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Art & Culture

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A

Section

Visual Arts

DANCES OF INDIA

7.1 Introduction

Dance in India has a rich and vital tradition dating back to ancient times. Excavations, inscriptions, chronicles, genealogies of kings and artists, literary sources, sculpture and painting of different periods provide extensive evidence on dance. Myths and legends also support the view that dance had a significant place in the religious and social life of the Indian people. However, it is not easy to trace the precise history and evolution of the various dances known as the 'art' or 'classical' forms popular today.



Figure: Dancing cave painting, Bhimbetka

In literature, the first references come from the Vedas where dance and music have their roots. A more consistent history of dance can be reconstructed from the epics, the several Puranas and the rich body of dramatic and poetic literature known as the nataka and the kavya in Sanskrit. A related development was the evolution of classical Sanskrit drama which was an amalgam of the spoken word, gestures and mime, choreography, stylised movement and music. From the 12th century to the 19th century there were many regional forms called the musical play or sangeet-nataka. Contemporary classical dance forms are known to have evolved out of these musical plays.

- Excavations have brought to light a bronze statuette from Mohenjodaro and a broken torso from Harappa (dating back to 2500-1500 BCE.) These are suggestive of dance poses. The latter has been identified as the precursor of the Nataraja pose commonly identified with dancing Siva.
- The earliest treatise on dance available to us is Bharat Muni's *Natyashastra*, the source book of the art of drama, dance and music. It is generally accepted that the date of the work is between the 2nd century BCE- 2nd century C.E. The *Natyashastra* is also known as the fifth veda. According to the author, he has evolved this veda by taking words from the Rigveda, music from the Samaveda, gestures from the Yajurveda and emotions from the Atharvaveda.



Figure: Shiva's Dance- Kailasanathar Temple, Kancheepuram

7.2 Aspects & Elements of Various Dances

As per *Natyashastra*, there are two basic aspects of Tandava and Lasya to Indian classical dances.

- Tandava:** The masculine, is heroic bold and vigorous.
- Lasya:** The feminine is soft, lyrical and graceful.

Abhinaya, broadly means expression. This is achieved through *angika*, the body and limbs, *vachika* song and speech and *aharya*, costume and adornment; and *satvika*, moods and emotions.

As per the ancient treatises, dance is considered as having three basic elements: *natya*, *nriya* and *nritta*.

- Natya** highlights the dramatic element and most dance forms do not give emphasis to this aspect today with the exception of dance-drama forms like Kathakali.
- Nriya** is essentially expressional, performed specifically to convey the meaning of a theme or idea.
- Nritta** on the other hand, is pure dance where body movements do not express any mood (*bhava*), nor do they convey any meaning.

To present *nriya* and *natya* effectively, a dancer should be trained to communicate the *navarasas*.

These are: love (*shringaara*), mirth (*haasya*), compassion (*karuna*), valour (*veera*), anger (*roudra*), fear (*bhayanak*), disgust (*bibhatsa*), wonder (*adbhuta*) and peace (*shaanta*).

7.3 Indian Classical Dance Forms

Indian classical dances have evolved through the years and each region has a distinct classical style of its own. The Indian classical dance forms have definite rules that have been followed traditionally over the years.

Natyashastra, which is regarded as the fifth Veda, is considered to be the source of all classical dance forms in India. It is believed to have been written between 2nd century BCE and 2nd century CE.

The Indian classical dance forms gyrate around the 'Navarasas' or emotions. There are shlokas in Natyashastra that describe how to perform all the movements in Indian classical dances.

Presently, eight Indian dance forms have been considered as classical dance forms by the Sangeet Natak Akademi of India, they are:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Bharatnatyam | 2. Kuchipudi |
| 3. Kathakali | 4. Mohiniyattam |
| 5. Odissi | 6. Kathak |
| 7. Manipuri | 8. Sattriya |

Bharatnatyam

- Bharatnatyam, originating from Tamil Nadu, is the oldest among the contemporary Indian classical dances and is considered to be over 2000 years old. It has its roots in Indian legends.
- Several texts beginning with Bharata Muni's Natya



Shastra (200 BCE. to 200 C.E.) provide information on this dance form.

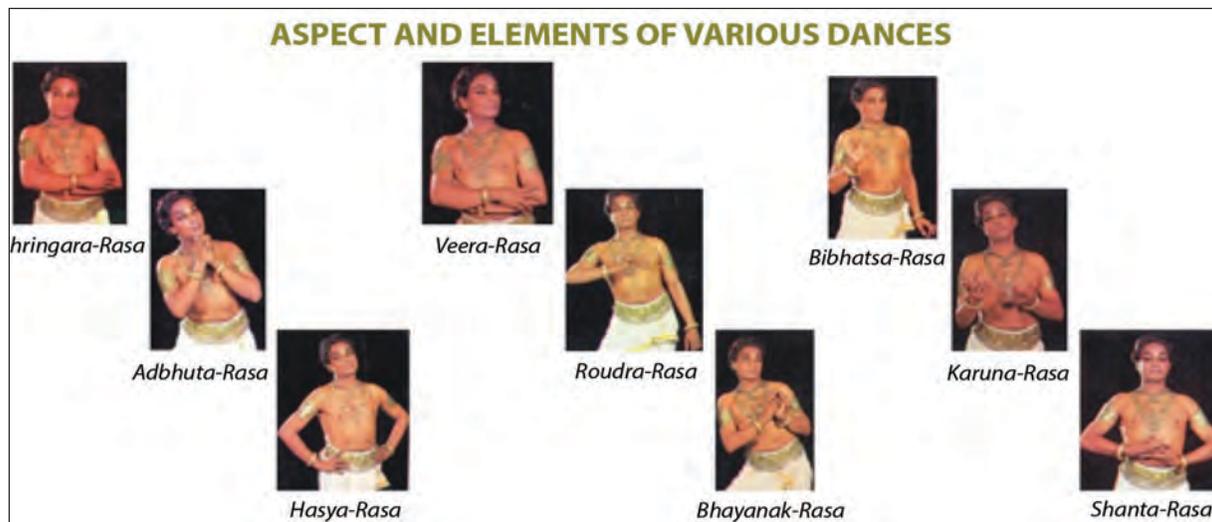
- The Abhinaya Darpana by Nandikesvara is one of the main sources of textual material, for the study of the technique and grammar of body movement in Bharatnatyam Dance.
- According to the Hindu tradition the name of the dance form was derived by joining two words, 'Bharata' and 'Natyam' where 'Natyam' in Sanskrit means dance and 'Bharata' is a mnemonic comprising 'bha', 'ra' and 'ta' which respectively means 'bhava' that is emotion and feelings; 'raga' that is melody; and 'tala' that is rhythm. Thus, traditionally the word refers to a dance form where bhava, raga and tala are expressed.

