

# Dances of India

## [UPSC Notes]

### What is the Dance of India?

India is home to some of the world's most diverse civilizations and customs. Whether it be folk or classical dance, India has diverse dance traditions. Also, India experiences four seasons, and there are dances for each. For the harvest season, practically every state has its dance. There are many folk dances that vary from each other on the basis of geographical regions, ethnicity, and respective state while the classical dances are mostly confined to Hindu spirituality.

### Different Dance forms of India

India is known for its richly diverse cultural heritage. Dance is one culture with a rich form all across the nation. In India, every state has its form of dance enriching the idea of unity in diversity. It is divided into two different forms-

- **Classical Dance Form-** There are 8 classical forms of Indian dance.
- **Folk Dance Form-** There are more than 30 popular folk dance forms of India.

### List of Classical Dances of India

As per the source and scholars, there are 8 types of classical dances in India. Classical dance is said to be originated from Natya Shastra. Legends like Shanta Rao and Birju Maharaj are known for their excellence in these dance forms. Here is the list of the classical dance of India, along with their basic technicalities and the states-

| Classical Dance of India | State of Origin |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Bharatnatyam             | Tamil Nadu      |
| Kathak                   | Uttar Pradesh   |

|             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| Kuchipudi   | Andhra Pradesh |
| Kathakali   | Kerala         |
| Odissi      | Odisha         |
| Manipuri    | Manipur        |
| Sattriya    | Assam          |
| Mohiniyatta | Kerala         |

## Bharatnatyam

It is one of the most popular classical Indian dances. It is almost 2000 years old. It is believed that Lord Brahma revealed Bharatnatyam to Bharata, a famous sage who codified this sacred dance in a Sanskrit text called the Natya Shashtra. Natya Shastra divides dance into two distinct forms – nritya and nritya. The Bharatnatyam dance flourished in the Hindu temples of south india. The temple dancers are called Devadasis or servants of god.

The present form of Bharatnatyam dance was evolved by Poniah Pillai of Tanjore and his brothers. Formats of Bharatnatyam consist of Alarippu(invocation), Jathi Swaram(note combinations), Shabdham(notes and lyrics), and Varnam(a combination of pure dance and abhinaya) lighter items like Padams and Javalis (all erotic) and finally the Thillana(again pure dance).

## Kathak

Kathak is one of the major classical dance forms of India. It is the dance form of Uttar Pradesh, whose origin is attributed traditionally to ancient Pakistan and North india. These were popularly known as the storytellers or the Kathakars. The term Kathakars refers to the people who tell a story. But, the dance form of Kathak developed in India during the Bhakti movement and the Mughal period. They used to depict the stories of lord Krishna through their dance.

Kathak is a particular dance form of India that has survived a significant period as an oral tradition. It is passed on from one generation to the other orally and via practice. The modern form of Kathak has three main sections-

- the invocation
- the abstract (pure) dance recital
- Expressive dance

## Kuchipudi

This dance originated in the village of Kusselavapuri or Kuchelapuram, Andhra. It is a dance with drama act & has its roots in “Natya Shastra” (Literary comprehensive, and vivid work on the various facets of Indian classical dance by Bharat Muni). It runs on the theme of Bhagwata Purana but has a secular character.

## Kathakali

is the oldest dance form of India and a native of Kerala (particularly in the southwestern region). Kathakali is another dance form that includes the genre of Story play art. It is distinguished from the other dance forms based on its appearance. In Kathakali, the performers use bright costumes with colourful make-up and great face masks. The face masks are restricted to the male Kathakali performers only.

## Odissi

It is a dance-drama genre traditional/classical dance of India, also referred to as Orissa ( as per India’s old literature). Its origin happened in history as a dance form in the temples of Odisha. It includes the parts of the eastern coastal Indian states as well. In Odissi, the dance performers and musicians play a spiritual message, a historical story, or a devotional poem from the Hindu culture. This dance form is famous for its mudras, abhinaya, body movements, and symbolic costumes.

