Mission Statement and Objectives

Mission Statement:
Guru Shradha’s mission is to inspire a new generation of dancers to sustain and spread Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra’s unique legacy of historic beauty and spiritual meaning in the Odissi Indian classical dance style. We also aim to further cross-cultural exchange by joining artists and communities to celebrate the theme of unity in diversity.

Guru Shradha works towards its mission through the following objectives:

- Propagate legendary Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra’s illustrious Odissi dance tradition in the U.S. through classes, workshops, and performances;
- Sponsor exceptional guest artists to inspire and showcase their artistry and proficiency and/or to instruct;
- Provide a platform for students to grow as artists and exhibit their talents;
- Produce a repertory of performances of traditional choreography by Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, as well as original choreography by Guru Ratikant Mohapatra and Guru Shradha;
- Create opportunities for and explore the intersection and interplay of Odissi with other Indian and non-Indian dance styles, as well as other performing arts, through collaborations; and
- Foster awareness of Odissi dance and Indian culture through public programs that are accessible to all, including free events.
Background

Guru Shradha is a non-profit organization and dance company established by Niharika Mohanty, a renowned Odissi dancer and teacher. Niharika's legendary guru, Padma Vibhushan Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, gave her his blessing to create Guru Shradha to help propagate his illustrious tradition. Guru Shradha is honored to be Guruji’s second establishment globally. Since its inception in 2008, Guru Shradha has developed into a premier Odissi institution in North America, providing a near-immersive Odissi experience to its students and the Bay area community. In addition to classes, Guru Shradha organizes programs, festivals, workshops, and lecture demonstrations in the US and India.

With roots in the East Indian state of Odisha traced back to the 2nd century A.D., Guru Shradha’s establishment in the San Francisco Bay Area enables a unique connection of deep history and modernity within an artistic community of immense diversity. Guru Shradha contributes to and draws inspiration from the beauty of the vibrant cultures that make the Bay Area a home or a destination with a unifying belief in the power of the arts to express our shared humanity.

Odissi

Odissi dance is from the state of Odisha in eastern India and is one of the oldest surviving Indian dance forms. Like other classical dance forms, Odissi involves both nratta, pure dance, and abhinaya, expressional dance. Its unique grace is expressed through the juxtaposition of fluid torso movements, strong stamping footwork, and postures evoking temple sculptures. Odissi is distinguished from other Indian classical dance forms by its two signature postures: chouka, a square-like stance, and tribhangi, a stance with a deflection of the torso, bend of the head, and bend of the knees.
Guru Shradha is led by three uniquely influential Odissi dancers and teachers whose lives have been shaped by the opportunity to be mentored by Guruji.

**Guru Ratikant Mohapatra** is the son of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and Smt. Laxmipriya Mohapatra. In the past 25 years, he has carved a niche for himself in his own right as a master dancer, choreographer, percussionist, teacher, and archivist, receiving several prestigious awards. Today, he serves as the Director of Srjan (Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Nrityabasa), while performing and teaching Odissi dance and music throughout the world. Guru Ratikant Mohapatra serves as Guru Shradha's Chief Advisor, providing guidance and support, especially for the organization's major performance/festival planning, and developing its curriculum to correspond with Srjan's.

**Guru Sujata Mohapatra**, disciple and daughter-in-law of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, has surrendered herself entirely to Guruji and adheres strictly to his style and vision of Odissi. With numerous accolades, like the recent Sangeet Natak Academy Award, and honors from around the world, she is widely recognized as one of the leading female Odissi dancers of our time, achieving a level of technical perfection that is difficult to match. Guru Sujata Mohapatra serves as the Artistic Director of Guru Shradha and is responsible for determining and implementing the institution’s overall artistic vision.

**Niharika Mohanty**, who was raised in Canada, took to Odissi dance at the tender age of five and ultimately became a prominent disciple of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. Since Guruji’s passing, Niharika has continued to refine her dance under Guru Ratikant and Guru Sujata Mohapatra. Niharika possesses an M.A. in Dance and is the recipient of several grants and awards for her training and choreography. She has performed extensively in North America and internationally as a soloist to notable reviews. Today, Niharika’s primary goal is to continue Guruji’s legacy in North America as Founder/Director of Guru Shradha.
Traditional Repertoire

Mangalacharan

*Mangalacharan* is an invocational piece for an auspicious beginning. The dancers mark their entrance to the stage in the Odissi style and offer salutations to Mother Earth before the central prayer. This is followed by the *Sabha Pranam* (acknowledgment of the audience) concluding with the *Trikhandi Pranam* to the Gods, Guru and the audience.

