

NRITYAGRAM DANCE ENSEMBLE & CHITRASENA DANCE COMPANY: **A Meeting of Two Cultures**



STUDY GUIDE

PREK- GRADE 12

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***“When you know what you want, the entire universe conspires with you to realize it.” -
Protima Gauri (1948-1998), Founder of Nrityagram Dance Ensemble & Village***



THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Audience members are an important and unique part of live theater. Remember that anything you say or do as an audience member will be visible and audible to the performer onstage. Your behavior as a member of the audience will make this performance memorable and enjoyable for everyone.

Remember to keep these things in mind:

- ❖ Leave your food, drinks, and gum in your classroom.

- ❖ Turn off all electronics. An unexpected beep or ring in the middle of the performance will distract the audience members and the performers!

- ❖ Remember to respond appropriately and at the correct times. Make sure you pay attention at all times, to let the performer know you are engaged in their performance. They will also let you know what is appropriate and what is not. Some performers will want a lot of audience interaction and some will want none. Make sure you know what is appropriate for the performance you are seeing. Applauding at the end of a show is always appreciated.

- ❖ Open your eyes, ears, and heart to the whole experience! You will get more out of it! Enthusiasm is key!

- ❖ Be respectful of your teachers, the performers, and your classmates. The experience should be enjoyable for everyone!

NRITYAGRAM DANCE VILLAGE

Nrityagram (which means dance village) is located outside Bangalore, India. It was founded in 1990 by Odissi dancer Protima Gauri, who converted ten acres of farmland into a setting for the study, practice and teaching of dance.



Nrityagram is dedicated to creating excellence in Odissi through the traditional method of learning, the Guru-Shishya Parampara, a unique and sacred relationship between mentor and disciple, referred to as mentorship in modern times.

Our dance pedagogy is inspired by the Gurukula, an ancient Indian residential teaching paradigm where students and teachers live together in an integrated environment of practice, theory and discipline. Learning is a way of life and students have a rare opportunity to imbibe the spirit of the Guru by living with them and observing them at work

Conceived this way, for over 30 years, Nrityagram imparts not only technique in dance but nurtures a philosophy of being that embraces holistic practice, mindful living and the pursuit of excellence. The daily schedule includes a unique, scientific body-conditioning and training programme that is sourced from Yoga, Natyashastra, Kalaripayattu, Western fitness methods and Odissi body-conditioning exercises. This training method is designed to increase the performance lifespan of a dancer and is sought-after by accomplished dance and movement professionals from different disciplines.

With a student strength of over 100, we provide an environment that fosters the artistic, intellectual and personal growth of our dancers and prepares them for successful and productive lives as artists and citizens, as well as to become leaders in their professions.

The aim is to prepare dancers for careers that combine performance with teaching, community outreach, and leadership. To enrich their practice, dancers are taught yoga, meditation, and martial arts along with Sanskrit and ancient dance scriptures. Choreographers, musicians, writers, and theatre practitioners from all over the world visit, to perform and conduct workshops and seminars in their area of practice.

This unique blend of traditional knowledge with contemporary understanding and application makes Nrityagram the only institution of its kind in the world and strengthens its position as a ground-breaking institution.

NRITYAGRAM DANCE ENSEMBLE



The Nrityagram Dance Ensemble is regarded as one of the foremost dance companies of India. Led by Artistic Director Surupa Sen, the Ensemble has achieved worldwide critical acclaim, performing across the globe including an annual tour to the United States.

The Ensemble is devoted to bringing Odissi - one of the oldest dance traditions in the world - to audiences worldwide. Performed as far back as 200 BC as a sacred ritual dedicated to the gods, Odissi speaks of love and union, between human and divine, transporting viewers to enchanting worlds of magic and spirituality. Its lush lyricism reflects both the motifs of Odisha temple sculpture as well as the poetry from the deep wellsprings of Oriya music.

Although steeped in and dedicated to ancient practice, the Ensemble is also committed to carrying Indian dance into the twenty-first century. Enabled by grants from International Arts Funding organizations, Nrityagram's dancers not only explore creative expansions of tradition but are also able to commission fresh compositions from leading Indian classical musicians.

Nrityagram has presented seven full-length ensemble shows **Śrī: In Search of the Goddess** (2001), **Ansh** (2005), **Sacred Space** (2005), **Pratimā: Reflection** (2008), **Śriyaḥ** (2010), **Samhāra** (2012) and **Āhuti** (2019); two full-length duet shows **Samyoga** (2012) and **Songs of Love and Longing** (2013) and two full-length solo shows **Yadunandana** (2017) and **Vinati: Songs from the Gita Govinda** (2021). All choreographed by Surupa Sen.

