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## Comparative Study on Classical Dances: Odissi & Bharatanatyam

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### Abstract

Culture differs from place to place throughout the world. It teaches people along with provides entertainment. Based on the cultural differences, Indian culture occupies a special position. Dance is one type of class out of many forms of cultural program. In this paper a comparison has been given among two different dances named as Bharatanatyam and Odissi. The two types of Indian classical dances are compared in terms of costumes, musical instruments, jewellery and steps of dances. It is found that, Odissi is simple and attractive as compared to Bharatanatyam. This paper provides the insights of two classical dances. The paper presents historical origin, technique, forms, and style of both Odissi, and Bharatanatyam dance. It analyses on both Odissi and Bharatanatyam dance forms on their styles, music, costume, jewellery, gurus and performances. It is to amalgamate and evolve the essence of both the styles for spectators and lovers of art

**Keywords:** Cultural program, classical dance, Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Music, Costumes, Dance Style

### Introduction

India has rich cultural heritage that lies in its music and dance. The Indian dances forms vary from state to states are Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Manipuri, and Satriya etc. Among all these dances, Odissi and Bharatanatyam are most ancient and bear the original styles of performance, which make them stand out differently superb [1-5].

If you love to dance, India is the place to be. The country is home to some of the world's oldest dance forms, including folk dances like Bhangra, and classic styles like Odissi and Bharatanatyam. Each dance has unique steps (even if many Bollywood choreographers like to combine different styles), and far from being random, these steps have very significant meanings [4-10].

Dance is any one prescribed sequence of such movements in the music to which it is performed or an event. There are hundreds of different types of dances in India. Most of the Indian classical dance forms are very ancient in nature. There are eight dance forms recognized as classical dances by the Sahitya Natak Akademi. Dance in India comprises the varied styles of dances in the country. With other aspects of Indian cultures different forms of dances originated in different parts of India. But particularly in our country classical dance has a lot of significances. It is not merely meant for entertaining oneself but it serves as a fabulous way to express the innate feeling of heart. It is also the best means to get corrected with God. It can be traced back during the period of Natya Sastra of BharatMuni. It was performed to appease the deities and was considered a vital element of spirituality. All the prevailing dance forms use basically the same "Mudras" or signs of hand as a common language of expression and were originally performed in the temples to entertain various Gods and Goddesses. They were also effective in carrying forward the various mythological stories from generation to generation while entertaining the audiences.

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### Origin and History

The common root of all Indian classical dance forms can be traced to **Bharata's Natyashastra**. It contains deliberations on the different kind of postures, the mudras, the kind of emotions, the kind of attires, the stage, the ornaments and the audience. According to the Natyashastra, Brahma, the creator of the Universe, created drama. He took the following components to create the fifth Veda called Natyaveda:

- Pathya (words) form the Rigveda
- Abhinaya (gesture) from the Yajurveda
- Geet (music and chant) from Samaveda
- Rasa (sentiment and emotional element) from Atharvaveda

There are ample evidences of the popularity of dance in the Indian society right from the Mesolithic period. The first and the oldest of evidences to date are the discovery of the bronze figurine of a dancer from the Indus Valley Civilization excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. Indian classical dances are dances of the mind and soul and are extremely traditional. It is very sensuous but the experience of Ananda (bliss) it evokes is very spiritual.

Odissi the term itself represents its origin from the state of Odisha. It is one of the famous classical traditional dance forms of the eastern part of India. It is an ecstatic and sensuous form of dance performed in the temples of Odisha as a religious-rite and offering by the "Devadasis" popularly known as "Mahari". The dance is found in the Manchapuri cave in Udayagiri which was carved during the religion emperor Kharavela. Hence it can be traced centuries back to its origin as a secular dance. Later it got attached with the temple culture of Odisha [2-7].

Odissi is a highly inspired, passionate, ecstatic and sensuous form of dance. In Odissi dance the whole body of the dancer is their instrument means of artistic expression and elevates body fitness. It also makes a dancer both physical and psychological strong as it requires high stamina and patience and tied with spirited mindedness. It creates devotion in one's mind and heart. Thus it is considered the most spiritual and religious based dance form like other Indian dance pattern.

