

## Classical Dance form of India

The classical Indian dance has eight dance styles– Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohinattam, Odissi and Sattriya.

- ❖ Contemporary classical dance forms have evolved out of the musical play or sangeet-nataka performed from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the 19th century.
- ❖ The Indian classical dances have two basic aspects - **Tandava** (movement & rhythm) and **Lasya** (grace, bhava & rasa).
- ❖ The three main components are-
  - **Natya** (the dramatic element of the dance i.e. the imitation of characters)
  - **Nritta** (the dance movements in their basic form)
  - **Nritya** (expressional component i.e. mudras or gestures).
- ❖ The nine rasas are - Love, Heroism, Pathos, Humour, Anger, Fear, Disgust, Wonder and Peace. The **Natya Shastra written by Bharat Muni** is the most prominent source for the Indian aestheticians for establishing the characteristics of the dances.

### ➤ Bharatanatyam Dance

Abhinaya Darpana by Nandikesvara is the main textual material for the study of the technique and grammar of body movement in the Bharatnatyam Dance.

Bharatnatyam is 'ekaharya', meaning only one dancer takes on many roles in a single performance.

It was continued as 'devdasi' or temple dance. Devadasis were young girls that were 'gifted' by their parents to the temples and were married to the gods. These devadasis performed music and dance as part of offerings to deities in the temple courtyards.

It was revived by **Krishna Iyer**, who was also a freedom fighter. It was made popular by **Rukmani Devi Arundale**, who learnt Russian ballet in Austria and began to learn Indian Classical dance after getting inspired. Rukmani Devi Arundale laid the foundation of Kalakshetra – taught by nattuvangam.

There are two famous styles of Bharatanatyam :

1. Pandanallur Style
2. Thanjavur Style

### Bharatanatyam costume

The costumes of bharatanatyam are bright and colorful. They are inspired by the sari tradition of contrasting border colors, and the borders of the various pieces of costumes form patterns that decorate the dancer's form. Heavy lines of makeup are drawn around the eyes, extending



outwards past the eyes. The pair of anklets or ankle bells (salangai in Tamil) are important part of Bharatnatyam costume.

### ➤ **Kuchipudi Dance**

Kuchipudi is the name of a village in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. Traditionally performed by male Brahmanas in temples. There is a huge impact of Vaishnavism which has inculcated themes of Bhagavad Purana in the Kuchipudi dance.

In 17th century Kuchipudi style of **Yakshagaana** was conceived by **SiddhendraYogi** who was a talented Vaishnava poet. According to a popular belief, Siddhendra Yogi had a dream where Lord Krishna asked him to compose a dance-drama based on the myth of the bringing of paarijaata flower for Sathyabhaama, the most beloved queen of Lord Krishna. Therefore, in compliance, Siddhendra Yogi composed the 'Bhaamaa-kalaapam'. It is an important part of Kuchipudi.

It was patronised by Vijayanagar kings and Golconda rulers in past. Kuchipudi combines 'lasya' and 'tandava'.

There are two forms of Kuchipudi – the traditional musical dance-drama and the solo dance.



### **Kuchipudi costume**

The costume of kuchipudi has a long pleat in the centre with a border and a back katcham and also a side small fan makes this a typical Kuchipudi style.

### ➤ **Odissi Dance**

It is one of the earliest dance form in India. Evidences are found in Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves. Various buddhist, tantric images of dancing Yoginis, Nataraja, and shaivite temple influences resulted in an unique philosophy of the dharma or faith of Jagannath.

The Devdasis were known as 'Mahari's were indispensable part of the odissi dance culture. For centuries 'maharis' were chief repositories for Odissi dance. The maharis were originally temple dancers which were also employed in the royal courts resulting in degeneration of the art form. After 12th century, there was great influence of

Vaishnavism and bhakti cult on the mahari system. The Mahari system declined largely because ascetics of vaishnavism disapproved of immoralities of the devdasi system.



This led to introduction of young boys dressed as women, dancing like maharis, known as **Gotipuas**. Gotipuas quit dancing when they turned 18 and began teaching. Many gurus of Odissi come from the gotipua tradition.

With influence of vaishnavism, *Jayadeva's Ashtapadi* become a compulsory item in Odissi dance. Important postures in Odissi are – **Tribhanga posture** (with 3 bends at head, bust and torso = mobile sculpture) and **Chowk posture**.

