



**India**  
Education Pack

# Introduction

## Welcome to India

India is a fascinating country with an immensely rich and vibrant culture. It has a growing economy, and a history stretching back thousands of years, a diverse mix of languages and religions and deep cultural ties with the UK.

This education pack is designed to help mainstream primary teachers introduce aspects of Indian language and culture to their pupils aged 7-11. It contains lesson and assembly plans, factual information and resources to help pupils improve their core skills and develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of the language and culture of India.

The materials are designed to be flexible and adaptable for use in a variety of settings. They can be used as starting points for individual lessons and assemblies or form part of larger cross-curricular joint projects involving collaboration with a partner school over a number of subjects. Your pupils can learn how to greet a friend in Hindi, get creative making rangoli patterns and shadow puppets, watch an animated film by an Indian film maker and find out about many other aspects of Indian culture using our wide range of classroom resources and activities.

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# India a land of contrasts

## Amaze your friends and family with these facts about India

India is a vast country of contrasts with a wide variety of landscapes and habitats, but did you know that it is also the world's largest democracy, grows more mangoes than any other country and many English words such as shampoo, bungalow and pyjamas originated there? The Illuminating India exhibition at the Science Museum in London also demonstrates how 'Indian innovation in science, technology and mathematics has dramatically shaped the world we live in today.'

Share the following factual information with your pupils and then challenge them to find out what else they can discover about this amazing country? Ask them to use their knowledge to create a resource to share with another class. They might plan and teach a short lesson, make a quiz, an A – Z book of information, a short slideshow, film, wikipage or app, if the relevant software is available.

If you are working with a partner school your pupils can also exchange their research and resources with them.



# Ten Facts About India

## Did you know...

- 1.** India prides itself on being the world's largest democracy. In the last general election more than 553 million people voted in the election, which was spread over 36 days.
- 2.** The country has the world's second largest population with over 1.3 billion people living there. This is equivalent to 17 % of the total world population. (United Nations estimate)
- 3.** Archaeological evidence has shown that the Indus civilization who lived in the north-western part of the country from about 2600 to 2000 BCE developed a sophisticated way of life and it was here that flush toilets were first used in people's homes!
- 4.** The national flag of India has saffron, green and white horizontal stripes. These represent courage and sacrifice, truth and peace and prosperity and life. The Ashok Chakra (wheel) in the centre stands for righteousness, progress and eternity and the spokes of the wheel represent the 24 hours of a day.
- 5.** Many Indians are very keen sports and games players. Cricket and hockey are particularly popular and it is claimed that chess, snakes and ladders, snooker and ludo all originated in India. Yoga also first began in India and has existed for over 5,000 years. The current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced the first International Day of Yoga in 2015.
- 6.** The Indian subcontinent is the birthplace of four of the world's major religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Today there continues to be a diversity of religious faiths. According to the 2011 census, 79.8% of the population of India practices Hinduism and 14.2% adheres to Islam, while the remaining 6% practice other religions including Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and other indigenous faiths.
- 7.** People of all religions celebrate Children's Day across India on November 14th. This was the birthday of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru - the first Prime Minister of independent India. Many activities and cultural performances are organised in schools on this day by the pupils. Teachers also get involved, and sometimes perform songs and dances for their students.
- 8.** India has, arguably, greater linguistic diversity than any other large country. The number of languages spoken overall is probably over 1000. There are 15 official languages including English and the big six languages of Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil and Urdu. (BBC)
- 9.** The number system that we use including zero was first invented in India. Albert Einstein said, that without this "no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made."
- 10.** Modern India has a strong focus on science and technology and the field of space exploration. The country has launched more than 80 spacecraft since its first satellite launch in 1975 and sent a camera to Mars for less than the cost of the film Gravity! (Science Museum)

## Diwali - the festival of lights assembly plan



Festivals are at the centre of people's lives in India and there are numerous celebrations spread throughout the year. Diwali is one of the most important and popular festivals. It is the Hindu festival of lights, but Sikhs and Jains also celebrate Diwali too. It celebrates the victory of good over evil and light over darkness through the story of Rama and Sita, which is told in The Ramayana – a Hindu holy book.

The following notes include background information and a script that you can use or adapt for a Diwali assembly.

If you have pupils of Indian heritage, invite them to help you to present the assembly. They could bring in some pictures, clothing or artefacts that are special to them and their families, prepare some short phrases to demonstrate and translate and talk about how their families celebrate this important festival.

Play some Indian music for your pupils to listen to as they come into and out of assembly. This could be traditional instrumental music, songs from Indian films, or you could introduce your pupils to a folk song called Morni from a region in northern India close to the foothills of the Himalayas. This can be found in the World Voice songbook, where local children perform it with Mohit Chauhan - a famous Bollywood singer <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/world-voice/morni>

### Assembly script suggestions:

Begin the assembly with the traditional greeting Namaste (pronounced nah-mast – aye) that means 'I greet you respectfully' and explain that in today's assembly we are going to find out about the country of India and the festival of Diwali.



## Slide 1

Can you spot the country of India on the map? It is a large country located in the continent of Asia. It has borders with six other countries that you can see. They are Pakistan, Bangladesh, China (Tibet,) Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar (Burma.) The capital city of the country is New Delhi and the world's highest mountain range the Himalayas are in the north of the country.

## Slide 2

People celebrate Diwali every year in India and across the world in late October or early November. The festival lasts for up to five days and celebrates the return of Prince Rama and his beautiful wife Sita to their homeland and the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.

To prepare for Diwali, people clean and decorate their homes and places of work and settle up bills. They dress up in new clothes or their best outfits. There are usually prayers, a family meal or party, cards and gifts are exchanged between friends and family and there are giant firework displays. Children enjoy eating sweets and are sometimes given toys and presents. People decorate and light their homes and mandirs with special diya lamps to remember the lamps that welcomed home Rama and Sita.



### Slide 3

Tell the story of Rama and Sita from the text below or use the animated version on the BBC website at:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship/collectiveworship\\_stories/festivals/diwali](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship/collectiveworship_stories/festivals/diwali)

Once long ago in the kingdom of Ayodhya there was a great prince called Rama who had a beautiful wife called Sita. His father King Dashratha was tricked by one of his wives into banishing Rama and Sita away from their home to live in the forest for fourteen years; so that her son could be the next king.

They lived a simple life together for many years with Rama's brother Lakshman in the forest, but one day an evil demon called Ravana appeared! He had ten terrible heads and twenty arms and was determined to kidnap Sita. To carry out his wicked plan he used his magic powers to make a beautiful golden deer appear in the forest. When Sita saw the deer she asked Rama to catch it for her. He agreed but told Sita to stay inside a magic circle that he drew on the ground to keep her safe. When he saw she was alone Ravana disguised himself as an old man in need of food. Sita gathered some fruit from inside their hut to give to the old man but as soon as she stepped out of the circle, Ravanna grabbed her and swept her away in his magic chariot pulled by winged demons. Although she was very frightened, Sita managed to drop small pieces of her jewellery over the side of the chariot to leave a trail behind her.

When Rama discovered what had happened to Sita he was devastated and began a frantic search for her with Lakshman, until they reached the land of Hanuman the Monkey King. Hanuman was brave and clever and could fly like a bird. He agreed to help Rama and flew across the sea to the island of Lanka where he spotted Sita imprisoned in Ravana's palace. He whispered to her that he had come from Rama to help rescue her and she gave him a pearl from her hair to take back to Rama. As he was escaping he was caught by demons who set fire to his tail.