Bharatanatyam-Bharatanatyam is also one of the traditional classical dance form in the South India originated from state of Tamilnadu. It is basically practiced in the temples of Shiva for many centuries it was performed only by certain families in the district of Tanjore like "Devadasis" or 'Mahari' of Odissi dance, the performers of Bharatanatyam one known as 'Nattuvans'. It is combined artistic expression with a sense of spirituality the dancers generally dance to a traditional south Indian Carnatic orchestra consisting of voice, strings, percussion, and flute. Though this dance form is purely originated from the state of Tamil Nadu, now it has become one of the classical dance forms all over the country [8-16].

### Comparison among Odissi and Bharatanatyam

In Indian mythology, there are three main gods: Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the protector) and Shiva (the destroyer). It is said that Shiva, who is also known as the lord of dance, created Bharatanatyam. Bharatanatyam is considered as a fire dance, manifesting spiritual element of fire inherent in human body to celebrate the eternal universe. It combines feminine and masculine aspects that are expressed through creatively choreographed

movements accompanied by music.

Bharatanatyam is a traditional Indian dance from the temples of Tamil Nadu in southern India. One of the most respected dance forms, a Bharatanatyam dance tells a story. Bharatanatyam consists of three divisions – 'Nirutham', 'Niruthiyam' and 'Natyam'. 'Nirutham' is movement of hands, feet, head and eyes with no expression. 'Niruthiyam' has expressions while 'Natyam' is the combination of 'Nirutham' and 'Niruthiyam' with music. In Bharatanatyam, dancers use their imagination to tell a story through dance and music.

There are four types of 'abhinaya' in dance, namely, 'Anghika' or physical movement, 'Vachika' or song, 'Aaharya' or ornaments, 'Satvika' or movements like trembling, tears etc. Performance of Bharatanatyam goes through innumerable sections such as 'Alaripu', 'Kayathuvam', 'Stuti', 'Koothu', 'Tillana' and 'Angikam'. They represent invocation to the gods, praise of a deity, telling a story of lovers separated and reunited.

Dancers wear 'temple jewelry' such as rope or leather anklets with copper bells during performance. Jewelry of those who have better control and fluid movement do not produce much sound and this is a criterion to judge their talent and skill. In ancient times, dancers used costumes that left parts of their bodies bare. Subsequently, they used heavy 'sarees' which often affected their movement. At present, they use lighter and symbolic costumes.

Before the dance can begin, dancers need to be wearing the right clothes. The style has been passed down for generations, and normally includes traditional Indian clothes like saris or lenghas, which have pleats which flow with the dancer's moves.

Carnatic music forms a vital part of Bharatanatyam. It is played by south Indian instruments such as 'Mridangam', 'Nathaswaram', the Flute, Violin and 'Veena'. Dancers also wear a pair of leg bells known as ghungroos, which create rhythmic sounds to go along with the dance. Make-up and accessories are also used to capture the audience's attention.

The dance usually begins with an opening routine called the namaskaram. Dancers have to bang the floor to tell Mother Earth they will be dancing on her, and also offer prayers to her, the audience and guru. As the dancer begins to move, she uses gestures to tell the dance's story. Mudras, or hand gestures, can represent anything from everyday objects and animals to emotions. Drishti bhedas, the eye movements, help to convey meaning. And, equally important, natya vardhini, or facial expressions, help to capture the audience's attention.

Bharatanatyam is usually accompanied by the classical music. It is practiced by male and female dancers. Odissi is the classical dance form of Orissa that originated in serene ambience of temples. Devdasi used to perform it in the honour of Lord Jagannath - the temple deity of Puri. Due to political and social changes in the society and suppression of Devdasi system during British rule, Odissi moved out of the temples and acquired a place in the wider Indian society. It was revived to its earlier glory during the cultural renaissance that started at the time of freedom struggle.

Odissi is a lyrical form of dance with subtlety as its keynote. It is a 'sculpturesque' style of dance with a harmony of line and movement. Odissi has developed its own vocabulary of foot positions, head movements, eye

movements, body positions, hand gestures, rhythmic footwork, jumps, turns and spins. The major difference between Odissi and Bharatnatyam is that Odissi has more curves of the body, which makes it more sensual as compared to the athleticism, and angular nature of the Bharatnatyam.

