

## Kelucharan Mohapatra and the Making of Odissi Dance\*

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It has been said that Odissi dance holds a record in terms of emerging as one of the most popular dance forms in India in the shortest possible time. In 1954, when Dhirendra Nath Patnaik and I danced in Delhi, in the first Inter-university Youth Festival, this dance was seen for the first time by people outside Orissa. It was then that Odissi was 'discovered' by the audience of Delhi and hailed by critics like Charles Fabri. The dance of Orissa, which young dancers like us had till then not taken very seriously, associating it mainly with Gotipuas and Maharis, suddenly acquired a new status and became an object of study and research for scholars, performers, and teachers. From that day in 1954, up to the late 1960s, the popularity of Odissi grew by leaps and bounds. In the history of Odissi, I would call this period the phase of its exponential growth.

Over these years, Odissi established itself as a popular 'classical' dance form of national ranking. In Orissa, there was a new awareness and enthusiasm for the dance. Parents were eager that their daughters learn it, so teachers drawn from Gotipua and Rasleela groups were very much in demand. In the 1950s, some of the teachers were attached to theatre companies which were thriving in Orissa. I remember the time when they would cycle from door to door giving dance tuitions in the daytime, and attending to their duties in the theatres where they were employed in the evening. (They were not referred to as gurus in those days.) A healthy competition among these teachers led to the rise of three teachers — whom I like to call the Trinity of Odissi — to pre-eminence, and it is they who eventually played a significant role in the development of the dance. They were, in order of seniority, Pankaj Charan Das, Kelucharan Mohapatra, and the late Debaprasad Das. While teaching the dance, these three teachers were actually defining and developing the form of Odissi. In that process, they drew upon their experience of the rich performing arts of Orissa — the Gotipua and Mahari dances, Rasleela, Chhau, folk dances, and the dance interludes of the urban theatre. In 1957, owing to the initiative of Dhirendra Nath Patnaik, these three teachers, together with several scholars and promoters, got together to create a forum named Jayantika, to pool their knowledge and to standardize the haphazardly growing form and corpus of Odissi dance. Though this forum was shortlived, it did succeed in systematizing the teaching methodology of Odissi to some extent, and established basic standards for its repertoire, dress, and music. After Jayantika, each teacher went on to develop his own style of movement and choreography.

Although Odissi has established itself as a classical dance on the international scene, very little published material is available on the making of the dance, especially on the

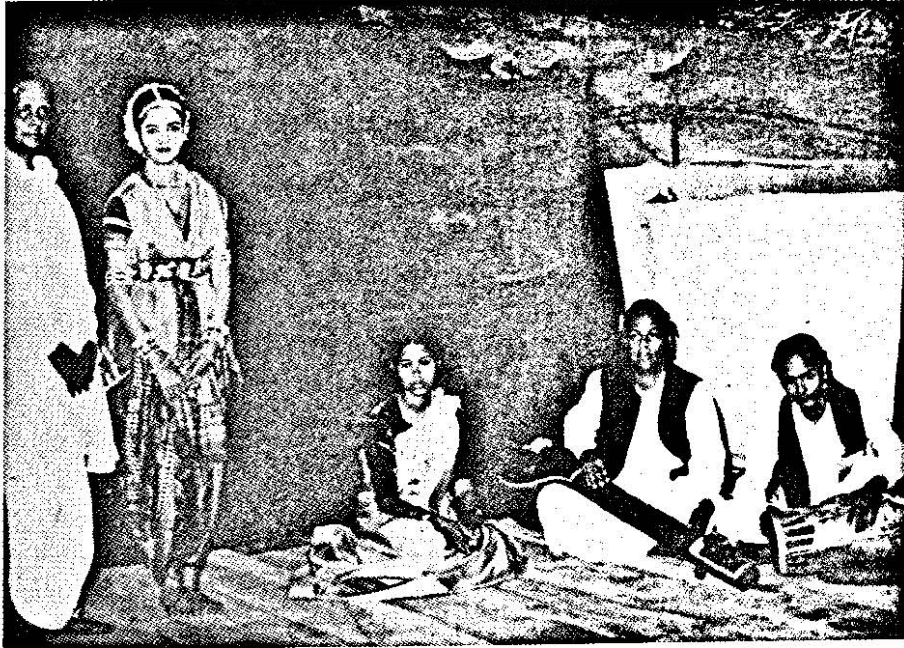
\*This is a review article based on Ileana Citaristi's biography of Kelucharan Mohapatra, *The Making of a Guru: Kelucharan Mohapatra — His Life and Times*. The book was published by Manohar, Delhi, in 2001; pp. 186, Rs 500. — Ed.



