

# Classical and folk dances of India

## Introduction

India has an unparalleled antiquity of dance traditions. Each region has evolved a distinctive style of music and dance at different levels of society. There are thus tribal, folk, village and classical dances in each region of India. India has thousands of years tradition of fine arts, classical and folk music and dances. The history of these dances can be traced back to the civilization of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, & their continuity can be observed in their rich variegated manifestations in different States of India. From amongst these innumerable dance styles have emerged six major dance forms, which are today known as classical dances of India. These dance styles are supported by literary and sculptural evidence and their history can be reconstructed from the poetic hymns of the Vedas and lyrics of the regional languages. Most of these styles draw their textual sanction from the Natyasastra written by Sage Bharata. In the course of time each of these styles followed other texts written between the 8th and 17th century A.D. All these styles, however, have a common division of dance into pure or abstract dance and mime on the one hand and Tandeva and Lasya on the other.

Classical and folk dances of India are among the proudest possessions in the country's cultural heritage. Emotionally expressive, vigorous and drawing sustenance from the entire spiritual experience of a mature people and performed with colorful costumes to the accompaniment of musical instruments, the varied styles of dance - interpret the kaleidoscope of Indian life. An elusive thread of shared historical experience and common approach to the external and the inner life runs through them.



## Classical and Folk Dances of India

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# Classical and folk dances of India

## 1. Tandava Nritya

Tandava Nritya is a divine dance performed by the Hindu god Shiva. Shiva's Tandava is described as a vigorous dance that is the source of the cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution. While the Rudra Tandava depicts his violent nature, first as the creator and later as the destroyer of the universe, even of death itself; the Ananda Tandava depicts him as joyful. In Shaiva Siddhanta tradition, Shiva as Nataraja is considered the supreme lord of dance.



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प्राचीन भारतीय शिल्पकला  
*Ancient Indian Sculpture*



Another significant dance related to Hinduism is the **Kalinga Mardhana** performed by Lord Krishna to defeat the dreaded "Kalinga Serpent"

## Classical and Folk Dances of India

### 2. Classical Dances of India

Indian classical dance, or Shastriya Nritya, is an umbrella term for various performance arts rooted in religious Hindu musical theatre styles, whose theory and practice can be traced to the Sanskrit text Natya Shastra. The classical dance forms recognised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Ministry of Culture are - Bharatanatyam, from Tamil Nadu, Kathak, from Uttar Pradesh, Kathakali, from Kerala, Kuchipudi, from Andhra Pradesh, Odissi, from Odisha, Sattriya, from Assam, Manipuri, from Manipur, Mohiniyattam, from Kerala.

These dances are traditionally regional, all of them include music and recitation in local language or Sanskrit, and they represent a unity of core ideas in a diversity of styles, costumes and expression.

भारतीय नृत्यो पर डाक-टिकट  
STAMPS ON INDIAN DANCES  
प्रथम दिवस आवरण FIRST DAY COVER



FDC of the set of 6 stamps issued by Dept. of Posts on classical dance forms.

# Classical and folk dances of India

## 2. Classical Dances

### 2.1. Bharata Natyam

Bharata Natyam has developed in South India in its present form, while its poses are reminiscent of sculpture of the 10th century A.D. onwards, the thematic and musical content was given to it by musicians of the Tanjore courts of the 18th - 19th centuries. It is essentially a solo dance and has close affinities with the traditional dance-drama form called Bhagvata Mela. It is characterized by straight lines, diagonals, triangles which are basic motifs for executing movements, as also patterns of floor choreography.



Commercially used Picture post card depicting Bharathanatyam

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 2. Classical Dances

#### 2.2. Odissi

Odissi is a close parallel of Bharata Natyam. It is developed from the musical play (sangita-nataka) and the dances of gymnasiums known as the akharas. Sculptural evidence relating to the dance goes back to 2nd century B.C. from the 12th century onwards there are inscriptions, manuscripts and other records which speak of the prevalence of Orissi dance styles of ritual dances of temples and entertainments of the village squares.



