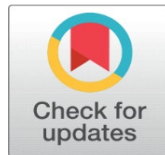
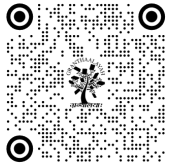


# PHYSICAL FITNESS FOR BHARATANATYA DANCERS

P. M. Kumar <sup>1</sup>, Dr G. J. Leema Rose <sup>2</sup>✉

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Bharatanatyam, Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts, Tiruchirappalli, India

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Bharatanatyam, Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts, Tiruchirappalli, India



## Corresponding Author

Dr G. J. Leema Rose,  
[leemagretakkcfa@gmail.com](mailto:leemagretakkcfa@gmail.com)

## DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.1053](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.1053)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Copyright:** © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



## ABSTRACT

Bharatanatyam is an Indian classical dance that originated from Tamil Nadu in southern India. It is a tradition steeped in Indian history and culture. Today, Bharatanatyam is a dance style that encompasses religious and non-religious themes, as well as fusion styles. Characterized by precise movements, sharp edges, and expressive body language, this tradition has delighted audiences for generations. Like many other aspects of Indian tradition, this art form has struggled through times of oppression. However, with the efforts of teachers and students all over the world, Bharatanatyam has been revived to continue to serve the people who find joy in the formal and intuitive expressions embodied in the structure of the dance. Bharatanatyam, an ancient classical dance style originating from South India, combines aesthetic beauty, spiritual expression, and physical skill. Bharatanatyam mesmerizes global audiences with its rich cultural background, exquisite footwork, beautiful gestures, and expressive narrative. The dancer's physical health is crucial for performing intricate movements with accuracy, strength, and elegance in this art form.

**Keywords:** Physical, Fitness, Bharatanatyam, South India

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, (Rimmer, E., et al., 2014) there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the need of physical fitness in Bharatanatyam training. Dancers are increasingly looking for ways to improve their strength, flexibility, endurance, and overall well-being to match the demands of this challenging art form. Although there is abundant information on general fitness principles, there is a lack of resources expressly designed for the distinctive requirements of Bharatanatyam dancers.

This article aims to investigate the correlation between physical fitness and Bharatanatyam performance. It seeks to offer dancers, instructors, and healthcare experts a thorough understanding of the crucial elements of physical fitness necessary for excelling in Bharatanatyam. This chapter will explore flexibility,

strength, endurance, balance, agility, and mindfulness to establish a comprehensive approach to physical training for dancers, enabling them to achieve their artistic potential while protecting their physical health.

It will provide practical insights and evidence-based ways for enhancing physical fitness for Bharatanatyam practice by combining ancient dance practices with contemporary fitness methodologies. It will discuss typical injury concerns for Bharatanatyam dancers and provide preventive ways to reduce these risks and enhance dancers' long-term health and career longevity.

Also, it is an essential resource for Bharatanatyam dancers and practitioners, offering them the necessary knowledge, skills, and advice to develop a robust and enduring body capable of expressing the beauty and complexity of this ancient art form. Dancers can enhance their lives on and off the stage by adopting the physical fitness principles detailed in this chapter, leading to self-discovery, artistic development, and improved physical well-being.

## **2. VERSATILITY**

Flexibility is essential in Bharatanatyam dancing as it is important for performing the intricate movements, flowing gestures, and expressive positions that characterize this classical art form. Increased flexibility improves the visual appeal of the dance and lowers the likelihood of injury from the strenuous physical requirements of Bharatanatyam.

Flexibility training (Krasnow et al., 2013) for Bharatanatyam dancers enhances joint mobility, enabling more profound and expressive movements. Having a broader range of motion in the hips and knees is crucial for movements like aramandi, allowing dancers to effortlessly and gracefully acquire the typical low stance. Flexibility in the spine and shoulders aids in fluid movement and improves the elegance of hand gestures (mudras) and facial expressions (abhinaya).

Bharatanatyam dancers can enhance their flexibility by include a range of stretching exercises in their training routine. Engaging in dynamic stretching exercises like leg swings and arm circles can effectively warm up the muscles and ready them for the physical requirements of dance practice. Static stretches entail holding muscles in an elongated position for a duration and can be utilized to focus on particular muscle groups employed in Bharatanatyam motions, like the hamstrings, quadriceps, calves, shoulders, and back.