SURUPA SEN

SURUPA SEN **Artistic Director, Choreographer**

Surupa Sen was the first student to graduate from Nrityagram. She began her Odissi training with the architect of Odissi, Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra. She also studied Odissi with Guru Protima Gauri, and Abhinaya (expressional dance) with Guru Kalanidhi Narayanan.

For over two decades, Surupa has researched and expanded the dance vocabulary of Odissi, and developed an aesthetic style that distinguishes the dancers from the Nrityagram Gurukula (School). Attracted to choreography from childhood, Surupa has focussed on making new dances using an expanded Odissi language, rooted in traditional Odissi and the Natyashastra. She has a keen interest in music and rhythm composition and has worked closely with Pt. Raghunath Panigrahi since 1999.



Surupa has choreographed seven full-length ensemble shows for Nrityagram, which are **Śrī: In Search of the Goddess** (2001), **Ansh** (2005), **Sacred Space** (2005), **Pratimā: Reflection** (2008), **Śriyaḥ** (2010), **Samhāra** (2012) and **Āhuti** (2019); two full-length duet shows **Samyoga** (2012) and **Songs of Love and Longing** (2013) and two full-length solo shows **Yadunandana** (2017) and **Vinati: Songs from the Gita Govinda** (2021). She has also created two virtual shows - **Vinati**, a solo for World Music Institute's Dancing the Gods Festival and **Upadāna: An offering** for the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Surupa received the Raza Foundation Award in 2006, the Yagnaraman Award from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai in 2008, the prestigious Nritya Choodamani from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai in 2011 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award 2018 - the highest honor for the Performing Arts in India. Surupa is Artistic Director and choreographer at Nrityagram.

PAVITHRA REDDY



PAVITHRA REDDY

Director of Outreach Activities

Pavithra Reddy lives at a neighboring farm and started her Odissi training in Nrityagram's rural outreach programme in 1990. She was the first student to graduate from Nrityagram's rural outreach programme. She learned Odissi under the tutelage of Surupa Sen and has worked with dancers and movement specialists from across the globe.

Pavithra joined the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble in 1993 and has performed solo and with the Ensemble at some of the most prestigious venues across India and the world.

In addition to being a full-time performer, Pavithra is also one of the primary teachers at Nrityagram.

ABOUT INDIA

India is located in south Asia. The capital is New Delhi, and the most widely spoken language is Hindi. A person who is from India is Indian. India is the seventh largest country in the world, and it has the highest population. A large portion of India is surrounded by the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. The Himalayan Mountains stretch along India's northern border. Countries around India include Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Burma.



TOP 10 FACTS ABOUT INDIA

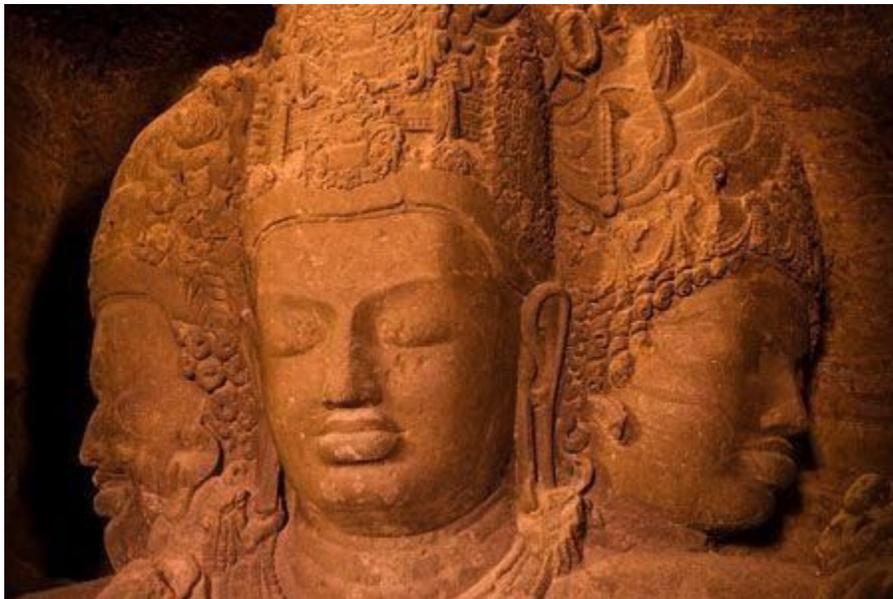
- About 1.3 billion people live in India
- The capital of India is New Delhi, but the largest city is Mumbai.
- India has 22 national languages with their own script and Literature and over 4500 dialects.
- English is the second most spoken language.
- The currency in India is the rupee.
- The main religion in India is Hinduism and the next most popular religion is Islam.
- One of the most important Hindu festivals is Diwali, also called the “festival of lights”.
- Many women in India wear saris, and some men wear dhotis - both are long pieces of cloth draped around the body in a certain way.
- Cows are seen as sacred in India.
- India's film industry, Bollywood is the largest in the world, producing the most films annually.
- Animals found in India include Bengal tigers, elephants, flying foxes, lions and macaques.

