

# THE DANCE INDIA

A Treasure Trove of Culture & Tourism

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A VERSATILE ARTISTE

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# EDITORIAL

'The Dance India' - a monthly cultural magazine in English is our humble attempt to capture the spirit and culture of art in all its diversity.

**"IF THE ART IS POOR,  
THE NATION IS SICK."**



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# EDITOR'S DESK



In a bid to woo voters before the general elections, major political parties in India rushed to release their political manifesto, promising to bring in progressive development in the country in all avenues. However, political parties forgot to represent the development of culture in their manifestos this year.

Every five years, it has been a practice for political parties to release a manifesto with an agenda to develop regions, communities, societies and the country with the view to entice voters. The recent manifestos released by major political parties in India had no mention of cultural development. Several artistes and critics have raised questions about the omission of this important aspect. Every citizen in the country would wish the next generation receive high ethical values. And what better way to do it than to ensure cultural development of varied genres like dance, music, literature and theatre. Political parties should work on providing the minimum requirements to artistes who dedicate their lives towards various art forms. Do leaders who make no provisions for art and artistes have the right to sit in the Assembly and Parliament? There are no adequate auditoriums to perform, no minimum requirements for artistes, no proper pension plans and no income guarantee. Today, art and artistes are being linked only to movies and this is unfortunate. Popular critics have been commenting that even one or two classical artistes who have been nominated for the house have not been speaking about cultural development. In the days to come, artistes wish to see a representative leader from the classical and traditional art forms who would do something for the development of culture in India.

Jai Hind!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BR Vikram Kumar'.

BR Vikram Kumar

# CULTURAL BULLETIN

Source: PIB

## Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 makes it to the Guinness World Records

Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 has been placed in the Guinness World Records in three sectors. It includes the largest traffic and crowd management plan, the biggest painting exercise of public sites under paint my city scheme and biggest sanitation and waste disposal mechanism. A three-member team from Guinness World Records visited the Prayagraj for this purpose. Exercise at large scale

was done before the team members for three days from February 28 to March 3. Around 503 shuttle buses were pressed into service in one go for the team on February 28 on the highway. Several people participated in the painting exercise on March 1 and 10000 workers were engaged in cleaning at Prayagraj Kumbh performing their duties altogether.



*Glimpses of the Kumbh Mela 2019, on the occasion of Mahashivaratri*

## Dr Mahesh Sharma inaugurates 'Azaadi Ke Diwane' Museum at Red Fort

The minister of state for culture (independent charge) and environment, forest and climate change, Dr Mahesh Sharma, inaugurated 'Azaadi ke Diwane' museum at Red Fort, Delhi, on March 4. Created by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the museum within the Red Fort complex paid homage to all the unsung heroes of freedom struggle of the nation, who would have otherwise been forgotten. The museum is the fifth in the series of recently inaugurated museums in the Red Fort Complex - others being, Subhash Chandra Bose and INA museum, Yaad-e-Jallian museum, Museum on 1857 - India's first war of Independence and Drishyakala - Museum on Indian Art. The 'Azaadi ke Diwane' museum talks about the sacrifices of great freedom fighters. It pays tribute to the selfless sacrifices of the revolutionaries, brave female freedom fighters and valiant children.

The museum is a modern state-of-the-art, informative and educational exhibition, involving multi-sensory technologies to engage the visitors. It is so designed

that as one moves from one section of the gallery to the other, a sense of awakening and spiritual awareness overwhelms an individual, a feeling of patriotism sweeps through them, inspiring the visitors to relive the struggle of the Indian freedom fighters and value the freedom that we so have today.



*The Minister of State for Culture (I/C) and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr Mahesh Sharma visiting after inaugurating 'Azaadi ke Diwane' Museum, at Red Fort Complex, in Delhi on March 04, 2019.*

## The release of Dictionary of Martyrs of India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the Dictionary of Martyrs of India's Freedom Struggle, at an event in Lok Kalyan Marg, New Delhi on March 7.

Speaking on the occasion, he said this five-volume dictionary contains an account of the martyrs from India's First War of Independence in 1857, to India's Independence in 1947. Union minister of state for culture (I/C) Dr Mahesh Sharma was present on the occasion. The project for the compilation of "Dictionary of Martyrs" of India's Freedom Struggle was commissioned by the ministry of culture to the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the uprising of 1857.

In this dictionary, a martyr has been defined as a person who died or who was killed in action or in detention or was awarded capital punishment while participating in the national movement for the emancipation of India. It includes ex-INA or ex-military personnel who died fighting the British. It includes the martyrs of 1857 Uprising, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), Quit India Movement (1942-44), Revolutionary Movements (1915-34), Kisan Movements, Tribal Movements, Agitation for Responsible Government in the Princely States (Prajamandal), Indian National Army (INA, 1943-45), Royal Indian Navy Uprising (RIN, 1946), etc.

Information of about 13,500 martyrs has been recorded in these volumes.

The publication has been brought out in five volumes (zone wise) as given below:

"Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)", Volume 1, Parts I & II. In this volume, more than 4,400 martyrs of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have been listed.

"Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)", Volume 2, Parts I & II. In this volume, more than 3,500 martyrs of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir have been listed.

"Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)", Volume 3. The number of martyrs covered in this volume is more than 1,400. This volume covers the martyrs of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Sindh.

"Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)", Volume 4. The numbers of martyrs covered in this volume are more than 3,300. This volume covers the martyrs of Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura.

"Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)", Volume 5. The number of martyrs covered in this volume is more than 1,450. This volume covers the martyrs of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

## Prayagraj Kumbh concludes with the bathing festival of Maha Shivratri

About two months long Prayagraj Kumbh has successfully concluded with its sixth bathing festival of Maha Shivratri. The Prayagraj Kumbh attracted more than 24 crore bathers on different bathing festivals including Makar Sankranti, Paush Purnima, Mauni Amavasya, Vasant Panchami, Maghi Purnima and Maha Shivratri. For the first time in the history of Prayagraj Kumbh, an unprecedented rush of devotees was witnessed throughout the Mela period.

Maha Shivratri, sixth and the last bathing festival of Prayagraj Kumbh, was celebrated on March 4, with religious fervour and enthusiasm. A large number of devotees thronged the Sangam, the confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati, braving cold and rains from midnight. Prayagraj Mela Authority has said that above 1 crore 10 lakh devotees took a holy dip on the occasion. Mela administration had developed about eight kilometres long eight ghats at the Sangam and other areas of the Mela for pilgrims. 27 special trains and thousands of buses were put into service to ferry the devotees. Elaborate security arrangements were in place in and around the Mela area. Several dignitaries including Union and state ministers took a holy dip on the occasion.

The Mela was spread over 3,200 hectares of land and divided into 20 sectors. 20 pontoon bridges were erected on the river Ganga to connect the different sectors. For the first time, Prayagraj Kumbh successfully put its name in the Guinness Book of World record in three fields including sanitation and cleaning, traffic plan and mob management and paint your city. Representatives of the world record book visited the Mela and observed the three days Mela



*The Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Arun Goel releasing the booklet at the inauguration of the Exhibition on "Kumbh", in New Delhi on March 11, 2019.*

administration. They have handed over three certificates to the Mela Authority in this regard. For the first time the President of India, Vice President, Prime Minister, Union ministers of the country, Governors and chief ministers and state Ministers of different state governments not only visited the Kumbh but also took a holy dip at the Sangam. Similarly, representatives of 72 countries put their national flags at Kumbh and more than 3,500 representatives from different countries visited the Mela. Thousands of Non-Resident Indians also visited the Kumbh and took a holy dip. Prime Minister of Mauritius with his wife also visited the Kumbh and took a holy dip and met various saints and sears.

Secretary, ministry of information and broadcasting, Amit Khare, also visited the Prayagraj Kumbh and took a holy dip. He also visited the campus of the All India Radio and Doordarshan and high tech exhibition of BOC set up at the Mela on the life of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel.

## Prime Minister inaugurates the new Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology at Greater Noida in UP

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology at Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh on March 9. He also unveiled a statue of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya at the campus and paid floral tributes. Later, he visited the Deendayal Museum in the institute campus. Present at the inaugural was chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, and Union minister for culture(l/c) Dr Mahesh Sharma.

The state-of-the-art institute, built at an estimated cost of Rs 289 crore, is spread over 25 acres. The 3-star

ultra-modern green building of the institute is equipped with all the latest technologies. The institute comprises an auditorium with seating capacity of 1,000 people, an open-air theatre and an archaeological museum. The Institute of Archaeology (IA) is an academic wing of ASI under the ministry of culture. In the institute, the students are provided with a supportive, enthusiastic and challenging academic atmosphere which enables them to achieve their full potential in the field of archaeology.

## National Council of Science Museums of culture ministry collaborates with Google Arts & Culture for the largest interactive online exhibition on inventions and discoveries

The National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), an organisation under the ministry of culture, Government of India, has collaborated with Google Arts & Culture for 'Once Upon a Try': Epic journeys of invention and discovery - the largest online exhibition about inventions and discoveries ever curated, as an attempt to explore humanity's greatest inventions and discoveries in an interactive online exhibition. The online exhibition was launched March 6 and contains collections, stories and knowledge from over 110 renowned institutions from across 23 countries, highlighting millennia of major breakthroughs and the great minds behind them.

Everybody can now explore more than 400 interactive exhibitions that pay tribute to humanity's greatest leaps in science and technology, and the visionaries that shaped our world, as well as tales of epic fails and happy accidents.

National Council of Science Museums contributes six interactive stories that share some key insights into the long and glorious Science and Technology Heritage of India. India's historical contributions to the field are considerable but not well known.

Beyond these narratives, museum views of the National Science Centre, Delhi and Science City, Kolkata, both

units of NCSM, are available for national and global audiences to virtually walk through.

The treasure which was lesser known to the world is now open to all. Explore National Council of Science Museums on Google Arts & Culture at <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/national-council-of-science-museums>.

National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), a premier institution in the field of science communication, is an autonomous organisation under the ministry of culture, Government of India. Primarily engaged in popularising Science and Technology through a network of science centres, Mobile Science Exhibitions (MSE) units that visit rural schools and a plethora of activities for public and students, in particular, NCSM has now become a trendsetter in the field of science communication both at national and international level.

Explore 'Once Upon a Try' on Google Arts & Culture ([g.co/onceuponatry](https://g.co/onceuponatry)) or using the app on iOS or Android. Google Arts & Culture put the collections of more than 1,800 museums at your fingertips. It's an immersive way to explore art, history and the wonders of the world, from Van Gogh's bedroom paintings to the women's rights movement and the Taj Mahal. The Google Arts & Culture app is free and available online for iOS and Android.



*The Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Yogendra Tripathi receives the First Prize Awards for 'Incredible India' at the Golden City Gate Tourism Awards in 'TV Cinema Spot' category, at ITB, in Berlin on March 08, 2019.*

# TORCH BEARERS



## NALINI KAMALINI: TRUE CULTURAL AMBASSADORS

Text: **BR Vikram Kumar**



**N**alini and Kamalini are two inseparable names in the field of Indian classical dance. They have popularised duet category in Kathak by performing across the country and the world. They have been passionate about the dance form from their childhood and dedicated their lives to its propagation.

Today, the duo stands at the pinnacle guiding and nurturing students in the art form of Kathak. Their effort in making Kathak popular around the globe is indispensable. Few people would want to become a classical artiste and those who become may not continue it over a prolonged period. There are a handful of people who strive for excellence in their skill and upliftment of the art form throughout their lives. Nalini and Kamalini belong to such clan.

They set foot into the world of classical dance with the encouragement of their mother but grew up as artistes with the support of their guru. The duo epitomises dedication and hard work and works not for awards and rewards but for the love of Indian art and culture. They have refused to accept certain awards because they believe that their guru needs to be recognised. This desire to keep their guru first speaks volumes about their ethics and values. Even after all these years, they are striving to document their unique work to give to the next generation.

**Nalini Kamalini**



# NALINI KAMALINI: TWO BODIES ONE SOUL



Text: **Paul Nicodemus**

The sister duo, Nalini and Kamalini, made an indelible mark in the world of dance. The devoted disciples of Kathak maestro Guru Jitendra Maharaj of Varanasi gharana have encompassed boundaries and put the temple style of Kathak dancing on the world map. The sisters are blessed with rare artistic qualities of natural expression, grace, sweetness, clarity and perfection. Their style pleases both the aesthete and purist. Dharmik, Samajik and Prakritik are three aspects of their dance.