Odissi costume

The costume of Odissi is similar to that of traditional Bharathanatyam costume. The dancer wears elaborate Odia silver jewellery and a special hair-do. The sari, that is usually stitched nowadays, is unique to the style of Odissi.

### ➤ **Kathakali Dance**

It was performed in Kerala temples as dance dramas. In the temple sculptures of Kerala and the frescoes in the Mattancheri temple, in 16th century, the dance scenes which depict the square and rectangular basic positions of Kathakali

The sources of Kathakali are Kudiattam, Krishnattam, and later Ramanattam created by Raja Balaveera Keralam, which later evolved into Kathakali.

Kathakali is performed on Open air stage against lush green Kerala landscape. No props are required, where expressions suggest the scene of dance-drama.

There is elaborate make up where the colour of makeup indicates the mental stages of the character such as green facial colour indicates nobility, virtue, divine. Red patches on nose indicate royalty and evil while black face indicate wicked female.

There is remarkable use of eye movements and expressions in Kathakali. Themes of epics and puranas are largely depicted in Kathakali.

Kathakali is a blend of dance, music and acting and dramatizes stories, which are mostly adapted from the Indian epics which mainly represents eternal conflict of good and evil.



### **Kathakali costume**

The costume of Kathakali is most distinctive to Kathakali dance. The costumes are very large and heavy. There are several type of costumes: Sathwika (the hero), Kathi (the villain), Minukku (females), and Thatti. Each character is instantly recognised by their characteristic makeup and costume. The dancers wear large head dresses mainly Kireedam, and the contours of face are extended with use of moulded lime.





### ➤ Mohiniattam Dance

It is a dance that originated in Kerala. The origin of Mohiniattam is traced in the reign of Maharaja Swati Thirunal of Travancore in early 19th century. Mohiniattam combines elements of Bharatanatyam (grace and elegance) and Kathakali (vigour). It is a solo dance where women perform the dance. Though Mohiniattam is more exotic, lyrical and delicate than both Bharatanatyam and Kathakali from which it derives elements.

#### Mohiniattam Costume

The costume of Mohiniattam is refined and distinct. This peculiar dance of Kerala is performed by a solo female dancer. The costume color is white with gold zari borders. The skirt around the torso is fully pleated from front to back.

### ➤ Manipuri Dance

It is different from other classical dances as in – it emphasises bhakti and not sensual aspects due to high Vaishnav influence.

The origin of Manipuri dance is traced back to ancient times which go beyond the recorded history. The dance in Manipur is mainly associated with the rituals and traditional festivals, with legendary references to the dances of Shiva and Parvati and other gods and goddesses who created the universe.

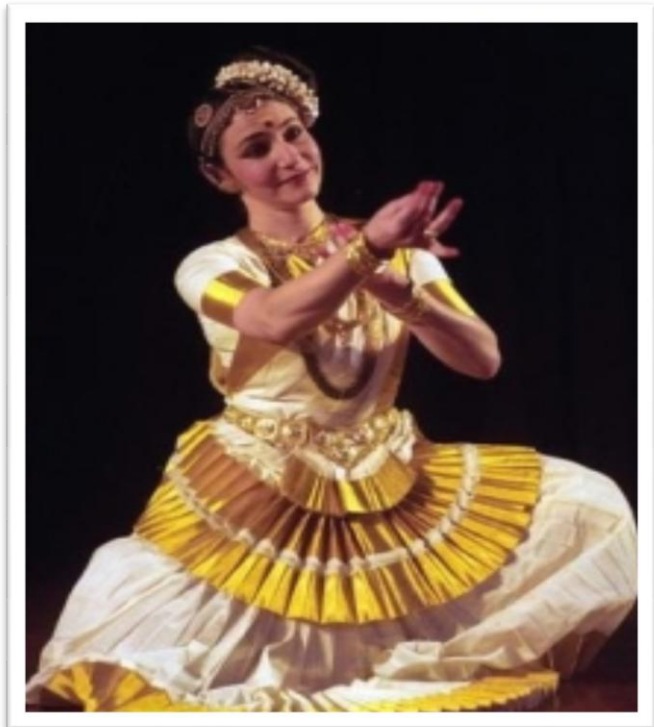
Also, **Lai Haraoba** is one of the main festivals that is still performed in Manipur which is rooted in pre-Vaishnavite period. The principal performers of Lai Haraoba are the **maibas** and **maibis** (priests and priestesses) who re-enact the theme of the creation of the world.

