

# The Art of Baksa Dance: Tradition and Education in Trusmi Village

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**How to cite:** Sulistyami, I.H., Sinaga, S.S., & Hartono. (2024). The Art of Baksa Dance: Tradition and Education in Trusmi Village. *Gondang: Jurnal Seni dan Budaya*, Vol 8(2): Page. 421-431

**Article History :** Received: Jul 22, 2024. Revised: Sept 01, 2024. Accepted: Dec 16, 2024

## ABSTRACT

*The researcher conducted research at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi on how Baksa dance is learned and its relevance for studio members in the preservation of Baksa dance at the Memayu ceremony in Trusmi Village, Plered District, Cirebon Regency. This research uses qualitative methods. The data collection procedures used in this research are observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The steps for the selection process of the first baksa dance is the announcement of the traditional memayu ceremony of Trusmi village. The second step is the announcement of the selection of Baksa dancers, the third step is the first training to learn the basic movements of Baksa dance, then the trainer will select all dancers by assessing how the wiraganya is the accuracy of movement or the arrangement of movements when dancing Baksa dance. if the Baksa dancer selection participants are more than 40 people then in the first week elimination is carried out. the process of selecting Baksa dance dancers is carried out 14 days before the memayu traditional ceremony. Selection is carried out from the screening stage, selecting from basic movements, positioning, to performing pilgrimage activities. In learning Baksa dance, demonstration and contextual learning methods are used. Because baksa dance is a traditional ceremonial dance, the demonstration method is the most appropriate method because each movement has provisions and cannot be changed.*

## KEYWORDS

Baksa Dance  
Blooming Tone  
Gending Studio  
Memayu  
Trusmi

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## INTRODUCTION

Each region in Indonesia has its own customs and culture adapted to the customs of its people. All customary activities carried out must have a place that is a gathering point and learning. There are several aspects that are the identity of a culture in a region, one of which is education and art. Education is a learning process that is carried out in a planned manner and carried out consciously to develop the academic potential or talents of students. Education is a learning activity that takes place throughout the ages in all situations of life activities (Suparlan Suhartono, 2008:79).

According to Murgianto (1983) states that there are several forms in art, namely invisible forms, inner forms, this idea is the result of the formation of thoughts, things that are inner in nature. Includes themes, ideas expressed in the work. The second is the external form, which is the result of the creative process. Management of movement and relationships between elements.

One of the community's efforts in developing or preserving customs in an area is to open a place or forum to study them such as an art studio. An art studio is included in non-formal education, namely an educational institution outside of formal education but still structured and has programs. Education in a studio is one of the non-formal education that develops

creativity, and has the opportunity to increase intelligence that is in accordance with the potential, talents, interests, and psychology of children to form character. With the studio system, children can learn easily because the trainer will focus on providing material about the field, freely express everything, learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses and hone skills so that children can become more active and creative individuals (Tjetjep Rohadi, 2016:5-12).

Cirebon Regency is a regency that is rich in arts and culture in every sub-district and village. Art is an element in culture, art has several parts, namely music, dance, fine arts and drama. Indonesia has a lot of diversity in the field of art. This happens because of the geographical location, different tribes and customs (Saadah, 2013). The village that is famous for its customs that still survive until now is Trusmi Village, Plered District, Cirebon Regency. One of the places to develop and express ideas about art is an art studio. An art studio is a place to study art, namely to introduce and develop art (Hidayani, et al., 2017).

The definition of "sanggar" in the Big Indonesian Dictionary is a place for art activities (KBBI, 2008: 1261). In other words, the term sanggar can be interpreted as a place or facility used by a community or group of people to engage in art activities such as dance, painting, craft or acting. Activities carried out in a sanggar are in the form of learning activities about art, which include the process of learning, creation, to production. Almost all processes are mostly carried out in the sanggar. However, each sanggar has different activities and goals so that each sanggar requires its own handling by experts (KBBI, 2002: 994).

