

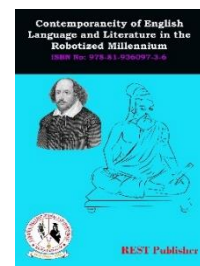


Contemporaneity of Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

Vol: 7(2), 2025

REST Publisher; ISBN: 978-81-936097-3-6

Website: <https://restpublisher.com/book-series/cllrm/>



Indian Classical Dances

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Abstract: This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the Indian classical dances, type of classical dances. Classical dances of India are an integral part of the country's rich cultural and artistic heritage. Rooted in ancient traditions and spiritual practices, these dance forms are not just artistic expressions but also vehicles of storytelling, philosophy, and devotion.

Keywords: Indian classical dances include the core elements of Nritta, Nritya, and Natya, as well as concepts like Rasa, Lasya, and Tandara. These terms describe different aspects of the dance form, from pure rhythmic movements to dramatic expression and emotional portrayal.

1. INTRODUCTION

India's classical dances are not just art forms; they are a blend of expression (abhinaya), rhythm (tala), and grace (lasya) that convey stories, mostly from Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These dances combine music, rhythm, and movement to express a range of emotions and stories through gestures, facial expressions, and body movements. Each classical dance form originates from different parts of the country and reflects the spiritual, cultural, and historical ethos of its region.

2. TYPES OF CLASSICAL DANCES

There are eight officially recognized classical dance forms of India: Bharatanatyam (Tamil Nadu), Kathak (North India), Kathakali (Kerala), Mohiniyattam (Kerala), Kuchipudi (Andhra Pradesh), Odissi (Odisha), Manipuri (Manipur), Sattriya (Assam).

Bharatanatyam (Tamil Nadu): The traditional dance style known as Bharatanatyam has its roots in Tamil Nadu, India. Known for its grace, purity, and expressive movements, it combines intricate footwork, hand gestures (mudras), and facial expressions to tell stories, often from Hindu mythology. Traditionally performed in temples as a form of devotion, Bharatanatyam has evolved into a respected art form performed on stages around the world, symbolizing the rich cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu. India's most famous Bharatanatyam dancers are; Rukmini Devi, Padma Subrahmanyam. Alarmel Valli.

Kathak (North Indian): Kathak is a classical dance form from North India, known for its intricate footwork, swift spins, and expressive storytelling. Rooted in ancient temple traditions, it later flourished in the royal courts of the Mughal era, blending Hindu and Persian influences. Dancers use rhythmic patterns, facial expressions, and graceful movements to narrate mythological tales and romantic epics, making Kathak a vibrant symbol of North India's cultural heritage. India's most famous Kathak dancers are; Raja Chakra Dhār Singh of the Raigarh Gharana, Lachhu Maharaja, Acchan Maharaja.

Kathakali (Kerala): Kathakali is a classical dance-drama from Kerala, known for its elaborate costumes, vibrant makeup, and powerful expressions. It combines dance, music, and acting to depict stories from Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Performers use detailed facial expressions (abhinaya), hand gestures (mudras), and body movements to convey emotions and narratives, accompanied by traditional music. Kathakali is a striking and dramatic representation of Kerala's rich cultural traditions. The five major Veshams in Kathakali are Kathi (Knife), Pacha (Green), Thaadi (Beard), Minukku (radiant) and Kari (Black). "Queen of Kathakali," Sitara Devi. India's most famous Kathakali dancers are Kalamandalam Gobi, Kavungal Chathunni Panicker, and Kalamandalam Ramankutty Nair.

Mohiniyattam (Kerala): The beautiful Kerala classical dancing style known as mohiniyattam is often performed by ladies. Its name means "dance of the enchantress," and it is known for its gentle, flowing movements, subtle expressions, and elegant costumes. Rooted in temple traditions, Mohiniyattam combines elements of Bharatanatyam and the local dance forms of Kerala, focusing on themes of love and devotion, often dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It beautifully reflects the serene and poetic spirit of Kerala's cultural Heritage. India's most famous mohiniyattam dancers are Sunanda Nair, Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma, and Jayaprabha Menon.

Kuchipudi (Andhra Pradesh): Kuchipudi is a classical dance form from Andhra Pradesh, known for its lively movements, dramatic storytelling, and graceful expressions. Originally performed as a dance-drama by male artists in temples, it has evolved to include solo performances by both men and women. Kuchipudi blends fast rhythmic footwork with expressive gestures and facial expressions to narrate stories, often from Hindu epics. It is a vibrant and dynamic representation of Andhra Pradesh's rich cultural legacy. India's most famous kuchipudi dancers are Vempati Chinna Satyam, Yamini Reddy, and Sobha reddy.

Odissi (Odisha): Odissi is a classical dance form from Odisha, known for its fluid movements, sculptural poses, and graceful expressions. Deeply rooted in temple rituals and devotion to Lord Jagannath, Odissi combines lyrical music, intricate gestures, and storytelling through dance. It features unique body postures like tribhangi (three bends) and is characterized by its spiritual and expressive nature. Odissi brilliantly captures Odessa's creative and cultural heritage. India's most famous odissi dancers are Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, Sanjukta Panigrahi, and Sonal Mansingh.

Manipuri (Manipur): Manipuri is a classical dance form from the northeastern state of Manipur, known for its graceful, flowing movements and devotional themes. Deeply rooted in the Vaishnavite traditions, it often portrays stories of Radha and Krishna through gentle gestures and soft expressions. Unlike other Indian classical dances, Manipuri emphasizes smooth, rounded motions without sharp footwork, creating a serene and spiritual atmosphere. It displays Manipur's rich religious and cultural legacy. India's most famous Manipuri dancers are Guru Bipin Singh, Guru Amubi Singh, and Guru Raj Kumar Singhajit Singh.

Sattriya (Assam): Sattriya is a classical dance genre originating from Assam, grounded in the religious traditions of Vaishnavite monasteries known as sattras. Introduced by the saint and reformer Srimanta Sankardev in the 15th century, Sattriya was originally performed by male monks as a form of worship. It combines expressive dance, drama, and music to depict stories from Hindu epics, especially the life of Lord Krishna. Today, Sattriya is performed by both men and women and stands as a symbol of Assam's spiritual and cultural heritage. India's most famous sattriya dancers are Guru Jatin Go swami, Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, Sharodi Saikia. Each form is unique in its style, costume, music, and storytelling tradition. These dances are traditionally performed in temples and during religious rituals but have now gained global recognition as a sophisticated art form.

3. CONCLUSION

Indian classical dances are a vibrant and integral part of India's cultural heritage, offering a unique blend of artistry, storytelling, and spiritual expression.

REFERENCE

The primary reference for Indian classical dances is the ancient text Natya Shastra. Hindu musical theatre and mythology.