Both Kamalini and Nalini were born in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, as their father, BP Asthana, served in the Royal Air Force. Their grandfather served as Chief Justice and father being a part of the air force took part in the Second World War. Given the background, the atmosphere in the house was strict and disciplined. Though the family did not have a background in art, their mother, Shyama Kumari Asthana had an inclination towards fine arts and was a Hindustani vocalist herself. She is 87 years now. Despite the conditions of her time, when women could not pursue their interests, she did a double MA. Apart from the two girls, the Asthana family had two boys as well. The boys followed their father's footsteps and joined the forces, while the mother wanted the daughters to become good vocalists.

Though they were born in Agra, they were brought up in Delhi. Both Nalini and Kamalini were groomed in Delhi

Kannada School, run by the Mysore Government. Later, they joined Venkateswara college.

A chance meeting with Guru Jitendra Maharaj of Varanasi gharana changed their fortunes forever. The guru had a unique, magnetic and spiritual aura in his personality and it captivated both the sisters. "We never wanted to become artistes, but his personality impressed us. Gradually, we got in touch with him, kept watching his performances now and then," says Kamalini. They first met their guru in Delhi when he was performing with his disciples.

Kamalini had an inclination towards science and Madam Curie was her role model. Nalini was interested in chemical engineering and Kamalini in medicine. "We always looked for logic and never really believed in



**Nalini Kamalini**



illusion or art. Over time, we understood the depth of art,” says Kamalini.

Living with the guru taught them to know themselves and listen to the soul. “Initially, we did not go to our guru as we did not understand him much. He spoke about abstract art, gods and demigods. I was in class 7 and such discussions were beyond our standards. My mother made excuses to send us to him and as days passed, we started understanding him. He is a unique person. He never compelled us to do anything. He will just give you the flow and we are supposed to swim,” says Kamalini.

Nalini always gives the example of a magnet and iron filings. “If you have a magnet and iron filings and they do not attract each other, then, either the magnet is at fault or the filings are not made of iron. We were like iron filings and got attracted to guru ji and with time, we ourselves have become magnets,” says Nalini. This transformation took place when they were 13-14 years

of age. “He was not like regular men, he was different — always calm and spoke of a higher realm. His way of communication was different. We found him to be a different person and got attracted to him. He had navarasas in his eyes. Soon, we found ourselves immersed in the flow. ‘Kala ka Jaadu’ - the magic of dance,” says Kamalini.

Guru Jitendra was an exceptional dancer with brilliant footwork. He is a trendsetter in the temple style of Kathak from the Varanasi gharana. The Banaras or Varanasi gharana took the patronage of neither Hindu nor Muslim courts. Dancers from the gharana were always in the temple, doing ashta seva. “Even today, when you visit, Vrindavan and Mathura you will find dancers and singers performing to please Krishna. It was like Devadasi performances in the south but in the north only men performed,” says Kamalini. The temple dance is derived from Bhakti Nrutya. Even the content is from Upanishads and the performances are soulful. Hence, the dance form has an emphasis on satvik abhinaya and chand



Nalini Kamalini

pravarti. "Initially, we danced with pakhawaj and now that there are less number of players, we have been accompanied by tabla. Kathak is storytelling, but the content depended on the purpose — to please a king or god," says Kamalini.

Nalini and Kamalini began learning from the guru in 1973 and the duo's arangetram happened in Kochi, Kerala, when they travelled with their guru. "We gave our first performance at Ernakulam in Kerala," says Nalini.

Nalini and Kamalini are of the same zodiac sign, Scorpio, just a year apart. Their nature is similar and so is the thinking process and approach. The two sisters shared a lot of affection. Guru Jitendra noticed it and made the 'Yugal Nrithya' (duet) for them. "Earlier people must have heard about the Travancore sisters but now, for over 40 years, we have been the only duet dancers of Kathak. Our dance style is unique and different from other dance forms. We dance like a shadow and never really dance apart," says Kamalini.

The duo did not face difficulties because of their focus and determination. "Initially, I never wanted to learn dance but once I decided there was no looking back," says Kamalini. They sacrificed their academic and professional careers to pursue Kathak. Nalini says their energy is doubled when they are together. The family supported them. Although the family initially spoke to them about marriage, they soon realised that the two were born for a higher purpose. Their father hoped to see them at the epitome. After touring the world for over five decades, Kamalini believes they fulfilled his dream.

Both of them learnt to dance on the stage. "It is like our guru ji pushed us into the swimming pool and we had no other option but to swim. We are married to our art form," says Kamalini.

They accompanied the guru and his senior disciples wherever they went and as beginners, they performed initial items like Krishna Tumri. The guru discovered that these girls had expressive faces and made them do small parts in his repertoire and taught them on stage. For Nalini and Kamalini, learning and performing went hand in hand.

"I believe when you have good intentions god will provide with good culture, good circumstances and a good guru. Everything was positive and in favour of us. We submitted ourselves to God and guru. More than the dance we liked

the presence of our guru — listening to him, talking to him, his vision, and his thoughts about life. It transformed our lives. He is a brahmachari and does not have sons or daughters. So he taught us like his own daughters. He gave everything with an open heart and taught us a lot," says Kamalini.

People consider the sisters to be exemplary artistes who brought forth the essence of guru-shishya parampara.

In South India, they continued with the culture of Sabhas and programmes. The troupe toured for 30 odd shows at a stretch. "We had such a good time. Today, when we look at young artistes, they are flying by air and have managers. But in those days, we had to do everything by ourselves," says Kamalini.

The remuneration received by the troupe those days was around Rs 500. They performed at many small villages and did their bit in spreading Kathak in the south. They got immersed in the south Indian environment. Travelling on train took them 3 days and the whole group



Nalini, Kamalini and Guru Jitendra Maharaj group



did their Riaz and had productive discussions about music and dance while travelling. They thoroughly enjoyed their careers. Sometimes the guru composed brilliant pieces while travelling on the train. The icing on the cake was they had a thirsty audience who would come prepared to listen.

The duos first overseas trip happened in 1983 when they attended the UFTAA Conference in Paris, France. "We stayed at Le Meridien in Paris. Those days there were few five-star hotels in India except the Ashoka Hotel," smiles Kamalini. It was an epic tour. They went on a 15 day trip to UFTAA Conference but returned to India after two-and-a-half years. They went to perform in the India Evening and from there the troupe went to Torremolinos and Madrid in Spain. Kathak of Varanasi gharana looked new to the Europeans and Guru Jitendra's technique proved to be beautiful. The troupe then performed in Dublin, Ireland and met people from ISKCON in London. They liked the Bhakti Nritya and invited them to perform in their Rath Yatra in London. "The weather was cold and there was no proper place for practice. We hired a caravan, practised and toured in it. It was a golden period," says Kamalini. They became members of the artiste guild and toured across Europe. One of their memorable performances was for BBC's Eastern Eye hosted by Karan Thapar. Similarly, they have done many shows. They have also made a



**Guru Jitendra Maharaj and Nalini Kamalini**



film titled 'Voyage of Kathak' for The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). After the film, they have given lecture demonstrations in major educational institutions in London. The duo conquered Europe with their dance.

Nalini and Kamalini share a unique and inseparable bond with each other. "I never feel she is away from me. Whatever I know of myself, my sister already knows it. People call us two bodies, one soul. I feel I need no one in my life. When we are together, we are complete," says Nalini.

"We have the same mind and revel in each other's success. There is no jealousy between us. If she wears a nice sari, I am happy and vice versa. We care for each other, I just don't know how it has come," adds Nalini. More importantly, people enjoy watching them together.

Right from the beginning, they have been together; they worked together, danced together and travelled together. Now that Kamalini is the chairperson of Kathak Kendra, she goes to the institution and also attends

meetings at Sangeet Natak Akademi. "I drop her at Kathak Kendra and do my work in my institution. Again, we join for lunch and have food. Recently, she was at Rabindra Bharati in Kolkata and I was at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh conducting a workshop with guru ji. Though we were away, we have been in touch with each other. Thanks to video calling, we can literally see what is happening on the other side. Even when we are away our minds and hearts work together," says Nalini.

Talking about Kamalini's work at Kathak Kendra, Nalini says, "I heard people say this is the best era for Kathak Kendra. Being an artiste, Kamalini is helping all the young artistes from various gharanas. Previously, there were performances only in Delhi but now she is organising performances in all the states of India. By giving importance to all the gharanas, she is trying to unite artistes across the country."

Meanwhile, Nalini is working on the therapeutic value of dance. She believes that if the music and dance of the original Indian culture prevail, then there would be no disturbance in the society. "When you dance, you are in

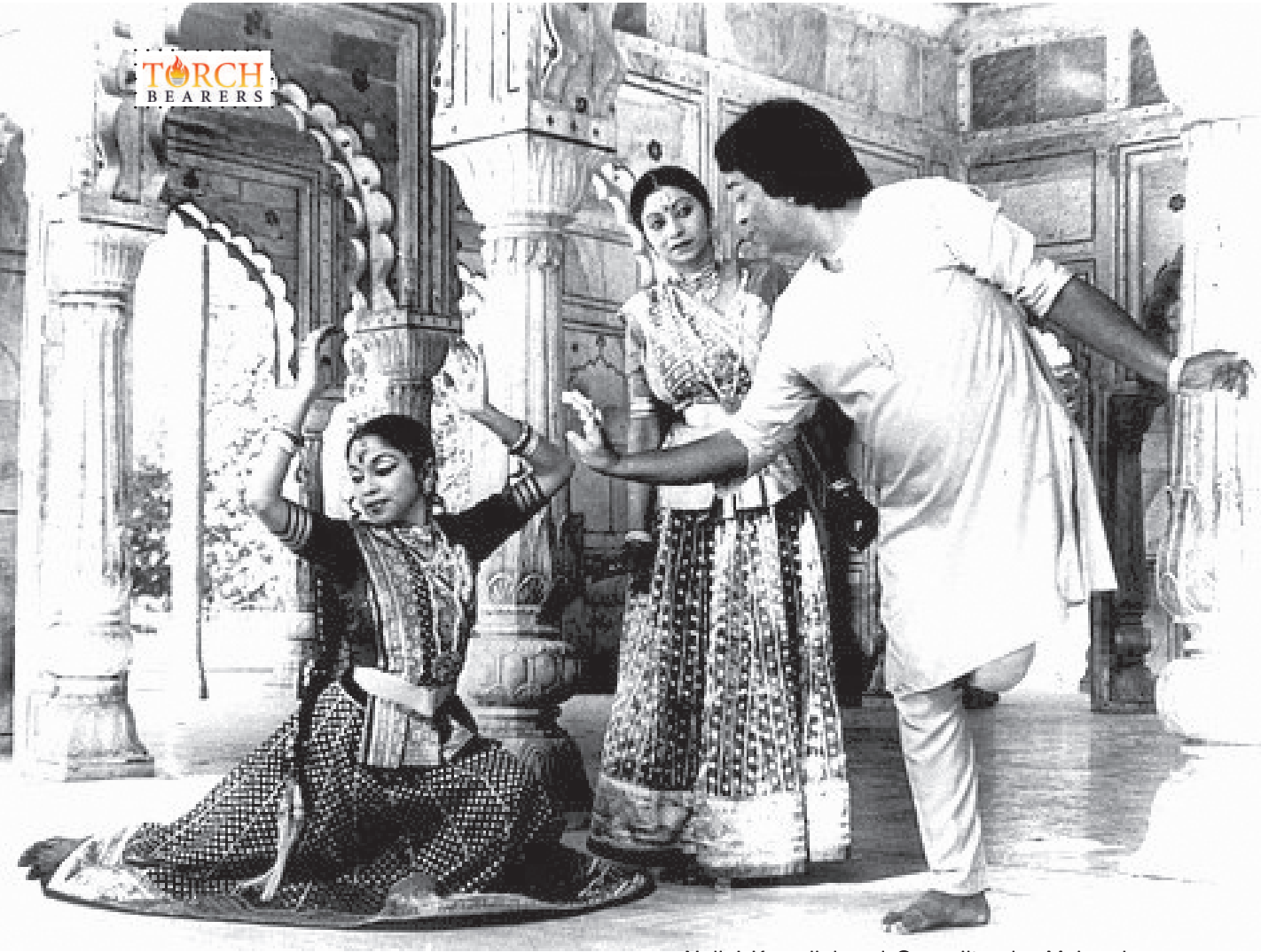


Nalini Kamalini

the Bhakti rasa and spiritual mind, which serves as meditation and helps in improving yourself. If an individual is improved then there is so special need to improve the society," explains Nalini. She also believes that Indian dance is a combination of physical and spiritual yoga and she has extensively worked on the Relation of Dance with Yoga.

The duo has taken Kathak to new heights with their choreography on the themes from Vedas and Upanishads. They have transformed solo Kathak into a duet and group choreographies and added traditional, contemporary storyline into the Kathak repertoire. They have established Sangeetka Institute of Performing Arts, a premiere academy for Kathak and classical music on February 21, 1975.

