



**Celebrating  
the divine in  
exalted bodies**



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Mireille-Josephine Guezennec is not only a Professor of Western Philosophy, and a scholar interested in Philosophy of Vedic Astrology, the subject on which she is writing a book, but also a versatile photographer. She has won Prix Kodak Grand Reportage for her photographs. Though she lives in France, her heart is in India. She has also studied classical Bharata Natyam and Kathak dance forms to understand the inner dynamics of Indian dance forms and visited the centres of classical dances, including Kuchipudi village in Andhra Pradesh. Her love for Indian classical dance is of abiding interest and transparent. In her photographs of Indian classical dance forms and dancers, she has succeeded in capturing the rhythm of Indian dance and its expressive quality. Those images linger long in one's inner eye after one has feasted one's eyes on them.

**Dr. Sunil Kothari,**  
Dance Critic, The Times of India

Sangheta Das - Odissi; Makuntala - Bharatnatyam; Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra - Odissi; Armelle-(Amrita) - Bharatnatyam; Madhavi Mudgal - Odissi; Raja And Radha Reddy - Kuchipudi; Javeri's Sisters - Manipuri; Dr. Suche - Chapekar - Bharatnatyam; Sonal Mansingh - Odissi; Shashikala - Kuchipudi; Kalamandalam Kshemavati - Mohini Attam; Shiva Nataraja - Temple Of Chidambaram; Pratibah Prahlad - Bharatnatyam; Shovana - Narayan - Kathak; Kumkum Dhar - Kathak; Charu And Singhegit Singh - Manipuri; Durga Arya - Kathak; Véronique Az - (sculpture) - Celes - Of Khajuraho; Guru Ganga Dhar Pradhan - Odissi; Jayalakshmi - Bharat Natyam; Malavika - Bharat Maharaj - Kathak; Bharat Mohini Attam; Vijayalakshmi - Mohini Attam; Prerana - Shrimali - Kathak - Bharat Natyam; Chitra - Bharat Natyam; Priyadarshini - Bharat Natyam; Manipuri - Temple Of Khajuraho; Jaya Rama & Yashoda - Kuchipudi

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**The years 2002 and 2003 shall see  
'Celebrating the divine in exalted  
bodies' travel to the following  
Alliance Françaises**

- Alliance Française d'Ahmedabad
- Alliance Française de Bangalore
- Alliance Française de Bhopal
- Alliance Française "Le Corbusier" de Chandigarh
- Alliance Française de Chennai
- Alliance Française de Kolkata
- Alliance Française de New Delhi
- Alliance Française de Goa
- Alliance Française de Hyderabad
- Alliance Française de Mumbai
- Alliance Française de Pondichery
- Alliance Française de Pune
- Alliance Française de Trivandrum



## Celebrating the divine in exalted bodies

***“Thus the beauty of bodies is the result of sharing a wisdom that comes from the gods” - Plotinus “Treatise on Beauty” Enneads, Book 6.***

Dance has existed in India from time immemorial and though this sublime art has suffered many an eclipse or even declined from time to time due to changing historical circumstances, it has not been possible to stifle its spirit totally. Dance really came into its own in the twentieth century to become a complete art in which the heart and the mind merged perfectly in the crucible of the human body.

That is why I experienced from the very outset a deep affinity with the eastern world, which gives the body the importance that is its due through the practice of *yoga*, *tantra* and classical dance. Dance started in India as a sacred rite in which the body is not only the foundation of future knowledge, but it becomes through the masterly control of breath the ‘winged team’ of well-regulated respiration. This controlled breathing awakens the timeless and supreme energy of Shiva-Shakti – the principle and the epitome of creative and polarised cosmic energy which sows the seeds of prospective divinity in man.

Being a philosopher by training but also extremely sensitive to poetry, I was initially drawn to India by words and ideas...My development was influenced not so much by ideas as by the certainty of having experienced a communion between the body and the mind – it was for me a complete revelation. This visual drama showed me that a competent

person could certify the conditions and the ways that allow us to reveal our veiled transcendence that is an intrinsic part of divinity.

Thus, dance played a revelatory role in the early stages.

From my base in Madras, the hub of dance, I travelled in all directions to meet artists and choreographers, first in the nearby areas, then further away and finally in the whole of India...

Using the image as an echo, I first started a silent dialogue with choreographers and the greatest dancers, then I set up meetings with artists from all over India where the conversation consisted of questions based on my minute observations. Gradually, during these meetings and travels over the years, when they gave me their precious time, I had the feeling that they were sharing their valuable possessions with me. This was far more important to me than their brilliant reflections captured in silvery images; it was something intangible but within reach – the spark of their sublime life.

These amazing and sacred moments represented a transient offering of oneself. Captivated by such unusual beauty, I wanted to transpose this intense and ephemeral presence in its utmost perfection “in the blink of an eye”...It could be described as a symphony built around a virtual column, the geometrical touchstone of a sculptural mirage.

What a majestic pose! Assumed so nonchalantly, meditative at times, splendid, throbbing, condensed in its own stature.

A hint of a flight. A momentary assumption. A pause in the supreme breath, in its creative pride...