Rama and Hanuman and his mighty army of apes and bears and other animals prepared for battle. First they had to build a bridge to get to the island out of rocks and sand. When it was complete they raced across. The battle was long and terrible, until finally Rama fired his bow that was a gift from the gods and hit Ravanna who fell to the ground.

There was great rejoicing and Rama and Sita could finally return home and Rama could be crowned king. To celebrate their homecoming, people cleaned and decorated their houses and lit small lamps to guide them on their way and that is why to this day people light lamps every year at the festival of Diwali.

A hand is shown lighting a small, ornate, blue diya (oil lamp) with a matchstick. The diya is placed on a wooden surface. In the background, several other colorful diyas (red, orange, green, yellow) are lit and arranged in a row, creating a warm, glowing atmosphere. The background is softly blurred, focusing attention on the hand and the diya being lit.

## Reflection – light a candle

Diwali is a joyful festival of light and the story of Rama and Sita reminds us of the importance of friendship and hope. When you look at the candle think about how flames can flicker or burn brightly. As you go about your day, take opportunities to ensure your flame burns brightly and are always ready to help others in difficulty, like the characters in the Diwali story.

## Follow up ideas and activities

**Curriculum Links:** Geography, English, art and design, drama

**Core Skills:** Communication and collaboration, creativity and imagination

**Learning objectives:** To learn more about the geography of India and retell the story of Rama and Sita through the medium of art.

**Preparation and resources You will need:** copies of activity sheets, scissors, glue sticks, collage materials such as tissue paper and magazines, fine rice and lentil seeds or coloured sand. You may also need black card, masking tape, sticks and paper fasteners.

After the assembly, encourage your pupils to look at maps or Google Earth to explore the geography of India in more detail. Investigate and make maps showing the locations of major cities and rivers and the high peaks of the Himalayas.

Prepare for a Diwali celebration in your classroom by clearing up and decorating the room with lights and decorations and encouraging pupils to retell the story of Rama and Sita in different ways. Your pupils could make large drawings or paintings of scenes and characters from the story or create a traditional shadow puppet show using the templates of Rama, Sita, Hanuman and Ravana on the activity sheets.

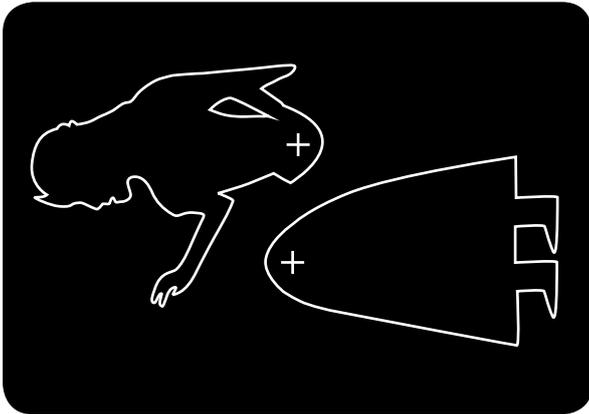
During Diwali, people draw bright Rangoli patterns on the floor outside their doors to welcome Lakshmi the goddess of good fortune and wealth to their homes. The beautiful decorative designs are usually geometric, associated with nature and traditionally created with white rice, flour, sand or chalk and then filled in with colour. Invite your pupils to use the examples on the activity sheet to create their own collage rangoli patterns by drawing and filling the shapes with colour and different materials. They could also design their own patterns on the playground floor with coloured chalks and photograph the results.

## Activity sheet 1

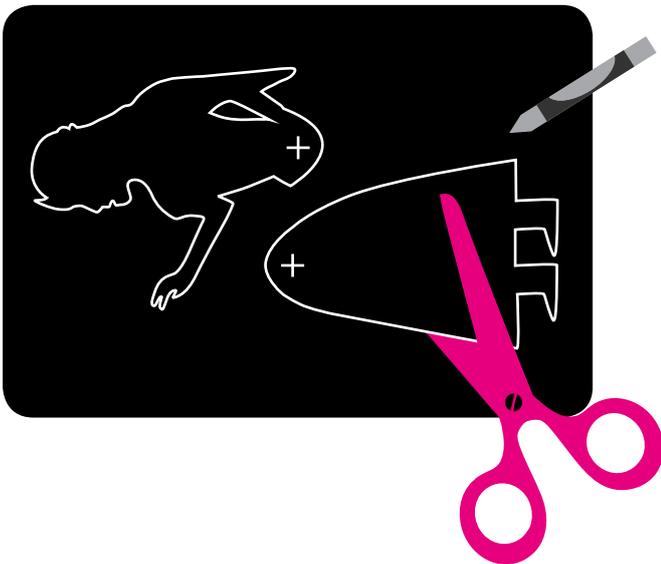
### Make shadow puppets of Rama, Sita, Hanuman or Ravana

You will need black card, masking tape, pens, scissors, bradawl, paper hole reinforcers, brass paper fasteners, sticks (chopsticks, lolly sticks or garden canes). Make sure you take all health and safety precautions when using sharp tools in the classroom.

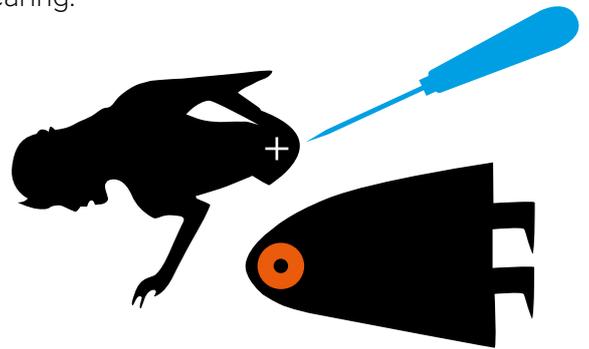
1. Choose one of the templates provided, copy the outlines onto a sheet of black card.



2. Go over the outlines with a marker and cut out the pieces carefully.

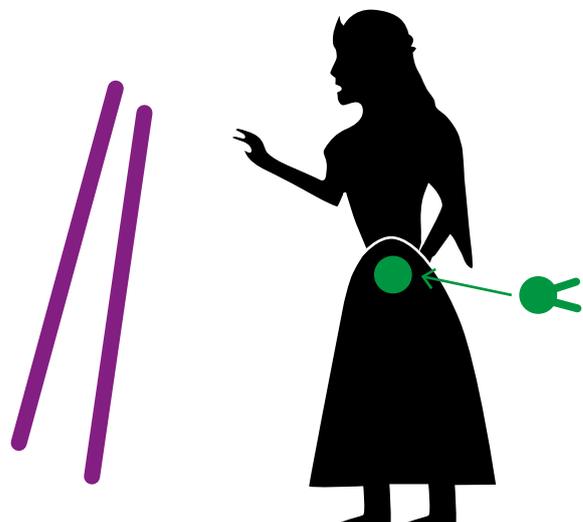


3. Carefully make a hole at the points marked with an 'X' with a bradawl and strengthen each hole on the back with a sticky paper hole reinforcer to prevent them from tearing.

