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# THE DANCE INDIA

A Treasure Trove of Culture & Tourism

TORCH  
BEARERS

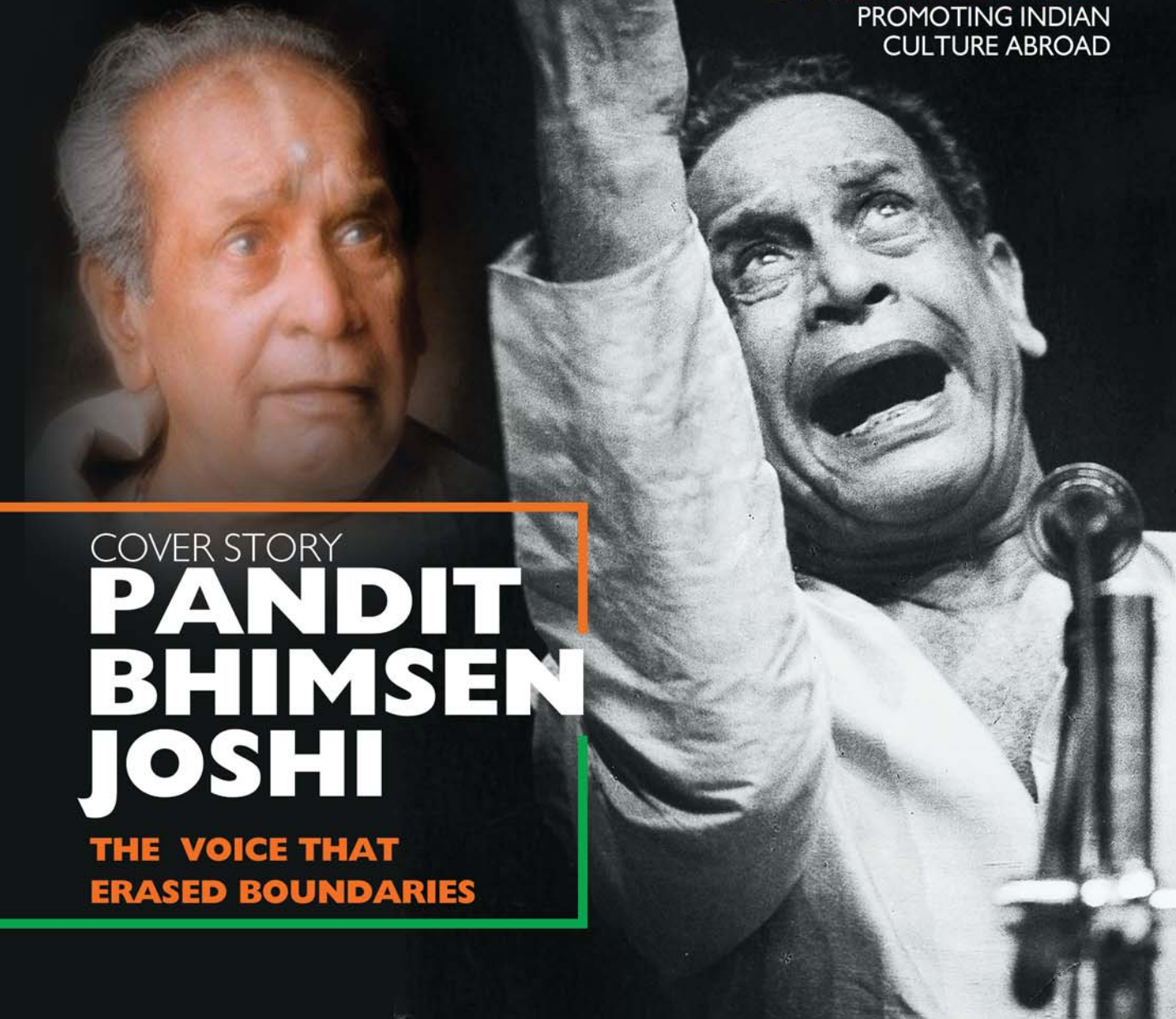
**DR(S) RAJA AND  
RADHA REDDY**

THE LEGENDARY  
KUCHIPUDI COUPLE

RAYS OF HOPE

**HAIMANTI BASU**

PROMOTING INDIAN  
CULTURE ABROAD



COVER STORY

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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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**P**adma Awards are one of the prestigious awards given by the Government of India and everybody in the country is aware of it. In recent times, some of the citizens feel that the awards have been losing its credibility - nothing to do with the award as such but everything to do with the procedure involved in selecting the awardees. Earlier, the number of applications received for the awards were in hundreds but today it has reached over forty thousand. Out of which only a few receive the awards. Critics of today are sceptical about of the list of awardees and point towards discrepancies in the selection process. Is the government honouring those who have exhibited exceptional talent remains a question? The applications require thorough scrutiny and it is a time-taking procedure. Another question that pops up is that how is the ministry of home affairs able to process such a large quantity of applications in a matter few days? Are they really going through them?

When you look at the recent list of Padma Awards, it makes one wonder if the awards are distributed among the states like the government schemes - according to a ratio. Also, most of the artistes from the art and culture community opine that these awards were given to people either through lobbying, political pressures or for political gains. In the coming days, people urge the government to maintain the credibility of these prestigious awards by honouring those citizens who truly deserve.

Jai Hind!

BR Vikram Kumar



Source: PIB

## About 68.86 Crores of funds collected in NCF

The aim of the National Culture Fund (NCF) is to establish and nurture partnerships in the field of culture and heritage between private and public sectors, government, non-government agencies, private institutions and foundations and mobilize resources for the restoration, conservation, protection and development of India's rich, natural, tangible and intangible heritage.

The following are some of the major objectives of NCF:

- ◆ To administer and apply the fund for conservation, maintenance, promotion, protection, preservation and upgradation of monuments protected or otherwise;
- ◆ For training and development of a cadre of specialists and cultural administrators
- ◆ For innovations and experiments in arts
- ◆ For documentation of cultural expressions and forms that have lost their relevance in the contemporary scenario and are either fading out or facing extinction.

The government had granted Rs 19.50 crore as a one-time corpus fund to National Culture Fund out of the

planned budget. Apart from this, there is no fund allocated by the government to the National Culture Fund. Besides this, NCF receives contributions and voluntary donations as endowments from many other sources. The details, as on March 31, 2018, are as below:

Primary Corpus	- Rs. 19.50 Crore
Interest on Corpus	- Rs. 27.32 Crore
Project Funds	- Rs. 22.04 Crore
<b>Total</b>	<b>- Rs. 68.86 Crore</b>

NCF helped in protecting, promoting and preserving India's culture by mobilizing resources by approaching various PSUs, banks, corporate/companies for seeking their participation under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to preserve/protect India's cultural heritage.

The above information was given by Minister of State (independent charge) for Culture and Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate change Dr Mahesh Sharma, in a reply to an Unstarred Question in the Rajya Sabha on January 8.

## A proposal to declare NSD as an Institution of National Importance is under consideration of the government: Dr Mahesh Sharma

The Broad-Based Committee (Vision Committee) set up by the National School of Drama (NSD) Society in February 2005, inter-alia, had recommended the opening of five regional centres of the NSD across the country. On the basis of these

recommendations, the decision to establish five regional centres during the 11th Five Year Plan period (2007-2012), one each at Kolkata, Mumbai/Goa, J&K, and North-East, besides upgrading the existing Regional Resource cum Research Centre, Bengaluru

to a full-fledged regional centre, was taken by the government. These regional centres were to be established in consultation with concerned state governments, who were required to provide land/accommodation for the purpose. So far, only the government of Karnataka has provided land/accommodation in 2013 in Bengaluru for the purpose. No other state government has provided land to the NSD for the opening of its regional branches.

Under NSD's Outreach/Extension Programme, two centres, one in Gangtok (Sikkim) and another in Agartala (Tripura), are functioning and are also conducting a one-year theatre training course in addition to the one being conducted at Bengaluru (Karnataka).

A proposal to declare NSD as an Institution of National Importance is under consideration by the government. Till such time a final decision is taken in the matter, the NSD has decided to defer the opening of the regional centres.

## Sangeet Natak Akademi launches the second phase of the Web Campaign 'SANJHI -MUJH MEIN KALAKAR'

**S**angeet Natak Akademi (SNA) the National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama will launch the second phase of the web campaign 'SANJHI -MUJH MEIN KALAKAR' an initiative to document and promote the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and diverse cultural traditions of the country by direct public-participation.

This is a unique talent search where the participant will showcase their talent in the fields of music, dance, drama, puppetry, folk and tribal arts, culinary skills, painting, sculpture etc. The literal meaning of the term SANJHI is "to share" and "to partner", and the cultural traditions of our country has developed and prospered on the notions of harmony.

The second phase of this campaign, 'SANJHI -MUJH MEIN KALAKAR', has its main focus area - the folk, traditional, customary, socially events and ritualistic art forms - woven as a cultural fabric around the harvest festival season of January. It is celebrated all across the country, known as various nomenclatures like Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Lohri, Bhogali Bihu, Torgya, Uttarayan, Attukkal Pongal etc.

It intends to bring forth such forms that are aligned with the domains of intangible cultural heritage as per the convention of safeguarding the ICH under UNESCO:

- ◆ Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- ◆ Performing arts;
- ◆ Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- ◆ Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- ◆ Traditional craftsmanship

The first phase of this campaign was earlier initiated in the month of November 2018 during the festival season of Diwali. There was mass participation and with great enthusiasm, people uploaded various audios and videos for music, dance, poetry recitation etc. and images for visual art forms like painting, craftwork, terracotta work, rangoli, written poetry, etc. More than 500 entries were received from various regions of the country. A screening committee, constituting of various cultural bodies and eminent artists, availed the opportunity to witness the talent reservoir of the country and considered many as worthy for further promotion and commendation.

Participants may log into the official website of Sangeet Natak Akademi ([www.sangeetnatak.gov.in](http://www.sangeetnatak.gov.in)) and click on the link to SANJHI -MUJH MEIN KALAKAR, for more information. The portal for uploading will be active during the period January 12-31, 2019

## Gandhi Peace Prize for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 announced

The Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 has been conferred on the following:

- ◆ Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, for the year 2015 for their contribution in rural development, education, development of natural resources.
- ◆ For 2016 jointly to Akshaya Patra Foundation for its contribution in providing mid-day meals to millions of children across India and Sulabh International for its contribution in improving the condition of sanitation in India and emancipation of manual scavengers.

