

Make your own Dance Mandala

The *Beyond Bollywood* exhibition features two types of mandalas (geometric meditation diagrams). One is the *rasamandala*, depicting the dance of devotion between the Hindu deity Krishna and the cowherd women:



LEFT: Covering cloth with scene of Krishna dancing with cowherd women, approx. 1850–1900. India; Chamba region, Himachal Pradesh state. Cotton with silk embroidery and metal strips. *Asian Art Museum, Transfer from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Carlotta Mabury, 1993.91.* Photograph © Asian Art Museum. RIGHT: Circle dances with Krishna, Approx. 1700–1725. India; Madhya Pradesh state. Opaque watercolors and gold on paper. *Asian Art Museum, San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990.969, EX2022.3.018.* Photograph © Asian Art Museum.

Another is the lotus mandala, on which the Buddhist deity Hevajra dances with yoginis (mistresses of yoga and magic). The two images on the left show an artwork which originally had a Hevajra figure in the center:



LEFT, MIDDLE: Lotus mandala of Hevajra with eight dancing yoginis and eight cremation grounds, Approx. 1100–1200. Northeastern India. Copper alloy. *Asian Art Museum, Rubin Museum of Art, C2003.10.2 (HAR65207), EX2022.3.032.* Photograph © Asian Art Museum. RIGHT: Dancing Hevajra surrounded by dancing yoginis, Probably 1050–1100. Northeastern Thailand; former kingdom of Angkor. Bronze. *Asian Art Museum, Cleveland Museum of Art, gift of Maxeen and John Flower in honor of Dr. Stanislaw Czuma, 2011.143, EX2022.3.033.* Photograph © Asian Art Museum.

In all of the above examples, the circling dancers feel a powerful connection to the central figure. Can you think of other dances that take place in a circle? What makes circle dances so compelling?

Make your own mandala depicting a circle dance, using the provided art supplies!

Share your mandala on social media with #BeyondBollywoodDance.

Steps for creating your Dance Mandala

- ① Use a ballpoint pen to poke a small hole in the center of a paper plate. Cut out the “petals” for your mandala. You can make them any shape you like.



- ② Decorate the center of your plate with repeating patterns. These could be geometric shapes or they might be images from nature (flowers, animals, etc.). Then draw a dancer on each petal; show the dancers making different poses.



- ③ From the options provided, choose a central figure for your mandala — it could be Krishna, Hevajra, or simply another dancer. Cut out two images of your chosen central figure. Poke a chopstick through the center hole you made. Tape your two central images “back to back” on the part of the chopstick that is inside the mandala.



- ④ Flip your petals up so that they are standing. Twirl your mandala to watch the emerging circle dance!



Bonus: Your mandala can also work as a zoetrope, a device that served as an early form of animation. You can draw your circling dancers so that they show a gradual progression of dance steps, then look through the slits between the petals as you twirl your mandala. It will look like the figures on the petals are dancing! This works especially well if you have a black paper plate and use the black surface as the “outside” of your petals.