Nalini is good at designing, makeup, gardening and cooking. After tasting food from many restaurants, she tells her best hotel is her kitchen. She likes to see happiness in everyone's face. Kamalini loves walking close to nature. Listening to old songs, reading and



**Nalini Kamalini and Guru Jitendra Maharaj**

writing are her hobbies. She also enjoys spending time with little children. Both of them love maintaining an ethnic looking house and whenever they get time, they love to visit the seashore or mountains. Sometimes they go trekking and indulge in discussion with Sadhus high in the mountains. Both of them enjoy cooking food and distributing it to the poor. The sisters do not charge remuneration when they perform at schools, temples, charity or for armed forces — another nice attribute.

Well versed in the allied arts of music and literature, the duo is as esteemed throughout India as they are abroad. Often they are invited to present their traditional form before visiting dignitaries in Parliament, Rashtrapati Bhavan and have taken part in several national and international festivals of repute in various parts of the world viz. UK, Germany, France, Spain, Norway, Finland, China and the Middle East. Lectures in Oxford,

Cambridge, Lei Den, Manchester University, London School of Economics were of great success.

Another popular feat they achieved was by setting a record for dancing at the height of 18,000 ft at Kailash Mansarovar. They have performed at Badrinath, Rameswaram, Chidambaram, Tirupati, Vrindaban, Kanyakumari and at various ISKCON temples all over Europe, at one hand and at Dewa Sharif, Dargah of Bareilly, Ajmer and Kalia Sharif for cultural integration.

For their immense contribution, they have received various awards including Atal Samman and Sangeet Natak Akademi. Their contribution to society includes cultural integration, cultural awareness programmes amongst the youth, propagation of classical art forms in remote areas and teaching the lesser abled.

Nalini Kamalini



Nalini Kamalini



“When we plant a seed in the ground, it needs time to show its growth. Till then patience is the key. If you are devoted to work, you will get money. If you are not then you would not. Work is worship. Today, youngsters are concerned about the future and neglect their present. I always tell them to take care of their present as it would become their future,” says Nalini

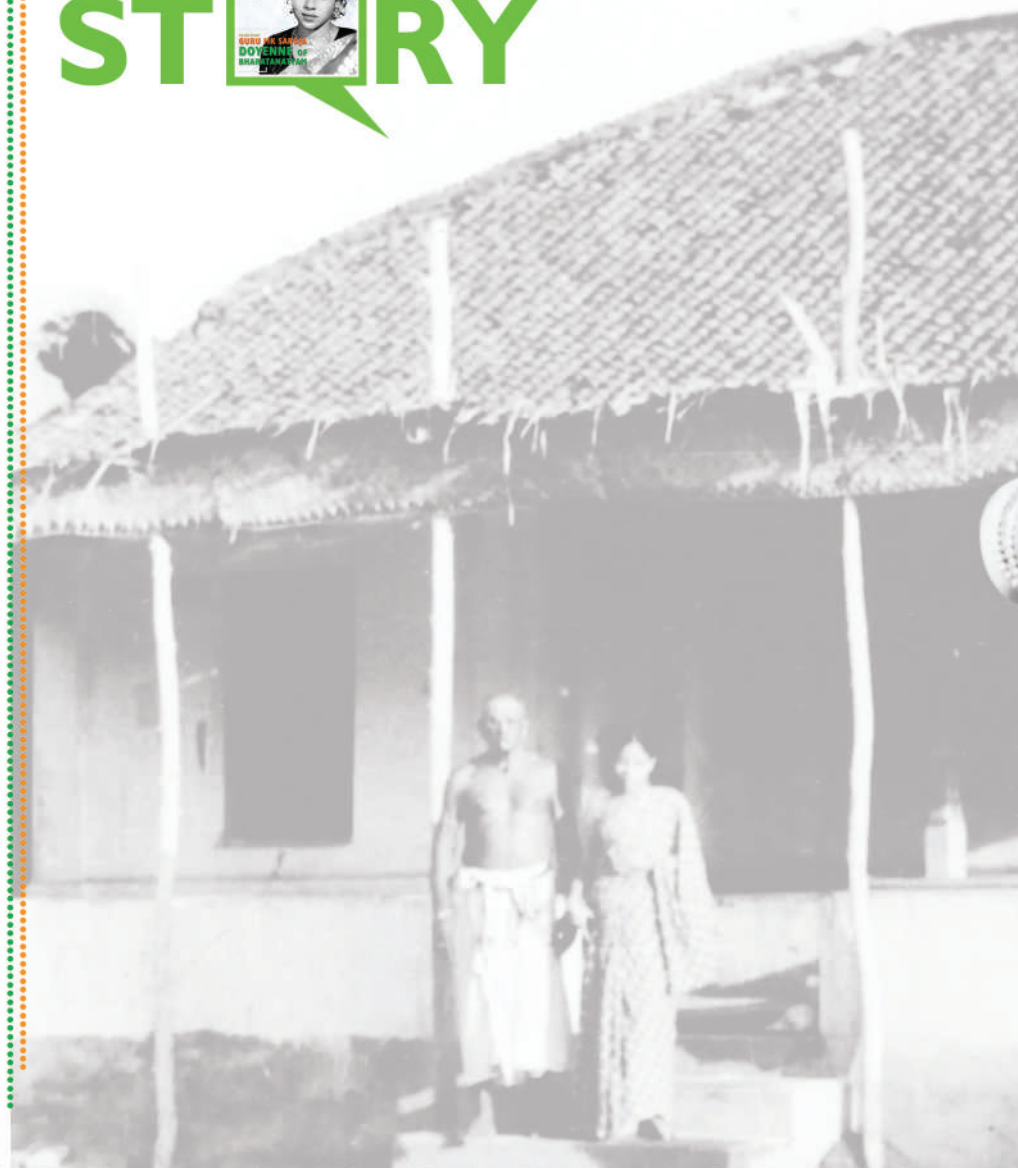
“People who want to achieve something in life should be a vessel with focus locked on a single agenda. There should be no room for prejudice and nurture brotherly attitude towards others. Patriotism is important for every citizen. Youngsters should have high ambition but they should not look for shortcuts. This is our message to the youth of India. Nalini always tells the youngsters to be devoted to work,” says Kamalini.

At present, Kamalini is the chairperson of Kathak Kendra and Nalini is the director of Sangeetka Institute of Performing Arts.



Nalini

# COVER STORY



# GURU MK SAROJA DOYENNE OF BHARATANATYAM



Dancing in the 1940s  
Pic: MKDC  
(Mohan Khokar Dance  
Collection of India)

# GURU MK SAROJA: DOYENNE OF BHARATANATYAM



**Text: Ashish Mohan Khokar, a kala and desh sevak: 45 years in field - from arts administration to art documentation - 45 books, over 5000 articles; 50000 photos, 10 films, 85 modules for UGC; many government cultural posts and serving many committees (ICCR, DD, Culture Ministry, CCRT, Neemrana) and projects.**

**Pics: MKDC (Mohan Khokar Dance Collection of India)**

**S**mile, Simplicity, Spirituality. These three words mark Guru MK Saroja, the "unpretentious doyenne of Bharatanatyam" (India Today, 1999). A veteran artiste of the form, 89-year-old mother figure -guru Saroja-ma, today is hailed a benchmark in the field and a living legend.

With over 70 years of active career, she has seen Bharatanatyam's history being made first-hand. Through her own life and times, she saw the temple dance come out of its fading lights into arc lights of big

cities and also films. She was witness to, and part of, many an interesting twist and turns in the fortunes of the form and yet remains an egoless practitioner, long-term watcher and a quiet servitor of the divine art. That she herself danced for almost 70 unbroken years (1938-2008), makes her a very significant source of direct history of the dance form. Other contemporaries of hers did either only abhinaya or danced for short periods. She thus remains the last link with the vintage of Bharatanatyam.

Seminal research work on Alwars and Nayanmars in 1988 (by grant of Culture Ministry)



Pic: Ashish Khokar



**Seminal research work on Alvars and Nayanmars in 1988 (by grant of Culture Ministry)**

Born on April 7, 1931, in Madras (hence, Madras Kadiravellu Saroja), she was spotted by Guru Muthukumaran Pillai, the fountainhead of Chidambaram baani, when he came to Madras to teach Sadir dance to girls in big cities, hailing from established families. The two sisters, Selvamani (to become India's first woman nattuvanar) and Saroja were put under his tutelage, and the family hosted the guru in their George Town home, as the guru was new to Madras and had no place to stay. His own sister was a dedicated devadasi at a temple in Kattumannarkoil in the Tillai region, not far from the famed Chidambaram, where Lord Shiva danced. The Vidwan had taught many boys in his village the art of dance and nattuvangam, amongst whom were Ramaiah Pillai, Kunchidapadam Pillai and Muthuswami Pillai.

Though the guru trained Ram Gopal, Mrinalini Sarabhai and Kamala Laxman, he took Baby Saroja, as she was soon to be called, everywhere, almost as a prized-pupil to show others what the art was. Thus, when Rukmini Devi started Kalakshetra and needed a dance teacher, the first one to be appointed was Guru Muthukumaran Pillai (fondly called tatha by all) and he took Baby Saroja,

to show atthai what his standards of teaching were. So impressed was atthai with the little dancing Saroja that she immediately appointed the guru as first dance guru of Kalakshetra. It was only after he left, that Rukmini Devi engaged Guru Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai. Many erroneously mistake Kalakshetra to be just Pandanallur style; history and facts prove otherwise. Each guru brought his style and characteristics and there were Kathakali talents too.

While Ram Gopal, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Kamala Laxman learnt from Tatha, they learnt from other gurus and contemporaries like Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai and Ramaiah Pillai, too. MK Saroja learnt only from Tatha, thus remaining his exclusive exponent. This historically places her as a unique legatee of a rare style, now gone from Chidambaram to Champs Elysees.

From the forties through the seventies, Saroja was a very popular star Bharatanatyam dancer, on demand in stage and in films. Thus three films, with her classical dances, were to become famous -- Krishna Bhakti; Nala Tambhi and Paithiakaram. Dandayudhapani Pillai was her singer and although he stammered while speaking

Pic: Ashish Khokar



**Seminal research work on Alvars and Nayanmars in 1988 (by grant of Culture Ministry)**

normally, he was unparalleled when it came to singing and nattuvangam. His jatis were crisp, clear and classy, sharp and spiffy and not a murmur of any speech defect. The guru and the singer would often carry the child dancer on their shoulder when going to perform from village to village. Those days, all musicians and guru would line-up behind the dancer on stage and my guru would often say, smile Pappu, smile! The sitting-on-side arrangement came with the proscenium stage, so seen nowadays. Ram Gopal devised that as did Uday Shankar when they travelled West, where often the orchestra sat in the music pit in front of the stage. "We dancers were Chinna Mellam artistes while singers-musicians were Peria Mellams, so we got secondary treatment."

M.K. Saroja married pioneering scholar Prof. Mohan Khokar on December 14, 1949. It would seem, she brought him good luck for, immediately, at the young age of 25 years, he was offered and made the head of the first department of dance at India's first university to do so, the M.S. University, Baroda. They left Madras for Baroda after 12 years in the city. The time spent in Baroda was full of Vaishnavite culture. She was witness to first dance course being shaped at the university level in the 1950s and thanks to her Tamil background and previous associations, both E. Krishna Iyer, Prof. Sambhamoorthy and other such luminaries trudged all the way to Baroda to give lectures and be part of the nascent classical dance scene in Gujarat. Her senior, Mrinalini had married Vikram Sarabhai and moved to Ahmedabad and established Darpana. Again, the same, common guru to both, Vidwan Muthukumaran Pillai was called all the way from his village Kattumanar to set the benchmark institution even in Ahmedabad.

**Pic: Mirelle Moustachi, Paris**

In Baroda, M.K.Saroja furthered her dance education by learning Kathak from Sundarlal and Kundanlal Gangani, two illustrious brothers of the Jaipur Gharana. Thanks to Mohan Khokar's vision of engaging traditional gurus in university-level teaching, both were absorbed. Children and grandchildren of gurus appointed then are still teaching or heading the dance department of MSU, Baroda. They thank Prof. Mohan Khokar for bringing their forefathers to mainstream dance teaching profession. Another mridangist-turned-nattuvanar, Kubernath Tanjorkar, was given employment and got a fresh lease of life. Ditto

**Moksha!**



Natarajan. This was the fifties and classical dance, especially Bharatanatyam was hardly known, let alone established outside its southern moorings.

