Dances in India

In the history of mankind, dance as an artistic form of expression is extremely old. Evidence of dance as a creative form is available in ancient texts, paintings and sculptures from prehistoric times to the medieval period.

There are now seven major classical dance styles- Bharatnatyam originated from Tamil Nadu, Kathakali from Kerala, Kuchipudi from Andhra Pradesh, Odissi from Orissa, Manipuri from Manipur, Kathak from Northern Region and Satriya from Assam. Most of these classical dances trace their roots to the grammar and techniques of movement codified in the Natya Shastra compiled by Bharatmuni, sometimes between 2nd century B.C. and 2nd century A.D.

Dance according to Bharat is classified into two main aspects, Nritta and Nritya. Nritta in the broadest sense is pure abstract dance which basically does not interpret or communicate a specific theme. It is the movement of limbs and body to the accompaniment of percussion instruments playing a specific cycle or tala. Nritya is the aspect of dance which is expressive and which communicates the meaning or theme of a song through gestures of the hands, facial expressions and body movements.

Stylized interpretation when conveyed through body movements and facial and hand gestures is known as Angika Abhinaya, through words as Vachika Abhinaya and through costumes and make- up as Anarya Abhinaya.