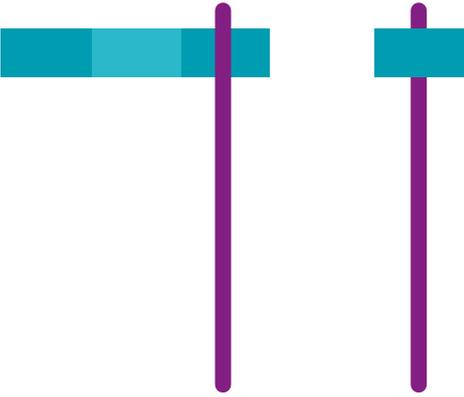


4. Now make the hinged attachments to fix the sticks to the puppets. These will allow the sticks to be held at an angle to the puppets, so that the sticks and puppeteers' hands will not show on the screen.

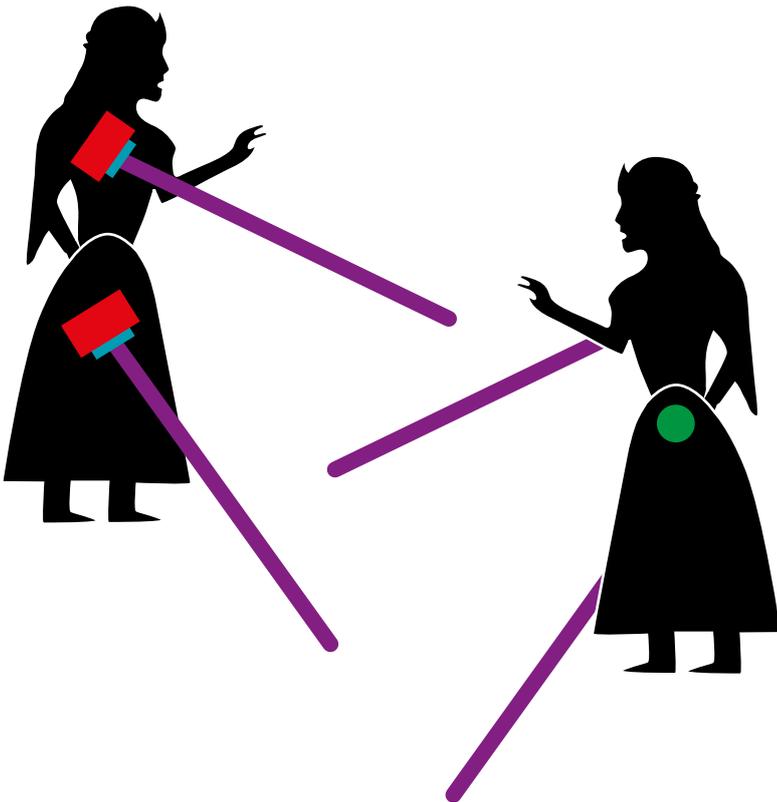
5. Attach the moving parts to the main puppet using paper fasteners pushed through the reinforced holes from the front and opened out at the back.



6. First stick a 10cm length of masking tape to the end of each stick, extending past the end and the sides, fold over a few times then flatten the tape to make a small spade-like end on the stick.



7. With a shorter piece of tape, stick the tape 'spade' (not the stick) to the back of the body of the puppet. Flip the stick upwards, and stick the underside of the 'spade' to the puppet as well. This creates a hinged handle. Trim off any tape that shows from the front of the puppet.



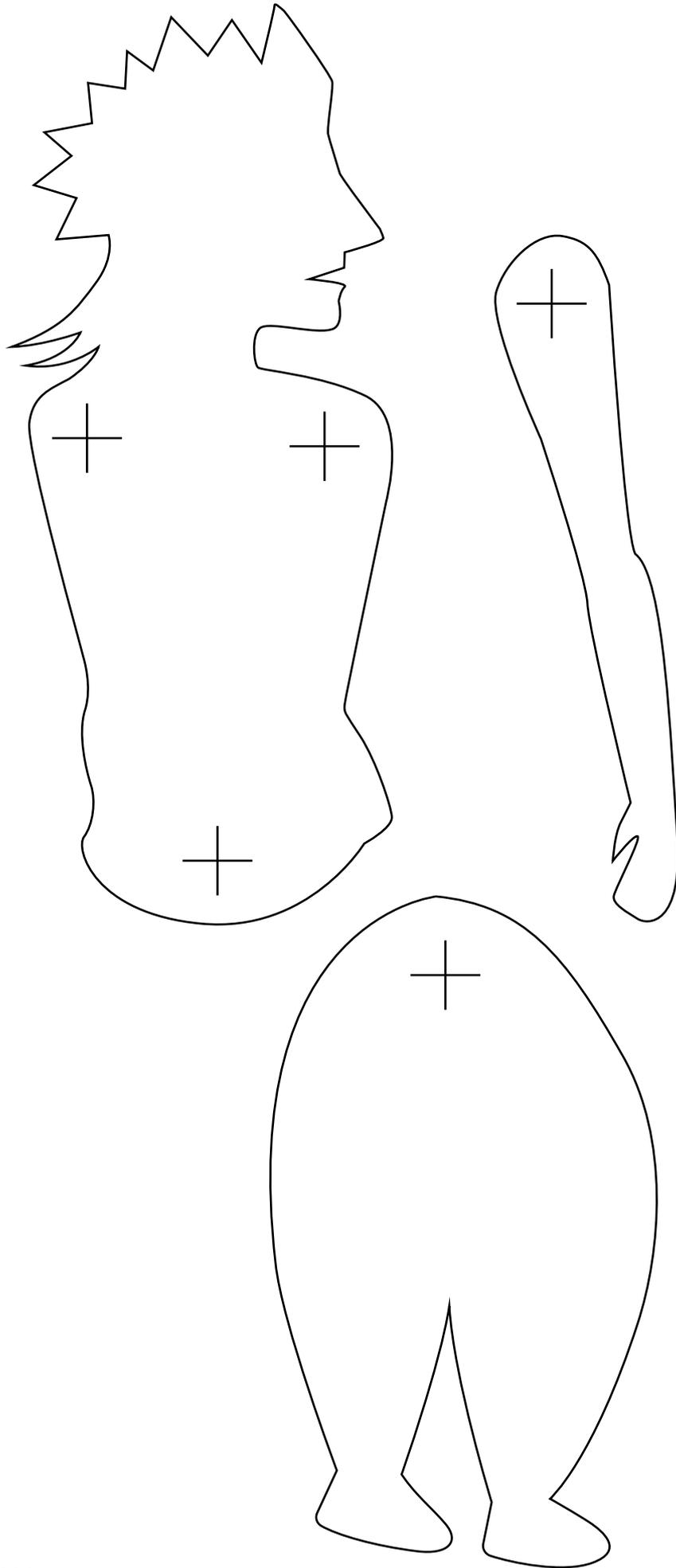
8. Repeat the process for all the moving parts of the puppet, so each piece has its own hinged handle attached.

9. Use a lamp to shine on a light coloured cloth or wax paper screen. Practise moving your puppets in front of the light to make the shadows move. Use the sticks to hold the puppets up close to the screen whilst your hands are further back. This will ensure they do not show up on the screen.



