vedic Hymns are the language of the Gods and the Mudras are the hand gestures of the Gods. OM.



Somashekhari while performing dance in Omkarananda-Kamakshi-Devi Mandir, is showing the “Hamsaasya Mudra” or “Chin-Mudra”, depicting infinite Truth, Bliss and Beauty (Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram).

## **The Hamsaasya or Chin-Mudra**

One of the most important Mudras, from the spiritual standpoint, is the single-hand Mudra “Hamsaasya”. The meaning of the Sanskrit word “Hamsa” is “swan”, that beautiful majestic bird, but in the philosophical context of ancient India “Hamsa” means also the

“Soul”. *Aasya* (Sanskrit) means “mouth” or “face”. So the meaning of this Mudra is “Face (mouth) of the Swan” or “Face of the Soul”.

This Mudra is practically made like this: The tips of the thumb and the index finger (forefinger) of one hand are combined in such a way, that they form a round shape, a circle. The other three fingers, middle finger, ring finger and little finger are stretched straight and kept slightly apart from each other.

In the Indian Classical Dances this Mudra is used with both hands, if one wants to show the “tying of a necklace”, “the flute”, “tying of the marriage-thread”, and for “meditation”, “divine Wisdom”, and, with the right hand only, for showing “initiation”, “telling, that something is ‘good or certain’”, “drawing” or “painting”, “speaking”, “reading”, “singing”, “the Eternal”, “Infinite Purity”, “the Truth”, “the Absolute” and with one or both hands to depict “peacock feathers”, “pearls”, “gems”, “drops of water”, “sounds of the flute”, “carrying garlands”, “ecstasy” and so many things more. Very beautiful and delicate, soft things can also be depicted with this Mudra.

This Mudra is very important because of its spiritual and mystical implication. It is contributed to Shri Dakshinamurti, a form of Lord Shiva, who conferred highest divine Wisdom to his disciples, without uttering any word, using this Mudra.

Therefore this Mudra is often shown in Indian Classical Dance for Meditation, divine Wisdom or showing Enlightenment.

In the field of spirituality this Mudra is called “*Chin\*-Mudra*”. It is the ideal Mudra to concentrate on and express the Infinite, the Truth, the Absolute, beyond time and space limitations.

My Sadgurudev H.D. Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati mentioned in His many speeches the spiritual importance of this

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\* “Chin” comes from the Sanskrit word “Chit”, which means in this context “Infinite Consciousness”. Because of a Sanskrit Grammar Rule (“Sandhi”) “Chit” changes to “Chin”.

Mudra. This simple gesture can depict the Highest State, called “*Turiya*” (the Fourth State) in the Upanishads. The circle, made by the combination of the thumb and forefinger, depicts the Absolute, the undivided One, the Truth, beyond time and space, or “*Turiya*”, “*the Fourth State*”, consisting of infinite Peace and Bliss, which is our real Being and which can be experienced consciously, while living in this mortal body, when we receive the Grace of the Divine through the Sadguru. The other three fingers may represent the three gunas in our material time-space world, or the three worlds, or the three States (Waking State, Sleep-State and Deep-Sleep-State). Swami Omkarananda used to explain to us, that the circle, or dot, are the most ideal abstract forms to denote the Infinite, because there is no beginning and no end. Therefore, if we want to describe the timeless, spaceless, endless, eternal Being, or Truth, within this limited time-space world, the symbol of a circle or dot, is most ideal.

According to ancient Indian Science the thumb represents the individual self and the forefinger represents the Guru, the One who removes the darkness of ignorance from our Soul and leads us to infinite Happiness, Wisdom and Immortality.

Therefore, if in the “*Chin-Mudra*”, or “*Hamsaasya Mudra*”, the fingers, representing the Guru and the individual self, are combined, it indicates the Enlightenment and final Liberation of the human being, which is explained in the Upanishads in different terms, like in one of the Mahavakyas: “*Soham*”, which means “*I am He*”, i.e. “*I am this immortal Being*”, “*I am this Infinite Truth*”.

This Mudra is used since thousands of years for concentration, meditation and imparting divine Wisdom.

