

MCQ Question · mcqquestion.com

Odissi

Free · Share

Odissi

Practice: 5 MCQs



A male Odissi dancer holds a mudra at an Odissi festival. Photo by Prateek Pattanaik, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Odissi is a classical dance from Odisha, tied to the worship of Jagannath.

This page covers where Odissi came from and who the Maharis and Gotipuas were. It shows how the dance nearly vanished under colonial rule. It also explains how gurus rebuilt it and what exams ask.

- **Home:** Odisha; devotion to **Jagannath** at Puri.
- **Dancers:** Maharis (women) and Gotipuas (boys).
- **Ban:** temple dances banned by the British in 1910.
- **Rebuilt:** Jayantika met in 1958; classical status between the late 1950s and 1960s.

Contents

1. Where does Odissi come from?
2. Maharis and Gotipuas
3. How Odissi nearly vanished
4. How Odissi was rebuilt
5. What exams ask
6. 3 understanding checks
7. Related Articles
8. 5 practice MCQs

1. Where does Odissi come from?

1.1 What is Odissi?

Odissi is a classical dance from Odisha, in eastern India. It is known for its flowing grace and sculpture-like poses. It is also known for **bhakti bhava**. This means an attitude of devotion and surrender.

The dance is closely tied to the worship of Lord **Jagannath** at Puri.

Today Odissi is counted among India's classical dances. Many Odissi dancers claim it is the oldest of them. Sahapedia describes this as a claim. It rests on buildings, texts and living rituals.

1.2 What does old evidence say about dance in Odisha?

The **Natyashastra** is an old Sanskrit text on drama and dance. It names an Odra-Magadhi style of dance. Many scholars see it as an early ancestor of Odissi.

The oldest stone evidence is in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves near Bhubaneswar. They are Jain cave-temples from the second century BCE. Their walls carry scenes of music and dance.

The Ranigumpha cave shows men and women dancing around a tree, with musicians. An inscription in the Hathigumpha cave mentions a performance of **tandava** and **abhinaya** arranged by King Kharavela. Tandava is vigorous dance. Abhinaya is expression.

From the sixth century CE, Odisha's rulers built many temples. Bhubaneswar has several from the sixth to the thirteenth century. Their walls carry carvings of dancers and musicians.

The Jagannath temple at Puri was built in the twelfth century by the Ganga king Anantavarman Chodagangadeva. The Sun Temple at Konark followed in the thirteenth century. Large temples often had a **natamandira**. This was a hall for dance.

Sources:

- Sahapedia, A Brief History of Odissi Dance
- Indian Culture Portal, Odissi

Sahapedia proves that Odissi is the oldest classical dance.

2. Who were the Maharis and the Gotipuas?

2.1 Who were the Maharis?

The **Maharis** were women who sang and danced for the deity as a form of service. The word comes from *maha*, meaning great, and *nari*, meaning woman. The Puri Jagannath temple was the main centre of their service.

A girl joined temple service around eight or nine. Her family could dedicate her, or an older Mahari could adopt her. A ceremony called **sari-bandhan** tied her to the temple and, in ritual terms, to Jagannath.

She was trained by the Rajguru, a teacher from the king's court. Then she took up one of four services. Bhitara Gauni sang inside the inner quarters. Bahara Gauni sang outside. Nachuni danced outside the sanctum. Pathuari danced at festivals and ceremonies.

The Maharis sang and danced to the **Gita Govinda**. This is a Sanskrit poem about Krishna and Radha, written by Jayadeva in the twelfth century. Today it is central to Odissi.

2.2 Who were the Gotipuas?

Gotipua means "one boy". Gotipuas were young boys, usually before puberty. Families dedicated them to temples or to akhadas, which were gymnasiums. There they learned acrobatics, singing and dance.

A boy could be dedicated for a fixed time. Families often did this to thank the deity for protection or for a wish fulfilled.

The tradition is believed to have started in the sixteenth century. It grew under the influence of the Vaishnava saint Chaitanya. The boys dressed as women and danced to songs of love and devotion to Krishna.

They also performed **bandha nritya**. This shows the body's flexibility in tableau-like shapes. Gotipua shows were held outside the temple and were open to the public. Local landlords often paid for the troupes.