Origin of Bharatnatyam

- This dance form was nurtured in the temple by the Devadasis, servants of the God. It was taken to the princely courts and the Chola and the Pallava kings were believed to be the great patrons of this art.

Theme of Bharatnatyam

- Bharatnatyam is a solo, feminine type of a dance (now performed by male and group artists as well), which is tender and erotic. The basic theme is love, where the female dancers usually perform as a devotion to the Supreme Being; or love of a mother for child.
- This dance is considered to be a fire dance, where there is a mysterious display of the abstract element of fire in the human body.



Development of Bharatnatyam

- The dance form went through various assessments to gain the present shape. The dance form was codified and documented as a performing art in the 19th century by four brothers who were called the Tanjore Quartet. Chinnayya, Ponniah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu of the Tanjore Court during King Sarabojis rule between 1798 CE-1824 CE introduced Bharatnatyam with its various forms such as the Alarippu, Jathiswaram, Sabdham, Varnam, Tillana.

- The dance form was carried from one generation to another and the direct descendants of these four brothers formed the original group of Nattuvanars (Guru) or dance teachers of Bharatnatyam in Tanjore.

Role of Music in Bharatnatyam

- Music plays an important role in Bharatnatyam. The musical instruments used are Mridanga, Manjira, Veena, Violin, Kanjira, Surpeti, Venu and Tanpura.

- The costume consists of a richly embroidered dhoti of silk for both male and female dancers. There is a pleated or frilled cloth hanging from the waist to the knees which is laced over the Dhoti.
- Bharatnatyam is known for its grace, purity, tenderness and sculptural poses.

Elements of Bharatnatyam

- The repertoire of Bharatnatyam is extensive, however, a performance follows a regular pattern as defined by the Tanjore Quartet. These elements in their order are:
 - ♦ **Alarippu:** It is an invocation song. Literally it means to adorn with flowers. It is an abstract piece combining pure dance with the recitation of sound syllables.
 - ♦ **Jatiswaram:** It is a short pure dance piece performed to the accompaniment of musical notes of any raga of Carnatic music. Jatiswaram has no sahitya or words, but is composed of adavus which are pure dance sequences - nritta.
 - ♦ **Shabdham:** It is the dramatic element, which includes the abhinaya in the song.
 - ♦ **Varnam:** It encompasses both nritta and nritya and epitomises the essence of this classical dance form. The dancer here performs complicated well graded rhythmic patterns in two speeds showing the control over rhythm.
 - ♦ After the strenuous varnam, the dancer performs a number of abhinaya items expressing a variety of moods. The common pieces are:
 - (i) keertanam (text is important)
 - (ii) kritis (musical aspect is highlighted)
 - (iii) padams and javalis (theme of love, often divine)
 - ♦ **Tillana:** A Bharatnatyam performance ends with a tillana which has its origin in the tarana of Hindustani music.
 - ♦ The performance ends with a mangalam invoking the blessings of the Gods.

Exponents of Bharatnatyam

E Krishna Iyer, a prominent freedom fighter, revived this dance form.

Rukmini Devi Arundale was a famous dancer and an animal lover. She is responsible for giving global recognition to the dance.

Others include – Yamini Krishnamurthy, Padma Subramaniam, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Mallika Sarabhai etc.

Kuchipudi

- Kuchipudi, originally called Kuchelapuri or Kuchelapuram, a hamlet in Krishna district is the classical dance form from the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, where it grew largely as a product of Bhakti (devotion) movement beginning in the seventh century CE



- It derives its name from the village of Kuchelapuram. It is known for its graceful movements and its strong narrative or dramatic character.
- Both geographically and stylistically, Kuchipudi dance can be best understood as located between the classical dance styles of Odissi and Bharatnatyam.

Style and Technique of Kuchipudi

The Kuchipudi is a dance-drama of Nritta, Nritya and Natya. The Nritta consists of teermanams and jatis, the Nritya of Sabdams, and the Natya of acting with mudras for the songs.

While fast becoming a solo presentation, Kuchipudi still has strong ties to the dance-drama tradition. It combines the elements of speech, mime and pure dance.

Music in Kuchipudi

The music used in Kuchipudi is classical Carnatic. The musical instruments used to accompany Kuchipudi dance are Mridangam, Manjira (Thalam), Veena, Violin, Kanjira, Surpeti, Venu and Tanpura.

Features & Elements of Kuchipudi

- From the later part of the fourth decade of this century a sequence of the presentation of the solo recital has been widely accepted.
- A recital of Kuchipudi begins with an invocatory number, generally **Ganesha Vandana**.
- It is followed by *nritta*, that is, non-narrative and abstract dancing. Usually **jatiswaram** is performed as the *nritta* number.
- Next is presented a narrative number called **shabdham**. One of the favourite traditional **shabdham** number is the **Dashaavataara**. Manduk Shabdham is another popular solo element which tells the story of a frog.
- The **Shabdham** is followed by a **natya** number called **Kalaapam**.
- A Kuchipudi recital is usually concluded with tarangam. In this the dancer usually stands on a brass plate locking the feet in **shakatavadanam** paada and moves the plate rhythmically with great dexterity.
- Both lasya and tandava elements are important in this dance form.



Figure: Tharangam (Kuchipudi)

- Jala Chitra Nitryam – It is the item where the dancer draws pictures on the floor with his or her toes while dancing.

Famous Exponents

- Radha Reddy and Raja Reddy, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Indrani Rehman, Vedaantam Satyanarayana Sharma.