Picture post card depicting Odissi

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 2. Classical Dances

#### 2.3. Kathakali

Is a classical dance drama. It is a different form, unlike the others. It is dramatic rather than narrative in character. Different roles are taken by different characters, the dancers are all men, till recently. It takes epic mythological themes as its content and portrays them through an elaborate dramatic spectacle which is characterised by another worldly quality, a supernatural grandeur, a stylised over-size costume to give the impression of enlarging human proportions and a mask like make-up on the face which is governed by a complex symbolism of colour, line and design.



## Classical and folk dances of India

### 2. Classical Dances

#### 2.4. Kuchipudi

It is closely related to Bharata Natyam in the dance style which is prevalent in Andhra Pradesh. It is sometimes called Kuchipudi, after the name of the village, or Bhama Kalapam (the story of Bhama, a consort of Krishna). In this style there is a thin line of demarcation between dance-drama traditions of Bhama Kalapam and the solo-Kuchipudi. While the basic stance, the foot contacts and the general pattern of treating the human form are very close to Bharata Natyam, the style is freer and to that extent less austere than Bharata Natyam.



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कूचिपूड़ी  
**KUCHIPUDI**

*Dance Genres of Andhra Pradesh*





# Classical and folk dances of India

## 2. Classical Dances

### 2.5. Manipuri



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# Classical and folk dances of India

## 2. Classical Dances

### 2.5. Manipuri

It is a lyrical dance form from the eastern region of India. Although many forms of ritual, magical, community and religious dances were known to Manipur before the advent of Vaishnava faith in the 18th century, the dances today known as Manipuri and specially its Rasa evolved as a result of the interaction of the Vaishnava cult and the several highly developed forms of ritual and religious dances which were prevalent in the area from times immemorial.



प्रथम दिवस आवरण FIRST DAY COVER



भारत-आर्मेनिया : संयुक्त डाक टिकट INDIA-ARMENIA : JOINT ISSUE

## 2. Classical Dances

### 2.6. Kathak

It is a lyrical dance form from the eastern region of India. Although many forms of ritual, magical, community and religious dances were known to Manipur before the advent of Vaishnava faith in the 18th century, the dances today known as Manipuri and specially its Rasa evolved as a result of the interaction of the Vaishnava cult and the several highly developed forms of ritual and religious dances which were prevalent in the area from times immemorial.



## Classical and Folk Dances of India

### 2. Classical Dances of India

#### 2.6. Kathak

प्रथम दिवस आवरण  
FIRST DAY COVER

5-5-1973

भारतीय  
लघु चित्रण कला

INDIAN  
MINIATURE  
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भारतीय डाक-तार विभाग INDIAN POSTS & TELEGRAPHS



The art of Miniature paintings developed mainly because of the royal and the religious patronages. Under the Mughals, a beautiful blend of Persian craftsmanship with Indian ethnicity infused some realism into the miniatures. However, Aurangzeb did not patronize art and the Mughal school of miniatures saw a set back during his reign. This painting on 50 Paise stamp issued in 1973, depicting a dancing couple is one such uncommon Mughal Miniatures from Aurangzeb's period. FDC of the same stamp is shown above.

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 3. Tribal Dances

India is inhabited by various tribes. These tribes have traditions of centuries behind them and have made rich contributions to the country's history and culture. Despite the onset of civilisation and the pressure of modernisation, the tribals have, to a large extent, maintained their distinct identity, customs and mores. Their characteristic dances form an important and colourful part of their traditions and customs.



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आदिवासी नृत्य  
TRIBAL DANCES



30-4-9  
NEW DELHI 110001  
TRIBAL DANCES



## Classical and folk dances of India

### 3. Tribal Dances

#### 3.1. Hozagiri



The Reangs, dance is almost a part of their daily life. To the accompaniment of drums, flutes and stringed instruments, the Reang women standing on earthen pitchers rhythmically twist the lower part of their bodies while at the same time balancing and waving metal plates on their hands. In the colourful costumes worn by them in this dance, the most conspicuous items are jewellery; necklaces, of beads and silver coupled with dominant display of flowers in their hair.