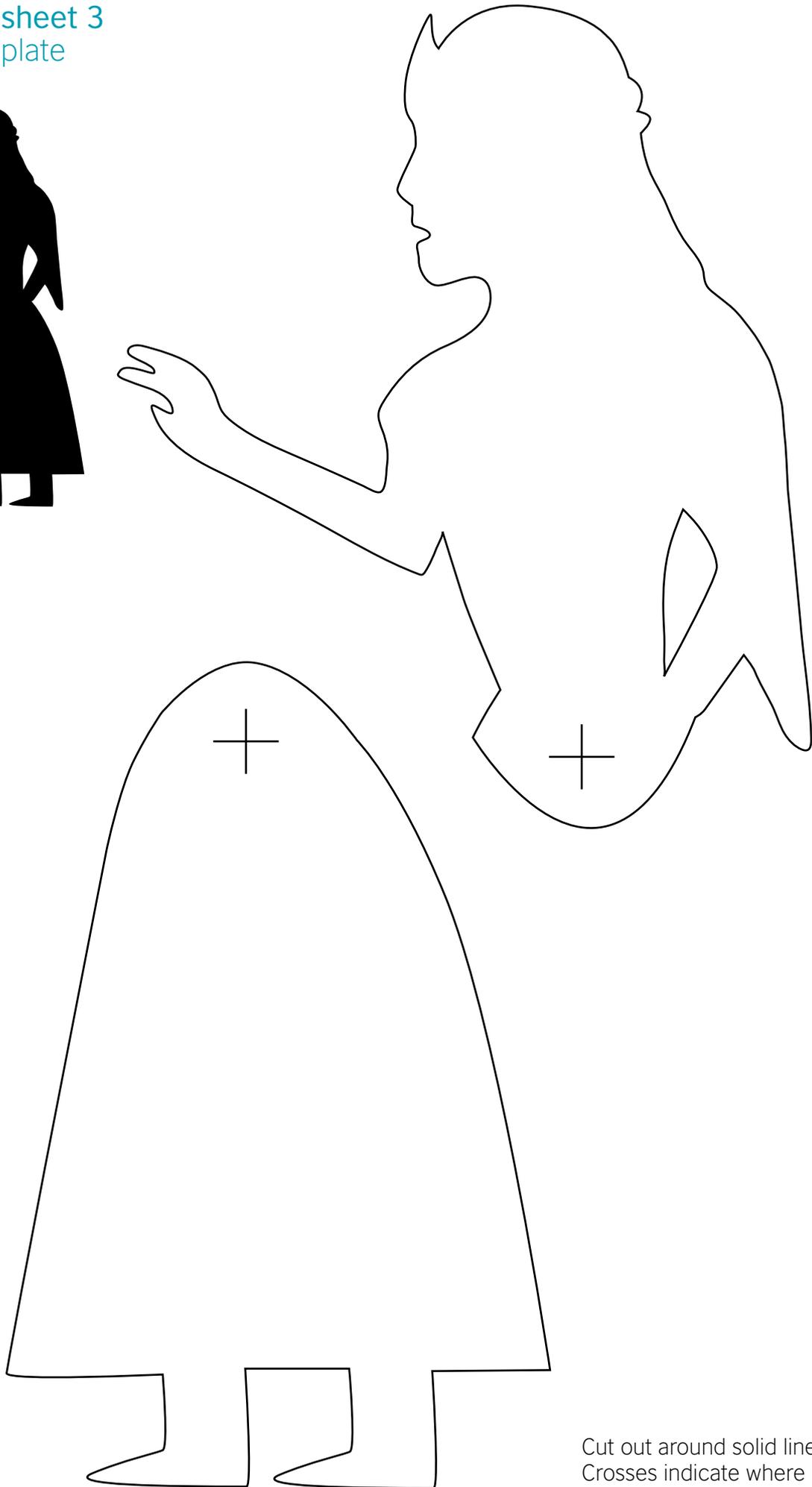
## Activity sheet 2

### Rama Template



Cut out around solid lines.  
Crosses indicate where paper  
fasteners should be positioned.

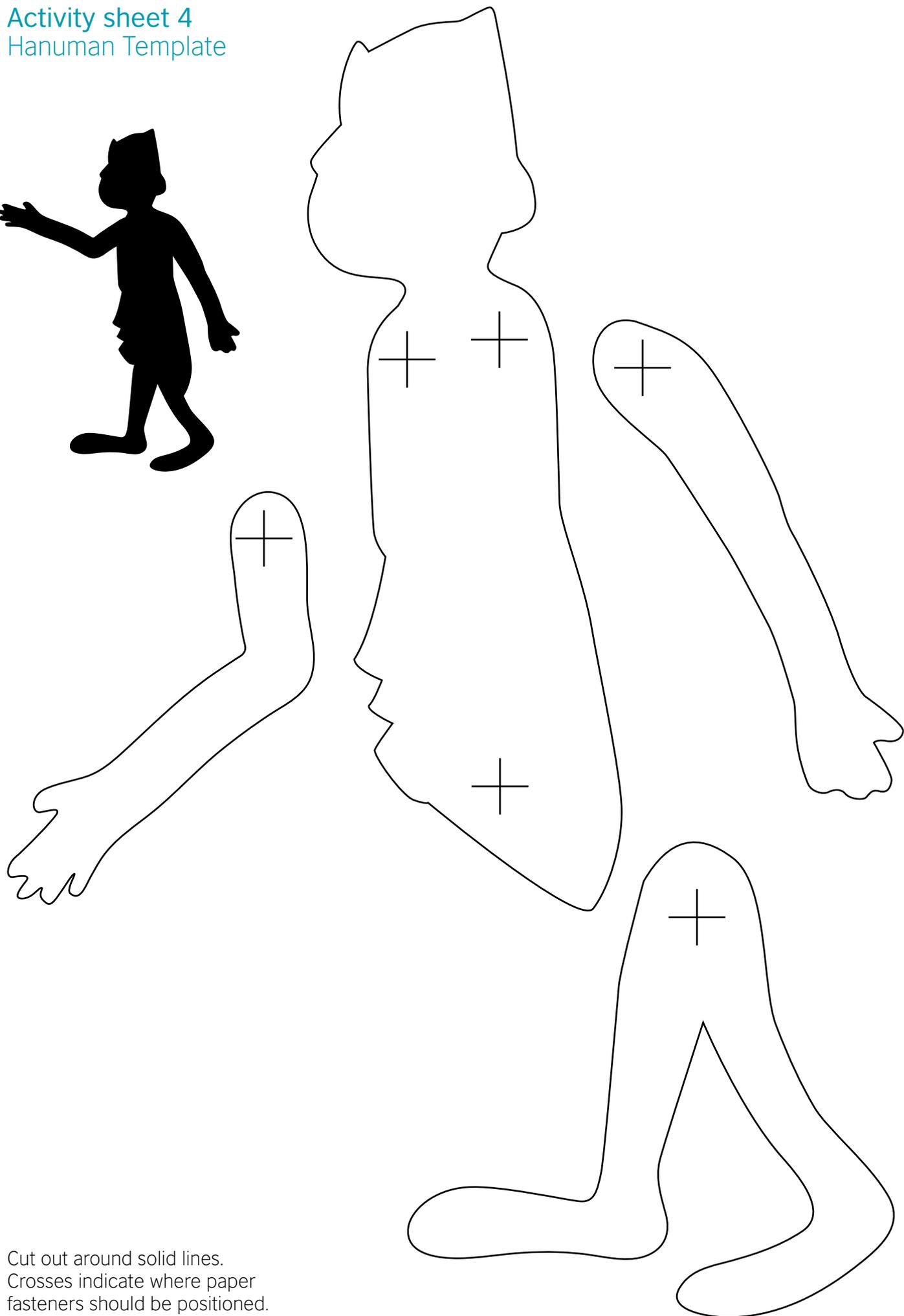
Activity sheet 3  
Sita Template



Cut out around solid lines.  
Crosses indicate where paper  
fasteners should be positioned.