- ◆ Ekal Abhiyan Trust for the year 2017 for their contribution in providing education for rural and tribal children in remote areas pan India, rural empowerment, gender and social equality.
- ◆ Shri Yohei Sasakawa for the year 2018 for his contribution in leprosy eradication in India and across the world.

The jury under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and comprising the Chief Justice of India, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Speaker of Lok Sabha Sumitra Mahajan, leader of the single largest opposition

party in Lok Sabha Mallikarjuna Kharge and member of Parliament, LK Advani, after detailed discussions on January 16, 2019 unanimously decided to select the above organisations/persons in recognition to their outstanding contributions in the fields mentioned above.

The annual award was instituted by the Government of India in 1995 during the commemoration of the 125th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The award carries an amount of Rs 1 crore, a citation in a scroll, a plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item.

## The new campus of National Museum Institute inaugurated at Noida

The new campus of the National Museum Institute was inaugurated by Prakash Javadekar, Union minister for Human Resource Development, in the presence of Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Culture & chancellor of the National Museum Institute (NMI), at A-19, Sector 62, NOIDA (Institutional Area) on January 30. DS Gangwar, addl. secretary, Ministry of Culture; Dr BR Mani, director general, National Museum; Alok Tandon, chairman, Noida Authority and Dr Pradyuman Sharma, registrar, NMI were among the other dignitaries present.

Four new courses i.e. (i) Archaeology; (ii) Palaeography, Epigraphy and Numismatics; (iii) Structural Conservation and (iv) Cultural & Heritage Management are expected to commence. In addition to these regular courses, short-term courses of five-months duration i.e. Art Appreciation and Bhartiya Kalanidhi (Hindi), which are very popular, are also conducted by the institute to disseminate the knowledge about the country's tangible and intangible heritage.



*The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Prakash Javadekar and the Minister of State for Culture (I/C) and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Mahesh Sharma at the inauguration of the new campus of the National Museum Institute, in Noida, Uttar Pradesh on January 30, 2019.*

**Details of the Campus are as follows :**

Total Area of Plot: 12000 sqm (03 acres)

Institute/Administration Block: 9945.18 sqm (including 5 floors)

Hostel Block: 2696.94 sqm (including 4 floors)

Electrical Substation: 253.00 sqm

Basement area for parking, etc: 2652.41 sqm

Green Open Area: 3070.42 sqm ( 25.58% of the plot area)

Administrative and hostel structures are having ground plus four floors and three floors, respectively. There will be offices for the administrative and academic staff, an auditorium, two conference rooms, 2 committee rooms, classrooms, library, laboratory, exhibition halls, museum hall, mess, etc.

## National Gallery of Modern Art, Ministry of Culture to organise auction of mementos received by the Prime Minister in New Delhi

National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, under the aegis of Ministry of Culture, will organise an auction of prestigious memorable gifts presented to the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, from all across India. The amount raised in lieu of auction will be used for the Project 'Namami Gange'.

The physical auction will be conducted on January 27 and 28, 2019 at National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, from 12 pm onwards. The e-auction will take

place subsequently from January 29 to 31, 2019 for remaining items left after the physical auction, on the portal [www.pmmementos.gov.in](http://www.pmmementos.gov.in).

Around 1,900 such exclusive gifts are currently on display for the public in National Gallery of Modern Art, Jaipur House, New Delhi. The gift items include paintings, sculptures, shawls, Pagris, Jackets and traditional musical instruments etc. Items can be viewed on the portal [www.pmmementos.gov.in](http://www.pmmementos.gov.in).

## National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, to begin 'Night at the Museum' starting this month

National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, (NGMA) organised the first edition of 'Night at the Museum' on January 30, 2019. The first edition of this event was organised in collaboration with the India Art Fair from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm. NGMA shall conduct a guided tour of its prestigious permanent collection which is on display at the permanent gallery. Highlight objects include works of art of Amrita Sher-Gil, Rabindranath Tagore, Raja Ravi Verma, Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy to name a few. Visitors would also get an opportunity to view special exhibitions entitled

Roopantar, an exhibition of sculptures from the treasures on NGMA, and Dandi Yatra, an exhibition that pays homage to the iconic Dandi March. NGMA aims to conduct Night at the Museum as a regular activity and organise it on the last working day of every month.

The details of activities will be available on NGMA's official website and Facebook page. For further updates, please visit:

NGMA WEBSITE: <http://ngmaindia.gov.in/>

## Exhibition organised by LKA commemorating 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi

Commemorating the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and highlighting his principles of nonviolence and peace, the Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA) has organised an exhibition titled 'Mahatma Gandhi and World Peace' at the Lalit Kala Akademi Art Galleries of Rabindra Bhawan, Mandi House, New Delhi. Dr Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Culture (I/c), inaugurated the show in the presence of Lalit Kala Akademi chairman, Sh Uttam Pacharne, joint secretary Ministry of Culture, Nirupama Kotru and secretary, LKA Rajan Shripad Fulari. Dean Vishwanath Sabale, professor Mariti Shelke, professor Shashikant Gorakhe from Sir JJ School of Arts and Artists, art critics and art

lovers in a great number attended the inaugural ceremony.

The show has been organised in association with Sir JJ School of Art, Mumbai. Over 75 artworks by the same number of artists have been put on display in this exhibition. The artists have shown their creative perspectives and thoughts about Gandhiji and World Peace

The show will be on view for public till February 12, 2019 from 11 am to 7 pm every day at the Lalit Kala Akademi Art Galleries of Rabindra Bhawan, Mandi House, New Delhi.



*The Minister of State for Culture (I/C) and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Mahesh Sharma visiting 'Mahatma Gandhi and World Peace' exhibition, organised by Lalit Kala Akademi, in New Delhi on January 29, 2019.*

## Bharat Ratna

The President has been pleased to award Bharat Ratna to the following:

Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumously)  
Dr Bhupen Hazarika (posthumously)  
Pranab Mukherjee

## Padma Awards

Padma Awards - one of the highest civilian awards of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. The awards are given in various disciplines/ fields of activities, viz. - art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc. 'Padma Vibhushan' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; 'Padma Bhushan' for distinguished service of high order and 'Padma Shri' for distinguished service in any field. The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.

These awards are conferred by the President of India at ceremonial functions which are held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March/April every year. This year the President of India has approved conferment of 112 Padma Awards including one duo case (in a duo case, the award is counted as one).

### Padma Awards in the field of Art and Culture PADMA VIBHUSHAN

Name Field State

Teejan Bai, Art-Vocal-Folk, Chhattisgarh  
Ismail Omar Guelleh (Foreigner), Public Affairs, Djibouti  
Anilkumar Manibhai Naik, Trade & Industry-Infrastructure, Maharashtra  
Balwant Moreshwar Purandare, Art-Acting-Theatre, Maharashtra

### PADMA BHUSHAN

Name Field State

Budhaditya Mukherjee, Art-Music-Sitar, West Bengal  
Mohanlal Viswanathan Nair, Art-Acting-Film, Kerala  
Kuldip Nayar (Posthumous), Literature & Delhi Education (Journalism), Delhi

### PADMA SHRI

Name Field State

Rajeshwar Acharya, Art-Vocal-Hindustani, Uttar Pradesh  
Manoj Bajpayee, Art-Acting-Films, Maharashtra  
Pritam Bhartwan, Art-Vocals-Folk, Uttarakhand  
Jyoti Bhatt, Art-Painting, Gujarat  
Swapan Chaudhuri, Art-Music-Tabla, West Bengal  
Dinyar Contractor, Art-Acting-Theatre, Maharashtra  
Thanga Darlong, Art-Music-Flute, Tripura  
Prabhu Deva, Art-Dance, Karnataka  
Godawari Dutta, Art-Painting, Bihar  
Bulu Imam, Social Work-Culture, Jharkhand  
Joravarsinh Jadav, Art-Dance Folk, Gujarat  
Narsingh Dev Jamwal, Literature & Education, Jammu & Kashmir  
Fayaz Ahmad Jan, Art-Craft-Papier Mache, Jammu & Kashmir  
KG Jayan, Art-Music-Bhakti, Kerala  
Waman Kendre, Art-Acting-Theatre, Maharashtra  
Kader Khan (Posthumous-Foreigner), Art-Acting-Films, Canada  
Abdul Gafur Khatri, Art-Painting, Gujarat  
Kailash Madbaiya, Literature & Education, Madhya Pradesh  
Gita Mehta (Foreigner), Literature & Education, USA  
Shankar Mahadevan Narayan, Art-Vocals-Films, Maharashtra  
Nartaki Natraj, Art-Dance-Bharatnatyam, Tamil Nadu  
Anup Ranjan Pandey, Art-Music, Chhattisgarh  
Ganpatbhai Patel (Foreigner), Literature & Education, USA  
Tao Porchon-Lynch (Foreigner), Others-Yoga, USA  
Anup Sah, Art-Photography, Uttarakhand  
Milena Salvini (Foreigner), Art-Dance-Kathakali, France  
Nagindas Sanghavi, Literature & Education-Journalism, Maharashtra  
Sirivennela Seetharama Sastry, Art-Lyrics, Telangana  
Mohammad Hanif Khan Shastri, Literature & Education, Delhi  
Brijesh Kumar Shukla, Literature & Education, Uttar Pradesh  
Anandan Sivamani, Art-Music, Tamil Nadu  
Devendra Swarup (Posthumous), Literature & Education-Journalism, Uttar Pradesh  
Rajeev Tharanath, Art-Music-Sarod, Karnataka  
Hiralal Yadav, Art-Vocals-Folk, Uttar Pradesh

# TORCH BEARERS



## Dr(s) RAJA AND RADHA REDDY AN ADORNMENT TO KUCHIPUDI



Text: **BR Vikram Kumar**

Pics: **Avinash Pasricha**

There would be nobody in the art and culture community who would not know this couple when you mention their names. In fact, the whole world knows Padma Bhushan awardees Dr (s) Raja and Radha Reddy as stalwarts who reached the zenith in the Kuchipudi art form. At a time when Kuchipudi was regarded as the tradition of Kuchipudi Bhagavathula, the couple made Delhi as their base and popularised Kuchipudi around the globe and became an adornment to the art form.