Kathakali

- Kathakali, a dance drama belongs to ancient Kerala. This classical dance form is still practised in the state. Kathakali is a combination of literature, music, painting, acting and dance. "Katha" means story and "Kali" stands for dance.
- It symbolizes a blending of the Aryan and Dravidian cultures, for shaping its technique. The most striking element in Kathakali is the dramatic quality which is inspiring and belongs exclusively to a world of myth and legend.



Origin of Kathakali

- The actual roots of Kathakali can be traced to at least 1500 years earlier. It evolved out of the earlier dance forms like the Chakiyarkoothu and Koodiyattom, Mudiyyettu, Theyyattom, Sastrakali, Krishnanattom and Ramanattom of Kerala.



Elements of Kathakali

- A Kathakali performance begins with the **kelikottu**. It is a devotional number performed where one or two characters invoke the blessings of the gods. **Kelikottu** is the formal announcement of the performance done in the evening when drums and cymbals are played for a while in the courtyard.
- Kelikottu is followed by the **todayam**.
- A pure nritta piece known as the **purappadu** comes as a sequel to this.
- Then the musicians and drummers hold the stage entertaining the audience with an exhibition of their skills in **melappada**.
- **Kalasams** are pure dance sequences where the actor is at great liberty to express himself and display his skills.

Features of Kathakali Dance

- Most Kathakali recitals are a grand representation of the eternal conflict between good and evil. Kathakali draws upon the inexhaustible treasure of the ancient puranas, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana.
- Kathakali dance is chiefly interpretative. The characters in a Kathakali performance are broadly divided into satvika, rajasika and tamasika types.
- Kathakali is remarkable in the representation of the rasas through the movement of eye and eyebrows.

- The use of props is minimum in Kathakali recital. However, elaborate facial makeup alongwith a headgear is used for different characters.
- Different colours are used in the facial makeup with each color having their own significance.
 - ♦ **Green** indicates nobility, divinity and virtue
 - ♦ **Red** indicates royalty
 - ♦ **Black** indicates evil and wickedness
- When it comes to music, several poets have contributed to a Kathakali script, which is called Kathakali Padam. Each Padam is a poem which is recited in one of the Carnatic music ragas. The stories for dance, the poetic compositions of legendary stories are performed in Carnatic style.
- Men usually perform in Kathakali. Men dressed in women's costume portray female characters. A Kathakali actor needs to have immense concentration, skill and physical stamina, gained from the training based on Kalaripayattu (Kalaripayattu), the ancient martial art of Kerala.
- Kathakali is generally performed in open air theatres or temple premises. The performance generally begins in the evening and it continues throughout the night, culminating at the auspicious hour of dawn, when good finally conquers evil.
- Kathakali symbolizes the element of sky or ether.

Famous Exponents

- Guru Kunchu Kurup, Kavungal Chathunni Panicker, Gopi Nath, Rita Ganguly etc.

Mohiniattam

- Mohiniattam literally interpreted as the dance of 'Mohini', the celestial enchantress of the Hindu mythology, is the classical solo dance form of Kerala.



- Mohiniattam though born out of the fusion of Kathakali and Bharatnatyam, has developed its own identity. In the word Mohiniattam, 'Mohini' means a maiden who charms the onlooker and 'attam' means dance. The Mohiniattam dances describe episodes from the epics and legends through graceful steps, rhythmic movements of her arms and facial expressions.
- The delicate body movements and subtle facial expressions are more feminine (dominance of lasya) in nature and therefore are ideally suited for performance by women.

Type and Theme of Mohiniattam

- Mohiniattam is also known as the 'Dance of the Celestial Female magicians'. It narrates the story of feminine dance of Vishnu.
- It is essentially a solo dance, performed by female dancers. However, the basis of this dance also signifies the transformation of Lord Vishnu into a female form and also the concept of Ardhnareeshwara that is male and female as one.
- The theme of Mohiniattam is love and devotion to god. Mohiniattam signifies the dance of enchanters that causes destruction of the wicked and brings delight and pleasure to the good.

Salient Features

- Mohiniattam is characterized by graceful, swaying body movements with no abrupt jerks or sudden leaps. It belongs to the lasya style which is feminine, tender and graceful.
- The movements are emphasized by the glides and the up and down movement on toes, like the waves of the sea and the swaying of the coconut, palm trees and the paddy fields.
- The foot work is not terse and is rendered softly. Importance is given to the hand gestures and Mukhabhinaya with subtle facial expressions.
- The hand gestures, 24 in number, are mainly adopted from Hastalakshana Deepika, a text followed by Kathakali. Few are also borrowed from NatyaShastra, AbhinayaDarpana and Balarambharatam.
- This art form denotes the element of Air.



Figure: Pataka, Kataka Mudra and Ardhachandra Mudra

- The vocal music for Mohiniattam is Carnatic Music. The music also accentuates these movements by being extremely lyrical, sensuous and concentrating more on bhava than trying to articulate the swara patterns. This mode of singing is called Sopanam.
- There is a typical costume for Mohiniattam, which is a mixture of white and gold.

Famous Proponents

The first renowned Mohiniattam dancer was Kalyaniamma. She also taught in Shantiniketan. The other notable proponents are Krishna Paniker, Madhavi Amma etc.

Odissi

- Sensuous and lyrical, Odissi is a dance of love and passion touching on the divine and the human, the sublime and the mundane. The Natya Shastra mentions many regional varieties, such as the south-eastern style known as the Odhra Magadha which can be identified as the earliest precursor of present day Odissi.
- Archaeological evidence of this dance form dating back to the 2nd century BCE is found in the caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri near Bhubaneswar.



- For centuries Maharis were the chief repositories of this dance. The maharis, who were originally temple dancers, came to be employed in royal courts which resulted in the degeneration of the art form. Around this time, a class of boys called gotipuas were trained in the art, they danced in the temples and also for general entertainment.
- Odissi closely follows the tenets laid down by the Natya Shastra. Facial expressions, hand gestures and body movements are used to suggest a certain feeling, an emotion or one of the nine rasas.



Figure: Sculptural relief of dancers, Sun temple, Konark

Elements of Odissi

- **Mangalacharan:** It is the opening item where the dancer slowly enters the stage with flowers in her hands and makes an offering to mother earth.