With the arrival of Vaishnavism in 15th century A.D., new compositions based on the life of Radha and Krishna were gradually introduced in Manipuri and eventually the popular Rasleela dances of Manipur originated.

The most popular forms of Manipuri dance are the Ras (Radha, Krishna and the gopis), the Sankirtana and the Thang-Ta. The martial dancers of Manipur are known as the 'Thang-ta' originated when man's survival depended on his ability to defend himself from wild animals. The Manipuri dance in its present form was promoted by Rabindranath Tagore in Shantiniketan in early 19th century.

Components of Manipuri dance are:

- drum- 'pung' is soul of this dance.
- has several 'cholums' or dances like pung cholam, kartal cholom, Dhol cholom.
- Rasleela is inseparable and very important part of Manipuri.
- Choloms have both 'tandavas' and 'lasya' aspects.
- Focus on devotional love.
- Songs in Bengali, Maithali, Bhojprasha and Sanskrit, usually compositions of Jayadeva and Chandidas.
- Ashtapadis of Jayadeva's Geeta Govinda are very popular.
- Lyrical grace, soft movements.



- Serene expressions
- Gorgeous costumes
- limited use of mudras
- No ankle bells worn by dancers.



### Manipuri Costume

The most elaborate costume of manipuri dance is for the Ras dance. Ras costume consists of a richly embroidered stiff skirt which extends to the feet. A short fine, white muslin skirt is worn over the stiff skirt. A dark coloured velvet blouse covers the upper part of the body and a traditional white veil is covers a special hair-do which falls gracefully over the face.

In the Ras dance, Krishna wears a yellow dhoti, a dark velvet jacket and a crown of peacock feathers. The jewellery worn is very delicate and the designs are unique to the region.

### ➤ Sattariya Dance

Sattariya dance of Assam developed in the 15th century A.D by the great Vaishnava saint and reformer, **Mahapurusha Sankaradeva**. Shankardeva developed sattariya dance as a powerful medium for propagation of the Vaishnava faith. It is especially associated with the Majuli island in Brahmaputra river.



The Sattras are 'Vaishnava maths' or monasteries. Due to its religious character and association with the 'Sattras', this style of dancing has been aptly named 'Sattariya'.

Sattariya dance tradition has strict principles governing it in respect of the hastamudras, footworks, aharyas and music. This Sattariya tradition, has two distinctly streams –

1. the Bhaona-related repertoire beginning from the Gayan-Bhayanar Nach to the Kharmanar Nach,
2. the dance numbers which are independent – like Chali (characterized by gracefulness and elegance), Rajagharia Chali, Jhumura (characterised by vigor and majestic beauty), Nadu Bhangi etc.

### ➤ **Kathak Dance**

The word Kathak is derived from the word Katha meaning a story. Kathakars are story-tellers, who narrate stories based on the epics, myths and legends. The Vaishnavite cult which was prevalent in North India in 15th century and the resultant bhakti movement introduced new forms of lyrics and musical forms.

The Radha-Krishna theme was immensely popular alongwith the works of Mirabai, Surdas, Nandadas and Krishnadas. Raslila developed in the Braj region (Mathura in Western U.P.) which combined music, dance and the narrative together. The advent of Mughals developed the bhava and sensuous aspects of the dance form taking it from temples to the courts.

The **19th century** was the **golden age of Kathak** under the patronage of **Wajid Ali Shah**, the last Nawab of Oudh. Wajid Ali Shah established the Lucknow gharana.

There are three schools of Kathak in Northern India –

1. Lucknow Gharana — has strong accent on *bhava*, the expression of moods and emotions.
2. Jaipur Gharana –known for *layakari* or rhythmic virtuosity
3. Benaras Gharana — evolved in Rajasthan, known for moderate tempo, grace and precision



Main characteristic of Kathak are its intricate footwork and pirouettes. The technique of movement in Kathak is unique to it, where the knees are not bent or flexed.

The metrical cycle (tala) of 16, 10, 14 beats is the foundation on which the whole edifice of Kathak dance is built.

