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1. INNOVATION IN DANCE

The deeper the roots of a tree, the higher the branches reach. Similarly, the more knowledge

and depth you have of your dance traditions, the more you can create and innovate.

If you look around, you will find movement and rhythm everywhere. The flutter of birds, the quivering of leaves, the sway of the grass, the sweeping of the broom, the picking of tea leaves—they are all movements. If you pick any such activity, you can create your own movement based on it, with all the material you have learnt.

Every dancer brings the potential for new innovation in dance. A strong foundation in dance, along with observations, experiences and your original thoughts, bring uniqueness to your dance.

INTEGRATION OF OTHER ALLIED FORMS

A step ahead in innovation is the inclusion of other allied forms in dance, like martial arts.

There are some traditional sports and martial arts traditions of India that have movement sequences in

their training, that have been creatively incorporated into dance by many artists. You have learnt about Chhau, which has developed with martial arts traditions of *phari khanda*.



Dance innovations with martial arts

You will now learn about two other forms of martial arts, which are being creatively used in present-day development of dance.

- 1 **KALARIPAYATTU:** A practice of Kerala, it is considered one of the oldest forms of martial arts worldwide. Legend says that it originates from Parashurama, the great sage, who is deemed to have been the creator of Kerala. Recent researches connect it to the Sangam Period, 600–300 BCE. Developed as a self-defence mechanism, the training is based on the scientific *marma* knowledge of Ayurveda and has movement phrases which are based on animal stances and movements.



Kalaripayattu

2. **THANG-TA:** A martial arts practice from Manipur, the word means the ‘Art of Sword and Spear’. It harmonises the inner energies with outer actions, expressing various kinds of movements with rhythmic breath control. It is also ritualistic in practice. It is believed that all movements of the Meitei people have originated from Thang-Ta.



Thang-Ta

Martial Arts used in Dance: The famous dancer and choreographer Chandralekha was a pioneer in amalgamating *kalaripayattu* and yoga with *bharatanatyam* in her choreographies and productions.

ACTIVITY 13.1: WATCH AND LEARN

Try to practice one or two movements of the above martial arts with a visiting practitioner or under the guidance and inspection of a teacher from the QR code.



Note to the Teacher: Advisable to do this in small groups.

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATION

Many dance artists have experimented with their dance forms to tell contemporary stories and showcase current scenarios. You have learnt about two pioneers of the modern dance development in India in Grade 7. In continuation, there are many other dance practitioners and institutions that have been instrumental in developing choreographies using creative movements as well as using traditional dance vocabulary to depict stories of today through dance.

The following are a few among many such artists who have made significant contributions. Each of them has been honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for creative choreography.

Narendra Sharma expanded his horizons and carved a niche for himself in developing creative dance. One of the senior-most students of Uday Shankar, his many choreographies and dance dramas reflected socially relevant contemporary situations. He is known to create a healthy free dance movement for children, in which his efforts have shown substantial success with the institutionalisation of dance education. He produced over 40 original fabulous works, including notable productions like Kamayani (1970), Wolf-Boy (1977), Antim Adhyaya (1985), and Gandhi (2007). These works were acclaimed for their innovative themes and choreographic excellence.





Acharya Parvatikumar was a pioneering dance choreographer for dance dramas like 'Discovery of India, Rhythm of Culture, and Dekh Teri Bambai' where he seamlessly integrated various Indian dance styles and showed contemporary concepts using traditional dance forms, for example, creating a scene of the Dabbawalas taking deliveries around the city using kathak footwork, showing the chase between police and thief using the game of 'hu-tu-tu'. On the traditional dance front, he was the only dance Guru to have researched and choreographed the Marathi compositions of Raja Sarfoji II of the Bhosale Dynasty in Bharatanatyam. He also bridged the gap between theory and practice by choreographing the dance text *Abhinaya Darpanam* into an audio-visual form.



