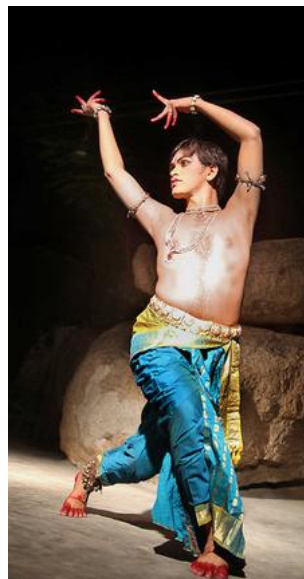


### Holding his own

RANEE KUMAR



Various avatars Dance performances by Halim khan.



**Profile Halim Khan is pursuing his passion for Kuchipudi against all odds. RANEE KUMAR**

He's a cut above the rest. In a domain more or less dominated by women, it is difficult for a male to pursue a classical Indian dance form with the view to making a profession out of it. Here is a youngster who is on the threshold of turning his passion into his profession. Braving many odds Halim Khan found his love in Kuchipudi dance. The management qualification which fetched him a comfortable salary with a business house faded into oblivion. He had to be a dancer—the decision was made long ago but implemented with certainty now.

Ask Halim how the going was? “Real tough. It's not in the least easy; there is no healthy equation,” he says vehemently. ‘Why?’ Is the next question.

“When a boy wants to take it up as a career, it is but natural that family and friends are bound to oppose the move. In my case, learning (dance) itself was an exercise in secrecy. Like all obedient sons I ventured to seek my parents' permission to pursue my interest. That was in Ongole. The answer was a ‘no’. I couldn't give up. So, I worked a way out. I had my typewriting and computer courses to attend. I would take half-an-hour off each of them and run to learn Kuchipudi dance for an hour from K.V. Subramaniam, a student of Vempati Chinna Satyam.” When asked about what kindled the fire? He says, “It sounds very frivolous, but K. Vishwanath's movies inspired me to learn dance. When I came here, I wanted to do a course in dance in the distance studies mode but there was nothing like that here. I strived to improve upon what I had learnt and began my journey into the world of Kuchipudi dance. Every move was experimental and in the process, a learning experience. I gave up my job because I wanted a single-minded pursuit. Then for a living I freelanced for companies. I am the only son of my parents but that neither deterred me nor did my parents relent. In fact they were in the dark till 2008 when I performed a melange of dances with ballet and Kuchipudi.

It turned out to be a mega hit. It was at this juncture that a chance TV interview asked for my parents and I had to confess my secret to them. It didn't make them any happier and I know that they have to live with the taboo," says Halim matter-of-factly.

He was associated with ABK Prasad's 'Telugu Prashasti' for the most part. It was only the other day that Halim was invited to give a performance at La Makaan.

"So far I've been doing female roles. But I wanted to break the pattern for the fear of being typecast. I took two other dancers as props to get the stage going while I change costume. I donned a female dance dress in the first half with a tillana in Kuntalavarali. Next I took the male lead and did pieces like *Bho Shambo* (Revathi) winding it up with a tillana in Hamsanandi. The response from the audience was spontaneous. It was an experiment for me and it clicked. I am not into home tutoring. As of now, I am concentrating on my own repertoire. And I choreograph for many other dance productions which actually brings in the cash. It's not much but I am content," he says with confidence and conviction.

The fact that there are still such youngsters who do not allow themselves to be swept away by the West winds comes with a sigh of relief. These passionate artists are our beacons of hope who are going to carry the mantle of our heritage way ahead into the future.