#### **Importance of Kathak:**

- Kathak is the only classical dance of India which has links with Muslim culture.
- It represents a unique synthesis of Hindu and Muslim traditions in art.
- Kathak is the only form of classical dance which involves Hindustani music (the North Indian music). Hindustani music has seen a parallel growth with Kathak, with each feeding and sustaining the other.



## Folk Dance

Folk dances are performed for every possible occasion - to celebrate the arrival of seasons, birth of a child, a wedding and festivals, which are a plenty. The folk dances are extremely simple with minimum of steps or movement. Indian folk dances are full of energy and vitality. Some dances are performed separately by men and women while in some performances men and women dance together. On most occasions, the dancers sing themselves, accompanied by artists with instruments. Each form of folk dance has a specific costume and rhythm. Most of the costumes, worn for folk dances, are colorful with extensive jewels and designs.

### North India



- **Dumhal** - This age-old dance is still kept alive by the Rauf tribe of Jammu & Kashmir and is performed by men who wear long and colorful robes, accompanied by tall conical caps. The performers place a banner into the ground at a fixed location, and the dance is performed around this banner.
- **Hikat** - Performed in groups, the dancers hold each other's hand and go around dancing in circles. The pace of their movement is adjusted according to the tempo of the music being played. Usually, it all begins slowly and the pace gradually picks up until the women gain full momentum.
- **HurkaBaul** - This dance form is associated with the state of Uttarakhand. Performed during maize and paddy cultivation in the state, this dance form is more of a storytelling. While a singer incorporates heroic stories of battles in his song, the dancers enact the stories with the help of their moves.
- **Chholiya** - 'Chholiya' dance form is practiced in the Kumaon region in the state of Uttarakhand. It is traditionally performed in wedding processions. Sword wielding men dancers are seen dancing spiritedly and hence 'Chholiya' is often referred as 'sword dance'.
- **Bhangra** - 'Bhangra' is one of the most popular and energetic dances of Punjab. The origins of this impressive dance form remains speculative. While it is widely believed that 'Bhangra' is a martial dance form, it is also said that it was started by farmers to celebrate

the harvest season. No celebration in the Punjab and surround areas is complete without a Bhangra performance.

- **Dhamyal** - 'Dhamyal' or 'Dhuph' is one of the most popular folk dances of Haryana. 'Dhuph' is a circular drum and is played by male dancers. The dance is performed as a part of celebration after a long day's work in the fields.
- **Mayur Nritya** - This dance form is prevalent in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Also known as peacock dance, 'Mayur Nritya' is performed by dancers who wear specially designed clothes so as to resemble a peacock. It is performed while worshipping Lord Krishna.
- **Charkula** - It is a dance performed in the Braj region of Uttar Pradesh. 'Charkula' is basically a multi-tiered circular pyramid and it's believed that Goddess Radha's grandmother announced the birth of her granddaughter while balancing a 'Charkula' on her head. Hence women dancers carry huge 'Charkulas' which in turn holds many lighted oil lamps.
- **Rasa Lila** - It is a divine form of dance performed in several parts of India. This particular dance form is considered very important by the devotees of Krishna as it has a mythological significance. It is believed that the dance was performed by Krishna along with Radha and her friends.
- **Giddha** - This dance form is performed in the state of Punjab. Giddha is the female version of 'Bhangra'. The dance aims at expressing the feminine grace. The women wear colorful clothes while performing. Giddha is usually accompanied by 'Bolliyan', a collection of couplets.

### Central India



- **Gaur Dance** - This dance is associated with the tribal people in the state of Chhattisgarh. In this dance, men don colorful head-dresses and hats adorned with peacock plumes. Women, beautified by tattoos and ornamented with fillets made out of brass and necklaces made out of beads, also join the gathering.
- **Muria Dance** - This dance is associated with the tribal people of the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh. It usually begins with an invocation to the phallic deity of the tribe. The Muria people also perform 'Hulki' dance and 'Karsana' dance. While 'Hulki' dance is considered the most attractive of all dance forms, 'Karsana' is seen as a recreational activity.



