

Sonal: The 22-carat dancer

Sonal Mansingh is a prominent Indian classical dancer who specializes in Bharatanatyam and Odissi. Since classical dancing is all she has done throughout her life, her proficiency and interest towards other classical dance forms does not come across as a surprise to many. Over the years, this veteran dancer has practiced many dance forms including Manipuri dance and Kuchipudi. Besides being a dancer, Sonal Mansingh is a well-known choreographer, teacher, orator and a social activist. For her contributions towards promoting 'Classical dances', she has received accolades from many national and international organizations. She was the youngest recipient of Padma Bhushan in 1992. In 2003, Sonal became the first Indian woman dancer to be awarded with Padma Vibhushan. Thanks to her priceless lectures and workshops, many young aspiring dancers have gone on to realize the importance of classical dance.

Sonal Mansingh was born to Arvind and Poornima Pakvasa on May 1, 1944 in Mumbai. Her mother was a noted social activist and in 2002 awarded with Padma Bhushan. Her grandfather was Mangal Das Pakvasa, a freedom fighter, and one of the first five Governors of India. Born into a family of social workers and freedom fighters, Sonal Mansingh was exposed to social issues very early in her life. Perhaps to escape the sternness surrounding her day-to-day life, she started to develop interest towards dance at the age of four. Along with her elder sister, she began to learn Manipuri dance from a teacher in Nagpur. By the age of seven, she had begun her classes in Bharatanatyam and was trained by many teachers including Kumar Jayakar.

In 2002, well-known film-maker Prakash Jha came up with a documentary titled 'Sonal', which marked the completion of 40 years of her dancing career. It all began in 1962 when she mesmerized hundreds of dance lovers in Mumbai with her first on-stage performance. Since then, she has delivered many such memorable performances across the world. Her travel to several parts of Europe to perform at various dance festivals formed the best days of her career. She then went on to establish the Centre for Indian Classical Dances (CICD) in New Delhi which would later help train thousands of aspiring dancers.

In 1977, Sonal Mansingh founded the Centre for Indian Classical Dances in New Delhi to train students in Indian classical dance. What started in a small space meant for garage in her rented apartment has now grown into a phenomenal institution.



The organization has been working to promote performing arts and nurturing the cultural legacy of India. For the last several decades, the institute has imparted immense knowledge on various dance forms and other related art forms. She is also the trustee of the largest institution in India, the Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts.

Choreography and Teaching

Many of her choreography have been based on the Indian mythology. Some of her renowned choreographic works include 'Indradhanush', 'Manavatta', 'Sabras', 'Devi Durga', 'Aatmayan', 'Mera Bharat', 'Draupati'.

Sonal's Productions

Indradhanush – An interesting fusion of film songs with classical dance forms. 'Indradhanush' was enjoyed by many and received the accolades of critics as well as dance lovers.

Sundari – 'Sundari' is a Bharatanatyam performance, highlighting the feminine grace and beauty. What made 'Sundari' special was the fact that a modern view had been expressed with the help of a classical dance form.

Dwi Varnaa – This saw the fusion of Bharatanatyam and Odissi. Viewed by many and praised by almost all critics, 'Dwi Varnaa' went on to become a famous act.

Manavata – For the first time ever, prisoners of Tihar jail were given adequate training in order to perform along with Sonal. The performance was held at Sirifort Auditorium in Delhi as part of International Day of Human Rights celebrations.

Sabras – Performed to film songs, 'Sabras' involved dancers showing off their Odissi skills.

Mukti – 'Mukti' was a detailed dance drama which aimed at conveying to its viewers that everyone can be liberated from their physical pain and woes while still being pretty much alive. It went on to break the age-old belief that 'Mukti' (liberation) can be attained only after a person sheds his or her mortal coil.

Aatmayan – This dance is a combination of four stories, illustrating the power of inner spirit. It also emphasizes on social inequalities and other important subjects like caste, creed and religion.

Mera Bharat – This was choreographed to celebrate the 50th year of Indian Independence. It had elements focusing on ecology and environment of the country.

Awards

Sangeet Natak Akademi Award – In 1987, she was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award by India's National Academy of Music, Dance & Drama.

Bhai Veer Singh International Award – She bagged this prestigious award in 1990.

Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award – This award was given to her in 1991 for her contribution to the field of dance.

