

## Tantric Dances and their Ideations

Laliita Marmika dance during kiirtana is a purely spiritual dance and Kaoshikii is a psycho-spiritual dance. It starts in the psychic level and culminates in the spiritual level. And Tandava is a physico-psycho-spiritual dance.

- Shrii Shrii Anandamurti

### Laliita Marmika and Kiirtan

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 wherein 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 dissolves egotism, and prepares the mind for meditation.

This dance is easy to perform. Arms are to be held out above the chest of the body, horizontally, with palms upward. The elbows should not go below the chest level. The step is 1-2-3, with one big toe behind the other heel bend the supporting knee, then 1-2-3 on the other side, and with the other big toe behind the other heel and bend the supporting knee. Close the eyes as often as possible and feel an all-encompassing oneness.

The siddha mantra which is used in the kiirtans of Ananda Marga is BABA NAM KEVALAM, which can be translated as 'only the name of the Lord'. 'Baba' means 'my Beloved', 'Nam' means 'name' or 'vibration' and 'Kevalam' means 'only'. So the literal meaning of the mantra is 'my beloved is all there is' or, more simply, 'Infinite Love is all there is'.

This ideation in the kiirtan can be enhanced so that when 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).

Beats: Ba-1, Ba-2, Nam-3, 4, Ke-1, Va-2, Lam-3, 4.

There are different ways of doing kiirtan.

Nama Kiirtan is to chant the name of the Lord over and over again. The word 'nama' means 'name'. 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 just a part of it. This is because a siddha mantra must necessarily have eight syllables. There are different forms of Nama Kiirtan:

- Kiirtan in rows: In this normal form of Nama Kiirtan there is usually a direct focal point in front, usually a table (puja table) with a pratiik (spiritual symbol) and a photo of the Guru, which everyone faces as they sing kiirtan, while doing the Laliita Marmika dance.
- Akhanda Kiirtan – Akhanda means 'endless'. This is the form of Nama Kiirtan that is danced around a puja (altar) table in an anti-clockwise direction. The focal point is the centre of the room. This

kiirtan should be done in a circle for at least three hours while dancing Laliita Marmika. After the 3 hours, there is no limit of time, it can last for some hours, or extended to several days. However, the length of the chosen time should be multiples of 3 hours, i.e. 6, 9, 12, 24 hours, etc. Often the 'leaders' of the kiirtan will be in a corner facing the puja table, or they may be part of the circumambulating singers and dancers. This is perhaps the most potent of all the kiirtans, as the rotational effect gives the feeling of the whole Universe dancing around a Cosmic Nucleus.

- Avartha Kiirtan – Avartha means 'turning'. This form of Nama Kiirtan is danced facing in all the 6 directions, in turn, changing the tune/melody of the kiirtan for each direction. This kiirtan is recommended to be done acapella style (without instruments). It is a sweet, gentle kiirtan, and each direction has a different ideation. As far as possible, the hands should always be held above shoulder height, preferably stretched above the head, with the arms being at least with 90 degrees angles – throughout the kiirtan. 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, there are special ideations for each of the 6 directions:

Direction	Ideation for each direction of Avartha Kiirtan
1 <sup>st</sup> Front	I am the embodiment of sincerity.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Right	I have an innate/inner love for the Supreme.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Back	I purify my mind by the flame/fire of devotion (I am the vital force or fire of Brahma: the Supreme Entity).
4 <sup>th</sup> Left	I am over coming all internal and external obstacles (I have come to fulfill a great mission).
5 <sup>th</sup> Front-down	Oh Parama Puruśa (Supreme Consciousness), take me on your lap (I want to sit on your lap – feel like a child crying for its mother).
6 <sup>th</sup> Front-up	I surrender my everything completely to You (I exist for the welfare of all).

- Nagar Kiirtan – Nagar means 'town'. This form of Nama Kiirtan is a collective kiirtan danced along the streets of a city or a town. It is done in public places with the intention of introducing the concept of kiirtan to the public or to celebrate any special occasion.

