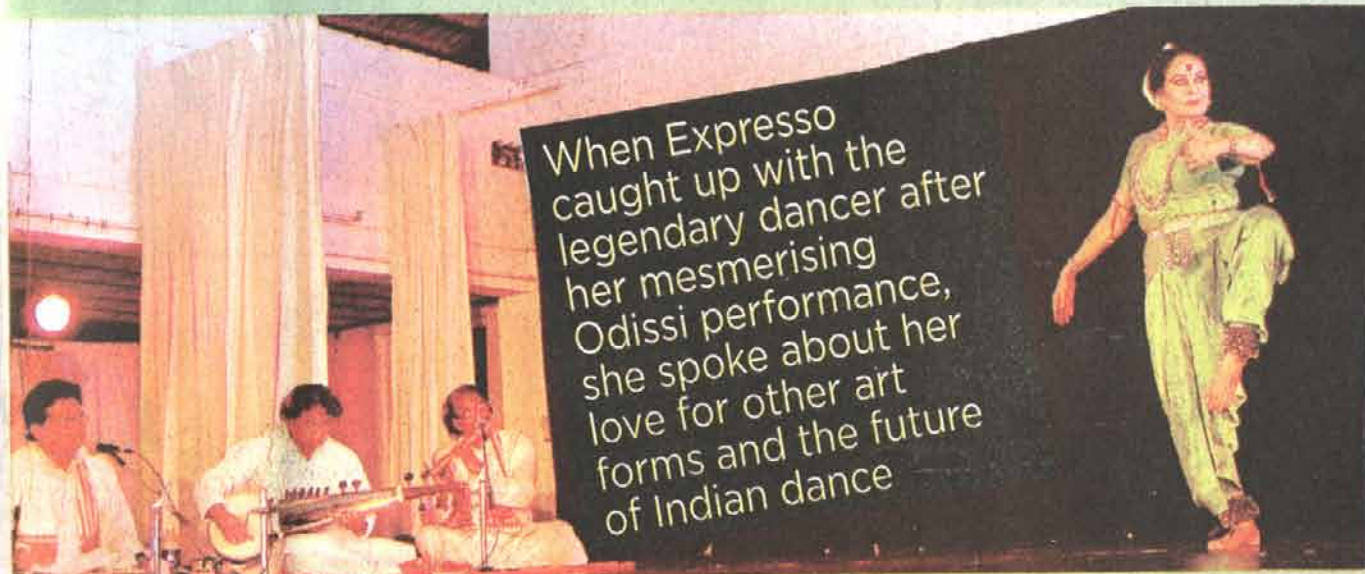


## PERSONALITY

# A vision in green



ALL those present at the Isha Yoga Centre on Thursday were witness to an absolute tour de force as Sonal Mansingh's graceful poses, nimble footwork and abhinaya virtually bowled them over.

When Expresso caught up with the legendary dancer after her mesmerising Odissi performance that delighted both novices and connoisseurs, she spoke about her love for other art forms and the future of Indian dance.

## India and dance

Bharatanatyam and Odissi are India's gifts to the world. The true beauty of these dance forms is the message they can convey. But I have noticed a recent unhealthy trend of increasing group performances. Group dance comes from the West, it is not Indian. However, most parents and kids

do not mind, they are just happy they got to perform on stage whereas the dance teachers are euphoric that so many children are flocking to learn from them. The very essence of classical dance is Abhinaya and Bhava. How can two people synchronise these at the same time? What is happening today is a sequence of hand and body movements with no expressions.

## The future of Indian dance?

Dance is becoming more and more commercial nowadays. I can see only a very few dedicated dancers in the field. The number of dancers might have increased but the quality has come down. We need to unearth new and exciting talent.

## Why classical dance is losing its audience?

Unfortunately, the times have changed. I can see youngsters fiddling with their mobile phones most of the time. They have no time to enjoy a dance performance. Indian drawing rooms now has a variety of programmes. The

computer and Internet are other diversions. If despite all this, dance in India is surviving, it is because we offer something imperishable in comparison to the plastic entertainment.

## Sonal Mansingh, the person not the performer?

You can call me a happy person. I always wanted to be a dancer and I never lost focus. I believe that dance is a confluence of language, poetry, sculpture, painting and literature. I have come to a point where I can see every art form as the manifestation of dance. Though I am merely a tiny dot, at the same time with my heart, my breath and my passion I'm everywhere.

## The role of dance in society

Dance is not only entertainment but for us Indians, it is also an integral part of our daily life. As I've repeatedly said, it nourishes people with spirituality and provides a social commentary. Everyone loves to listen to a story. Similarly when a message is enveloped in beautiful movements, interesting costumes and lovely expressions, the audience is invariably attracted to it.

## Advice to young dancers

Determination backed by solid 'sadhana' alone can bring out the best in you. There should be constant churning without losing focus of where you want to be in the end.