In Baroda and Delhi, M.K. Saroja danced and also slowly started teaching. She reached out to unknown places like Jalandhar and Chandigarh, Jammu and Nagpur. Yes, in the 60s and 70s these places didn't even have proper halls or stage. She was also never afraid of learning other forms as dance is without form. It is about the spirit, the soul. Although she was herself not 25, in Baroda she was teaching the art to grown-ups like Nargis Katpitia, Pratibha Pandit, Laxmi Valrani and in Delhi in early years Indrani, Milena Salvini (this year's Padma awardee) and Lucia Maloney. After 15 years in Baroda, the couple shifted to Delhi, the capital city, where Mohan Khokar was appointed as Special Officer for Dance, placed at the then Education Ministry, at the Sangeet Natak Akademi. Upcoming star dancers like Yamini Krishnamurthy didn't think twice before acquiring an item or two from her. Others who benefitted in Delhi were Shanta Raghavan, Ratna and Kameshwari.

Being in Delhi meant far wider opportunities and although her husband, legendary Mohan Khokar, was important in the dance world, he did not do much to promote her career. Such was the couple's honesty and integrity. He saw to it that she got no undue attention. What a change it is now, when assorted fields' husbands, holding offices,

Pic: Ashish Khokar



**At home with Mohan Khokar**

go out of the way to promote their own wives, daughters or relatives! It was the various chairmen and vice-chairmen of the Akademi (KPS Menon, Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, Pu.la Deshpande) that wanted Saroja seen and made few opportunities available, though she got the Akademi Award, 15 years after Mohan Khokar left the Akademi!

At Rashtrapati Bhawan (President of India's official residence) cultural shows were hosted for visiting dignitaries. Once King Sheikh Yemeni of Saudi Arabia, in the mid-1970s, came as a guest and after the show gave her (and other artistes) a small bag (of gift), attended by the then PM Indira Gandhi. Upon opening it



**With students at home in Madras**



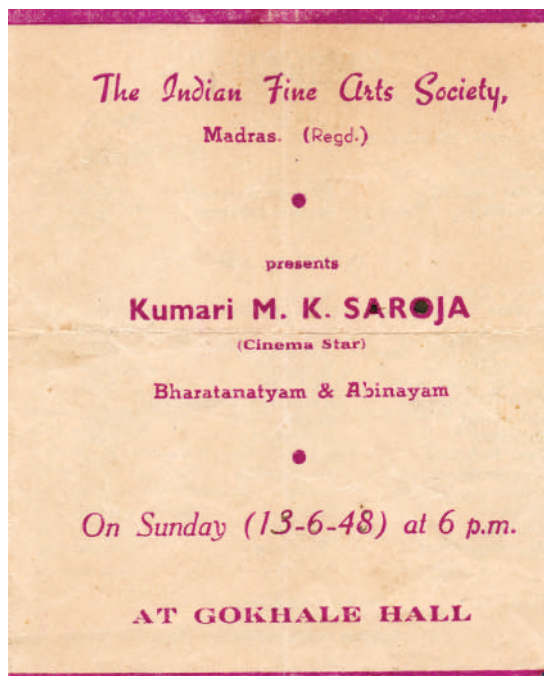
was found to contain a few gold coins! Promptly Saroja gave it to her husband, the acting secretary of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, as it was a government-organized function. Imagine an artiste turning in gold? And promptly, Mohan Khokar deposited that with the ministry saying it was government property. Numerous such examples abound, some noted on SNA official files as well. Flautist and former deputy secretary of the SNA, G.S Rajan, has seen and related some such files when he was at the SNA.

In Delhi, her music team was Radha Krishnamurthy, a temperamental woman, who often threw tantrums, especially before a show. But her singing was strong and special so Saroja had to depend on her for many years before Meera Seshadri came into her life. Meera used to go to common friend Swarna Saraswati's house in Karol Bagh, where many south Indian artistes stayed. With Guru KJ Govindrajan as nattuvanar, TK Sankaran and later TK Murthy as flautists, Meera as singer and Dandapani as mridangist, Saroja's dance was strongly supplemented by able music. Many, like Raja Reddy, hold that after Bala amma, it is Saroja amma who represented the best in Bharatanatyam as both dance and music meshed and merged well and were of high standards. Many have respected her art. The Khokars

have paid some professional price for their integrity and honesty but they are highly respected and universally valued and admired for setting and maintaining high standards in dance.

M.K.Saroja has four sons: Hariharan, an IAS allied; Nandan, a scientist-inventor; Ashish, dance critic-historian, and Vivek, in the hotel trade. She has 5 grandchildren in all (Prarthana, Karan, Ishan, Aneesh and Kripa) till date. But anyone who comes in contact with her becomes family for she is genuine, warm and affectionate to all. Her smile is her best ornament, wrote Anjana Rajan in The Hindu. (May 2008).

Guru Saroja is the most continuously documented dancer of India. Some dancers have photos only of their peak, not childhood; others have only end years. Not from birth to end. Thanks to Mohan Khokar - also an ace documenter and pioneer in dance photography - she has photos spanning 75 years. Not just hers, but her gurus, their village, her friends, contemporaries and more. Two documentary films on her dance have been made in the 70s by the Theatre Dept University of Rome and one by Lamorisse in France. Lamorisse's best half Claude became Ram's partner later and came and stayed with Saroja at her Madras home. She has been a regular visitor to Mandappa in Paris, thanks to her first French student Milena Salvini, where since the 70s she has trained over 200 students and some of these are now training the next generation. Most of her students





Gurus Meenakshi Sundaram and Muthukumaran Pillai with MK Saroja

Pic: Mohan Khokar



Shooting for film by Rome University

Receiving Padma Award from Pratibha Patil, President of India





are like her: tradition-bound, maintaining margam format; and sticking to cultural contexts of showing real respect to a guru, gift of gods and Saraswati's grace. Like M.K. Saroja, none are seeking fame or name and are devoted to art, not a reflection of glory for self through art.

"M.K.Saroja has always remained simple and humble in front of her art, her guru and her audiences." (Fernau Hall, London, 1975). There is no one who talks ill of her in any city. She has had a genial personality, always smiling and warm-hearted. She remains a quintessential bhakta of Bharatanatyam and has quietly served her art. She has trained many, many students in Paris, over 200, where she taught every summer for almost 30 years from 1970-2000 and among these Vidya ranks majorly and continues her art significantly while Jyoti, Ambika, Sylvia, Edith, Shalini, Shanti (all got Indian names from their guru!), continue her art. In India, while many senior dancers learnt specific items from her, those who learnt properly and regularly are Shobana Radhakrishna, Nupur, Arup Ghosh- Sylvia. She did not take many students in India as most wanted to be famous before they even became a dancer! The family being important in dance, never encouraged corruption or short cuts. Called "the first family of Indian dance" by S. Ranjit in India Today (2009), the Khokars have striven to maintain ethics and integrity of and in art.



Governor Prabhudas Patwari felicitates

Pic: Ashish Khokar | At home with Ram Gopal and Mohan Khokar



Thanks to senior dancers like Leela Samson, ex-chair-SNA, who respect her much and speak for her, a Padma award came her way in 2011 and she was made an SNA

Tagore Fellow in 2012. In the dance fraternity, she is respected and valued by all, especially those who have seen her in her active years. Sonal Mansingh always



With her son, Ashish Khokar



shows respect by touching her feet; Padma Subrahmanyam has called her a gem on stage and guru Kalyanasundaram prostrated fully on Kalakshetra stage when he heard Saroja-ma was in the hall. Diva Alarmel Valli is her fan and Guru Birju Maharaj danced with her. Gurus Kelubabu and Vedantam Satyanarayana shared the last show of hers, the trio performing an impromptu Kasturi Tilakam on Bangalore stage, Dec

30, 1999, organised by Pratibha Prahlad. She is the benchmark in humility and good graces. A true artiste, she took leave of the stage after her husband and later her singer, died. Sitting in her house by the seaside in outer Madras, she looks at almost 90 years, 75 of which she spent in dance, amusingly, with no ego and no attachment. MK Saroja is thus a true bhakta of Bharatanatyam.



# RAYS HOPE



## PRATIVA PANDA: A VERSATILE ARTISTE

Text: **Paul Nicodemus**



Her abhinaya communicates the Rasas and Bhavas with clarity, her mudras depict the finer elements, her body language emotes both lasya and tandav and amalgamation of these elements makes her a human ensemble of Odissi classical dance. Many consider her as a torchbearer of Deba Prasad Gharana in Odissi dance tradition. Prativa Panda is an Odissi dance exponent, Odia cine and television artist, social worker and festival organiser.

Prativa was born in Bhubaneswar on June 17, 1971. She started to dance in her 7th standard. When a dance institute was established in her colony, her father made her pursue dance. Her father, Prahlad Sahu, was an all-rounder - a scientist, sportsman and theatre artiste. He always pushed her to pursue different things. The place she was living had a good artistic vibe and she performed whenever there was an opportunity. Prativa had a challenging childhood as her mother Pramila fell ill

Prativa Panda and her daughter





with a mental condition. She had to take care of her two brothers and household activities. Despite the responsibilities, she continued to pursue her academics and dance.

She learnt Odissi under the tutelage of Durga Charan Ranbir in the style of Guru Debi Prasad Das. After completing her class 10, along with his guru she went out to perform on various platforms. During the same period, she also got an opportunity to act in an Oriya movie. She balanced her family, dance and acting well. "I got an opportunity to act in the movies because I am a dancer," she says. Her cousin helped to get her an opportunity to act in the Oriya movie and her father encouraged her to learn something new. Pancha Pandav (1988) was her first movie.

She continued her dance and acting for 5 years. Then tragedy struck, and she met with a severe accident in 1993. She had 17 stitches on her face and lost her memory. "Whatever I am after the accident, I consider it to be my new life. I had a memory loss and forgot everything except dance," she shares. The doctor advised her father to let her pursue her interests, and he encouraged her. She chose to dance and gradually

improved on it. She got a senior scholarship from the ministry of culture and continued her dance journey. She once again performed with her guru and travelled across India and even gave performances abroad.

She completed her class 10 from Vani Vihar High School, Bhubaneswar, higher secondary in arts from RD Women's College, Bhubaneswar, and degree from Shri



Guru Durga Charan Ranbir and Prativa Panda

## Prativa Panda



Jagannath Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, Puri. Besides, regular academics, she completed 'Alankar' from Akhila Bharatiya Gandharva Mandal, Mumbai; 'Bhaskar' in Odissi Dance from Pracheen Kala Kendra, Chandigarh, and 'Sangeet Visharad' in Odissi vocals from Pracheen Kala Kendra, Chandigarh. Prativa was chosen as a fellow of the then ministry of human resource development (now ministry of tourism and culture), Government of India, New Delhi, and received junior fellowship for the project 'Evolution in Choreography in Odissi Dance'. She also received a senior fellowship from CCRT under the aegis of the ministry of culture, Government of India.

In 1997, Prativa got married to Manmohan Panda, a film producer. After her marriage, she continued to dance for the next 3 years and gave birth to a girl child, Aditi in 2001. She took a break from dance and then established her own dance institution named Nrutya Pratiba in 2000. She trained students and frequently gave performances along with them. "After starting my school, because people knew me, we were frequently invited by organisers to perform at various places," she says.

Along with performing, she also organised an annual festival and conducted workshops. After a successful seven-year period, she had a chat with her husband and established 'International Chausathi Yogini Mahotsav' and it has now turned into one of the major festivals of Odisha. "It has been 12 years since we started the festival and over the years it grew into one of the biggest festivals

of Odisha. The who is who of the dance community in India has been a part of the festival. From chief minister to ministers, everybody knows me as Prativa Panda Chausathi Yogini," she says.

Raising funds and getting sponsors for the festival is a challenge she faces every year. "It is difficult to go around like a dance artiste to get a sponsor. Film and dance fields are different. I am a VIP in the film fraternity but as an artsite, I am a normal person. There is a difference," she explains.

She donned different hats and balances them effectively as a wife, mother, dance performer, dance teacher, actor and social worker. Apart from dance, she is interested in playing cricket, traveling and looking after pets.

She is the secretary, Nrutya Prativa; secretary, Chausathi Yogini Mahotsav Committee; examiner of Odisha Sangeet Natak Academy; life member Odia Cine Artist Association, managing trustee, Prativa Trust; Trustee, Prativa Orphanage, Bhubaneswar, and board director of Odisha Film Development Corporation.



Pic: Paul Nicodemus | Prativa Panda



Prativa formulated novel choreographic patterns and choreographed many dance pieces. These include 'Kavya Kalpa' - depicting the Oriya poetics and its evolution; 'Anyā' - written by famous Oriya poet Rajendra Kishore Panda; 'Dayana Phula Chori' - a story based on a popular legend from Lord Jagannath Cult; 'Bapu Pari Ame Heba' - the life history of the father of our nation; 'Chha Rutu' - describing the festivals of six seasons; 'Durga Stuti' - a story based on demon Mahishasura killed by Goddess Durga; 'Pancha Bhoot' - the five elements of human body (fire, soil, water, air and sky); 'Chausathi Yogini' - how goddess Mahamaya killed Demon Raktabirja creating 64 Yoginis; 'Nataraj Rutu Ranga Shala' - written by Biswa Kavi Rabindranath Tagore; 'Gandhari Abhisampata' - a story adapted from 'Sarla Mahabharat'; 'Jagannath Ashtakam' - written by Adi Shankaracharya; 'Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya' - a life sketch of Pandit Dindayal.