One form of studio is a dance studio, dance is a branch of art that uses the body as a medium to express artistic expression. According to Soedarsono, quoted by the Aesthetics Team of the Faculty of Language and Arts (2008: 147), dance is defined as the urgency of human feelings within him that drives him to seek expressions in the form of rhythmic movements. Thus, it can be concluded that a dance studio is a place where there are dance learning activities starting from the creation process to the production of a dance work, in the Dance Education Journal Vol 2 No 01 (2021) pg. 79 where the body is used as a medium for artistic expression. Learning and teaching activities play a very important role in every training because they are the core activities of the training process (Kamil, 2010: 40).

There are quite a lot of art studios in Cirebon Regency, but due to financial constraints and lack of development carried out by the studios, some art studios have retreated or are no longer heard from. The people of Trusmi village are aware that the existing culture is passed down from generation to generation by utilizing non-formal education as an effort to preserve it. Because of their concern for the existing arts and culture and the results of the village leaders' deliberations, an art studio was created called Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi.

Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi is an art studio located in Trusmi Wetan Village, Plered District, Cirebon Regency. Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi was founded in 2020 and is the only art studio that studies the Baksa dance for the Memayu traditional ceremony held annually in Trusmi Village.

Memayu is one of the traditional ceremonies performed by the people of Trusmi village, namely the ceremony of replacing the welit or roof of several sacred buildings. Memayu comes from the word 'ayu' which means beautiful, the suffix 'me' means to do, so the Memayu ceremony is to beautify or repair something that is worn out. The sacred buildings that have their roofs replaced are pekuncen and jinem. Pekuncen is the residence of the caretaker in the sacred area and Jinem is a place for people to make pilgrimages or do asceticism. Memayu is held once a year but is not held in the months of Mulud and Fasting. In the Memayu ceremony, the new welit will be paraded around Trusmi village. The

parading activity or commonly called a procession includes spear troops or soldiers who dance carrying spears called the Baksa Dance.

Baksa comes from the word 'Babak' which means beginning or beginning and 'Yasa' which means to build. According to Ki Artani (Alm) the type of troops formed by Prince Cakrabuana consisted of Suratani troops and Baksa troops in 1445 AD. Suratani troops mean, sura means brave and tani is farmer. So Suratani means brave troops recruited from farmers. Baksa troops were recruited from troops who had experience in clearing forests for the expansion of residential areas. Baksa troops also mean troops in front or troops that open battles armed with shields and spears, also equipped with swords at their waists.

This Baksa dance was created inspired by the resistance of the Trusmi village community who fought the Dutch in the Kedondong War. Baksa Dance was created around 1952 by Mr. Sukendra, Mr. Parto, and several community leaders of Trusmi village who wanted to dedicate or commemorate the services of their ancestors who had fought and rebuilt Trusmi village. Baksa Dance in the Memayu traditional ceremony is the result of the idea of the Trusmi community as a form of appreciation for the heroes who had defended Trusmi village. The coaching at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi every year is to select every female dancer to dance the Baksa dance at the Memayu traditional ceremony. There are around 40 dancers who will be selected. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in conducting research at the Gending Nada Bersemi Studio regarding how to learn the Baksa dance and its relevance for studio members in preserving the Baksa dance at the Memayu ceremony in Trusmi Village, Plered District, Cirebon Regency.

## METHOD

This study aims to determine and describe the forms and methods of training used at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi. The qualitative research approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and context of Baksa dance training. Data collection in this study was carried out through three primary techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted on November 15, 2023, to directly examine the learning activities and interactions between trainers and participants at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi. The researchers meticulously documented the processes and practices involved in the training sessions, focusing on the teaching methods, dancer responses, and the overall atmosphere of the studio.

Interviews were held on October 20, 2024, using structured techniques to gather detailed insights from key informants. The participants included Arya Fadilah, the Head of Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi, and Mr. Handi Kusnaedi, a seasoned Baksa dance trainer. These interviews explored various aspects of the training, including the objectives, challenges, and strategies implemented to maintain the integrity of Baksa dance traditions. The structured format ensured consistency while allowing for follow-up questions to clarify or expand on critical points.