Dancers (Laws et. al. ,2005; Shah, Shonali B. & Alan M. Nathan, 2010) must carefully and mindfully engage in flexibility training, being cautious not to overstretch or exceed the body's limits to prevent injury. Consistency is crucial for dancers to enhance flexibility gradually by include stretching exercises in their regular practice regimen. Furthermore, integrating yoga practices like asanas (postures) and pranayama (breathing exercises) helps improve flexibility and body awareness.

Flexibility is a key element of Bharatanatyam dance, enhancing the smoothness, elegance, and emotiveness of the motions. Bharatanatyam dancers can improve their performance quality, lower the chance of injuries, and strengthen their connection to the art form by including consistent flexibility training in their practice routine.

### **3. COMPOSITION OF THE BODY**

Body composition significantly impacts the performance and overall health of Bharatanatyam dancers. The body composition of dancers significantly affects their strength, endurance, agility, and aesthetic presentation on stage due to the demanding physical activity and precise movements involved.

It is crucial for bharatanatya dancers to maintain a balanced body composition to enhance their performance abilities. This usually entails regulating the proportion of muscle mass to body fat, while also maintaining sufficient hydration and nutrients to sustain energy levels and aid in recuperation.

Strong muscle mass is crucial for bharatanatya dancers to perform dynamic movements, maintain stability in demanding poses, and sustain their bodies over long durations of dancing. Strength training activities including bodyweight exercises, resistance training, and plyometrics can assist dancers in developing and preserving muscular mass, as well as enhancing general strength and endurance.

Dancers must simultaneously regulate their body fat levels to attain the optimal equilibrium of strength, agility, and attractiveness. Having too much body fat might hinder movement efficiency and agility, while having too little body fat can affect energy reserves and overall health. Dancers should prioritize maintaining a healthy body fat percentage by following a balanced diet, engaging in frequent exercise, and staying properly hydrated.

Proper hydration is essential for bharatanatya dancers' body composition as dehydration can hinder physical performance, coordination, and cognitive function. Dancers should aim to maintain ideal hydration levels by consuming water consistently throughout the day and replacing fluids lost during vigorous dance practice or performance.

Dancers should focus on consuming a balanced diet that supplies the essential nutrients required to sustain their physical activity levels and recovery demands. This involves consuming sufficient protein for muscle repair and growth, carbs for energy, and vital vitamins and minerals for overall health and well-being.

Attaining and preserving a harmonious body composition is crucial for Bharatanatyam dancers to excel in their performances and ensure their long-term health and wellness. Dancers can enhance their performance and thrive in their profession by focusing on strength training, controlling body fat levels, maintaining hydration, and consuming nutritional foods.

### **4. MUSCULAR FITNESS**

Muscular health (Koutedakis et. al.,2004) is essential for Bharatanatya dancers since it gives them the strength, endurance, and stability needed to perform the complex movements, poses, and transitions of this classical Indian dance style. Strong and enduring muscles in certain groups are crucial for maintaining alignment, balance, and control throughout performances, as well as minimizing fatigue and injury risk.

Bharatanatya dancers can improve their physical fitness by including specific strength training exercises in their training routine. The exercises should target the development of strength, endurance, and stability in essential muscle groups used in Bharatanatyam, such as the legs, core, back, shoulders, and arms.

To strengthen the quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, and calf muscles for stability in standing postures and dynamic footwork sequences, include exercises like squats, lunges, calf raises, and leg presses in your routine.

Core strength is crucial for maintaining balance and stability during bharatanatya exercises, as well as for providing support to the spine and pelvis in different positions. Engaging in core-strengthening exercises like planks, Russian twists, and bicycle crunches can assist dancers in building a robust and steady core, improving their performance and reducing the risk of injuries.

Furthermore, strong upper body muscles are crucial for performing arm movements (hastas) and gestures (mudras) accurately and elegantly. Performing exercises like push-ups, triceps dips, bicep curls, and shoulder presses can enhance arm, shoulder, and upper back strength and endurance, leading to improved quality and fluidity of arm motions in Bharatanatyam.

Bharatanatya dancers must engage in strength training with correct form and technique to reduce the likelihood of injury. Dancers should begin with low weights or resistance bands and then progressively raise the intensity as they develop strength and skill. Additionally, including workouts that focus on balance and stability, such as single-leg squats or standing balance poses, can further strengthen muscular fitness and improve overall performance quality.

Ultimately, muscular fitness is an essential element of physical preparation for bharatanatya dancers, allowing them to execute their performances with power, accuracy, and elegance. Dancers can improve their muscular strength, endurance, and stability by including specific strength training exercises in their routine and emphasizing correct form and technique. This will enhance their performance abilities and artistic expression in this challenging dance style.