Other types of kiirtan are:

- Katha Kiirtan – Kiirtan involving stories interspersed with kiirtan singing or songs of the Lord, such as the Prabhat Samgiita collection of songs. The alternating stories arouse inspiration and intense devotion. The vibration is heightened as people tell spiritual stories, anecdotes or experiences which are split up by having kiirtan or songs in between. It is normal for participants to be seated in a circle and not dancing. Usually an evening activity.
- Pada Kiirtan – Kiirtan which is like poetry, involving singing about the Lord, telling about the qualities of the Lord.
- Pala Kiirtan – Many persons take different roles in the kiirtan performance, which involve longer programs with different dialogues.

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 with the Laliita Marmika dance has many benefits. Namely, it purifies the mind and prepares it for meditation, accelerating our movement towards the Supreme. Thanks to achieving mental clarity, this allows a practitioner to easily find solutions for their problems and get relief for physical and mental imbalances. Since it engages both the motor organs (i.e. legs, arms, voice) and sensory organs (i.e. ears, and subtly our eyes and skin to some extent) it is a tremendous help in making 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 done 30 minutes of kiirtan, then 10 minutes of meditation, then the meditation will be of far more worth.



## **Kaoshikii**

This dance was given by Shrii Shrii Anandamurti when some sisters requested him for a special dance for women, like the Tandava dance which is taught for males. Kaoshikii Nrtya, the dance of Kaoshikii, has all the positive effects of Tandava 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 extends life: women who dance it regularly will remain fit and healthy until 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 easier and reduces the pain involved with 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 of the Kaoshikii dance. 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 practice 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:**

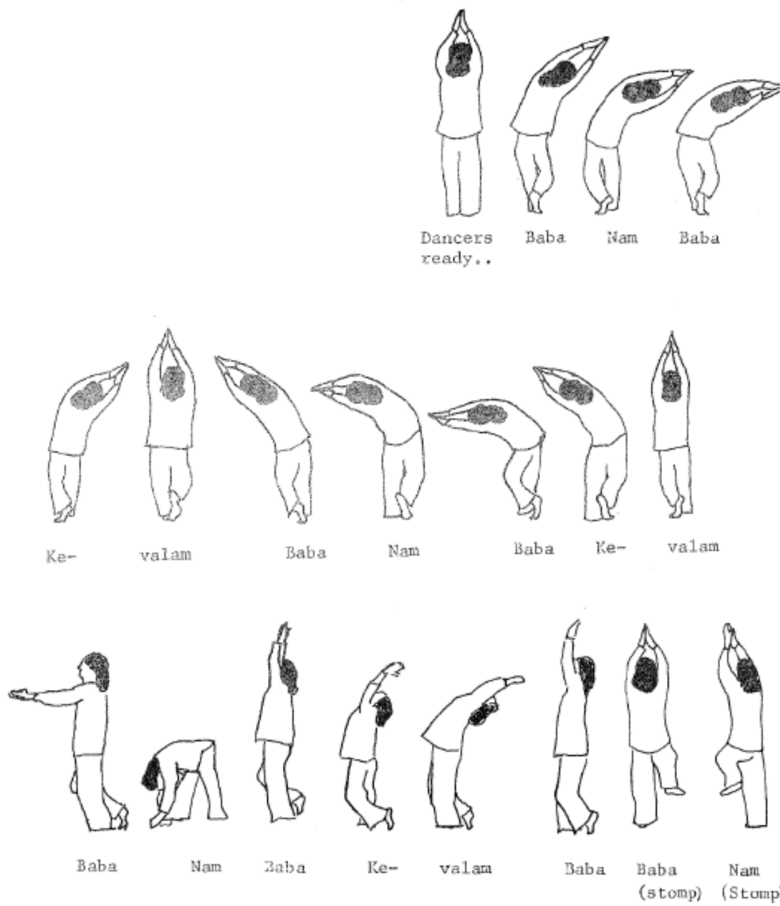
The mental ideation that is central to the dance is based on the idea of striving to reach a spiritual goal – to realize the relationship between oneself and the Cosmic Self. The dancer imagines herself or himself to be like a lotus flower, initially in bud, with its petals gradually unfolding and opening 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 Samskrta word 'kosa' which means layer of the mind.

