



JANA SANSKRITI CENTRE FOR THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

Muktadhara XI

22 December, 2026 — 2 January, 2027

BADU · KOLKATA · SOUTH 24 PARGANAS, WEST BENGAL

22-24

DEC, 2026

TUE – THU

PHASE 01 · WORKSHOP

Forum & Introspective Theatre Workshop

A three-day intensive in the core Jana Sanskriti methodology, opening the festival.

FACILITATOR

Sanjoy Ganguly

VENUE

Badu

25-26

DEC, 2026

FRI – SAT

PHASE 02 · WORKSHOP

Workshop on Method Acting

A two-day practical workshop on performance technique.

FACILITATOR

Sujoy Ganguly · Satya Ranjan Pal

VENUE

Badu

27

DEC, 2026

SUNDAY

PHASE 03 · INAUGURATION

Official Inauguration

Followed by a performance from the JS Coordination Team and a Gotipua recital.

VENUE

Badu

Gotipua

Odisha · precursor to Odissi

28

DEC, 2026

MONDAY

PHASE 04 · EXCURSION

Kolkata Tour

A full day in the city.

VENUE

Kolkata

29-1

DEC – JAN

TUE – FRI

PHASE 05 · FIELD PROGRAMME

Village Visits

Forum theatre performances presented alongside a different traditional art form each day.

VENUE

South 24 Parganas

29 Dec	Raibenshe	Bengal · martial folk dance
30 Dec	Natua	Purulia · martial folk dance
31 Dec	Chhau	Seraikella · Purulia · Mayurbhanj
01 Jan	Torja	Bengal · improvised musical debate

02

JAN, 2027

SATURDAY

PHASE 06 · CLOSING

Return to Badu

The festival closes with a special dinner.

VENUE

Badu

Gotipua, Raibenshe, Natua, Chhau and Torja are traditional performance forms of eastern India. Full descriptions follow overleaf.



Traditional Art Forms

ODISHA · PRECURSOR TO ODISSI

01 Gotipua

A traditional folk dance of Odisha and the direct precursor to classical Odissi. In Odia, goti means single and pua means boy: young boys dress as female dancers to praise Lord Jagannath and Krishna through high-energy acrobatics, graceful expression and complex rhythms. The temples of Odisha were once served by female dancers known as devadasis, or mahari, devoted to Jagannath, from whom the Mahari dance descends; bas-relief sculptures of dancers at the Konark Sun and Jagannath temples in Puri attest to the antiquity of the tradition. As the mahari dancers declined around the sixteenth century, during the reign of Rama Chandra Dev, founder of the Bhoi dynasty, boy dancers carried the tradition forward. Gotipua follows the Odissi style, but its technique, costume and presentation differ from the mahari, and the dancers sing for themselves.

BENGAL · MARTIAL FOLK DANCE

02 Raibenshe

A martial folk dance of Bengal associated above all with the districts of Birbhum, Bardhaman, Murshidabad and Bankura. The name is commonly linked to the bansh, or bamboo staff, traditionally carried by performers, and the dance reflects the martial traditions of rural Bengal. Raibenshe is more than a dance form: it holds the memory of a rural martial culture. Its movements retain traces of physical defence, collective discipline and Bengal's lathial tradition, practices that over time were absorbed into ritual, entertainment and folk performance. Its collective movement, rhythmic discipline and familiar rural vocabulary make it a telling example of how traditional forms can be reinterpreted for contemporary social and political expression.

PURULIA · 600-700 YEARS OLD

03 Natua

An ancient martial folk dance of West Bengal, especially Purulia district, and of neighbouring parts of Jharkhand, reckoned to be six to seven hundred years old. It is performed by men with chalk-painted bodies and bright costumes, and blends high-energy acrobatics and stunts with vigorous rhythmic drumming. Natua is in fact the mother form of Chhau. Less a dance than a display of vigorous physical feats set to the beating of drums, the form is primarily tribal. Colourfully dressed, with bright strips of trailing cloth tied to their arms and wrists, the Natuas present a high-powered mix of martial art and acrobatic movement.

SERAIKELLA · PURULIA · MAYURBHANJ

04 Chhau

A vibrant semi-classical Indian dance with strong martial, tribal and folk roots. Originating in eastern India, it enacts episodes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana, local folklore and abstract themes. Its three distinct styles come from Seraikella in Jharkhand, Purulia in West Bengal and Mayurbhanj in Odisha, the first two of which use masks. Chhau is intimately connected to regional festivals, notably the spring festival Chaitra Parva, and its origins are traceable to indigenous dance and martial practice. Its vocabulary of movement takes in mock combat techniques, the stylised gaits of birds and animals, and movements modelled on the daily chores of village housewives. It is taught to male dancers from families of traditional artists or from local communities.

BENGAL · IMPROVISED MUSICAL DEBATE

05 Torja

A traditional Bengali folk form built around a lively, impromptu musical debate between two rival singers or groups. Rooted in the cultural history of rural Bengal, it relies on sharp wit and quick poetic improvisation to take on complex themes drawn from Hindu mythology, spirituality and social life. The artists keep a rhythmic pace on traditional instruments such as the dholak and dotara while challenging one another in a pointed question-and-answer format. This competitive oral tradition serves at once as public spectacle and as a vital medium for preserving regional folklore and philosophical knowledge.