Prativa has performed all across India and received rave reviews and appreciation from the audience. She also performed abroad in Kazakhstan, Bangkok (Thailand), Kuwait and Malaysia.

Social work is at the heart of Prativa and she is an active member of Rotary Club, Bhubaneswar Royal. She regularly takes part in health camps, blood donation camps, social forestry, care for downtrodden and physically handicapped children.



Prativa has not confined herself to dance but has shown her prowess in acting in Odia feature films and TV serials in a lead role. She is also a camera audition artist for both drama and Odissi dance for Doordarshan Kendra, Bhubaneswar. She is an 'A' grade Odissi Dancer for Doordarshan Kendra, New Delhi.

She has acted in several films including Panchu Pandav; Rajanigandha; Chaka Akhi Sabu Dekhuchi; Hisaba Kariba Kalia; Hasa Luhabhara Duniya; Kandhei; Ja Debi Sarbabhuteshu; Loot Taraj; Daadagiri; Akasara Akhi; Gadhi Janile Ghara Sundara; Emiti Bhai Jagate Nahni; Mahua; Kalinga Putra; A Mana Mane Na; Prema Adhei Akhyara; Mate Bohu Kari Nei Ja; Mo Dunia Tu hi Tu; Omm; Lekhichhi Na Tora; Samaya Bada Balaban; Tiger; Romeo Juliet; Abhaya; Biswanath and Prema Pain Mahabharat.

Some of her TV serials and telefilms in Hindi include: Antardaha (DDK New Delhi); Khanda Dhar (Tele Films); Document Kavi Samrat Upendra Bhanj (DDK, New Delhi). In Odia she has performed in Toshu Nohila Mora Chita; Haire Phula Gacha Kahniki Malu; Kichi Khatta Kichi Mitha; Mahajagnya; Suna Kalasha; Bou; Rajaniti (Tarang); Jhimiti Khela Ru Mahabharat; Aasha Ra Aakash (Zee Kaling); Kumkum (Colours Odia); Manini (Sarthak TV); Pari (Sarthak TV); Jeeban Sathi (Sarthak TV) and others.

For a contribution towards arts, she has received many awards and accolades. Some of them include 'A' grade Odissi dancer for DDK, New Delhi; Cine Critic Award; Snehi Samaj Award; Snehi International Award; Capital Poster Award; Dharitri Samman; Chalachitra Jagat Award; Banichitra Award; Senior Dance Scholarship from department of culture, Government of India; Rajiv Gandhi Sadbhavana Award; Junior & Senior Fellowship from CCRT, Government of India; Professor Kahgeswar Mohapatra Award; Rangam, (Silver Jubilee) Award; Krishna Dance Group, Khurda; Sabuja Samman (Prerana); Chinta -O- Chetana Baisakhi Samman; Aji Kali Ra Julam Samman (monthly newspaper); Utkal Social and Cultural Association, Guwahati; Odisha M.E. School Teachers Association; Washington State, USA and India Trade Action Committee Dignitaries; Neel Shaila Samman; Annual Day of Sambada Keshari; Kuwait Odisha Association Award and Guru Debaprasad Smruti Samman.

Prativa feels that today's generation already has a lot of knowledge and what they need now is somebody to guide them in the right direction. "They have to choose a good guru and learn dance diligently. With patience and hard work, anyone can become a good dancer," she concludes.

Prativa Panda





# THE DANCE INDIA INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS 2019

Text and Pics: **Paul Nicodemus**



**Geeta Narayan**

Keeping up with the tradition of celebrating the lives and work of women achievers on International Women's Day, The Dance India has once again recognised and honoured 11 female artistes from varied Indian classical dance styles in a ceremony at Kalabharathi Auditorium in Visakhapatnam on March 8.

On the occasion, Padma Bhushan recipient Dr Saroja Vaidyanathan was honoured with the 'Legend' award for her immense contribution towards the art form of Bharatanatyam. Speaking on the occasion, she lauded the efforts of The Dance India magazine and its editor, BR Vikram Kumar, for making a difference in the field of Indian art and culture.

'Torchbearer' award was presented to Padma Shri recipient Bharati Shivaji for her contribution towards Mohiniyattam, Padma Shri recipient Aruna Mohanty for her contribution towards Odissi and Sangeet Natak Akademi recipient Rama Vaidyanathan for her contribution towards Bharatanatyam. Kuchipudi artiste

Sudagani Geeta Narayan was presented the 'Beacons of Light' award for being an inspiration to aspiring artistes. Roopa Kiran for Bharatanatyam, Achutamanasa for Kuchipudi and Voleti Sree Rekha for Simhanandini received 'Rays of Hope' awards. Seuli Mukherjee Chatterjee for Bharatanatyam, Chandrika Agarwal for Kathak and Aishwarya Narayan for Bharatanatyam received 'Kindled Spirit' awards.

Komali Krishna, IRS, additional commissioner of income tax, Hyderabad, graced the occasion as the chief guest for the International Women's Day celebrations and presented the awards to artistes. Sudagani Ravishankar



**Aishwarya  
Narayan**

Narayan, additional commissioner of income tax, Visakhapatnam, was also present during the ceremony.

Earlier in the evening, Sudagani Geeta Narayan, Seuli Mukherjee Chatterjee and Aishwarya Narayan performed their respective art forms and garnered appreciation from the guests and audience. Compère



**Seuli Mukherjee  
Chatterjee**

Dr Perala Balamuralikrishna needs a special mention for his quality and clarity.



**Guests**



### Guru Dr Saroja Vaidyanathan

Padma Bhushan and Bharatanatyam Exponent

Saroja Vaidyanathan is an inspirational persona, an exemplary artiste and a living legend. She is a recipient of Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awards presented by the Government of India. Hailing from an orthodox family at Bellary, Karnataka, she was born on September 19, 1937. Her tryst with dance began at the age of 7 years. She learnt under the tutelage of Guru Lalithamma, a disciple of Thanjavur Kattumannar Muthukumara Pillai. She has established Ganesa Natyalaya, a premier Bharatanatyam institute in New Delhi.



### Guru Bharati Shivaji

Padma Shri and Mohiniyattam Exponent

She is an embodiment of the South Indian art form Mohiniyattam - an art form she has nurtured and given a new dimension and definition through her dedication and commitment. Born in the year 1948 in the temple town of Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu, she was naturally drawn to classical dance and music at an early age. After her initial training in Bharatanatyam under Guru Lalitha Shastri and Odissi



under the legendary exponent Kelucharan Mohapatra, on the advice of Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, a renowned social reformer and freedom fighter, she took up research on Mohiniyattam as a research fellowship from Sangeet Natak Academy. She pursued her work under the tutelage of Kavalam Narayana Panicker, a scholar Temple Arts of Kerala and thereafter took up training in the art form Mohiniyattam under Guru Radha Marar, Guru Kalamandalam Satyabhama and Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma. She has established Centre for Mohiniyattam in Delhi.



### Guru Aruna Mohanty

Padma Shri and Odissi Exponent

Guru Aruna Mohanty's astounding talent defying stereotyping and amalgamating unconventionality renders a new definition to the dance form Odissi while preserving the basic structure and its aesthetics. She was trained and nurtured under the able guidance of Padma Shri recipient Guru Gangadhar Pradhan. Making a humble beginning as a student of the Orissa Dance Academy (ODA), she has grown into a respected performer, teacher, choreographer and administrator.



### Rama Vaidyanathan

Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee and Bharatanatyam Exponent

A master performer with sublime virtuosity, a brilliant dancer, fascinating storyteller and an eloquent orator, Guru Rama Vaidyanathan is the most celebrated Bharatanatyam dancers of her generation. She is recipient of Sangeet Natak Akademi Award by the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi under the ministry of culture, Government of India. It was her mother's dream to see her become a dancer and it was facilitated by her first guru, legendary dancer Yamini Krishnamurthy. She was further guided by her mother-in-law and renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Guru Saroja Vaidyanathan. The three powerful women, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Saroja Vaidyanathan and her mother played a pivotal role in nurturing her into an accomplished dancer.



### Sudagani Geeta Narayan

Kuchipudi Artiste

Her soulful rendition of the art form is a treat to watch. Her beautiful and large eyes emote the right expression as she effortlessly gets into the role of the characters. She exudes grace in her angika abhinaya and satvika abhinaya. Her eloquent sense of rhythm and perfect mudras coupled with dedication and undulating spirit to triumph has made her into



one of the finest Kuchipudi artistes. Sudagani Geeta Narayan has been training in Kuchipudi, the classical dance of Andhra Pradesh, under the tutelage of KV Lakshmi, principal and secretary of Nataraj Music and Dance Academy, Visakhapatnam, for the past few years. Her spouse, Ravishankar Narayan, IRS, has been a pillar of strength in her terpsichorean pursuit. Her story of embracing classical dance of Kuchipudi in her late 30s and the determination shown to emulate professional standards in a short span of time is epic. She was born in Jangareddygudem of West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh.



### Roopa Kiran

Bharatanatyam Artiste

Hailing from the princely city of Mysore at the foot of Chamundi Hills, she is a reflection the city's opulence and affinity to art forms. She is groomed under the tutelage of Guru Dr Vasundhara Doraswamy. Roopa Kiran is a committed teacher who has refined rhythm and abhinaya. She is the founder director of Laasya School of Dance in Hong Kong. Promoting the beauty of Indian classical dance forms, she has embodied it in the annual dance festival - Lasyostava. As true ambassador of Indian culture abroad, she was conferred the 'Wonder Book of Records International' for promoting and spreading Indian culture and arts abroad.



### Voleti Sree Rekha

Kuchipudi Artiste

She underwent rigorous training under her mother, Guru Kalaratna Voleti Rangamani, in Hyderabad and obtained proficiency in traditional Kuchipudi repertoire. She also obtained advanced training in Devalaya Aaradhana Nrityams. Her grandfather, CR Acharyulu was an internationally renowned guru of Kuchipudi and temple dances. She is currently propagating these dance items all over India and abroad along with her mother. Devalaya Aradhana Natyams include Simhanandini, Mayura Kauthuvam and Mahalakshmi Udbhava in which the dancer forms the holy portraits like lion, peacock and lotus with foot work.



### Seuli Mukherjee Chatterjee

Bharatanatyam artiste

Seuli Mukherjee Chatterjee hails from the literary capital of the country, Kolkata. A danseuse par excellence, she has endeavoured to bring the art form to prominence in the far east of the country and metaphorised the same in the midst of prevalent art forms like Odissi, Manipuri and the likes. An ardent choreographer and a teacher of



eminence, Seuli made her initial foray into dance under the tutelage of Guru Thankamani Kutty at the age of 18. She was awarded the National Scholarship by the ministry of culture, Gol in 2009-10. She has established 'Nriyangan Kala Kendra' in Kolkata and Howrah.



**Chandrika Agrawal**  
Kathak Artiste

Her eloquence in rhythm and perfect mudras coupled with dedication and undulating spirit to triumph has made her one of the finest Kathak artistes. She has been teaching the underprivileged and runs a school Riddhi Siddhi foundation in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. She has done her Honours in Fine Arts and B.Ed from CCS University, Meerut. Apart from dance, she was a finalist in Mrs India beauty pageants.



**Aishwarya Narayan Kudtarkar**  
Bharatanatyam artsite

She was born to Mamatha and Aarun and took to dance like a swan takes to water. She was tutored by Guru M Gopal. She has been blessed with grace and rhythm. She has won a scholarship Shimoga in 2015. She has done her Rangapravesam in 2016. Despite being a young dancer, she has already achieved a lot and made a foray in to the world of dance.



The 60th Anniversary Logo of Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) being released by Padma Bhushan recipient Saroja Vaidyanathan, Padma Shri recipient Bharati Shivaji, Padma Shri recipient Aruna Mohanty, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award recipient Rama Vaidyanathan, Komali Krishna, IRS, "Additional Commissioner of Income Tax, Hyderabad and other artistes on the occasion of International Women's Day 2019.