- **Batu:** Here the basic concepts of the Odissi nritta technique are highlighted bringing out the duality of the masculine and the feminine through the basic stance of the chauh and tribhanga.
- **Pallavi:** There is flowering and ornamentation of music and movements in Pallavi. A musical composition in a particular raga is visually represented by the dancer with slow and subtle movements, building up into complex patterns highlighting rhythmic variations within the tala structure.
- **Tharijham:** It is pure nritta like the Thillana of Bharatnatyam or Tarana of Kathak
- The dance can be concluded in two ways. Moksha is dance of liberation through joyous movements. The Trikhanda Majura is another way of concluding, indicating leave taking from the gods, the audience and the stage.

Salient Features of Odissi Dance

- Odissi derives its theme from Geeta Govinda mostly. The themes of Odissi revolve around Lord Krishna. The Ashtapadi of Jayadeva is a very common theme. Odissi centers on spirituality and devotion.
- Odissi dancing follows the basic rules of the Natyashastra and the Silpasastra in its techniques. It has similar foot movements as Bharatnatyam. The essence of Odissi dance lies in its sculptural quality. Its beautiful poses resemble the sculptures of the famous temples, which once nourished this art.
- The techniques of movement are built around the two basic postures of the Chowk and the Tribhanga. The chowk is a position imitating a square - a very masculine stance with the weight of the body equally balanced. The tribhanga is a very feminine stance where the body is deflected at the neck, torso and the knees.



**Chowk-basic
standing position**

**Tribhanga
position**

- Odissi presents a fine synthesis of Lasya and Tandava aspects of the Indian Classical Dance. The dancer very efficiently changes from one to the other according to the need of the expressional number, rhythmic syllables and abhinaya.
- Hand gestures play an important role both in nritta where they are used only as decorative embellishments and in nritya where they are used for communication.
- The music is a combination of Hindustani (predominantly) and Carnatic classical styles.

- Odissi dance attire has a stitched costume in pyjama style made out of the special Odisha handloom silk sarees, draped in a comfortable style. Odissi dance uses silver jewellery.
- This art form denotes the element of water.

Famous Proponents

Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra, Guru Pankaj Charan Das, Madhavi Mudgal, Rekha Tandon, Sreyashi Dey and many more.

Manipuri

- Manipuri dance form finds its mythological origins to the celestial dance of Shiva and Parvati in the valleys of Manipur along with the local "Gandharvas". The dance gained prominence with the advent of Vaishnavism. With the arrival of Vaishnavism in the 15th century CE, new compositions based on episodes from the life of Radha and Krishna were gradually introduced.



Salient Features of Manipuri Dance

- Manipuri dance incorporates both the tandava and lasya and ranges from the most vigorous masculine to the subdued and graceful feminine.
- Grace, divinity and a seamless majesty characterize Manipuri dance. The Indian religious themes and the devotional aspects of Indian philosophy and religion shape the dance pattern.
- Music in Manipuri dance is bound by sheer technicalities of this dance form. Short musical compositions like the swarmala, the chaturang, and the keertiprabhand form an important part of the dancer's repertoire.
- Nagabhanda mudra, in which the body is connected through curves in the shape of '8' is an important posture in Manipuri dance form.
- The cult of Radha and Krishna, particularly the raslila, is central to its themes but the dances, unusually, incorporate the characteristic symbols (kartal or manjira) and double-headed drum (pung or Manipuri mridang) of sankirtan into the visual performance.
- The most popular forms of Manipuri dance are the Ras, the Sankirtana and the Thang-Ta.
- In Manipuri Ras, the main characters are Radha, Krishna and the gopis. The themes often depict the pangs of separation of the gopis and Radha from Krishna.

- The Kirtan form of congregational singing accompanies the dance which is known as Sankirtana in Manipur. The male dancers play the Pung and Kartal while dancing. The masculine aspect of dance - the Choloms is a part of the Sankirtana tradition.
- The main musical instrument is the Pung or the Manipuri classical drum.
- Rich and vibrant colours with attractive jewellerys are used as Manipuri dance costumes. "Patloi", is the typical costume of the female dancers.

Manipuri Proponents

The Jhaveri sisters - Nayana, Suverna, Darshana and Ranjana Jhaveri are well known Manipuri dancers. Other well known performers are Sohini Ray, Poushali Chatterjee etc.

Kathak

- Kathak dance is originally from Uttar Pradesh. It is a combination of music, dance and narrative.
- The name Kathak is derived from the Sanskrit word katha meaning story. This dance form traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, known as Kathakars, or storytellers.
- The present day Kathak dance mainly depends on the medieval period Ras Lila, a local dance in the Braj region of Uttar Pradesh. It combined in itself music, dance and the narrative.
- Eventually popular Kathak became highly stylised in both Hindu and Muslim courts and came to be regarded as a sophisticated form of entertainment.
- There are four major schools or gharanas of Kathak from which performers today generally draw their lineage:



1. Lucknow Gharana:

- It came into existence mainly in the court of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah the ruler of Awadh in the early 19th century.
- It is characterized by graceful movements, elegance and natural poise with dance. Artistically designed dance compositions, emotive vocal compositions like thumri-s, dadra-s, hori-s along with abhinaya (expressional acting) and creative improvisations are the hallmarks of this style.
- Pandit Briju Maharaj is considered the chief representative of this gharana.

2. Jaipur Gharana:

- The Jaipur Gharana developed in the courts of the Kachchwaha kings of Jaipur in Rajasthan.
- Importance is placed on the more technical aspects of dance, such as complex and powerful footwork, multiple spins, and complicated compositions in different talas.

- There is also a greater incorporation of compositions from the pakhawaj, such as parans.

3. Banaras Gharana:

- The Benares Gharana was developed by Janakiprasad.
- It is characterized by the exclusive use of the natwari or dance bols, which are different from the tabla and the pakhawaj bols.
- There are differences in the thaat and tatkaar, and chakkars are kept at a minimum but are often taken from both the right- and the left-hand sides with equal confidence.
- There is also a greater use of the floor, for example, in the taking of sam.



4. Raigarh Gharana:

- It developed under the patronage of Raja Chakradhar Singh.
- It lays emphasis on percussion music.