HINDUISM

Hinduism is considered to be the oldest “living” religion in the world, since it began at least four thousand years ago and people still follow it today. What we call Hinduism is a huge collection of belief systems that have been influenced and changed over history. Unlike most other major religions, Hinduism has no single founder like Jesus or Mohammad or a central leader like the Pope—because of this, people worship in VERY different ways.

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world, with about 1 billion followers world-wide, most of whom live in India. Hinduism provided the belief structure for all other South Asian religions that followed such as Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism, just as Judaism provided the structure for Christianity and Islam.

Most Hindus believe in one supreme spirit called Brahman. Hindus believe God is all things in the world—not just a spirit in the sky. Brahman does not just exist; it IS existence. Brahman can be worshiped in many forms, such as other “gods” such as Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh or Krishna, so many people think Hindus worship many gods, but actually all other gods represent Brahman in different forms. This is similar to Christianity. Christians worship Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit. They call this the Holy Trinity in Christianity—not three different gods, but three forms of the same God.



Brahman statues at the Elephanta Caves in Mumbai

THE HISTORY OF ODISSI



Odissi, also referred to as Orissi in older literature, is a major ancient Indian classical dance that originated in the Hindu temples located in Odisha – an eastern coastal state of India. Odissi is considered one of the oldest dance forms of India, dating back to the 2nd century B.C.

The foundations of Odissi are depicted in the *Natyashastra*, an ancient Sanskrit text of performance arts (2nd century BC to 2nd century AD). The basic dance units described in the *Natyashastra*, all 108 of them, are identical to those in Odissi.

Innumerable Orissa temples, built over several centuries and adorned with prolific dance sculptures, serve as a veritable lexicon of dance. Sculptural evidence dating to the first century BC shows a dancer performing with musicians before a royal couple. Buddhist, Jain and Hindu archaeological sites in Odisha show inscriptions and carvings of dances that are dated back to the 6th to 9th century. Actual sculptures that have survived into the modern era and reliefs, sculptures where a modelled form projects from a flat background, in Odisha temples, dated from the 10th to 14th century AD, show Odissi dance.

Odissi, in its history, was originally performed by women inside Temples, and expressed religious stories related to Hindu gods and goddesses and spiritual ideas. These women were called “Maharis” or Servants of God and they sang and danced inside the temple for Lord Jagannath (presiding deity of Odissi dance).

Later on another tradition arose, where young boys dressed as women, performed outside the temples - this was Gotipua dance, which was marked by extreme athleticism, and most of the Guru’s responsible for the revival of Odissi dance, were trained in Gotipua dance.

In the 1950’s several Guru’s and Scholars studied Temple sculptures and defined Odissi dance as we know it today, using the sculptures as dance poses and threading them together to make dances. Three “Schools” of Odissi dance were created by three of the most prominent Gurus.



Nrityagram dancers originally learned Odissi from Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra and belong to that

“school” of dance. However, after over 2 decades of research and development, there now exists a Nrityagram “school / style” of Odissi dance.

In addition to Odissi, The Sangeet Natak Akademi, the national level academy for performing arts set up by the government of India, recognizes seven classical Indian dances – Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Sattriya, Manipuri, and Mohiniyattam.



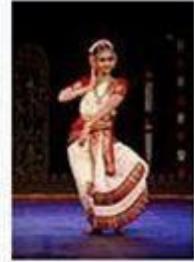
Bharatanatyam



Kathak



Kathakali



Kuchipudi



Odissi



Sattriya



Manipuri



Mohiniyattam

ODISSI TECHNIQUE

Odissi is a lyrical style of dance and follows body norms quite different from those of other dance forms. Its subtlety is at its core and the intimate relationship experienced between the dance and the music is the feature upon which the aesthetic of the style is built.

Torso movements, a specialty of Odissi, conform directly to the positions and movements of the lower half of the body. The lower limbs remain steady in relation to torso movement, and the hips do not move. Rather, the upper torso undulates gently in a vertical plane, the head moving in opposite deflections to the torso causing a visual effect of lyrical, undulating beauty.

The movements in Odissi are lyrical, perhaps due to the curved, rolling and spiral nature of the style. The neck movements follow a natural tilt of the head in relation to the angle of the torso and maintain a central line with that of the upper half of the body. The neck also moves sideways, as opposed to being tilted to the sides.

The hands are used in Odissi around the frame of the body in various ways. Circular Movements and semi-circular extensions of the arms moving downwards or upwards from the center of the chest to the sides are often seen. Often one hand is placed above the head, encircling it as it were and the other extended along the line of the leg, in a relaxed position, like that seen in sculptures all over India.