## Manipuri

Manipuri Raas leela or manipuri dance is a classical dance form of Manipur. This dance form involves the devotional stories of Radha Krishna of the Madhura raas. The performers have gentle eyes, and their body movements and facial expressions are soft and peaceful. The soft and peaceful movements symbolise the emotions of devotions (particularly emphasising the Bhakti Rasa). Though Manipuri is a dance form based on Vaishnavism’s Hindu Shastras, this dance form is not only restricted to the Hindus.

## Sattriya

Inspired by the Bhakti movement, it depicts mythological stories of Vishnu. Shankaradeva, in the 15th century A.D, introduced its modern form. It is a classical dance form of Assamese. It originated from Vaishnavism (this was Krishna-centred) and was attributed to the 15th century by the saint Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev and Scholars of the Bhakti Movement. It is mostly played in the dance community halls of temples. It is a mixture of dance, drama, and ballads. The form includes expressions of virtues, spiritual ideas and scripture’s essence.

## Mohiniyatta

Mohiniyatta is a dance form that was restricted to Kerala. It developed and remained in the state despite its popularity all over the south. It was named after the historical enchantress avatar of lord Vishnu- Mohini. Mohini was a symbol for women who, with her feminine powers, helped in

prevailing good over evil. It is a dance which depicts feminine, delicacy and eros filling. Initially, it was a woman's dance, but later, it was adopted by men.

## List of India Folk Dance

Folk Dance forms represents the culture of a particular area or community from where it originated. Some of the India Folk dances are listed in UNESCO's list of intangible cultures. A list of different dance forms of India with their states is as under-

| State             | Dance  |
|-------------------|--|
| Andhra Pradesh    | Kuchipudi, Kolattam  |
| Arunachal Pradesh | Bardo Chham  |
| Assam             | Bihu dance, Jhumur Naach   |
| Jharkhand         | Karma/Munda  |
| Chhattisgarh      | Panthi, Raut Nacha, Gaur Maria, Dekhni Dance                                       |
| Goa               | Koli, Dashavatara, Dekhni, Dhalo, Ghodemodni, Romta Mel, Divlyan Nach (Lamp dance) |
| Gujarat           | Garba, Raas, Tippani Dance   |
| Himachal Pradesh  | Kinnauri Nati  |
| Haryana           | Saang, Ras Leela, Ghoomar, Jhumar, Teej, Phag, Dhamal                              |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Karnataka      | Yakshagana, Bayalata.  |
| Kerala         | Mohiniyattam, Kathakali, Koodiyattam, Thirayattam, Thitambu Nritham, Aravanmuttu, Padayani.                              |
| Madhya Pradesh | Jawara, Maanch, Grida, Tertali, Phulpati Dance, Matki Dance  |
| Maharashtra    | Lavni, Tamasha, Dangi, Pavri Nach, Povadas, Koli, Dindi  |
| Manipur        | Thang-Ta, Dhol Sholom  |
| Mizoram        | Cheraw Dance   |
| Nagaland       | Chang Lo or Sua Lua.   |
| Odisha         | Ghumura Dance, Ruk Mar Nacha (& Chhau dance), Goti Pua, Nacni, Odissi, Baagh Naach or Tiger Dance, Dalkhai, Dhap, Ghumra |
| Punjab         | Bhangra, Giddh, Jhumar, Karthi, Ludi   |
| Rajasthan      | Ghoomar, Kalbelia, Bhavai, Kachchhi Ghodi.   |
| Sikkim         | Singhi Chham   |

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Tamil Nadu  | Bharatanatyam, Kamandi or Kaman Pandigai, Devarattam, Kummi, Kolattam, Karagattam or Karagam, Mayil Attam or Peacock dance, Paampu attam or Snake Dance |
| Tripura     | Hojagiri  |
| West Bengal | Gambhira, Nacni, Alkap, Domni, Chow   |