Kelucharan Mohapatra in the 1950s.  
*Courtesy: Kelucharan Mohapatra*



Pankaj Charan Das, 1984.  
*Photograph : Avinash Pasricha*



Kalicharan Patnaik and Sanjukta Panigrahi (standing), Balakrishna Das and Kelucharan Mohapatra (seated left and right respectively), late 1950s.  
*Courtesy : Kala Vikash Kendra*

Kelucharan Mohapatra in a performance with Sanjukta Panigrahi in Switzerland, 1984.  
*Courtesy : Ileana Citaristi*





Kelucharan Mohapatra (right) with Bhubaneswar Misra, 1986.  
*Photograph: Ashok Lal*



teachers who built it up. Ileana Citaristi's book on the life and times of Kelucharan Mohapatra has at last filled this lacuna.

Of the Trinity, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra had a meteoric rise, and has become a legend in his lifetime. In relating the story of his emergence as a guru, Ileana Citaristi has also related the story of the evolution of Odissi. The biography has thus become an important piece of documentation.

I first learned dance from Kelucharan Mohapatra in 1955, in which year he choreographed for me the item '*Padabande Gananatha*' in the dance-drama *Sakhi Gopal*. This has now become a standard item of the Odissi repertoire. Later, reacting to doubts expressed by some experts that Odissi was not a self-sufficient dance form, he choreographed eight items for me in preparation for the first full-evening recital of Odissi in Delhi in 1961. I was amazed by his confidence and discipline. He brought perfection to everything he did, be it playing the Pakhawaj or doing choreography, or doing make-up, or tying the sari. I have seen him go through several serious illnesses and personal difficulties, but he has always come out unscathed, and has plunged himself with renewed passion in his work. He has contributed an amazing number of Pallavis and *abhinayas* to the Odissi repertoire. A recipient of all the coveted honours of the nation, including the first Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Odissi (in 1966) and the Padma Vibhushan (2000), he remains the same humble person I first met in 1955. It is fitting that Ileana Citaristi has brought out a book on this extraordinary man and his extraordinary career.

As I read Ileana's book, memories crowded my mind, and I shall take this opportunity to provide some links in the story which I think are important from a larger perspective. Especially so because *The Making of a Guru* is based mainly on information and records from various people associated with Kelucharan Mohapatra. The book has seven chapters, with the first three — 'Childhood', 'Away from Home', and 'Odd Jobs' — dealing with Kelucharan's upbringing in the village of Raghurajpur, his apprenticeship in the Rasleela troupe of Mohansundar Goswami, and the difficult post-Rasleela period, when circumstances forced Kelucharan to take up various odd jobs to support himself.

The atmosphere of Raghurajpur was permeated with Vaishnava devotion and its associated artistic practices. Here, Kelucharan grew up listening to the music of the Khol played by his father, an excellent Khol-player. This obviously laid the foundation for Kelucharan's later mastery over rhythm. It was also in Raghurajpur that he made his first foray in the world of dance: he stealthily learned Gotipua dancing from Balabhadra Sahu, though his father, who regarded the dance as vulgar, eventually put a stop to his instruction. He was then taken to Puri and recruited in the Rasleela troupe of Mohansundar Goswami. Here, too, the dominant theme was Radha-Krishna *bhakti*. Mohansundar Goswami was himself an exceptional artist, who wrote plays, led the accompanying instrumentalists, and was skilled in playing many instruments. From him, Kelucharan got his first systematic training in music, dance, and drama — starting at the age of nine. Kelucharan worked in the troupe for twelve years. Playing the role of the child Balakrishna, and later of the youthful Madanmohan, he got an

excellent grounding in emotional representation. This was later to be the strength of his performance as a dancer, and the speciality of his work as a teacher and choreographer.

However, Kelucharan had been quietly assimilating lessons in abhinaya and movement, by observation, even earlier in his home environment. He often recalls how once, when he was challenged by Mohan Sunder Goswami to interpret a female role, Kelucharan had stunned him by portraying a woman's bashful walk — he remembered how his mother and his aunt carried themselves while coming into the house with pitchers of water at their waists, covering their faces with the *anchal*, leaning to one side, and walking bashfully past the menfolk!