A Gotipua dancer in a bandha nritya pose, with a lit oil lamp in front. Photo by Tapas Kumar Halder, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Sources:

- Indian Culture Portal, Odissi (section 2)
- Sahapedia, A Brief History of Odissi Dance (section 2)

3. How did Odissi nearly disappear?

3.1 What went wrong under colonial rule?

Under British rule, temples lost state support. Their dance traditions lost support too. Maharis and Gotipua troupes were discouraged, and the dancing families were pushed to the margins.

Christian missionaries called the dances immoral. By the late 1890s they were calling for a ban. In 1910 the British government banned temple dances. The dancers fell into poverty.

Sahapedia adds more. The Maharis' status as courtesans limited where they could go in the temple. Later, the Maharis were left out of talks on Odissi's future. Their requests for grants for a school were repeatedly denied by the State Academy.

3.2 How did Odia theatre help?

From the 1930s, Odia theatre companies in Puri and Cuttack staged Ras-Lila and new plays. Dance came at the start of a play or between acts. Poet Kalicharan Pattanayak is credited with naming the dance Odissi. Sahapedia says the name came into use only in the late 1950s.

Four gurus got early training in these theatres. They were Kelucharan Mohapatra, Pankaj Charan Das, Deba Prasad Das and Mayadhar Raut. All four worked at the Annapurna Theatre in Cuttack.

Sources:

- Indian Culture Portal, Odissi (section 3)
- Sahapedia, A Brief History of Odissi Dance (section 3)

The British government banned temple dances in 1910.

Think it through: why did the Maharis lose their place in the temple?

Their status as courtesans limited their access, even inside the temple. Colonial rule cut temple support. Then the 1910 ban pushed the dancers into poverty.

4. How was Odissi rebuilt as a classical dance?

4.1 Who rebuilt it, and how?

In 1952, the businessman Babulal Doshi started the **Kala Vikash Kendra** in Cuttack. It was the first centre for research and teaching of Odissi.

On 22 June 1958, a group called **Jayantika** held its first meeting in Cuttack. It had gurus, scholars and writers. They met over five to six years to fix the grammar and repertoire of Odissi.

The group studied temple sculptures, old texts and the living memory of Maharis and Gotipuas. It linked Odissi to texts like the Natyashastra and the Abhinaya Darpana. This was done to support Odissi's claim to be classical.

Not everyone agreed with Jayantika. Pankaj Charan Das parted ways with the group. He disagreed with the way Odissi was being constructed.

4.2 When did Odissi win classical status?

Sahapedia says the Sangeet Natak Akademi accepted Odissi as classical in the late 1950s. The Indian Culture Portal places official recognition in the 1960s. So the safe answer is: between the late 1950s and the 1960s.

Many male gurus of that time had trained as Gotipuas as boys. So the best-known features of Odissi come from the Gotipua style. Pankaj Charan Das is now called the Adi-Guru, or first guru, of Odissi.

Sources:

- Sahapedia, A Brief History of Odissi Dance (section 4)
- Indian Culture Portal, Odissi (section 4)

Think it through: why did Jayantika link Odissi to old texts and temple sculptures?

Odissi needed to show it was a classical dance. So the group tied it to the Natyashastra and the Abhinaya Darpana. It also studied temple sculptures and the memory of Maharis and Gotipuas.

5. What do exams ask about Odissi?



Two basic stances of Odissi. Original explanatory diagram.

5.1 What are the key features of Odissi?

Odissi is built on two stances.

- **Chowk** is a square, symmetrical stance. It is believed to reflect the image of Jagannath.
- **Tribhang** is an S-shaped stance with three bends, at the knee, the torso and the neck.

Jayantika built a five-part repertoire. The parts are mangalacharan, batu or sthai, pallavi, abhinaya and moksha. Each piece runs about five to fifteen minutes. Mangalacharan opens the show with a prayer. Moksha, meaning liberation, ends it.

