

# Deep Freeze Puts Shocked Dancer on Path to Stage

**Express News Service**

**Chennai:** When Balaji sits in his wheelchair and cracks jokes, it's hard to believe that a month back he was lying in a near-vegetative state, hooked onto a ventilator and fed through a tube. The 28-year-old professional dancer does not remember much of the harrowing time his family and doctors at MIOT hospital went through, wondering if he would ever wake up. Doctors say Balaji's survival, after he received a strong electric shock, is a miracle.

Three days before he launched his dance company, Balaji suffered a strong electric shock on February 5. After 12 years of hard work and training, Balaji and his friend James, both professionally trained in ballet and contemporary dance forms, were on the verge of realising their dream of opening a dance school. The young MBA graduate was installing a signboard at the school when he got the electric shock, which went straight through his heart and stopped it.

"When Balaji was brought to the hospital, he did not have a heart-beat. He was not breathing. His heart had been still for over 15 minutes when we started cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR)," recalled Dr T P Nisheeth, director of critical care at MIOT.

Luckily for Balaji, there were two well-built orthopedic doctors on duty who administered CPR for ten minutes, and managed to kick-start his heart. "However his heart was very weak and he suffered a cardiac arrest," said Dr Nisheeth.



**Balaji speaks at a press conference in MIOT Hospital on Thursday | MARTIN LOUIS**

The team of doctors then decided to try a technique called therapeutic hypothermia, where the patient's body is slowly cooled to 92 degree Fahrenheit in order to bring down all brain functions and give it rest and a chance to heal itself. He was kept cold for 36 hours before gradual re-warming. However, there was still no response from Balaji.

Finally, seven days after the accident, Balaji opened his eyes as a reaction to pain. Two weeks later, he responded to a doctor calling his name. "From then there was no turning back. Balaji's improvement was dramatic. His memory was intact, he could talk and was also able to use his hands," said Dr Nisheeth. Today, the young man dances with his torso, as his legs are still weak.

"He is undergoing occupational therapy to strengthen his legs, and will soon be able to dance," said his partner, James. "If we had only known how to administer CPR, Balaji's recovery would have been much quicker," he added.