As in the Rasleela troupe, in the theatre companies where Kelucharan later worked, each member had to be versatile. Kelucharan, as also Pankaj Charan Das and Debaprasad Das, were adept at all kinds of jobs — readying the stage, playing various instruments, doing make-up, et cetera — besides enacting a variety of roles. As a student, I remember that they would sometimes recite speeches and act out comic roles from the theatre during our training or rehearsals, just for fun. They had the sense of humour to survive in a profession that gave no assurance of a decent livelihood in that period.

All the three Odissi gurus were skilled Tabla players. I have had the good fortune to learn from all of them at different times, and I still remember Deba Sir, Pankaj Sir, and Kelu Sir playing the Tabla for my lessons and practice. With the standardization of Odissi, the Pakhawaj gradually replaced the Tabla, but while the Tabla was still in use, I remember that it was always played 'full throttle', in what was referred to as the *khula* mode, when it sounded louder and more akin to the Pakhawaj (better known as Mardala in Orissa). My very first Odissi guru, Singhari Shyamasundar Kar, however, played the Pakhawaj with me right from the start. Singhari, as he was better known, was the doyen of Odissi music and dance, and was the teacher of most of the leading gurus and senior Pakhawaj players. (His name has come up several times in Ileana Citaristi's book, with reference to music and *tala* patterns — *ukutas* — for compositions in the theatre.) However, no one could play the Pakhawaj like Kelucharan Mohapatra. His innate mastery over *tala* and *laya* was a distinct asset as a choreographer, and I have always felt that his Pakhawaj accompaniment gave dancers an added advantage in performance.

The third chapter of the book deals with Kelucharan's life in the post-Rasleela period, when he even had to work in a betel leaf nursery (*pana-baraja*) to support himself. In this period he worked with various traditional performing groups, but he was especially fascinated by the modern theatre and its technical wizardry. Eventually, like many artists of the time, he was professionally absorbed in the theatre in Cuttack, which was then the cultural and economic capital of Orissa. There he joined the Orissa Theatre of Kabichandra Kalicharan Patnaik as a stage hand and minor actor.

Here I must refer to Kalicharan Patnaik's unparalleled leadership in the cultural movement in Orissa in our own times. A *vidwan* with an amazing knowledge of traditional dance-drama, music, and literature, he is also regarded as the father of the modern theatre in

Orissa. He staged several highly successful plays including *Bhata* (Rice) — a social drama on drought and the plight of the poor under the zamindars — as well as the classic *Jayadeva*, a full-length musical in which he utilized the Mahari dance. He attracted many talented artists from different parts of Orissa, and many of them, like Kelucharan, later became prominent figures in dance, drama, or music. It was in the Orissa Theatre that Kelucharan came into contact with the legendary actor Samuel Sahu, better known as Babi. Later, after the Orissa Theatre broke up, Babi helped him join the Annapurna B Theatre in Cuttack.

It was only after joining the Annapurna Theatre that Kelucharan blossomed into a dancer, though he had joined the Theatre as a Tabla-player. His evolution as a dance artist is recounted in the fourth chapter of the book ('Love at First Sight'). Kelucharan was in fact a part of the process of evolution of the dance now known as Odissi, and it was the nascent Oriya theatre of the time that provided the platform for this process. In those days, it was the convention to present an attractive dance piece before the main play. The theme of the dance rarely had any relation to the play, whose concerns were mainly contemporary. Occasionally, of course, the story of the play allowed the insertion of a small dance. The preliminary dances were of all kinds: sometimes it was a dance to a Gotipua song; at another, a dramatic piece like Mohini-Bhasmasura. Under the widely felt influence of Uday Shankar, various new themes were taken up by dancers in Orissa. At Annapurna B Theatre, the talents of several people were involved in the process of translating these themes into dance compositions. Pankaj Charan Das was then the chief choreographer of the company. Durlav Chandra Singh was not only the director of plays — he was very knowledgeable in literature and music — but was also an expert Tabla- and Pakhawaj-player. (In fact, Durlav Chandra's contribution to dance has been very significant; it has been highlighted for the first time in this book.) Kelucharan enriched the dances with his mastery over tala. Shrimati Laxmipriya, who came over from the Annapurna A group, emerged as a lead dancer, and even Radha Krushna Bhanja, who is better known as a singer today, was an accomplished dancer at that time. At a later stage, Dayal Sharan, a student of Uday Shankar, worked with the group and brought in new ideas of choreography. (Kelucharan himself feels greatly indebted to him for his guidance and training methods.) The combined talents of all these artists, and their youthful enthusiasm, resulted in more and more dances being created in the Theatre.