## 5. CARDIOVASCULAR ENDURANCE

Cardiovascular (Borowski, & Laurie A., 2015; Faber et al., 2006) endurance is essential for Bharatanatyam dancers as it allows them to meet the energetic requirements of performances, sustain stamina during long dance sequences, and recover quickly between movements. Improving cardiovascular endurance boosts dancers' performance quality and decreases tiredness, enabling them to execute Bharatanatyam's nuanced movements and emotions with fluidity and grace.

Bharatanatya dancers can enhance their cardiovascular endurance by including aerobic workouts and interval training into their training routine. Engaging in aerobic activities like vigorous walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, or dancing for prolonged durations can increase heart rate, boost circulation, and improve the body's oxygen utilization.

Interval training, characterized by alternating between high-intensity exercise and recovery periods, is very helpful for improving cardiovascular endurance. Dancers can include interval training into their routine by switching between rigorous dance practice or aerobic workouts and active recovery intervals like strolling or mild stretching.

Bharatanatya dancers can improve their cardiovascular endurance by incorporating dance-specific conditioning drills and sequences alongside regular aerobic activities. These activities may involve rehearsing adavus (basic steps) at a faster pace, executing repeating moves rapidly, or creating choreographies with continuous movement patterns to improve cardiovascular fitness and enhance dance technique.

Dancers should progressively intensify and extend their cardiovascular exercise to prevent overexertion and reduce the chances of injury. Utilizing a range of aerobic workouts and interval training methods helps reduce monotony and maintain motivation in dancers while enhancing cardiovascular fitness.

Proper hydration and nutrition are crucial for enhancing cardiovascular endurance and overall performance. Dancers should maintain proper hydration and consume nutrient-dense foods such as complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, and healthy fats before, during, and after training or performances to sustain energy levels.

Cardiovascular endurance is a crucial component of physical conditioning for Bharatanatyam dancers, allowing them to meet the requirements of performances with vigor, stamina, and elegance. Dancers can increase their cardiovascular fitness, boost performance quality, and flourish in classical dance by including aerobic workouts, interval training, and dance-specific conditioning drills in their training routine.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This research has analysed the significance of physical fitness for Bharatanatyam dancers and suggested a holistic method to enhance their performance abilities while emphasizing their long-term health. Dancers can improve their physical fitness and artistic expression in classical Indian dance by focusing on flexibility, strength, endurance, balance, agility, and cardiovascular endurance.

Bharatanatyam dancers can enhance their strength, flexibility, stamina, and agility required for precise and graceful execution of intricate movements by incorporating specialized exercises, dynamic stretching routines, endurance training, and cardiovascular conditioning into their training routine. Furthermore, dancers can reduce the likelihood of accidents and maintain their dance careers by using injury prevention measures and emphasizing appropriate warm-up and cool down routines.

This research article aims to be a beneficial resource for dancers, educators, and healthcare professionals in the Bharatanatyam community, offering them the knowledge, resources, and assistance necessary to enhance physical fitness and succeed in this intricate art form. Bharatanatyam dancers can enhance their life on and off the stage by following the holistic physical fitness concepts discussed in this paper, leading to self-discovery, artistic development, and physical well-being.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

## REFERENCES

- Borowski, & Laurie A. (2015). Cardiovascular conditioning. In *Dance Medicine & Science: Principles and Practice*. Springer-NY, 189-202.
- Faber et al. (2006). Cardiorespiratory fitness and cardiovascular risk factors in non-elite female dancers. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 24(9), 999-1007.

- Koutedakis et. al. (2004). The dancer as a performing athlete: physiological considerations. *Sports Medicine*, 34(10), 651-661.
- Krasnow et al. (2013). Preventing Dance Injuries: Current Perspectives, *Open Access Journal of Sports Medicine*, 4.
- Laws et. al. (2005), Preventing Musculoskeletal Injury: Dance-Specific Variables and Training Principles. *Journal Of Dance Medicine & Science*, 9, (3).
- Rimmer, E., et al. (2014). The effect of a dance specific fitness program on selected physical fitness components of trained classical ballet dancers. *Journal of Dance Medicine & Science*, 18(1), 29-35.
- Shah, Shonali B. & Alan M. Nathan. (2010). Incidence of injury and attitudes to injury management in skilled Indian Bharatanatyam dancers. *Asian Journal of Sports Medicine*, 1(4), 215.