

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Subject: Dhol Di Awaz (Bhangra)
Discipline: Music and Dance

SECTION I - OVERVIEW	2
EPISODE THEME	
SUBJECT	
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS	
OBJECTIVE	
STORY SYNOPSIS	
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	
INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	
EQUIPMENT NEEDED	
MATERIALS NEEDED	
INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED	
SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT	3
CONTENT OVERVIEW	
THE BIG PICTURE	
RESOURCES – TEXTS	
RESOURCES – WEB SITES	
VIDEO RESOURCES	
BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS	
SECTION III – VOCABULARY	7
SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK	8



Dhol Di Awaz performers.
Still image from SPARK story, 2009.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

SUBJECT

Bhangra

GRADE RANGES

K-12

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Dance and Music

OBJECTIVE

To explore traditional folk dance and how it has become a powerful means of cultural expression for a new generation of South Asians as well as a popular dance form for Westerners.

STORY SYNOPSIS

The driving, high-energy Indian folk dance known as “bhangra” has a long history that takes it from the fields of northern India and Pakistan to modern-day dance halls. It has become the connection to the Punjabi culture for a generation of Indian Americans who have grown up far from home. **Spark** goes inside the Dhol Di Awaz competition held at Cupertino’s Flint Center and meets one of the Bay Area’s top bhangra teams.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Hands-on group projects, in which students assist and support one another
- Hands-on individual projects, in which students work independently
- Group oral discussion and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing
- Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- To foster an appreciation of the Punjabi folk dance known as bhangra
- To reveal the ways in which new Punjabi-Americans maintain connection to their cultural heritage while inserting their individuality.
- To understand how traditions change over time and maintain relevance to new generations

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Spark story about Dhol Di Awaz on VHS or a computer with Internet access, streaming capability, navigation software, video projector, and speakers. CD player and musical samples selected from the Resource section of the guide.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
Access to recordings of bhangra music and CD player
Pencils, pens, and paper

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

- Linguistic – the ability to express oneself metaphorically and poetically
- Logical-Mathematical – the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically
- Musical Intelligence – the capability to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms
- Interpersonal – awareness of others’ feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
- Intrapersonal – awareness of one’s own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
- Bodily-Kinesthetic – the ability to use one’s mind to control one’s bodily movements



See more information on [Multiple Intelligences](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education) at www.kqed.org/spark/education.

MEDIA MATTERS

The following SPARK stories may be used for compare/contrast purposes:

Shri Krupa Dance Foundation:

<http://www.kqed.org/assets/pdf/arts/programs/spark/218.pdf?trackurl=true>

Pandit Chitresh Das

<http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=16485>

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

The driving, high-energy Indian folk dance known as "bhangra" has a long history that takes it from the fields of northern India and Pakistan to modern-day dance halls. It has become the connection to the Punjabi culture for a generation of Indian Americans who have grown up far from home. **Spark** goes inside the Dhol Di Awaz competition held at Cupertino's Flint Center and meets one of the Bay Area's top bhangra teams.

Founded in 1999 by the Berkeley Sikh Student Association, Dhol Di Awaz -- which translates as "the sound of the dhol [an Indian drum]" -- is the oldest bhangra competition on the West Coast. With participating teams that hail from as far away as Canada, it has also become one of the largest events of its kind.

Vigorous and dynamic, bhangra arose out of dances that Punjabi farmers once performed while working in the fields during the spring harvest. From there, it gradually evolved into a popular folk dance for festive occasions, such as weddings and parties. Although originally it was danced primarily by men, in modern competition it's not unusual to see co-ed groups dressed in colorful outfits -- the men usually in long tunics called "kurtas" and the women in bright baggy pants, or "salwar kameez." Bhangra dancers traditionally bound and bob to the relentless beat of the dhol, a two-sided Indian bass drum, accompanied by such other instruments as the stringed sarangi, the jingling chimta and the supps, which resemble a long section of a wooden folding gate.