Kuchipudi with the efforts of Dr (s) Raja, Radha and Kaushalya Reddy has encompassed boundaries and entertained the audiences across the world. Even in India, it is because of them, Kuchipudi made its mark in the capital. Today, Kuchipudi artistes in India and abroad look up to them and also feel that if there is someone who could uplift the Kuchipudi art community and put it on a pedestal, it is Raja, Radha and Kaushalya Reddy.

They have established a school in Delhi, popularised the art form, taught students and brought recognition to Kuchipudi. Their efforts have created a path for other Kuchipudi artistes to tread on and reach a larger audience. They have documented their work with Sangeet Natak Akademi and CCRT and stand as torchbearers. In the upcoming days, many Kuchipudi artistes wish that it would be great if Dr Raja Radha and Kaushalya Reddy introduce a curriculum for studying Kuchipudi in a systematic manner thereby helping the art form to grow in the hundred years to come.





# DR (S) RAJA AND RADHA REDDY THE LEGENDARY KUCHIPUDI COUPLE

Text : **Paul Nicodemus**  
Pics: **Avinash Pasricha**



It was Dr(s) Raja and Radha Reddy, legendary Kuchipudi dancing couple, gurus and choreographers who put the art form on the cultural map of the world. They have given the ancient art form a new dimension with their performance, choreography and teaching. Radha with her sinuous 'Shringara' movements and Raja with his stark, chiselled, powerful movements represent the two pillars, 'Lasya' and 'Tandava' upon which the edifice of classical Indian dance rests.



From their childhood, both Raja and Radha were used to watching Bhagavatam, Natakam and Kolatam. Hence, they had an affinity towards dance right from the beginning. "Ours was a child marriage and both of us were interested in performing arts. Whenever her father organised Bhagavatam in her village, she used to call me and I used to go and watch," says Raja. In the villages, people watch Bhagavatam after dinner and the performance continues into the wee hours. Raja Reddy hails from Narasapuram village and Radha from Kootala Gramam in Telangana (former Andhra Pradesh). In fact, both Raja and Radha are related to each other. "Her father is my mother's brother," says Raja.

Raja Reddy was born to Rajanna Reddy and Narasamma, and Radha was born to Raja Reddy and Venkata Lakshmi. Sangeetam and Natyam were popular in the Andhra region but not in Telangana. "As we are part of the Reddy community, people around us did not appreciate us pursuing dance. There were no proper teachers of dance and people looked down upon dance. There was a notion that those who performed Bhagavatam belonged to a lower class," says Raja. So when Raja pursued dance, members of his family

including his father and mother felt he was destroying the family name. Raja was sent to Nirmal, a district in Telangana (former Taluk), to concentrate on studies.

While in Nirmal, Raja watched a film for the first time in his life. "In 1954, I watched a film titled Nagin starring Vyjayanthimala. The film was full of dance and I was in the theatre continuously for 17 days," he reveals. He performed those dances at school functions imitating Vyjayanthimala. After the movie, his passion for dance reached the next level. But he never got a chance to learn dance.

After matriculation, he came to Hyderabad for his PUC (Pre University Course) and learned to dance. Then there were no Kuchipudi teachers in Hyderabad. "My friends took me to Vedantam Jagannadha Sarma's house to learn dance. He looked at me and asked if I looked at my face in the mirror? Pointing at my dark skin colour, nose and waist, he told me I would not be suitable for a career in dance and suggested I go back to the village to pursue agriculture," he shares. Tears rolled down his eyes and for the next three-four days, he did not attend college. His friends cheered him up and took him to a music college in Hyderabad. As there were no Kuchipudi classes in the college, he enrolled for learning Kathak. Although he did not completely like the art form, it helped him rhythmically. "Our Indian dance forms have their unique beauty in them, be it Manipuri, Odissi, Kathak, Kuchipudi or Bharatanatyam," he smiles.

He met his guru in Vedantam Prahlada Sarma when he visited Hyderabad from Eluru in Andhra Pradesh to present a dance drama. Raja Reddy heard the news from someone and met him. By then his wife Radha Reddy joined him in Hyderabad and both went to meet the Kuchipudi guru at Ravindra Bharathi auditorium. The couple bowed at the feet of the guru and expressed their desire to learn the Kuchipudi art form. Sarma was happy to see a couple who were interested in learning the dance for the first time. The guru asked them if they were serious and told them he would get back to them after arranging things in Eluru.

After a week, Guru Prahlada Sarma sent a message asking the couple to come down to Eluru. In the early '60s, Raja and Radha Reddy moved to Eluru and stayed at Uppu Ramarao, a lawyer's house in Ramchandrapeta, for the next two-three years and learnt Kuchipudi. The couple practised extensively and made the guru happy.



In 1966, they got a scholarship from the Government of Andhra Pradesh to learn choreography under the Kathak exponent, Maya Rao. By then, she returned from Russia after learning choreography. She taught choreography based on Natya Shastra and Abhinaya Darpana. The basic idea of the course was to teach techniques on how to present an item effectively - how to begin, reach a climax and end the recital.

The couple moved to Delhi and learnt choreography techniques under Maya Rao. Along with the learning,

they also performed now and then. "Once in a year, Maya Rao used to take us to Bangalore, Goa and other places to perform," he says. During one such outing, in Chennai, Maya Rao was scheduled to present a Kathak piece but the lyrics being in Hindi and Urdu, people of Tamil Nadu objected to her performance. So, Maya Rao turned towards Raja Reddy and asked him to perform an item in Telugu. Raja and Radha performed. As a result, by the time they completed their choreography course, the couple has gained performance experience too.

Raja and Radha Reddy's performance mesmerised Kapila Vatsyayan, a leading scholar of Indian classical dance. After watching them, she praised the discipline they brought to the art form of Kuchipudi. In the beginning, when the Reddy couple invited their guru to Delhi, he was hesitant to come as he was not sure about the quality of their performance. "After pleading with him to attend our performance in Delhi, he finally agreed and came down. Upon watching our performance and choreography, he immensely praised us and said there will be certain things which we can learn from the disciples as well. It was like a great moment for us because Guru is like God. He had an open mind, and it really encouraged us," says Radha Reddy. Choreographic works of Raja and Radha Reddy had a disciplined and linear approach to them.

Vedantam Raghavaiah, film director and VAK Ranga Rao, a cultural critic who had a treasure of films, showed them the film 'Dasavatharam' and Raja noticed that the dancer performed at a single place. After watching the movie, he felt that there was no choreography and beauty in it and presented his version of Dasavatharam

along with Radha. It was choreographed beautifully, and the duo enacted different avatars alternating between them. In the end, Raja became Lord Vishnu and Radha turned into Goddess Lakshmi at his feet. When the duo performed Dasavatharam at Avignon Festival in France, a huge crowd that had gathered gave them a standing ovation for half an hour. Raja and Radha Reddy had to go back and forth between the stage and green room 9 times. "After our performance, we got a standing ovation and thunderous clapping, we thanked everybody and stepped off the stage and went into the green room amidst all the clapping. As we were about to change our costumes, we heard an announcement saying 'Mr Reddy, you are requested on the stage,' and we went onto the stage again and unbelievably, it happened again and again for 9 times. It was one of the most memorable moments in our career" he smiles. The performance was highlighted in the news and it was broadcast on TV across France.



On completion of the choreography course in Delhi, the couple wanted to get back to Hyderabad, but before leaving, they wanted to give a performance at the Andhra Association in Delhi and requested them for a remuneration of Rs 50. The calculation was to pay mridangist, flautist and nattuvanar Rs 15 each and they would be left with Rs 5 for other needs. The Andhra Association refused to pay them Rs 50 and told them they are not well-known dancers. Later, through some friends, the couple met Raman, theatre director of Tamil Nadu at All India Radio, in Delhi. Their friends introduced the couple and Raman asked them to perform. When Raja told him about the experience they had at Andhra Association, Raman told them he would get back in a few days. After a week, he visited Raja's place and offered to organise a programme at a popular auditorium in Delhi, pay them Rs 1,016 apart from travel fare for their guru. "We can never forget January 30, 1970," says Radha. It was the first time someone organised a full-length Kuchipudi programme in Delhi. Till then, artistes like Yamini Krishnamurthy and Indrani Rehman only had an item or two in their repertoire. The next day, all the major papers highlighted their performance. "Andhra Dancers Storm Delhi Audience' read one of the headlines with a beautiful photograph of us," says Raja.

Popular classical dancer and Miss India, Indrani Rehman was also among the audience that day and she invited Raja and Radha Reddy to her residence. She offered them to perform with her and they performed with her for the next two years. Later, the couple gave solo programmes and created their own identity.

Karan Singh, the then tourism minister and a Siva devotee, invited them to the Conventional Hall at Ashoka for a programme. After the programme, he was completely mesmerised and spoke to Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, about the Kuchipudi couple. They were invited to perform at Teen Murti Bhavan on November 14, 1976. Indira Gandhi fell in love with their performance. Upon learning they were from Andhra and would go back, she immediately asked Kotha Raghuramaiah, minister of housing to allocate a house for them. "We never expected that they would allocate us a house and we would stay back in Delhi. House was our major problem and once that was taken care, we stayed back," says Radha. Indira Gandhi, who studied at Shantiniketan, patronised arts and made sure that there were classical dance performances both at Vigyan Bhawan and Rashtrapati Bhawan whenever foreign dignitaries visited. Since then whenever there was a government occasion, Raja and Radha Reddy represented Kuchipudi.

The Seventh Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi in March 1983 was yet another milestone in the career of Raja and Radha Reddy. Delegations from 140 countries attended the summit and classical dance performances were part of the programme. "After our Kuchipudi recital Fidel Castro, Prime Minister of Cuba, filled with ecstasy went to Gandhi, lauded our performance and requested





for the performance in Cuba," reveals Raja Reddy. Later that year, they toured Cuba and the USA. Upon returning home, they had a surprise of their lives in the form of a telegram - it carried a message: 'You are awarded Padma Shri'.