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 3. Tribal Dances

#### 3.2. Valar



Valar is the typical dance of Garasias. Its song is woven round the beauties of nature, starry nights, moonlight, mountains and restless rivers. It is an expression of romantic feelings rendered in a lyrical mood. Artistically, the dance is highly developed and seeks to establish correlation between word, sound and gesture. The dance is characterised by colourful costumes and silver jewellery.

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 3. Tribal Dances

#### 3.3. Velakali



Velakali dance is predominantly performed by Kundividians and Nairs. Each dancer holds a shield in one hand and a stick in the other. The dancers wear a white dhoti on which a red cloth sash is tied. The head dress is a flaming red turban with a border of gold. It is performed to the accompaniment of trumpets, kettledrums and war cries. Basically it is a martial dance full of dramatic situations depicting the victory of the Pandavas over the Kauravas. It is marked by fast movements, jumps and turns.



## Classical and folk dances of India

### 3. Tribal Dances

#### 3.4. Kayang



Kayang is a popular dance form of Kinnaur. It is a rosary dance in which the artists hold hands in a cross form that look like the beads of a rosary. The male dancers take their positions one after the other alternatively. The leader of the party carries a whisk in his hand and starts the dance. This form of dance is both thrilling and heart-warming.

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 3. Tribal Dances

#### 3.5. Jamhang Tsouthong

This Dance is vibrant and colourful. The traditional attires consist of bright red and deep blue coloured dresses. The ornaments are made of cowries and conch shells. . The 'Jamhang Tsouthong' tribal dance is of **Khamngan Naga tribe** of Nagaland. It is one of the major tribal dances of north east India.



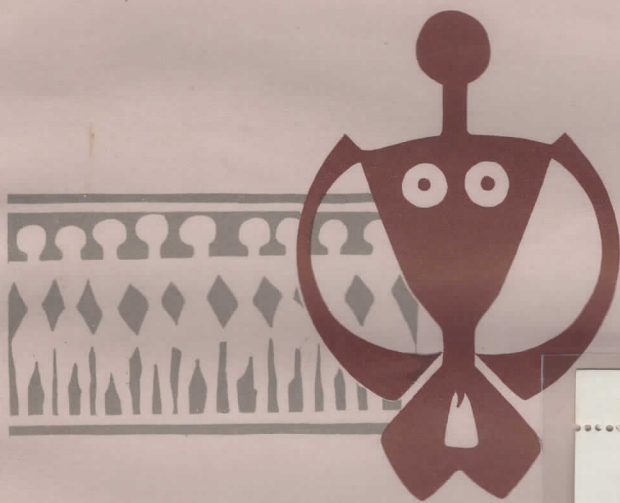
## Classical and folk dances of India

### 1. Tribal Dances

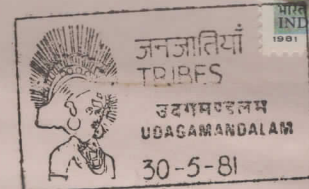
#### 3.6. Toda Dance

The traditional dance of **Todas**, the tribals of Nilgiris, commences in a small circle consisting of 5-6 people. As the dance progresses, more people join in ultimately making it a big circle. Men and women dance in different circles. They adorn themselves with cloaks and shawls which is exclusively made by their women known as "pukhoor". It has a very fine finish it appears like woven cloth. Material used in making the embroidery is white cotton cloth, threads both red and black.

प्रथम दिवस आवरण FIRST DAY COVER



जनजातियाँ TRIBES



## Classical and folk dances of India

### ३. Tribal Dances

#### 3.7. Ghoomar

Ghoomar is a traditional folk dance of **Bhil** tribe performed to worship Goddess Sarasvati which was later embraced by other Rajasthani communities. The dance is chiefly performed by veiled women who wear flowing dresses called ghaghara and pitchers on their head. The dance typically involves performers pirouetting while moving in and out of a wide circle. The word ghoomna describes the twirling movement of the dancers and is the basis of the word ghoomar.

