WEEKEND JOURNAL
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# Dancing for the divine

PRIYANKA CHANDANI

**Carrying forward the illustrious legacy of Kuchipudi dance, ace performer Yamini Reddy gets candid on her experiment with the classical dance form**

Founder of Natya Tarangini, Kuchipudi dancer Yamini Reddy may be the daughter of Kuchipudi doyens Raja and Radha Reddy, but over the years, she has carved a niche for herself. The three-time National Award-winning accomplished dancer is acclaimed not only as a performer, but also as a Guru having honed many young dancers for over two decades. Yamini was recently in Mumbai for a performance at Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre. *An Evening of Storytelling*, the three performances — Hindi versions of *Ramayana*, *Dasheavataram*, and *Rasaabdam* by Oothkadu Venkata Subbaiar in Sanskrit — were helmed by her mother and guru Kaushalya Reddy on the vocal.

*Excerpts from an interview*

**How was it growing up with legendary Kuchipudi dancers as parents?**
For me, they are just parents. Growing up with my parents was the same as any other child. I didn't feel any difference while growing up, the only difference was we used to dance a lot. But when I was a little older, people would tell me about my parents and how famous they are. I loved watching them dance. I wanted to do everything around dance. My mother didn't expect me to take this up as a profession. There was no pressure as such from my parents. When I decided to make Kuchipudi dance my profession there was a lot of demand from other people. They wanted me to be as good as my parents from the day I went on the stage. They never realised that they are what they are because of the accumulated experience of many years and they are legendary because they have been performing for many years. That was daunting in the beginning, but I think about it, I ask myself in this [illegible] is or [illegible] to be doing as the [illegible] that I love doing, I will be in the field.

**You have been teaching Kuchipudi dance for over two decades, what are the basic qualities one needs to have as a teacher?**
The thing with classical music and dance is that it becomes the duty of the guru to pass the knowledge to the disciple. As a teacher, I believe we need to imbibe the entire technique and its values to the student from a very young age. Later, when they grow up and know the art form they can do what they want to do. Until they have mastered the grip over the dance form, it's my duty as a teacher to make sure what they are doing is right. A teacher needs to let the students go once they learn the dance form.

**You have toured across the world as a classical dancer. How has been the journey for you and how have you evolved over the years?**
Dance is very closely connected to me. As we change, our personality changes, and dance changes with us. As we grow and mature through life experiences, our dance matures too. There's more dimension to it. Life has taught me a lot. I am at a stage of life where my dance is constantly evolving. My dance has more depth now than it had in my 20s. I can bring more to the stage. My approach to life changes my approach to dance. Life and dance for me are interconnected.

**Interestingly, classical dance is probably one field that was dominated by men initially, but women started ruling it from the 18th century onwards. What are your views on that?**
Definitely true. For instance, the Kuchipudi dance was only performed by men. It was much later that women were introduced and allowed to dance. And then it became a more female-centric field. But that doesn't mean it is only meant for men or women. Dance is for everyone, the more you dance, the happier you are. Dance is liberating. I believe it is because of the times we are living in where dancing as a profession for men is still not a very convenient option because of job security, so only fewer men are taking dance as their career and there are more women in the field. But we have a whole new crop of men performing Kuchipudi.

**At this stage of your life as a classical dancer, what does dance mean to you?**
Dance has become my Raison d'etre — my reason for existing. I can't imagine life without dance. If I want to walk away from dance I don't know what I will do. I don't know anything other than dancing. If I don't dance or rehearse, I feel emotionally low.

Dance keeps me happy and my emotional and mental well-being intact.

**What do you think about modern fusion and experiments with classical dance forms?**
I believe in experiments in dance. I belong to the new generation of dancers and like to do experiments with my performances. But there's one caution, when you experiment, you should have in-depth knowledge about the subject that you are experimenting with so that you don't make mistakes. I do see experimental performances where dancers have mixed three dance forms, but do they really have a strong grip on those dance forms to be able to blend them well? You only see those two-three movements of the dance forms and the rest all is something else, that's not an experiment. Let's have full knowledge of the subject and then do the experiment. I call it a token experiment. If you do it with knowledge something profound comes out and that's divine.

