

Ashish Mohan Khokar

Date of birth: 29th Feb. 1960 **Place of birth:** Baroda, Gujarat, India

Languages: Hindi, Tamil, Punjabi, Bangla, Sanskrit and English.

Address: Casa Lavelle 6, Flat C-1, Lavelle Road, Bangalore 560001. T-080-22483686

Education: Ph.D candidate, Mumbai university: Masters in Indian History (Delhi University merit-list; B.A. History St. Stephens and Hindu Colleges; School-Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan's Mehta Vidyalaya, A.I.H.S.B, Merit-list in Humanities)

Positions held: Overview (details on next page)

1998-2008: Editor-Publisher, attendance, yearbook. *India's only, in the field. In its Tenth Anniversary year (2008), hailed by press and connoisseurs as the bible of arts.*

2005-7: AFS India, National Director designate; *enhanced overall standing; added new chapters; got committed staff in each region; motivated students, parents, schools and had excellent relations with the press, govt., embassies and all agencies, nationally.*

1998-2005: Authored, *photographed and published over 30 books on Indian arts and culture, spirituality and heritage. Exclusive publishing for dance books under Ekah Bios.*

1991-98: Critic, the Times of India, and Firstcity, Delhi. *Distinguished service high credibility of columns. Curated and created Taal-Mel, episodic serial for, National TV.*

1991-92: Director, Martand Singh Consultants; *helped org India Exhibitions in Gallerie Lafayette, Paris; Mathura; Nainital; scripted and scored for MSC.*

1991-1989: Director, INTACH, India's largest educational-cultural-environmental NGO (under PM Rajiv Gandhi's Chairmanship): *Incharge of 40 chapters, fund-raising; international relations; exhibitions plus publication program*

1986-89: Coordinator Festivals of India in France, Sweden, Germany and China *dealt with over 25 leading cultural organizations in each country; its universities, the media, highest levels of bureaucracy and decision-makers.*

1984-86: Prog officer, Sahitya Kala Parishad: *created new festivals and forums. Yuva Mahotsava; Ghazal fest; Ballet Fest; Maestro Fest; poets meet; special events...Gave SKP class and constructive structure.*

1982-83: Manager, Bhoomika: *streamlined management and toured East Europe*

1978-82: Director, STAS (support the arts society) *Presented many events in Delhi, last attended by the then President of India as Chief Guest.*

DETAILED BIO PROFILE

Born in Baroda, on the 29th of February, 1960, to pioneering art scholar and collector Prof. Mohan Khokar and senior Bharatanatyam Guru M.K. Saroja, Ashish Khokar learnt Kathak from Kundanlal Gangani, Orissi from Guru Mayadhar Raut/Aloka Panikar, western ballet from Marianne Balchin (of London), Bharata Natyam from Swarna Saraswathy's disciple Shanta Raghavan and Kuchipudi from Guru Krishna Kumar.

Ram Gopal was an early, major influence. He nurtured the art of presentation and stage presence. **Dr. M.P.Chhaya**, noted educationist and his principal at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Delhi, left a deep impression on how to run schools and manage character-building. **Dr Martand Singh**, the design and textile guru helped create love for weft and weave, colour and design. **Dr Karan Singh**, the scholar-savant, former Maharaja of Kashmir, former Education, Culture and Tourism Minister and current President of the Foreign Ministry's ICCR, encouraged him by giving valuable guidance and support, including penning Foreword to or releasing some of Ashish's books. **Dr. L. Subramaniam**, internationally reputed violin maestro and composer showed him intricacies of music structure and symphony and ensemble management. Thus armed with deep insights into varied art expressions from the greatest living legends of India in each discipline, Ashish grew up to enjoy and relish Indian aesthetics and arts in a wholesome and humble way.

After **post-graduation in History from the University of Delhi** (merit-lister, among top 15 in the university), **he served** as a cultural administrator the Delhi govt's art body, **Sahitya Kala Parishad (1984-86)**, the Union Dept of Culture's **Festivals of India** in France (1985), Sweden (1986-88), Germany (1989) and China (1990) and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (**INTACH**)(**1988-91**) under PM Rajiv Gandhi and later Mrs Pupil Jayakar and H.H.Madhavrao Scindia's Chairmanship.

In **his work in last 30 years**, he has had the opportunity to visit as member of cultural delegation representing India or as eminent editor-critic, many festivals and fetes in countries and cultures as vast as Austria, Belgium, Czech, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan-Kyoto, Macau, Malaysia, Norway, Russia, Sweden, U.S.A, Yugoslavia-Zagreb.

He also worked for **Martand Singh Consultants** and undertook India Promotions in China, France and Italy. These were big exhibitions based on royal costumes, crafts of India and fashion events involving major names like Ritu Kumar, Muzafar Ali and Anita Lal.

A **Grantee of the Swedish Institute** in arts administration he was later awarded a **Government of India fellowship** to research on the pioneers of Indian dance. He was also nominated for a Woodrow Wilson Public Admn. Scholarship at **Princeton, USA**.

As an **author and photographer** he has undertaken several titles (Dance, Textiles, Crafts, Krishna, Indian Images, Jaipur, Ganesha, Khajuraho and Hindu Gods, Taj) for the Classic India series of Rupa & Co. He has written and photographed books on pilgrimage sites like Tirumala-Tirupati; Mathura-Vrindavan and Shirdi.

As biographer, he has pioneered titles on many greats in arts and spirituality like Baba Allaadin Khan Sahib, Sai Baba of Shirdi, Guru Maya Rao, Guru M.K. Saroja and legends like Ram Gopal, Uday Shankar and many more under production..

He has scripted, curated, **hosted TV shows**, notable among which is *Taal-Mel*, a serial on dance commissioned by the **national TV**.

