

#RULER

The King Who United With Traditions

King Thirumalai Nayak created Madurai's Grand Chithirai Festival, a powerful symbol of harmony between Shaivism and Vaishnavism



History remembers many kings for their conquests, monuments, and wealth. But few rulers are remembered for bringing people together through faith and celebration. In Madurai, one such visionary was King Thirumalai Nayak, whose ingenious decision transformed a local religious observance into one of South India's greatest festivals.

Centuries ago, the sacred wedding of Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar, known as Meenakshi Thirukalyanam, was celebrated during the Tamil month of Masi. Although the event held immense religious significance, it coincided with the busy harvest season. Farmers and villagers were occupied in their fields, making it difficult for many devotees to travel to Madurai and participate in the festivities.

As a result, attendance was often limited. Even the magnificent temple chariot procession, one of the highlights of the celebration, struggled to attract enough people to pull the massive wooden car through the streets. The festival's spiritual grandeur was not matched by public participation.

At the same time, another important religious tradition was taking place during the Tamil month of Chithirai. Lord Kallazhagar, the revered form of Vishnu from Alagar Kovil, would begin his divine journey towards Madurai. Thousands of devotees eagerly awaited his arrival, making the event one of the most anticipated Vaishnavite celebrations in the region.

Recognizing an opportunity, King Thirumalai Nayak came up with a remarkable solution. He merged the Shaivite celebration of Meenakshi Thirukalyanam with the Vaishnavite festival of

Kallazhagar's journey, bringing both traditions together under a single grand celebration during the month of Chithirai. The decision was revolutionary. By shifting the wedding festival to a time when the harvest season had ended, people were free to travel and participate. Devotees arrived in thousands from villages and towns across the region. The streets of Madurai came alive with music, processions, rituals, and celebrations. The giant temple chariot rolled through the city with thousands of devotees pulling it. The decision was revolutionary. By shifting the wedding festival to a time when the harvest season had ended, people were free to travel and participate. Devotees arrived in thousands from villages and towns across the region. The streets of Madurai came alive with music, processions, rituals, and celebrations. The giant temple chariot rolled through the city with thousands of devotees pulling it.

More importantly, the festival became a powerful symbol of harmony between two major traditions of Hindu worship—Shaivism and Vaishnavism. The divine marriage of Meenakshi and Sundareswarar and the journey of Kallazhagar, celebrated by devotees regardless of sectarian affiliation.

Today, the Chithirai Festival of Meenakshi Amman Temple is one of the largest and most vibrant religious festivals in India. Millions witness the celestial wedding, the grand chariot procession, and the dramatic arrival of Kallazhagar. What began as a practical solution to a seasonal problem evolved into a lasting cultural legacy.

Thirumalai Nayak's vision was more than administrative wisdom. It demonstrated how faith could unite communities rather than divide them. By bringing together Vaishnavites and Shaivites in a shared celebration, he created a festival that continues to embody devotion, inclusiveness, and social harmony centuries later.

Every Chithirai, as Madurai erupts in celebration, it pays tribute not only to its deities but also to a king whose foresight transformed religious traditions into a living symbol of unity.



Let me begin by two quotes from an article called 'Beyond these Stone Walls' by Fr. Gordon J. MacRae, 'Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote: "From the wild Irish slums of the 19th-century Eastern Seaboard to the riot-torn suburbs of Los Angeles, there is one unmistakable lesson in American history: A community that allows a large number of young men to grow up in broken homes, dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any rational expectations for the future—that community asks for and gets chaos."'

The United States has less than five percent of the world's population, but twenty-five percent of the world's prisoners. The U.S. has more young men in prison today than all of the leading 35 European countries combined. The ratio of prisoners to citizens in the U.S. is four times what it is in Israel, six times what it is in Canada and China, and thirteen times what it is in Japan.

Our boys are spaced out. We have a major boy-raising problem which should be addressed urgently. Boys are raised badly, thanks to a combination of disinterested fathers and overindulgent mothers. Mothers ruin boys. They don't ruin girls. Girls are taught boundaries, manners, caring, responsibility and accountability. But not boys. Especially not in Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures. Boys are indulged and their hormone-induced bad behaviour is tolerated and indulged and explained away as, "Boys will be boys." That leeway is not given to girls. Girls don't need to deal with testosterone, which in adolescent boys can become a huge problem, especially in today's culture where there seems to be no way to expend it in strenuous, potentially dangerous pursuits. Scrolling screens is not strenuous, though dangerous. Boys need to test themselves in tough, potentially dangerous situations, to find their equilibrium and grow into men. For this, they need supervision from positive male role models to develop healthy masculinity, emotional intelligence, and self-worth. Involved men, fathers, uncles, or mentors, provide a model for identity, discipline, and respectful behaviour; helping boys navigate emotions and reduce behavioural issues. Remember "village"