I personally use this Mudra often, when I perform Temple-Dances, whenever I want to express infinite Truth, Divine Wisdom or infinite Divine Beauty. OM

*Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari*



# OMKARANANDA JAYANTI







Here one can see Kumari Somashekhari in a purely rhythmic part of Bharatanatyam Temple-Dance, using the Mudra “Tripataaka” with both the hands. Place: Omkarananda-Dakshinamurti Mandir, in front of the holy Banyan Tree.



In Honour of her Adorable Sadgurudev Shri Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati Kumari Somashekhari performs Bharatanatyam during Omkarananda Mahotsava at the holy Ganga. Here she is seen in the pose of Lord Shiva Nataraja. The right hand is in the “Abhaya Hasta”, the fear-removing, protecting and blessing hand gesture. The left arm is stretched towards the right side with the left hand depicting the “Gaja Hasta” (the posture of the Elephant-Trunk, symbolising the infinite Power of Lord Ganesha), pointing to the left uplifted foot, which means Liberation from ignorance, evil and death. It indicates the release from the cycle of birth and death and the granting of the conscious experience of Immortality, while living in a physical body (Jivanmukti).



Kumari Somashekhari in a joyous Krishna Dance, showing the Mudras of Lord Krishna taking care for the cows.





Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari in front of her Sadgurudev H.D. Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati, showing the Mudras “Pataaka” with the left hand and “Tripataaka” with the right hand, which means: “Seeing oneself in the mirror and applying Tilak.” But the metaphysical meaning of this pose is: “Seeing oneself as a Reflection of the true Self, the Absolute Truth, the Sadguru.”



Standing next to Gurudev Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati Kumari Somashekhari shows to the students of Omkarananda Gayatri Ved Vidyalaya a typical Vedic Mudra, “*Meenakshi Devi, holding the parrot*”, while the Priests start lighting the Deepas. Place: Omkarananda Gayatri Sadan at the holy River Ganga.







Kumari Somashekhari behind the students of the Gurukul Omkarananda Gayatri Ved Vidyalaya, showing again the same Mudra of Meenakshi Devi holding the parrot. The holy bird parrot symbolizes the Vedas. The divine Wisdom of the Vedas is in the hands of the Divine Mother, i.e. It originates from Her.





Kumari Somashekhari  
in the pose of Meenakshi Devi.



*B*efriend God – and You have access to the  
Sources of all Wisdom, all Knowledge.

*And where dwells this God?*

*Right in Your Heart! In the middle  
of Your Consciousness is His Light!”*

**Paramahansa  
Omkarananda Saraswati**



Guru-Bhakti-Ratna Kumari Somashekhari, while performing Bharatanatyam Temple-Dance in Omkarananda-Kamakshi-Devi Mandir, is showing the dawning of Divine Wisdom with the Hamsaasya or Chin-Mudra.

*All life is a dance. There are many forms of dance. The movement of the atoms is a dance. The universe is a dance. The entire cosmic manifestation is an extraordinary rhythm of dance. The divine rhythm has called the world into being. It is this rhythm that preserves the world and that guides it to the experience of Perfection. The dance of the Divinity is step by step an unfoldment of creation.*

*The Divinity is the source of all genius, all art, all music, all beauty, all experience of bliss. This Divinity is your father. He is the Soul of your soul, the Creator of the universe, Lord Shiva. His name is Nataraja. He is the true Dancer. From Him emerge all the rhythms and subtleties of movement. All creation is His dance. He is the Infinity of Consciousness. He is the Infinity of Beauty. He is the Infinity of Truth.*

*Every little gesture of the hand, every Mudra has a deep meaning – the entire philosophy of life is contained in these gestures. They convey a whole history of God's self-manifestation in the universe.*

*Even the greatest Sages, whom we expect to be above all emotions and feelings, and whose character and conduct is indescribably dignified, are prompted to dance by the Divinity Itself. God is full of love and tenderness.*

*What you need is a true dance, a dance that springs from deep love and devotion. Dance is our nature. You are a child of infinite Bliss, a child of Nataraja.*

*God is the aim of the Indian Classical Dance. It is an education in itself. This form of art is a gift of God and a way to God-Experience. It can bloom into its full Beauty only by the Grace of God.*

*The Soul of this dance lies in the Hands of the Divine. Be a great devotee of the Divine and you will know all the secrets of this dance, all its metaphysics.*

**Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati**



*“Think Like a Genius,  
Work Like a Giant,  
Live Like a Saint.”*

**Paramahansa Omkarananda Saraswati**





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