

# *New Experiments and innovations in Indian classical dance*

Guide

**Dr. Smruti Vaghela**

University: Faculty of Performing Arts  
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda,  
Vadodara

**Harshada Chavan**

University: Faculty of Performing Arts  
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda,  
Vadodara

There are eight popular Indian classical dances of India and till today we continued or followed the same pattern which was already aggregated by our dancers and scholars. This pattern was arranged in a very particular way. That is a very big and amazing thing that we are following our tradition and we keep continuing as it is. But another way we also became very rigid and not exploring our dance style. Every art has to be limitless and then it can grow with the period. After the revival of Indian classical dance styles, there so many Indian and western dancers give their contributed to uplifting our rigid dance version and also expanding the new variation to just give a new direction to our Indian dance styles. They started doing new experiments and innovations in the costumes, makeup and performing area.

The innovations and experiments in different classical dance styles:

The first Indian innovator who initiated this change was Uday Shankar. He based his dancing on the elementary principles of the existing classical and folk dances and created a new form. He took real-life themes in his dancing. He based his dancing on the elementary principles of the existing classical and folk dances and created a new form. He took real-life themes in his dancing. He worked on very different themes which are very interesting and connected to normal people so that every normal human being can connect himself very easily.

## **Different themes:**

“Shiva Tandava” shows the victory of good over evil. 'Labour and machinery show the harmony of science and spirituality. These ballets are powerful interpretations of contemporary life through the medium of gesture, sound, and music.

## **Use of technology:**

In 'Shankar Scope' the other dance theme of Uday Shankar he has used technology to present his work. He put a screen at the back of the stage, and Mallika Sarabhai

also gave Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi a creative touch. Her works included dancing on the sand, and creating an image while doing so. Dancing on a pot turned upside down, making the perfect sound. Her works also included dance dramas, using different properties like masks, etc. where images of thoughts and emotions that the character of the play was going through were depicted while the dancer did his steps.

Rabindranath Tagore presented many of his plays as dance dramas or dance operas using his technique, which is the Shantiniketan style. He mixed Manipuri and the available folk style to create a unique style of dancing. Tagore's dance dramas, songs, and poetry called for innovation in technique. 'Chandalika' and 'Chitrangada' are two of the many examples of his innovative work.

## **BHARATANATYAM**

Rukmini Devi is one of the pioneers of the Bharatnatyam dance. Rukmini Devi introduced instruments like a violin in Bharatnatyam. She changed the set and light design elements. She also experimented with costumes and jewellery. These changes could be seen in her pioneering dance dramas based on Ramayana and Geeta Govind.

In Bharatnatyam dance, the other dance that introduces the new 'Mayur Alaripu' is also a very interesting innovation by Rama Vidhya Nathan. She performed this Alaripu differently from our traditional Alaripu it is with Mayura hasta used and she also changed his directions while performing and also its movements are like a peacock there for it is called Mayur Alaripu. She performed it in a very vibrant way after this first innovation of Mayur Alaripu we can find other so many different types of Alaripu after this Rukmini Vijaykumar also did this Alaripu but it is in Mishra Chapu Talam.

Dakshina Vaidhyathan's 'nakshatra' was based on our different types of 12 Rashi their symbol. In this composition, she presents all 12 Rashi in different movements. Also, she used music to relate to that Rashi. Her other dance composes of historical subjects but she

presents it unique style and also, she mostly used duets in this type of choreography.

Rukmini Vijaykumar is also a very famous dancer who also explores Bharatanatyam in different ways, she wears different types of practice sari in her performances and her dance themes are also very unique like she beautifully used karanas in Bharatanatyam. She also experiments dance with water in her production 'Meghan' which describes the physical impact of water in our lives.

We can also see the change in the Margam of Bharatanatyam. For example, today the Varnam is performed between 20 to 35 minutes as compared to the old system in which it was performed for at least 40 to 45 minutes. This is the new experiments in Bharatanatyam dance.

## **KATHAK**

Kumudini Lakhia has also given much thought to the subject of tradition and change. Her choreography is usually based on social concerns and issues which she presents through medium of Kathak. 'Duvidha' shows the turmoil of a woman torn between tradition and the contemporary value system. 'Setu' portrays the plight of a young blind girl trying to bridge the gap between her desires and reality. Costume and tradition Kumudini Lakhia is perhaps the first to give Kathak a distinctive group image, breaking the tradition of solo or duet dancing that prevailed.