**They say dance is one of the ways to reach the divine or higher source of life. What has been your relationship with dance like?**
India itself is a very spiritual country. Everything we do is connected to spirituality including music and dance. Music and dance are meant to elevate us to that higher realm where we are able to feel the divine. Dance is a form of meditation. You are meditating through movement. You are getting into the meditative space. Not every performance but sometimes you get so deep inside of yourself that you feel the divine force within.

**What would you advise an aspiring dancer?**
It is a tough field but if you do choose to be in this field then don't be tempted to take any shortcut. Learn the dance form in its completeness and be with it and make it a part of your life then you will enjoy the journey. Don't rush your training.

**In the internet, many are learning dancing by watching online videos. How do you see this change?**
Both physical and online mediums are coexisting now. Classical music and dance are best experienced live but online is a blessing for those who couldn't learn the dance form for many reasons. It makes it easier for them to follow their dream that they couldn't fulfil otherwise. Online mediums have connected people but I suggest whatever they are learning online follow it up with some physical classes.

Read full interview on www.freepressjournal.in/weekend

# Rise of speakeasy bar culture

**Quiet rebellion is in and we take a look at some of these bars which offer that**

MAITHILI CHAKRAVARTHY

Speakeasy Bar was first started in the liquor prohibition era in the US, which lasted between 1920-1933. It was a time when consuming alcohol was disallowed, and this gave rise to speakeasies, as people craved to rebel against the prohibition. These bars sold alcohol illegally, without a license, and speaking softly inside these establishments was encouraged so as not to attract the attention of the police.

## Forbidden fruit

These bars were letting people to do what they couldn't. Different names emerged to describe the speakeasies, such as "blind tiger" and "blind pig". One reason for why they were called such was because there was a drawer in the wall, from which people could get their fix, straight or spiked, and you couldn't see the seller. It was like a blind operation.

Today, long after prohibition, this trend has picked up again. There is no prohibition in India today (except in a few states like Gujarat and Bihar), but people want that ambience that was well-loved from the past. They are on the look-out for quiet, intimate and personalised settings which these kinds of bars provide.

## Pushed by the pandemic

A speakeasy is usually dark and dimly lit, often playing romantic jazz music. Says Ryan Snr, Co Founder, Prive by Akina, a speakeasy in Mumbai, "In the post-pandemic era, in bustling cities like Mumbai, individuals hanker for moments of tranquillity along with havens to enjoy cocktails while engaging in meaningful conversations."

## Listed here are some such watering holes:

**Pass Code Only:** Pass Code Only is famously known for allowing entry only to a select list of patrons who know the password to get in. Says Rakshay Dhariwal, the Founder; "It's been 11 years since we opened, and we took this step since we saw a rise in the speakeasy culture across the world with places like Milk and Honey, PDT, and Apothéke. Hence we thought about starting a similar bar in India, and we've been doing very well. Almost every night we have a full house and we have managed to attract sets of people with similar mindsets which was also part of our objective."

**Cocktails and Dreams:** Started by barman Yangdup Lama in 2012, in a basement, this speakeasy came to be known by word-of-mouth, like most of the others. The founder wanted his speakeasy to be an approachable one and not elitist like the others, and hence designed the place to have simple chairs and benches. Says Vishwanath Das, the bar manager, "We didn't want to be an elitist speakeasy. We kept things simple. Our menu is also reasonably priced."

**Native Bombay, the Negroni Bar:** Housed in a 150-year-old ice factory, going to Native Bombay's Negroni Bar is literally like drinking in a basement or factory setting. Shares Shahrom Oshtori, Managing Partner, "At Native Bombay, we were quite clear while developing the menu that we wanted to introduce and amplify the Negroni culture in Bombay."