As young people of Southeast Asian descent rediscover their roots, they've found that bhangra's heavy backbeat and coordination of nonstop foot and hand motions has made it a natural match to other styles of dance and music, and its distinctive rhythms have filtered into dance clubs and fused with reggae, raggamuffin, house music and hip-hop, all of them breathing contemporary life into an ancient style. No

longer confined to just the Punjabi area, bhangra fusion can be heard in Apache Indian's ragga hit "Chok There," on Missy Elliot's 2001 *Get Ur Freak On* in "Beware," in Jay-Z's remix of the bhangra song "Mundian to Bach Ke" and even in Britney Spears's "Me Against the Music."

BIG PICTURE

Bhangra comes from the region in Southeast Asia known as the Punjab -- an area that extends from Northeast Pakistan into Northwest India. The name Punjab means "the land of five rivers," and due to its fertile lands and location, has been an important agricultural and strategic part of the great history of Southeast Asia. Through the course of history, it has fallen under the control of many different empires, including the Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Muslims, Mongols and, most recently, the British.

After the end of the British Raj in 1947, the region was partitioned between the two countries and continues to be home to millions of residents who speak primarily the Indo-Aryan language of Punjabi, and practice a variety of religions, most predominantly Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism. Punjabi culture is a reflection of its diverse population and complex history, in which traditional folk dance plays an important part.

What is today called bhangra is believed to have developed approximately 500 years ago. As with many traditional dance forms, it is believed that bhangra began first as a means to help farmers working in the fields with the tedious nature of their work, then gradually grew in to a celebration of the harvest associated with Baisakhi, or the New Year (April 13th), and the arrival of spring. In more recent years its function was expanded into a celebratory experience for any important social gathering, such as weddings or holidays. Dancing of traditional bhangra follows the cycle of the wheat season, beginning with the sowing of the seeds, with celebrations every full moon until the harvest and arrival of the New Year. Men dance in a circular manner around a drummer

playing the *dhol*, a double-headed barrel-shaped drum played with sticks. The drummer dictates the tempo and intensity of the dance. A rather exuberant dance, one common feature is the use of acrobatics, such as one dancer standing on the shoulders of another dancer.

Contemporary bhangra still maintains its celebratory quality, yet has become open to women and now encompasses or is informed by a number of different traditional Punjabi folk dances, which include (but are not limited to): Daankara, Dhamal, Giddha, Jhumar and Sammi. Each dance in its most traditional form is gender specific, and has its own rhythmic, tempo and dance characteristics for which it is identified. A few are described here:

Jhumar is a folk dance of the Jaangli people of Western Punjab. Traditionally a dance for men, it features slightly slower, graceful tempos, gestures and lyrics of love and longing. Also danced to in a circle around a drummer, the dance mimics nature through the movements of animals and birds, as well as the work of the farmer preparing the soil, sowing seeds and reaping the grain, and even of the wife giving lunch to the workers, or giving her husband lassis to drink. Although this dance in its most traditional form is declining in popularity, many of its movements and rhythms have been incorporated into contemporary Bhangra.¹

Sammi is a dance for women from the same region of Western Punjab. It is a sensual, flirtatious dance performed in unison, meaning that all the movements are coordinated and executed the same way by all the women. Danced in a circular manner, the women add to the rhythm through hand claps, and all sing together in unison, led by a solo woman who initiates each line of the lyrics.

Giddha is perhaps the most popular women's dance. Like Sammi, it relies on hand clapping, circular dancing around a single singer, sometimes with no other rhythmic accompaniment except spoons or a small drum called a *dholak*. However, when not in a performance context there is a little more room for improvisation or individual choice in the dance movements, and the lyrics tend to be more satirical and focused around common social themes, such as

¹ Singh, Dr. Nahar. Punjabi Folk-Dance: Cultural Role and Significance. 1988. Translated by Gibb Schreffler 2003

quarrels with one's in-laws or feelings of loneliness when their husband is away.

