

This book deals with various aspects of performance in India; especially that related to dance and dance-drama. Rather than being a description of the various dance forms of India, it attempts to discuss the social equations and cultural ideas that a performance attempts to portray. In this sense, a performance is a narrative. At the same time, performances also deal with well-known narratives from the religious traditions of India, often redefining and recounting them in the process of performance. A study of these aspects is important to understand the kind of equations that define these discourses on the performance narratives. Chapter I shows the different forms of dances that are described in the iconographic canons and also the famous dance treatise the *Natyashastra*, correlating them with the sculptures of dance available in the temples. Here, the temples of south India datable to 6th- 13th centuries have been studied for this purpose. Attempt is made to study the gender equations that are expounded through these dance images and texts, as also the correlation between the audience and the performance and how these ideas are intertwined with the religious images. Chapter II deals with four Sanskrit burlesque plays written in the ancient period, which reverse social equations and classical dramatic representations through the genre of satire. Almost every elite-class person, generally idealized in the classical Sanskrit plays, is lampooned here. Issues of audience perception and the reception of this kind of reversed images of the ideal figures of the society are discussed in this chapter. Chapter III deals with the aesthetics of eroticism that form the basis of many Indian classical dances, how they are intertwined with the notion of devotionism in Hinduism and how they are negotiated in the Indian classical dances in our contemporary period. A case study is done here of Odissi, the classical dance from the eastern state of Orissa, which draws extensively from the temple sculptures of dance. Chapter IV shows that sacred narrative in India is not always a means of glorifying the divine. Rather, sometimes it is also used to satirize the established notions of religiosity and of divinity. This forms the basis of this very interesting semi-classical dance-drama form called *Ottan Thullal* from the southern state of Kerala. *Kathakali*, the classical dance-drama and *Mohiniattam*, the classical dance from Kerala have dominated the scene so much that this form of dance-drama has been overshadowed and it is little known to the world outside Kerala, even in India. There is not much scholarship on *Ottan Thullal*. This chapter deals with this form and the manner in which it uses the idiom of satire to narrate the religious legends. Chapter V is a study of the Mithila narratives from the eastern region of Mithila in Bihar to understand the ways in which gender equations in the Mithila society influence the making of these narratives. There is a discussion of the nature of folk narratives in this chapter. Chapter VI takes some folk forms of performance and visual narratives from different states of India to show how social equations such as power hierarchy, gender and caste dimensions are negotiated. All these use the traditional religious space to work out these equations. Chapter VII on one hand is a comparative study of two Hindi films made in 1960s, based on the lives of two women dancers from ancient India.

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