The music accompanying Odissi is a mix of Hindustani and Carnatic systems. The instruments traditionally used are drums, flute and small cymbals. The dancers adorn themselves with the traditional silver jewellery and wear a stitched costume, which has five pieces including the angrakha, blouse and pajama. The major Odissi dance styles are - Mangalacharan, Battu, Pallavi, Adhinaya and Moksha.

It is the oldest of the eight classical dance forms of India. Its antiquity is proved by its reference in Natya Shastra and archaeological evidence found in the caves of Odisha. It differs from other dance forms in the sense that it lays stress on 'Tribhangi' – in which head, chest and pelvis move independently – including other 'Bhangas' such as 'Bhanga', 'Abhanga' and 'Atibhanga'.

Like Bharatanatyam, Odissi also has a temple history. It was regularly performed in Jagannath Temple, Shaivite, Vaishnavite and Sakta temples in Odisha. Many Jain temples and Buddhist monasteries in Odisha bear clear evidence Odissi dance being performed by 'Devdasis' and other dancers.

Odissi classical dance form has three major schools, namely, 'Mahari', 'Nartaki' and 'Gotipua'. 'Maharis' were temple girls. In ancient times, they performed 'Nritya' or pure dance and 'Abhinaya' or interpretation of 'Mantras' and 'Slokas'. Later they switched to Jayadev's Gita Govinda to perform select dance sequences. Gotipuas were boys dressed up as girls and taught the dance by the Maharis. Only this tradition out of these three remains extant today.

'Nartaki' dance was performed predominantly in the royal courts. During the British period, the 'Devdasi' system was strongly opposed and Odissi dance shifted its venue from the temples to the courts.

Odissi is performed in different pieces. One such piece is 'Mangalacharan', which is an invocation to God. 'Battu Nritya' is performed in honor of Lord Shiva and 'Pallavi' is performed to elaborate a 'raga' through movements of eyes, postures of body and complex footwork. 'Abhinaya' is enacting a song through gestures of hand, expression of face and movement of eye and body. 'Moksha' is the final item which the dancer performs to symbolize liberation from the worldly bondage and ascent to a sublime state of spiritual bliss.

Like in Bharatanatyam, music plays an integral part in Odissi. Instruments such as 'Veena', 'Pakhawaj', 'Kartala' and 'Venu' are played to create the right tune and rhythm to match the effect of the dance.

### Costumes

In Odissi the women dancers wear the patta sari a brightly coloured silk sari which is nine yards long and a black or red blouse called the kanchula. An apron-like silk cloth, known as the 'nibihanda', is tied from the waist like a frill worn around the legs. The waistband, called the jhobha, is a length of cord with tasseled ends. The Patta sari used by dancer in odissi are particularly coloured with bright shades of orange, purple, red or green. Sambalpuri Saree and

Bomkai Saree are also preferred in odissi dance formats. The beautiful Pallu in this dance is called the Thallaippu. This pleat is made in the front that makes the costume very rich and colourful. The decorative headpiece of the dancer is made from Styrofoam, which is shaped like flowers.

The costumes of Bharatnatyam dancer are very bright and gorgeous. The costumes consist of a dothi for both the genders. It is basically embroidered brocade. It fits snugly above the ankles and is pleated along the legs, which it encases. Over the dhoti, in the middle, is a pleated or frilled cloth hanging from the waist to the knees. The upper part of the male dancer's body that is above the waist remains bare save for a necklace. And the Women dancer put on a tight fitting choli of the same colour and material as the dhoti.

Similarities-Blouse, Pyjama are used in both the cases.

Dissimilarities- Bomkai Saree in Odissi whereas Pattu Saree used in Bharatanatyam, 3 pieces in Odissi and 6 pieces in Bharatnatyam, Uttari is used in Odissi, Pallu is not in Odissi. Kanchula in Odissi and small fan in Bharatanatyam. Sarees are with side pleat style in Odissi but Middle pleated in Bharatanatyam.

### Make-up and Hair Style

There are three kinds of hairstyles in Odissi dance. They are the ardh bathaka or semicircular bun; the pushpa-chuda with the hair of the dancer coiled into the shape of a flower and the kati-beni, which is a single plait down the back. But the Hairstyle in Bharatanatyam mainly of Kunjalam which is three cotton pom's to tie at the end of a braid, two rubber bands, hair Extension real or fake Gajra in white colour forehead with a pattern made from white kumkum around it, Kajal (black eyeliner), applied around the eyes with a broad outline. In odissi the dancer decorated their eyes with kohl and there is a small mark on the chin. They also use a crown namely Mookut in their head. The Mukoot consists of two parts one is Ghoba and other Tahiya. . The flower decorated back piece of the crown is known as the Ghoba. The longer piece that emerges from the centre of the back piece is called the Tahiya. these two piece of the crown on the so called mukoot of the odissi dancer represents the temple spire of Lord Jagannath or the flute of Lord Krishna.