Documentation techniques were also employed to complement the observational and interview data. Photographs, video recordings, and written records were collected to provide additional layers of evidence, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the training methods. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher used triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was achieved by consulting multiple informants, while technique triangulation involved cross-verifying data from observations, interviews, and documentation.

Data analysis followed a qualitative descriptive approach, emphasizing clear and detailed narrative descriptions. Using the flow model of analysis (Rohendi, 2014), the

researcher engaged in an iterative process of reducing, organizing, presenting, and interpreting data. This interactive network ensured that conclusions were grounded in the collected evidence, providing a transparent and coherent portrayal of the training practices at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Gending Nada Bersemi Studio, established in 2020, was inaugurated by the Village Head or Kuwu of Trusmi Wetan Village as part of a community effort to preserve and celebrate local cultural heritage. Initially, the leadership of the studio was entrusted to Mr. Sarip, who played a pivotal role in laying the foundation for its activities and objectives. After three years of dedicated service, the leadership transitioned to Mr. Arya Fadilah, who now continues to oversee the studio's operations and its mission to uphold the cultural traditions of Trusmi Wetan Village. Strategically located adjacent to Trusmi Wetan Village, the Gending Nada Bersemi Studio operates under the auspices of the village, reinforcing its role as a community-driven initiative.

What sets the Gending Nada Bersemi Studio apart is its exclusive focus on the Baksa Dance, a traditional ceremonial dance deeply rooted in the heritage of Trusmi Village. The studio is the only one of its kind dedicated to this art form, underscoring its commitment to preserving the cultural significance of the Baksa Dance. This specialization stems from the critical role the dance plays in the annual Memayu traditional ceremony, a key event in the cultural calendar of Trusmi Village. The studio's primary responsibility is to train and prepare dancers who will perform during this ceremony, ensuring that the traditions and values associated with the Baksa Dance are upheld.

The uniqueness of Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi lies not only in its exclusive focus but also in its unwavering emphasis on quality over quantity. Unlike other studios that may expand their reach through multiple branches, Gending Nada Bersemi prioritizes maintaining a singular, high-standard operation to nurture skilled and dedicated dancers. This approach aligns with the great enthusiasm shown by the Trusmi village community for the Memayu ceremony, which holds profound cultural and spiritual significance.

Preparing competent dancers for the Baksa Dance is a meticulous process, reflecting the solemnity and importance of the Memayu ceremony. The selection process is rigorous, involving multiple stages to identify dancers who can embody the physical, emotional, and cultural aspects of the dance. These steps ensure that each performance contributes to the solemnity of the event while preserving the values and traditions associated with the Baksa Dance. In this way, Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi serves as the cultural heart of Trusmi Village, safeguarding its heritage for future generations.

### Baksa Dance Learning System and Learning Process

Every year, Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi opens registration for women who want to become Baksa dancers with a minimum requirement of junior high school or a minimum age of 13 years due to considerations of the physical problems of the dancers at the Memayu traditional ceremony. Then training is carried out at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi for 14 days and after that a selection is made into 40 women to learn more about Baksa dance.

There is a minimum age limit set for Baksa dancers due to the long selection process and training that is often done at night. If the Baksa dancers are too young, it is feared that it will disrupt the dancers' health during training or when the Memayu traditional ceremony is held. Walking around Trusmi village for 5km, the hot weather of Cirebon, and the crowded road conditions with spectators on the side of the road require Baksa dancers to have strong



physiques and high concentration so that they are not disturbed by anything that happens during the parade.



**Figure 1.** Baksa dancers practicing in front of the Trusmi Wetan village hall.

### **Directions and Guidance given by Trainers**

According to Malarsih (2007), trainers have an important role as a guide for someone so that they can master something and explore a field. Trainers are one of the important components in the teaching and learning process. A trainer will play a role in efforts to form potential human resources (Mindflash et al., 2014). According to Wahyuni et al. (2019), trainers are a very important component in the success of education. This is natural, because trainers are the spearheads who are directly related to students as subjects and objects of learning.