Dance is an expression of the individual's joy through movement. This pure expression and release of energy, when in the classical mold, must strictly adhere to the codes of a systematized technique. Odissi bases itself on a wealth of such techniques and abounds in prescribed or hand-down codes. Positions of the feet, toe and heel contacts, body positions, deflections of the body, units of movements, are all graceful and subtle.



BHANGAS

Odissi is learned and performed as a composite of basic dance motifs called the Bhangas. The bhangas involve the lower (footwork), mid (torso) and upper (hand and head) body as three individual sources of expression.

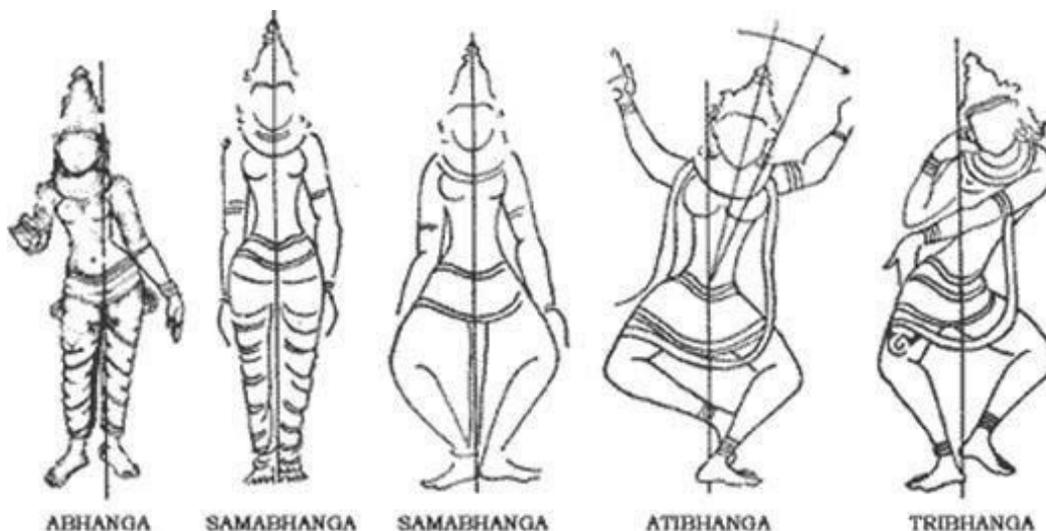
The four basic bhangas in Odissi are:

Abhanga: is an asymmetrical position, with the body weight shifted to either side and one hip consequently dropped lower and the upper body slightly bent to compensate.

Samabhanga: a straight, universal standing position with the feet together in parallel, or with feet and hips turned out.

Atibhanga: a great diagonal bend in the torso with the knees bent.

Tribhanga: the triple-bent, elaborately graceful position of the body. The head, shoulders, torso and waist, hips and knees zigzag back and forth across the center of gravity to create a balanced asymmetry.



MUDRAS (HASTAS)

Mudras or Hastas are hand gestures which are used to express the meaning of a given act or represent an animal or object. There are 63 Hastas in modern Odissi dance, and dancers spend much of their training mastering all the subtleties of the mudras.



Alapadma
“fully opened lotus”



Simhamukha
“lion face”



Sarpasirsha
“serpent head”



Chandrakala
“crescent moon”



Suchi
“needle”



Kataka-mukha
“link in a chain”



Mayura
“peacock”



Kapita
“wood-apple”



Sikara
“spire”



Kangula
“tail”



Mirga Sirsa
“deer head”



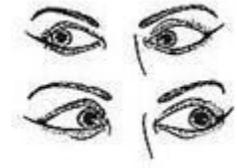
Padmakosh
“lotus bud”

BHEDAS

In Sanskrit, the word bheda refers to the different ways to hold the eyes, head and neck while dancing. In Odissi dance, there are 3 bhedas: Dhristi bheda (eye movements), shiro bheda (head movements) and greeva bheda (neck movements):

Dhristi bheda: "eyes"

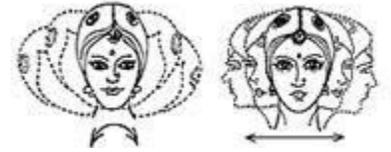
- 1.Samam: Eye straight forward without any movement.
- 2.Aalokitham: Roll eye balls in a circular pattern.
- 3.Saachi: Eye balls side to side to the corner of the eyes.
- 4.Praalokitha: Right to Left eye movement.
- 5.Nimeelithe: eyes half closed.
- 6.Ullokitha: eyeballs looking up.
- 7.Anuvritte: Rapid movement of eye balls up and down.
- 8.Thathaachaiva: Looking upwards.
- 9.Avalokita: Looking down.