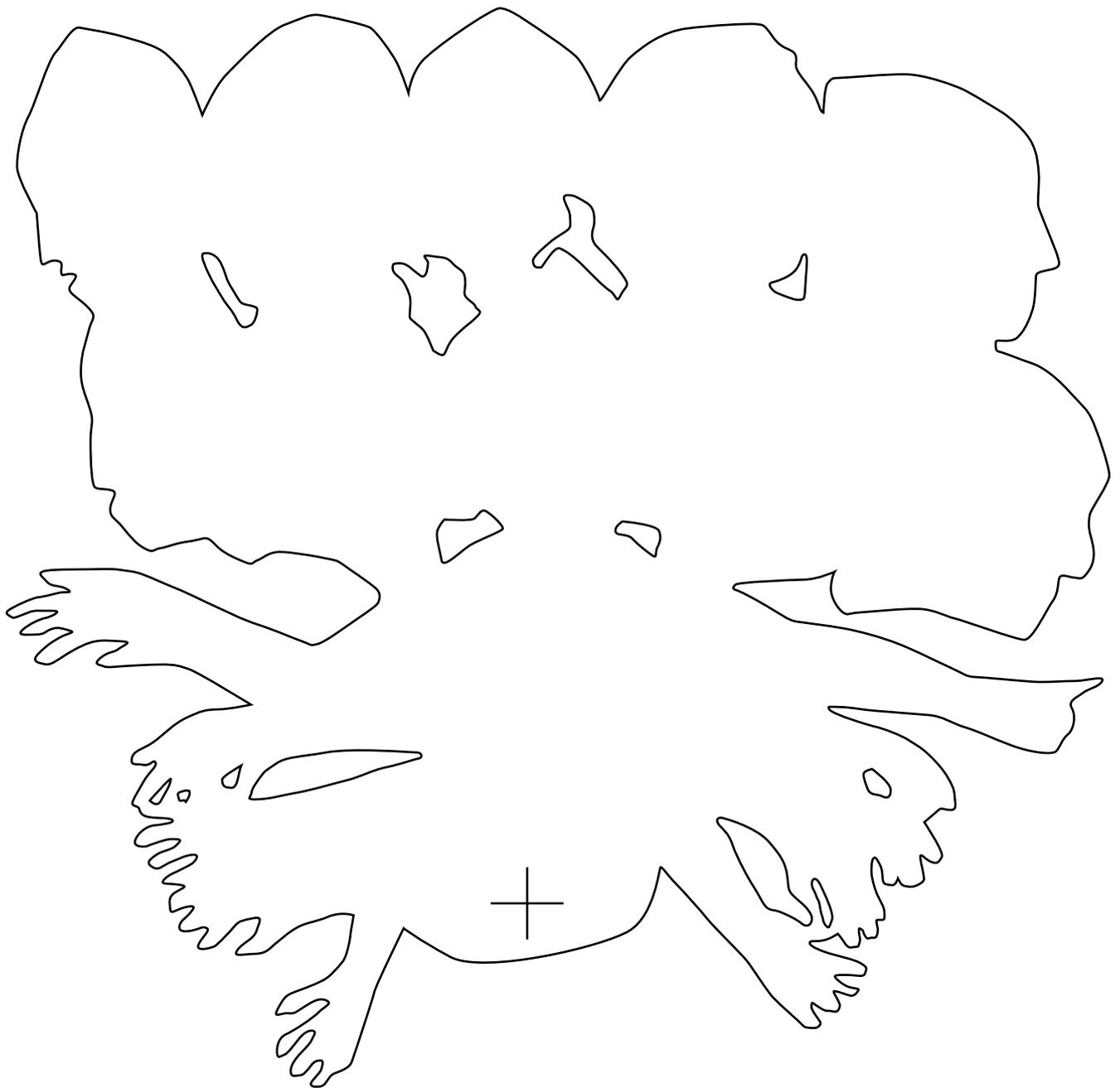
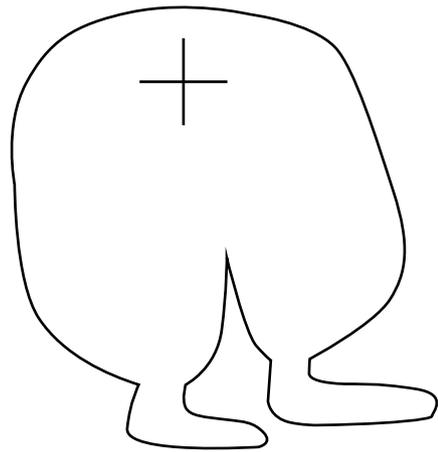
# Activity sheet 4

## Hanuman Template



Cut out around solid lines.  
Crosses indicate where paper  
fasteners should be positioned.