# LOK SAMSKRITI SAMVARDHANAM AT BHU, VARANASI



Text: **Nita Vidyarthi, Cultural Critic**  
Pics: **Dr Vidhi Nagar**

The department of dance, faculty of performing arts, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, organised a three-day international seminar on "Global Folk Culture: Traditions and Reflections"-Vaishvik Lok Sanskriti: Parampara aur Pratibimb III- in association with the Sangeet Natak Akademi at its Pandit Omkarnath Thakur Auditorium recently. In an effort to break boundaries that existed locally, the third edition of 'Lok Samskriti Samvardhanam' in Hindi, saw renowned artists, scholars and experts global and local on the same



**Dr. Vandana Purguss, Mauritius**



**Thailand Group**

## Book release



platform, performing, discussing and interacting at multiple levels. Intellectuals from different parts of the country were invited as speakers in the open forum which saw active participation and interaction of the audience comprising many students and research scholars. Two very useful books were launched on this occasion; one on music and another on dance authored by young P. Medini Hombal entitled "Universal Dance and Drama"-the English along with its Hindi version.

Academic discussions, seminars and interactive sessions gave a panoramic view of folk culture and illuminated and enriched the audience. Performing artists, scholars and intellectuals offered their concerns on the preservation of folk culture, stressing the analogy of geographical identities with culture through power-point presentations or live performances. Since folk art, folk food, folk music and dance are the significant representatives of our civilisation, the need for cultural mapping, preparation of directories of folk artists, analysis of oral traditions, propagation through 'Srutit' and 'Smritit' were some of the recommendations that emerged out of the discussions.

The day-long seminars and performances opened with the keynote address by Dr Manoj Srivastava (Bhopal). This was followed by an enriching lecture by professor Rakesh Bhatnagar, vice- chancellor, B.H.U, on the folk art form, their studies, relevance to culture and identity



Sri Lanka

## Sri Lanka



of a nation and the merging of interest between ethnochoreologists and ethnomusicologists for an holistic approach and development in traditional or indigenous performing arts to make it more meaningful. Preservation of traditions and connection with it, without disregarding them, were the prime concerns of the speakers of the opening sessions. Dr. Archana Sharma (Varanasi) traced the analogy of tradition and folk rituals of the worship of the Sun God in India, Egypt and in the Middle East but could not hit the main point. Sharad Dandage spoke of different percussions instruments related to folk traditions especially dance and music and offered a fine recital with his group. Subsequent sessions on the following two days concentrated on the power-point presentations of different folk instruments, a very interesting account of Ramlila in the village and its social impact through a performance by Shanti Swaroop Sinha. Vandana Purgus from Mauritius offered detailed imagery of the preservation of the different cultural and national identities of the heterogeneous communities of the country who celebrate the rituals and festivals of their land of origin in their own way but with amity with others. Dr H. Anjali Mishra (Sri Lanka) gave an account of the various types of dances not only from birth to death rituals but striking and humorous ones like the removal of ghosts (Bhoot), bad souls and spirits from those possessed with it by a group of specialised dancers!



The chase of golden stag by Thailand

## Assam SNA group NE India



A series of recommendations converged on the urgent need to find solutions for protection of the folk traditions and connect it with the culturally structured movement system of the present.

However, the highest form of self-expression came through the uncommon and stellar performances by the participatory nations. The amalgamation of cultures though centred on dances, adopted theatre too. The North East group of the Sangeet Natak Akademi presented three vibrant folk dance forms under the guidance of the renowned Mukul Rabha. He gave a short yet vibrant introduction followed by performance. 'Hamjar' (soil) dance of the Rabha tribes of Assam is the most popular ancient agricultural tradition observed during their "Jhoom" cultivation. It was interesting to watch men and women in a joyous harvest dance, singing with various agricultural tools, with the tunes of the Brangchi (flute) and Daidi (Cymbals) and the rhythm of the Dhak/Kham (drum) with the lyrics "Riba Riba Fui Riba". Bodo women with untied hair, holding scarves in one hand and "Khonjori" (Wooden clappers) on the other, forming a chain fascinated with "Bardaichikhla" dance dedicated to the Goddess of Storm and Water accompanying the song "Maar deyee Sikhola". Their frenzy caught on to the young audience and of course, no folk dance of Assam is complete without Bihu- the



Sharda Sinha

## Gajaka varnam by Sri Lanka



Rangoli, Kangali and Bhogali (Maghi) Bihus performed at three different seasons -Spring, Autumn and Winter (During Makar Sankranti). The audience responded highly with the rhythms as well as the joyous shouts at times.

Dr Ramesh Kumar Pokharel spoke briefly on the folk dances of Nepal with a highly enjoyable performance by his group. Reflecting the aesthetic sense of the people of Nepal six dancers some clad with peacock feathers presented "charia" with Tantric traditions, homage to Manjushree, God of Wishes, with the music of flowing



Bihu dancers Assam (Rabha Group)

## Ying Roong, Thailand



water, giving eloquent and imaginative expressions to Jhangad dance of the valleys and a Tamang solo fermented with mixed culture. "Krishna Charita" by a little girl needs special mention and so does Tappa dances - not the Hindustani music style- of the Gurung community.

Ms Ying Roong's power-point presentation on Ramakien-the Ramayan in Southeast Asia and the detailed discussion of its performance led to a gratifying presentation, familiar yet very different. She explained how the characters and their nomenclature in Khon dances are slightly different and varies a bit in the

interpretation of the story from the common Indian one. Her lecture was engrossing and the performance stunning. A slice of Thailand's Khon dance emerged in "The Chase of the Golden Stag", an episode from the Thai Ramayana Ramakien. Shimmering costumes, dazzling headgear and poised delicate execution made the performance captivating.

Finally, the tall elegant dancers of Sri Lanka offered stylised, explorations of expressions in 'Sohag' dances, Jhakni, Ramabhajanam Simhagri, Gajaka Varnam and Kandyan dances that were a treat to watch.

The highlight and the most popular part of the event was the hour-long vocal recital of Padmabhushan by Sharda Sinha from Patna. Known as Bihar Kokila (The Cuckoo of Bihar), she is immensely popular for her Chhath Puja Songs and was welcomed with thundering applause. She punctuated her recital with interesting anecdotes of herself revealing the Mythili culture as her powerful voice reverberated with "Aamua Mahua ke Jhumej Dalia", "Neka Chukaiya Dwarke", "Dukh Kahan Harabo More Hey Bholeynath", Sanskaar Geet (the Haldi ritual), Biraha, Bhojpuri songs and the famous song of Chhat "Sona Shatkuniya Hey Dinanath".

Renowned Bharatanatyam guru professor Premchand Hombal and Dr Vidhi Nagar, head of the dance department B.H.U, and convener of the event, must be lauded for organising such a worthy presentation.



North East Group of Sangeet Natak Akademi

# INDIAN ARTISTS' FRATERNITY PAYS TRIBUTE TO PULWAMA MARTYRS

Text **Mandira Ghosh**, Cultural Critic  
Pcis: **Paul Nicodemus**



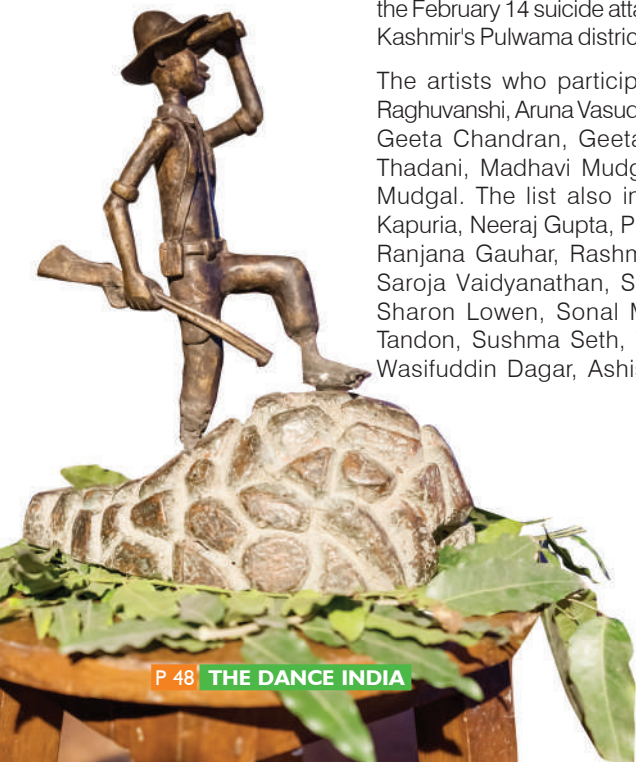
In a solemn and peaceful evening atmosphere at India International Centre, New Delhi, on March 17, 2019, members of India's classical artists' fraternity paid tribute to the 40 CRPF troopers who were killed in the February 14 suicide attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district.

The artists who participated were: Alka Raghuvanshi, Aruna Vasudev, Bharati Shivaji, Geeta Chandran, Geetanjali Lal, Lavlin Thadani, Madhavi Mudgal and Madhup Mudgal. The list also included: Naresh Kapuria, Neeraj Gupta, Prathibha Prahlad, Ranjana Gauhar, Rashmi Vaidyalingam, Saroja Vaidyanathan, Shanno Khurana, Sharon Lowen, Sonal Mansingh, Sunit Tandon, Sushma Seth, Vidya Shah and Wasifuddin Dagar, Ashish Kokar, Rama

Pandey, Prerana Srimali, Saswati Sen and above all Shovana Narayan.

The artists made 4-5 minutes presentations using music, dance, Romi Chhabra's recitations and arts to pay homage to the brave martyrs who sacrificed their lives for their motherland. Kathak doyen and former civil servant Shovana Narayan spearheaded the gathering along with Naresh Kapuria. Both conceptualised the event which was unique and distinct as the artists expressed solidarity for the martyrs of the Pulwama attack and their families through soul-stirring music, abhinaya, dance, addresses, anecdotes and recitations.

Before entering the Multipurpose Hall of India International Centre, all of them signed on the canvas and assembled in the foyer to light the lamp to begin the event. The programme included beautiful poetry by Shovana Narayan, who addressed the gathering by saying that when on February 14 the entire world was celebrating love, brave hearts at Pulwama laid down their lives for us.





Patriotic songs like "Ye Mere Watan Ke Logo" by Gitanjali Lal and "Vaishnava Janato" by Vidya Shah echoed. Rama Pandey and Lavlin Thadani recited soul-stirring poems in Hindi and English, respectively. Famous dancers, Gita Chandran hailed and danced to the music of "Victory to the motherland". In white, green and golden attire, Bharati Shivaji danced to the Sanskrit hymn and enchanted the audience. Madhup Mudgal said best things were felt in the heart and not seen. Aruna Vasudev revived her memory of pre-partition days and how happy she was to receive Indian passport in Lahore. Madhavi Mudgal danced to a shloka from Atharva Veda and Ranjana Gauhar and her students performed

brilliantly paying homage to Goddess Saraswati. Dr Saroja Vaidyanathan expressed her feelings through her incomparable abhinaya, capturing the spirit of the wife and mother of soldiers before and after the attack, and Pratibha Prahlad concluded with a dance to a patriotic song saluting the soldiers of India.

It was a blissful and memorable moment in Indian history when the session began with Shanoo Khurana's melodious voice echoing in the auditorium and Romi Chhabra reading a poem in Punjabi that touched the hearts of the august audience. The poem was written for Kargil martyrs. Sushma Seth very appropriately mentioned, "With martyr's blood, our gardens flower."







Each of the participants, who are respected names in their individual fields were superb in their performances and invoked peace. Expressions like 'river of tears', 'one who has gone will never return', 'who won, who lost?' made the audience extremely emotional. Recitation of Shanti Mantra and the performances along with it were remarkable.

CRPF Jawans, present in the Hall, were applauded by the august gathering as the canvas with signatures of 30 artists was presented to DG CRPF by Naresh Kapuria. The book titled 'From Kargil to Pulwama' published by Shubhi publications was also released.



## KIRATHA VILASAM IS THIS YAKSHAGANAM?

Is the stature of UGC Major Projects going down?

**Text: Dr Tadepalli, Secretary, Bhagavata Mela**

**Pics: Paul Nicodemus**



**A**s Yakshaganam artiste, dance researcher and cultural critic, I am writing this review about Kiratha Vilasam, Yakshaganam presentation collaboratively organised by the department of music and dance, Andhra University, and Kuchipudi Kala Kendram at Kalabharathi Auditorium in Visakhapatnam on March 29.