Praalokitha

Shiro bheda: "head"

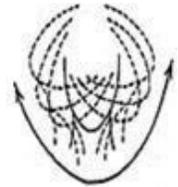
- 1.Samam: Head straight forward without any movement.
- 2.Udvaahitham: Head upwards.
- 3.Adhomukham: Head downwards.
- 4.Alolitham: Roll in circular pattern.
- 5.Dhutam: Right to Left head movement.
- 6.Kampitam: Up and down head movement.
- 7.Paravrittam: Sharp turn of head either right or left.
- 8.Ukshiptam: Head raised.
- 9.Parivahittam: Slight head shake right and left.



Parivahitt

Greeva bheda: "neck"

- 1.Sundari: Neck side to side, also called attami.
- 2.Tirashchina: Upward side to side, v-shape.
- 3.Prarivartita: Neck in semicircle motion.
- 4.Prakampita: Neck moved in and out like a duck.



Tirashchina

COSTUMES

The costumes in Odissi dance are very elaborate. Some elements of Odissi dance costumes are as follows:

pattasari: brightly colored silk wrap dress

kanchula: black or red blouse embellished with diverse stones and gold and silver thread

ardh-bathaka: or semicircular hair bun

pushpa-chanda: hair coiled into the shape of a flower

kati-beni: hair in single plait down the back

bindi: an elaborate design often made on the forehead with a red mark

mahkoot: crown worn by Odissi dancers

ghoba: or flower decorated back piece of the mahkoot, which sits around the dancer's hair and is pulled into a bun at the back of the head which represents the lotus flower with a thousand petals that lies above the head in the form of head chakra, or energy center

thiya: the longer piece that emerges from the center of the back piece which depicts the temple spire of Lord Jagganath or the flute of Lord Krishna

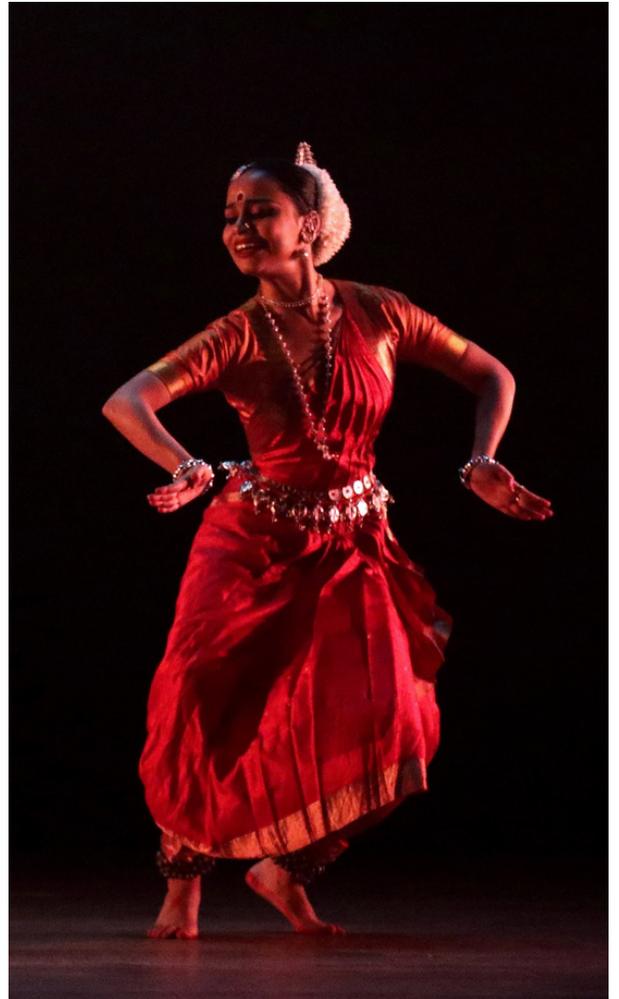
kapa: elaborate ear covers, similar to earrings

bahichudi or bajuband: pair of bracelets worn on the upper arm

kankana: bangles worn on the wrist At the waist, they wear an elaborate belt

ghungroo: bells that are attached to a leather belt

alta: red colored dye that may cover the dancer's palms and soles



MUSIC

Odissi dance is accompanied by Odissi music, a synthesis of music styles. Many scholars of Odissi dance believe that it is a form of "visualized music". Each note has purpose and is attached to a mood in classical Indian music, which Odissi accompanies to express feelings. This is true whether the performance is formal, or less formal.