Trainers or teachers at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi must fully understand the Baksa dance that will be taught. Trainers or teachers must know the accessories and properties used in teaching and learning activities. Thus, trainers or teachers can provide direction and guidance to the dancers regarding the correct dance movements and the correct use of properties. The plus point is not only from understanding the dance movements, but also understanding all the supporters or properties in the Baksa dance.

Before training, Mr. Handi as the main trainer will give direction to his assistant trainer, Ms. Uun Hanifah. Ms. Uun Hanifah has been a Baksa dancer since 1988. Ms. Uun was appointed by Mr. Handi as an assistant trainer because she has studied Baksa dance for more than 30 years. When Ms. Uun graduated from high school, she was appointed as an assistant trainer by Mr. Handi. With the assistant trainer, Mr. Handi felt helped because his work became lighter. Training 40 dancers is not easy. As a trainer, not only does he provide knowledge of movement or movement techniques, but Mr. Handi also provides knowledge about the background of the creation of the Baksa dance, the meanings and philosophy of the Baksa dance to all dancers.

### **Time Allocation for Baksa Dance Learning**

Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi has a time allocation of 3 hours in each meeting, which is carried out from 19.00 to 22.00. Baksa dance learning is carried out at night because the majority of Baksa dancers are students who are still actively attending school.



**Figure 2.** Baksa dancers practice at night.

### **Steps in the process of selecting the Baksa dance**

The steps for the first Baksa dance selection process are the announcement of the traditional ceremony of Memayu in Trusmi village. The second step is the announcement of the selection of Baksa dancers, the third step is the first training to learn the basic movements of the Baksa dance. Next, the trainer will select all dancers by assessing their wiraga, namely memorization of movements or movement techniques when dancing the Baksa dance. If the Baksa dancer selection participants are more than 40 people, then on one day in the first week an elimination will be carried out. After carrying out the elimination and there are already 40 Baksa dance participants, the trainer divides the groups for the positions of the dancers when lining up. Dancers who meet the trainer's criteria, namely being able to master movement or wiraga, wirasa or soul and wirama, namely the accuracy of movement with music, will be positioned at the front. The determination of the dancer's position is also determined by height, if the dancer is shorter, they will be positioned at the front, and tall dancers will be positioned at the back.

The selected Baksa dancers are required to carry out a series of activities before the Memayu traditional ceremony is carried out. The Memayu traditional ceremony is usually held on Sundays. Three days before the Memayu traditional ceremony is held, coinciding with Thursday night Friday after Maghrib, the dancers gather at the Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi to make a pilgrimage to the Mbah Buyut Trusmi tomb in the Buyut tomb complex of Trusmi Wetan village. The pilgrimage activity is carried out with the aim of asking permission from the elders of Trusmi village as a form of etiquette and as an inauguration activity for the Baksa dancers.

On the day of the Memayu traditional ceremony, the dancers gather at the Gending Nada Bersemi Studio to prepare themselves, such as wearing clothes and make-up, starting from 02.00 to 06.00. When the dancers have finished preparing themselves, they line up on the main road in front of the Trusmi village hall to parade the welit with the condition that they are not allowed to talk until the dancers return to the Gending Nada Bersemi Studio or the Trusmi Wetan village hall. This aims to respect the ancestors or elders who are present at the memayu traditional ceremony.



**Figures 3.** Baksa dancers practice at their respective schools.

### **Learning Methods Applied at the Nada Bersemi Gending Studio**

Learning strategies are used as a way to develop structured learning methods so that the learning atmosphere and learning models delivered to children achieve the desired goals and can meet and achieve the goals as much as possible. Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi uses a demonstration method. The demonstration method is a learning method on how to demonstrate the sequence of activities directly in the Baksa dance movements. The trainer also uses a contextual method, namely a learning concept that links learning to everyday life. This contextual method can bring dancers closer to their surroundings and dancers will be more sensitive to events that occur in their surroundings and are adjusted to the context of their society.

There are many values in the Baksa dance, at least the dancers learn to appreciate and respect their ancestors who have built the village into a beautiful village, foster a sense of love for the homeland, preserve the culture that has been passed down from generation to generation, and apply all the lessons or values contained in the Baksa dance in everyday life.



