



## Dr Piyush Raj

Dr Piyush Raj – an artist having an academic approach, an entrepreneur and a performer, is a Doctorate in Pharmacy and a MBA in marketing and was in the medical industry for 20 yrs followed by a stint of 10 yrs of career in Interior and Furniture Design. His love for dance was constant throughout these many careers and that made him give up all the other careers and has now dedicated his time completely to Performing Arts and Dance. He has been instrumental in establishing a creative space for all performing arts- **the Natanam Studio for Performing Arts**- based in Mumbai, which is affiliated to Gandharva Mahavidyala and Natavari Academy of Kathak Dance.

### Training in Dance-

A Nritya Visharad in Kathak under **Dr Shveni Pandya**, (*disciple of Pandit Lacchu Maharaj*), Piyush further honed his art for over 18 years in the Guru Shishya Parampara from his **Guru Late Shri**

**Bireshwar Gautam**, (*disciple of Guru Bandana Sen, Padmashri Pt. Gopi Krishna and Padmashri Damayanti Joshi*) a renowned Kathak dancer and accomplished Thumri singer.

Piyush's dance derives its flavor from his tutelage- highlighting the nuances of Kathak by emphasizing the "Thehraav" while simultaneously developing the Bhava and Abhinaya aspect of Katha vaachan and poetry in dance. He has been pursuing his training in Thaata on Vilambit Khayal- a unique presentation which was a trademark of his Late Guru Bireshwar Gautam

He is now pursuing his advanced training in Kathak under the able guidance of Kathak Scholar and **Guru Padma Shri Dr Puru Dadheech**. His deep interest to integrate Kathak Prayoga with Shastra has given him an impetus to consider pursuing further research in Kathak under his guidance. Under Dr Dadheech's guidance, Piyush has been instrumental in establishing the first ever "**Diploma Course in kathak Shastra**", a one year long course exploring various facets of the ancient and recent literature available on kathak.

Besides this, he has also attended various Kathak workshops conducted by Pt. Birju Maharaj, by Guru Pratap Pawar and also attended Body Movement workshops with Aditi Mangaldas. Having an in-depth knowledge of Indian Folk Dances, he has performed and assisted in choreography of many ballets based on Kathak and Folk dances.





#### Organizational accomplishments listed:

- Founder Secretary and a trustee of his own charitable institute called as KATHAK DARPAN CULTURAL CENTRE, conducting Kathak classes for students besides conducting various other activities related to Classical Performing Arts.
  - Was the General Secretary and key member of Dancer's guild- NARTAK MILAN, headed by Late Guru Krishnan Kutty and Late Guru Damayanti Joshi. Also organized events and competitions in Indian Classical Music and Dance for various schools and colleges of Mumbai to help to popularize classical art forms amongst the youth.
  - Have been the General Secretary and a Board of Trustee of Nrityanjali- An institute of Dance, Music and Personality Development, Mumbai. Intensive training and performances in Indian Folk Dances and dance ballets under the guidance of Shri Tushar Guha.
- Initiated a course and written the first thesis on **Personality Development through Performing Arts**- which was presented at the end of the Special Personality Development course developed by me with able guidance from Shri Tushar Guha. This course has now been adopted by the Education Ministry to be implemented in schools and also adopted by corporates to train their executives.
  - Have organized festivals like **PURUSH**- All male Dancer's Festival, **SWARANJALI** – a festival of Music and Dance, **PHAGUN**- a festival of Dance and Music on Holi, **SHAAGIRD**- a Dance festival featuring young disciples of renowned Gurus.
  - Have assisted in choreography many Dance Ballets and is creatively involved in evolving a new project to convey the finer nuances of Kathak: Ballets which were conceptualized and choreographed by his Guru Shri Bireshwar Gautam were-
    - RAAG MILAN– A synthesis between Rabindra Sangeet and pure classical music, set against the backdrop of Kathak.
    - KATHAK AUR THUMRI KE RANG – Brings out and elaborates the similarities between Thumri and Kathak.
    - SHAKTI- Salutations to the supreme power- Shiv and Durga and Kali.
    - SURABHINAYA – A dance-drama which brings out the tension and conflict in the mother-son relationship between Karna and Kunti.
  - A key member in the **SANSKRITA FOUNDATION**, a charitable institute founded by Guru Shubhada Varadkar, promoting Odissi Classical dance art form and other performing arts and working towards a noble cause of collecting funds for poor cancer patients.
  - A panel member of the Discussion of **Pedagogy of Kathak** at the Maya Rao Conference on Choreography in Kathak, organized by Natya Institute of Kathak and Choreography, Bangalore.
  - A panel member on discussion on “**Breaking Stereotypes of a Male classical Dancer**” organized by Sunshine Initiatives in Mumbai, as a part of their CSR activities.

- Various Lecture Demonstrations on Kathak – the nuances, the body movements, the techniques and the aspects of Theraav in Dance.

Present activities:

- He is the Trustee of the charitable Trust **KATHAK DARPAN CULTURAL CENTRE** established by his Late Guru Shri Bireswar Gautam and the Founder Director of **NATANAM STUDIO FOR PERFORMING ARTS** in Mumbai which is affiliated to the Gandharva Mahavidyala. The Studio promotes and propagates Indian Classical Dance and Music by training many promising students in Kathak, Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Mohinattam, Manipuri and Hindustani Vocals. The list of activities carried out at Natanam Studio is exhaustive.
- He is an accredited Kathak teacher by the Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva MahaVidyalaya and is teaching Kathak to students at the **Natanam Studio for Performing Arts**. Virtual Online Training of students in Kathak in India and abroad at beginners and Advanced level. Associated with educational institutes like PODIUM, World Forum of Art and Culture (AOL venture) and others.

**DANCE PERFORMANCES TO NAME A FEW-**

Have performed at many prestigious dance festivals with his Guru and solo and with his own students. (Few Listed below) –

- Kala Ghoda Festival, Mumbai.
- Ellora Festival by MTDC, Aurangabad.
- Purush Festival-Bombay, Nehru Centre, Mumbai
- Festival of Dance, Spirit of Unity Concerts for International Integration- Chennai
- 'Vasantosav' of Kalashram, organised by Pt. Birju Maharaj in Delhi.
- Prayaag Festival, Mumbai.
- Prajvalan Concert Series- A tribute to Late Pandita Madhurita Saranag
- Dance India, The Dance Magazine -3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Festival at Nalanda Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai
- NCPA- Mumbai Dance Season- Opening Ceremony.
- Natyanajli Mahashivratri Festival, Chembur, Mumbai.
- Arghya Festival- Art of Living, Triveni Ashram, Pune
- Ashitih Utsav 2019, Indore
- Guru Wandana Festival- A Tribute to Late Guru Asha Joglekar, organized by Smt Archana Joglekar.
- Dancing Soils, Art of Living Ashram, Gagangiri, Mumbai
- Atmanaad- A group presentation along with Students with other 108 Dancers of different styles organized by ALAP, Mumbai.
- Nritya Aradhana Festival- Thematic presentation on Ram
- Baithak- Natanam Studio, Mumbai
- Ashitih Utsav 2021.
- Koodalmanikaym Temple Festival, Thrissur- Kerala- 2022
- Assisted Guru Dr Puru Dadheech at his various Lec-Dem on his research topics of his Tagore Fellowship of SNA
- Have acted in the theatrical dance production- **"Shyam Sakhi"**, directed by **Late Shri Chetan Datar** and conceptualized by **Guru Rajashree Shirke** and **Shri Vaibhav Arekar** staged in Prithvi Theatre, Mumbai.



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