

Let's ROCK and ROLL

Whether it is for corporate launches, films, annual conventions or TV shows, dance is an industry which can only grow. VARUN SONI on the career opportunities in this field

Vikas Khokha, a senior executive with AirTel, has just finished learning how to jive from Ashley Lobo's Danceworx Academy. The grand finale of the classes was a dance performance, which satisfied Khokha's passion for dance.

Khokha is not the only one in his pursuit of excellence. A number of young executives are now taking time out from their busy schedules to give vent to their passion. Moreover, many of them have even started taking dance up as a profession.

Says noted choreographer, Ashley Lobo of Danceworx, "The scope of dance is huge. From a time where television was limited to only one channel (Doordarshan), today with the advent of cable TV, Western culture has affiliated itself to most viewers. Music channels, videos and corporate events that were unheard of a few years ago have now created a huge demand for professional dancers and dance directors. Bollywood has changed the face of dance in

today's day and age. The regular song and dance sequence has made way for high-standard choreographies, who are an integral part of movies today."

Adds Aparajita Jamwal of Shiamak Davar's Institute for the Performing Arts (SDIPA), "Dancing and the entertainment industries associated with it, such as music, films and variety entertainment have a certain respectability today, that they could not claim 10 years ago. Another related industry is the fitness sector, which has also seen a big boom in the past few years. Whether it is for corporate launches, annual conventions or TV shows, dance is an industry that can only grow."

So, what are the growth opportunities in this field? Says Kaytee Namgyal, Director, Salsa India Dance Company, "The growth is big as a business as well as an art. The demand is huge, but the supply is not of great quality. Jobs can be had aplenty as choreographers and dancers in

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Institute Watch

Salsa India
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Ashley Lobo's Danceworx
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Shiamak Davar's Institute for Performing Arts
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movies, shows, videos and advertisements."

If dance is pursued with the same perseverance and dedication like any other profession, it can guarantee you a sure-shot career. You can be a professional dancer and go on to become a choreographer or a dance teacher. Adds Jamwal, "It can also be used as a tool to open communication lines with those who have developmental or communication disorders. This is a course offered by many universities in the US. In India too, we have several dancers adopting this aspect of dance as a career. Other opportunities include becoming a fitness professional, specialised trainer, wedding choreographer and corporate trainer."

Taking up dance as a hobby has its benefits too. "It provides a means of expression, results in a positive release of energy, keeps you fit, develops a music appreciation and rhythmic ability and improves your posture and body awareness," says Jamwal.

As far as courses are concerned, you can learn a plethora of modern and contemporary dances like

jazz, salsa, merengue, hip hop, bachata, cha cha, jive, guanguanco, tap, mambo, rock and roll etc. While the duration of the courses ranges from a month to six months, the fees can be anywhere between Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 3,000, depending upon the course. There are special programmes as well which end with a ticketed show.

And what are the pre-requisites needed to be a good dancer? Says

Namgyal, "You just need to be able to have your head in the right place, work hard, be loyal and down-to-earth as well as have dedication." While Lobo says that if you have the desire to dance, there is always a place for you at the academy, Jamwal says that at the SDIPA, their motto is — have feet, will dance. She says, "In keeping with this, there is no selection procedure; beginners of all ages are all warmly accepted. The youngest student is four and the oldest is 65."

Most experts feel that the pre-requisites to be a good dancer are:

- A basic fitness level — flexibility, strength, cardio ability and endurance.
- A basic knowledge of various music and dance styles.
- Body and spatial awareness.
- The ability to perform, convey thoughts and emotions through facial expressions and body language.
- Mental strength and a definite positive attitude to withstand fatigue, injuries and physical challenges.
- A stage presence and grooming.

Any tips for those who want to take up dancing as a profession? Says Jamwal, "Confidence and a belief in yourself." Adds Lobo, "Join a dance academy that has a set curriculum and does not restrict itself to teaching only dance. It should also contribute to the holistic growth of its students and help them flower creatively and spiritually through the medium of dance."

So, if you're keen to tango, head to the nearest dance academy. ■

Apart from performing during TV shows and product launches, a dancer can also become a fitness professional, specialised choreographer or a corporate trainer

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