While Chidambaram is the greatest centre of dance and Lord Shiva dances in our hearts, dance addresses itself to persons having good taste and a good heart, called “sahridayas” in Sanskrit. These persons in high mental condition are attentive and knowledgeable spectators, inclined by a temperament inherited from their past lives to respond to its exquisite grace. This is so because one of the keystones of Indian aesthetics is ‘*rasa*’, an infinitely delectable flavour.

And on the mental plane, where artistic emotion reaches its highest point, *rasa* is nothing but that which is savoured in private in this figurative and spiritual dialogue that gives rise to a pleasurable emotion, an equal enchantment of all the senses and the forbearing rapture of the soul. This absolute and exquisite equanimity is but another form of ecstasy.

May these photographs share this ecstasy, suggest, and even arouse the intense and intimate rapture that holds the proud body together in the secret kingdom of the heart.

May these translucent pictures touched by the supreme grace of the artist with ‘glorified limbs’ stimulate us to lose ourselves in deep admiration.

May our shared joys, at the height of spiritual dignity, rise to the very limits of the foreseen mystery.

**Mireille-Josephine Guézennec**

## Celebrer le divin dans les corps magnifiés

**« Ainsi la beauté des corps dérive de sa participation à une raison venue des dieux »**  
*Plotin* « **Traité du beau** » **Ennéades -Livre 6.**

De temps immémorial, la danse a existé en Inde et si cet art éminent a connu des éclipses, voire des déclin, en raison des vicissitudes liées à l'histoire du pays, rien n'a jamais pu étouffer le ferment de cet art qui renaît véritablement au 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle : un art intégral où s'accomplit à la perfection, dans le creuset du corps, l'alliance vertueuse du cœur et de l'esprit.

C'est donc d'emblée que je me suis sentie en profonde affinité avec un monde oriental qui octroyait au corps toutes ses lettres de noblesse et ce, au divers titre du yoga, de la philosophie des Tantras et de la pratique de la danse classique : une danse initialement sacrée, où le corps est non seulement le point d'ancrage d'une promesse élue de sagesse mais devient, par la maîtrise du souffle magistral, cet « attelage ailé » d'une respiration bien conduite, qui attise l'énergie séculaire et souveraine de Shiva-Shakti : principes et archétypes de la puissance cosmique créatrice et polarisée qui fonde en l'homme l'horizon possible du divin.

Philosophe de formation et, plus que tout, sensible à la poésie c'est d'abord conduite par les mots et par les idées que je venais à l'Inde ...Mais, bientôt, la certitude vécue d'une souveraine communion entre le corps et l'esprit fut l'œuvre d'une révélation: la

mise en scène visuelle d'une présence charnelle révélait toute l'immanence du divin...

Aussi, la danse a-t-elle initialement joué un rôle de révélateur.

Madras fut ma destination d'élection...C'est à partir de ce lieu d'ancrage, au moyeu de la danse, que je rayonnais de plus en plus, pour aller à la rencontre des artistes et des chorégraphes.

Captivée par tant de beauté singulière, avec l'image pour écho, je voulais donc tenter de transposer « **en un clin d'œil** » l'éphémère et si fugitive présence en sa perfection accomplie. D'abord j'instaurais ce silencieux dialogue avec les danseurs: bien au-delà des reflets virtuoses, en captivité dans l'image argentique, c'était l'étincelle incorporelle de leur vie sublime à portée du regard.

Que mon regard à leur égard soit ma gratitude infinie ...

...Instants inouïs et sacrés d'offrande éphémère de soi-même.

Coïncidence élue autour d'une colonne en puissance, pierre de touche géométrique d'un mirage statuaire.

Quelle pose magistrale ! Comme prise à la légère, un instant recueillie, somptueuse, palpitante. Condensée en sa propre stature...

Le divin incarné dans le corps magnifié.

Chaque fois, l'enchantement lyrique se produisait, telle une syncope rythmique dans le fondu enchaîné d'une

prise photographique... Prise de vue éminemment singulière qui se dérobe, qui se capture...

Point de rencontre inouï où le silence respiré confond l'inspir photographe.

Esquisse de l'esquive. Instant d'assomption.

Point d'orgue du souffle souverain, en son orgueil créateur...

Le temple de Chidambaram est le Centre par excellence où le Seigneur Shiva accomplissant sa danse exulte en notre cœur (« Chit » : âme, « ambaram » : cieux). La danse s'adresse à des hommes sensibles, aux « sahridayas », à ces êtres de haute condition psychique, spectateurs attentifs également accomplis, enclins, par les dispositions héritées de leurs vies passées, à se laisser toucher par l'exquise grâce du « rasa », cette saveur infiniment délectable, ce ravissement égalé de tous les sens : l'enchantement longanime de l'âme...

Absolute et exquise équanimité qui n'est autre qu'une forme de l'extase.

Puissent alors ces photos révélées, en partage, suggérer, voire aviver, cet intense et intime ravissement que tisse le corps altier dans le royaume secret des cœurs.

Puissent ces images « translucides » touchées par la grâce souveraine de l'artiste « aux membres glorifiés », éveiller notre contemplation émerveillée, suprême...

Puisse ainsi notre joie partagée, au comble d'une dignité spirituelle, s'élever aux confins du mystère pressenti...

**Mireille-Joséphine Guézennec**