To begin with, it was nice to document and send the ballet to University Grants Commission (UGC) as a major research project. Guru AB Bala Kondala Rao, a disciple of master Vempati Chinna Satyam, is world renowned for continuing the guru-shishya parampara and I would be the first person to wish that all the experiments presented by her be scientific and serve as pathfinders for people. Professor A Anuradha, Department of Music and Dance, Andhra University is an experienced person in dance and for documenting something like a UGC major project, she should not

have taken only Yakshagana literature or music but additionally, the ballet should have followed the Yakshagana pattern of traditional K u c h i p u d i Bhagavatulu which was devised according to Natya Shastra. Kiratha Vilasam was closer to Kuchipudi Dance Ballet rather than



**Guru AB Bala Kondala Rao on Nattuvangam**



**A sequence from Kiratha Vilasam**

Yakshaganam. I can strongly say that the presentation does not qualify or have the eligibility to be called a Yakshaganam. Selecting traditional ragas does not make a Kuchipudi ballet a Kuchipudi Yakshaganam because there is a particular pattern involved in it and Yakshagana ragas have a unique bhava, bani and virupulu. Also in Yakshagana sangeetam, mitralu plays an important role and these elements were missing in Kiratha Vilasam.

According to tradition and parampara, Yakshagana follows the sequence - Nandi Stuti, Punyavachanam, Ganapati Prardhana, Amba Prardhana and then the Sutradhar narrates the plot. Kiratha Vilasam partially missed the order. Punyavachanam was done first and then Nandi Stuti, Amba Prardhana and Ganapati Prardhana were performed. To make matters worse, organisers stopped the performance in the middle and conducted a ceremony. The performance once started should go on till Mangalam. I feel Kuchipudi Yakshagana presentations should not be like political meetings.

## A sequence from Kiratha Vilasam



Coming to the performance part, parents and relatives of nearly 40 artistes packed the auditorium, and it was natural for them to clap and applaud the performers. But looking at it from the point of Yakshaganam, the characters and their costumes resembled Kuchipudi dance ballet rather than Yakshaganam. The artiste, Aditya Bullibrahmam, who portrayed the character of Shiva, did not look like Shiva but resembled Veerabhadra. On his own, Aditya is an amazing artiste with brilliant technique and timing, but he should have concentrated on his attire and costume too. Rama Kavi has expounded on the main qualities of a dancer in 'Nartaka Lakshana Vidhi' and said the dancer should be handsome, eloquent with language and capable of emoting rasas and bhavas. He should not have a moustache and have a smiling face. On various occasions, I have advised Aditya to perform without the moustache and beard when he performs solos, but he feels that men should have a moustache. Yes, men should have a moustache but not the dancer who is continuing a parampara on stage. As the son of Guru Bala Kondala Rao, who is continuing the legacy of Padma Bhushan recipient Vempati Chinna Satyam, Aditya has a responsibility to follow the tradition. I hope that he would concentrate on his aharaya in the coming days. When you look at Shiva in Vempati's ballets, He always looked real. Lord Shiva stayed away from excessive ornaments and jewellery except for a few occasions like weddings. While Shiva was endowed with matted hair, Aditya resembled Veerabrahmam with his long moustache. Dancers on the stage need to have more coordination and act according to the decorum of their characters.

Kiratha Vilasam works when you look at it as a Kuchipudi dance ballet, but it lacks commitment when you look at it as a Yakshaganam presentation. The artistes who performed Nattuvangam and accompaniment did a fabulous job in their own right. I should appreciate Pavani for her effort. Not only selecting few ragas but those selected ragas should be capable of expressing the bhavas, virupulu and mitralu of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam

## Guests on the dais



tradition. I hope that she would continue to do a great job in the days to come.

Another instance which looked uncomfortable during the performance was when someone of Guru Bala Kondala Rao's stature was performing nattuvangam on the stage, her son was in the costume and tried to overlap her by prompting or singing jathis in the backdrop. It did not sound right. In the days to come, they should rectify these mistakes. They should take the legacy created by master Vempati Chinna Satyam forward to the next generation and in order to do that, every department of presentation should cross-check their roles 10 times before presenting it to the public.

When a University level production is being sent to UGC as a major project to Delhi and aspires to win appreciation from everybody, they should not do it like a school annual day function by creating roles for all the available children to perform on stage. It looks odd to watch amateurs with no proper competence trying to perform in a ballet of this stature.

I still feel Guru Bala Kondala Rao must have left this production on the shoulders of her son Aditya because everybody knows that she has created amazing ballets in the past. If she concentrates on creating a ballet, she would create a masterpiece on the lines of master Vempati Chinna Satyam's ballets. I wish all the artistes would put in their best efforts and reach the standards expected from the students of Guru Bala Kondala Rao.



Aditya and Sri Varsha as Shiva and Parvati

# BAITHAK - PHAGUN AAYO RE

**K**athak Darpan Cultural Centre is a charitable trust founded by Kathak and Thumri exponent Late Guru Bireswar Gautam with an objective of promoting and propagating Indian classical dance and music. As a Kathak Darpan initiative, Natanam Studio for Performing Arts (NSPA) was established by his disciple Dr Piyush Raj as a creative space for all performing artists of Indian classical art forms.

Natanam Studio organises and hosts a Baithak - an evening of classical dance and music - once every two months with an aim to make classical dance and music accessible to everyone by hosting it in small intimate

cosy environments which encourage better interaction between the audience and the artistes. It promises a platform for all young upcoming artistes and also invites stalwarts and senior gurus and dancers to perform so that the audiences can witness the best of both.

The 5th edition of Baithak titled 'Phagun Aayo Re' was held on March 30. It began with a sitar recital by the talented and musically erudite Bhupal Panshikar. He played an alap Jod Jhala in raag Yaman and a brief Chaiti Desh Dhun which was also composed by him. The mellifluous notes Bhupal played were blessed with gayaki ang and his sitar spoke to the listeners.





It was followed by a blending of Khayal and Kathak in Khayali That exhibition. With the focus on the Thehraav aspect of the Indian arts, the movements of Kathak unfolded slowly to the notes of the Vilambit Khayal in raag Bageshri, expertly synchronised between Jayanthi Sundaram Nayak's full-throated, evocative bhava pradhan gayaki and Dr Piyush Raj's fluid, gently graceful and expressive That in Kathak as they explored 'Sakhi Man Lage Na'. Jayanthi also sang a robust and resonant 'Na Daro Rang Mope' in Drut Ektal, to complete the khayal. Together, Jayanthi and Piyush performed 'Baithki bhav' (in Kathak style) in a soulful vocal rendition in Bhairavi - 'Daro Na Daro Na... Moh Pe Rang...' the deliberate Dheema Laya of the Thumri with Piyush's Bhava delineation were a beautiful conclusion to this all too brief set which was lyrical, expressive and soulful. Tabla accompaniment by the versatile and seasoned Kaushik Basu and harmonium by the nimble and



melodious Vinod Padge enriched and enhanced the tone of the first half of the program.

Noted Bharatanatyam exponent Guru Kashmira Trivedi and her student Swati held centre stage after the short interval. The superb rendition of the traditional Ganesh Vandana and a Kriti - Bansi wale and Ashtapadi from Geet Govind - Yahi Madhava left viewers wanting more of this expressive and dedicated dancer. Their music was also very well woven into the whole evening's presentation.

The evening concluded with an Odissi recital by Guru Shubhada Varadkar and her disciples Mitali Varadkar, Shreya Sabharwal and Attrayee Chowdhury. The trio presented the pure dance aspect of Odissi in the Janasammohini Pallavi executed to perfection. Temple sculptures seemed to be coming alive during the performance! The immense talent, grace, bhava and expertise of Shubhada especially in the mesmerising presentation of the Ashtapadi from Geet Govind - Kuru yadu nandan - brought the evening to a resounding conclusion.

The Baithak had a full house audience. Many noted senior dancers like Latasana Devi (Manipuri exponent), Sandip Soparkar (ballroom dance exponent), Sharbani Mukherjee (actress), Shivaprasad (Carnatic musician and composer), and many other young and promising dancers encouraged the artistes with their presence in the audience.

**-Kashmira Trivedi,**  
Maharashtra





# 'LIVE YOUR DREAMS, LOVE YOURSELF'

Vibrant Woman 2019, a three-day event organised by Falcon Arts in association with XL Events and supported by Shiv Sahakar Sena, paid a tribute to all the women who are a reflection of the family they represent and the society they live in on March 8, 9 and 10. With the world talking of women empowerment and gender equality, their message for the third edition this year was 'Live your Dreams, Love Yourself'.

All three days of the event had mesmerising performances including Ganesh Vandana by students of Kashmiri Trivedi's institute Takshashila Nrityakala Mandir, fusion by Pallavi Mhaiskar, belly dance workshop by Chaitali Soparkar, Zumba session by TJ's Academy, performances by Blooming Dance Academy, Lavani by Pradnya, Mitali Inamdar's dance performance and guitar session by Meryl Dentas.

The evening took off with a fashion show for youth, women, mother and daughter and Saas and Bahu (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law). The event was supported by the National Institute Of Interior And Fashion Designing (NIIFD) which groomed all the participants in collaboration with Lakme Academy. Participants of the women categories were groomed by 'I deserve it' and Neelam Ahire, a makeup artist who has completed her master class of hairstyling in Moscow (Russia) at CMC Academy Mkhitarian Vazha. The fashion show was judged by Radha Raja, Jennifer Lobo Dias and Nazifa Khan.

The mayor of Thane, Meenakshi Shinde, youth icon and singer Reewa Rathod (daughter of Roop Kumar Rathod) and social media influencer Leslie Tripathy were among the guests of honour.

The programme was inaugurated in the presence of Shilpa Atul Sarpotdar, Shiv Sahakar Sena president, Ragini Barishetti, Vartak Nagar Prabhag Samiti president and TMC corporator, Parisha Sarnaik, TMC corporator, Jayshree David, TMC corporator, Sandeep



Tambe, secretary, Shiv Sahakar Sena, Manoj Pillai, Thane president of Shiv Sahakar Sena, Suman Vijayakar of Falcon Arts, Jital Golwala, Disha Gandhi; Chaitra Shetty and Binkle Gandhi of XL Events, Kashmiri Trivedi from Takshashila Nrityakala Mandir, Dr Namrataa Srivastav and core committee members of Shiv Sahakar Sena, Vanita Deshmukh, Lata Borole, (president - Thane rural), Anuya Misal (president - Thane city), Sarita Kadge (vice-president - Thane City), Sandeep Nate (president Owale - Majiwada, Rajesh Kajare (president - Thane Vidhan Sabha), Nitin Shivrame (president Prabhag No. 5) Prassana Jagtap (president - Prabhag No 4), Sanjay Surve (president - Prabhag No 14) Amit Kesarkar (vice-president - Prabhag No 5) Jayashree Solanki (vice-president - Prabhag No 5), Anuja Tipnis (vice-president - Prabhag No 4).

Meenakshi Shinde, mayor of Thane, presented Women Achievers Awards to artist Rajnandini for her achievement in the field of art & sculpture; Preeti Rane,





principal of Aatman Academy, for her achievements in the field of inclusive education for specially challenged and children with diverse-needs; Neeta Deolalkar for her achievement in the field of special education, Support & Care Centre for Cerebral Palsy & Autistic children & their parents; Sunita C Sinha for her achievement in the field of performing art under the banner Peepul - The Art Connect; Dr Arohi Tasgaonkar for her achievement in the field of gynaecology; Simrin Vijayakar for her achievements in the field of Latin Ballroom Dance and for following her passion by quitting her corporate job; Kashmira Trivedi for her achievement in the field of classical dance; Ruchi Verma for her achievement in the field of content writing and blogging; Dipti Uday Khutwal for her achievement in beauty and personality pageant; Pallavi Wesavkar & Trupti Wesavkar for their achievement in the field of architecture; Supriya Patil for her achievement in the field of women's hygiene & health; Sarita Dhanavade for her achievement in the field of agriculture and agro tourism; Saranya Gogate for her achievement in the field of acting & performance as a

child; Tejashree Alshi for her achievement in the field of fitness; Prachiti Chavan for her achievement in the field of origami and paper art; Arushi Gudhka for her achievement in the field of home baking and Tejashree N Balal for her achievement in the field of sports.

As a tribute to Pulwama Martyrs, an All Women Bike and Scooter Rally was organised in association with HUM Automobiles. It was flagged off by blogger, journalist and actress Leslie Tripathy on March 10.

Vibrant Women showcased a pet show which included a pet adoption facility. The three-day event also had over 20 stalls of shopping and food.

Vibrant Women 2019 was organised by Falcon Arts in association with XL Events and supported by Shiv Sahakar Sena. Manoj Pillai, Suman Vijayakar, Jital Golwala, Disha Gandhi, Binkle Gandhi, Chaitra Shetty, Nitin Shivrame and Amit Kesarkar planned and executed this event successfully.

**Kashmira Trivedi, Maharashtra**





Samidha Shinde

## @ANDHERI

The monthly programme of The Dance India magazine organised by Samidha's Institute of Performing Arts was conducted at Bagarka College, JB Nagar, Andheri East, on March 24. The programme witnessed performances by members of Taal Sanwad Academy, Andheri West, Mumbai.