As a regular writer on the arts, he has contributed to **several publications** such as the *India Magazine*, *The Week*, the *Hindustan Times* group, *Indrama*, *Elite*, *Life Positive* and *Diplomatic Corps*. He was a regular art columnist for the *First City* magazine and Spic Macay's *The Eye*.

He **served the Times of India** as their Dance Critic based in New Delhi for almost a decade and then in Bangalore for 5 years as cultural columnist before starting a dance publishing line full time, out of Bangalore, in addition to working on the organisation of the Dance Archives of India based on the Mohan Khokar Dance Collection.

For nearly a decade now, he edits and publishes India's only yearbook on dance, **attendance** and publishes dance books & bios through EKAH with his editor- wife, Elisabeth Hall.

For almost two years (2005-7) he was the chief consultant designated acting National Director of **AFS India** Intercultural Programs, dealing with intercultural educational learning in over 53 countries worldwide. He set up systems and selected able staff in each city and helped create new chapters in Bangalore, Baroda and Madras (in addition to having initiated the same in Ahmedabad, Pune, Delhi); extended school network (from 18 to 80) and during his tenure the media support was handsome. He provided a foundation for the organization to possibly develop. His wife Elisabeth Hall, herself and alumni of AFS (USA to Sweden, 1960s) was team-mate and helped establish AFS in India in its initial years (2005-7).

They now wish to focus on education-culture for the young, as India has world's largest youth population amounting to over 500 million under 25 years of age! He wants to create platforms and avenues to see and support their talents and help educate and

motivate them towards excellence in arts and intercultural learning. See www.childance.com

He is a **registered PhD candidate** at the University of Mumbai.

Published Books

1. Dance – Classic India (4th edition), Rupa & Co
2. Jaipur – Classic India (2nd edition), Rupa & Co
3. Textiles – Classic India (2nd edition), Rupa & Co
4. Hindu Gods – Classic India (3rd edition), Rupa & Co
5. Khajuraho – Classic India (2nd edition), Rupa & Co
6. Ganesha – Classic India (2nd edition), Rupa & Co
7. Krishna – Classic India (2nd edition), Rupa & Co
8. Biography of Ustad Allaadin Khan, Roli
9. History of Artistes of Delhi, Roli
10. History of Thar, German House
11. Tirumala-Tirupati, KGM- Rupa
12. Hanuman, Rupa & Co
13. Vishnu-Lakshmi, Rupa & Co.
14. Shiva-Parvati, Rupa & Co
15. Brahma-Saraswati, Rupa & Co
16. Ganesha-Kartikkeya, Rupa & Co
17. Mathura-Vrindavan, Rupa & Co
18. Eternal India: Bharatanatyam, Rupa & Co
19. Eternal India: Folk Dance, Rupa & Co
20. Eternal India: Classical Dance, Rupa & Co
21. Dance in India-*attendance* 1998, EKAH-Printways
22. Dance Abroad-*attendance* 1999, EKAH-Printways
23. Bharatnatyam-*attendance* 2000, EKAH-Printways
24. Choreography-*attendance* 2001, EKAH-Printways
25. Gujarat-*attendance* 2002, EKAH-Printways
26. Shirdi Sai, Rupa & Co
27. Ardhnarishwara-*attendance* 2003, EKAH-Printways
28. Kathak, Khajuraho-*attendance* 2004, EKAH-Printways
29. Bombay-Bhubaneswar-Bangalore-*attendance* 2005/6, EKAH-Printways
30. Traditions of East-*attendance* 2007, EKAH-Printways
31. Greats of India, *attendance* 2008, EKAH-Printways
32. Ashtanayikas, *attendance* 2011
33. Guru Gopinath Centenary, *attendance* 2008
34. Male Soloists of India, *attendance* 2009
35. Dancing Couples, *attendance* 2010
36. My Journey in Dance -Pratap Pawar, EKAH-Bios
37. The Dance Orissi, Abhinav
38. Maya Rao, the Kathak Doyenne EKAH

39. M K Saroja, Bharatanatyam Bhakta, EKAH
40. The Ashtanayikas...8 heroines in dance, EKAH
41. 15th Anniversary issue, *attenddance* 2013
42. Classical Dance in Modern Times - with S D Desai
43. Andhra Traditions (guest compiled by Dr Anand Shankar Jayant)
44. Milestones of institutions, 2016, wish
45. GSP: Guru Shishya Parampara, 2017
46. 20 years of *attenddance* 20 greats, 20 future stars
47. Mysticism in Dance, 2021/2
48. Vande Mataram! 2023
49. Pune Spcl., 2024
50. Mohan Khokar: The father figure of Dance, IGNCA
51. Dance in France! 2025

Academic Milestones

- Distinction (above 75%) in History, English Lit & Geography - Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Delhi, 1976
- Merit List (in top 15) M.A. History, Delhi University, 1982
- Grantee of the Swedish Institute, Stockholm (for theatre administration).
- Nominated for a Princeton fellowship at Woodrow Wilson School, USA.
- Member, UNESCO Dance Council, Paris.
- Systems Intern at New York Public Library, Lincoln Centre, New York, USA.
- Advisor to several National and International Agencies, Bodies and Institutions.
- Panel member/dance for Doordarshan (national TV); ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) under the Foreign Ministry; Khajuraho and Konark Festivals.

Ashish Khokar

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In his generation, he is a reputed cultural personality with wide interest and outreach. He has over 25 years of direct arts management and media related practical experience (dance, music, fashion, exhibitions, seminars, conferences, press, publications) at national and international levels with a wide variety of organizations, govt. bodies, foundations, NGOs and people who matter/ celebrities. A simple Google search on his name also helps establish his outreach. (other ref. websites: www.attendance-india.com, and www.dancearchivesofindia.com; www.childance.com)