### **IDEATION:**

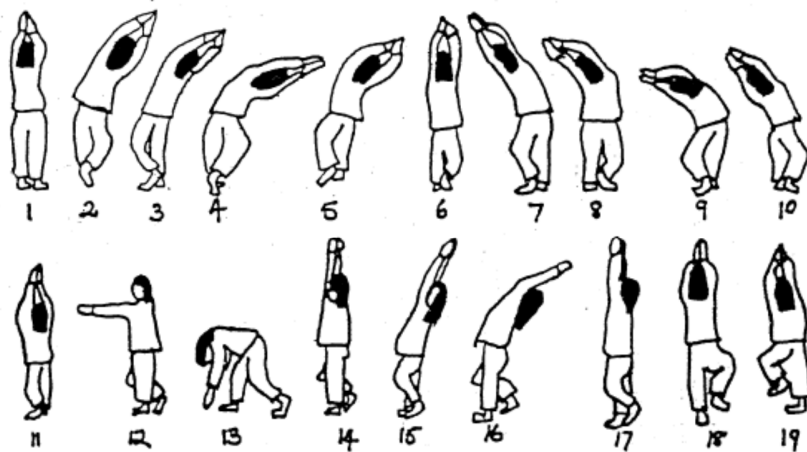
The ideation is as follows:

<b>Movement</b>	<b>Ideation related to the movement</b>
1 <sup>ST</sup>	Pranam/Greetings to the Lord: I am seeking the link between microcosm and macrocosm.
2 <sup>ND</sup>	Movement to the right side: I know the right way to request you.
3 <sup>RD</sup>	Movement to the left side: I know how to fulfill Your command.
4 <sup>TH</sup>	Front movement: I surrender to You.
5 <sup>TH</sup>	Backwards movement: I am ready to undergo all difficulties.
6 <sup>TH</sup>	Stamp feet: Lord, I repeat your rhythm.

The steps in the Kaoshikii dance are as follows:



Keep repeating ...



## Tandava

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 dexterous hands of Sadashiva made dance into a science, rather an articulate science, an art form. 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 in various conditions of being. As a result these creatures expressed themselves in various ways. After researching all these factors Shiva invented thousands of mudras, particular postures which affect certain human glands in a particular way, and thus influences people's minds accordingly.

One unique, and perfect, dance that Shiva invented was tandava. In the Samskrata (Sanskrit) language 'tandu' means 'jumping', so 'tandava' 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.

Tandava 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 – or replicas of such, all these represent fear and/or death. The right hand holds a sword, knife or staff, all these symbolizing discrimination – mental ability to determine right and wrong – the weapon against ignorance.

Tandava 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 tandava: 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	Come up on your toes.
1, 2, 3	On <b>3</b> you jump up, kicking your heels against your buttocks, landing in a squatting position, your feet pointing in opposite directions (180° apart).
Ta, Ta, Dhin, Ta	Wait while squatting on <b>ta ta</b> ; jump on <b>dhin</b> ; land on the flat on your feet, in a standing position, on <b>ta</b> .
Ta, Ta, Dhin, Ta	Wait while standing on <b>ta ta</b> ; get ready on <b>dhin</b> ; on the last <b>ta</b> you cock your right foot up to the left and begin the dance on the next call.
Ta, Ta, Dhin, Ta	On the first <b>ta</b> you jump to your right foot and bring the left foot up; on the second <b>ta</b> you bring your left knee higher as you hop on your right foot, (your knee should go above your waist). For the <b>dhin, ta</b> you repeat the process jumping to your left foot. 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 'BABA NAM KEVALAM'.

To end the dance, the caller yells:

CALLER	DANCER
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 implements and weapons always facing up.

There are three variations of increasing difficulty:

1. When the knees cross the navel it is called Brahma Tandava.
2. If the knees cross the center of the chest (Anahata Cakra), it is called Vishnu Tandava.
3. When the knees cross the center of the neck (Vishuddha Cakra), it is called Rudra Tandava.

This dance is not recommended for females, due to stimulation of certain glands and secretion of hormones.

Tandava gives a feeling of beautiful clarity and inner peace. It helps one to overcome one's enemies: fear and death. By stirring up the whole body, all systems are energized. It makes one healthy and gives one longevity.



*TANDAVA*