



SIMPLY TWO
by Gurbeer Singh Chawla

Padmashri
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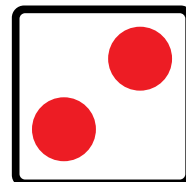


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■ **Two things one must possess to reach high magnification and prosperity in life?**

- Positivity and dedication.
- Honesty and sincerity.

These should form an integral part of each and every human being for it determines how one is able to face challenges in life. After all, life means challenges; obstacles, a test at every step.

■ **Two things that inspired you to become a Kathak dancer?**

- I was initiated into Kathak when I was barely three years old. I am told that I took to it like fish to water.
- As far as I can remember, Kathak means my life, my breath, my soul.

■ **Two challenges you faced to become a successful Kathak dancer?**

- All challenges are part of life and I welcomed them for all the associated experiences that have contributed

so much to my development and growth. In those days (more than seven decades ago), dance was not looked upon well for any girl from an upper-class family.

- To add to it, pursuing two parallel successful professional careers was also against usual societal norms.

■ **Two things you always focus on while performing Kathak dance?**

- In spite of being on stage for over six and half decades, yet every time I step on to the stage, I pray for the benevolent grace and blessings of the Almighty. Thereafter I lose myself to dance.

■ **Two reasons to start Asavari Institute of Kathak?**

- I love to share everything I know or I learn, and hence Asavari that facilitates sharing and showcasing of talents of young and experienced dancers and

musicians.

- It indoctrinates sharing of views and of different perspectives on a theme of thinkers, philosophers, experts from various fields, and such others.

Two major achievements of Asavari Institute of Kathak?

- It has introduced new talents to the world of art who are young professionals today and has also spearheaded and opened doors to new ideas such as the world of Sufism in 1973, the issue of environment in 1982, use of focused lights to highlight movements, to social issues such as human rights, child foetus, incest, abuse of women, etc – most of which were staged in eighties and the nineties, much ahead of their times.
- Similarly, the introduction of dance theatre / dance enactment with English as a medium and works on the life of contemporary sages such as Vivekanand, Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Paramhans, Gandhi with philosopher Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi, presentation of soliloquies, collaborative works with classical music, musicians, dancers of other genres and inter-faith collaborations – were pioneering works that opened doors for other dancers.

Two of your best international performances you feel proud of?

- There were several performances where one experienced a sense of transcendence.

Two expectations from the Department of Arts and Culture to promote Kathak dance?

- The government has been doing whatever its resources allow. I also feel that it is also the corporate houses and various people's organisations that also need to contribute their bit to the preservation and nurturing of our classical arts for in it lies our real Indian identity, philosophy and cultural heritage.
- The world of classical arts helps in the development of balanced individuals; human beings whose roots are firm and simultaneously they are able to withstand storms and yet be able to inhale fresh ideas in a meaningful manner.

Two suggestions for young Kathak artists?

- I always feel that shortcuts do not last. The inner joy experienced in one's own honest sweat and dedication is unsurpassable. Also, one should be extremely honest to one's own self, about one's strong and negative points, honing and polishing the strong points and working on minimising the negative points.

- It is important that in our journey in life, one should never lose sight of ethics and values, of sensitivity and humanity.



Two decisions of your life you never regret?

- I have never regretted the paths I have chosen namely that of being a dancer, of pursuing two parallel professional careers.
- I don't ever regret having a long-distance marriage which is more than 40 years of happy marriage despite distances because of our deep love, trust, faith and respect for each other.



Two things you feel proud of for the PadmaShri Award?

- All awards that I have received instil a sense of gratitude and humility for the faith and recognition of one's dedicated service to dance given by the people and the government. However, the dedicated 'pooja' through dance goes on unabated.

Two compliments for your Guru Pandit Birju Maharaj ji?

- Maharaj ji was an artiste par excellence – a versatile artist, an artiste who defined aesthetics in dance and its presentation, an artiste who redrew the vision and path and contours of Kathak.
- While doing that, he kept its spirit and essence intact and alive and made it known nationally and internationally.

Two attractions of your popular dance video "Dance of Temples?"

- It has been said that this dance video for the first time brought a new perspective to the fore namely inter-linkage of the philosophy of the temple architecture and sculptures seen through the lens of the four 'varna-ashrams' of life.
- Today when the emphasis is on multi style presentations, "Dance of the Temples" has adopted a multi dance style treatment – once again two decades ahead of its times.

Two of your favourite books as an author?

- All works of any artist or an author are like their children, with each one being ever so special.

Two personalities who inspired you the most?

- Perhaps, the lives and the deeds and what Krishna, Rama, Devi, Shiva and Buddha stood for, have always served as a reference point for values for many and for me too.

Two things you do for your own happiness?

- I dance and dance for it is then that I am one with myself; for it is then that I experience inner joy!
- I spread love and positivity all around me.

Two things you do for your fitness?

- I just dance.
- I have a very positive approach to life, to people and to the environment.

Two messages for your fans worldwide?

- We should never lose sight of humanity and sensitivity be it in words, deed, action and thought.
- Nor should we ever lose sight of ethics, values and integrity.