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Belle with beautiful eyes

Dance is the tool of communication for her and she believes in sending across her message using it as a medium for communication. Known for her unique choreography, she has dedicated her life to dancing and hasn't stopped till date.

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By Jaya Vellampalli (<https://telanganatoday.com/author/jaya-vellampalli>) | Published: 31st Mar 2018 11:59 pm
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About 53 years ago, at Marredpally Subramanya Swamy temple, a stranger suggested to a mother to train her daughter in classical dance. And the reason she gave was that the girl has big and beautiful eyes. This incident was the first step in the making of one of the great dancers who has expertise in both Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi styles of dance.

Dance is the tool of communication for her and she believes in sending across her message using it as a medium for communication. Known for her unique choreography, she has dedicated her life to dancing and hasn't stopped till date. This is Ananda Shankar Jayant, a renowned dancer and Padmasri recipient from our very own city.

Kalakshetra days

It was at the age of 11 that Ananda Shankar Jayant joined Kalakshetra. She was there for six years and earned a diploma and post-graduate diploma in various streams such as Bharatanatyam, Carnatic music, veena, dance theory and philosophy. Ananda says that it was a totally different world where everything is completely dance-driven. She shares that Kalakshetra gave her a complete understanding of dance. "It taught me the aesthetics and the philosophy behind it. The institution changed the way you look at dance and it is not just an art form for me; it is my life. This kind of thinking comes only when dance becomes a part of your soul," says Ananda.



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Relation with Rukmini Devi

“We used to call her athai. I was the youngest of the students, so she had a soft corner for me and liked me a lot,” shares Ananda who feels the most amazing experience was “working under her choreography”. This was a huge learning experience, the way she deconstructed the music, her thought process, and understanding of the concept were what made it entirely different. “Even for the smallest roles, she would explain everything in detail. These kinds of inputs actually helped me a lot,” she adds.

First woman railway officer in SCR

Ananda Shankar Jayant was always inclined towards education. Even though she had to discontinue her studies, she took a concrete decision to continue formal education as well. “I always knew I had to support my dancing, and education was the only way I could do it. So, after finishing my correspondence in commerce, I understood that it is not for me,” says Ananda who then decided to go for a master’s degree in Ancient History, Culture and Archaeology at the Osmania University.

That was when she saw students giving Railways exam and decided to give it a try. “In fact, when I was studying for the exam, my mom would ask me



not to prepare because she was scared that I will give up dancing. I cracked the exam and went on to become the first railway office in South Central Railways division," she adds.

Meeting Jayant

"We met in the beginning of my professional career. Jayant was working with Modi Xerox and came to our office for some Xerox machine installation. I was handling everything regarding the installation, and that's how we met first. Later, we became friends and the rest is history," says Ananda with a smile.

Fight with cancer

It was in 2008 that she was diagnosed with breast cancer. But, thanks to family support and strong will to fight it out, she came out as a winner. And during this phase, Jayant was very supportive, she says. "Immediately after I was diagnosed, he told me that nothing has changed; everything is the same. It is that positive energy and affirmation that gave me the strength to fight it out. I would do everything; I did not stop dancing or anything I would usually do. This played a very prominent role during that period," adds the renowned dancer.

Unique choreography

Recalling her first choreography, Ananda says it was in the year 1987 that she choreographed 'Krishnam Vande Jagadgurum' and then 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull', "where I experimented with Jazz music". Then came 'Buddam Sharanam Gachchami', 'Navarasas', 'Panchatantra' and many more. The artiste says that dance is like a spiritual journey for her. "It is the best communication tool and I base my subjects on anything that inspires or bothers me. My idea is to use dance as a tool to spread across the message," she adds.

Younger generation & dance

In the recent times, youngsters are coming forward to learn dance forms, but nobody is ready to take it up as a full-time profession. Though sad, this is the reality. It is difficult to survive because there is no money. "The lack of 'sabha' culture is also affecting the prospects of this art form. The change has to come in people's mindset. How many people would invest time and money to go watch a classical dance performance," questions Ananda. The most difficult part is to perform without any audience. This happens many times and until such situations are prevailing, there is no way people will take it up as a full-time profession, she concludes.



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