Since 1947, when the British rule in India ended, millions of Punjabis immigrated to Great Britain. With this expatriate community came all their traditional dances and culture. Within a generation, bhangra became a new sensation, and with each passing decade, more fusion has occurred with contemporary music and dance styles, becoming a new symbol of identity for the young Southeast Asian Diaspora. For instance, in the 1980s, bhangra became influenced by reggae and rock, and experienced a departure from the use of traditional instruments such as the *harmonium* or *sarangi*, replacing them with guitar, saxophone and synthesizer. Popular groups of the time include Alaap, Heera, Gurdas Mann and Malkit Singh.

In the last twenty years, Bhangra has seen a return to some traditional instruments and rhythms, but simultaneously a further infusion of sampled sounds, Hip-Hop, House, and R&B. Also, there is more hybridization of dance genres, some traditional, and much of it from African-American and African-European forms to become what has been called "post-bhangra". Competitions on college campuses have become incredibly popular, with categories in both "traditional" and "modern" bhangra. Men and women compete on a more equal basis, and the choreography has reflected the shift from the circular nature of the dances around a drummer or singer, to a large-scale stage presentation with perfectly staged unity. The costumes have maintained a certain level of traditionalism, with men wearing long shirts (*kurtas*), *pudgees* (a turban) and *turlas* (a colorful fan attached to the pudgee). Women wear *salwar kameez* (long blouses and baggy pants), *duppatas* (a long scarf) or *ghagra* (traditional Punjabi dress).

As a measure of bhangra's influence on mainstream Western culture, the sound of bhangra has become so prevalent as to be found in Pepsi commercials in the UK. Popular artists such as Panjabi MC and Jazzy Bains have sampled Punjabi music from older musicians and used it in their own blend of rap, Hip-Hop and bhangra. Along with other popular artists they have sold thousands of copies of their songs worldwide, and many songs are part of the Bollywood re-mix culture. They perform for huge audiences in sold-out venues. Through constant

adaptation and incorporation, bhangra maintains its relevance to a new generation of Southeast Asian youth seeking to connect to their heritage while embracing the European and American cultures in which they live.

RESOURCES - TEXTS

Ballantyne, Tony. Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World. Duke University Press, 2003.

Sharma, Sanjay. "Noisy Asians or 'Asian Noise'?" In Dis-orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music. London: Zed Books, 1996

Singh, Dr. Nahar. Panjabii Lok-Naach: Sabhiaachaarak Bhoomika te Saarthakta ["Punjabi Folk-Dance: Cultural Role and Significance"] 1988, Lokgit Prakashan. *Translated, with editorial remarks, by Gibb Schreffler (2003)

RECORDINGS

Balle. Sukshinder Shinda. 2000

Bhangra Fever. Sanctuary, 2008.

The Rough Guide to Bhangra Dance. World Music Network. 2006

The Best Manak Album Ever. Manak, Kuldeep. Traditional Punjabi artist with many albums.

Mustt Mustt. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. One of the most incredible traditional Pakistani Qawwali singers.

Contemporary bhangra artists include:

Amar Singh Chamkila

Jazzy Bains

Punjabi MC

Lalchand Yamla Jatt - a traditional Punjabi singer with many recordings and videos posted on YouTube.

RESOURCES - WEB SITES

<http://www.dholdiaawaz.com> - The official website for Dhol Di Awaz, the dance competition featured in the Spark story.

<http://www.dolrhythms.com> - The website for Bay Area organization of the same name, founded by Vicki Virk and Suman Raj. Class listings, events and information about bhangra are posted there.

<http://www.nonstopbhanga.com> - The website and blog for the monthly San Francisco Bhangra dance events.

<http://www.thingsindian.com/dance> - A website with listings for Indian dance classes in the Bay Area.

<http://www.punjabonline.com> - Information about Punjabi culture

RESOURCES - AUDIO/VISUAL

The Bhangra Wrap. Through the Looking Glass Productions, San Francisco 1994.