History and Development

- The Vaishnavite cult which swept North India in the 15th century and the resultant bhakti movement contributed to a whole new range of lyrics and musical forms. The Radha-Krishna theme proved immensely popular along with the works of Mirabai, Surdas, Nandadas and Krishnadas.
- With the coming of the Mughals, this dance form received a new impetus. A transition from the temple courtyard to the palace durbar took place which necessitated changes in presentation.

Elements of Kathak

- Ananda – introductory item through which the dancer enters the stage
- Thaata – comprise of soft gliding movements of the neck, eyebrows and the wrists
- Todas & Tukdas – small pieces of fast rhythm
- Padhant – in it the dancer recites complicated bols and demonstrates them
- Tarana - it is pure nritta like the Thillana of Bharatnatyam
- Kramalaya – it is concluding element comprising of pure rhythmic movements

Salient Features of Kathak Dance

- The Kathak dance technique is characterized by the use of an intricate system of foot-work. The weight of the body is equally distributed along the horizontal and vertical axis. There are no deflections and no use of sharp bends or curves of the upper or lower part of the body.
- Both in nritta (pure dance) and the abhinaya (mime) there is immense scope for improvisation of presenting variations on a theme. The dancer's greatness lies in his capacity for improvisation on the melodic and metric line on the one hand and the poetic line on the other.
- Jugalbandhi is main attraction of kathak recital which shows competitive play between the dancer and table player.
- The dance could not remain away from the growth and development of north Indian music, specially the khayal. Both the dhrupad and the khayal accompanied the dance.
- The Kathak female dancers wear a Ghaghara, a choli and a veil. For the men, the costume includes Dhoti-Kurta or Kameez-Churidar-Vest. Gold and silver ornaments are used for head, neck, arms, hands fingers, waist and feet. Ankle bells are also an essential part of adornment.

Kathak Proponents

Birju Maharaj, Lacchu Maharaj, Sitara Devi, Damayanti Joshi etc.

Sattriya

The Sattriya dance form was introduced in the 15th century A.D by the great Vaishnava saint and reformer of Assam, Mahapurusha Sankaradeva as a powerful medium for propagation of the Vaishnava faith.

The creation of Sattriya Nritya by Sankaradeva was an accompaniment to the Ankiya Naat (a form of Assamese one-act plays devised by him), which were usually performed in the sattras, as Assam's monasteries are called.



Salient Features of Sattriya Dance

- The dance incorporates different elements from various treatises, local folk dances prevalent in Assam, mainly Ojapali and Devadasi.
- Conventionally, this dance form was performed only by male monks (also known as Bhokots) in monasteries as part of their daily rituals or to mark special festivals. In the modern days, Sattriya is performed on stage by women and men, who are not members of sattras, on themes not merely mythological.
- Sattriya Nritya is divided into many genres: Apsara Nritya, Behar Nritya, Chali Nritya, Dasavatara Nritya, Manchok Nritya, Natua Nritya, Rasa Nritya, Rajaghariya Chali Nritya, Gosai Prabesh, Bar Prabesh, Gopi Prabesh, Jhumura, Nadu Bhangji, and Sutradhara, among others.



- Sattriya Nritya is performed with musical composition called borgeets (composed by Sankaradeva among others) which are usually based on classical ragas.
- Sattriya dance tradition is governed by strictly laid down principles in respect of hastamudras, footworks, aharyas, music etc.
- The dance tradition has developed into two distinctly separate streams – the Gayan-Bhayanar Nach and the Kharmanar Nach.
- The dress is typical of Assam as the silk that are worn are produced in Assam, woven with meticulous designs.

Sattriya Proponents

Maniram Datta Moktar, Bapuram Bayan Attai, Ghana Kanta Bora, Jatin Goswami, Indira PP Bora etc.

7.4 Folk Dances of India

Indian folk and tribal dances range from simple, joyous celebrations of the seasons of the harvest, or the birth of a child to ritualistic dances to propitiate demons and invoke spirits. There are dances involving balancing tricks with pitchers full of water, or jugglery with knives. Other dances highlight activities like ploughing, threshing and fishing. The costumes are generally flamboyant with extensive use of jewelry by both the sexes. Some dances are performed exclusively by men and women, but most have them dancing together. Nearly all involve singing by the dancers. The drum is the most common of the folk instruments that provide musical accompaniment to these dances.

The *Sangeet Natak Akademi* has recognised 08 classical dance forms whereas, the *Ministry of Culture* has recognised 09 classical dance forms including Chhau.

Chhau Dance

- Etymologically the word Chhau is derived from Sanskrit "Chhaya" meaning shadow, image or mask.
- Chhau dance is a semi classical Indian dance with martial, tribal and folk origins from eastern India. It is a form of mask dance.



- The dance ranges from celebrating martial arts, acrobatics and athletics performed in festive themes of a folk dance, to a structured dance with religious themes found in Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism.



- It is found in three styles named after the location where they are performed:
 - i. Mayurbhanj Chau of Odisha
 - ii. Purulia Chau of Bengal
 - iii. Seraikella Chau of Jharkhand
- Natural themes such as Sarpa Nritya (serpent dance) or Mayur Nritya (peacock dance) are also performed
- Masks form an integral part of Chhau dance in Purulia and Seraikella styles.
- The popular Hindi film Barfi! has several scenes that features the Purulia Chhau in it
- In 2010 the Chhau dance was inscribed in the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Folk Dances of Uttar Pradesh

Folk dances of Uttar Pradesh show the rich cultural heritage of the state. The dance dramas based on the mythological stories of divine characters like Lord Rama & Lord Krishna reflects the traditional essence. The major folk dances of Uttar Pradesh include Raslila, Ramlila, Khyal, Nautanki, Naqaal, Swang, Dadra and the Charkula Dance.

Raslila

- The Raslila performed in this state is known as the Braj Raslila, since it has originated from the Braj area of Uttar Pradesh.
- The story revolves around Lord Krishna's charming childhood, adolescence and the early youth of Krishna, where it explores the relationship of Lord Krishna with his consort Radha.



Ramlila

- Ramlila is considered as a traditional art form reputed in folk culture of Uttar Pradesh.
- It primarily deals with the life of Lord Rama in Ramayana, who is also another incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
- This dance form depicts the story of the exile of Lord Rama from Ayodhya, his success over Ravana and his interaction with Sita.