**Costume:** She also improvised the costumes of Kathak. She designed simple and aesthetic costumes as opposed to the frilly ones. She also replaced the chunky jewellery with simple jewellery which would not disturb the dancer while performing.

Aditi Mangaldas is yet another exponent who has experimented with and brought about so many changes in Kathak dance. From costume, make-up, and jewellery to the fusion of contemporary with Kathak, using lights as part of the dance performances and use of the stage, she has created a whole new era of representing Kathak in a very innovative and new way. In her works 'Now Is' and 'Timeless' etc.

**Her innovation with light and music:** she and her troop has performed Kathak without ghungroos. Also, instead of traditional live music that accompanies the Kathak dance, she has used recorded music. The lighting effect in each of her works is different and unique, it reflects the mood of the music or the theme.

**Her innovation in costume and jewellery:** The costume she has designed is bold. The traditional Anarkali style costumes have been traded for palazzo and tight-fitting corsets. She does not wear any duppatta. The boys are also dressed similarly. No ornaments are worn at all and very little makeup is applied.

Aditi Bhagwat in her work has done a fusion of Lavani and Kathak. She also performed a unique composition by dancing Shiv tandava to rock music. She has also done a Kathak and Flamenco jugalbandi with Flamenco dancer La Sonja from New York.

Daksha Sheth's 'Summer' was choreographed to the music of 'The Four Seasons' by Italian composer Vivaldi. It was an attempt to mix classical Kathak technique with western music. In terms of movement language, it was an exploration of variations of pirouetted. 'Sarpagati – the way of the serpent' is a contemporary style of dancing where Daksha has used Kalaripayattu exercise positions, entwining and slithering movements, and rope gymnastics for this piece. Her bold treatment of sensuality is a step toward a new dimension of dance.

Piyush Chauhan and Priti Sharma danced Kathak to Bollywood songs. In one of their choreographies, they have used gulaal during their performance, and in another one, they have used moving property throughout their dance. Thus, in Kathak dance we can also find beautiful changes.

## **KATHAKALI**

Mrinalini Sarabhai experimented with Kathakali dance form, presenting it without the heavy costume and the make-up, in her creative work 'Manushya'. In this work, she has employed Bharatanatyam for women and Kathakali for men. In her 'Dance of Life,' she depicted the history of Indian science through the Bharatanatyam dance style. Variations in costume and music can be seen in this work.

In 'Angika' choreographed by Chandralekha, she talks about what is happening to the human body in our times. Through this work, Chandralekha explored the physical traditions like Kalaripayattu, the martial art of Kerala, and its relation with dance. From this innovation get attention on this dance style and also explore our rigid mind set about this dance style which is really very grateful thing for our Kathakali dancers.

## **KUCHIPUDI**

In Kuchipudi dance style Mallika Sarabhai is

tremulous and successful innovator. She also gave Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi a creative touch. Her works included dancing on the sand, and creating an image while doing so. Dancing on a pot turned upside down, making the perfect sound. Her works also included dance dramas, using different properties like masks, etc.

## MANIPURI

For Manipuri dance Priti Patel is the most successful innovator. she choreographed so beautiful experiments in Manipuri dance and martial arts and laiharoba. In her production 'suryagati' she presented the whole movement of the sun from morning to night. According to the new direction in Indian dance by Sunil Kothari "Priti Patel and her team of thang-tha dancers and drummers invest Manipuri dance tradition with a contemporary kinetic language with which the audience can identify from the stories of the gods and goddesses to stories of people, dancers have made a long journey and with the emergence of young choreographers the boundaries of Manipuri dancers are being extended."

## MOHINIATTAM

Mohiniattam is known for its shringarik and feminine style. In this, we have also sewed the change in their dance theme like Bharti Shivaji choreographed mohiniattam dance the whole team on 'Swan Lake' with Tchaikovsky's original music very unique choreography.

## CONCLUSION:

Thus, we can see a constant process of innovation and change, with each generation focusing either on what was prohibited before or responding to changing paradigms of perception concerning tradition and the technique of dance. and the innovations and the experiments are very interesting for our new generation to grab the attention towards our ancient art form its major purpose is not to change the ancient technique or presentation but is just to realize that our traditional dance form is not rigid but it is limitless.

## References :

- NEW DIRECTIONS IN INDIAN DANCE by Sunil Kothari
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rukmini\\_Vijayakumar#Dance\\_productions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rukmini_Vijayakumar#Dance_productions)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ops5EwguyJE>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ss9dSfRXTY>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdhWZiaDhzY>

