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When dance is a passion and a weapon

Odissi dancer Sujatha Mohapatra is in the city to shoot for her upcoming online dance classes. She intends to preserve the legacy of odissi for posterity











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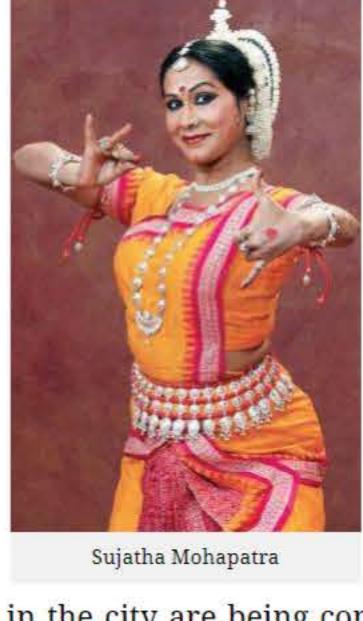
An odissi recital by Sujatha Mohapatra

By Aathira Haridas

Express News Service

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Love, affection and art have bought her back to Kerala. For Odissi danseuse Sujatha Mohapatra, dancing in Kerala is pure pleasure, because she feels it is a place where everybody understands art. "When I come to Kerala or any part of South India for that matter, it makes me feel that I am at a place where art is appreciated. When you dance in Kerala, people value what you do. And that is very important to me," says Sujatha. She was here in the city to shoot for her online dance classes.

For someone who teaches Odissi across the world, the decision to start online classes was an attempt to take the art to a larger audience. "It is not for today, but for the future, for posterity," says Sujatha, who learned the art under Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra who is considered as the doyen of Odissi. "I am carrying a legacy which should be taken forward through teaching and performing. My guru struggled for several years and created the structure of Odissi in a perfect way. I am taking my guru's work forward," she says.



The online classes shot in the city are being conceptualised by the firm Invis Multimedia. "The online dance lessons will not only help beginners but also those who want perfection. Your fundamentals need to be strong. The classes will be beneficial to everyone. Moreover, to pass on the legacy, documentation is needed. I will be sharing tips to make you stronger in the field of Odissi," she says. "I have introduced the very basic structure, showing a path to enter the Odissi world," she says.

Sujatha still remembers her first day in Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra's

class. "I remember the way of his teaching. It was so refined. When he was correcting me, I had this feeling that this is the man who will make me a dancer. And that complete surrender is required. So when I teach, I teach the way I was taught. My dream is to spread Odissi all over the world," she says.

Having born into a family conducive for art, Sujatha started learning at the age of four, dancing with her mother. It was only later when she was 20 that she could learn Odissi from Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra who is also her father-in-law. "We are a family of dancers," she laughs. As

also her father-in-law. "We are a family of dancers," she laughs. As Sujatha waxes eloquent about her Guru and the lessons she learned from him, it is evident that she misses him.

Sujatha revers her guru to such extends that she would never want to break the traditional structure of the dance. "I feel that innovation has already been done by our gurus. We have to keep the tradition and go

forward. My husband does innovations by keeping the parameters.

What he does is neo-classical form. It is important that you do not break

the tradition," she says.