A significant result of this cooperation was the choreography of *Dashavatara* (1947), an item which I regard as critical to the development of the Odissi repertoire. Based on the well-known hymn from Jayadeva's *Geetgovindam*, it was presented in a scene of the play *Sadhaba Jhia* written by Adwaita Charan Mohanty. The rhythmic score was by Durlav Chandra, with help from Harihar Rout and Kelucharan. Pankaj Charan Das did the choreography, Lingaraj Nanda and A.C. Mohanty provided general guidance, and Kelucharan and Laxmipriya were the two dancers.

Regarding the use of *mudras* in this dance, I have been told by Pankaj Charan Das that the playwright, Adwaita Charan Mohanty, introduced the book *Dances of India* by Projesh Bannerji to Pankaj Charan Das and others who could not read English. An important publication of the time, the book contained illustrations of *mudras* for the ten incarnations of Vishnu. It was thus that *mudras* came to be used successfully in *Dashavatara*, the first mature choreography in Odissi, and equally important from the melodic and tala point of



view. *Dashavatara* remains a popular item even today, with hardly any change in the original choreography. A slightly different version of how the dance was created is narrated by the author of the present book, but I suppose that when we are depending on interviews about an event which took place almost fifty years ago, there would inevitably be variations in the story.

It has to be pointed out here that during this period the practice of dance was thriving outside the theatre too. One important teacher was Banabehari Maity who gave dance lessons to several girls (including me), and who used to stage dance-dramas based on the Bhasmasura story and Radha-Krishna lore. He himself used to dance as Nataraja — a stunning presence still vivid in my memory. A tall and handsome man, he used to perform in a haze of incense smoke, creating a celestial atmosphere on stage. (The author has mentioned that he taught the Nataraja dance to Kelucharan.) Ajit Das was a very active teacher, and he taught several girls including Minati Das (now Mishra). Singhari Shyamasundar Kar was another important teacher directly connected with the development of Odissi. Durlav Babu told me that he used to get the *ukutas* for his dance compositions from Singhari. He even told me that he got the *Ta-Kadataka-Dhi* series of bols, which now identifies Batunritya, from Singhari long after I had danced to these bols as the latter's pupil. After me, Singhari taught many other girls at the Utkal Sangeet Samaj in Cuttack.

Thus people like Singhari or Maity, who were themselves not connected with theatre, contributed a great deal to the growth of dance and music in the theatre. Under them, a new line of dancers was already being groomed outside the theatre in the 1940s. I remember taking part in an Odissi dance competition in the All Orissa Music Festival, which used to be organized every year by the Utkal Sahitya Samaj at Ramachandra Bhavan, Cuttack. By the late 1940s there was already strong competition between the Puri girls and the Cuttack girls — the two centres of dance at that time. By the early 1950s we used to distinguish Puri girls from Cuttack girls by their hairstyle — the *juda* (bun) with a *tahia* of fresh *juin* (jasmine) flowers was a standard feature of Puri coiffure. We Cuttack girls used to have *benis* (plaits), not judas, decorated with fresh flowers. In course of time, when dance items were standardized, even the dress and hairstyle were standardized — with the juda being accepted by all. (However, in recent years, some dancers come on stage with both juda and beni, like Kuchipudi dancers.)

It is also important to recognize in this context the contributions of different institutions in Orissa which provided facilities for the study of music and dance. The Utkal Sangeet Samaj, which was established as early as in 1933, was the first of these, and initially imparted training in music, and later in dance. The National Music Association and Kala Vikash Kendra came up in the 1950s. The three institutions provided a living to music and dance teachers including Singhari, Pankaj Charan, Kelucharan, Debaprasad, and other contemporaries like Dayanidhi Das (who also taught Kathak). These institutions also enlivened the dance scene by organizing performances — mainly for annual functions or competitions. There was an abundance of dance-dramas — antecedents to the fine

productions seen later in the Kumar Utsab.

