

**Various**  
**Dance**  
**forms in**  
**India**

# INTRODUCTION

India has a rich heritage of dance and music. In every Indian state, you can find a unique classical dance form that represents the values and traditions of the people of that state. Sangeet Natak Akademi has recognized eight Indian dance forms as Classical Dances of India. These dance forms are described briefly including their characteristic features and other important details related to their style, costumes etc.



**Bharatanatyam**



**Kathakali**



**Kathak**



**Kuchipudi**



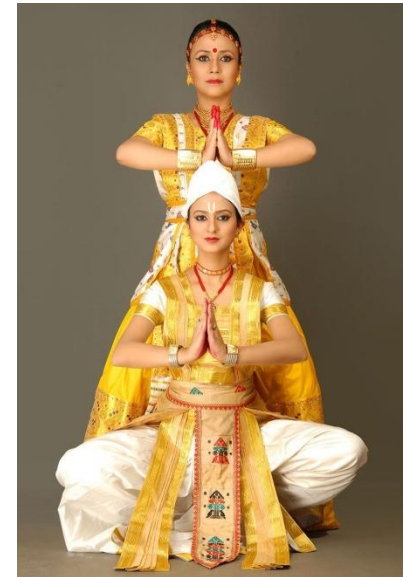
**Manipuri**



**Odissi**



**Mohiniattam**



**Sattriya**

# Bharatanatyam

Bharatanatyam is believed to be the oldest classical dance form of India from which other dance styles are believed to be originated.

**Bha:** It means emotions

**Ra:** It means musical notes.

**Ta:** It means the rhythm.

**Natyam:** It means Drama.

## Costumes in Bharatanatyam:

The dancer of this dance form wears charismatic makeup, attractive costume (bright coloured sari) and shining ornaments.

Music and Instruments in Bharatanatyam:

South India's Carnatic style of music is used. The instruments used include Mridangam (double-sided drum), Nadaswaram (double-reed wind instrument), Surpeti, Venu, Kanjira, Manjira, Nattuvangam (cymbals), etc.



# Kathakali



Kathakali represents the ancient heritage of India that is preserved for centuries in the Kathakali plays. It is mostly performed by men. To portray female characters the men wear the women's costumes. Traditionally, Kathakali is performed at night and continues until early morning. A Kathakali dancer needs to have full concentration, skills, and stamina to perform this dance form.

## Costumes in Kathakali:

There can be different types of costumes in this dance form depending on the character the dancer is playing. For example, ***Sathwika is worn by the hero, Minukku by the females, and Kathi is for the villain, etc.*** So, a character can be recognized easily by its costume and makeup.

The characteristic features of this dance form include intriguing ***face movements*** and ***heavy costumes***, traditional face masks, and the body of the dancer is painted with colours. For ***white colour***, rice flour is used and for red Vermilion is used. The ***black colour*** is made from soot. Each colour has a meaning, for example, the ***red colour*** on the feet symbolizes evil character or intent. The ***green*** is used to represent noble characters, black is used for hunter and monsters, and ***yellow*** to show female characters.



# Kathak



Kathak is believed to be ***originated in North India*** where Kathakars (storytellers) used to travel to different places to ***communicate stories from ancient scriptures like Ramayan, Mahabharat and Lord Krishna stories through dance, music and songs***. It got its name from the word "katha" which means "story" in English.

## Costumes in Kathak:

In Kathak, the dancer wears a ***sari with choli, or long embroidered skirt with choli*** with ornaments and ghunghru (musical anklet). The ***male dancers wear a combination of chudidar kurta and a dupatta tied at the waist***. The dancers do not wear heavy makeup, it remains sharp and fine to show the expressions. A bun with a garland is also a part of the costume.

The ***ghunghru are very heavy and used to produce a large variety of sounds*** to show heavy rains, the sound of horse riding, running train, etc.

# Kuchipudi



This classical dance form ***originated in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh***. Its name is derived from the village Kuchelapuram and it looks similar to Bharatanatyam. The ***themes*** of Kuchipudi is inspired by ***Lord Krishna, Rukmini, Satyabhama***, etc. It is not only a dance, but also a sacred procedure as it includes burning of incense sticks, sprinkling holy water, and offering prayers to God.

