MOHINIYATTAM

Mohiniyattam,is one of the famous classical dances of India that developed and remained popular in the state of Kerala. Mohiniyattam dance gets its name from the word 'Mohini' – a historical enchantress avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, who helps the good prevail over evil by developing her feminine powers.

Mohiniyattam's roots, like all classical Indian dances, are in the **Natya Shastra** – the ancient Hindu Sanskrit text on performance arts. However, it follows the **Lasya style** described in Natya Shastra, that is a dance which is delicate, eros-filled and feminine. It is traditionally a solo dance performed by women after extensive training. The repertoire of Mohiniyattam includes music in the Carnatic style, singing and acting a play through the dance, where the recitation may be either by a separate vocalist or the dancer herself. The song is typically in Malayalam-Sanskrit hybrid called Manipravalam.

The Nritya is the expressive aspect of the dance that attempts to communicate a storyline, with emotions and feelings, with spiritual themes. In a nritya, the dance-acting (Abhinaya, Vaittari) expands to include silent expression of words through hand and facial gestures and body motion set to musical notes. The dancer articulates a legend or a spiritual message, aiming to engage the emotions and mind of the viewer.

The basic posture of Mohiniyattam is parted feet, knees bent outwards, an erect upper torso, gentle 8-shape side to side swaying of body along with hips. The footwork is soft, sliding and synchronous with the musical beat and acting.The body movement is sometimes described in

terms of calming images of nature as the swinging of the palm leaves and the gentle undulating of ocean waves.

Simple, yet elegant costume is one of the aspects that give Mohiniyattam a unique identity among classical dance forms of India. The attire for Mohiniyattam consists of white sari, bordered with broad golden brocade (called kasavu in Malayalam).

In Kerala, there are centres that offer training in Mohiniyattam. The Kerala Kalamandalam, which is a deemed university is the premier centre in Kerala for learning classical art forms, where one can undergo training in Mohiniyattam.