

A Study on History of Indian Classical Dancers Mallika Sarabhai & Pandit Birju Maharaj

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Abstract:

As you can see India is a very intricate culture full of diversities which makes our culture unique as a whole. and I hope that by reading this piece you will understand that dance is full of passion and technique. As Rukmini Devi says "Many people have said many things. I can only say I did not consciously go after dance. It found me." (wikiquotes) You understand that dance is universal. There are two main forms of dances 0 classical and folk. The origin of classical dances are the Hindu temples, Some famous classical dances of India are Bharat Natyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak and Odissi. The rules and principles of classical dances were laid in the Natyashstra by BharatMuni, ages ago. Folk dance is a traditional dance of the common people of a reign. No rigid rules are followed in folk dances. The Sangeed Natak Akademi and other institutes promote both classical and folk dances.

Introduction:

Indian classical dance has a distinct character that reflects the great cultural and traditional endeavor. The forms of Indian dance have transcended beyond the fences and socio-cultural hindrances. Exponents of the Indian classical dance believe that it has the caliber of creating a new and disciplined lifestyle. The Indian Classical Dance is often regarded as the form of worship and meditation. The performers of Indian Classical Dance, despite of the background and forms, have played a crucial role in presenting India to the forefront of the World stage. It has helped in ending the erstwhile artistic isolation. Here, in the following lines, we provide the profile and biography of those great artists who made the country proud.

Mallika Sarabhai

Contributions

Mallika Sarabhai, a multifaceted personality born in the year 1954, is a noted Kuchipudi and Bharatnatyam dancer. She has immensely contributed to the fields of acting, writing and publishing. She is a social activist and has participated

in many socio-developmental projects initiated by the United Nations. Mallika Sarabhai has also received the "French Palme D'or", the highest civilian award of France.



Life

Born to famous dancer Mrinalini Sarabhai and reputed space scientist Vikram Sarabhai, Mallika is a woman of many dimensions and talents. She is a noted dancer, film maker, TV anchor and social activist. Mallika Sarabhai, an alumna of IIM Ahmedabad, was trained by R. Acharyulu in Kuchipudi. As a young dancer, Mallika won many international awards for her classical dance including the "French Palme D'or", the highest civilian award of France. In 1977, she took over the reigns of Darpana, the arts

academy founded by her parents.

Theater and Dances

Mallika Sarabhai's theatre works reflect the challenges of the society and sends a strong message. Her natural charm with conviction creates a unique style of presentation. Following are some of the works performed by her:

Unheard Voices

"Unheard Voices" is a physical, musical theatre piece. It is based on Harsh Mander's book "Unheard Voices". The story is about the lives of marginalized faces - the beggars, children at the Traffic Signal and "chhotu", the little child at roadside restaurant. These are stores of struggle and courage.

India

Then, Now, Forever: This revolves around the multiple lifestyle of the people of India. It attempts to show the resemblance between the life of the tribal of Mizoram and their lifestyles with the bollywood. The show takes the audience from the temples of southern India to the forests of the Dangs and the minds of today's creators.

Actor

Mallika Sarabhai started her acting career at the age of fifteen and has worked in more than 30 films. In 1984, she played the character of Draupadi in "The Mahabharata", directed by renowned director Peter Brook. The movie was launched in French and English. Some of her critically acclaimed films include "Lovesongs: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow", Peter Brook's "The Mahabharata", "Kahkasha", "A Thousand Flowers" and "Katha".

In 1982, she founded the "Darpana for Development" concentrating on the development of performance as a language for change. She also formed "JANAVAK", the voice of the people, to

archive and preserve the folk and tribal culture of India.

Deeply excited by the possibility of continuing the work as an activist on TV, in 2001 she launched Darpana Communications. She has also produced over 2500 hours of broadcast programming in Gujarati dealing, with social issues like gender bias, communal hatred, the environment, corruption, violence etc.

Publisher

Mallika Sarabhai never tried to confine herself into a single character. After being recognized as a reputed dancer and film actor, she has also made herself count in the world of publications. In 1979, Mallika Sarabhai published India's first design magazine, called Inside Outside. Following are some of the acclaimed books published by Mallika Sarabhai and Mapin Publishing Private Limited.