An Odissi dance troupe comes with musicians and musical instruments. The orchestra consists of various regional music instruments such as:

- mardala - barrel drum
- harmonium - pump organ
- bansuri - bamboo flute
- tanpura - plucked string instrument which does not play melody, much like a bass guitar
- manjira - metal cymbals
- sitar - plucked string instrument which plays melody, much like an acoustic guitar
- swarmandal - zither

A special feature of Odissi music is the *padi* which consists of words to be sung in *Druta Tala* (fast beat). *Chhanda* (metrical section) contains the essence of Odissi music. The Chhandas were composed by combining *Bhava* (theme), *Kala* (time) and *Swara* (tune). Odissi *Sangita* (music) is characterized by a combination of these three elements of music:

Dhruvapada: first line or lines to be sung repeatedly

Chitrapada: the arrangement of words where all words begin with the same letter

Chitrakala: referencing works of art in song



VOCABULARY

Odissi: a major ancient Indian classical dance that originated in the Hindu temples of Odisha - an eastern coastal state of India; the style of dance performed by the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble

ashram: a spiritual hermitage or a monastery in Indian religions

Ayurveda: a system of medicine with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent.; Means "life knowledge" in Sanskrit

Hinduism: a religion, or way of life, found most notably in India and Nepal; has been called the oldest religion in the world

Odisha: one of the 29 states of India, located in the eastern coast; where Odissi dance originated

Natya Shastra: a Sanskrit Hindu text on the performing arts dated somewhere between 200 BCE and 200 CE

Konark Sun Temple: a complex 13th-century Sun Temple at Konark in Orissa, India that has elaborately carved stone wheels, pillars and walls; the wheels of the temple are sundials used to calculate time accurately to a minute including day and night

Brahmeswara Temple: a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva located in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, erected at the end of the 9th century

Shiva: One of the principal deities of Hinduism; the Supreme Being; God of Creation, Destruction, Regeneration

Surya: the solar deity of Hinduism; God of Light and Day

The Sangeet Natak Akademi: The Indian National Academy for Music, Dance & Drama

Bhangas: basic Indian dance motifs

Mudras/Hastas: hand gestures which are used to express the meaning of a given act in Odissi dance

Bhedas: different ways to hold the eyes (dhristi), head (shiro) and neck (greeva) while dancing

SRI LANKA

Located in the Indian Ocean and off the coast of India, Sri Lanka is lush island with an abundance of wildlife, natural waterfalls, beaches, and cultural heritage. The capital of Sri Lanka is Colombo and the native language is Sinhala. The people of Sri Lanka that live in the Central, Western and Southern parts of are called Sinhalese. The Northern and eastern region is mostly comprised of people known as Tamils. Tamils live alongside with Sinhalese in central and Southern Sri Lanka. The estimated population of this country is 21,128,773.

FACTS ABOUT SRI LANKA

- Colombo is the largest city in Sri Lanka.
- The most popular religion is Buddhism followed by Islam
- Women traditionally wear a sarong or a sari
- Sri Lanka supplies 80-90% of the cinnamon supply in the world
- Sri Lanka is know as one of the friendliest countries in the world :)
- Animals that inhabit Sri Lanka include elephants, leopards, monkeys, mongoose, sloth bears, jackals, Sambar and chital deer, water buffalo and wild boars
- Major industries in Sri Lanka include manufacturing and agriculture, and is also known for its production of tea, apparel and textile, rubber, coconut and tobacco



The City of Colombo

KANDY



Kandy is the largest city in central Sri Lanka and second largest after Colombo!

- There is an estimated population of 125,400 people who live in Kandy
- In the middle of the city, there is a large lake called Kandy Lake
- Kandy is home to the Temple of the Tooth Relic which is known to be one of the most sacred places to worship in the Buddhist world
- Because of its location, Kandy is the transportation hub of the country
- The city lies between the Knuckles mountain range and the Hanthana mountain range and sits right above sea level
- The climate in Kandy is like a tropical rainforest
- The Sinhalese make up the majority of the city
- The country is known for its rice, tea, vegetable, and fruit production

KANDYAN DANCE

Kandyan Dance encompasses various dance forms native to the area called Kandy of the central hills region in Sri Lanka. As legend says, the dance originated from an exorcism ritual called “Kohomba Kankariya,” which was originally performed by Indian shamans who came to the island at the request of the king who was suffering from a recurring dream. After the performance of the “Kohomba Kankariya,” the illness vanished.

Kandyan Dance was adapted for the stage in the 1940s, by Chitrasena. His wife and dance partner, Vajira, was the first professional female Kandyan dancer, and together they established Kandyan dance as a performance art.

OTHER TYPES OF KANDYAN DANCE

Naiyandi Dance

- Dancers in Naiyandi costume perform during the initial preparations of the Kohomba Kankariya, a specific traditional dance, during the lighting of the lamps and the preparation of foods for the demons.
- This is a graceful dance, also performed in Maha Visnu, (Vishnu) and Kataragama Devales temples on ceremonial occasions.

Uddekki Dance

- Uddekki is a very prestigious dance because of its important history behind the instrument used.
- Its name comes from the “Uddekki” which is a small lacquered hand drum in the shape of an hourglass. It is believed to have been given to people by the gods.
- The dance is said to have originated in the days of Prince Siddhartha, who became Buddha.