प्रथम दिवस आवरण FIRST DAY COVER



जनजातियाँ TRIBES



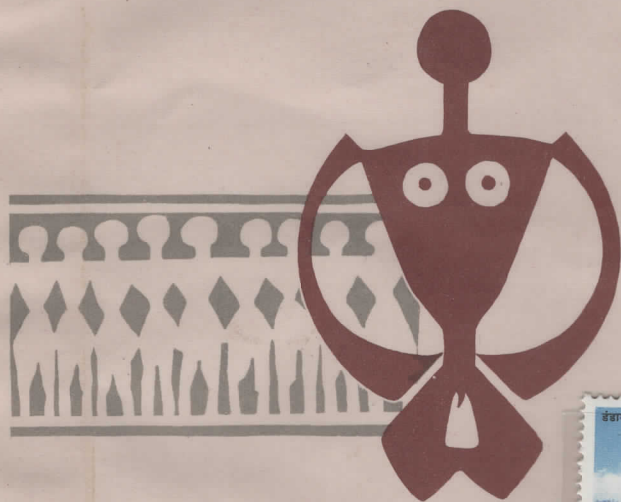
## Classical and folk dances of India

### 3. Tribal Dances

#### 3.8. Dandami Maria

Is a tribal dance men wear head gear made of Bison Horn and ornately hand crafted with beads & it is very colourful. Women wear colourful dress with silver jewelry. Men and woman dance together. Men beat drums as they dance. Women sing and join them in dancing. The dance is rhythmic in circles with easy steps. The women have sticks while dancing and they strike the ground along with the dancing steps. This is performed in festivals or during social occasions.

प्रथम दिवस आवरण FIRST DAY COVER



जनजातियाँ TRIBES



## Classical and folk dances of India

### 4. Folk Dances

India is a land of varied cultures and traditions. Diversities in all spheres make the Indian culture quite unique. Indian folk and tribal dances are product of different socio - economic set up and traditions evolved over ages. In India, we have festivals and celebrations virtually every day, and dances are performed to express joy and festivity. This has added to the richness of Indian culture. Since every festival is accompanied by celebration, folk dances have become an integral part of our social milieu. There are numerous folk and tribal dances, and almost all of them have continuously evolved and improvised.

Folk dances are performed for every possible occasion - to celebrate the arrival of seasons, birth of a child, a wedding and festivals, which are a plenty. The folk dances are extremely simple with minimum of steps or movement. Indian folk dances are full of energy and vitality. Some dances are performed separately by men and women while in some performances men and women dance together. On most occasions, the dancers sing themselves, accompanied by artists with instruments. Each form of folk dance has a specific costume and rhythm. Most of the costumes, worn for folk dances, are colorful with extensive jewels and designs.



## Classical and folk dances of India

### 4. Folk Dances

#### 4.1. Yakshagana

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Yakshagana in 'Mystamp' on Special Cover

# Classical and folk dances of India

## 4. Folk Dances

### 4.2. Lambadi

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विशेष आवरण



APPEX 2003  
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Googri Topli



Haas



Bhooria



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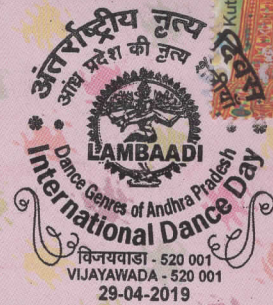
International Dance Day



लैंबडी

LAMBAADI

Dance Genres of Andhra Pradesh



Lambaadi Dance Special Cover issued on International Dance Day 2019



## Classical and folk dances of India

### 4. Folk Dances

#### 4.3. Dandiya



Dandiya Dance form depicted on Maxim Card of Stamp issued as India-Portugal Joint issue.

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 4. Folk Dances

#### 4.4. Kalbelia

Is one of the most popular dance forms of Rajasthan, performed by the tribes known for their frequent movement from one place to another in ancient times. Their traditional occupation is catching snakes and trading snake venom. Hence, the dance movements and the costumes of their community bear a resemblance to that of the serpents, their dance is an integral part of their culture. Both men and women participate to celebrate joyful occasion, festivals. Women in flowing black skirts who dance and swirl, replicating the movements of a serpent. The dancing cloth is called Angrakhi, head scarf known as odhani. The men play musical instruments and sing. In 2010 the Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan were declared a part of its Intangible Heritage by the UNESCO.