Read full article on www.freepressjournal.in/weekend

# B-Town wins independence from cliches

**Over the years, Hindi cinema has rid itself from several redundant cinematic staples. Here's a look at few of them**

DINESH RAHEJA

To coincide with India's 76th Independence day, here's a look at all the cliches from which Hindi cinema has won its hard-fought independence. In a dramatically transformed movie industry, many taboos have been trashed and some cinematic staples have been summarily shown the exit door.

Certain cancelled cliches that leap to the eye now seem obsolete. The doting mother always offering *gajar ka halwa*, the dependent sister who has to be protected by the hyper-masculine brother, the hero always standing first in class. The effete giggling gay, the hero's sidekick, the golden-hearted vamp, the monsoons-propelled lovemaking ... all gone the way of the dodo. But there are some more changes which run deep.

**Independence from...**

## Narrow definition of masculinity

Recent films have expanded the definition of masculinity from the narrow confines it was long constrained within. Unlike the unidimensional, masculine leading man of yore, Ranveer Singh in *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* plays a new-age lover who learns *kathak* dancing in solidarity with his fiance's father, a dance instructor, after the latter is insulted because of his 'strange' passion. Moreover, Singh is shown to be secure enough in his masculinity to perform in public to the estrogen-soaked *Dola re dola* number, unabashedly shaking his *kamar a la* Madhuri Dixit-Nene and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan. And no, the scene is not played for comedy.

The quintessential Hindi film 'hero' was fully equipped to best any situation. However, Ayushman Khurrana's films have him playing leading men who are disadvantaged from the conventional viewpoint — he suffers from erectile dysfunction in *Shubh Mangal Saavdhan*, is complexed about his bald head in *Bala* and is a phone sex worker who replicates a seductive female voice in *Dream Girl*. Their box-office success has vindicated the potential of unconventional male leads.

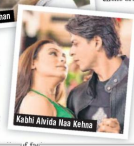
Khurrana also portrayed the love story of regular gay men in *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan*. It's well nigh impossible to imagine Amitabh Bachchan or Dharmendra essaying the typical Khurrana role.

**Independence from...**

## Cliche of the submissive, sexually hesitant leading lady

Long after the heyday of Meena Kumari and Nutan, today's leading ladies are happily shouldering films, but not by emphasising self-sacrifice or suffering. Instead, they are successful sports-women (*Mary Kom*), solo honeymooners (*Queen*), competent corporate women (*Pink*), surrogates with agency (*Mimi*) and independent scientists (*Mission Mangal*). The delicate flower reliant on male chivalry is passe. Alia Bhatt essayed the role of an Indian spy in *Raazi* and a brassy brothel keeper in *Gangubai Kathiawadi*.

For decades the syntax of cinematic romance always stopped short of mentioning sex... Remember the feather motif in *Mughal-e-Azam*? But, n[illegible] mann[illegible] befo[illegible]



(1970s) to *Mujhe Insaaf Chahiye* (1980s), premarital sex has been repeatedly freighted with guilt and grief. In a marked departure, today's leading ladies are shown to initiate premarital sex. Popular heroines like Deepika Padukone (who takes the lead and sleeps with a befuddled Arjun Kapoor in *Finding Fanny*) or Anushka Sharma in *Jab Tak Hai Jaan* (who reveals: "* Alag alag accent ke bandon ke saath sex karna hai*") play sexually active and assertive women.

**Independence from...**

## Straight-laced relationships

The simple triangles of old have given way to cliche-breaking relationship conundrums.

Consider this: In *De De Pyar De*, Ajay Devgn and Tabu play a separated couple who still strike romantic sparks though he has a young girlfriend.

*Rocky Rani...* too posits that a woman can want a relationship based on lust even as Alia pointedly ogles Ranveer's bare chest.

Extramarital relationships once had to crash and burn as in *Silsila* (1981). Today's films offer a more considered view. Karan Johar's *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* dared to show Shah Rukh and Rani Mukerji

GOOD LIFE JOURNAL
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# How to meditate right!

**Mindfulness and being in a state of Zen while diverting all your senses to the now and here is important**

MICKEY MEHTA

Meditation helps you get into a state of extreme Zen. However, there's a certain way it has to be done to get the best results. It starts with concentration on the breath then relaxing your body and then you are in the process of universal awareness, which leads you to abundant and vibrant consciousness.