YouTube has a host of Bhangra competition excerpts – teachers should preview first to find appropriate material. www.youtube.com

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

ABADA Capoeira Brazilian Arts Center – see their listing for classes in Bhangra. 3221 22nd Street at Mission, SF

Ashkenaz, Berkeley – for live concerts and dance, including bhangra. 1317 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley

Dhol Di Awaz – Hosts an annual bhangra competition at the Cupertino's Flint Center. Check website for information. <http://www.dholdiaawaz.com>

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

Ancestors

A person from whom one is descended, a forebear.

Authenticity

The quality of being authentic or genuine.

Bhangra

A term used to denote a variety of celebratory Punjabi folk dances as part of cultural and social gatherings such as weddings, holidays and festivities.

Bhugaris

A Sikh turban worn by men.

Chimpta

A percussion instrument used in South Asia and especially in bhangra. A chimpta is really a pair of metal cooking tongs that, over the years, have been fashioned into a percussion instrument by the addition of little metal jingles.

Dhol

A traditional Punjabi barrel-shaped drum with two heads. Played with sticks on both sides, the dhol provides the fundamental rhythm. Bhangra dance music.

Dhol Di Awaz

Literally, “sound of the drum”. The name of the competitive dance group in the Spark story.

Immigrants

People who have left their country or place of birth to live in another country or region.

Kurta

The long shirt worn by men in India, Punjab and Pakistan

Props

Items used in dance and theater to augment the narration of the story or embellish the dance and music.

Punjab

The geographic region extending from the Northwest corner of India into Northeast Pakistan that was partitioned after the end of the rule of the British Raj in 1947.

Rhythm

An organized pattern formed by a series of beats or sounds of differing duration and stress.

Salvar Kameez

The baggy pants and long blouses worn by women in India and Pakistan.

Sarangi

A bowed, short-necked lute in Hindustani music. It is one of the hardest instruments to master as the notes are articulated by pressing the cuticles of the nail against the string instead of pressing it against the fret board with the flesh of the finger. However, it is also said to most resemble the human voice and as such is highly respected.

Sequence

In dance terminology, an organized series of steps and movements choreographed to music which is memorized and executed by the dancers.

Sikh

A religious belief system in India and the Punjab.

Supp/Saap

A percussive instrument and dance prop fashioned like a flexible wooden gate, traditionally used in bhangra music.

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Exploring Bhangra music and dance

For young children, getting up and moving to music is one of the best ways to learn about beat, tempo, shape and dynamics. You can acquire many music examples of bhangra on line, and use these in the classroom for an introduction to bhangra. Start by listening to the music and talking about what kinds of sounds there are. If you can, bring in pictures of the different instruments as well and identify the various percussion sounds, such as the *dhol* drum, the *chimtas* (jingling sounds), and the stringed instruments such as the *sarangi* (a more traditional instrument). Then initiate playing/clapping a steady beat with the strong downbeats of the music. If your classroom has access to hand drums, use them as well. Follow this with getting up and “stepping it out,” first by walking, then by taking suggestions as to other ways to physically articulate a steady beat. Let different children be the “leader.” Assign the syllables “ta” for a quarter note, “ti” for an eighth note, and “sh” for a quarter note rest.

Keep the time in 4/4, and increase the difficulty by alternating playing /clapping a different rhythm (such as ti-ti-ta, ti-ti-ta) then moving to it. Select favorite movements for this exercise and conduct this activity with the music, using your students’ “choreography.” Challenge students with pre-selected developmentally appropriate motor skill and axial movements. Play along with the music on hand drums or just clapping, changing the rhythms and repeating them for several measures.

Music and Dance in Cultural Context

Engage students in a discussion about the various ways we experience music in our daily lives. Encourage students to bring in examples from their homes and discuss its importance to them, their likes and dislikes, and ask them to be as specific as

possible in describing why they are drawn to a certain kind of music and dance.