After receiving the award, Indira Gandhi revealed to the couple that it was indeed Fidel Castro who had written a letter to her after watching their performance which read: "Indira Thank you. Great! I have seen complete India in Raja and Radha Reddy's performance, including Indira."

It was the first time in the history of Padma awards that two people received it from the same family for the same cause. "The credit goes to our art and the depth in Telugu literature. I am fortunate to have been born in the Telugu land," says Raja.

The couple desired to spread Kuchipudi and founded their own school of dance in 1976. Initially, it was titled Natya Tharangam and later made into Natya Tarangini on the advice of Varadacharyulu, a poet. Now, they have built a proper school in Delhi.

Kaushalya Reddy, the second wife of Raja Reddy and younger sister of Radha Reddy, played an important role in the growth and the journey of the couple. Raja and Radha Reddy have been living far away from their hometown and Radha's parents had sent her sister Kausalya to Delhi to be their company. While in Delhi, Kausalya studied and trained in dance. There was a tour of Malaysia from ICCR and in the last minute, the nattuvanar who was supposed to accompany them, opted out of the programme. Raja enquired if the programme could be postponed, instead, Usha Malik, secretary of ICCR asked him for Kaushalya's photograph and wanted her to be the nattuvanar. Earlier, Usha had seen Kaushalya Reddy's performance and noticed that she had good rhythm. At 15,

Kaushalya went on the Southeast Asian tour to conduct nattuvangam. "Since then, she has been making us dance to her nattuvangam. In fact, she herself was a good dancer, but she sacrificed her dancing for us," shares Radha.

Nattuvangam adds depth to the performance, and she became an expert in it. Eventually, she became an integral part of Raja Reddy's life by marrying him. Kaushalya was also instrumental in starting the well-known annual 'Parampara Series' National festival of music and dance in New Delhi in 1998. "I must credit most of our success to my sister Kausalya. Maybe we would not have made it so far without her. She took care of music and practices. We are all dependent on each other. We are a dancing family," says Radha.

Once they have performed at the National Museum in Delhi and after the performance, Dr Sivarama Murthy, who has designed the museum showered praise on them and advised, "Today I have seen Siva, Parvati, Rama, Seeta, Krishna and Radha. But remember that in Natya Sastra, one of the vruthi says when you go from





your region to another region, be clever enough to select the language and music. Keep the banks of your dance intact."

Raja Reddy is a master choreography and some of their productions include Mahanatam - Cosmic Dance of Shiva, Natya Laya Vibhati - Amalgamation of six classical dance styles, Bharata Bharathi and Life Tree.

In their careers spanning over several decades, they are the first Indian dancers to perform in the International Dance Festival of Avignon in France and Salzburg (Austria) and the Festivals of India in the USA, UK and Bangladesh. In Japan, the Reddy's were two of the twenty-two star dancers from worldwide invited to perform at The All-Star Ballet Gala Festival. Raja and Radha inaugurated the "Play House Theatre" in Durban (South Africa), they performed on Mississippi River for

the Late American President Gerald Ford and a galaxy of notable personalities across the globe. The government conferred them with India's highest civilian awards Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, and Sangeet Natak Akademi and Nritya Choodamani Awards.

Dr (s) Raja and Radha continue the tradition of the art by teaching Kuchipudi at their performing art centre 'Natya Tarangini' at Saket, New Delhi, Gurgaon and Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad. Yamini Reddy and Bhavana Reddy, daughters of Raja, Radha and Kaushalya Reddy have already established themselves as able successors of their parents and they will continue their legacy into the future generations.



### Message

They should know the greatness of Bharat. We know our country as Prachi Sudha because of Natyam (dance), Sangeetam (music) and Sahityam (literature). The upcoming generation should know the greatness of our Indian arts. If they want to become an accomplished dancer, they should have devotion and sadhana. Practice is a must, not just in front of the guru but even after going home. For Kuchipudi to be at the forefront, all the practitioners should have a broad mind. We should stop criticising each other and think like one big family.

# COVER STORY



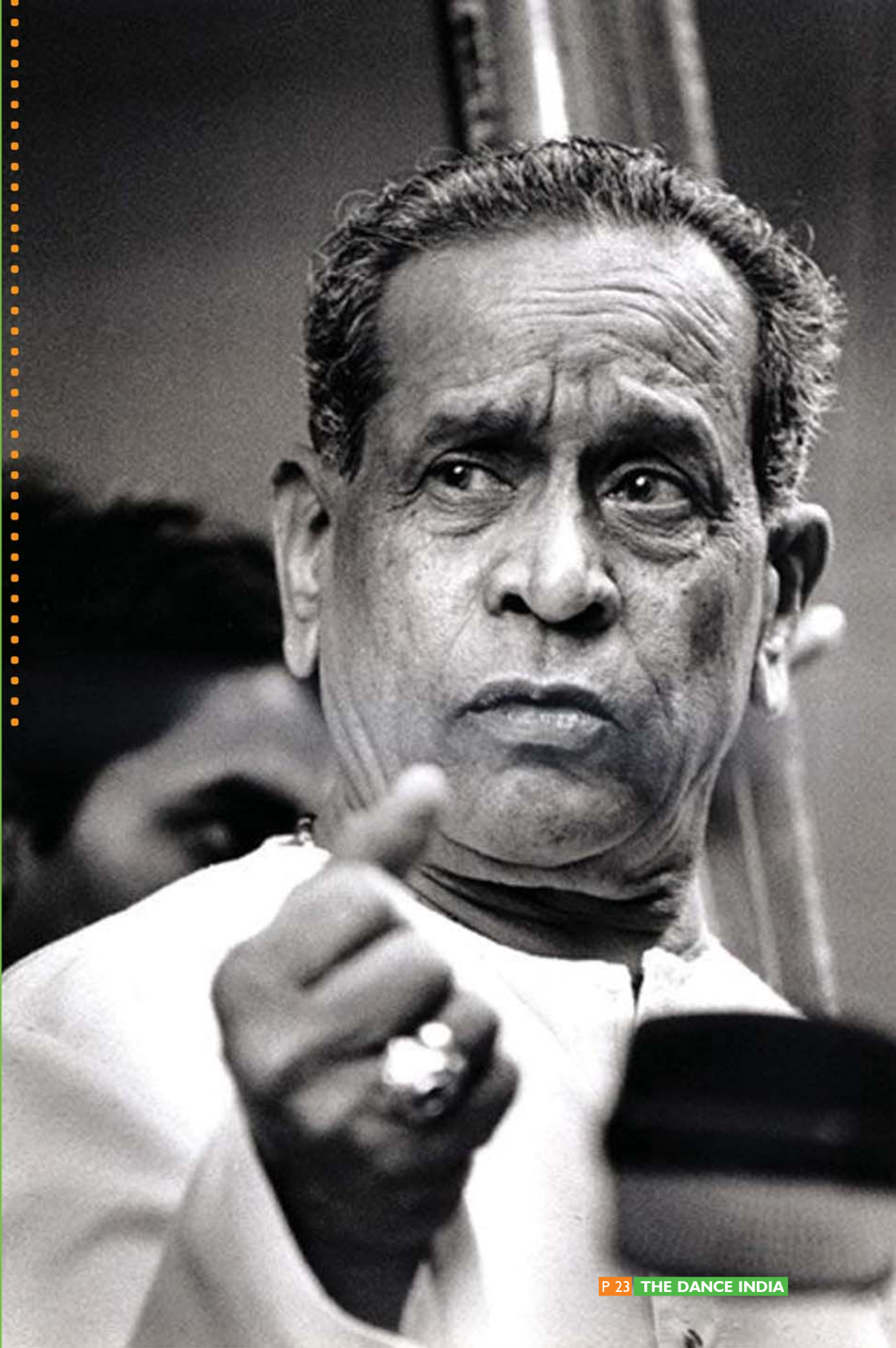
BHIMSEN

# PANDIT BHIMSEN JOSHI

## THE VOICE THAT ERASED BOUNDARIES



Text: Paul Nicodemus  
Pics: Avinash Pasricha



Whenever there is a discussion about Indian classical music, his image catches the popular imagination. He weaved magic with his voice and music aficionados simply obliged and revelled in ecstasy. Pandit Bhimsen Gururaj Joshi was a legendary Indian vocalist in the Hindustani classical tradition. His voice travelled across the country and erased boundaries - North, South, East and West.

Bhimsen Gururaj Joshi was born in a Deshastha Madhwa Brahmin family at Ron, Bombay Presidency, British India (now Gadag district, Karnataka) on 4 February 1922. His father was Gururaj Joshi, an author who compiled a Kannada-English dictionary and mother Ramabai was a home-maker. Bhimsen was the eldest among 16 siblings. Right from his childhood he had an affinity towards music and simply followed wherever music was being played. While he was still young, though it was assumed that he ran away from the house over a spoon of ghee, in reality, he made up his mind to leave the house to learn



music and hence picked up a dispute with his mother and left. He wanted to leave because the place where he lived had no facilities for him to learn music. He felt that the place did not have Ustads who could train him beyond the elementary notes. At the age of 11, he heard a record of Abdul Karim Khan, which got released and he liked the record so much he was instantly determined to become a singer. He told himself if he is going to sing, he should sing like him and began to think on those lines. The problem he had was that there were no singers of that calibre in his region.

While searching for ways to becoming a singer, he had heard about Gwalior and left home. He had no money in his pockets and travelled without a ticket. While travelling, he used to imitate songs and struck a rapport with the ticket collectors who allowed him to travel. Mostly it worked but yet times he had to face the consequences. Doing so, he managed to reach Gwalior in a couple of months. He lived in Gwalior for a year and a half with Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan, the father of Amjad Ali Khan.



Those days, learners of music received one free meal from Gwalior estate, so he had his lunch from the estate and spent the evening at the teacher's place listening to practice. At times, the teacher used to explain. Purya and Marhwa are two ragas that the Ustad gave him. Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan was a popular singer of the time and he frequently travelled out of Gwalior. Noticing that, the presence of the guru was becoming lesser by day, he once again began his search for a teacher as could not sit idle. Someone told him that there were many accomplished singers in Kolkata and the place had a good vibe. So he left for Kolkata and met Pahari Sanyal, an Indian actor and singer. As he did not have an earning, he looked for a job of domestic help. Pahari Sanyal needed a servant and Bhimsen Joshi started staying at his place. He listened to the rehearsals and practice sessions that took place in the house.