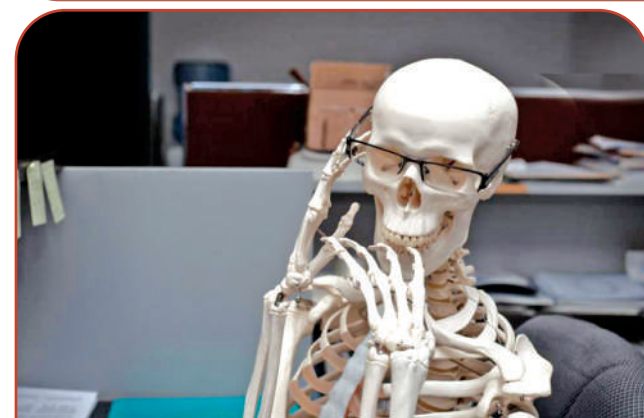
Padma Bhushan – Sonal became the youngest recipient of Padma Bhushan in the year 1992.

Indira Priyadarshini Award – In 1994, she was honored with this award, which is given to commemorate the birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi.

Padma Vibhushan – In 2003, she became the second Indian woman dancer to be honored with the country's second highest civilian award after Balasaraswati.

Kalidas Samman – In 2006, she was honored with Kalidas Samman by the government of Madhya Pradesh.

THE FACT CORNER



A baby's body has about **300 bones** at birth. These eventually fuse (grow together) to form the **206 bones** that adults have.



A whole orange will **float** on water, but a peeled orange will **sink**.



Scientists say that the **universe** is precisely 13.75 billion years old.



The world's oldest wooden wheel has been around for more than **5000 years**.

BRAIN TEASERS

1 Q. Which word does NOT belong with the others?

- A. parsley B. basil
C. dill D. mayonnaise

2 Q. Which word does NOT belong with the others?

- A. tulip B. rose
C. bud D. daisy

3 Q. Which word does NOT belong with the others?

- A. guitar B. flute
C. violin D. cello

4 Q. Which word does NOT belong with the

others?

- A. heading B. body
C. letter D. closing

5 Q. Which word does NOT belong with the others?

- A. tape B. twine
C. cord D. yarn

6 Q. Odometer is to mileage as compass is to

- A. speed B. hiking
C. needle D. direction

7 Q. Marathon is to race as hibernation is to

- A. winter B. bear
C. dream D. sleep

SOLUTION:
1. Mayonnaise.
2. Bud.
3. Flute
4. Letter
5. Tape
6. direction
7. sleep

English Proverbs and Meanings

*** Let well alone.**
Do not interfere with some thing that is functioning properly or a calm situation.

*** Liars need good memories.**
People who do not tell the truth must be careful to remember what they say.

*** Loose lips sink ships.**
Disclosing important information (to the enemy or a competitor) could result in large losses.

*** Learn to walk before you run.**
Don't rush into doing some

thing until you know how to do it.

*** Beauty is only skin deep.**
A person's character is more important than their appearance.

*** Little strokes fell great oaks.**
If you divide a task into small parts, it becomes easier to do.

*** Least said soonest mended.**
The more discreet you are, the less damage you cause.

*** Let bygones be bygones.**
Let's forgive and forget past.

Cloud Bread



Ingredients:
1 egg
1/2 tablespoon sugar
1 ounce cream cheese
1 tablespoon cream of tartar

Method

To prepare this simple recipe, preheat oven at 180° C and line a baking tray with a silicon sheet. Beat egg white with cream of tartar in a bowl till stiff peaks form. Mix together cream cheese and egg yolks in another bowl, until well combined and smooth. Gently fold in egg white mixture till well combined. Divide the egg mixture into 8 equal portions and put on the prepared tray. Spread to about 1/2 inch thickness. Place the tray in the preheated oven and bake for 15-20 minutes or till golden brown in colour. Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack. Serve or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

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Oat Bran Muffins



Ingredients:
1/2 cup dark brown sugar
1 1/2 cups oat bran
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons baking soda,
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup chilled applesauce,
4 tablespoons vegetable oil

Method

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (205 degrees C). Line or grease 12 muffin cups. Blend together brown sugar, oat bran, flour, baking powder, soda, and salt. Add chilled applesauce, and vegetable oil. Mix until well-blended. Spoon batter into muffin cups. Let stand 10 minutes. Bake at 400 degrees F (205 degrees C) for 15 minutes or until golden brown.

TIP: Add 1 cup plumped raisins, with a little bit of raisin water (approximately 2 tablespoons). Or, before baking, sprinkle mixture of sugar and cinnamon over the tops of the muffins.