Describe and demonstrate different ceremonial and folk dance traditions that show work activities such as harvesting, fishing, or weaving. Lead students in a discussion of the traditional uses of music and dance, including religious, work-related, ceremonial, and social. How are the specific aspects demonstrated through the music or dance? Examine the lyrics, instrumentation, physical gestures, costumes, gender roles and audience in your discussion.

Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 and have each group research a different world folk dance tradition based on the previous discussion. Have them present their findings to the rest of the class, including pictures and aural samples of the tradition.

RELATED STANDARDS

Music Grade K-1

Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 Compare the various uses of music in daily experiences.

3.3 Use a personal vocabulary to describe voices and instruments from diverse cultures.

Music Grade 2-3

Artistic Perception

1.5 Identify visually and aurally individual wind, string, brass, and percussion instruments used in a variety of music. 3.3

Grade 6

Identify and describe distinguishing characteristics of musical genres and styles from a variety of cultures.

Dance - Grade K-3 Artistic Perception

1.1 Show a variety of combinations of basic motor skills (e.g., walk and run, gallop and jump, hop and skip, slide and roll)

1.2 Show a variety of combinations of axial movements (e.g., swing and balanced shapes, turn and stretch, bend and twist).

1.3 Perform short movement problems, emphasizing the element of time (e.g., varied tempos, rhythmic patterns, counting).

Grades 6-12 – Cultural Hybridization

Bhangra is an excellent example of the continual hybridization of cultures. What began as a traditional Punjabi harvest dance has now become a huge international dance craze, popularized through Bollywood and the large international Punjabi Diaspora. Have students take a close look at the tradition of bhangra and its contemporary form, including the large national competitions. If possible, have students attend one of the Bay Area events. Identify contemporary elements such as Hip-Hop and Reggae, and lead students in a discussion of how these elements merge and why. What is the nature of these transnational remittances? (i.e., does it go both ways or are the cultural benefits unidirectional?) Is it helping to break down stereotypes and increase cultural understanding? What do students think of it? Contact a dancer from one of the many Bay Area dance companies and ask them to lead the class in a bhangra basics lesson, and include Hip-Hop dancer as well if possible. Have them discuss the similarities and differences between the two genres.

SPARKLERS* (More ideas to extend learning)

Compare the differences and similarities between Bhangra and other traditional Indian dance. Watch the Spark episode on the Shri Krupa Dance Institute or on Chitresh Das Dance Company. Compare and contrast these episodes with your students. Discuss the nature of the dances, their cultural aspects, and physical and musical specifics.

Create a dance – using nothing but hand claps and maybe spoons, challenge students to make their own bhangra moves as a class. Break up into groups of four or five, and assign each group a short, one-minute choreography. Challenge them to create their own rhythms first, and then put it together with other students' rhythms. Each group can teach the others their movements, and at the end they put it all together into a larger performance.

Attend local events such as the bhangra competition at the Flint Center in Cupertino or other local dance companies and festivals. Compare and contrast different groups and analyze the performances using specific criteria for making informed critical evaluations of quality and effectiveness of the presentation.

RELATED STANDARDS

Music Grades 5-8

Connections, Relationships, Applications

5.1 Explain the role of music in community events.

Dance grade 5

Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 Describe how and why a traditional dance may be changed when performed on stage for an audience.

3.3 Select traditional dances that men, women, or children perform and explain the purpose(s) of the dances.

Connections, Relationships, Applications

5.1 Describe how historical events relate to dance forms (e.g., the rebellion of the 1960's was represented in popular social dances with a move from partners to individual expression).

Dance High School, Proficient

Creative Expression

2.6 Collaborate with peers in the development of choreography in groups (e.g. duets, trios, small ensembles)

Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 Identify and perform folk/traditional, social, and theatrical dances with appropriate stylistic nuances.

3.2 Describe ways in which folk/traditional, social and theatrical dances reflect their specific cultural context.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.

For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp>.