After 30 years, things went around and Pahari Sanyal came to listen to the music concert of Bhimsen Joshi and did not know that it was the same servant that once worked at his house. Back then, they called him Joshi and not Bhimsen Joshi. Bhimsen jogged the memory of the actor and told him that he was the same servant, Joshi. That was a rapid graph and it happened because of his focus and dedication towards music.



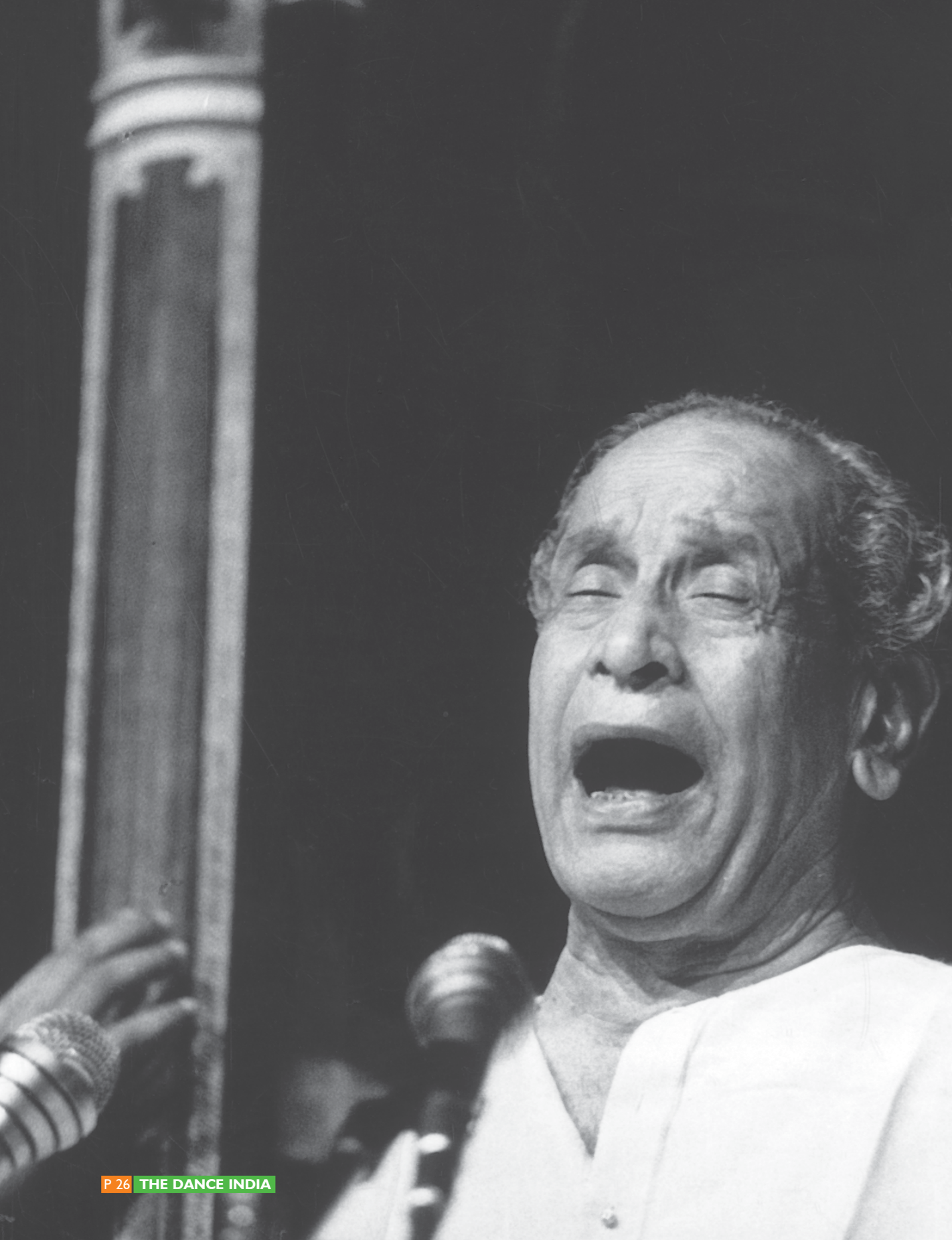
He later moved to Delhi in search of a teacher, met a few singers but they wanted him to become their Ganda bandh but he did not have the money to become a disciple. From there he moved to Jalandhar and met a blind singer named Bhakt Mangatram, a Dhrupad singer. Bhimsen learnt Dhrupad from him. Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan, the oldest festival of Indian Classical Music in the world takes place in Jalandhar every year. At the time, Vinayakrao Patwardhan of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya came down to the conference. Whoever came down, Bhimsen used to sit behind them and played tanpura. Patwardhan asked him why he was in Jalandhar and he told him that he wants to learn music. Then he told him that there was a famous singer Sawai Gandharva, a disciple of Abdul Karim Khan near his village and suggested him to go to him.

In 1936, Bhimsen visited guru Sawai Gandharva and became a disciple. Though he mainly stuck to the Kirana

Gharana for the most part of his career, he also incorporated various styles from his inspirations.

His first concert was arranged by his guru sister Gangubhai Hangal's husband during Dussehra at Hubli in Karnataka. He toured extensively across India. Maharashtra and Bengal were his favourite places. After learning 5 years under his guru he went to Lucknow. He then lived in Rampur for a year and learnt from Ustad Hussein. After that, he came back to Lucknow to hear and learn Tumri. Learning Tumri was a necessity in the field of music. While in Lucknow, he listened to Begum Akhtar, Siddheshwari Devi, Rasoolan Bai, Telat Mehmood.

It was the period of British rule and for a while, he worked as a staff artist in All India Radio. His debut



album, containing a few devotional songs in Marathi and Hindi, was released by HMV in 1942. His performance to celebrate his guru Sawai Gandharva's 60th birthday in 1946, won him accolades and put him on a different pedestal.

Bhimsen Joshi was a spontaneous singer and never really planned his vocal concerts. The moment he had the tanpura in his hands, based on the atmosphere, the music just flowed from his vocal cords. During conferences, he generally found out about what the other singers before him sang and avoided singing the same ragas. Todi was his favourite raga in the morning, Multani or Bhim Palash in the afternoon and Yaman, Malkauns, Darbari or Puriya in the night.

Apart from being a classical singer, Bhimsen Joshi was also a patriotic and devotional singer. His mass popularity grew even further because of television, his participation in public service films like 'Mile Sur Mera Tumhara' and 'Baje Sargam' aired on Doordarshan in the late '80s. Pt. Bhimsen Joshi was also a part of Jana Gana Mana produced by AR Rahman on the occasion of the 50th year of Indian Republic. Bhimsen was



someone who knew what could catch his audience's ear. Once upon a time, listening to Karim Khan's record, he wanted to sing like him and thanks to his devotion towards music, his wish came true. Joshi became Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, one of the finest classical singers the country has ever seen and upon whom the Government of India bestowed the highest civilian honour of Bharat Ratna.

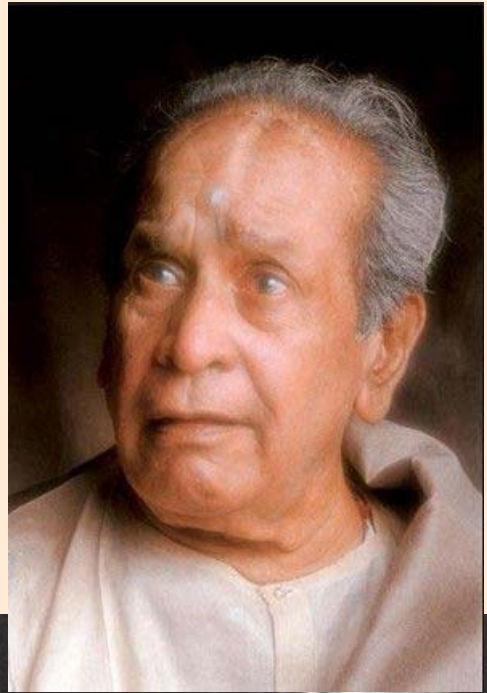
Bhimsen even sang for several films, including 'Basant Bahar' (1956) with Manna Dey; Marathi movie 'Swayamvar Zale Siteche' (1964) for famous song 'Ramya Hi Swargahun Lanka'; Kannada movie Sandhya Raga (1966) which includes a song 'e pariya sobagu' rendered in both Hindustani and Carnatic styles along with M Balamuralikrishna; He sang Birbal My Brother (1973) with Pandit Jasraj; He also sang for the Bengali film Tansen (1958) and Bollywood Movie Ankahee (1985) which later fetched him National Film Award for Best Male Playback Singer. His song 'Bhagyada Lakshmi Baramma', a Purandara Dasa composition, was used by Anant Nag and Shankar Nag in the Kannada film Nodi Swami Nav Irodhu Heege. He also sang as a playback singer for the Marathi film Gulacha Ganapati, produced and directed by PL Deshpande.

In his career spanning several decades, Bhimsen had travelled to various countries including Afghanistan, USA, Canada, Germany, Holland, Italy, France and other countries and enthralled audiences world over.

According to popular opinion, Bhimsen Joshi achieved a balance between the traditional values and mass-culture tastes. His greatest endeavour in perpetuating his legacy could be the Sawai Gandharva Festival held at Pune annually since 1953. Madhav Gudi, Narayan Deshpande, Shrikant Deshpande and Anand Bhate are some of his well-known disciples.

Bhimsen Joshi married Sunanda Katti, the daughter of his maternal uncle in 1944. The couple had four children - Raghavendra, Usha, Sumangala, and Anand. In 1951, he married Vatsala Mudholkar, his co-actor in the Kannada play 'Bhagya Shree'. The couple had three children - Jayant, Shubhada, and Shrinivas Joshi. He never forced his passion for music on his children and gave them free will to choose their career path based on their interests.

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi breathed his last on 24 January 2011 and was laid to rest at Vaikunth Crematorium in Pune.