**Figure 4.** Baksa trainers and dancers practicing

### **Obstacles and Efforts in Learning Baksa Dance**

Based on the results of research at the Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi, several obstacles were found in learning the Baksa dance, namely the dancers, location, and practice time. The obstacles faced by the dancers are that some dancers sometimes feel tired during practice because many dancers have activities before practice, such as school that ends in the afternoon because of the full day system implemented, extracurricular activities, and there are also activities at home such as helping parents clean the house. Sometimes the dancers are too tired to practice. As for the efforts made to support the physical health of the dancers, the Memayu traditional ceremony committee or the Trusmi village prepare vitamins and form a health section to support the condition of the Baksa dancers.

The constraints at the location in question are the place for Baksa dancers to practice, namely the absence of a special place such as a hall or field used for Baksa dancers to practice. There is no large place to accommodate around 40 Baksa dancers to practice. Efforts made to overcome this problem are to use the courtyard or front yard and the Trusmi village road. Every time the Baksa dancers practice, usually the village security members, usually called *hansip*, will sterilize the front yard area of the Trusmi Village Hall and the main road.

The constraint of the training time in question is the training time which is carried out at night with a duration of around 2-3 hours. Training carried out at night makes some dancers feel sleepy and unable to concentrate because they are too tired from their activities before the training begins. Efforts made by the trainers if they see some dancers feeling sleepy are holding ice breaking such as massaging each other between friends or giving a break of around 15-20 minutes for the dancers to eat or drink so that the Baksa dancers are fresh, happy, and not sleepy anymore.

The deadline for the Baksa dancers from the beginning of the selection until the Memayu traditional ceremony is held for about one month only. With only one month, the trainers choose to select the Baksa dance participants with the requirement of taking participants who already have a basic dance, because it will facilitate the training process that will be carried out.



**Figure 6.** Baksa dancers practice process at night in the front yard of Trusmi Wetan Village Hall.

### **Relevance of Baksa Dance Learning for Character Education of Dancers**

The learning of Baksa dance at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi provides numerous benefits, particularly in shaping the character of its young participants. As an integral part of the Memayu traditional ceremony in Trusmi Village, this dance not only preserves cultural heritage but also instills vital values such as discipline, responsibility, hard work, love for the homeland, manners and politeness, friendliness, curiosity, and cooperation. Through



active and engaging training, these values naturally emerge, transforming the dancers into individuals who uphold cultural pride and personal integrity.

Discipline is one of the most evident character traits developed through Baksa dance training. The dancers are trained to adhere strictly to the rules set by their trainers, such as arriving on time for practice and ensuring they bring the necessary props, like scarves, to every session. This habit of punctuality and preparedness fosters a sense of accountability and respect for time. Over time, the dancers internalize this discipline, applying it not only in their dance routines but also in their daily lives, as they learn the importance of being organized and consistent in their commitments.

In addition to discipline, responsibility is another critical value cultivated during the training. The dancers are tasked with memorizing complex sequences of movements, ensuring they can perform independently without relying on others. This expectation encourages them to take ownership of their progress and learning. The selected dancers are also held accountable for attending all training sessions at the Trusmi Village Hall, even when the sessions are held late at night. This responsibility teaches them the importance of dedication and follow-through, qualities that are essential for personal and professional growth.

The rigorous training schedule also nurtures a strong work ethic among the dancers. Despite being physically and mentally exhausted from their daily activities, the dancers exhibit remarkable perseverance. They attend practice sessions with enthusiasm, pushing through fatigue and resisting drowsiness to focus on mastering every movement. Their determination is further demonstrated by their willingness to practice at home, ensuring they have thoroughly internalized the choreography. This commitment to hard work not only enhances their performance but also builds resilience and a sense of achievement.

Another profound value instilled through Baksa dance is love for the homeland. As a dance rooted in the history and traditions of Trusmi Village, Baksa Dance serves as a medium for the younger generation to connect with their cultural identity. By participating in this dance, the dancers develop a deep appreciation for the sacrifices and contributions of their ancestors. This patriotic sentiment inspires them to preserve and celebrate their heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging that transcends the dance itself.

