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News: Mohiniyattam artiste Kanak Rele no more

- Classical dance legend Kanak Rele passed away on Wednesday in Mumbai. The Mohiniyattam exponent was awarded the first Guru Gopinath National Puraskaram of the Government of Kerala.

Mohiniyattam

- Mohiniyattam is based on Natya Shastra's lasya style.
- It has delicate movements and more feminine facial expressions.
- The movements are gentle and glide-like. They do not have terse rhythmic steps.
- More emphasis is on facial expressions and hand gestures.
- There are features borrowed from other dance forms of Kerala like the Nangyar Koothu and the Thiruvathirakkali.
- It is traditionally performed only by women. Kathakali, on the other hand, was confined to men, although, in modern times, women also take it up.
- According to some experts, the dance form is 700 years old.

- One of the earliest references of Mohiniyattam is available in Vyavaharamala, which is a 16th century text on Indian jurisprudence authored by Mazhamangalam Narayanan Namboodiri.
- Like many other Indian art forms, Mohiniyattam suffered under the colonial British administration.
- Travancore King Swati Thirunal contributed immensely to the growth and systematisation of the art form.
- Eminent Malayali poet Vallathol Narayana Menon and dancer Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma made tremendous efforts to uplift the dance form.
- Dr. Sunanda Nair became the first in India to acquire a Master's degree in Mohiniyattam. She completed her Ph.D. thesis in Intrinsic Lyrical Feminism in Mohiniyattam from Mumbai University.

Historical References to Mohiniyattam

- There are sculptures of female dancers in poses similar to those seen in Mohiniyattam found at the 11th century Vishnu temple at Thrikodithanam, Kottayam.
- A few texts that find mention of Mohiniyattam are Vyavaharamala (16th century), Gosha Yatra (17th century) and Balarama Bharatam (an 18th century treatise on Natya Shastra authored in Sanskrit)

List of Notable Mohiniyattam Dancers in India

- Sunanda Nair, Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma, Jayaprabha Menon, Pallavi Krishnan, Gopika Varma, Vijayalakshmi, Radha Dutta and Rema Shrikant.

Mohiniyattam Costumes

- The dancer wears a white or cream plain saree adorned with coloured or gold brocade weaved in its fringes in the typical Kerala style. The artist also wears gold jewellery on her neck, arms, hands, ears, etc.

Mohiniyattam Music

- The music accompanying this dance form is based on the Carnatic style.
- The lyrics are in Manipravalam (which is a macaronic language based on Sanskrit and Tamil/Malayalam).
- Instruments used are flute, veena, and percussion instruments such as Mridangam, Maddalam, Idakka and Kuzhitalam (cymbals).
- The songs are generally in the Sopana style.