Bihar

The history of Bihar can be traced back to as far as the history of civilization itself. Lord Rama's wife, Sita, is known to have been born in Bihar. The city of Pataliputra or Patna was founded by the great Mauryan Emperor, Ashoka in 270 B.C. The religions of Buddhism and Jainism, revolts against Hinduism, were founded in Bihar. Vardhamana Mahavira attained nirvana in this land and founded the new religion of Jainism; another prince sacrificed all his worldly treasures and meditated under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, attaining salvation from the continuous cycle of birth and rebirth and founding Buddhism. Chanakya, also known as Kautilya, was born here and went on to write the first treatise on the modern science of economics, Arthashastra. This land also witnessed the birth of the tenth and last Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who attained sainthood in Bihar.

The tribal and folk songs, as well as the varied dance forms of Bihar are a representation of the emotional upheavals experienced by the people, along with their values, hopes, beliefs, and traditions- a simultaneous amalgamation of culture, music, art and religion.
Karma Dance

The traditional Karma Dance gets its name from the Karma tree, a symbol of fortune and luck. The dance begins with movements that depict the planting of the tree, followed by circular formations around it. There are usually as many men as women in this group dance; the dancers form a two-tiered formation and the movements are usually backward and forward, towards and away from each other. The dancers swing to the rhythm of the drum and the clapping of hands. Later, breaking the formation, the dancers thread in and out and the body movements involve bending the torso and the knees. The dancers then put their arms around the waists of their neighbours and form semicircular rows. Each row of dancers sings and dances alternately to the accompaniment of the Mandur and the Timki. Drums beat fast and loud and the dance ends on a happy note. The choreography is imaginative and the themes of the songs are contemporary and relevant.
Kajri Dance

The Kajri Dance welcomes the beautiful season of Monsoon: Young girls of the village, bathed in the romance of the season, exchange notes with each other about their beloveds, dance out in the open to express their joy at the approach of the season of fulfillment. The dance is usually performed in the months of Shravan and Bhadra, when rain, the sublime symbol of fertility, of succulence, of birth and rebirth, washes over the land.
Jhijhia Dance

Jhijhia is a prayer dance that originated in the Koshi region of Bihar and is performed during droughts, when the land is dry and parched and there are no signs of clouds in the lifeless sky. Through the Jhijhia dance, the young girls offer their prayers to the King of Gods, Lord Indra. The dancers pray to the Lord of Rains for the rain that will breathe life into their crops. The words of the song *Haali Huli Barsaun Inder Devta* depict the conviction and deep devotion of the dancers as they pray to their Lord.
Jhumar Dance

Jhumar, a traditional folk dance of Bihar, is performed by the rural women. Spring descends upon the earth, prompting the village women to dance in recognition to its beauty. They invite the men folk to join in, who usually provide the musical accompaniment. Though Jhumur songs are associated with Spring, there is no fixed season for this beautiful dance form- it is performed at all times of the year.
Bhojpuri Jhumar Dance

Bhojpuri music and dance is popular in Magadh and its surrounding districts in Bihar. The Bhojpuri Jhumar is a famous folk dance of the Bhojpuri people. With the advent of Spring, the people of this region welcome the season with vibrant songs and dances. This rhythmic dance form is an expression of the joys and sorrows of the people; essentially, a mirror to their lives.
Magahi Jhumar Dance

The Magahi Jhumar dance is usually presented in the form of a duet, where male and female dancers perform, to the accompaniment of melodious music, the role of husband and wife. They dance in unison, expressing their desires and aspirations. The wife asks her husband for good clothes and beautiful ornaments. The husband promises to give her everything she desires.
Mukhota Dance

The Mukhota Nritya is a very interesting dance form, not least because the male dancer appears wearing the mask of a woman on the back of his head. As he dances facing the audience, he is a man, and when he turns around, he is a woman. With every turn of his body, his movements change, and he plays both the roles to perfection. Besides depicting the tender moments between a young man and his wife, this dance also makes statements about sorrow and poverty.
Jat Jatin

