



SHARMILA BISWAS

Akademi Award: Odissi

Born on 19 November 1962 in Calcutta, Shrimati Sharmila Biswas was initiated into dance at the Children's Little Theatre in the city. Later, she received her training in Odissi dance under Kelucharan Mohapatra.

Emerging as an exponent of Odissi dance in the 1980s, Shrimati Sharmila Biswas has won renown both as a performer and choreographer. She has performed solo at dance festivals organized by Sangeet Natak Akademi such as Nritya Pratibha (1986), Swarna Samaroh (1997), Nritya Sangam (2006), and Rabindra Pranati (2011), and at the Khajuraho Festival (1995) organized by the Government of Madhya Pradesh. Besides, she has played lead roles in the choreographies of her guru Kelucharan Mohapatra such as *Bhanusingher Padabali*, *Kurukshetra*, and *Chandashoka*, travelling extensively to perform in India, the erstwhile Soviet Union, and Germany during the 1980s and '90s. At that time, she commenced studies in the performance traditions of Orissa which lie at the roots of Odissi dance. She studied the Mrudanga tradition under Dhanurdhar Reddy, Batakrushna Behera, and Prahlad Baral; the Mahari dance under Shashimoni Mahari and Parashmoni Mahari — the last two devadasis of the Jagannath temple of Puri; and the folk dances of Orissa from Murari Mohan Mishra, Shashankashekhar Dubey, and Rajan Sahu.

In later years Shrimati Sharmila Biswas has fruitfully incorporated elements from her research in her choreographic works, which include *Dhulikhel*, *Amit Shrishti*, *Murchhana*, *Chhandamalika*, *Sampoorna*, *Sutra*, *Utsav*, *Sri Radha Rasa Vilasa*, *Touching Death*, *The Dance We Dance*, and *Samudra*. These have been presented at the Nishagandhi Festival, Thiruvananthapuram (1995, 2012); the Kalidas Festival, Nagpur (1997, 2003); the Konark Festival (2001, 2003, 2011); the Uday Shankar Samaroh, Kolkata (2002); the Ananya Festival, Delhi (2004, 2010); the Elephanta Festival (2005); the International Odissi Festival, Bhubaneshwar (2006); the Geet Govinda Festival, Delhi (2010); and the Khajuraho Festival (2012). She has also organized festivals such as 'Living with Odissi' in Kolkata (2008); 'Poorvadhara' in Delhi and Kolkata (2009); and The Calcutta International Performing Art Festival (2012). She has authored a book on Odissi dance, titled *Knowing Odissi* (2008). She trains young Odissi dancers at her institution, the Odissi Vision and Movement Centre, established in Kolkata in 1994.

Shrimati Sharmila Biswas receives the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for her contribution to Odissi dance.