This problem is exacerbated in wealthy families where boys live on the expense accounts of their fathers. That is the worst crime that you can commit against your child. When he is conditioned to live in a state where he doesn't need to earn anything and every need is satisfied because of who he is, not what he achieved, he becomes a parasite. When you condition him to believe that whatever doesn't come automatically will come if he asks for it,



Hyderabad Public School, Begumpet.



you have taken away all his initiative and courage and made him a beggar in a designer suit. He grows up with an entitled attitude which takes away his ability to lead others, build and work in teams, have a healthy and happy marriage, and raise emotionally stable children. He is entitled and expects the world to conform. When that doesn't hap-

pen, he is lost and emotionally adrift, directionless. This state manifests itself in antisocial behaviour; breakdown of relationships, anger, depression, and despair. He doesn't know how to deal with authority, or to exercise it. The good news is that this is not inevitable. It is avoidable if there is will in the parents.

Consider this. In the 1980s and 90s, to deal with the problem of overpopulation of elephant herds in Kruger National Park, many elephants were relocated to Pilanesberg and Hluhluwe-uMfolozi National Parks. Since they were airlifting individual animals by helicopter, they found that it was easier to do it with cows and adolescent calves, and so that is what they did. The big bulls were left behind because they were too big and difficult to handle. However, after a couple of years, they found that over 60 endangered white and black rhinos in Pilanesberg and Hluhluwe-uMfolozi Parks had been killed and mutilated. They found the carcasses with wounds to the head and shoulders with deep stab wounds inflicted by tusks. Camera footage confirmed the findings. Without older, mature bulls to teach them social protocols and regulate their excessive "musth"

"Boys will be boys." That leeway is not given to girls. Girls don't need to deal with testosterone, which in adolescent boys can become a huge problem, especially in today's culture where there seems to be no way to expend it in strenuous, potentially dangerous pursuits. Scrolling screens is not strenuous, though dangerous. Boys need to test themselves in tough, potentially dangerous situations, to find their equilibrium and grow into men. For this, they need supervision from positive male role models to develop healthy masculinity, emotional intelligence, and self-worth. Involved men, fathers, uncles, or mentors, provide a model for identity, discipline, and respectful behaviour, helping boys navigate emotions and reduce behavioural issues.

Boys Need Their Fathers

PART:1



#RAISING SONS



Elephants were relocated to Pilanesberg and Hluhluwe-uMfolozi National Parks.

(a hormonal, aggressive state), these adolescent elephants became "delinquent" and aggressive and were killing rhinos, just to show off.

The problem was solved by introducing older, large bull elephants (aged 30-45) from Kruger into the parks. The presence of these mature males established a hierarchy, and through direct intimidation and suppression, the young males stopped killing rhinos. As soon as there was a big male elephant within reach, the adolescent males dropped out of musth and became docile. All their toxic aggressiveness disappeared. This, say psychologists and ecologists, demonstrates that male elephants must, and have, strong father figures to teach them social behaviour, which is vital for them to be part of a community. This applies also to boys and men.

Without strong male role models to guide and direct boys and make them men, we get cute looking clothes hangers without any real worth, living off their father's wealth, indulged and doted on by their mothers. But they know their reality in their own hearts, believe me. No matter whatever fancy gadget they use or drive or wear, they have low self-worth because they know that they have never done anything worthwhile on their own, never achieved any great goal, never overcome any great challenge, never felt pain, never wept tears of frustration and fear in the night, yet got up the next morning to carry on, never sweated or bled, never had their back to the wall and a life-threatening situation facing them...I

can go on but this is enough. The tragedy is that it is not their fault. They never achieved anything because they were never given a chance to do so. This is one of the root causes of marriages breaking up. The man is not really a man except in terms of gender. That is not enough by far and so he is unable to be a role model or inspire respect in his family.