### Awards and Recognitions:

- 1972 - Padma Shree
- 1976 - Sangeet Natak Akademi Award
- 1985 - Padma Bhushan
- 1985 - National Film Award for Best Male Playback Singer
- 1986 - First platinum disc
- 1999 - Padma Vibhushan
- 2000 - Aditya Vikram Birla Kalashikhar Puraskar
- 2002 - Maharashtra Bhushan
- 2003 - Swathi Sangeetha Puraskaram by Government of Kerala
- 2005 - Karnataka Ratna by Government of Karnataka
- 2008 - Bharat Ratna
- 2008 - Swami Haridas Award
- 2009 - Lifetime achievement award by Delhi government
- 2010 - S V Narayanaswamy Rao National Award by Rama Seva Mandali, Bangalore
- 2017 - Bharat Ratna Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Hospital By Mira Bhayander Municipal Corporation, Bhayander West

### Discography

- 1960 - Pt. Bhimsen Joshi (Miyan Malhar + Puriya Kalyan)
- 1961 - Raga Lalit / Raga Shudh-Kalyan
- 1962 - Pt. Bhimsen Joshi Sings Raga Malkauns / Marubihag
- 1963 - Miya Ki Todi / Puriya Dhanashri / M. Gara Thumri
- 1967- Ragas Yaman-Kalyan, Multani
- 1968 - Chhaya / Chhaya-Malhar / Darbari / Suha-Kanada
- 1968 - Raga Komal Rishabh Asawari/ Raga Marwa
- 1971 - Raga Lalit-Bhatiyar / Raga Kalashree
- 1973 - Raga Pooriya / Raga Durga
- 1973 - Raga Brindavani Sarang / Raga Gaud Sarang
- 1974 - Enchanting Melodies (6 melodies from 45 rpm releases)
- 1980s - Raga Soor Malhar / Raga Shuddha Kedar



# HAIMANTI BASU

## ODISSI IS HER BREATHE



Text: Paul Nicodemus

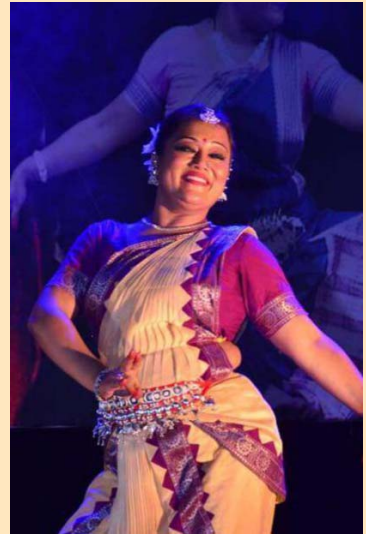


She is a disciplined individual who is immensely passionate about dance. While there were many avenues for her to pursue her career, her passion made her choose dance as her profession. Haimanti Basu, an Odissi artiste from Kolkata has travelled across the oceans and has been instrumental in promoting Indian art and culture both in India and abroad.

Haimanti Basu was born on 8 May 1975 in Kolkata. She did her schooling from a reputed school in Kolkata and later did her graduation in the field of commerce from Calcutta University in 1997. She also did a three years course in Computer Science from NIIT Kolkata.



In her childhood, her sister inspired her to fall in love with dancing and over a period of time, she became passionate about it. "Her regular practice and performances on stage inspired me to be a dancer," she says. At the age of 5, she started taking her first lessons in dance from CLT, a renowned performing arts institute in Kolkata. She had exposure to various dance forms under the guidance of different dance gurus from an early age. She also took Kathak lessons from Chaya Halder.



In 2007, she moved to the United States of America and stayed there for almost 10 years. Over there, she had the opportunity to experience Odissi, the ancient art form from Odisha. She liked so much that the art form became her profession. Currently, she is pursuing her advanced training in Odissi under the guidance of Guru Durga Charan Ranabir and a special Talim from Guru Kohinoor Sen Barat.

Her desire to spread Indian dance made her open her own academy, 'Aarangam Dance Academy', first in the United States of America and later in India. Under her guidance students have been undergoing training in Odissi. She has won several accolades in the USA and India. 'Kindle Award' for promoting Indian Culture among the diverse community in the USA and the title of 'Nrityasree' from India are prominent among them.

Her mother has been her role model, "She gave me immense inspiration and support to be a person that I am today. She could not live her dream but she effortlessly helped me to achieve my mission," she says. Haimanti got the opportunity to teach the diverse community and feels





accomplished to have carried our art form to the highest point of global acceptance.

As an artist, she feels the best moment of life was when she received praise and applause from the audience. The worst moment is when a student does not keep up to the expectation on stage.



Apart from her full-time dancing profession, she loves cooking and spends a good time pursuing the hobby.

According to Haimanti, "Classical dance is a pure art form where each individual needs dedication and has to put in an enormous effort to learn a drop from the vast ocean." She also feels that classical dance should not be improvised with fusion as the pure art form has its own dimension and structure. "Pure dance and fusion should be kept separated as they may not blend together," she opines.

Indian art and culture have a huge effect on society. "We should motivate our next generation to enrich themselves with art and culture. This will help to heal our society from various social hazards and the world will be a better place to live peacefully," she says. Haimanti adds that our government is helping the artistes with different scholarship programmes and talent grants whereby helping our generation to be good human beings with the influence of art and culture.

She is delighted to serve as a cultural ambassador and pledges to support any noble cause.



REVIEW

# SANSKRUTI ARTS FESTIVAL 2019

## A GRAND SPECTACLE FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Text: **BR Vikram Kumar**  
Pics: **Paul Nicodemus**





Sanskriti Arts Festival presented by Vihang at Upvan Lake in Thane, Maharashtra from January 11 to 14 was a grand spectacle. Huge crowds in lakhs thronged the festival site. Five years ago, the festival was conceptualised by a band of art lovers with a vision to encourage, promote and showcase India's rich and diverse cultural heritage and a mission to support upcoming artists by providing a platform to showcase their talent. The 5th edition of the Sanskriti Arts Festival presented a vast panorama of Indian Art and Cultural performances set in the spectacular ambience of Upvan Lake, Thane with a backdrop of lush green Yeoor Hills.

The festival had Performing Arts - Classical Music and Dance, Fusion Music, Folk Music and Dance, and Street Art; Visual Arts - Paintings, Installations, Sculptures, Sand Art and Workshops; Traditional Arts - Handicrafts & Artefacts from different parts of India displayed in 100 plus stalls and Culinary Art - Indian Western, Chinese and Exotic Cuisine to tickle every palate. Apart from these Kids Zone, Nature Arts, Martial Art and Educational entertainment were provided for the family entertainment.

Each of the above programmes was performed on specially designed stages to enhance the enjoyment of the art lovers. Popular music is staged on Classical Dance programmes on Mudra Stage, Classical Music programmes are staged on a floating stage Tarang, Bollywood Stage, Fusion Music on Beat Treat Stage, Folk Dances and Music on Virasat Stage. For Visual Arts, exhibits are displayed in an Art Gallery and Installations, Sculptures and Sand Art are displayed on specially designated places. The festival also had an exciting experience of Nature spectacle, Light and Laser show, workshops, plays and adventure sports leaving visitors with a lifetime of happy memories.

Since its inception in 2014, the festival has been very well received by the art-loving public as evidenced by a footfall of over 7 lakh visitors every year. The Festival emerged as a major Art and Cultural Event, not only in Thane and Maharashtra but also all over India.

The prime force to enlighten the prominence of the festival was Founder and Chairman of Sanskriti Arts Festival, Pratap Sarnaik, a leader who professes refined sensitivity toward art, philanthropy and social

**THE FESTIVAL BROUGHT FORTH  
THE ESSENCE OF  
INDIAN ART AND CULTURE  
WITH MULTIPLE STAGES SET UP  
AROUND THE LAKE.**





work. The other important members of the festival committee include Vice Chairman, Arun Kumar Suvarna, Architect, involved in planning and Infrastructure activities; Secretary, Manoj Pillai an entrepreneur and finance consultant having an aesthetic inspiration, he coordinates the entire activity of the festival and administration; Purvesh Sarnaik, Executive President SAF accomplishes the festive promises by implementing innovative and definitive plan in action and Joint Secretary, Suman Vijayakar, coordinating visual art section and workshops and administrations of entire activity.

The festival was supported by Rajan Bandelkar, President, Naredco; Jitendra Mehta, Vice President MCHI, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation, Thane Municipal Corporation; Ramesh Vyas Advisor to all stages and media and administration; Dr Namrataa Srivastava, Media Coordinator and Compere; CA Rajeev Mundra Treasurer, and CA Snehal Raole Joint Treasurer in charge of accounts.





The festival had a Grand Opening Parade and Cultural Festivities showcased by more than 2000 school children and groups of Thane citizens. The parade laid emphasis on 'Improving our Present' by initiating and leading a Campaign - "Save Our Environment: Refuse! Reuse! Recycle!", hazardous plastic products" and sought participation and commitment of dedicated volunteers to help the organisers realize their vision of a 'Sustainable and Better Future' of the community. The opening ceremony was coordinated by Manoj Pillai, Ramesh Vyas, Kashmiri Trivedi, Anubha Kharabe, Rakesh Shinde, Anand Patil, Navin Shah, Sanjay Patil and Jital Golwala and others.

Celebrities Darshan Raval, playback singer and composer; Meet Bros, the musical duo; Jaswinder Singh, young generation ghazal maestro and Shirley Setia, Indi-Kiwi YouTube sensation rocked the main stage in the four-day festival.

# TIMES SANSKRUTI ARTS FESTIVAL



# TIMES SANSKRUTI ARTS FESTIVAL



VIHANG  
PRESENTS  
TIMES  
SANSKRUTI  
ART FESTIVAL  
UPVAN THANE  
BE A PART, CELEBRATE ART

PRATAAP  
SARNAIK  
FOUNDATION

## MUDRA STAGE

ART IS  
NOT ART  
IF IT'S  
NOT A  
FESTIVAL







# TIMES SANSKRUTI ARTS FESTIVAL

THE  
MES  
OF  
INDIA



## Mudra Stage: Sanskriti in Sanskriti Arts Festival

Mudra Stage, an Indian Classical Dance Stage curated by Kashmira Trivedi, a well known classical dance artiste, performer and organiser attracted a large crowd all through the festival. The stage was beautifully supported by Mohan Puthran. Legends like Padma Bhushan awardee Dr Saroja Vaidyanathan and Padma Bhushan awardees Dr(s) VP Dhananjayan and Shanta Dhananjayan mesmerised the audiences. Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee Dr Sandhya Purecha, Dr Uma Rele, Dr P Rama Devi, Mysore B Nagaraj, Dr Ayswaria Warriar, Dr Smruti Vaghela, Kalamandalam Prasad and G Ratheesh Babu were other star performers delighted crowds during the four-day festival.