The involvement of the Oriya intelligentsia with dance had an impact on the teachers, whose own formal education was limited. In the heyday of popular theatre, Kalicharan Patnaik — dramatist, lyricist, and musician — Shyama Sundar Das, popularly known as 'Kishore Kabi', and Advaita Ballav Mohanty provided intellectual input in the growth of Odissi dance. In a later period, scholars like Mayadhar Mansinha, Pandit Banambar Acharya, Suren Mohanty, and Dharendra Nath Patnaik performed the same service. And then there were disciples who were highly educated — Minati, Kumkum, Sonal, and myself. All this led to a sophistication in compositions by the gurus, which was critical to the evolution of Odissi and to the development of Kelucharan Mohapatra as a choreographer.

In this context, one must also note that many established dancers in other styles, such as Indrani Rahman and Sonal Mansingh, not only took up Odissi dance but also propagated it nationally and internationally. In my opinion, this has been one major reason for the present wide popularity of Odissi. Further, the movements of the principal gurus outside Orissa expanded the scope of the dance and exposed the gurus to the dance world beyond Orissa. This, too, has been an important factor in the development of Odissi.

The first guru to go out of Orissa was Debaprasad Das — as early as 1957. Debaprasad was to teach Indrani Rahman, who had come with her little daughter Sukanya to the dance and music festival in Puri earlier that year, and wanted to learn Odissi. I was then studying in Lucknow, and at first Indrani had requested me to come to Delhi to teach her some items of the dance. I was unable to go, so upon Indrani Rahman's request, the Orissa Nritya Natyakala Parishad (now Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi) arranged for Debaprasad Das to teach her. (This is recorded in the Parishad's report of that year.) Deba Sir went to Delhi and taught Indrani several items including one specially written and composed by Kalibabu for me in a rather perky combination of talas — '*Sajani Kahinki*' — which became an instant hit. Indrani took Odissi outside India and boosted our morale in a big way. The next teacher to venture out was Pankaj Charan Das who taught Yamini Krishnamoorthy (again in Delhi) some items of Odissi. The last guru of the Trinity to go out of Orissa was Kelucharan Mohapatra, who established bases for himself in the metropolises of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. The author has covered this in her sixth chapter — '*Dancing Through his Disciples*'.

She has documented well in this chapter the artistic growth of Kelucharan's disciples like Sanjukta Panigrahi and Kumkum Das, for whom he composed many of his now famous dances, and Sonal Mansingh, seeing whose performance in Madras, Rukmini Devi finally accepted Odissi as a classical dance. From my personal experience I can say that not only did Kelucharan take extreme care in his teaching, he gave a lot of thought and time to his choreographies, many of which have, over the years, come to be known as his patent creations, coveted by most dancers.

In the fifth chapter, '*Odissi Dance: An Obsession for Life*', the author gives an account of how Kelucharan established himself as a dance teacher. In this context, she has mentioned in passing the cultural efflorescence in Orissa which was inaugurated by the Kumar Utsab

Samiti in 1952 (footnote, p. 89). Kelucharan's association with the Kumar Utsab began in 1955. As a person associated with it since its inception, I may add here that the Utsab gave Kelucharan very valuable exposure to the theatrical ideas of Suren Mohanty, who used to come out with a wonderful new production every year at the festival. His *Konarak Jagaran*, based on the poetry of Mayadhar Mansinha, stunned the audience in 1956. Mansinha had imagined that the statues of Konarak come alive on full moon nights. The production has stood the test of time and continues to be performed with minor variations under different titles. Suren Mohanty's *Krishna Gatha* incorporated dances based on many popular compositions of Oriya poets which later became very popular as individual abhinaya pieces. Mohanty gave me the lyric for *Saranagati* ('*Dine na dakibu*') by Banamali, set to music by Balakrishna Das, which is still popular in Odissi dance today. Bhubaneswar Misra and Balakrishna Das were in charge of music for all Kumar Utsab productions, and later P.V. Krishnamoorthy also contributed in this regard after joining All India Radio in 1956 (not 1948 as mentioned in the book).

Kelucharan joined the Kala Vikash Kendra in 1953 as a teacher and had a long association with the institution. During this period, he composed many dance-dramas. He often used to perform the popular folk item *Kelakeluni*. He came into contact with several stalwarts in music while working at the Kendra, but his most fruitful association was with Bhubaneswar Misra, whose musical compositions have become completely identified with Odissi dance.