Choreographer: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra

*Guru Brahma Mangalacharan* (Guru), *Namami Mangalacharan* (Lord Ganesh), *Pada Vande Mangalacharan* (Lord Ganesh), *Namo Devi Mangalacharan* (Goddess Devi), *Manikya Veena Mangalacharan* (Maatangi Devi), *Jaatatavi Mangalacharan* (Lord Shiva)

Other Devotional Opening Items

Choreographer: Guru Ratikant Mohapatra

*Vakratunda* (Ganesh), *Guru Brahma* (Guru)

Batu

*Batu* is a pure dance offering in honour of Lord Batuka Bhairava, an aspect of Lord Shiva. Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra’s traditional choreography of Batu is a visual delight banking on the interrelationship of dance with the Orissan temple sculptures. The sculptures come alive in many aesthetically pleasing poses, reminiscent of the life size sculptures on the famous Konark Sun Temple.

Choreographer: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra

Pallavi

*Pallavi* is a beautiful example of a purely technical piece in the Odissi dance repertoire without a specific meaning conveyed in the dance. Pallavi means blossoming and implies elaboration; an exposition of both the dance and the music that accompanies it. The graceful and lyrical movements of the dancer's form is supported by intricate rhythmic patterns. Together they create an exquisite and enchanting tapestry of rhythm, music and movement.

Choreographer: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra

*Vasant Pallavi, Saveri Pallavi, Mohana Pallavi, Shankarabaranam Pallavi, Aravi Pallavi, Bilahari Pallavi*

Choreographer: Guru Ratikant Mohapatra

*Megh Pallavi*
Abhinaya

*Abhinaya* is an example of *nritya*, or expresional dance. The dancer uses hand gestures, facial expressions, and body movements to narrate a song or poem.

**Gita Govindam Songs & Ashtapadi**

An *Ashtapadi* is an eight-verse song from the famous Sanskrit poem entitled “Gita Govindam”, written in the 12th century by the great poet Jayadeva, a devotee of Lord Jagannath. “Gita Govindam” consists of 24 songs in the *sringara rasa*, or mood of love, depicting the love between Lord Krishna and his consort Radha, who go through the anguish of physical separation and finally meet in spiritual union. Here, Radha is neither a wife nor a worshipping rustic playmate. Her intense experience of love and longing complements and reflects Krishna's passion. For many centuries, the Odissi repertoire solely consisted of songs from the “Gita Govindam”, to which the temple dancers, or *Maharis*, would sing and dance for the pleasure of the Lord.

Choreographer: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra

*Dasavatara, Srita Kamala, Lalita Lavanga, Hari Riha*

**Odia Abhinaya**

An *abhinaya* is referred to as an *Odia abhinaya* when it is choreographed to a song in the Oriya language.

Choreographer: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra

*Aahe Neela Saila, Nachanti Range, To Laagi, Patha Chadide*

**Other Abhinaya**

Choreographer: Guru Ratikant Mohapatra

*Jaya Mahesha*
Traditional Repertoire

Mokshya

*Mokshya* means salvation. Paralleling this concept, *Mokshya*, the final item of the Odissi repertoire, signifies the ultimate release and total surrender of the dancer to God. A fast rhythmic pure dance sequence is followed by an invocation to the Goddess Devi, seeking harmony and well-being for all mankind.

Choreographer: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra

Dance Ballets

2. *Dashanana*: Retelling the Hindu epic, *Ramayana*, through the perspective of Ravana, the one considered the villain.

Choreographer: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra
Creative Choreography

Guru Shradha has produced and been involved in several productions, especially featuring the collaboration of artists of culturally diverse backgrounds, and has created in collaboration and also separately, many new pieces, choreographed/co-choreographed by Director Niharika Mohanty. If interested, more information can be provided.
Significant Performances

2008
○ Asian Art Museum 6-Day Residency: Lecture/Demonstration/Performance
○ WestWave Festival

2009
○ Guru Shradha: A Journey Begins...