Kalbeliya Dance form depicted on Miniature Sheet of Stamp issued as India-Mexico Joint issue.

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 4. Folk Dances

#### 4.5. Veeranatyam

Veeranatyam initially started as a ritual that was performed at all Lord Shiva or Shivite temples in honour of Lord Shiva. This Dance form has a furious tempo and dancers expressing high degree of emotions. The Veerabhadra Dancer holds the veerakhadgamand, other dancers beating the veerabhadrapallem simultaneously, which is similar to a war cry or challenge to the opponents.

विशेष आवरण  
SPECIAL COVER

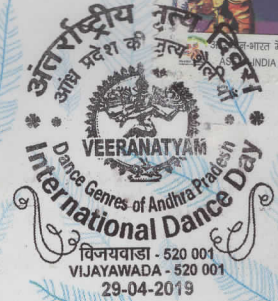
*International Dance Day*



**वीरनाट्यम**

**VEERANATYAM**

*Dance Genres of Andhra Pradesh*



Veeranatyam Dance form depicted on Special Cover issued on the occasion of International Dance.

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 4. Folk Dances

#### 4.6. Tappetagulu

Tappetagulu is a devotional and lively dance form performed in the northern costal districts of Andhra Pradesh by men folk as a ritualistic dance to propitiate the rain Godess 'Gangamma'. A group of 15-20 dancers perform thid dance with drums hung around their necks creating mesmerising beats and heart stopping acrobatics.

विशेष आवरण  
SPECIAL COVER

*International Dance Day*



तप्पिट गुल्लू

**TAPPETAGULLU**

*Dance Genres of Andhra Pradesh*



Veeranatyam Dance form depicted on Special Cover issued on the occasion of International Dance.

## Classical and folk dances of India

### 4. Folk Dances

#### 4.7. Andhra Natyam

Originally called 'Lasya Narthana' and performed by only Temple dancers, this dance form has evelved into a vibrant dance form now known as 'Andra Natyam'. When performed in Royal Courts it was known as 'Kalavantulu' and when performed for general Public it was known as 'Kalapam.

विशेष आवरण  
SPECIAL COVER

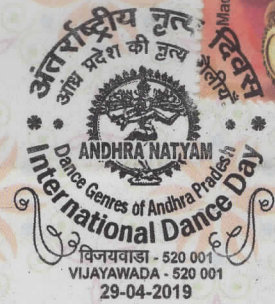
*International Dance Day*



आंध्र नाट्यम

**ANDHRA NATYAM**

*Dance Genres of Andhra Pradesh*



Andhra Natyam Dance form depicted on Special Cover issued on the occasion of International Dance.

## Classical and Folk Dances of India

### 4. Folk Dances of India

#### 4.8. Kolattam

Kolattam is performed in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and other parts of South India. It is also known as stick dance involves group of dancers forming two circles. While the inner circle receives a strike on their sticks, the dancers forming the outer circle deliver the strike.



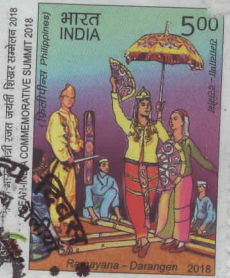
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*International Dance Day*