'Dancing Through his Disciples', the sixth chapter of the book, covers Kelucharan's career from the early 1960s to the late 1970s — the peak period in his work as a choreographer, performer, and teacher. Further, the chapter gives space to Kelucharan's personal biography, describing his struggle to build a house for himself on a piece of marshy land in Cuttack, and the arrival of his son Ratikanta.

The first national recognition came to Kelucharan during this period — the Award from Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1966. Increasingly, he made presentations in all-India arts forums. Teaming up with Bhubaneswar Misra, he created most of his well-known Pallavis (in ragas Shankarabharana, Saveri, Khamaj, Bilahari, etc.). This process, as well as Kelucharan's association with his prize students within Orissa (Sanjukta Panigrahi and Kumkum Mohanty) and outside the State (Sonal Mansingh, Rani Karnaa, Madhavi Mudgal, etc.) have been dealt with in detail. His grooming of some of the Odissi gurus of the next generation (like Ramani Ranjan Jena, Hare Krushna Behera, etc.) is recorded in the chapter. Several important decisions which Kelucharan took at that time — for instance, resigning his government job at the Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, or starting summer courses which attracted students from outside Orissa — were critical to his development as a guru. Epithets like 'quick-formula guru' or 'jet set guru' did not deter him. Taking up teaching in Delhi and Bombay strengthened his position as a teacher of national stature. This was the phase, as the author puts it, when his "dreams came true" — he won both material security and emotional security, and nationwide recognition boosted his confidence. In this chapter, the author has done well to speak of Kelu Sir's incipient interest in technical equipment for audio and video

recording, and for editing recordings, in which he has acquired a remarkable proficiency. An interesting revelation in the chapter is that his birthday was fixed arbitrarily as 1 August 1926 when his passport had to be made for his first trip abroad!

The last chapter of the book, 'Return to the Stage', is really an extension of the previous chapter and describes Kelucharan's classes in metropolitan cities, his work in Shyamanand Jalan's production of *Shakuntala*, and the formation of his own institution, Srjan, in Bhubaneswar. His emergence as a major performer at a relatively late stage in life, and his ability to transcend his physical limitations in order to identify with the character he portrays, have evoked ecstatic wonder in audiences and among critics (p. 152). He has excelled in devotional themes, his portrayal of Kaibata both in the *Kaibata Prasanga* from Tulsidas's Ramayana and in Upendra Bhanja's *Bitalku Alingana* being well known. His age-defying performances have led to his being compared with Nijinsky by Western dance critics. The author has observed in this context that Kelucharan has sometimes departed from the manner of Odissi, adopting the Chhau style while depicting non-human characters like Jatayu. While this observation is true enough, one has also to bear in mind that quite generally, in course of extended thematic abhinaya, it is not possible to adhere to a given style — some degree of artistic freedom is permissible in the interest of building on the theme. I would like to add, though, that some elements of Chhau are indeed clearly evident in recent compositions by Kelucharan.

This last chapter mentions all of Kelucharan's notable students and contains an anecdotal account of his relationship with them, as well as with his students' students and his own family. I do not think this throws any light on Kelucharan's work as a guru, but it does give us an insight into his human nature. The author sums up Kelucharan's distinctiveness as a teacher well when she says: "Kelucharan's sensibility as a teacher is a perpetual source of wonder for his students; he has an inborn sense of discrimination which ensures that nothing escapes his attention." (p. 160)

The author has tried to bring out Kelucharan's unique relationship with his wife, Shrimati Laxmipriya, by describing several incidents. All of us who have had a place in his family have noticed the joyful, childlike attitude the couple have towards each other. I see the same warmth between them that I saw some forty years ago. Both of them, individually and together, are two of the most caring people I have known. The humility of Kelu Sir; his brave defiance of impediments, physical or emotional; and his confidence in himself have all helped to make him one of the greatest ever gurus in the field of Indian dance.

After the establishment of Srjan, his son Ratikanta has been increasingly involved in its management; his daughter-in-law Sujata has become a fine performer. An interesting fact is that Charu, his only daughter (who is a grandmother now!), never took up dance.

Several incidents described in the book reveal Kelucharan's sensitive nature which prompted him to leave, first, Mohansundar Goswami's Rasleela troupe, then the Orissa Theatre, and, finally, the Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar. Such incidents have never proved a setback to him. He has always taken life positively and gone forward along

his chosen path. An important aspect of Kelucharan's personality is his ability to concentrate on the task on hand. In spite of his penury during his early years as a dance teacher, and severe illnesses (tuberculosis and heart disease, leading to a bypass surgery), he has never lost his zest for dance. Irrespective of comfort or convenience, he has devoted all his time to his beloved profession.

