

Rukmini Devi's views

On Bharatanatyam

“Few dancers either know the true meaning of the mudra-s, the mandala-s, etc., but learn the poses for the sake of effect. Just as the ancient South Indian bronzes were made to the correct proportion according to the Sastra-s, given for the helping of those who wished to attain the best results, so were rules and regulations made for the position of the body and the mudra-s in Bharatanatyam.

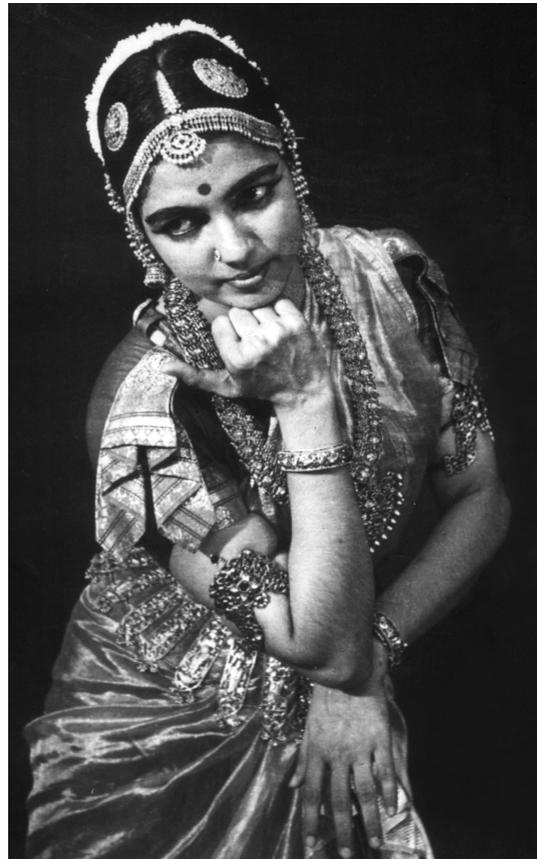
In modern days sculptors are copying these bronzes and attempting to follow the sastra-s, but they are not able to produce the beauty that was achieved by the artists of ancient days, because, though they follow the rules, they have lost the spirit. Rules in themselves are not enough. Words are not enough. Knowledge is not enough. There must be a spirit which one might almost call “A Deva of Movement”. This spirit is intangible and can never be described, as indeed nothing great in the world can be described. But this spirit is most easily and profoundly available through the art of Bharatanatyam when it is properly mastered and understood.”

On dance

“I have seen dancers who were very great in the world's eye, who turned and jumped and performed extraordinary gyrations with the body, and everybody said, “How splendid!” But to me it was just like a circus. What is the difference between the acrobat and the dancer? The acrobat can jump much higher, turn a greater number of times. The dancer is not able to do one third of the tricks of the acrobat. The real dancer can make just a few gestures — but one look of the eye, one turn of the head, every little movement is so full of meaning, so full of expression, that you notice it. A finger lifted with meaning is far more thrilling than all the turns and gyrations and tricks of the circus performer.”

On art

“There is a fundamental unity in art and I think through art we can bring about real internationality and real understanding between all nations, religions, and peoples. It is easy to do it, because there is only one ideal — that of beauty. Whether that ideal of beauty is expressed in one or a thousand



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forms, it does not matter — the more forms the better. Just as the sunlight breaks into many colours, so do we want many forms.”

On culture

“I am convinced that India should become a land of non-superstitious, broadminded, tolerant and spiritual people in order to help the world. Particularly in art and education, my faith is that India should lead the way. I have great faith in the children of India and I feel that the education given to them must be simple, should

be Indian, and idealistic, for essentially only idealism appeals to the Indian mind.

“I feel that the world in general is ruled by lack of balance. Only culture can keep the balance between the mind and the heart. Science has become a domineering influence in the world. It is without culture, which is the reason why it is used for destruction and why science has become cruel.

“Politics without a cultural background and a cultural understanding, will lead our nation to materialism and cruelty. The world is not lacking in mind; it is lacking in heart.”

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