**कोलाटं**  
**KOLATAM**

*Dance Genres of Andhra Pradesh*

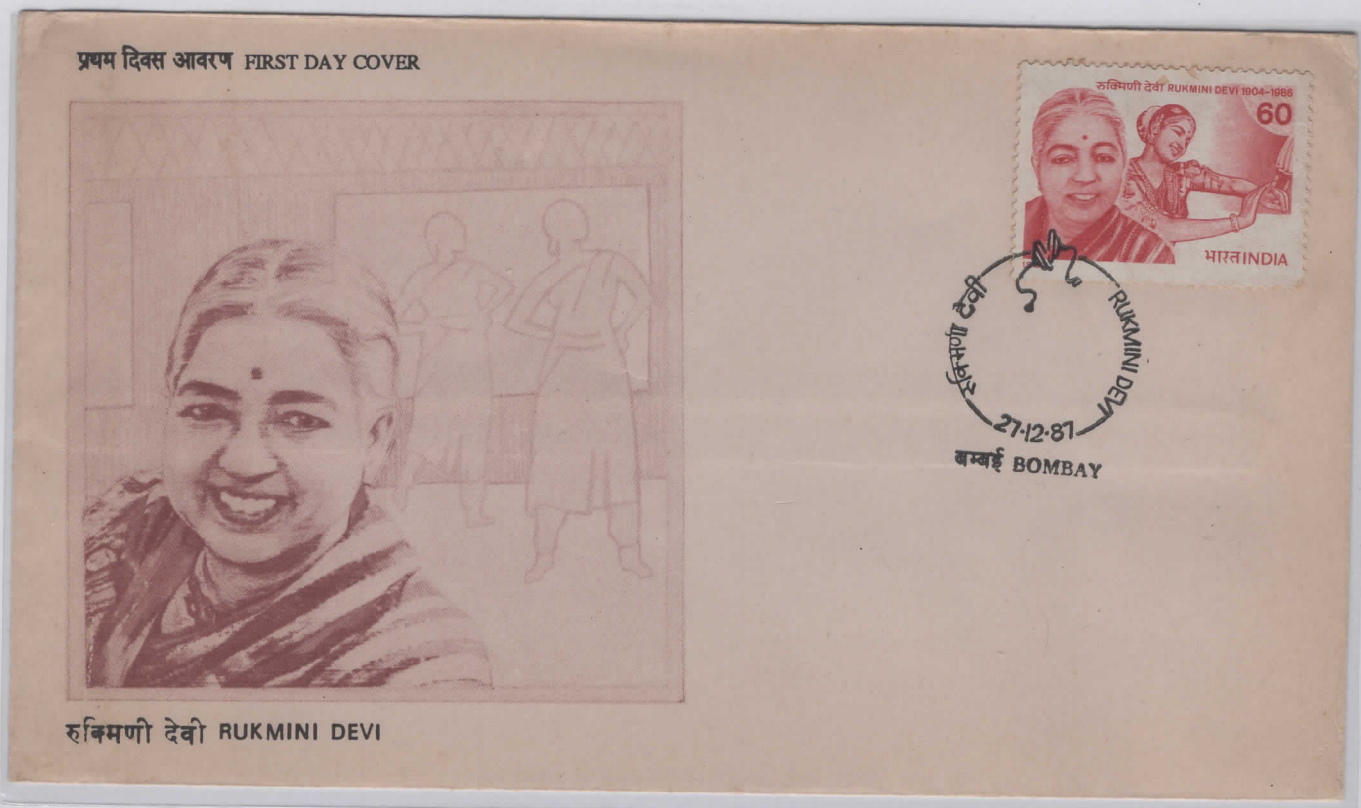


## Classical and Folk Dances of India

### 5. Proponents of Indian dances



Vallathol Narayana Menon is credited with the revival of Kathakali dance in Kerala. He was instrumental in setting up the Kerala Kalamandalam and during his travel abroad he took the Kathakali dance form to international forum.



Rukmini Devi Arundale was a theosophist, dancer and choreographer of classical dance form of Bharatanatyam. She was nominated to the Rajya Sabha. She revived the Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam from its original sadhir style (temple dancers). She was awarded Padma Bhushan, & Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship.

## Classical and Folk Dances of India

### 5. Proponents of Indian dances



प्रथम दिवस आवरण FIRST DAY COVER

*Deccan / MCH Q. M.S.*



उदय शंकर UDAY SHANKAR



*209*

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*50*

Commercially used FDC with "Postage Due - Underpaid" marking of stamp issued honouring 'Uday Shankar', renowned dancer and choreographer, best known for creating a fusion style of dance, adapting European theatrical techniques to Indian classical dance, imbued with elements of Indian classical, folk, and tribal dance, which he later popularised in India, and abroad. He was a pioneer of modern dance