However, if one is to assess the contribution of Guru Kelucharan to Odissi dance, one has also to take into account the role of other artists in his development. What really puts Kelucharan apart from all his contemporaries is his ability to imbibe, synthesize and harmonize ideas from various sources. As I have mentioned earlier, his association with Pandit Bhubaneswar Misra was both timely and lucky. As Kelucharan's work with Bhubaneswar Babu progressed, the Pallavis became more and more musically complex and ornate, and in the process some masterpieces were created. Sanjukta Panigrahi too played a crucial role in a later phase by bringing precision to Kelucharan's choreography. In her guru's own words, "I cannot create another Sanjukta" (p. 142). Thus, while the story of Odissi is the story of its gurus, it is also that of students through whom the dance expressed itself.

A lacuna in Ileana Citaristi's book is that it does not devote sufficient space to the three people who were most closely connected with Kelucharan Mohapatra's career in dance: Pankaj Charan Das, Bhubaneswar Misra, and Sanjukta Panigrahi. Unfortunately, the latter two are no longer around, and we are thus deprived of their thoughts on the subject. But it is not clear why the author has not consulted Pankaj Charan Das, who taught dance to both Kelucharan and his wife Laxmipriya, and whom both regard as their guru. I know from personal experience that both Kelucharan and Laxmipriya enjoy the special affection of Pankaj Charan Das till this day. Conversely, Kelucharan's regard for his old guru is well known: Kelucharan does not go onstage until he is blessed by Pankaj Charan Das if the latter happens to be in the audience. I vividly remember the occasion when Pankaj Charan Das, acting on a sudden impulse, removed the garland from the idol of Jagannatha (not Krishna, as mentioned on p. 181) after a performance by his prize *shishya* Kelu (as he calls him), and put it around his neck.

There are also a number of factual errors, and I take this occasion to point out some of those for the record. On page 65, the music for the lyric '*Nahi ke karidela*' is attributed to Singhari Shyamasundar Kar while it is actually by the lyricist himself, 'Kishore Kabi' Shyama Sundar Das; in that period, the lyricists themselves set their lyrics to music. On page 90, it is mentioned that Banabehari Maity used to teach a "dance form known as Bangala Nacha". As one of Maity's students I can say that he did not teach any such dance; he was trained in Bharatanatyam and Kathak, and staged several dance-dramas in Cuttack with his students. The group photograph on page 102 is stated to be one of participants in the "All-India Dance Seminar in Delhi, 1958", while it is actually a photograph of participants in the dance-drama *Sakhi Gopal*, performed in the industrial fair in Delhi in 1955. (The picture shows Kalicharan Patnaik, Kelucharan, Balakrishna Das, and myself together with other



dancers from Cuttack and Puri.) Nayan Kishor Mohanty is twice referred to as Narayan Kishor Mohanty (pp. 92–3). Bhikari Bala did not join the Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya when it was “newly established”, as mentioned on page 112, but only in the late 1970s.

Translations (and transliterations) of Oriya and Hindi phrases in the book are not too apt, and some are indeed misleading. Besides, indifferent editing and proof-reading have resulted in a number of errors which tend to irritate the reader — “packwaj” for Pakhawaj (p. 117), “Arundati” for Arundhati (p. 145), “mokhia” for *moksha* (p. 185), etc. In some places, lack of editorial attention creates greater problems, as when Harihar Khuntia changes into Harihar Panda (p. 141). Similarly, a certain Banamali Sahu on page 56 becomes Balabhadra Sahu a page after.

In a book based mainly on “oral testimony” (p. 15), one wishes that those who contributed significantly, or lent rare photographs or cuttings from the press, had been suitably acknowledged. A list of honours bestowed on Kelucharan, with dates, would also have been appropriate; the author has only mentioned the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Padma Vibhushan.

However, these lacunae do not detract from the usefulness of the book as a record of the work of Kelucharan Mohapatra and the story of Odissi dance. Ileana Citaristi must be complimented for gathering information from various sources and putting the text (and the many rare photographs) together, aided by her personal experience as a pupil of many years. I am sure that this very timely book on an architect of Indian dance of our own times will benefit dancers, connoisseurs, and the public at large.