The characteristic feature of Kuchipudi is ***Tarangam in which the dancer performs on a brass plate and a pot on his or her head***. The dancer is also required to sing along body movements, so this dance form requires a bit more skills and dedication.

## Costumes in Kuchipudi:

Both male and female can perform this dance form. The ***female dancers wear a colourful sari, while the male ones wear dhoti***. The dancers wear light makeup with traditional jewellery, ghunghru, and metallic waist belt.

# Manipuri



Manipuri is one of the main styles of Indian classical dances which is **originated in the Manipur state of India** and is also known as **Jogai**. Manipuri dance is purely focused on religious aspects that are intended to give spiritual experience. It mainly narrates the love of Radha-Krishna and their romantic relationship, which is known as Raaslila.

## Costumes in Manipuri dance:

The costumes are very unique as compared to the costumes in other dance forms. The **male dancer wears a bright and colourful dhoti** which is known as dhora or dhortha. It covers the lower body part from the waist. He also wears a **crown decorated with the peacock feather**. The costume of a female dancer looks similar to a Manipuri bride's costume. It is known as **Potloi costumes**. The most unique costume of a female dancer is **Kumil**, which is a decorated, **barrel-shaped long skirt with a rigid bottom**. It also has embroidery of gold and silver with small mirror pieces and border printed with lotus, rose or similar natural things. The top border of the skirt is fitted with a **wavy skirt** that is tied in three places around the waist and spreads out like a flower.

A velvet choli (blouse) is worn on the upper part of the body, while a **white, translucent veil or cloth is used to cover the head**.





# Odissi



Odissi is originated in the state of **Odisha**. It is a classical dance form that is lyrical, sensual as well as a dance of love and passion. It has found mention as Audramagdhi in the oldest Sanskrit Text, Natya Shastra. It is a mixture of **Lasya and Tandav style**.

## Costumes in Odissi:

The costume is made of traditional cloth. Men wear **dhoti** and women dancers wear a **sari** and a crown which is made in Jagannathpuri. **White flowers** can be seen attached to the bun. **Silver coloured** jewellery is worn, **ghunghroos** are also worn by the dancers.

# Mohiniattam



It is *originated and evolved in the Kerala state of India*. This classical dance form consists of soft, and gentle movements, so, it looks more graceful and feminine style of dancing. Its name is derived from the word "**Mohini**", which was a female avatar of Lord Vishnu.

## Costumes in Mohiniattam:

The costume worn in Mohiniattam is a *white plain sari embroidered with bright golden brocade in its borders accompanied with a matching choli (blouse)*. Besides this, a frilled cloth with concentric golden or saffron bands on the front part of the sari makes and a golden belt around the waist make the costume more attractive.

The dancers wear light makeup, the fingers and feet are coloured with red natural dye to highlight the gestures. The *dancers of Mohiniattam are easily identifiable by their bun or kuduma (one-sided hairstyle)*.

Jewellery is worn on the head, around the neck, on hair and fingers. Ghunghru (musical anklets) are worn in the legs and are used to produce rhythmic sounds through the footwork. Besides this, Hindu tilak can be seen on the forehead, lips are coloured and *eyes are lined to make the eye movements more visible*.

# Sattriya



Sattriya classical dance form ***originated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.*** It was introduced by the ***Mahapurusha Sankaradeva***, a great Vaishnava saint of Assam, as a medium to spread the Vaishnava faith. It became popular as a part of the Vaishnav Bhakti Movement in Sattras (Hindu monasteries). The themes in Sattriya are mostly based on ***Radha-Krishna stories***, Dramas written by Sankardev, and other myths. There are two styles in this dance form; ***Masculine*** (Paurashik Bhangi), which is energetic and involves jumps, and ***Feminine*** (Stri Bhangi or Lasya), which is gentle and graceful.

## Costumes used in Sattriya:

The male dancer wears a ***dhoti, chadar, and pagri (turban)***. The ***female dancer wears white flowers, chadar, ghuri, kanchi (waist cloth)***. The costumes related to characters and play can be worn. For example, masks are worn for special characters like demons. The traditional Assamese jewellery adorns the costumes of females and makes the dance moves more attractive and mesmerizing.

# CONCLUSION

India is enriched specially with these eight dance forms. Indian classical dance forms are carrying forward Indian history, cultural views and mythologies. Many new dance forms and folk dance forms have come from these. These dance forms are linking ancient and modern cultural sides.