- India's Daughters
- Cultural Guide to Ahmedabad
- Spectacular India
- Jute Handlooms of India
- Sufism And Beyond
- Romance of Golconda Diamonds
- From Mustard Fields to Disco Lights
- Parvati: Goddess of Love
- Documenting Chandigarh
- Image & Imagination:5 Indian Artists
- Performing Arts of Kerala
- Understanding Kuchipudi (Co-Author)
- Krishna as Shrinathji: Miniature Paintings From Nathdwara

Social Thinker

In an effort to serve the society, Mallika Sarabhai took up many developmental projects including the "The Acting Healthy Project" (2008). The project supported by ArtVenture took crucial learning on how to avoid maternal deaths and infant deaths amongst the very deprived communities. Besides, she has also played an active role

in the UNICEF Peer Educators Project, UNICEF Anandshala Project in 2005-2007 FATEHPURA Model village project and UNICEF Rural Health Project.

Controversy

In 2001, she was criticized by the extreme right-wing political parties after she filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court of India. In the PIL, she had accused the BJP-led state government of supporting the genocide against the Muslims in Gujarat.

Pandit Birju Maharaj

Contributions

Birju Maharaj is a leading exponent and torch-bearer



of the Kalka-Bindadin gharana of Lucknow **Born on** February 4, 1938. He is the only son and disciple of Shri Achhan Maharaj and is a familiar face of Indian Kathak dance all over the world. He has performed in almost all the countries of the globe. He is a wonderful singer with a strong grip over, Thumri, Dadra, Bhajan and Ghazals. He gave his first performance at the age of seven. Pandit Birju Maharaj is not only a Kathak dancer but also a sensitive poet and captivating orator.

Life

Birju Maharaj was born in the house of renowned Kathak proponent, Jagannath Maharaj of Lucknow Gharana. His father, popularly known as Achhan Maharaj, used to spend much time in teaching young Birju, the fundamentals of Kathak. Birju

also accompanied his father to the places where Achhan Maharaj had to go to perform. So, as a result, Birju Maharaj started learning dance forms at a very early stage. His uncles, Lachhu Maharaj and Shambhu Maharaj also guided him in learning the Kathak dance. However, after the death of his father in 1947, the family moved to Bombay. There, he mastered the different aspects of the Kathak and other Indian classical dance forms. At the age of thirteen, he was invited to Delhi to teach at Sangeet Bharati.

Teaching

Birju Maharaj, the master of Kathak, taught in Sangeet Bharati, Bharatiya Kala Kendra and headed the teaching faculty Kathak Kendra (a unit of the Sangeet Natak Akademi) in Delhi. After his retirement from Kathak Kendra, in 1998 Birju Maharaj started his own Kathak and Indian fine arts academy, Kalashram.

Kalashram

Kathak maestro Pandit Birju Maharaj had a dream of opening a dance-school and Kalashram is the real-face of the dream. In Kalashram, the students are trained in the field of Kathak, and other associated disciplines like vocal and instrumental music, yoga, painting, Sanskrit, dramatics, stagecraft etc.

The classrooms, practice halls and amphitheatre of Kalarshram reflect a shade of rural setup in the busy and fast urban lifestyle. The natural atmosphere, with numerous trees and ponds would be extremely inspiring and would bring everyone close to the simple, unassuming but rich heritage of the country.

The objective of the institute is primarily

to produce highly talented students who would not only prove worthy of the training they receive, but also live as modest, humble and disciplined members of today's society.

Awards

Pandit Birju Maharaj has won several honors and awards including the coveted Padma Vibhushan (1986). He has also been awarded with the Kalidas Samman by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Soviet Land Nehru Award, Sangam Kala Award. In 2002, He was the recipient of the Lata Mangeshkar Puraskaar. Pandit Birju Maharaj has also been conferred with the honorary Doctorate degrees from Banaras Hindu University, and Khairagarh University.

Conclusion:

Dance is a series of movements and steps that match the speed and rhythm of music. It is an art. It is accompanied by gestures and expressions which explain the theme contained in the music. One can dance and classical dance. They are not simply the movement of legs and arms, but the whole body. There are many dancers in the India who brought the good name and fame to the nation.

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