Khyal

- Khyal is a folk arts form, which is simultaneously popular in many Indian states and it started as a prime dance form in Uttar Pradesh.
- The performances of Khyal start with an invocation, which begins with hymns to the respected deities and various instruments like the nakkara or the dholak drum, cymbals and the harmonium give the music.

Nautanki

- Nautanki is a form of street play or skit that is popular in the northern side of India especially in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
- Nautanki performances are operas based on a popular folk theme derived from romantic tales, mythologies, or biographies of local heroes.



Naqaal

- Naqaal is a folk art form of all the villages of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in the north India.
- There is a storyteller character in all the plays of Naqaals, where generally the themes are based on a common man.

Swang (Saang)



- Swang is a popular Indian folk dance drama practiced in Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh.

- Swang flourished with song and it is considered as a rich performance with literary wealth. This dance drama is dialogue-oriented rather than movement-oriented.
- It focuses on various mythological and social topics. Amateurs or new artists personify this folk drama and it is played either in the open or on the specially created platform.

Dadra

This is a popular dance form of Uttar Pradesh. It has a unique style. The play back singers use to give support to the dancers on the stage.

Charkula Dance

- This is the most spectacular dance performance, which is widely performed in the Braj region of Uttar Pradesh.



- It is a dramatic dance performance that is visually attractive. This dance form symbolises the birth of Radha.

Folk Dances of Rajasthan

Ghoomar Dance

- The Ghoomar dance is a very famous and a community dance of *Rajasthan*. It is performed on various auspicious occasions like fairs & festivals by women.



- The dance is chiefly performed by veiled women who wear flowing dresses called ghaghara.
- The dance typically involves performers *pirouetting* while moving in and out of a wide circle.
- The word ghoomna describes the twirling movement of the dancers and is the basis of the word ghoomar.
- This dance is also done by women of Bhil tribe.

Gowari Dance

- The most famous art form of the Bhil tribe is the 'Gowari', which is a kind of dance drama.
- The performers travel from village to village as a troupe for a month, during which the nine functionaries follow a strict regimen.

Terahtali Dance

- This fascinating dance form is performed by women and is considered as a devotional form of dance.
- Manjeeras are tied on the wrists, elbows, waists, arms of the performers. The women with dexterous and fine movements dance at a strong rhythm on beats of 'Manjeeras', whereas, the male partners sing and play on the 'Tandoora.'



Drum Dance

- It is a professional dance-form of Jalore region of Rajasthan, where only the men participants can perform.
- In this dance, five men beat huge drums that are tied around their necks; a dancer, which holds huge cymbals in their hands, also accompanies them.

Fire Dance



- The stirring fire dance is performed by the 'jasnathis' of Bikaner and Churu districts.
- This dance is example of Jasnathis's life style. These devotional dances can be seen only in late nights.

Chari Dance

- It is a dance form of the villagers and executes the happiness of them when they go to search water and find it.
- The women go many miles just to collect water to fulfill their daily needs. While going they express their joy through the Chari dance.

Kathputli Dance

- It is the dances of puppets.
- Through the puppet shows all the real stories of great herons have been told from village to another.

Kalbeliya Dance

- The Kalbeliyas, is a snake-charmer community from Rajasthan, which performs the Kalbeliya dance. They rely heavily on this dance performance for their living.
- The *UNESCO has inscribed Kalbelia folk songs and dances in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010*

**Gair Dance**

Gair Dance is a folk dance of the Bhil community of Rajasthan, which is performed at the festival of Holi. There are several differences in the performance of men and women in this dance.

Bhawai dance

This form is very difficult and can only be performed by skilled artists. This dance basically involves women dancers balancing 8 to 9 pitchers on their heads and dancing simultaneously.

Panihari Dance

- As water is a scarce commodity in the parched desert lands of Rajasthan and women who fetch water from afar called Panihari. The overworked women created melodious numbers that often had water and rains as their theme. Soon Panihari songs became famous and common.
- Panihari slowly came to be a part of the rich folk dance and music culture of the state.

Folk Dances of Kashmir

Kashmir includes prominent folk dances like the Bhand Jashna, the Dumhal and the Kud Dance.

Bhand Jashna

- Bhand Jashna is a famous "festival of clowns" of Kashmir, which also has a legacy of 300 to 400-year-old genre of Kashmiri folk theatre. It is considered as a traditional folk theatre style having combination of play and dance in a satirical style.
- It mostly depicts parodies on social situations, expressing many strong sentiments through dance, music and clowning.

Dumhal Dance

- It is performed on set occasions and at set locations. Generally, this dance is performed by only the men folk of Wattal, wearing long colourful robes and tall conical caps, which are usually studded with beads and shells.
- Apart from dancing, the performers also sing along songs in chorus, tuned with music by various drums.

Kud Dance

- It is a typical community dance, performed in the middle mountain ranges of the Jammu region. The Kud dance is performed during the rainy seasons and it exhibits swaying & sinuous movements.
- It is basically a ritual dance performed in honor of the Lok Devatas and men, women and children, attired in their best, gather around a bonfire for this nightlong ritual.

Folk Dances of Punjab**Bhangra Dance**

Bhangra is one of most popular dances of India performed during Baisakhi only by the men in Punjab. Bhangra includes the drummer who usually stands in the centre of the circle in an open space surrounded by dancers. Giddha is female counter part of male Bhangra.

Jhummar Dance

- Jhummar dance is a dance of ecstasy and a living testimony of the happiness of men, so performed only by men.
- Jhummar is performed mostly during the melas, weddings and other major functions and celebrations.

Luddi Dance

Luddi Dance is also a male folk dance of Punjab and it is to celebrate a victory or success that is gained in any field. This is basically the dance of slow movements and some even identify it by integrating with that of the Bhangra.

Dhumall Dance

It is a male dance and, likewise it is danced in a circle, where the drum is used as the accompanying instrument.

Dhankara Dance

Dhankara Dance is a dance of celebration. This form is also called the Gaatka dance. This form is often performed in marriage celebration.

Giddha Dance

Giddha dance is considered as originated from West Punjab. This dance form is derived from the ancient style of ring dancing.

Kikli Dance

Kikli is more of a sport than a dance and is generally popular within the young girls. Usually, the dance is performed in pairs.