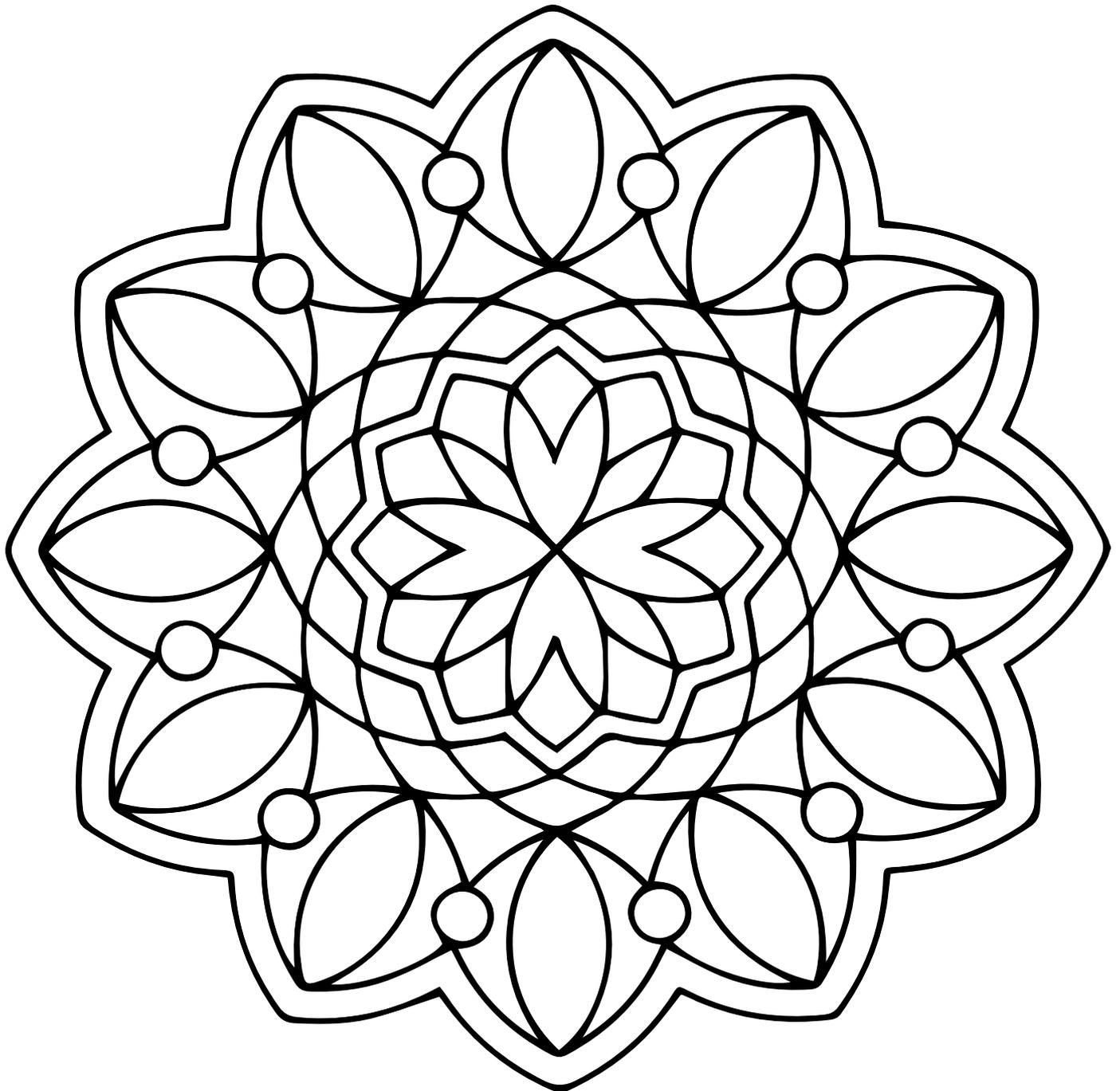
Activity sheet 5  
Ravana Template



Cut out around solid lines.  
Crosses indicate where paper  
fasteners should be positioned.

## Activity sheet 6

Use the template and art materials to create your own brightly coloured rangoli patterns.



## Lesson Plan

### Kahanikar the Storyteller - a modern retelling of an ancient Indian story

**Curriculum Links:** English, media studies, PSHE.

**Core Skills:** Communication and collaboration, imagination and creativity.

**Learning objectives:** To explore a traditional Indian story through the medium of animated film. To discuss issues about family relationships and film techniques.

**Preparation and resources You will need:** Access to the internet, large sheets of paper and pens.

Factual information to share with your pupils

Indians love cinema and the country has the world's largest film industry producing more films than both Nigeria and the United States - over 1,100 on average, each year. (BBC)

Kahanikar The Storyteller is a short animated film created by Indian filmmaker Nandita Jain. The film is about 7-year-old Nirmala who loves her Grandpa's stories but for some reason he just can't remember them anymore. Wanting to help get rid of his forgetfulness she puts on his glasses and tries to tell her favourite story of the boy and the fish. Based on an Indian myth about how the coconut got its face, this imaginative animation gently explores ideas of the beauty of storytelling, growing old and the special relationship between children and their grandparents.

Watch the film together with your pupils using the link: <https://vimeo.com/238370615> (the password is StorytellerNJ1)

Encourage them to give their first impressions and then show the film again before asking them to discuss the following questions with a partner. You may want to pause the film at different points on the second viewing, to draw attention to particular features such as the different styles of animation and music that is used and the particular effects that they have on the viewer.

#### Things to discuss with a partner and jot down:

- Describe the opening shots of the film. Do you think this was a good way to begin the story? Can you explain why?
- Where does the story take place? How do we know? Does the story stay in one location or move around?
- Who are the main characters? What are they like? How would you describe the relationship

between Nirmala and her Grandfather?

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- What parts of the film do you like best? Were there any parts that you didn't like? Can you explain why?
- How would you describe the style of animation and music used by the filmmaker?
- Does it remind you of any other films you have seen?
- What do you think the filmmaker is trying to say to you in this film?
- Can you think of any stories or films from your culture, which also try to explain the origins or appearance of an animal or object?
- Can you retell the major events of the film to each other, one sentence at a time, swapping over after each sentence until you get to the end of the story?

#### Activities

Ask your pupils to write a film review for Kahanikar The Story Maker picking up on some of the points they discussed with their partner.

They could then go on to draw a storyboard for a film version of a traditional tale from their own culture. If you have the technology available, help your pupils to create their own live action films or stop frame animations of their traditional stories.

If you are working with a partner school you could exchange copies of your storyboards and films with your partner school.



## Lesson Plan

### An introduction to Hindi

**Curriculum Links:** Languages

**Core Skills:** Communication and collaboration, citizenship.

**Learning objectives:** To learn how to greet someone and introduce yourself in Hindi.

Preparation and resources You will need copies of Hindi vocabulary

Explore with your class the nature of verbal and nonverbal greetings. Why do we use them? How many different greetings do we use in English? Ask your pupils to demonstrate how they might greet a friend, an elderly relative, their Head teacher and their Head of State. How many greetings in other languages do your pupils know? Speaking and writing other languages is a great skill to have.

### Hello:

The most common Hindi greeting is नमस्ते 'Namaste' (na-mas-thay) or "Namaskar' (na-mas-car) and can be used at any time of day.

The meaning is also important : 'Namah' means 'to bow' and 'te' means 'you', meaning "I bow to you"

Namaste is a way of showing respect and that you are equal to one another and is used with anyone you meet – young and old, friends or strangers.

When greeting with 'Namaste' we also use a particular 'mudra' (hand gesture.) We bend our elbows, bring together the palms of both hands and hold them at chest level, and then bow our heads.

This bowing of the head is used to show friendship and respect. For example at the end of a school day or lesson, students will sometimes bow their heads and say 'Namaste' as a sign of respect to their teacher.

English greetings like 'hello' and 'hi' are also often used, especially when being more casual.

### How are you?:

आप कैसे है? aap kaise hain? (to a male)

आप कैसी है? aap kaisee hain? (to a female)

'आप' is the more polite and formal way of saying 'you.' You would use 'आप' when greeting someone new or someone older than you, like your teacher for example. It is also used to show respect.

When chatting with friends or when being informal/casual we replace 'आप' with तू (tu):

तू कैसा है? tu kaisa hain ?

### Good bye:

'Namaste' can also be used to say 'goodbye' but here are a couple of others you might like to try:

बाद में मिलेंगे । "baadh may milengi" – See you later!

जल्दी मिलेंगे । 'jaldi milengi' – See you soon!

English greetings like 'bye' and 'see you' are also often used.



## I'm well, thank you:

मैं ठीक हूँ धन्यवाद main teek hoon - I am ok, thanks  
(Male and Female)

Or informally you can simply say ठीक ठाक! (teek taak!)  
- I'm well / So-So!

What is your name? / My name is'

आपका नाम क्या है? aapkaa naam kyaa hai? -  
What's your name?

मेरा नाम \_\_\_ है mayra naam \_\_\_ hai -  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

This is exactly the same for both male and female.

## I live in...:

मैं लंदन में रहता हूँ Main London may rahtaa hoon -  
I live in London (Male).

मैं लंदन में रहती हूँ Main London may rahthee hoon -  
I live in London (Female).

