



SUNDAY TIMES OF INDIA, BHUBANESWAR  
JULY 14, 2019

TIMES

## In male-dominated IITBBS, boys match steps to Odissi

### Dance Course A Big Draw Since Its Introduction In 2015-16

Sandeep Mishra | TNN

**Bhubaneswar:** If you think students of IIT had no time for extracurricular activities, think again. A course on Odissi offered by the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar (IITBBS) has seen the enrolment of 159 students and 146 of them are male. Even more interestingly, not a single student from Odisha has enrolled in the course ever since its introduction in 2015-16.

This is the seventh edition of the Odissi course offered by the male-dominated IIT. The course is offered to B Tech students in their first and second semesters.

The enrolment data shows 14 students had registered for the course the first time it was offered in 2015-16. Twelve of them were boys. In 2016-17, the course was offered in two batches, and all 31 students who registered were male. Similarly in 2017-18, the number of students in both batches increased to 37; of them, 30 were boys. In 2018-19, the number of students increased to 68 boys and nine were girls.

"We wanted to make the education system broader and therefore we introduced Odissi as a 'breadth' course.



A student performs at a function in the institute; (right) boys learn some dance steps in the class



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We are one of the first educational institutes in the country to offer such a course. It is heartening to see that more and more boys are evincing an interest in learning the classical dance form," IITBBS director R V Raja Kumar said. Some of the other breadth courses offered to B Tech students at the institute are international business, understanding human behaviour, emotional intelligence and mathematics in India.

According to data, the student strength of the B Tech and dual degree programme at the institute currently stands at 960; of this, 858 students are boys while the rest are girls.

"The students who

Kumkum Mohanty, who takes the course at IITBBS, said it was indeed a surprise to see more boys than girls in the class.

"The trend is changing and it is a positive sign. The boys, especially from north India, are doing exceptionally well in the course," said Mohanty.

She further said her classes over the years had seen students from almost all parts of the country, especially from the south. "But I have not seen any Odia student learning Odissi at the institute ever since the course's introduction. This might also be because their number is very low at the IIT," she said.

Mohanty said IITBBS was the only IIT in the country to introduce a classical dance form as a course. "I must thank the director of the institute for this initiative. Odissi cannot be learnt in six months but some students are doing well. I am using the terms of engineering to connect with them and teach them the dance," Mohanty added.

Odissi dancer Meera Das said the dance was versatile and could not be kept confined to the domain of women. "The students of IITBBS are proving this. It is a positive change in attitude and we must appreciate it. Odissi can help boys be more expressive if they learn it well," Das said.

have enrolled in the course ever since it began are all from outside the state. This may be because the curiosity about the dance is more among the outsiders," IIT insiders said. Director Kumar added that while it was expected that more boys would take up the course since almost 80 per cent of the students of IITBBS were male, the fact that more and more students were taking up the course was an encouraging sign. "Boys are bold enough to take up the dance course without hesitation," he said.

A student who has taken part in the course said it had helped him become more expressive. "I feel rejuvenated in my body, mind and soul when I dance Odissi. It has helped me evolve and become more expressive," said the student.

Renowned Odissi dancer