- **Saila Dance** - This dance form is associated with Bastar district in the state of Chhattisgarh. Saila is a unique dance in which the dancers use sticks for rhythmic purpose. The dancers are seldom seen forming a circle, each standing on one leg and supporting themselves by holding on to the dancer in front. Then they all hop together round and round.
- **Karma Dance** - Karma dance is performed by the tribes of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and other regions of India. The dance is associated with the fertility cult and is related to the Karma festival that falls in the month of August. The dancers form a circle by placing their arms on the waist of the adjacent dancer and dance in a rhythmic manner.
- **Kaksar Dance** - Kaksar dance is popular among the Abhujmarias of Bastar. It is performed in hope of reaping a rich harvest. To invoke the blessings of the deity, young boys and girls perform Kaksar. An interesting trivia about the Kaksar dance is that it allows its dancers to choose their life partners from the same dance troupe.
- **Jhumar** - This dance form originated in the Multan and Balochistan region of Pakistan. Jhumar is slower and more rhythmic. Often performed by men, 'Jhumar' marks the beginning of the harvest season and portrays the happiness of people.
- **Jawara Dance** - It is associated with the state of Madhya Pradesh. The dance not only involves rapid feet movement but also difficult acts of balancing. The women perform a balancing act by carrying a basket full of the harvested crop on their head.
- **Bhagoria Dance** - This is performed by the tribal people of Madhya Pradesh. Though the dance is part of a unique festival, which allows young men and women to elope, it has its own agricultural significance – completion of the harvest season.
- **Suwa Dance** - It is performed by tribes in the state of Chhattisgarh. Also known as 'parrot dance', this unique dance gets women to act like parrots! It is usually performed only by women and girls while men get to play musical instruments of their choice.
- **Tertali Dance** - It is performed by the Kamar tribe of Chhattisgarh. The dance is performed only by women who start by squatting. A musical instrument called 'Manjira' is tied all over their body – most commonly to their legs and the same is played by the performers throughout the ritual.
- **Grida Dance** - Grida dance is performed in the state of Madhya Pradesh during winter when the rabi crop is ready to be harvested. The dance marks the success of farmers which is celebrated among the villagers in a grand manner.

## East India



- **Chhau** - This dance form traces its roots to Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal but it is popular in other parts as well. As masks form an important feature of this dance it is called 'Chhau', which literally translates to 'mask'. The performers wield weapons such as swords and shields while dancing.
- **Brita Dance** - 'Brita' or 'Vrita' dance is one of the most prominent dances of West Bengal. The dance is usually performed to thank the local deity after recovering from a contagious disease – usually small pox.
- **Dalkhai** - This dance is popular in parts of Odisha. The dance is performed by young women who are later joined by men, playing drums and other instruments. Interestingly, the men address the women as their girlfriends throughout the play.
- **Gotipua** - It is performed in the parts of Odisha. 'Gotipua' is a unique dance form since the performers are dressed as women. The dance form is taken seriously by the boys so much so that they don't cut their hair just to look like women.
- **Bardo Chham** - It is performed by Sherdukpens, a small community living in the West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh. The Sherdukpen tribe believe that every month an evil force appear to mar the good qualities of humans. Thus to ward off those evil forces, they wear masks representing different animals and dance together.

## North East India



- **Bihu** - This dance form forms the most attractive part of the Bihu festival celebrated by the people of Assam. Bihu is celebrated at the beginning of the harvest season and goes on for nearly 30 days.
- **Hojagiri** - This dance is performed in the state of Tripura. Women and young girls balance bottle and earthen lamps on their head and move their lower body so as to make sure the bottles or lamps don't fall. Men are involved in the act by singing and playing musical instruments.
- **Nongkram Dance** - Performed by the Jaintia Hill inhabitants of Meghalaya, the 'Nongkram' dance is a colorful event. The dance form is a way of paying respect to the local deity.
- **Bagurumba** - It is performed mainly by the Bodo tribe in Assam. Usually performed by the women, the dance is accompanied by instruments like drums and flutes. Bagurumba dance has a rich history and is believed to be inspired by nature.
- **Bhortal Dance** - It is a folk dance of Assam. Performers wield cymbals and dance in groups, with each group consisting of six or seven dancers. Dancers come up with a unique beat known as '7hiya Nom' and engage in rapid feet movements.
- **Jhumur** - This dance is performed in the states of Assam, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha. The dance is performed by young girls while men take care of the musical part. The dancers place their arms around the waist of the adjacent dancer and sway to and fro in a synchronized manner.
- **Cheraw Dance** - It is performed in the Indian state of Mizoram. While the men move horizontally and vertically held bamboo staves, women dance in between them so as to avoid their legs getting caught in between the staves. The beats are formulated when the bamboo staves are moved at rapid pace.
- **Chang Lo** - This dance is performed by Chang tribe of Nagaland. Since the dance is traditionally performed to celebrate the victory over their enemies on a battle field, dancers don costumes worn by warriors and display war tactics in the form of dance.