All the participant were felicitated and recognised by the organisers. The participating artistes include

Day 1: Keka Sinha, Kathak; Kalamandalam Prasad, Kathakali; Dakshina Vaidyanathan, Bharatanatyam and Padma Bhushan Awardee Dr Saroja Vaidyanathan.

Day 2: Richa Shrivastav, Kathak; Atharva School of Fine Arts, Bharatanatyam; Preetilekha Chowdhury, Satriya; Purva Pandit, Kathak; Archana Punyesh, Kuchipudi; Nisha Satish, Bharatanatyam; Shanmukhapriya, Odissi; Nutan Patwardhan, Kathak; Sangeetha Rajiv, Mohiniattam; Sarfojiraje Bhosale Centre of Dr Sandhya V Purecha, Bharatanatyam; Kalasri Dr P Rama Devi, Kuchipudi; Padma Bhushan awardees VP Dhananjayam and Shanta Dhananjayan.





Day 3: Harshada Jambhekar, Kathak; Nisha Gilbert, Bharatnatyam; Dimple Girish, Mohiniyattam; Angik Dance Academy, Odissi; Samidha's Institute of Performing Arts, Bharatanatyam; Smriti Raj, Kathak; Aarya Ambure, Kathak; Nrityanjali, Classical Dance Ballet; Sanjib Bhattacharya, Manipuri; Namrata Mehta, Odissi; Dr Smruti Vaghela, Bharatanatyam; Mysore B Nagaraj, Kathak and Nrityathi Kalakshetram headed by Dr G Ratheesh Babu.

Day 4: Mukta Joshi, Kathak; Kalishwaran Pillai and Group, Bharatanatyam; Kalasri Ayswaria Warriar,

Mohiniattam and Nalanda Dance Research Centre, Classical Dance.

Each and every artiste gave their best and showcased the rich vibrant flavour of Indian Classical Dances. It turned out to be an audio-visual feast for the gathered audience.

On the whole Sanskruti Arts Festival 2019 presented by Vihang was a festival where art and artistes thrived.



# TIMES SANSKRUTI ARTS FESTIVAL



# ANTARDRISHTI BY SRJAN IN COLLABORATION WITH UNC CHARLOTTE, USA



Text: **Dr Nita Vidyarthi**, Pics: **SRJAN**

Srjan, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Nrityabasa, Bhubaneswar, celebrated the 93rd birth anniversary of the legendary Odissi Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra by presenting an exclusive Odissi evening entitled 'Antardrishti' recently at Uttam Manch, Kolkata. The programme in collaboration with UNC Charlotte, department of dance, USA, comprised three solo recitals composed by Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra in the first part by dancers in order of increasing seniority, followed by a deeply emotive and gripping mythological dance-drama 'Bali Badha' (slaying of the Monkey King Bali) from the 'Kishkindha Kanda' of the Ramayana.

Ustad Bismillah Khan Puraskar recipient, Rajashree Praharaj, a senior disciple of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, opened the evening with the popular 'Ardhanareeswara'. She excelled in the elegant composition of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra set to Pandit Raghunath Panigrahi's music in Raag Mallika, Taal Malika, exhibiting with ease, a fine balance of tandava and lasya, portraying with maturity and training the aesthetics and spiritual content of the stotram with vibrant and yet very soothing choreography. Her special designation was the quick shift of expressions as Shiva and Shakti. Especially elevating was the imagery of the lines 'Mandaramala Kalitaalakayai' and 'Prapanchashrustyun Mukhalasyakayai'.

Guru Ratikant's student Kaustavi Sarkar, now a faculty of UNC Charlotte and collaborator of 'Antardrishti', presented Bhakta poet Salabeg's famous composition

'Ahe Neela Shailo'. The seasoned dancer stood out for her fine abhinaya in this popular abhinaya in raag Arabhi, taal Jati with a thorough understanding of the lyrics by surrendering herself to the poetry skilfully using her expressive eyes to an advantage. The episodes of the rescue of Gajaraj, the elephant King from the crocodile, Draupadi's Chirharan and the Prahallad-Hiranyakashipu were highly evocative and well received by the audience.

It was heartening to watch young Prachi Hota from New Delhi, an erstwhile student of Guru Harekrishna Behera and presently under the tutelage of Y Asha Kumari, perform Saveri Pallavi, a pure dance in Ektali, raag Saveri and confidently share the stage with seasoned dancers. Recipient of quite a few awards, Prachi has performed in several festivals at home and abroad. Hence she was able to grip confidently the rhythmic variations that the Nritya demanded and proved her training confidently.





The much-awaited piece of the evening was the three-character 'Bali Badha' based on Tulsidas' Ramcharitmanas by leading Odissi dancers of the country. The dance-drama began with the invocatory prayer 'Sri Ramanamamritam', a 'Ram Bandana', in classical Odissi by Rajashree Praharaj and moved on to the backdrop of Kishkindha forest where Ram and Lakshman were hunting for Sita with the help of Sugriva and Hanuman.



Bali, the Monkey King and twin brother of Sugriva, abducted Sugriva's wife, hit him and threw him out of the kingdom. Ram and Sugriva developed a friendship and both promised to help each other. Ram hatched a plan to dethrone Bali and make Sugriva the King but failed the first time because of his confusion of the similarity in appearances and identities of the two brothers. Sugriva called on Bali to a fight. When Bali in fury sallied forth to meet the challenge, Ram emerged from the forest to shoot him with an arrow on his chest from behind a tree. The dying Bali wanted an explanation from Ram for this act. Ram justified and reminded Bali of his misdeeds. Bali's last words of entreaty to Ram were for the Lord's blessings and his own salvation.

Srjan's production under the imaginative choreographic interpretation of the theme by Guru Ratikant Mohapatra boasts of a physical brilliance that is seldom seen and

is always a visual and aural treat. Immaculate dancing, razor-sharp abhinaya and marvellous dramaturgy without props or character costumes but only simple light design - a striking and successful signature feature of director Guru Ratikant Mohapatra - made the piece an experience of sheer optical beauty. The production was a succession of a disciplined and ordered combination of athletic moves, wrestling (between Bali and Sugriva) with strong male dancers engaged in captivating body language to create a dialogue with rhythm. The choreography was set to Laxmikant Palit's music and was predominantly theatre overpowered by classical Odissi. The classicism and texture of Odissi movements were intelligently interwoven into the



choreographic framework while focussing attention and understanding the special qualities of the individual dancers.

Sujata Mohapatra as the dignified Ram danced majestically with her stunning poised authority, providing the production few moments of meaningful exchange with Sugriva and Bali. Rajib Bhattacharya, a seasoned dancer, made a convincing Sugriva for his dexterity in portraying myriad emotions apart from his understanding of the dance form and bringing a glow to his refined execution. But the memorable moments of the production are attributed to Ratikant both as the powerful, frenzied king Bali and the repenting and dying one, creating his own idiom of soul-stirring performance.



# A JOYOUS MUSIC AND DANCE FESTIVAL

The New Year had an artistic beginning with the four-day VRC Academy Festival, a unique music and dance festival organised by VRC Academy of Music and Dance headed by Mridangam Vidwan VR Chandrashekhar, held at ADA and Sevasadan Auditoria in Bengaluru from January 5 to 8.

Venugopal, regional director, ICCR, inaugurated the festival. Dance exponents Aparna Kishore, Rama Venugopalan, Nidhag Karunad, Dr Seshadri Iyengar and Aishwarya Nityananda presented Bharatanatyam concerts of high standards. Senior guru and legendary performer Professor Usha Datar aged over 70 years

left the audience in complete awe with her meritorious Bhamakalapam presentation. Dr Seetha Kote, a veteran film, TV, theatre artiste and danseuse, presented 'Purandara Darshana', a devotional dance drama with full zeal and professionalism. Vid. Gayathri Chandrashekhar magnificently presented Sanskrit dance drama Krishna Koumudee.

Dr M Suryaprasad, Nanjunda Rao, Vid. Anuradha Vikranth, Dr Karuna Vijayendra, Vid. Radhika Ramanujan and Dr Dwaritha Vishwanath graced the festival as guests of honour.

During the festival, Vid. SV Giridhar, Vid. Bhavani Shankar, ace Mridangam artistes, dance exponent Karnataka Kalashree Vid. K Brunda, vocalist Vid. Ramesh Chadaga, ace dancer and anchor Vid. Sugganahalli Shadakshari were honoured.

Senior and seasoned musicians Dr Ratheesh Babu, Vid. Nandakumar Unnikrishnan, Vid. Naveen Anand, Vid. Niteesh Ammannaya, Kum. Aruna Bhargavi, Vid. Vasudha Balakrishna, Vid. Bhavani Shankar, Vid. Narasimha Murthy, Dr Suparna Venkatesh, Vid. Rohit Bhat Uppoor, Vid. Srihari Rangaswamy, Vid. Vivek Krishna, Vid. Karthik Datar, Vid. Bharathi Venugopal, Vid. Padmini Ravi, Vid. Neela Ramanujam, Vid. Karthik Hebbar, Vid. Preethi Bharadwaj, Vid. DV Prasannakumar, Vid. Raghuram, Vid. Janardhana Rao, Vid. Priya Karthikeyan (Chennai), Vid. Madhusudan ably supported the festival. Vid Roopashree Madhusudan efficiently anchored the festival and MG Naveen Narasimha did a fantastic job with the lighting.





The last day of the festival witnessed a great vocal concert by Gana Kala Bhushana Sangeetha Saraswathi Vid. RA Ramamani supported by Vid. B Raghuram on violin, Vid. Bengaluru Arjun Kumar on Mridangam and Vid. G Omkar Rao on Ghatam. Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar presided over and Prof. Mysore V. Subrahmanya was the guest of honour.