Chandralekha was one of the earliest dancers who dramatically brought changes in traditional forms and synchronised various Indian dance, yoga and kalaripayattu with philosophy, and literature also. In her production *Angika*, she presented traditional Bharatanatyam vocabulary of dance based on the principles of *Abhinaya Darpana* and integrated Kalaripayattu with it. *Lilavati* was based on Bhaskacharya's mathematics treatise which she choreographed in dance using numbers, nature and imagination. *Prana* was based on yoga and breath in dance. She has also worked with modern dancers and actors from the West in experimental productions. She has made films on dance and written on the subject. Among her films are *The Myth of Woman* (1976) and *Hasta* (1984).

Kumudini Lakhia,

the famous kathak dancer, was one of the pioneers in bringing a fresh outlook to a form. She was



a pioneering kathak dancer and choreographer who revolutionised the traditional solo format of kathak by introducing group choreography and contemporary themes. Going beyond the traditional repertoire, she asked, "Where do I go from here?". Thus, her first groundbreaking choreography, *Atah Kim*, was born. Other creative dance productions were *Dhabkar (Pulse)*, *The Coat*,



Feathered Cloth (Hagoromo) among many others. Her dance choreographies integrated the abstract and narratives, often addressing contemporary themes.

ACTIVITY 13.2 DANCE THE NOW

Choose a current theme concerning a socially relevant issue like the environment and cleanliness or climate change and develop your creative dance. Song example — Swachh Bharat song.



Choreography



Note to the Teacher: Suggest a song that is from the region or one that the students are familiar with.

2. INCLUSIVITY IN DANCE

Inclusivity in dance is an essential aspect of today's society.

More and more dancers are creating work that is accessible to all, including those who are differently-abled. Dance teachers work with people of all ages and abilities, bringing the joy of dance to all without barriers and inhibitions. Even on national television and important platforms, you see representation of dance performances by the differently-abled.

Dance is also beyond gender. Dance traditions predominantly performed by male artists have also opened their doors to female artists. Most folk traditions have men and women dancing alongside each other. There is no gender bias.

The beauty of dance is in its ability to bring people together. This is inclusivity.

What does inclusivity mean to you?

ACTIVITY 13.3: DANCE FOR ALL

Think of ways to make your dance accessible and enjoyable to those who are differently-abled.

On 26 January 2025, India's 76th Republic Day, the Ministry of Culture set a Guinness World Record—by bringing together over 5,000 folk and tribal artists from across India to perform on the Kartavya Path in New Delhi—for the largest ensemble of folk and tribal artists at a single venue. This monumental event not only set a world record but also symbolised inclusivity, as artists from various cultural and tribal backgrounds shared the stage, celebrating unity through diversity.



India's 76th Republic Day

ACTIVITY 13.4: INSPIRING CHANGE

DANCE EMPOWERS

During India's freedom movement, song and dance inspired everyone. From gender discrimination to climate change, dance has been used to convey complex topics and initiate thought-provoking conversations effectively.

For instance, JNMDA, the premier institution for Manipuri in Imphal, premiered their choreography Keibul Lamjao in 1985 based on the environmentalism of M. K. Binodini Devi's script, which shows the conservation of the Sangai Deer.



Sangai Deer

Dance prompts you to think differently, to think out of the box, and view the world with more compassion and love.

What changes can you prompt with your dance?



Innovative Choreography

ACTIVITY 13.5: DANCE BEYOND GENDER

There are many transgender artists performing dance today. Conduct research on one transgender artist and present it in a journal.

ASSESSMENT

CHAPTER 13: INNOVATION, INCLUSIVITY AND INSPIRING CHANGE

CG	C	Learning Outcomes	Teacher	Self
2	2.1	Demonstrates an understanding of how allied forms such as martial arts can be integrated into dance, and articulates how this enhances the expressive and physical dimensions of a dance performance.		
2	2.1	Investigates contemporary social or cultural issues and interprets them through thematic dance compositions that reflect personal insight and critical thinking.		
2	2.1	Displays curiosity and openness in exploring how inclusivity is being integrated into diverse dance practices across various fields and communities.		
3	3.1	Exhibits curiosity about innovative choreography and actively experiments with original and creative movement vocabulary in their own choreographic work.		
4	4.2	Conducts independent research and presents a journal or case study on a transgender dance artist, critically analysing their contribution to the field and their role in promoting diversity in dance.		

Teacher's Comments and Student's Observations
