

Odissi Dance from India

ARUP MITRA

Professor of Economics, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi University Enclave

Odissi is one of the Indian classical dance forms. It originated from one of the Indian states, called Orissa, which is located in the eastern part of the country. For a long time this dance used to be performed in front of the Lord within the temple premises. Since the 1950s the dancers have been performing in auditoriums both in India and abroad. The first part of the dance is called “mangalacharan”, in which the dancer unfolds offerings to the Lord of the Universe, takes permission from the mother earth to place his/her feet on her lap, seeks blessings from one of the personal Gods/Goddesses for a successful performance. This item ends with three salutations: first, to the Lord of the Universe, second, to the important personalities present in the programme and third, to the general public including friends and admirers. The second item in the sequence is called “Batu” which is a pure dance form, set to dance syllables, demonstrating the masculine aspects of the dance. This is followed by the item called “pallavi” which is also a pure dance form, exhibiting the tenderness or the delicate aspect of the dance. In the fourth part, “abhinaya”, the dancer narrates some story from the epics through body language, postures, fingers, expressions and rhythmic movements of the feet. Finally, in “mokshy” which literally means salvation, the dancer dedicates the body, mind and soul to the Lord of the Universe. On the whole, Odissi is nothing but a mode of spiritual exercise passing through the rhythmic movements of sound to silence, describing the journey of the human soul from life to eternity, preaching the theory of renunciation in the midst of affluence and moving from self-decoration to selfless action.

I started learning this form of dance from a temple located in south Delhi. My first stage performance was organized within the temple premises in front of the Lord. And I hope to perform someday in front of Senso-ji in Tokyo.