2010
○ Kelucharan Keerti Sampradaya Festival
○ OSA Convention 2010: Odissi Dance Drama: Guru Shradha segment choreographed by Guru Ratikant Mohapatra

2011
○ Yuva Bharati Kathak & Odissi Festival
○ Guru Madhurai Muralidharan’s Sense Beyond Dance Ballet
○ Odissi International Festival 2011: Odisha, India
○ International Odissi Dance Festival 2011: Odisha, India: Guru Shradha presented Dashanana as the Grand Finale of this festival in which the renowned and established Odissi Gurus, dancers and companies performed

2012
○ Samsmaranam: U.S. Tribute to Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra
○ Kelucharan Guna Keertanam Festival in College Station, TX
○ Chinmaya Mission 1 in 11 Program

2013
○ Asian Art Museum Collaborative Lecture/Demonstration/Program with Tiruchitrambalam Dance Company
○ Access Braille “The Blind Leading the Sighted” Surdas Dance Drama

2014
○ Kelucharan Keerti Sampradaya Festival 2014
○ Kalamahotsav 2014
○ San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival

2015
○ Sahanartana
○ Yuva Bharati Milan Festival
○ Silicon Andhra Annamacharya Festival
○ OSA Convention 2015 in Washington D.C.
○ Kelucharan Keerti Sampradaya Festival 2015
○ Odissi International Festival 2015: Odisha, India

2016
○ Natya Mela
○ Chinmaya Mission Naada Bindu Festival
○ Yuva Bharati Odissi Parampara Program
○ Naatak “Mr. India”
○ EnActe “Conference of the Birds”

2017
○ Kelucharan Keerti Sampradaya Festival 2017
○ Spark!
○ Offered our dance in or for spiritual centers: Bahamas Sivananda Ashram, Livermore Temple, South Bay Hindu Temple, Brahma Kumaris Ashram, Mahakaleshwar Temple, Fremont Temple, North Bay Hindu Temple
○ Offered our dance for Hindu spiritual occasions: Mahashivratri, Saraswati Puja, Ganesh Puja, Durga Puja, Mahakumbhabhishekham, Silver Jubilee of Sunnyvale Temple

Sustaining a unique legacy of historic beauty and meaning in the Odissi dance style
...dance drama ‘Dasanana’ by Guru Shradha from US, held the audience spell-bound. Odisha360.com Bureau

Likewise students of US based dancer Niharika Mohanty marked their distinct presence. Talim and Taiyari were distinctly visible in their body language...Divya, Rasika Kumar are a few names one must remember. Odisha360.com Bureau

The performances of Divya Saha (USA), Ulrika Larsen (Sweden), Douglas Ridings (USA), Shantona Bag (Australia) and Yuval Cohen (Israel) as well artistes from Malaysia-based Sutra dance company were impressive.
Namita Panda, The Telegraph

Then, it was impossible not to fall in love with the boy-girl pairing of Maya Lochana Devalcheruvu, 11, and Akhil Srinivasan Joondeph, 10, in "Guru Shradna," a courtly duet in the Odissi style. Allan Ulrich, S.F. Chronicle

Charming, yet very serious in odissi were Maya Lochana Devalcheruvu (age 11) and Akhil Srinivasan (10). Young as they are, they already showed Odissi’s curved body position and light footwork. With good stage presence, they knew what they were aiming for. S.F. Guardian

Megh Pallavi in Odissi was clearly the highlight, choreographed by guru Ratikant Mohapatra and superlatively rendered by Akhil Joondeph and Maya Lochana Devalcheruvu. Priya Das, Narthaki

It was a pleasure to see so many young dancers pursuing the challenging dance style of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra under the strict supervision of Niharika Mohanty...Manjari Sinha, The Statesman

“The arrangements were absolutely delightful and the costumes of the dancers upon the stage were stunning to say the least. The young dancers danced to the unmeasured invocatory verses, and then the traditional Pallavi, Batu and the Dasavatara of poet Jayadeva, every student exhibiting her keenness and excitement at the opportunity provided to them by the opening of such an institute. The professional presentations of Yugmadwanda Pallavi and an Oriya abhinaya number were performed by Niharika Mohanty and Sujata Mohapatra. They each performed with a mastery that melted the hearts of the onlookers. While the Jugalbandi in the pallavi danced by Niharika was captivating, the Kede Chhanda Abhinaya of Sujata glowed with a brilliant promise that the future of Odissi is intact, and Guruji’s mission has the continuum. His research work will go on and on and the stage is set for those in his trail to carry on with zest and intensity, the lifeworks of this great master.” Vishal Ramani, Narthaki
Contact Information

For booking performances, workshops, lecture/demonstrations and high resolution photos, please contact.

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