Everyone understands the passive way of meditating – simply stop doing and start being. It is withdrawing from all the activities that you are doing and coming to a standstill. However, when you come to a standstill your mind ticks. So, allow your mind to settle and take a pause, and enjoy the stillness to begin with. You need to take an interest in being with yourself, in being introduced to yourself because you have not known yourself.

Silence creates profound meanings and becomes important. Many insights come to us as we meditate in silence because our senses calm down and aren't stimulated as they do in many other aspects of our lives. As our senses begin to settle and calm down, they integrate and become one. This oneness of senses is a powerhouse of perception, and it begins to introspect-retrospect and brings about solutions, realisations, insights, foresight, and intuitions. This also takes you to a space of pure nothingness, eventually where it is just you and you only prevail and nobody else, not even your body. You then feel weightless, timeless, and spaceless. The relatability to the body and mind dissolves and the reference to the invisible spirit to the self prevails and truly the experience regales.

The other type of meditation is active. Being in a meditative frame of mind while you are doing daily activities is the meditation of pure awareness, which in true self is being mindful of everything you do. Mindfulness of everything you are doing and getting involved in is an acquired skill. One of the ways to do this is to sit on a train, watch everyone around you while the scenery passes by and be only aware of the passing moment – which is smooth. Let's say you are cooking, studying, typing, reading, or watching a movie – you could be doing it all in a meditative frame of mind, which means being completely involved and adding beauty and grace to the otherwise meaningless tasks or jobs or routine.

Or, for that matter, playing games with family or friends? Going out to the beach, garden, or even cooking together – that could become a meditation as well. Dance becomes meditation as well. Going out at night in an environment of partying, with music and movements one can get meditative. Laughter, jokes, and watching funny content can get you into a meditative frame of mind as well.

Coming to the point where you connect with your parents, grandparents, and spending time with them, can be a form of meditation and magic. Any elderly person is a beautiful meditation for you and recipient only that also becomes healing in nature. Meditation with activity is also healing and wholesome.

Meditation is the simplest state of being, it is getting difficult to be simple. It appears to be the toughest thing to do, but there is nothing to it – just being. The only thing we know is to do, but what we need to do is to drop all the trappings and move towards nothingness or emptiness.

Meditate and you get broad perceptions, all including, all-encompassing.

Creativity Maximized... Get Mickeymized!!!

*(Mickey Mehta is a global leading holistic health guru and life coach; website: www.drmickeymehta.com)*

# UNCOVER YOUR WHY

**Take the first step to achieve your health goals**

Let us face it. It is not easy to do some of the things that keep us healthy. Like exercise, eat right, or sleep on time. It may be easy to get started, but sustaining healthy habits can be tough. The reasons for this are multifold: not-so-healthy options stare at us wherever we look: in grocery stores, advertising commercials, fast-food joints, and office pantries. Societal pressure to have "just one drink", or "this awesome piece of dessert" is constant. And life often feels too busy to make that extra effort to move, cook or rest. It is no wonder that achieving health goals can be challenging.

If you are struggling to lose those extra pounds, resolve a nagging health issue, reverse type 2 diabetes, or simply do the things that make you feel your optimal best, there is something you need to do first, before anything else. You need to uncover your WHY. And reversing type 2 diabetes, losing weight, or feeling better are not a good enough WHY. You must dig deep and find the thing that pulls at your heart strings, that keeps you up at night, that you want more than ANYTHING else. Let me share a client's story with you to illustrate this.

MONIQUE JHINGON

Marie was, when I met her, in her mid-50s. She was dealing with bloating, low energy, poor sleep, allergies, and uncontrollable sugar cravings. The kind that had her raiding the pantry in the middle of the night. All these things bothered her, and she really wanted to get rid of the bloating, the cravings and feel more energetic.