Figure: Kikli Dance

Folk Dances of Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh includes folk dances like the Wancho, Khampti, Buiya and the Ponung Dances.

Wancho Dance

Wancho Dance belongs to a particular tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. This dance is performed only in special occasions like festivals and ceremonies.

Khampti Dance

The Khampti Dance is basically a folk dance performed by the *Khampti Communities*. Khampti dances are based on some mythical stories. These are drama based stories, which have some hidden lessons for its viewers.



The Buiya Dance

The Buiya dance of Digaru Mishmis is performed on any festive occasion which have the purpose for the prosperity and good health of the performer and his household.

Ponung Dance

Ponung dance is the famous folk dance of Adi tribal people. This is the women dance. The purpose of this festival is seeking a good harvest and welfare of the village community.

Folk Dances of Haryana

Phag Dance

This dance form is performed by the farmers in the month of Phalgun. Both men and women can perform this dance. During performance women wear colourful traditional cloths where men wear colourful turbans.



Dhamal Dance

The Dhamal dance is famous in the Gurgaon area, which is inhabited by Ahirs. This dance is performed only by men. It is said that the people perform this dance whenever their crop is ready for the purpose of the harvest.

Folk Dances of Maharashtra

Tamasha

- It is among the major forms of Maharashtra folk theater.
- The love songs called 'Lavanis' form the heart of this dance form and are thus well-known.
- Tamasha is linked with two Maharashtra communities which are Mahar and Kolhati.

Lavani

Lavani is a mixture of traditional dance and song, which is performed mainly to the beats of 'Dholak'; an instrument like a drum. This folk dance is executed by beautiful women wearing sarees of nine-yards. The women whirl on the quivering beats of conventional music.



Figure: Lavani Dance

Koli

Koli Folk Dance is another folk dance of Maharashtra which got its name from fisher folk of the state called 'Kolis'. The Kolis are known for their lively dances and a separate identity.

Dhangari Gaja

Dhangari Gaja is one of the most famous folk dances performed in the Indian state of Maharashtra. It is performed by the shepherds of the Solapur District who are also known as Dhangar.

Povadas

- Povadas form a part of Marathi ballads, depicting the Marathi leader Shri Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's life.
- Through the Povadas, people remember Shivaji, a famous hero of his period.

Folk Dances of Gujarat**Garba Dance**

- This dance is performed by the womenfolk of Gujarat. This dance form has connection with Shakti-Puja and its origin is believed to be in the worship of goddess Jagdamba.
- At the time of Navaratri this dance is performed throughout nine nights where women dance in circular movement with rhythmic clapping.

Dandiya dance

- The most popular Dandiya dance is also known as the 'stick' dance.
- This dance form is always performed in a group in a circular movement to a measure steps. The sticks used in this form are believed to be the sword of Goddess Durga.

Bhavai

- The Bhavai Dance is believed to be dance of emotions.
- The Bhavai drama is a continuous performance lasting the whole night and staged in open grounds before the audiences, as a source of entertainment.

Tippani Dance

- There are many folk dances in India that typically represents the community related activities and their functional aspects, and the Tippani folk dance is also a dance of such a pattern.
- This dance is performed during wedding ceremony.

Folk Dances of Odisha**Pala**

- Pala is widely performed in Odisha and a very famous performance associated with the cult of 'Satyapir'.
- The entire performance of the Pala is to evoke the deity of Satyapir, intended for the well being of the people.

Daskathia

- 'Daskathia' has originated from the Ganjam District. As, it got wide popularity; it spread to all other parts of Odisha.
- The word 'Dasa' means a devotee & 'Katha' refers to wooden pieces arranged in tune for the prayer of the devotee.

Danda Nata

- Danda Nata is performed during the festival observed by the Kaibartas in the month of Chaitra from the full moon day to eight day of Vaisakha.
- The participants in a Danda Nata invoke the blessings of Lord Shiva to get blessed by a child, to fulfill certain ambition, to get rid of sickness, seeking happiness in life, good harvest or even peace and happiness to all the communities.

Prahlad Nataka

Prahlad Nataka is considered as a form of traditional theatre, which is very famous in the region of Odisha, however, this folk art form is originated in Ganjam District.

Bharat Lila

Bharat Lila is an example of presenting the stories from epics with expressive acts & dances. It is the most colorful presentation of folk dance performed & prevalent in Ganjam District of Odisha.

Dalkhai Dance

- The 'Dalkhai' is an eye-catching dance performance by the tribal women from the Sambalpur district of Odisha.
- The festival of 'Dusserah' is the occasion of performing Dalkhai, which is the most popular folk-dance of western Odisha.

Jumur or Jumu Nach

- This dance is called as 'Chah Baganar Jumur Nach' that means Jumur dance of tea garden.
- This dance is very much prevalent in all tea garden surrounding areas & performed by girls and boys together to make the people relax while working.

Bagurumba Dance

- It is a folk dance of the Bodo community, which is very rich in cultural wealth.
- It has many folk dances to boast about their culture, but among all the dances the best and the most attractive dance is the Bagurumba dance.

Deodhani Dance

Deodhani is danced as a solo or group performance. In the group performance, it essentially includes 3 or 4 females and it is performed on the occasion of the worship of Devi Manasa or Maroi.

Dhepa Dhuliya Dance

Dhepa Dhuliya Dance is another form of traditional folk art of Darrang region of Odisha. In this dance performance, two to four performers play the Dhepadhol and it is specially to generate a unique sound, while beating it.

Folk Dances of Madhya Pradesh**Maanch**

- Maanch is a lyrical folk drama and a form of operatic ballet that is very popular in Malwa in Madhya Pradesh.
- "Maanch" means the stage or place of performance and as an indigenous & distinct folk-form.

Gaur Maria Dance

- Gaur Maria dance is one of the important dances of Bison Horn Marias of Abhujmaria plateau of Bastar in Madhya Pradesh.
- This is a very beautiful and joyful dance and is basically performed as an invocation on the occasion of marriages.



Figure: Gaur Maria Dance

Jawara

It is a harvest dance popular in Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh. The peasants' community of the area performs this dance, to celebrate their joy and bliss. The women carry a basket full of Jawara crop on their heads while performing the dance.

Folk Dances of Manipur

Pung Cholom Dance

Pung Cholom is folk art form with a combination of sound and movements, which sometimes demand acrobatic abilities and stamina.



