

Dance is a way of life: Geetha



Geetha and her students in London



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According to Bharatanatyam dancer Geetha Sridhar, who performed at the 'UK welcomes Modi' concert at The Wembley Stadium, London, recently dance is much more than just a profession. "To dance is to exist. It is a way of life and a source of energy or *shakti*, which embraces me, which empowers me," she says. Speaking more about the event, one of the biggest cultural events put together outside of India for Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

Geetha says this was the first time that the British Prime Minister addressed a crowd of 60,000 people as well. "I choreographed a yoga piece. Yoga is not a performing art, so setting it to music and rhythm was a unique challenge," she tells us, and adds that she was the artistic director in charge of stage choreography for the 'Classical Dances'.

"The concept was 'Ancient India' and I worked with 26 yoga practitioners who were consisted of students and teachers from across England and the Midlands. The total number of dancers was 50 — we had Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Odissi, Yakshagana and Kathak," Geetha explains. Heading her own dance school Geetha Sridhar Dance Company, she works as a freelance lecturer in Kingston University, Chichester University and Goldsmith College, besides collaborating varied styles of dance and theatre. She started learning dance formally at an early age, and underwent intensive training in Kalakshetra. "Following my training at Kalakshetra, I worked with Chandralekha Dance Company and have featured in many of its productions as a

Classical dancer Geetha Sridhar speaks to DC about performing at the Wembley Stadium, London recently, besides her inspiration, interests and more

principal dancer. I also learnt yoga and Kalaripayattu from the best teachers in the country," says Geetha, who did her undergraduation in Indian history at the Madras University and in UK, she did masters in Dance Training and Education.

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Geetha is inspired by everything she sees around her, such as the warm fall colours in England now. Geetha gives credit to her strong foundation in Bharatanatyam.

"I have covered both the traditional and fusion approaches. When I did Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, I chose the traditional Bharatanatyam vocabulary. In my production of *Kavacham*, based on *Kandha Sashiti Kavacham* I included yoga and Kalari in the choreography." Geetha's sums her immersive approach to dance as, "One needs to dwell within it and keep pushing the boundaries to realise one's own potential. The journey is that which is enriching while the point of arrival is not fixed. So I tell my students to leave any baggage from the outside world when they come to class. Perseverance, focus and commitment — are the *moola mantra* that I prescribe for my students," she smiles.

Up next, she has a couple of big projects lined up for next year. "One is a traditional repertoire performance with my company and the other is a collaborative work incorporating Indian and Western dance and theatre," she says.

Geetha is planning to write a book as well, a manual explaining movements with anatomical notation, to help dancers understand the ergonomic perceptions in choreography.

Sudha perform Margazhi

DC CORRESPONDENT

Few musicians interest in the sent a concert ensure that their ret able. Renowned cla Sudha Raghunathar them. It's no secret t the artistes who bag concerts during the season. After he Vasanthakumari Sudha came to be re her eminent disciple

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