When I dug a bit deeper and asked her why this was important to her, she thought for a bit and then said: "My mother is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. She is in a care home and does not recognize me or my siblings. It has been very difficult to watch her gradual decline and literally lose her while she is still alive. I have 4 children and I will do whatever I can to spare them the same fate. I want to go for hikes with them when I am in my eighties, play with my grandchildren, instead of having them visit what's left of me in an old-age home."

Marie had uncovered her deepest WHY, her motivation for being her healthiest and best self. With my help she got rid of her cravings, optimized her diet, lost the tire around her waist, and improved her energy levels. And she didn't stop there. She used her boundless energy to explore the world, certify as a personal trainer and help other people get fit.

Once you know your deepest motivation and you keep this visible, it becomes a whole lot easier to make the right choices. Your WHY will be different: maybe you want to uplevel your career, start a successful business, rekindle your marriage, be a better parent, give your life new direction and meaning. And for that you need a healthy body, a sharp and focused mind, confidence, and plenty of energy.

To uncover your WHY, start by asking yourself the following questions:

If you had a magic wand and you could change anything you wanted about your current health status, what would you change?

If you didn't do anything about these issues, what do you think would happen down the line?

What, on the other hand, would happen if you got this under control? How would you feel, what would be different about your life, what could you achieve that you currently can't?

The key is to find the motivation that is worthwhile enough for you to be making consistent effort. To identify your deepest dreams and desires and think about how being in optimal health will help you manifest the vision you have for yourself and your life.

I promise you, making healthy choices will become a whole lot easier when you have your WHY figured out.

*(Monique Jhingon, Functional Nutritional Consultant and Author)*

## PAWFECT CORNER

# 5 unusual cats with unique appearances

**KHAO MANEE:** The name means diamond eye, because Khao Manee cats have bright blue, yellow, or odd eyes. They have silky and white coats and are touted to be prized by ancient Siamese royalty. This rare breed was so far, found in Thailand, but when it became threatened with extinction, it was brought out of the country

**DEVON REX:** This cat is known for its extremely playful and affectionate nature. It was first seen in England in 1950 and 60s. Similar to Cornish rex, the cat has large ears, small head and wavy coat. It has very expressive eyes

**CORNISH REX:** This cat has fur resembling Astrakhan lamb's wool. It has slender tail, slim waist, and enormous eyes. Another surprising trait of this cat is that their toes are so long that at times, they are looked as hands

**SAVANNAH:** This cay is a creation of a cross breed between servals, a wild African cat in savannah and female domestic Bengals. They are wild in nature and gigantic

**LEVKOY:** The cat is also known as Ukranian leekoy, has folded ears and no hair. Russia and Ukrain call this cat as experimental breed between Scotish fold and Russian donskoy

– FPJ WEB DESK

## UNLOCK YOUR INTIMACY

**Once slept with my male best friend after drinking too much and hugged him all night. I could feel his erection against my body but I was too sleepy. He has started telling everyone in college that I slept with him. What should I do refute his claims?**
Engaging in an intimate embrace can often lead to further sexual activities, especially when alcohol is involved. It's natural to wonder if there was any underlying attraction between you and your male best friend during that moment. However, it's crucial to prioritise your well-being in this situation. If you did engage in sexual activity and feel uncomfortable about the news circulating, consider addressing the issue with the college community gradually and thoughtfully. Sexual encounters are not uncommon, particularly among young people, but it's essential to establish clear boundaries with your friend and ask him to stop spreading the news to protect your privacy. Being seen as a mere object or a "socio-sexual trophy' is distressing and clearly not how you wish to be perceived. Seek support from trusted individuals who can help you navigate through this challenging time. Openly communicate your emotions, discomfort, and humiliation resulting from the breach of your privacy and modesty. Be honest and assertive in your communication