The dancers themselves play the Mridanga (Pung) while executing the performance in front of the audience.

Maibi Dance

Maibi dance is performed during the celebration of festival Lai Haraoba, which is an annual ritual festival of the Meitei Manipuris, living in the valley of Manipur.



Nupa Dance

- Nupa dance or Nupa Pala is also known as Kartal Cholom or Cymbal dance, performed in a group, only by the men folk.
- This dance represents the unique Manipuri style of dance and music, where the performers sing and dance to the rhythm of the Pung.

Folk Dances of Mizoram

Cheraw Dance in Mizoram

Cheraw dance is also known as 'Bamboo dance' as bamboos are used while performing the dance.



This dance is one of the most colourful and distinct dance of the Mizos.

Khuallam Dance in Mizoram

Khuallam is also known as 'dance of the guests' and it is performed at the time of ceremony called 'Khuangchawi'. In this dance a group of males perform to the tunes of drum and gong.

Chailam

This dance is performed during the festival of Chapchar Kut. This dance is performed by men and women standing in circles.

Sawlakin

This dance is actually a Lakher dance that has been adopted by the Mizos. A warrior starts the dance who has hunted a man or an animal.

Chheihlam

It is a group dance performed by both men and women. It is performed surrounding a rice beer in the evening.

Zangtalam

This is dance of the Paihte group. It is danced to the tune of the drums.

Sarlankai

Sarlankai is the variation of Solakia dance. However the dressing is different in this dance. Gongs or cymbals or drums are used.

Other Folk Dances of North Eastern States

Bihu Dance, Assam

The Bihu is considered as feature of folk dance of Assam and is enjoyed by all sections of society.



It is the most popular & colorful folk dance of Assam.

Ankiya Nat, Assam

It is believed that Ankiya Nat is a one-act play, initiated by Shankardeva. Shankardeva composed various forms of literary kind of work like Bargeet, Ojha Pali songs and numerous dances, which were incorporated into the dance drama, termed as Ankiya Nat.



Other Folk Dances

Dollu Kunitha Dance, Karnataka

- Kunitha are considered as the ritualistic dances of Karnataka, of which the Dollu Kunitha is one of the ritualistic dances that is popular with the kurubas of 'Beereshvara Sampradaya'.
- One of the popular dance forms of Karnataka, kunitha is accompanied by the beats of the drums, and singing of the dancers.

Hurka Baul Dance, Uttarakhand



The Hurka Baul dance is performed during the cultivation of paddy and maize in the farms. The dance is named according to the Hurka, which is the drum used for musical accompaniment in the performance of the dance and Baul is the song.

Pangi Dance, Himachal Pradesh

Pangi dance of Himachal Pradesh is a fascinating dance form which is usually performed by the womenfolk. The performers stand in a circle and execute the steps in a slow form.

Pandwani Dance, Chhattisgarh

- Pandwani is an Indian folk Dance in ballad form performed predominantly in Chhattisgarh.
- It is also popular in the neighbouring tribal areas of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. It depicts the story of the Pandavas, the leading characters in the epic Mahabharata.
- Pandwani is narrated in a very lively form, almost constructing the scenes in the minds of the audience.

Panthei, Chhattisgarh

Panthei dance is one of the important dance forms of Chhattisgarh State of India. This Indian folk dance is basically a prominent ritual of the Satnami community of Chhattisgarh.

Padayani, Kerala

- Associated with the festival of certain temples, called Padayani or Paddenil.
- Such temples are in Alleppey, Quilon, Pathanamthitta and Kottayam districts.
- The main Kolams (huge masks) displayed in Padayani are Bhairavi (Kali), Kalan (god of death), Yakshi (fairy) and Pakshi (bird).

Taranga Mel

It is a dance in Goa that involves a lot of energy. It is usually performed on the occasions of Dushehra and Holi by young boys and girls.

It derives its name from the streamers also known as "tarang" involved in the dance. The dance performers wave multi coloured flags and streamers and make noises to the beat of the instruments such as "Dhol" and "Romut". The dancers in Taranga Mel wear colourful costumes that makes it an eye-catching dance. They create a spirit inspiring and inviting everyone to join in the festivities.

Kummi

It is a folk dance, popular in Tamil Nadu and Kerala in India, danced mostly by Tamil women in circle. Dancing may be different. In some places, it is very simple, with rhythmic clapping. Kummi often accompany by songs, called "Kummi songs". It is often danced during festivals. It is also danced by Tamils of Sri Lanka. Kummi songs became a popular addition to Kuthiyottam festivities in modern times.

Martial Dances of India

- **Kalarippayattu:** It is a famous Indian martial art from land of attraction Kerala and one of the oldest fighting systems in existence.



- **Silambam:** It is a weapon-based Indian martial art from Tamil Nadu.



- **Gatka:** It is weapon-based Indian martial art basically created by the Sikhs of Punjab.



- **Thang Ta:** It is popular term for the ancient Manipuri Martial Art also known as Huyen Lallong. Manipuri martial arts with swords and spears, is a strong yet gracefully sophisticated art.



- **Mardani Khel:** It is an armed method of martial art created by the Maratha. This traditional martial art of Maharashtra is practiced in Kolhapur.



- **Paika Dance:** It is a *martial art form of Orissa*, which has withstood the test of time. Paika Akhadas thrive in several villages of the state till today. As early as the 15th century CE, Gajapati Raja was believed to have raised an army of Paika warriors. The brave Paikas raise their voice of rebellion against the British rulers as early as 1817, four decades before the Sepoy Mutiny broke out.
- Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mahapatra Bhramarabar Roy led the Paika Bidroha. The Paikas of Khorda did not allow the British to enter the region and that is why Khorda is known as the last freedom fort of India. The heroism of these warriors influenced the art, architecture and literature of Orissa. The carvings that adorn the Konark Temple depict the martial prowess of the Paikas. Many of the performing art forms of Orissa, namely the Mayurbhanj dance, Ranapa dance etc., have been influenced by this glorious martial tradition.



Figure: Paika Dance



TRY THIS MAINS PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

1. Discuss the 'Tandava' dance as recorded in early Indian inscriptions. (Write in 100 words)

(2014)