

EXPLORING SOUTH INDIAN CULTURE...

Dance and Music



Incredible India!

India is a land as diverse as its people. It is a mosaic of faiths, cultures and customs that blend exquisitely to form a perfect whole. South India is one such element, which contributes to form an incredible blend called India. The South Indian culture refers to the culture of the South Indian states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. South Indian culture though with its visible differences forms an important part of the Indian culture.

South Indian Dance

- South Indian culture is celebrated through elaborate dance forms of South India - Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Yakshagana. Bharatanatyam is the celebration of eternal universe through the celebration of the beauty of the body.
- The dance form aspires to bring to life the philosophy of Natyashastra, 'Angikam bhuvanam yasya' (The body is your world).
- This is elaborated in the araimandi posture, wherein the performer assumes a half sitting position with the knees turned sideways. In this fundamental posture of the Bharatanatyam dance, the distance between the head and the navel becomes equal to that between the earth and the navel.
- Similarly, the distance between the outstretched right arm to the outstretched left arm becomes equal to the distance between the head and the feet, thus representing the "Natyapurusha", the embodiment of life and creation.



Dance Styles in India



- India offers a number of classical Indian dance forms, each of which can be traced to different parts of the country. Classical and folk dance forms also emerged from Indian traditions, epics and mythology.
- Classical dance in India has developed a type of dance-drama that is a form of a total theater. The dancer acts out a story almost exclusively through gestures. Each form represents the culture and ethos of a particular region or a group of people.
- Folk dances are numerous in number and style, and vary according to the local tradition of the respective state, ethnic or geographic regions. Contemporary dances include refined and experimental fusions of classical, folk and Western forms.



Origin of Indian dance

The background of the slide features a photograph of four Indian dancers, likely performing a classical dance style. They are wearing white costumes with gold jewelry and have their arms raised in a graceful pose. The dancers are positioned across the top half of the slide, with their heads and upper bodies visible. The lighting is soft, highlighting the dancers against a dark background.

- Dance in India comprises the varied styles of dances in the country.
- As with other aspects of Indian Culture, different forms of dances originated in different parts of India, developed according to the local traditions and also imbibed elements from other parts of the country.
- In Hindu mythology, dance is believed to have been conceived by Brahma.
- Brahma inspired the sage Bharata Muni to write the Natya Shastra, a treatise on performing arts, from which a codified practice of dance and drama emerged.
- He used *pathya* (words) from the Rig Veda, *abhinaya* (gestures) from the Yajurveda, *geet* (music) from the Samaveda and *rasa* (emotions) from the Atharva veda to form the *Natya veda* (body of knowledge about dance).

Folk Dance

- Folk dances and plays in India retain significance rural areas as the expression of the daily work and rituals of village communities. These dances have their roots in religious and seasonal festivals that have become a background for such celebrations. They are mostly performed in groups.
- Sanskrit literature of medieval times describes several forms of group dances such as Hallisaka, Dand Rasaka and Charchari. The Natya Shastra defines group dances of women as a preliminary dance performed in prelude to a drama.
- Folk dances can be located according to the regions of their origin. Every state has its own folk dance forms like Garba, Ghoomar, Bhangra , Giddha and Kalbelia etc...



Contemporary Dance



Contemporary dance in India encompasses a wide range of dance activities currently performed in India. It includes choreography for Indian Cinema, modern Indian ballet and experiments with existing classical and folk forms of dance by various artists.

Uday Shankar and Shobana Jeyasingh are credited as the pioneers of modern Indian dance. Other well known proponents of modern dance in India include Ram Gopal, Mrinalini Sarabhai and Chandralekha. Poet Rabindranath Tagore developed a dance genre popularly known as Rabindra Nritya Natya—dance-dramas composed by him. These dance dramas and dances set on Rabindra Sangeet are popular in Bengali Culture.

Influence of dance in Indian society

- The best known of Hindu deities—Shiva, Kali and Krishna—are typically represented dancing. Shiva's cosmic dance, tandava, Kali's dance of creation and destruction and Krishna's dance with the gopikas (cowherd girls)—Rasa Lila—are popular motifs in Hindu mythology.



Warli cave Art depicting men and women dancing during a ritual.



Krishna dancing on a demon snake, according to a legend.



An archeology find from Mohenja-daro portraying a dancing woman.

