**CLASSICAL DANCE OF INDIA**

**1. Bharatnatyam** [**Tamil Nadu**](https://www.holidify.com/state/tamil-nadu)**, South India:** Performed on the celestial tunes of the Carnatic music, Bharatnatyam comes from the state of Tamil Nadu in South. The origins of Bharatnatyam can be traced back to 1000 BC, and it originates from the ancient temples of Tamil Nadu performed by the women of the ancient period. The dance form is known for its beautiful body movements and gestures which are called Mudras in the traditional language. It focuses on the hand gestures, leg movement and the facial expressions of the dancer. This dance form was very prevalent before the British era but was highly depressed during the colonial period. However, India kept the dance form alive in the houses, and today it is recognised as one of the most respectable art forms in India especially in the Southern region of the country where it is pride for the women of the house to learn the classical dance form of Bharatnatyam.

**2. Kathak** [**Uttar Pradesh**](https://www.holidify.com/state/uttar-pradesh)**, North India:** Coming from the northern part of the country from the state of Uttar Pradesh, Kathak comes from the word 'Katha' which means "story" in Hindi. It isn't a very smart guess for one to make that Kathak is performed in the form of storytelling through the body movements used by the dancer. Kathak is often referred to as the dance of love, and it can be performed by both by the male and female dancer together. This dance form focuses highly on the ankle movements complemented by the ankle that has to match the beats of the music. Ankle bells or gunghroos as they are called in the traditional language is an important part of the discipline of this dance form. Various distinctions can be witnessed in this dance forms as it is performed in various places in the country which includes Jaipur, Benaras, and Lucknow.

**3. Kathakali:** [**Kerala**](https://www.holidify.com/state/kerala)**, South India** Kathakali is another traditional dance form of India which relates to the storytelling. Kathakali translates to the 'storyteller' in the country's language. Coming from the Southern region of the country from Kerala, Kathakali is one of the most renowned and religious dances forms of India. It originates from the tales of Ramayana and Shiva stories. Kathakali includes the intriguing face movements and the heavy costumes which include the traditional face masks and body paints (generally green). The music which includes only the vocals is called soppanam. The storytelling of the epic Hindu mythology tales depicting both evil and good is shown through the conversation between the dancers only through their body gestures and facial expressions. Simply fascinating to watch!

**4. Manipuri** [**Manipur**](https://www.holidify.com/state/manipur)**, North East India** As you stroll towards the North-east India which is brimming with the rich tradition and their unique culture, Manipuri comes as an important symbol to represent the state of Manipur from the region. This dance form is performed to narrate the romantic relationship between the Hindu gods Radha and Krishna, which is famously known as RaasLeela. This art form is performed in a team with the traditional Manipuri costumes and makeup to narrate the tale of the two gods. The dance is performed on the narrative chanting and the music created by the Indian classical instruments.

**5. Kuchipudi** [**Andhra Pradesh**](https://www.holidify.com/state/seemandhra)Belonging to the Andhra Pradesh, Kuchipudi is probably the toughest form of classical dance in India. Kuchipudi is not just considered as the dance but a whole religious procedure dedicated to God which includes certain rituals such as sprinkling the holy water, burning the incense sticks and praying to God. Kuchipudi includes both singing and dancing by the performer which is why it requires both the skill and much more dedication than any other art forms in India. In the earlier period, Kuchipudi was only performed by the male dancers in the temples, specifically the Brahmins( Upper caste of the society) but with the passage of time, it became famous amongst the women and nowadays it is mostly performed by the female dancers.

**6. Odissi** [**Odisha**](https://www.holidify.com/state/odisha)**, East India** Odissi dance form comes from the state of Odisha in the eastern part of India. The traditional dance has been derived from the Hindu temples in Odisha. Most of the gestures and movements (Mudras) are inspired by the sculptors and idols belonging to the ancient temples of India. The dance is performed as a way to express the mythological tales of Hindu gods, including that of Shiva and Surya. The dance is accompanied by a mythical story, Hindi poem in the form of music by the musicians. Odissi is considered as the oldest dance forms of India which are surviving till today. Odissi dance is performed mostly by the women dancers, and it includes more than 50 intriguing mudras (body movements).

**7. Lavani** [**Maharashtra**](https://www.holidify.com/state/maharashtra-goa)**, West India** Originated from the state of Maratha empire, Lavani is a dance form of Maharashtra. The female-oriented dance is a blend of traditional music and tales of deities. The origin of Lavani comes from the word Lavanya which means beauty. Apart from helping in the upliftment of the Marathi folk theatre, the dance form was also a morale booster during the war in the 18th century. Lavani has two forms; One that's philosophical - Nirguni Lavani and the other that's sensual- Shringar Lavani. With powerful and quick foot-tapping tempo, the dance form is performed along with the beats of the Dholak. The stories or subjects this dance is based on revolves around topics of religion, politics, society and mostly romance. Dancers are dressed in nine-yard of saree with golden jewellery. The dance was initially staged at local temples in the form of worship, but now it's a sensual dance performed to the pulsating beats rendering a socio-political satire.

**8. Mohiniyattam Kerala, South India** In the Indian mythology, Mohini is the female avatar of Lord Vishnu, and the meaning of Attam in Malayalam is rhythmic motion hence adhering to the dance of the divine enchantress. It is the second most popular dance form of Kerala. This classical Indian dance form roots from the age-old Sanskrit text - Natya Shastra. It is traditionally performed by women following a repertoire of Carnatic music, singing and acting a play. At times, the song, a typical hybrid of Malayalam and Sanskrit also called Manipravalam, is sung by the performer herself. With a repertoire of instruments such a Mridangam, Madhalam, Flute, Idakka, Veena and Kuzhitalam; the music is rendered in ragas and performed in a slow melodic style. Although the Lasya dance is often portrayed as gentle, graceful and feminine, it also exhibits a vigorous dance of Tandava relating to Lord Shiva. Besides its popularity, the dance was ridiculed by a series of laws as a devadasi prostitution system during the colonial British Raj. A ban that was protested repealed in 1940 and with the help of the locals of Kerala, Mohiniyattam was revived and reconstructed.

**9. Sattriya Dance Assam, North East India** Mahapurusha Sankaradeva, a Vaishnava saint and reformer of Assam, introduced Sattriya dance in the 15th century AD. This dance form was preserved in the Sattras or the Vaishnava Maths; therefore, it remained a living tradition. This dance was an artistic way of presenting mythological teachings. Traditionally this dance was performed by the male monks or bhokots. However, today, the practice has changed in many ways. The theme is not just related to mythology, and the performances are not limited to the Sattras. Even women can perform Sattriya dance and on the stage.