Role Models

Strong sports programs where boys play team games is a good way to inculcate discipline, responsibility, combativeness, willingness to take pain to reach a goal, collaboration, willingness to pass on personal benefit for the good of the team, concern for team members and the sporting spirit. All eminently desirable and necessary. So also are prefectorial programs in schools, where they exist. In the Hyderabad Public School, where I did my schooling, we had a prefectorial program where students are appointed as leaders and mentors. This is done by a combination of student elections combined with class teacher's (and other teachers') recommendation. The purpose is to give promising senior students leadership opportunity and responsibility, and the authority to help maintain school discipline and assist staff. The group of prefects is often referred to as the Prefects' Council or Prefect Board. Leadership titles were Head Boy/School Captain/Head Captain and so on. Prefects act as role models, monitor behaviour during breaks, help

Global Beatles Day

It was in the year 1960, on a foggy island found Nor-Norwest of Spain that music history changed forever. Four young proto-gods came together to form what would be one of the most influential rock bands to ever come out of England, if not the world. We're speaking, of course, of the Beatles. Paul McCartney, George Harrison, John Lennon, and Ringo Starr. These four boys came together to change the world, one song at a time. Global Beatles Day is a yearly holiday that takes place to celebrate and honour the ideals of The Beatles. The day is celebrated with a number of events around the world and music that celebrate harmony and peace.

#IDENTITY

The Revival of Odissi to Classical Recognition

Odissi performance moved away from temples and courts and survived through the Gotipua tradition, where young male dancers performed female roles



Kalicharan Patnaik

By the late 1950s, Odissi was at a fragile and uncertain stage. Many historians describe this period as a time when the dance was almost "on life support." Once performed in temples and royal courts, Odissi had survived only in fragmented traditions after centuries of decline.

Decline and Survival of Tradition

During colonial rule, British-era social laws and changing moral frameworks had severely affected traditional performance arts. Temple dancers, especially the Mahari tradition, were stigmatized, and many temple-linked practices were discouraged or pushed into obscurity. As a result, Odissi performance moved away from temples and courts and survived quietly through the Gotipua tradition, where young male dancers preserved elements of the form in folk and devotional settings.

Despite this decline, Odissi did not disappear. It survived in rural Odisha through oral transmission, ritual practice, and scattered performance traditions. However, it lacked standardization, and different regions preserved different versions of technique and repertoire.

The Search for Classical Identity

By the 1950s, Indian cultural scholars and artists began actively working to restore Odissi's status as a classical dance form. A major challenge was that Odissi was not yet fully codified. Unlike established classical forms such as Bharatanatyam, Odissi had no unified grammar of movement, posture, or performance structure. At this time, scholars such as Kalicharan Patnaik played a crucial role in presenting research on Odissi's historical and practical foundations. His papers highlighted its ancient roots in temple traditions, sculpture, and regional performance culture.

Key 1958 Cultural Gatherings

In 1958, a series of important cultural events helped accelerate the revival movement. In Madras (now Chennai), at the Music Academy conference, Kalicharan Patnaik presented scholarly papers on Odissi's historical structure and performance possibilities. Around the same time, performances by artists such as Sanjukta Panigrahi demonstrated the expressive potential of the form, including pieces like



Lalita Lavanga Lata, bringing Odissi to national attention. Later that year, at a seminar organized by the Sangeet Natak Akademi at Vigyan Bhavan in Delhi, the discussion on Odissi intensified. Kalicharan Patnaik once again presented his findings, while master artists like Deba Prasad Das demonstrated key structural elements such as Batu and Moksha. These performances highlighted both the richness of the tradition and its lack of uniform structure.

At this stage, Odissi was still sometimes viewed as a regional variant influenced by Bharatanatyam, largely due to its incomplete codification and variation across performers.

The Formation of Jayantika

A turning point came around 1958 in Cuttack, where a major meeting of artists and scholars was convened. This led to the formation of Jayantika, a landmark collective dedicated to the systematic revival of Odissi.

Jayantika brought together some of the most influential figures of the revival movement, including:

- Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra
- Pankaj Charan Das
- Deba Prasad Das
- Scholars like Kalicharan Patnaik and others

Their shared goal was to answer a crucial question: What is authentic Odissi?

Codification and Structural Development

The Jayantika group worked through years of study, discussion, and experimentation. They examined temple sculptures such as those at Konark, studied ancient Sanskrit texts like the Natyashastra, and analyzed surviving performance traditions. They began standardizing:

- Bhumi (footwork patterns)
- Mudras (hand gestures)
- Body positions like Tribhanga and Chauka
- A structured performance sequence

This eventually established a clear repertoire format. Mangalacharan-> Batu-> Pallavi-> Abhinaya-> Moksha. Each section had a defined aesthetic and spiritual purpose, transforming Odissi from a fragmented tradition into a structured classical form.

Recognition and Cultural Rebirth

By 1958, the efforts of revivalists were recognized by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, marking a major step towards national acceptance of Odissi as a classical dance form. This recognition is often seen as the moment Odissi transitioned from endangered tradition to institutional legitimacy.