Manners and politeness are also central to the training process. As the Baksa Dance is performed during the sacred Memayu ceremony, the dancers are taught to embody respect and reverence in their actions. For instance, when visiting the tomb of Buyut Trusmi as part of the ceremony, the dancers are instructed to bow their heads, pray silently, and refrain from speaking to maintain a solemn atmosphere. These practices instill in them an understanding of proper etiquette and the importance of honoring cultural and spiritual traditions. The emphasis on maintaining decorum during the ceremony reinforces the value of respectful behavior, a trait that extends into their interactions outside the dance.

Friendliness and communication skills are naturally developed through the collaborative nature of the training process. The atmosphere at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi fosters camaraderie among the dancers, trainers, and even the dancers' parents. When some dancers struggle to grasp certain movements, their peers often step in as informal tutors, offering guidance and support. This spirit of mutual assistance not only enhances their technical skills but also builds strong relationships and a sense of community. The collaborative environment encourages open communication, making it easier for the dancers to express their ideas and learn from one another.

Curiosity is another valuable trait that flourishes during the training. The dancers' natural inquisitiveness is encouraged through discussions about the history and significance of

Baksa Dance and the Memayu ceremony. Trainers at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi are required to have extensive knowledge of the dance and its cultural context, which they share with the dancers. This exchange of knowledge ignites a desire among the dancers to learn more about their heritage and the stories behind the traditions they uphold. Such curiosity not only enriches their understanding of the dance but also cultivates a lifelong interest in learning and cultural exploration.

Lastly, cooperation plays a vital role in the success of both the training process and the Memayu ceremony. The dancers learn to work together in various ways, from practicing and memorizing movements as a group to coordinating with musicians who provide the accompaniment. They also collaborate in setting up and organizing the ceremonial elements, ensuring the event runs smoothly. This teamwork fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose, teaching the dancers the importance of collective effort in achieving common goals.

The holistic approach to character development at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi highlights the transformative power of arts education. Through their participation in Baksa Dance, the dancers not only preserve an invaluable cultural tradition but also develop traits that will serve them well throughout their lives. Discipline, responsibility, hard work, love for the homeland, manners, friendliness, curiosity, and cooperation are more than just values—they are the foundation of a well-rounded and resilient individual.

As the dancers practice late into the night under the guidance of dedicated trainers, they are reminded that they are part of something greater than themselves. The Memayu ceremony is not just an annual event; it is a testament to the enduring spirit of the Trusmi community and their commitment to honoring their heritage. By participating in this tradition, the dancers become stewards of their culture, ensuring that the legacy of Baksa Dance continues to inspire future generations.

In conclusion, the learning of Baksa Dance at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi goes beyond the technical mastery of movements. It is an immersive experience that shapes the character of its participants, equipping them with values and skills that resonate far beyond the dance floor. This unique blend of cultural preservation and personal development makes Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi not just a training ground for dancers but a beacon of tradition and transformation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research on Baksa dance learning at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi in Trusmi Wetan Village, Plered District, Cirebon Regency, the detailed processes of selecting and teaching Baksa dancers were identified. The selection process begins 14 days prior to the traditional Memayu ceremony, highlighting the studio's commitment to meticulous preparation. This multi-step process includes an initial screening stage, evaluation of basic movements, dancer positioning, and culminating in pilgrimage activities. Each step is designed to ensure that selected dancers meet the cultural and technical standards required for the ceremony.

The learning process at Sanggar Gending Nada Bersemi employs both demonstration and contextual learning methods. As a traditional ceremonial dance, Baksa Dance requires strict adherence to prescribed movements and forms, making the demonstration method particularly effective. This method allows trainers to model precise movements for the dancers, ensuring that every gesture aligns with the cultural values and traditions embedded in the dance. Contextual learning further enriches the process by connecting the dance to its historical and cultural roots, enabling the dancers to internalize not just the movements but also the deeper significance of the performance. Together, these methods ensure that Baksa

Dance is taught with both technical precision and cultural authenticity.

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