## Where do you live?

आप कहाँ रहते हैं? aap kahaan rahtay hain -  
Where do you live? (male)

आप कहाँ रहती हैं? aap kahaan rahtee hain -  
Where do you live? (female)

## Counting:

0 शून्य Shoonya

1 एक Ek

2 दो Dho

3 three तीन Theen

4 four चार Char

5 five पांच Paanch

6 six छह Che

7 seven सात Saath

8 eight आठ Aaat

9 nine नौ Now

10 ten दस Das

## Writing in Hindi:

Now, you may have noticed that Hindi is written using a special alphabet, this is known as Devanagari.

You may be familiar with this one: ॐ

This is pronounced 'Aum' and is often seen in ancient scripts and temples.

Here are some words related to the Diwali story:

शुभ दीपावली 'Shubh Deepavali' which means  
'Happy Diwali'

साल मुबारक 'Saal Mubarak' means 'Happy New Year'

राम - Ram or Rama from the Diwali story

सीता - Sita

हनुमान - Hanuman

रावण - Ravana

## Lesson Plan

### Animal Arts and crafts



**Curriculum Links:** Art and design

**Core Skills:** Creativity and imagination, digital literacy

**Learning objectives:** To investigate some of the native species of India and use this research to create pieces of animal art.

**Preparation and resources You will need:** Internet access, art materials.

India is a country of amazing animals and landscapes. The national animal is the Bengal tiger and the peacock is its national bird. It is also the only country, which is home to both lions and tigers. (WWF India)

Artists from many cultures and time periods have produced artworks that depict and celebrate Indian native species in visual art, textiles and sculpture. These include the painting A Roman Triumph by Rubens.

Pupils from Loughton Manor First School created their own life – sized baby Asian elephant sculpture when they explored Rubens' painting as part of the Take One Picture project at the National Gallery in London. They investigated the dimensions of a real elephant and calculated how many two-litre drink bottles were needed to make the legs. Two classes made the legs while another class made the elephant's body shell from chicken wire.

Children dyed fabric to create the elephant skin and explored Indian colours symbols and patterns to design and make the saddle cover or jhool.

Why not invite your pupils to carry out some research and make sketches of some of the animals that are native species to India. These might include lions, elephants, leopards, tigers, pythons and crocodiles. They could go on to use this information to create artworks in a variety of materials. If you are working with a partner school you could create an online gallery to exhibit your artwork and pieces of research together.

Indian Elephant by pupils from Loughton Manor First School which was exhibited in the Take One Picture exhibition at the National Gallery in London



## Lesson Plan

### Indian Cooking

**Curriculum Links:** English, Design technology

**Core Skills:** Communication and Collaboration

**Learning objectives:** To make a traditional Indian sweet treat.

**Preparation and resources You will need:** recipe ingredients and cooking utensils, access to a refrigerator



Cooking is a very important part of life in India and no social occasion or family gathering is complete without sharing a meal. Indian food is colourful and popular all over the world and uses many spices. In fact, 70% of the world's spices come from India.

Here is a simple Indian recipe that you might like to try out with your pupils. Do make sure you take all expected safety precautions and supervision when carrying out these activities and check that none of your pupils are allergic to coconut.

### Recipe

Indians love sweet treats and these are particularly popular around festival times. Here is a quick recipe for 'Coconut Ladoos' which you might like to try:

#### Prep. time:

Less than 3 minutes No cooking time.

Requires 15 minutes to set.

Makes: 13-20 depending upon the size.

#### Ingredients:

2 cups desiccated coconut

1.5 – 2 cups icing sugar or powdered sugar

1/2 cup condensed milk

1/2 tsp vanilla essence

Few drops of food colour of your choice (optional)

Extra coconut for dusting

#### Method:

1. Line your chopping board or any plate with plastic wrap or cling film and keep aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the sugar, coconut and vanilla essence.
3. Add in the condensed milk and then use your hands to get everything together. If using food colouring add a few drops now.
4. Sprinkle some coconut on the plastic sheet that you have kept aside.
5. Take some mixture in your hands, and roll into small round balls (ladoos)
6. Roll these in the dried coconut.
7. Refrigerate for 15 mins.
8. Remove and enjoy.

#### Variations:

You can add dried fruits of your choice to add some extra flavours.



## Lesson Plan

### Children's letters

**Curriculum Links:** English, PSHE, RE.

**Core Skills:** Communication and collaboration, citizenship

**Learning objectives:** To find out more about Indian festivals and gain insights into different religious customs and the lives of children living in India.

**Preparation and resources**

**You will need:** Copies of the letters and questions.

The following letters are from children living in different parts of India describing their favourite festivals during the year. Divide the class into small groups with copies of the letters. Use your judgement to select which may be most appropriate for their reading levels. Ask your pupils to read the letters as a group and discuss and record their responses to the following questions before reporting back to the rest of the class:

- What are the names of the four festivals described by the children?
- What does Alyonna say happens to the statues of the goddess on the tenth day of the festival of Durga Puja?
- Where does Shivanka help his mother put the diyas during Diwali?

- What three things do you find most interesting about the letters and the festivals they describe?
- Was there anything that puzzled you or you did not quite understand?
- Were there any things in the children's descriptions that reminded you of festivals that you celebrate?
- What three questions would you like to ask the children about the festivals they describe?
- Can you find out about another religious festival that is celebrated in India?

Ask your pupils to draft a reply to one of the letters describing a festival that they enjoy celebrating.



# My Favourite festival - Diwali

India is a land blessed with all the seasons and many languages and religions across its length and breadth. So festivals are synonymous with India. We Indians celebrate festivals for every season, region and for every deity and religion. These include Diwali, Holi and Dussehra.

Among all these festivals, my favourite is Diwali. Every festival has its own significance and history and Diwali celebrates Lord Rama coming back home after an exile of 14 years and defeating the evil king Ravana and rescuing his wife Sita. The Sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind Singh Ji was also imprisoned along with 52 princes on this day.

The reason I like this festival the most is it connects followers of different religions. Every year I wait eagerly for this special festival. The celebrations start two days before Diwali and conclude two days after Diwali on Bhai Dooj.

These are the best days of my year.

Last year Diwali was super special for me as my father's uncle and aunt came from the United Kingdom. They reached here on the day of Dhanteras (the first day of Diwali) and we enjoyed it a lot and did a lot of shopping and they also told me how they celebrated Diwali in the UK. We bought new clothes and sweets for that day and I told them that people start cleaning their homes, offices and shops almost a month before.

On the day of Diwali last year I woke up early in the morning and dressed in a very nice way and wished my nearest and dearest a very "Happy Diwali". My mother prepared Halwa, Puri as per our tradition and we also bought sweets like jalebi, dry fruit and burfi. In the night-time there was a puja (Hindu worship) and afterwards all the children started burning crackers although my elders told me that we should not burn crackers because it spreads pollution. It can also hurt animals as the sounds of crackers frighten them so we should celebrate festivals in a good manner.

I love this festival of lights. It brings me closer to my family and friends and brings a lot of joy and happiness in our lives. I love to help my mother in filling up the earthen lamps with mustard oil. They are known as diyas in our culture. I light up the diyas on our rooftop in a row with my mother. I just love this experience. I also go to the temple every year and worship goddess Lakshmi.

