

Study Guide

World Music in the Schools • Living Room Learning: World Music & Dance

India: Odissi Dance

Teaching Artist: Shibani Patnaik • [Shibani's Artist Profile](#)

Video link: <https://youtu.be/PftmWPF1cTg>

In this video, Teaching Artist **Shibani Patnaik** will take students on a journey to India to learn about an ancient classical dance form called Odissi. During this interactive session, students will be introduced to basic postures, stances, and movements of Odissi. Students will also explore the use of hand gestures, or *mudras*, which are used to convey an action or a story.

Learning Objectives: Students will . . .

- Participate in the movements of *Bhumi Pranam*, an introductory and closing invocation that is performed by Odissi dancers before and after dancing; in this dance tradition, the significance of this invocation is to seek permission from Mother Earth before dancing on her, and to thank her afterwards
- Experiment with some basic postures and movements in Odissi
- Understand the use of hand gestures or *mudras*
- Observe how the basic postures and movements come together in a dance performance piece
- Have fun!

Alignment with **California Arts Standards for Public Schools:**

- **Dance:** .DA:Cn10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art
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Preliminary Activities

- Geography
 - Locate India on a world map. New Delhi is the capital of India.
 - Odissi originates from the state of Odisha, located on the eastern coast of India. The capital of Odisha is Bhubaneswar.
 - There are over 1.3 billion people in India, making it the second most populated country in the world.

- History
 - Odissi is an ancient art form that dates back to the Second Century BCE.
 - You may wonder how this dance form has been preserved over such a long time period:
 - There are texts and manuscripts which outline the fundamentals and details of classical dance. The “Natya Shastra” is one such book, dating to the First Century BCE.
 - India has thousands of ancient temples. Dance historians and teachers have studied the engravings on temple walls and statues of dancers to reconstruct the dance.
 - Devadasis, or women who are dedicated to dance, lived in the temples. They passed the artform from generation to generation. Since the 1900s, the dance form was brought outside the temple walls and taught to the general public; it continues to be a tradition taught from teacher to students.
- Culture
 - India has a very rich culture of dance and music. There are classical dance forms like Odissi, as well as folk dances and tribal dances.
 - There are eight recognized forms of Indian classical dance. Each dance form has its own distinct style, postures, music, costume and historical roots.
 - Both men and women learn and perform Odissi.
- Language/vocabulary
 - India has 22 major languages, written in 13 different scripts with over 700 dialects. The official language of India is Hindi. Many people speak English as well.
 - The official language spoken in the state of Odisha is Oriya. Some of the traditional Odissi dances use lyrics in Oriya.
 - Sanskrit is an ancient, classical text used in philosophical and religious texts. Some of the traditional Odissi dances use lyrics in Sanskrit.
 - Indian classical dance uses *bols*, or rhythmic patterns. *Bols* are frequently used in Odissi dance, with accompanying movements and footwork.
- Tradition
 - All the music for Odissi dance is recorded or performed by specially-trained musicians from India.
 - The costume, makeup and jewelry for Odissi dance is traditional and everything is made in India.
 - It takes 2 hours to get dressed and ready for an Odissi performance!

Follow-Up Activities

Ask your students to . . .

- Demonstrate *Bhumi Pranam*.
- Show an animal through the use of *mudras*, or hand gestures. If they can't remember one, ask them to make one up.
- Share one interesting thing they learned or liked from the interactive session.
- Share an observation from the stage performance on the use of *chouka*, *thri bhanga*, or torso movement
- Share what more they would like to learn about Odissi.