5.2 Which names and places come up?

- **Kelucharan Mohapatra** is the best-known Odissi guru. He trained as a Gotipua.
- **Sanjukta Panigrahi** was his student and a leading Odissi dancer.
- **Nrityagram** is a dance village near Bangalore. Protima Gauri, a student of Kelucharan Mohapatra, founded it in 1990. It is in Karnataka, not Odisha.

SSC CGL 2024 (9 September, Shift 3) asked which state hosts Nrityagram. The answer is Karnataka, not Odisha. See the question paper, Q19.

Exams like to mix up near neighbours. Odissi began in Odisha, but Nrityagram is in Karnataka. Maharis were women. Gotipuas were boys dressed as women.

Sources:

- Sahapedia, A Brief History of Odissi Dance (section 5)
- SSC CGL 2024 General Awareness, 9 Sep Shift 3, Q19
- Indian Culture Portal, Odissi (section 5)

Nrityagram, the Odissi dance village, is in Odisha.

Your understanding checks

Your 3 quick checks Answered 0 of 3 · Correct 0
This score resets when the page reloads.

Practice: 5 MCQs

Practice MCQs

1. Odissi's signature body posture, involving a three-part bend of the body, is called what?

A. Chowk

B. Samabhanga

C. Ardhamandali

D. Tribhangi

See answer ↓

2. What does the word Gotipua mean?

A. Temple guard

B. One boy

C. Village singer

D. Great woman

See answer ↓

3. Which ceremony tied a Mahari to the Jagannath temple at Puri?

A. Mangalacharan

B. Batu

C. Upanayana

D. Sari-bandhan

See answer ↓

4. The Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves, with early scenes of music and dance, are near which city?

A. Bhubaneswar

B. Konark

C. Puri

D. Cuttack

See answer ↓

5. Which guru was one of the four who got early training at the Annapurna Theatre in Cuttack?

A. Birju Maharaj

B. Rukmini Devi Arundale

C. Kelucharan Mohapatra

D. Uday Shankar

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.**
   The correct answer is **Tribhangi**. Tribhangi, also called Tribhang, is an S-shaped stance with three bends. The bends are at the knee, the torso and the neck. It is one of the two basic stances of Odissi.
   Chowk is the other basic Odissi stance. It is a square, symmetrical stance. Ardhamandali and Samabhanga are not the name of this three-bend posture.
   Memory hook: Tri = three; bhanga = bend.
   ↑ Q1

2. **B.**
   The correct answer is **one boy**. Gotipuas were young boys, usually before puberty. Families dedicated them to temples or akhadas, which were gymnasiums. They learned acrobatics, singing and dance.
   Great woman is the meaning behind Mahari, from maha and nari. The other two options are not the meaning of the word.
   Memory hook: Goti-pua = one boy.
   ↑ Q2

3. **D.**
   The correct answer is **sari-bandhan**. A girl joined temple service when she was around eight or nine. A ceremony called sari-bandhan tied her to the temple and, in ritual terms, to Jagannath.
   Upanayana is a different ritual. Mangalacharan is the opening prayer item of an Odissi show. Batu is a part of the Odissi repertoire.
   Memory hook: Mahari + sari-bandhan = bound to the deity.
   ↑ Q3

4. **A.**
   The correct answer is **Bhubaneswar**. The Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves are Jain cave-temples near Bhubaneswar. They date to the second century BCE. Their walls show music and dance.
   Konark has the Sun Temple, built in the thirteenth century. Puri has the Jagannath temple. Cuttack is where the Jayantika group first met.
   Memory hook: Old dance caves = Bhubaneswar.
   ↑ Q4

5. **C.**

The correct answer is **Kelucharan Mohapatra**. The four gurus were Kelucharan Mohapatra, Pankaj Charan Das, Deba Prasad Das and Mayadhar Raut. All four trained in the Odia theatre of Cuttack. They later helped rebuild Odissi.
Birju Maharaj is a Kathak guru. Rukmini Devi Arundale is linked with Bharatanatyam. Uday Shankar is known for his own modern style of dance.
Memory hook: Four gurus, Cuttack theatre, Odissi.

↑ Q5

Curated by Arsalan Zuberi · mcqquestion.com



Scan to read online

https://mcqquestion.com/articles/artnculture0090-odissi/