



YOG SUNDER DESAI

Akademi Award: Creative and Experimental Dance

Born in 1921 in Limbdi, Gujarat, Shri Yog Sunder Desai was initiated in dance by the Kathakali master Kunchu Nair. While in Kerala, he also learnt Krishnanattam performance under the guidance of Krishna Kartav, and Mohiniattam as a pupil of Kochumar Amma. His teachers in Manipuri dance and Kathak were Guru H. Atomba Singh and Pandit Bhure Lal. Shri Desai also learned painting under Nandalal Bose.

Shri Yog Sunder Desai ranks among the pioneers who ventured into dance professionally in the pre-Independence era. He started his career in 1945 dancing the lead role of Raja Bhimadeva in *Jai Somnath* produced by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan in Bombay, with Nayana Jhaveri as Choula Devi. He also took part in dance productions by eminent dancers of that period including Ram Gopal and Sadhana Bose. Subsequently, Shri Desai focused on the regional dance forms of India and travelled around the world presenting them at prestigious dance festivals. The India Revival Group, which he founded in Delhi, won wide acclaim for its dance-dramas in the early 1950s. Shri Yog Sunder's productions include *Rhythms of India*, *Festivals of India*, *Lore of Ind*, *Kirat Arjuna*, *Shree Ram Katha*, *Krishna Leela*, *Mahabharata*, *Call of the Country*, *Voice from Beyond*, *Lakshmi Bai*, *Chandalika*, *Shyama*, and *The Man Divine*. Shri Desai produced the popular *Ramlila* for Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra in 1966.

He has been awarded the Triveni Samman by Triveni, Baroda, in 1995 and an Achievement Award by the Delhi Gujarati Samaj in 2000.

Shri Yog Sunder Desai receives the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his contribution to creative and experimental dance.