The women of the Mithilanchal region perform the Jat Jatin Dance on moonlit nights during the Monsoons. Unmarried girls and young housewives assemble in a courtyard and dance from midnight to dawn, accompanied by a drum. As they dance, they enact the epic story of the love of Jata and Jatin. The most dramatic part of the dance occurs when a wicked boatman breaks through the dancing ring and kidnaps the beautiful Jatin. The lovers are separated but, as is the norm in folk tales, all ends well and the lovers live happily ever after.
Chhath Puja

Chhath is the most important and holy festival of Bihar, celebrated in the month of Kartik. This Puja is unique because it is arguably the only festival in which the devotees worship the setting sun before worshipping the rising sun. The first offering or 'Arghya' is done at sunset, after which the worshippers spend the night on the banks of the river Ganges. The next morning they offer 'Arghya' to the rising sun, before returning home. This prayer dance is performed with great devotion by the dancers.
Jharni Dance

The Jharni Dance is a ritualistic dance performed by the Julaha community during Muharram. The dancers use bamboo sticks split at one end. They stand in a circular formation, and move around, each dancer striking the stick of his partner. The sound produced provides the beat for the dance.
**Jhumeri**

Jhumeri is a folk dance from Mithilanchal. After the month of Ashwin comes Kartik with its clear skies. On the full moon night of Kartik the young maidens of the village sing and dance to celebrate the turn of the season. The words of the Jhumeri song *Kartik Maas Na Akashey Badari* and the graceful movements of the dance cast a spell on the audience.

**Devas**

In the months of Chaitra and Ashwin (during the Navaratri period), Shakti Puja is performed. Devotees believe that the Devi enters the body of a mortal on hearing the prayers of the *Pujari* (priest). The dance depicts this divine presence in our midst.
Sohar Khelwana

Sohar Khelwana is a dance performed by women to celebrate the birth of a child. In India, the arrival of a newborn is celebrated with traditional rituals, and the child receives blessings from family members, neighbours and well-wishers. Through the Sohar songs, the women compare the new born to Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, popular Hindu Gods who are the embodiments of virtue. The eunuchs of the society are an integral part of the celebration of childbirth and take part in this dance.
Krishi Nritya

Rain-drenched earth and fields rich with golden crop-sights that fill the farmers’ hearts with joy. They express their happiness through dances, both rhythmic and enjoyable. In every agrarian society, the farmers look forward to the harvest season. For them, it signifies reaping the sweet fruits of labour, the conclusion of a year’s toil and planning. As the crops ripen in their carefully tended fields, the Krishing celebrate each other’s success and pray for a similarly good harvest in the upcoming year.
Kishan Nritya

The Kishan Nritya is a popular folk dance of Bihar wherein the villagers get together to celebrate the harvest season. They offer thanks to the Almighty for saving them from the vagaries of nature and blessing them with good crops. This dance is an expression of pride of the farmers of Bihar, bringing them together in a bond of brotherhood.

Holi Dance (Dhamar Jogira)

Spring arrives, resplendent in the colours of abir as the magic of Holi sweeps across the land. Commemorative of the victory of good over evil, this Festival of Colours is celebrated with unabated enthusiasm by young and old alike. As the dancers sprinkle colour on one another, they visualize themselves playing with Lord Rama and Goddess Sita or Lord Krishna and his beloved Radhika.

The Holi Dance is a vibrant dance form of Bihar. The accompanying songs are sung in the Dhamar style, with music provided by the Dholak, Daf, and cymbals.

Nachni

The Nachni dances with her Rashik or male partner to the singing and clapping of male accompanists. The Nachri is not only the dancer, but also the singer. The accompanying musical instruments include the Nagara, Shenai and Harmonium. Nachni Dances are presented at various festivals and special occasions.

Natua

The Natua Dance begins with an item called the “Natua Kachai”. In this duet performance, the accompanying musical instruments include the Nagara, Dhol and Shenai. The costumes worn by the dancers are indigenous and attractive.