## South India



- **Padayani** - It is performed in the central part of Kerala. Padayani is not only popular but is also pleasing to the eyes as colors form an important aspect of the dance. The dancers wear massive masks which often represent deities.
- **Kummi** - 'Kummi' is a popular folk dance in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Since this dance form originated when there were no musical instruments, it just involves women singing and clapping.
- **Kolannalu** - It is performed in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Popularly known as the 'stick dance', 'Kolannalu' involves group of dancers forming two circles. While the inner circle receives a strike on their sticks, the dancers forming the outer circle deliver the strike.
- **Parai Attam** - It is a special type of dance in Tamil Nadu. Men folk play a percussion instrument called 'Parai' and dance to the rhythm they come up with. Traditionally, the dance was performed for various reasons and is one of the oldest dance forms of India.
- **Karagattam** - It is an ancient folk dance of Tamil Nadu. Karagattam is performed while worshipping the goddess of rain. Dancers balance huge pots on their head and dance to the tunes of musicians.
- **Mayil Attam** - It is performed in the temples of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. This dance is similar to the 'Mayur Nritya' of Uttar Pradesh. Young girls are dressed to look like peacocks and perform to the beats of the musicians. The dancers often imitate the moves of peacock.
- **Paampu Attam** - It is performed in Tamil Nadu. This dance is performed while worshipping snakes as snakes are considered divine in this part of the country. Young girls wear clothes that resemble the skin of snakes and go about moving like snakes!
- **Poikal Kudirai Attam** - 'PoikalKudirai' literally means 'horse with fake legs'. The dancers are made to look like they are riding a horse with just two legs! This is one of the most popular folk dances in Tamil Nadu.
- **Theyyam** - It is performed in the Malabar region of Kerala. Theyyam is an age-old dance, performed to praise Goddess Kali and hence it is also known as 'Kaliyattam.' The dancers paint their faces with vibrant colors which add to the overall effect.

## South West India



- **Dollu Kunitha** - It is performed in the state of Karnataka. Dollu Kunitha is a popular drum dance. Large drums are hung around the necks of men. The songs used in this dance usually have religious and battle fervor.
- **Ghodemodni** - It is performed in the state of Goa and the adjoining areas. Ghodemodni is also called as 'warrior dance' as the performers are dressed as warriors and wield swords. The dance portrays a war since the village in which the dance form originated was once captured by a king.
- **Lava Dance** - This art form is performed in one of the islands of Lakshadweep. It's performed by the men inhabiting the island. The dance is based on folk songs and rhythmic movements.
- **Fugdi** - It is a Goan dance performed in the Konkan region. Performed by women, this dance form is given life during Hindu festivals. The dancers make different formations like circles or rows and go about singing and dancing. The dance begins slowly and gains pace gradually.
- **Veeragase** - Veeragase is one of the prominent dances of Karnataka as it's performed during Dasara celebrations in Mysore. Performed only by men, this dance form is intense and involves energy-sapping movements.



## West India



- **Dandiya** - This is very popular dance form in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Dandiya is a dance form which requires its dancers to wield sticks and wear colorful costumes. Much like the 'Saila' dance, sticks here are used for rhythmic purpose.
- **Garba** - This dance form originated in the state of Gujarat. Garba is traditionally performed during the nine-day Hindu festival 'Navaratri'. The dance is performed around a lamp. Often the lamp is replaced with a picture or statue of Goddess 'Shakti'.
- **Koli** - Koli is performed in Maharashtra. Since the dance is performed by fishermen, it involves elements of fishing and sea. Both men and women are involved in this interesting dance form which is a treat to watch.
- **Tippani Dance** - Performed during weddings and festivals in Saurashtra region of Maharashtra, this dance is performed only by women. Shehnai and percussions like Manjira, Tabla and Dhol are used to create music.
- **Padhar Dance** - It is a folk dance performed in Gujarat. Performed by fishermen, who spend their lives along the banks of Nal Sarovar, Padhar dance involves enactment of fishing and rowing of boats.