Festivals help us to unite and build good relations. They can bring countries together. As we celebrate India-UK Year of Culture, May the festival of lights brings lot of peace.

From Shivankur Ghaie



## My Favourite festival - Durga Puja

Durga Puja is a nine day festival in October.

Festivals are an important part of life in India. They are celebrated irrespective of caste and creed in the country and bring people closer, creating a bond of humanity. India is a land of fairs and festivals. It is so called because people of various religions live here and they all celebrate their festivals with great pomp and gaiety. India is a holy place where many rivers are considered to be holy and there are several festivals celebrated related to them.

My favourite festival is Durga Puja. It is celebrated during the month of September and October. Navratri or Durga Puja is a festival celebrated by the people across the country but especially in Eastern India. It brings a happy festive atmosphere all over the country. People worship the Goddess Durga during this festival. Flooded with people, illuminated with lights and ecstatic with joy, Kolkata turns into a paradise. Before this festival begins, people do a lot of shopping, buy new clothes and decorate their houses. This occasion also serves as a reunion opportunity for family members. People of all ages and walks of life go to see different Puja pandals, which are decorated altars where a community celebration is carried out.

There are various stories related to Durga Puja. It is a day to celebrate the victory of good over evil and in the Hindu epic Ramayana, it is mentioned that on this day that Lord Rama killed the demon Ravana.

Food called Prasad is offered, which is then distributed among the people. I love this time as we can buy a lot of things and the shopping experience is wonderful as there is a big crowd in the market place and in shopping malls. We invite guests to our homes on these days. After the ten days of celebrations people perform the immersion ceremony and the clay statues of the Goddess are immersed in the rivers.

This is my favourite festival because all our family members get together and we enjoy the festival in a grand way. We not only wear new dresses but also give gifts to each other. We enjoy different kinds of delicacies made at home such as Prasad. Our schools are closed and so it makes this time more enjoyable. We also sometimes plan to visit our relatives who live in other parts of the country. I love this festival as it is celebrated by the community and there is lot of happiness everywhere.

Written by Alyonna Mohapatra, Sai International School,  
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## My Favourite festival - Holi

Holi takes place in spring and celebrates the life of the Hindi god Krishna

Dear friends,

Oh, how eagerly I wait for this festival! It is the most fun and exciting and extremely colourful festival of all! It is as if all the colours jump out and speak to you- 'play with me!' My teachers tell me that this festival symbolizes the victory of good over evil.

Every year I eagerly wait for March. It feels so good with the warm sun outside and the cool water guns and water balloons in my hand! My friends and cousins, all get together and plan our Holi games days in advance. The fun part is, no one at home scolds us for getting drenched in colours and making as much mess as we can! My father says that not only is this festival celebrated across our country but foreigners also enjoy Holi with great zeal and enthusiasm. Sometimes I wonder, do they enjoy it as much we do?

My father does all the arrangement for Holika Dahan, a ritual we perform, on a prior evening on a full moon day. We kids, help him in bringing together all the firewood and decorating the huge bonfire meant for Holika Dahan. Dadu, my grandfather, lights the Holika Dahan bonfire and we all sing and dance around the 'Holika'. It is fun to watch everyone sing and dance and enjoy themselves. On the actual day of Holi, that's the next day after Holika Dahan, Mummy wakes us up with 'gulal tika', a vermilion mark on our foreheads, symbolic of the festivities to begin! And we get ready to drench

ourselves in colour, and have water guns and balloons and drama!

All our family members and relatives come home for Holi. We play with 'gulaal' water and balloons. Dadi (my Grandmother) and Mummy make sweets and we savour all the gujiya, gulab jamun and barfi, the usual Holi sweets. We all dance to the latest Bollywood songs as well.

Dadi says that there is a famous legend behind this grand festival. She says that Raja Hiranyakashyap once ruled over India. He was evil and forced his subjects to worship him like a God. He had a son called Prahlad who was an ardent follower of Lord Vishnu. Raja Hiranyakashyap hated his son and planned his murder along with Holika. Holika was granted that no fire could harm her. Therefore, she took Prahlad along with her and sat on a bunch of hay. It was then lit with fire. But, alas, she got burnt to death and Prahlad was not hurt at all. Lord Vishnu had saved his follower and then killed the evil Hiranyakashyapa.

I know it's a long story but my Dadi tells it to me every year and I just love to hear it all over again! Dadi says that we all have some negative things inside us too. But we need to burn them away with the bonfire and let only the good things remain within us. She says our life will become colourful and happy just like the beautiful festival of colours - Holi!

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## My Favourite festival - Navrati

Navrati is celebrated in September/October for nine nights.

Festivals play an important role in uniting and strengthening our nation. Festivals are the tokens of cultural, social, economical and political unity. We celebrate various festivals in India but among them I love to celebrate Navratri.

'Navratri', literally mean nine nights. It is a multi-day Hindu festival celebrated in the autumn every year. It is observed for different reasons and celebrated differently in various parts of the country.

In certain parts of the India decorative 'Pandals' are made. These are large temporary structures erected during religious festivals and people visit them to worship the goddess.

In Gujarat, the nine nights of Navratri are celebrated with a traditional local touch, with great pomp and show as their traditional dance 'Garba' is done throughout the nine nights in nine different colours which is amazing.

On the nine days the Goddess Durga is worshipped and on the tenth day people celebrate the victory of Lord Rama over the demon king Ravana. A huge preparation for this festival takes place, which starts few days earlier. A big fair is also held for the whole ten days.

Every one is happy and enjoys themselves and therefore, I love the festival of Navratri. It is the most magnificent festival of the year. It is just amazing and my favourite festival ever!

From Aastha Laad



# Celebrate your learning

To conclude your project, why not invite parents and friends to a special event where your pupils can celebrate and demonstrate all that they have learnt about Indian language and culture. They could show some of the artwork they have created, retell their stories of Rama and Sita and share some of the delicious food they have made.

## Partner School activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Exchange photographs and responses to your learning celebrations



## Find out more

We hope your pupils enjoyed learning about aspects of Indian language and culture. If you want to find out more, the following links contain additional information and resources:

### Find a partner school

Use our British Council Schools Online partner finding tool to link up with schools in India and many other countries worldwide:

<http://bit.ly/1TnkJaG>

### Communicate

Use our forums and online project spaces with your partner school:

<http://bit.ly/1Q2ULLH>

### Access resources

Check out our global learning resources, including classroom activities, videos and lesson plans:

<http://bit.ly/1TnkZGMBritish Council>

### Get recognition

Sign up to our prestigious British Council International School Award scheme to earn accreditation for your international work:

<http://bit.ly/1XMYg8t>

Mix the Play Mix the Play is an interactive video platform that sees the British Council collaborate with acclaimed Director, Roysten Abel to direct a scene from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet using some very well known Indian actors.

Explore South Asian art and artefacts to gain an understanding of the culture, religion and style of the Indian subcontinent at the Victoria and Albert museum at:

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/teachers-resources-for-primary-schools>

Find out more about Indian festivals from different faiths at:

<https://shoesonloose.com/15-famous-festivals-of-india-and-the-stories-behind-them/>

Stories from other religious festivals including the story of Guru Nanak and a Buddhist story of the Monkey King's sacrifice can be found at:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship/collectiveworship\\_stories/festivals/diwali](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship/collectiveworship_stories/festivals/diwali)