

GENIUS UNPLUGGED

The first dance Guru of Odissi for Mumbai and the National award recipient Guru Rabindra Attibudhi talks about his journey so far...



What do Rani Mukherjee, Meenakshi Sheshadri, Esha Deol and sister Ahana Deol have in common? They have learnt a cultural dance called Odissi from Pandit Rabindra Atibudhi - the very man who ran away from home at the tender age of eight in pursuit of his passion for Odissi dance. Today, Pandit Rabindra Atibudhi does not regret his decision.

This dance form evolved in the 14 century BC. It is one of India's oldest form of classical dance originated from Orissa. The dance form is inspired from the inscriptions in the Jagannath temple at Puri. The dance form is very subtle and the movements are very soft.

He has traveled to every continent to create awareness about this dance form. His passion, devotion and dedication won him laurels and accolades in equal measures including a Sangeet Visharad, a Vadya Visharad and Kathak Nritya Visharad, to mention a few. Today, he is the Odissi professor at Nalanda Research Centre at Juhu and Sardha Sangeet Vidyalaya at Bandra.

So what inspired him to take up this profession? "I never thought I could eventually make a profession out of it. In those days, dancing was not the activity one would look

up to. In fact, if someone danced, people would jump to the conclusion that he was a good-for-nothing. But I was completely inspired by the beautiful gestures and moves and poses depicted in the photographs of gods and goddesses." says the Master. Born on February 14, 1946 in a village Bhada jhola in Puri district of Orissa, Panditji, learned this art when he was trying to make both ends meet by doing odd jobs at passing villages and dancing at village squares.

Pandit Guru Shri Rabindra Atibudhi came to Mumbai [then Bombay] in October 1970, at a time when Odissi dance was almost unheard of, in Maharashtra. This graceful classical dance from Orissa would very often gets confused with Udiipi, a town in south India. With his belief in Lord Jaganath bearing him up in all obstacles and tribulations, he laid the foundation of a new culture, when he introduced Odissi dance to Mumbai. Today, Odissi Kalashetra is a full-fledged organisation which has brought Odissi within the reach of the masses. This national award recipient Nrityacharya is a well known figure in the classical dance circuit and has played an integral role in taking this form of Indian dance to the global centrestage.

Today many actresses and television stars are learning Odissi. This dance has its own charm, it's subtle and ever enchanting grace amazes people from all over the world. And Guruji is happy about the way in which this form of dance has evolved in the last few years. Today's generation is keen to learn Odissi and the overwhelming number of students at Nalanda academy reflects this interest. "There is an enigma about this form of the dance that leaves spectators enthralled. If we talk about western dance, there is not a particular protocol that is followed. You move your body as per the beats and rhythm of the music, whereas Odissi has certain postures and composure for every mood to be depicted. It's more disciplined and organised in that way," says Panditji with great conviction.

Any dance form imparts good flexibility and stretch ability to the body and this is more so in the case of Odissi. This dance form comprises of two main body movements- trihanghi (Tri-bent movement) and chowk (the square structured step) which gives good pos-



ture and develops a lean and proportionate frame. "It strikes a good balance between mind and body. I get that feel good factor when I perform Odissi and it kind of rejuvenates me," says Seema, a student of Guruji who is already trained in Kathak.

For his immense contribution to traditional dance forms, Guruji has been honoured with Shringarmani national and the world friendship award in the U.S. He received the Pandit title at Apna Utsav in Mumbai in 1985. Despite this, the simplicity that he retains is incredible. And his steadfast goal in life is promoting and developing the Odissi form of dance across the city...

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