Legendary mridangam exponent Ganakala Bhushana Dr TAS Mani was felicitated with Vagdevi Puraskar by VRC Academy of Music and Dance. The festival greatly pleased art lovers of Bengaluru with great dance and music concerts.

- Gopal M, Sagar



## SUJANA KALAKOTA A STAR IS BORN



Text and Pics: Paul Nicodemus

*Padma Bhushan awardees Dr Kanak Rele and Dr(s) Raja and Radha Reddy present 'Natya Snaatak' Award to Sujana*

Her dynamic abhinaya captivated the gathered audience. Her footwork did not skip a beat. Kuchipudi Rangapravesam of Sujana Kalakota presented by Nataraj Music and Dance Academy (NMDA) turned out to be a grand evening of classical dance performance at Kalabharathi Auditorium on January 6. Sujana has been training under the tutelage of Naatyasri KV Lakshmi, principal and founder secretary of NMDA, for the last 15 years. Her Rangapravesam attained a gold standard in the history of art and culture in Visakhapatnam. The programme under the supervision of BR Vikram Kumar, founder president of NMDA, was quite entertaining. The presence of the most renowned exponents of performing arts Padma Bhushan awardees Dr Kanak Rele (Mohiniattam) and Dr (s) Raja and Radha Reddy (Kuchipudi) added a new dimension to the whole programme. It was an auspicious occasion for the dynamic and young Kuchipudi dancer. The other guests who graced the occasion to bless the artiste included Sudagani Ravi Shankar Narayan, additional commissioner of Income Tax, PVN Madhav, MLC, Kashmiri Trivedi, Bharatanatyam artiste from Mumbai, Jagabandhu Jana, Devdasi festival director from Odisha, and Sai Venkatesh, lighting expert and International dance festival director from Bengaluru.











Guru KV Lakshmi on Nattuvangam; M Narasimha Rao on vocals; Pasumarthy Haranadha Sastry on mridangam; A Satya Vishal on violin; BVS Sarma on flute, provided the live orchestra for the performance. Lighting design by Sai Venkatesh from Bengaluru added more depth to the programme. Compere by Rambhatla Nrisimhasarma, a Nandi awardee, was impressive.

After her performance, Padma Bhushan awardee Dr Kanak Rele and Padma Bhushans awardees Dr (s) Raja and Radha Reddy showered praise and presented her 'Natya Snaatak' for completing her Rangapravesam.



Sujana Kalakota was born and brought up in the coastal city of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. Her parents, Kalakota Ashok Reddy and Aruna noticed her interest in dance and encouraged her to learn it. She began training at a very young age and gave her first stage performance at the tender age of 5. Over the years, she continued to hone her skills and reached professional standards.





**@ANDHERI**

It was a beautiful and blessed evening at the Dance India Magazine's Monthly Programme organised at SRSS Academy in Bagarka College, Andheri. Magazine editor BR Vikram Kumar's vision of providing a platform for young budding talent is a big step towards the growth of the traditional art forms. With this initiative, every artiste is being recognised. A big kudos to the entire team. Coordinator Kashmira Trivedi has worked hard to make it a reality.

The evening began with a performance by disciples of Vidya Sriram's Nritya Veda Academy. Students kickstarted their recital with Ganesha Kauthavam and concluded with a Pushpanjali. 'Bho Shambho', the most popular and familiar Keertan, was enjoyed by everybody. The performance had an ample dose of vigour and grace. The icing on the cake was the beautiful presentation of Ashtalaxmi. Pallavi Pargaonkar and Avinash Satoskar set the tone and mood with their mesmerising Hindustani vocals. Both these professional artistes interacted with the audience through their compositions in raga Yaman. Classical and semiclassical numbers were presented. The chief guest for the evening Dr Parul Shah made his presence with encouraging words. He also explained dance therapy and how it is useful for our mental stability.

It was indeed a satisfying evening for art lovers and artistes. The programme had a beautiful combination of Carnatic and Hindustani music, a blend of two worlds. Vidya Sriram and her students Aditi, Nili, Meghana, Khanak and Jhanvi did a fabulous job.

- Samidha Shinde



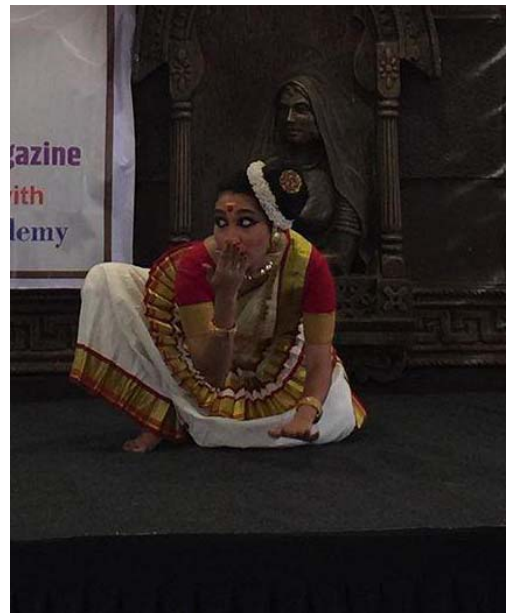


**@DOMBIVLI**

The Dance India's Monthly Programme in collaboration with Mudra Dance Academy supported by Vrunda Upadhyay was held at Dombivli on January 19. The programme started with an informative lecture demonstration by Jayashree Hariharan, a Carnatic vocalist from Kalyan, a city in Maharashtra. The lec-dem was special as it was based on the relation between Carnatic music and Bharatnatyam dance. Later, Radhika V Nair, a Mohiniyattam dancer, performed Ganapati Stuti in ragam Arabi and talam Adi. She continued with Omanathinkal Padam in ragam Navarasam and talam Misra Chapu and concluded her Mohiniyattam recital with Jeeva. She is a disciple of Guru Dr Kanak Rele and Guru Kalamandalam C Gopalkrishnan.

The programme had a young audience who were inspired by the lec-dem and performance. In the end, artistes were felicitated with a certificate as a token of appreciation from The Dance India team.

- Vrunda Upadhyay





**@KURLA**



The Dance India's Monthly Programme in collaboration with Atharva School of Dance supported by Shamal Pawar was organised at Kurla in Mumbai. The programme saw established artistes from Odissi and Kathak perform.

Archana Basu and Rakhi, disciples of Guru Debi Basu, an eminent dancer, choreographer and teacher, presented Odissi. Both the artistes have been training under her tutelage for over a decade. Guru Basu imbibed the art form under the guidance of the Odissi legend Padma Vibhushan awardee Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. The duo, Rakhi and Archana, performed a mesmerising Jagannath Bhajan and left the audience awestruck. Their graceful body movements showcased their passion towards their art.



The second performance of the day came from another established artiste, Manisha Yadav, a disciple of Late Guru Gopi Krishna and Guru Sitara Devi. Manisha not only showcased her footwork with Tarana but also presented a beautiful composition of Tumri with an excellent expression. She is currently pursuing her Kathak Alankar from Guru Lata Bakalkar.

**- Shamal Pawar**





## @ AHMEDABAD



The Dance India's Monthly Programme in collaboration with Nrutyasangini Dance Institute supported by Sheetal Makwana was organised in Ahmedabad on January 13. In the pioneering programme, two rising stars in the field of Bharatanatyam - Riya Gohel and Yuti Patel - gave a scintillating performance and captivated the gathered crowd. Yuti Patel is a state level Bharatanatyam champion. Several eminent personalities from the field of art and culture graced the occasion.

- Sheetal Makwana





**THE DANCE INDIA MONTHLY PROGRAMME**  
**@NAVI MUMBAI**

The Dance India's Monthly Programme in collaboration with Meenakshi Nritya Vidyalaya, Navi Mumbai, was held at Manikanda Seva Sangham in Nerul on January 22. In this month's programme, students from Jalnawala Kalaniketan and Nritya Kala Academy showcased their talent.

Students from Jalnawala Kalaniketan under the guidance of their Guru Anuradha began the programme. Anuradha, director of Jalnawala Kalaniketan, did her MA in Bharatnatyam from Khairagarh University and she is a multifaceted danseuse with equal knowledge of Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi and Odissi. The repertoire consisted of Ganesh Kriti - Gajanana Yutam. This invocatory piece was in praise of Lord Ganesha, who has the elephant head and is worshipped by everyone. This Sanskrit composition was by Muthuswami Dikshitar in raga Chakravakam and tala Adi. The next presentation was a Shabdham - Sarasijakshulu in Telugu. It was an abhinaya piece based on a Tanjore quartet in Ragamalika and tala Misra Chapu. Three episodes - Gopika Vastraharan, Makhan Chor and Krishna playing pranks on gopis - were enacted. Following the Shabdham was a Padam - Krishna Ni Begane Baro. This vatsalya Padam is a composition in the Kannada language. This is a composition of Saint Purandaradasa in raga Yaman Kalyan and tala Misra Chapu. It was performed by Guru Anuradha herself. Her expressive abhinaya enthralled all present there. The repertoire was concluded with a Tillana with brisk rhythmic intricate foot patterns and sculpture-like poses. This composition is of Balamuralikrishna in raga Kadanakuthuhalam. The students who performed were Prasanna Acharya, Ritika Shetty, Shravya Shetty and Tamanna Bharat. The hard work put in by the students was evident in their perfect coordination and perfection in postures. It was a laudable performance.





Next was a presentation by the Nrityakala Academy, whose director is Guru Suhasini Rahul Padale. The repertoire opened with a Pushpanjali choreographed by the Guru herself, in raga Srotaswini and tala Adi. It was a salutation to the lord of dance Nataraja, the Guru, the musicians and the audience. The next item was Devi Alarippu based on tala Misra Chapu. The word Alarippu means a flowering bud. It is an invocatory piece meaning it is performed before a dancer begins the performance. It is considered to be a warm-up for the dancers, relaxing the dancer's mind and body and preparing them for the

dance. Alarippu began with Atamis or neck movements followed by Mandi adavu in the second half and later culminated with vibrant footwork and teermanam adavu. The performers were Shreya Rahul Padale, Kanika Bharadwaj and Vishakha Thombre. All the students showed self-discipline without which the perfect postures and footwork are not possible in classical dance along with their guru's guidance and inspiration. Truly, the programme was a treat for the connoisseurs of classical dance.

- Julia Ghosh



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