Similarity- Almost same for both dances.

Dissimilarities- Pushpa-chuda- Long Plait with Gajara, Tahiya- Kunjalam

### Jewellery

In Odissi, filigree silver jewellery are used by the dancer of both genders. But these are important parts of a female dancer's costume. The hair is drawn into an elaborate bun on which the Tahiya is placed. The Seenthi is a jewellery piece placed on the hair and forehead. The dancers face is decorated with Tikka made by hand with sandalwood paste. Mathami or MathaPatti (forehead ornament), Allaka (head piece which the tikka hangs), unique ear covers called Kapa in intricate shapes usually depicting the peacock's feathers, an ear chain Jhumkas (bell shaped earrings), a short necklace, and a long necklace with a hanging pendant. For hand ornaments the dancer wears a pair of armllets also called Bahichudi or Bajuband, which is put on upper arm. A pair of Kankana (bangles) at the wrist part ankle bells around the ankles. The dancer's palms and soles are painted with red coloured dye called the Alta.

But in Bharatanatyam jewellery is popularity known as

Temple Jewellery. There are Jumka (Ear ornament), Oddiyanam (waist band), Nathni (nose ring), Long Mala (long necklace), Short Mala (choker), Vaanki (arm bands), Chudiya Matching colored bangles with dress), Ghungroo (musical anklet with metallic bells), Mattal (forehead ornament), Surya (sun shaped hair ornament) Chandra (moon shaped hair ornament) etc.

Similarities- Long Mala (long necklace) for both.

Dissimilarities- Silver jewellery (Tarakasi ornaments)- Temple Jewellery (Kempu ornaments), Surya (sun shaped hair ornament) Chandra (moon shaped hair ornament) Mathami or Matha Patti (forehead ornament)- Mattal (forehead ornament) Kapa -Jumka, Naka Phula-Nathni (nose ring) Nattu and Bullaku, Short Mala (chika)- Short Mala (choker), Bajuband (Taita)- Vaanki (arm bands), Bengapatia-Oddiyanam (waist band), Kankana (bangles) -Chudiya (colored bangles to match)

### Musical Instruments

There are a number of musical instruments used in Odissi dance. One of the most important is the Pakhawaj, also known as the mardal. The most significant instrument is pakhawaj. The others are Tabla, Flute, manjira (metal cymbals), sitar and violin. But in case of Bharatnatyam, The mridangam and a pair of cymbals are used. The other instrument like Veena, Ghatam, Violin, Manjira.

The musical instruments in Bharata Natyam are the mridangam. Sometimes veena, (Nattvangan), Ghatam, Tabala, and flute are also used. The vidwan (expert) sets the refrain, which is repeated by the chorus. The cymbals provide the timing, while the supplies fractional measures of the broad beats. The dancer follows the mridangam and cymbals. A tambura is often incorporated in the orchestra to provide the scale for the refrain.

Similarities- Violin, Flute, Manjira, Tabala are common for two dances.

Dissimilarities- Pakhawaj, Sitar, Sankha are used for Odissi. However, Mridangam, Veena, and Ghatam are used in Bharatanatyam.

### Result

A comparison between Odissi and Bharatanatyam dance showed difference in terms of style, technique, origin, history, costume, jewellery, hairstyle, instruments, etc. Bharatnatyam is straight and more over angular. Odissi has more torso movement which makes it look more beautiful. So, Odissi is preferable as compared to Bharatnatyam Dance. Odissi is simple and attractive as compared to Bharatanatyam.

### Conclusion

The five classical dances of India are considered to be the mystic manifestation of the metaphysical elements of nature (Panchatatva) in the human body. These include Odissi (element of water), Kuchipudi (element of earth), Mohiniattam (element of air), Bharatnatyam (element of fire) and Kathakali (element of sky or aether). In this article, a comparison is made among the classical dance.

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