**Once caught my younger sister having sex with her boyfriend and made a video out of it. I keep seeing this video and masturbating. I feel weird around other women and all that turns me on is that video I took. How do I get over this?**
Your sister is not only your sibling but also a woman with a female body. It's possible that you may have experienced some attraction towards her engaging in sexual acts with someone else. Evolutionary psychology suggests that sexual urges in organisms stem from a primal and instinctive part of their hormonal makeup as they navigate life on this planet. However, it's important to note that animals in the wild don't exhibit special rituals or relationships beyond the binary male and female when it comes to mating. In human society, feeling sexually aroused by one's sibling is considered incestuous and controversial. Such thoughts can be deeply unsettling, as it goes against societal norms and moral standards. If these thoughts persist, they could have a negative impact on your relationship with your sister and family, especially if they were to find out about this. It's crucial to respect others' privacy and not record videos of anyone without their consent. If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable or

Got questions for our expert? Scan the code or fill the form https://bit.ly/3AU6rHm

# Spiritual growth, healthy and karma, and more

## GURU GYAN

**In this Ask Sadhguru column, spiritual leader Sadhguru answers queries regarding life, spirituality, and more**

**How does adultery affect a person's spiritual growth?**
**Sadhguru:** One thing that needs to be understood is that if there is no love in your heart, you are anyway an adulterer. Without love in your heart, if you have given yourself to any aspect of life for convenience or comfort – not necessarily a man or a woman – you are an adulterer. In that sense, I am against adultery. But from the social perspective of what is considered adultery, it is individual choice. For every action that you perform, there is a consequence. Most people are not willing to face the consequences when they come. Anyone who is not willing to joyfully accept the consequences for whatever actions they perform is a fool. A fool goes against himself in so many ways.

If you are turning against yourself because you have given in to an aspect of your body, emotion or something else, it is definitely not okay, because you will bring suffering to yourself. It doesn't make sense to bring suffering to yourself – whatever the reason.

In your life, you must do what makes utmost sense to you. It is not about right or wrong. Are you living your life sensibly or are you a slave of something? That is the question. A senseless life is sin, isn't it? If you live sensibly in a way that the creator will be proud of you, it is fine. If you have just given in to the ways of your body, emotion or mind, and are going against yourself, it is not sensible.

SADHGURU

Is such senselessness wrong? I am not saying it is wrong; it is just very limited and stupid. Anything that is limited and stupid is not worthwhile. So I would say adultery is not worthwhile. It is stupid and senseless to give into something which seems to be everything today but will make you feel like a fool tomorrow. You must live in such a way, with so much sense, that God should be envious of you. If you show such sense, there is no right and wrong with your life. If you do not have such sense, everything is wrong with your life.

**There are some energy-based solutions for health, instruments like Tensor and Frequency Generators, which can generate a negative polarity at the signals and feed it into the body. The question is by doing healing this way, will it not create any karma?**
**Sadhguru:** This may not be good for commerce, but I cannot help saying this: trying to heal with vibrations, bio-energies and such things has to be done in a very careful and calibrated way. Otherwise, I have personally seen these things causing immense damage to people who are promoting and propagating these things themselves. A lot of damage has been caused to their life, and some of them are no more.

But every day, a new instrument comes up. I want you to understand, suppose you had a backache and you happened to sit next to an electric generator. It may so happen that your backache is cured because of the generator's vibrations. But that does not mean you should start selling electric generators as backache-curing machines because you do not know what other impacts it has. Certain vibrations might have had certain effects. But assuming they can cure everything and selling a machine based on this is very juvenile.

Most of these machines have not been through the necessary testing to determine whether they really work and what their side-effects are. Just about anything can be beneficial, if at a certain moment it touches you in a certain way, but this does not mean it is a standard treatment process. I personally would not advise going for these things, unless they are really tested out.

There are two dimensions of energy – physical and non-physical. A machine can only generate a certain level of physical energy at the most. Human beings must use their physical energies only if they are rooted in the non-physical. That is why I always discourage healers and others. Just because you learned how to use your physical energies a little, do not start using it because it has its possibilities, limitations and also serious problems.

Only if you can dip into the non-physical, then you can play with the physical a little bit; otherwise do not attempt that. When I am saying that to human beings, I say that about machines too.

*(Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and bestselling author)*

*(Have queries for Sadhguru? Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/3GKogSX to submit them)*

Woodpeckers can peck a tree up to 20 times per second.

(SOURCE: INSTAGRAM8 FACT)