Taal Sanwad is an institute imparting knowledge on India's historical art forms for almost two decades now. It was formed in 2006 with the blessings of late Pandit Mahadeorao Indorkar. The institute promotes Indian classical music by spreading the knowledge of music to the new generation.



Renuka. The audience enjoyed the performance of Kathak Tarana.

The tabla students presented Teen taal. The performance started with Peshkar by Pranati Kathavte and Dhanish Gadkari followed by Kayada by Dr Vinali and Shubham Banekar. The tabla performance ended with a few group performance of Tukadas.

Taal Sanwad expressed its heartiest gratitude to The Dance India and Samidha's Institute of Performing Arts for organising such event and providing them with an opportunity to exhibit their skills.

The disciples of distinguished gurus Manisha Satardekar (Kathak) and Subodh Satardekar (tabla) graced the occasion with their elegant and precise performances of Kathak Dance and Tabla Vadan.

The programme was heartily appreciated and enjoyed by the packed audience who were treated to the soothing and lively music of tabla and good Kathak dance performances by the Taal Sanwad students.

The performances included Kathak dances such as Ganesh and Saraswati Vandana done by all performers. As per Kathak Parampara, Teen tala was presented by Vedika More and Thumari Shringar rasa, 'Sab Ban Than Aayi Shyam Pyari Re' was presented by Renu Kashyap, Dipika Pant, Urvashi Bhavanath and Vedika. Bhajan, 'Vrindavan Kunj Bhawan Nachat Girdhari Re' was beautifully presented by Tanishka Thakur, Dipika and





Shamal Pawar

**@KURLA**



Vedika, The Dance India's monthly programme organised by Atharva School of Fine Arts - Dance Studio, was held at Kurla on March 17.

The performers, Charuta Malgaonkar and Kashmira Limaye, were disciples of Guru Mukta Joshi from Nrityadhara Kathak Research Institute, Thane. Both the artistes are talented in their art form. They complimented each other while performing the duet items excellently choreo-



graphed by their guru. It was an excellent presentation with lucid footwork and intensity showcasing their years of learning.

The second presentation of the day was a Hindustani vocal concert by Mithil Gawade, a disciple of Guru Umesh Mestry. He was accompanied by his brother, Khushal Gawade on tabla and his father, Gawade on harmonium. He delivered a brilliant performance. The exceptionally talented artiste was well supported by his family members who serve as accompanying musicians.





**Vrunda Upadhyay**

## @DOMBIVLI



The Dance India magazine's monthly programme, Vedika, in collaboration with Mudra Dance Academy supported by Vrunda Upadhyay, was held at Dombivli on March 10.

The programme started with a beautiful Bharatanatyam dance by the disciples of Madhavi Ganga from Chidambaram Dance Academy. They performed Ganesh Kauthavam in raga Gambhira Nattai and tala Adi, Mallari in raga Mishra Triputa and tala Adi and Thillana in raga Kadanakuthuhalam and tala Adi.

The next performance came from the disciples of Vaishali Dudhe of Manjiri Nrutyakala Mandir. They presented Kathak dance comprising Teentaal, Dhamar, Hori, Sadara and Ladi.

It was a beautiful event and the young audience was quite appreciative of the performances. The programme concluded with the felicitation of artistes with a certificate by a Regency committee member who graced the occasion.





**Rajan**

## @NAVI MUMBAI

**V**edika, the monthly programme organised by The Dance India at Sri Manikanda Seva Sangham, Nerul in Navi Mumbai on March 14 proved to be an excellent platform. In this edition, two proponents of Bharatanatyam and Mohiniyattam dance demonstrated their respective styles.

In the first part, Dr Priyanka Iyer, a disciple and daughter of Guru Shobhana Subramanian showcased the Bharatanatyam style of classical dance. Shobhana Subramanian's training in Bharatanatyam started at the age of 5 years, from Raj Rajeshwari Bharat Natyakala Mandir, under the able guidance of Guru Nagaraj Pillai, and later continued under Guru Mahalakshmi.

Shobhana's daughter, Priyanka Iyer is a dental surgeon who has been learning under the able guidance of her mother and guru from the age of 7 years. She performed Bharatanatyam in the Vazhuvoor and Kalakshetra style. She began her performance with an Alarippu (tisra jati) in raga Nattai. Being the first piece of Bharatanatyam Margam, Alarippu means flowering of the bud. It is an invocation to the Gods while offering respect to the audience. The second item was a Shabdham, which is the third item in a Bharatanatyam repertoire. The song was separated into different stanzas and between each stanza, one could witness 'Korvai' or Nritta stepping. She performed 'Thillai Ambalam Shabdham', a female devotee who was mesmerised by the dance of Lord Shiva, and describes the feeling that she experiences in the hope of uniting with Lord Nataraja. The intricate facial expressions and



elegant postures along with exquisite footwork was a treat to the audience.

The second half of the programme dealt with Mohiniattam, another style of classical dance from Kerala. Amala Mohan, daughter of late EKK Nayar, the founder of Lola Nrithya Niketh, performed Mohiniyattam. She has imparted training for Bharatanatyam and Mohiniyattam from various gurus like Chemancheri Kunhiraman, Vikraman, Srinivasan and Sushma and has performed on various stages in Mumbai. Currently, she conducts her own dance classes and prepares students for stage performances.

Her first performance was a Ganesh Stuti, worshipping Lord Ganesha, the remover of all the obstacles in tala Adi. The second performance was a Thillana. The song was in praise of Lord Padmanabha, another manifestation of Lord Krishna. In the item, equal importance was given to acting, intricate footwork and exquisite eye as well as body movements. The composition was in raga Dhanashree set to tala Adi, a brilliant composition of Swathi Thirunal. The dancer clearly delineated graceful and exquisite body movements, which is so intrinsic to Mohiniattam. Also, the expressions of the dancer mesmerised the audience. It was a successful and enjoyable programme.

- Julia Ghosh



# KISHORI AMONKAR: AN ISOLATED SINGER



Text: **Tejasri Bathina**

The late Kishori Tai Amonkar transcended many boundaries to create space for herself in the world largely dominated by men. Kishori, who was a role model, belongs to the Jaipur Gharana or a community of musicians sharing a distinctive musical style. She was meant for her micro-tunes. She would provide a different dimension to the whole structure of the raag (tune) on the basis of just one note. Thus she was called an icon of unique singing of songs. She was unconventional, abstract, yet deeply systematic. She found rhythm and aesthetics in the chaos among the many tones of thought and approach.

## Kishori's bygone:

A rebellious musician and fierce feminist, Kishori was born on April 10, 1931 in Mumbai. She received her initial music training under her mother Mogubai Kurdikar, a renowned Hindustani classical musician who hailed from the Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana. They are a rare mother-daughter duo to hold the legacy of this traditional music art. Aside from this, she was also nurtured under many tutors included Anwar Hussain Khan of Agra Gharana, Sharadchandra Arolkar of Gwalior Gharana, and Balkrishna Buwa Parvatkar. While learning the finer points



and techniques of the Jaipur Gharana from her mother, Amonkar also developed her own personal style, which reflects the influence of other gharanas and has generally been regarded as an individual variant of

the Jaipur tradition. She performed the lighter classical thumri repertoire, bhajan devotional songs, and film music. Regardless of musical genre, her performances were marked by vitality and grace. Many leading classical artistes might count live performances as their biggest source of fame, but Amonkar doesn't seem to care for them. She performs the way she wants to and when she wants to. She refused most of her performances abroad because she was 'uncomfortable in that environment'.

Kishori Amonkar was married to a school teacher Ravindra Amonkar in the year 1932, who left this world in the year 1992. The couple had two sons, Bibhas and Nihar, now both in their sixties.

Aside from being a renowned musician, Amonkar was a popular speaker and travelled throughout India giving lectures, most notably on the theory of rasa (feelings, emotions) in music.

## Some feathers in her cap:

For her brilliance in the art of music, she was awarded some civilian honours like Padma Bhushan in 1987, Padma Vibhushan in 2002, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in the year 1985 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship for 2009. She was also awarded the prestigious Dr TMA Pai Outstanding Konkani Award in 1991; she was one of seven recipients of the M.S. Subbulakshmi Award for classical music. Under her guidance, many students were nurtured and have become classical musicians of their own repute, including Nandini Bedekar, Raghunandan Panshikar, Suhasini Mulgaonkar, Pt Arun Dravid and Mira Panshikar.

Kishori breathed her last on April 3, 2011, a week before her 85th birthday, at her residence in Mumbai.

# CLASSIFIEDS

## KUCHIPUDI



**Nataraj Music & Dance Academy**  
Teacher: KV Lakshmi  
50-1-50/1, ASR Nagar, Seethammadara  
**Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India**  
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**Atharva School of Fine Arts**  
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**Kurla (E), Mumbai – 400024.**  
+91 99690 23246/ 9869272392.  
**Bharatanatyam and Folk Dance Classes,**  
Website-www.atharvaschool.com,  
Email-shamal@atharvaschool.com

## BHARATANATYAM



**Geeta Nritya Vidyalaya**  
Teacher: **Girija Nair**  
'Gurukul' 32/2 Powai Chowk behind  
Shastri Nagar, Saibaba Temple Mulund Colony  
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**Andaals fine arts**  
Teacher : **Madhuri Prathap**  
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## KATHAK



**Takshashila Nrityakala Mandir**  
Teacher: **Kashmira Trivedi**  
A - 405, Asawari Co. Op. Hos. Soc.  
Pokhran Road No - 1, Varkat Nagar,  
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**Nritya Tapshya Kathak Dance Academy**  
Teacher: **Chetan Saraiya. MA, Kathak.**  
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**Pune, Maharashtra, India**  
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**Sri Krishna Kala Mandir**  
Teacher : **Gayathri Gopinath**  
No 5-469 .18th St Sathuvachari Phase - 2  
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**Nritya Darpanan Foundation**  
Teacher : **Paullumi B Mukheerjee**  
Alap C.H.S. B woing, Plot No 173  
Sir Bhalchandra Road,  
Opp. 2nd Lane Hindu Colony, Dadar (E)  
**Mumbai - 400014 .**  
Contact No. 9821583004

**Shanmukha Arts Institute of Performing Arts**  
Teacher : **Kala Srinivasan**  
D-309 , Usha Nagar, Village Road  
**Bhandup West, Mumbai- 400078**  
Contact No : 98671 14223

**Kalanand Nritya sanstha**  
Teacher : **Bhavana Sanjiv Lele**  
Shop No-2,3,4,5 Rosewood Building  
Prestige Residency, Dongripada  
Waghbil Naka,Ghodbunder Road  
**Thane West, Maharashtra**  
Contact No : 9223440605

**Nitya Veda Academy**  
Teacher : **Vidya Sriram**  
E - 404, Krishna bldg. Vasant Sagar  
Complex, Thakur Village  
**Kandivli (e) 400101**

**Nalanda Bharatnatyam Nritya Niketan**  
Teacher : **Guru K. Shobhana**  
**Centres: Thane, Kalwa, Airoli, Ghatkopar,**  
**Kalyan, Dombivali**  
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# TRIBUTES



some organisations used his services but did not fulfil his desire of becoming a complete dancer. He then tried his hand at cultural criticism and wrote for Narthaki, an online cultural portal. Later, he began writing for various other websites and changed his name to Bhavanvitha Venkatesh. He was someone who strived for the art form and recognition in art. Despite being a chartered accountant by profession, he dedicated a major part of his life to Kuchipudi. He wrote reviews and also addressed several problems that have been plaguing the art form. His untimely death due to a heart attack is saddening, and it is an irreplaceable loss to Andhra Pradesh. On behalf of Nataraj Music and Dance Academy, I pray to Lord Nataraja to let his soul rest in peace.

- BR Vikram Kumar

There is nobody in the world of Kuchipudi who cannot identify Bhavanvitha Venkatesh. He was earlier known as Prasad, CA, who had settled in Chennai as an exceptional Chartered Accountant. Later, he opened a branch in Visakhapatnam and moved to the city of destiny along with his family. While he was living in Chennai, he imbibed the traditional values and after moving to Visakhapatnam, he regularly visited Nataraj Music and Dance Academy, a premier dance school in Visakhapatnam, and watched the practice sessions. He took an interest in cultural debates. In one such conversation, he told me; he has a desire to learn dance, but he was not sure if his age would permit. After I gave assurance and several examples, he started learning. Kuchipudi is known for its female impersonation and he expressed his interest to portray it. Naatyasri KV Lakshmi, principal of NMDA, choreographed a beautiful lasya tandav, and he portrayed the role of Parvati.

Venkatesh's interest in dance made him approach various teachers of Kuchipudi in Visakhapatnam and learn from them. He always mentioned that he hoped to do something more for Kuchipudi. Unfortunately,

