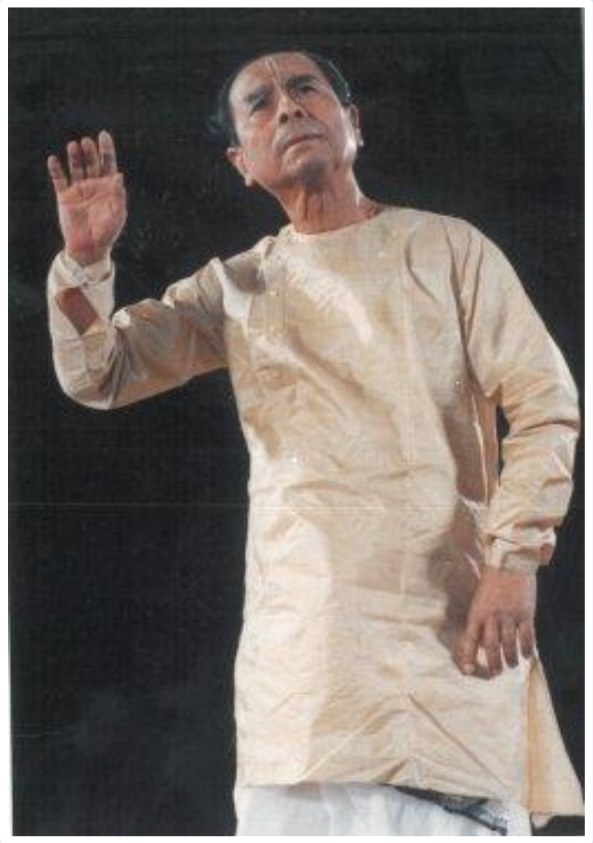
INTACH

CLASSICAL DANCERS OF INDIA



Bipin Singh



Guru Bipin Singh was a noted exponent and teacher of Manipuri dance. Popularly regarded as the 'Father of Manipuri Dance', he worked ceaselessly for the promotion and spread of the dance form.

Guru Bipin Singh was born on August 24, 1918 to a Bishnupriya Manipuri family of performers and artists. At a young age, he showed keen interest in folk forms such as the Jatra. In the early days of his career, Guru Bipin worked with pioneers like Kaji Nazrul Islam and empresario Haren Ghosh. He also toured Europe with the dancer Madame Menaka.

Concerned by the little exposure and apathy towards the Manipuri dance form, Guru Bipin Singh's constant endeavor was to show that Manipuri was not just a folk form. He wished to show its strong shastric base (including the elements from the Natyashastra!). He took up the propagation of the true beauty of Manipuri dance as a mission of his life, which he then passed down to his disciples!



Supported in his cause of reviving Manipuri dance by the Maharaja of Manipur, Guru Bipin Singh worked day and night for years in Manipur learning about the tradition. Of all the gurus he learnt from, his closest mentor was Guru Amudon Sharma. He founded the Govindji Nartanalaya in the Palace Compound at Manipur so that women from ordinary families could also learn the dance that had been restricted so far to the royal family. Alongside his disciples – Kalavati Devi, Binodini Devi, the Jhaveri sisters – Guru Bipin made rich contributions to the Manipuri repertoire, form and theory.



Guru Bipin Singh with Pt Omkarnath and the Jhaveri sisters at their residence in 1957



Nayana, Ranjana, Swarna, Darshana, with Guru Bipin Singh



Guru Bipin Singh receives Sangeet Natak Akademi Award from Indira Gandhi in 1966



Mridang vadan

AWARDS AND LEGACY

For his immense contribution to the Manipuri dance form, Guru Bipin Singh received several recognitions. Of notable mention are the Nrityacharya and the title of 'Hanjaba' by the Maharaja of Manipur, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1966 and the Kalidas Samman by the Government of Madhya Pradesh. He has left behind a legacy beyond measure, consisting of dances, musical compositions, books authored by him, and his vast collections of manuscripts, books and other texts. He founded and shaped the Bipin Singh gharana of Manipuri dance. In 1972, he founded the Manipuri Nartanalaya in Kolkata with branches in Mumbai and Imphal.



ACTIVITY CORNER

1. Research about the Natyashastra. What does the text talk about? Who wrote it and where was it written? What is the significance of the text? Are there any other historical texts that are used in the different classical dances of India?
2. Research about the costumes used in Manipuri Dance.
3. Research and name some of the major solo dances and ballet dances composed and directed by Guru Bipin Singh.
4. MY FAVOURITE DANCER – Identify one dancer, classical, contemporary or folk, who inspires you. Research about their life, career and achievements. What are their contributions to the field of performing arts? Document your findings in the form of a movie, poster, etc.

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