Pantheru Dance

- The instrument used in Pantheru dance is called a “pantheruwa.” This instrument is dedicated to the goddess Pattini.
- It resembles a tambourine (without the skin) and has small cymbals attached at intervals around its circumference.

COSTUMES

Dancers are covered in elaborate costumes that include headdresses. The chest is traditionally decorated in beading, this is known as the Ves Costume. This costume is known as the Ves costume. The headdress of the Ves costume can only be worn by males.



MUSIC

The Kandyan Dance is traditionally performed to percussion only. The most common instrument used is the Geta Beraya, a drum, and Thalamota, small cymbals.

KANDYAN DANCE TODAY

Traditionally, only men were allowed to train as dancers however now, women are allowed to be trained in traditional Kandyan dance. The costumes are focused on the males but the women have found ways to adapt the costumes in different ways. The dance in its traditional form is still performed each year at the Dalada Perahera, a procession held each year at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy.

CHITRASENA DANCE COMPANY

Founded by Guru Chitrasena in 1943 with a vision to inspire and exhilarate through the traditional dances and drums of Sri Lanka, the Chitrasena Dance Company has always been at the forefront of transforming the traditional arts landscape of the island. Chitrasena is recognized for rescuing the traditional dances that were confined to village settings and presenting them to audiences in Sri Lanka and across the world.



Enabling a path for the female dancer, Chitrasena, together with his wife Vajira, Sri Lanka's first prima ballerina, worked tirelessly for decades to carefully distill ancient rhythmic rituals, by reviving and refining elements of it while staying firmly rooted in the old, and developed an authentic dance language and presentation for the stage. Today his dance school and company is presided by wife Vajira and daughter Upeka, who continue to guide the Company to forge new paths and create the benchmark for Sri Lankan dance the world over.

For over seven decades the Chitrasena Dance Company has given life to compelling performances ranging from a rich repertoire of dance and drumming pieces, to acclaimed original ballets and productions inspired by ancient rituals and contemporary culture. **Karadiya** (1961), **Nala Damayanthi** (1963), **Nrithanjali** (1965), **Kinkini Kolama** (1978), **Shiva Ranga** (1984), **Chandalika** (1996) and **Bera-Handa** (2001) are some of the most-renowned. More recently, the Chitrasena Dance Company has brought to the stage **The Art of Chitrasena** (2006), **Kumbi Kathawa** (2007), **Dancing for the Gods** (2010), **Devanjali** (2015) and **Guru Gedara Festival** (2018). The creative partnership and the first collaborative production, based on an invitation extended to the Chitrasena Dance Company by Nrityagram led to the much-acclaimed **Samhāra** (2012).

The third generation is led by Heshma Wignaraja, Artistic Director and eldest granddaughter of Chitrasena and Vajira, who continues to take forward the legacy of her grandparents. Experimenting without compromise and using traditional dance language and form to push boundaries, the new work offers a fresh perspective, while upholding Guru Chitrasena's philosophy that "the new is but an extension of the old".

ACTIVITIES

GRADES PREK - 3

Common Core Standards Addressed:

CCSSI. ELA. SL. 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSI. ELA. SL. 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSI. ELA. SL. 2.2: Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

ACTIVITY 1

Goal: Compare and contrast Odissi dance, ballet and hip-hop.

Instructions:

1. Watch an excerpt of Odissi dance performed by Nrityagram Dance Ensemble:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUHN3JffV4I>
2. Watch an excerpt of ballet performed by Mariinsky Ballet:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gApOfm4qd0>
3. Watch an excerpt of hip-hop performed by freestyle hip hop dancers:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZB20XyfLQg>
4. Discuss the differences and similarities between the three performances in terms of movement, costume and music.

ACTIVITY 2

Goal: Create your own traditional Odissi costume.

Instructions:

Design your own Odissi costume based on the pictures and text in this study guide. Use your imagination, lots of colors and details and share your finished work with the class.

GRADES 4 - 6

Common Core Standards Addressed:

CCSSI. ELA. W. 5. 2: Write any informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSI. ELA. W. 5. 7: Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSI. ELA. W. 5. 8: Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant

information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work and provide a list of sources.

ACTIVITY 1

Goal: Understand a major aspect of traditional Indian dance more deeply and explain it to the rest of the class.

Instructions:

Choose a major aspect of traditional Indian Dance or Sri Lankan Dance and conduct more in-depth research about it. Write one paragraph about your chosen subject and include 3 facts that the rest of the class might not know. Create a presentation including pictures and the facts to present to the rest of the class.

Topics that you could choose might include, but are not limited to:

- Nrityagram Village Founder Protima Gauri
- Traditional Indian music
- Hand gesture Choreography and its various meanings
- Eye choreography and its various meanings
- Costumes/makeup used in traditional Indian dance
- Traditional Sri Lankan Music
- Kandyan Costumes

ACTIVITY 2

Goal: Create your own Odissi dance!

