

Program Name: Experience India

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Artist: Samarpita Bajpai

### Special Requirements:

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Prefer hardwood stage at least 20' x 20'; no carpets; one microphone with stand; sound system with cassette/CD player; projector and room that can be darkened; stage area cleared 15 minutes prior to performance

### Performance Description

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Sarpita Bajpai combines performance, lecture, and a PowerPoint presentation to give students insight into the diverse culture and traditions of India. First, she talks about and shows slides of the different kinds of regional attires, festivals, and traditions in India, stressing the “Unity in Diversity” theme.

She then goes on to talk about the ancient temple architecture and how the arts developed there. She then briefly talks about the seven major classical styles that exist in India, their history of evolution, and costumes. All of this is complemented by a slide show.

Sarpita then performs dances from two major styles. Each dance is preceded by a short narration to illuminate the meaning and cultural context of the dance. Sarpita concludes the performance with a short question and answer period.

India has an extremely rich cultural tradition of music and dance, both classical and folk. Indian classical dance styles are among the most ancient dance traditions of the world. Most of these styles have a 2000 year old history. There are seven such acknowledged styles in India. These dance forms are some of the most well structured ones, both in terms of physical movements and theoretical contents. Indian dance theory is perhaps the most expansive of all. It not only deals with specific structure of movements and beats, but lays equal stress on mime or expressions.

Indian dances are a narrative that require the conscious effort of the dancer to portray a character and enact the story convincingly. Indian dance forms are also unique in their use of codified hand gestures, that is used more like the modern day sign language.

### Educational Objectives & Standards

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Students will:

- Develop an understanding of the diversity of Indian life.
- Learn how legends and mythology are the primary themes of all Indian classical dances.

Standards addressed:

- Knows the ways in which culture influences the perception of places and regions.
- Understands dance in various cultures and historical periods.

## Artist Bio: Samarpita Bajpai

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Samarpita Bajpai started training in dance at the tender age of seven. She trained in all the seven styles for three years, before she went on to specialize in two of the most popular forms: Kuchipudi and Bharatnatyam. She trained in these forms for over 25 years. She has given innumerable stage performances since 1988 both in

India and the United States. Samarpita has ventured into creative choreography too, experimenting with different styles of music and Indian dance forms.

She has been a dance instructor for almost two decades now. Samarpita is also a roster artist of both the Kansas Arts Commission and the Heartland Arts Fund.

## Vocabulary

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### List of Resources:

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#### **Books:**

#### Indian Classical Dances

by Shovana Narayan  
Publisher- New Dawn  
(2005)  
ISBN- 1-84557-169-X

#### Kucipudi Baratam or Kuchipudi Dance: A South Indian Classical Dance Tradition

by K. Uma Rama Rao  
Publisher- South Asia  
Books (Dec 1992)  
ISBN- 8170302919

#### Indian Classical Dance: Tradition in Transition; by

Avinash Pasricha & Leela  
Venkatraman  
Publisher- Roli Books Pvt  
Ltd (2002)  
ISBN- 8174362169

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information about this and  
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**Abhinaya:** The dramatic facial expressions used in dance to narrate the story.

**Aduvus:** The basic steps that form the foundation of all Indian classical dance forms.

**Mudras:** The codified hand gestures that convey the meaning of the song and narrate the story.

**Raga:** The sequence of musical notes to which the songs are set.

**Tala:** The sequence of beats to which the Ragas, and subsequently the dances are set.

## Post-Performance Activities

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1. Discuss the music and dance you saw today. What is the importance of expressions and why? Into what kind of structured sequences are the beats divided?
2. What is the role of spirituality in Indian Dance, and how do you think it helps? Do you think any kind of spiritual connection, in art or outside of it, can help you in any way?
3. In what ways are Indian dances different from the Western forms that you usually see?

