

# Enthralling Odissi Dance: A Journey with Shovana Narayan



**Odissi Dance** by Shovana Narayan

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

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Odissi, an ancient classical dance form from the eastern Indian state of Odisha, captivates audiences with its graceful movements, intricate choreography, and profound emotional expression. It is one of the eight major dance styles recognized by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, India's national academy for the performing arts.

Among the most celebrated exponents of Odissi dance is Shovana Narayan, a renowned performer, choreographer, and teacher. Her dedication to preserving and promoting this ancient art form has earned her international acclaim and countless accolades.

## **Nritya Gopalika: A Pioneer of Odissi**

Shovana Narayan was born in 1943 in Chennai, India. She began her dance training at a young age and quickly developed a passion for Odissi. In 1962, she joined the prestigious Nritya Gopalika dance academy in

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, where she studied under the legendary Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra.

Mohapatra was one of the pioneers of Odissi dance and played a pivotal role in its revival and popularization. He developed a unique style that emphasized the feminine grace, lyrical beauty, and spiritual essence of Odissi. Narayan absorbed his teachings with great zeal and went on to become one of his most accomplished students.

### **The Technique and Aesthetics of Odissi**

Odissi dance is characterized by its distinct movements, postures, and expressions. It is performed by both male and female dancers, with each gender having its own unique style.

The basic stance of Odissi is called the chowka, a square position with the legs apart and the knees slightly bent. From this position, dancers execute a variety of graceful movements, including:

- **Bhangis:** Sideways movements involving bending and straightening the knees.
- **Pattas:** Footwork involving rapid tapping and stamping.
- **Chaukis:** Square movements performed with the legs together.
- **Tribhangis:** Poses with three bends in the body, creating a sinuous S-shape.

Odissi dance is also known for its intricate hand gestures, called mudras. These gestures can convey a wide range of emotions and ideas, from love and devotion to anger and sorrow.

## The Emotional Power of Odissi

While Odissi dance is highly technical, it is ultimately about expressing emotions and telling stories. The themes of Odissi repertoire often revolve around love, loss, devotion, and the human condition. Through their movements and expressions, dancers strive to connect with the audience on a deep emotional level.

Shovana Narayan is known for her exceptional ability to convey emotions through her dance. Her performances are filled with passion, intensity, and a profound understanding of the human heart.

## Shovana Narayan's Contributions to Odissi

In addition to her work as a performer, Shovana Narayan has also made significant contributions to the preservation and promotion of Odissi dance:

- **Establishing Nrityagram:** In 1990, Narayan co-founded Nrityagram, a dance village and school dedicated to the study and performance of Odissi. Located in the serene surroundings of Hesaraghatta, Karnataka, Nrityagram provides a nurturing environment for dancers to immerse themselves in the art form.
- **Choreographing New Works:** Narayan has choreographed over 100 new Odissi works, including full-length productions and solo pieces. Her choreography is known for its innovation while remaining rooted in the traditional grammar of the dance.
- **Teaching and Mentoring:** Narayan is a renowned teacher who has trained numerous students, both in India and abroad. She is passionate about passing on her knowledge and skills to the next generation of dancers.

## Odissi Dance in the Modern World

In recent years, Odissi dance has gained increasing popularity both in India and around the world. Artists like Shovana Narayan have played a crucial role in introducing this ancient art form to new audiences. Today, Odissi is performed on stages worldwide and studied by dancers from diverse backgrounds.

The future of Odissi dance looks bright. With passionate exponents like Shovana Narayan carrying the torch, this captivating art form will continue to enthrall and inspire audiences for generations to come.

Odissi dance is a testament to the rich cultural heritage of India. It is an art form that combines grace, beauty, and profound emotional expression. As a dedicated exponent of Odissi, Shovana Narayan has dedicated her life to preserving and promoting this ancient tradition. Through her performances, choreography, and teaching, she has inspired countless people and helped to ensure that Odissi dance will continue to captivate audiences for generations to come.



## Shovana Narayan performing Odissi dance



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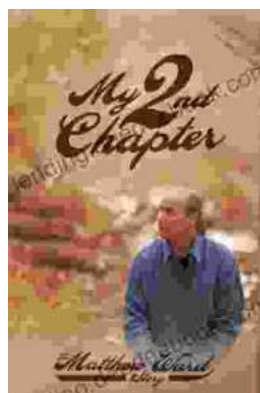
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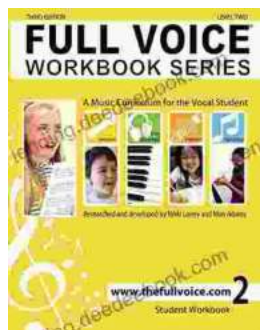
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