Instructions:

- 1) Go over the bhangas, mudras/hastas and bhedas covered in this study guide with the students.
- 2) Separate the students into small groups and have them come up with their own choreography that uses 3 different gestures to tell their own story.
- 3) Tell them to be creative! How many different narratives can be created through these hand gestures?
- 4) Have the groups perform their choreography for the class. Have the students guess what the story meant according to the descriptions of the gestures, and finally, have the choreographers explain their narrative.

GRADES 7 - 8

Common Core Standards Addressed:

CCSI. ELA. SL. 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSI. ELA. SL. 7.2: Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text or issue under study.

ACTIVITY 1

Goal: Understand the way in which Nrityagram dancers and Chitrasena dancers work together to highlight each others' similarities and differences to create a unique collaboration.

Instructions:

- 1) Pick two different aspects of the same form, i.e. sports (basketball and soccer), visual arts (sculpture and painting), performing arts (singing and dancing), etc.
- 2) List all of the differences these sports have. Then, list all of the similarities. What happens if you combine the two to create something new?
- 3) As a class, share how each form is different and similar and share what your hybrid version would look like by drawing, physical demonstration, etc.

ACTIVITY 2

Goal: Identify the benefits of the Nrityagram Village and how you would set up your own ashram in a discipline of your choice.

Instructions:

The Nrityagram Village is unique in that the dancers live, sleep, eat and dance together in one village. Pick your favorite activity, from sports to arts to recreational activities and research supplemental activities that would benefit the well-being of its inhabitants in addition to contributing to the improved performance of your chosen activity. Design a “day in the life” at your ashram in collage format and share with your classmates.

GRADES 9 - 10

Common Core Standards Addressed:

CCSSI.ELA.WSHT.9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research on projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation

CCSI.ELA.SL.9-10.4: Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and task.

CCSI.ELA.SL.9-10.6: Adapt a speech to a variety of contexts, and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

ACTIVITY 1

Goal: Research and write an informative essay on a topic of Odissi dance or Kandyen Dance of your choosing.

Instructions: Choose one facet of Odissi dance that interests you and pick a specific component, for example: geography, history, technique, music, costumes, etc. Write a 3-page essay outlining your topic of choice and include a bibliography with at least 5 outside sources.

ACTIVITY 2

Goal: Investigate and do further research into an Indian dance style other than Odissi dance.

Instructions: Refer to the different Indian dance styles outlined on page 9 of this study guide. Choose one and create a short presentation outlining the different facets of the dance including geography, history, technique, music, and costumes. Use audio/visual aids whenever possible, and include at least 5 outside sources.

GRADES 11-12

Common Core Standards Addressed:

CCSS1.ELA.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSSI.ELA.SL.11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CCSSI.ELA.SL.11-12.5: Make strategic use of digital media (e.g. textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

ACTIVITY 1

Goal: Research and present information on one of the official religions in India, and compare it to Hinduism.

Instructions: Include how it came to be practiced in the region, how it is practiced differently in other areas, and compare it to the most popular religion in India -- Hinduism. Discuss holidays, customs, beliefs, ceremonies, or anything you find interesting. Make sure to cite your sources and attach an MLA-style bibliography.

ACTIVITY 2

Goal: Discuss and come to a greater understanding of why dance is such a huge part of Indian or Sri Lankan culture.

Instructions:

Watch the documentary on Nrityagram Dance Village by Nan Melville on Vimeo entitled "Nrityagram: For the Love of Dance" here: <https://vimeo.com/231598752>. Think about the sacrifices that today's dancers need to make to become Odissi dancers. Is the process different for women than it is for men? What inspires the dancers to dedicate their lives to this art form? Is there anything in your life that you would devote this much study to? How is this different and similar to today's athletes that play soccer, basketball, football, etc. or even study other dance forms, like ballet or tap.

RESOURCES

Nrityagram Dance Ensemble's Official Website: <https://nrityagram.org/>

Nan Melville's documentary on Nrityagram, "For The Love of Dance":
<https://vimeo.com/231598752>

Excerpts of Nrityagram Dance Ensemble performing "Sriyah": <https://vimeo.com/200078770>

Comprehensive guide to Odissi music: https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Odissi_music

Protima Gauri's obituary in the New York Times:
<https://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/30/arts/protima-gauri-bedi-49-dancer.html>

National Geographic's Guide to India:
<https://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/india-guide/>

Odissi dancer Rosi Das performs to Ed Sheeran's "Shape of You":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHjFaW7Ul3M&index=3&list=PLi1KKGJtku7Wilk46UCiQhk5yxKQifrD3e>

Wikipedia – "Dance in India" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance_in_India

Wikipedia – Timeline of Indian History
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Indian_history

Odisha Tourism's "Letter from Orissa" documentary film
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZ9qpUAfWXE>

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