By September 1958, Odissi was no longer in decline. Instead, it had entered a phase of structured growth, research, and artistic expansion. New institutions and groups such as Nari Seva Sangh and other cultural bodies further experimented with presentation styles, refining the five-part structure and expanding performance practice.

Conclusion: From Fragmentation to Classical Identity

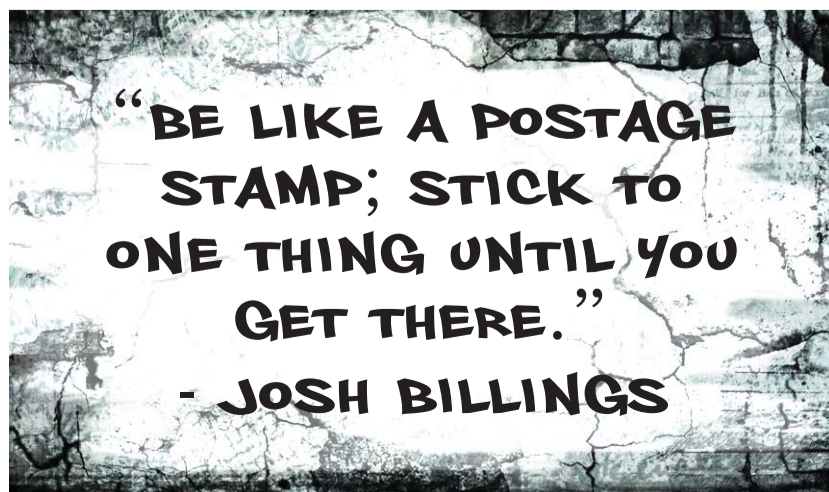
The revival of Odissi in the mid-20th century is one of the most important cultural recoveries in Indian performing arts history. What once existed in scattered folk and temple traditions was transformed into a globally recognized classical dance form. Through the combined efforts of scholars, gurus, and institutions, Odissi gained:

- A codified grammar
- A standardized repertoire
- National recognition
- And ultimately, international respect

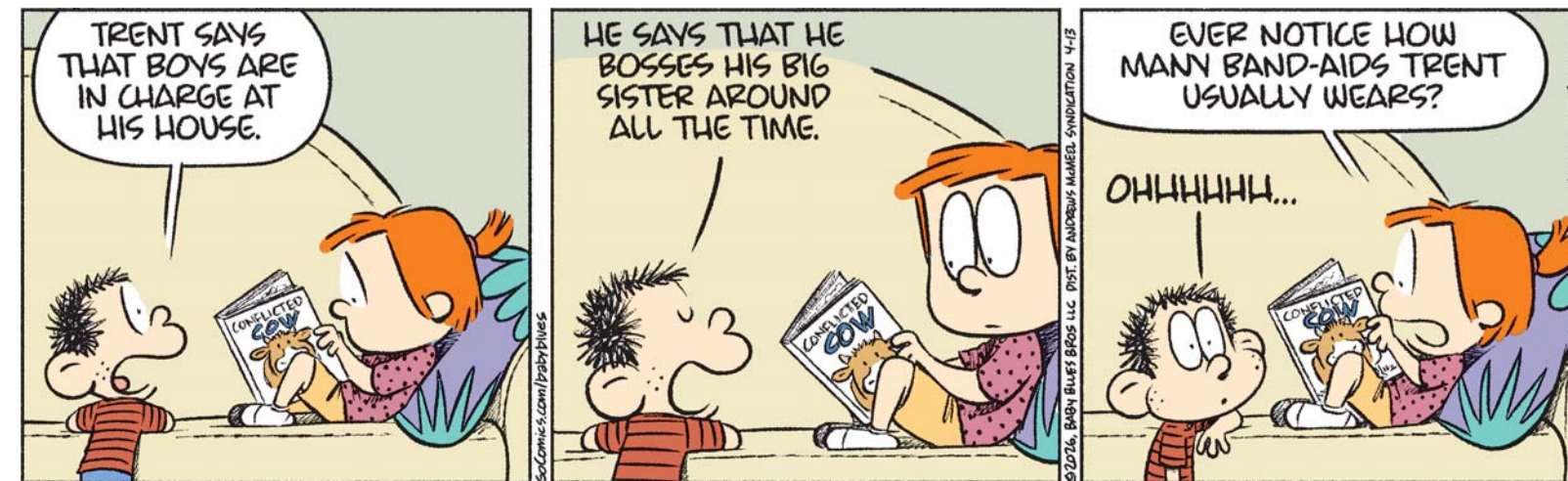
Today Odissi stands as a symbol of cultural resilience, a tradition that survived suppression, reinvented itself through scholarship and artistry, and emerged as one of India's most refined classical dance forms.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman