

THE DANCE INDIA

A Treasure Trove of Culture & Tourism

ISSN 2456-4249

Volume 3 | Issue 9 | March 2019

₹ 90

TORCH BEARERS
KUMKUM MOHANTY

.....
RAYS OF HOPE
JAI QUEHAENI:
A PRINCESS OF BHARATANATYAM

COVER STORY

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Here the language of stone surpasses the language of human.
- Rabindranath Tagore



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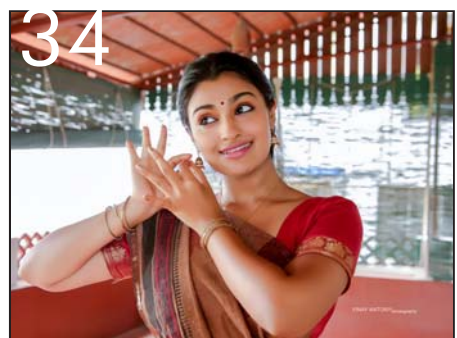
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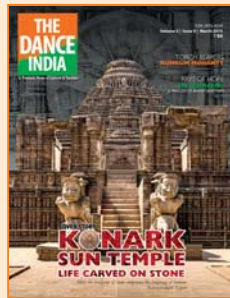
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EDITORIAL

'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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Articles may be submitted for possible publication in the magazine in the following manner:

- Send in your articles to editor.thedanceindia@gmail.com
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- Articles are published in the magazine only on the condition that the author agrees to the terms of the Copyright Statement and Policy

Regd. Office: Trivikram Publications,
D.No. 50-01-50/1, ASR Nagar,
Seethammadhara, Visakhapatnam - 530 013, A.P.
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The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers in the articles and reviews do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the editorial team or official policies of The Dance India.

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Edited, Published and Owned by

Bathina Ranga Vikram Kumar,
Mobile No. +91-9848137445, on behalf of
Trivikram Publications from
D.No. 50-01-50/1, ASR Nagar,
Seethammadhara,
Dist. Visakhapatnam - 530 013, A.P. and

Printed by G. Sangameswara Rao, at
Sri Lekha Power printers
D. No : 30-20-30 & 31, Nehuru Sreet
Seetarapuram, Elluru Road
Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh)

Editor: Bathina Ranga Vikram Kumar

The Dance India acknowledges the help rendered by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, by way of a financial grant.

Technical Advise and Graphic Design



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EDITOR'S DESK



India as a country is renowned for its culturally rich heritage. Universally, the land is hailed as a Karmabhoomi. But unfortunately, in the present context, even after multiple lamentations by the artiste community, the government has failed to provide the needed protection and promotion.

When you compare culture and sports, the Indian government has not been giving equal importance to culture. Artistes find it hard to get platforms for performing, and those who find platforms do not receive adequate remunerations. Artistes who are passionate about bringing excellence in their work do not receive enough scholarships compared to sports scholarships.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is another area which has been a tragedy. Every region needs a performing theatre which is accessible to artistes but unfortunately, the government did not look into such practices. It is a moment of shame for Indian artistes. Why are the organisations not serious about cultural promotion as part of the CSR initiative? Why is the ministry of culture not given equal importance as the ministry of sports? Will there ever be an answer or solution these questions? These are some questions to ponder over and questions that are being asked by the artsite community. The upcoming government needs to look into these areas and take necessary measures in the right direction. Indian arts and culture need to be protected and propagated to posterity.

Jai Hind!

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

BR Vikram Kumar

CULTURAL BULLETIN

Source: PIB

President of India presents Gandhi Peace Prize

The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind presented the prestigious Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 at a function in Rashtrapati Bhawan on February 26. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also attended the function and felicitated the awardees.

Minister of state for culture (Independent charge), Dr Mahesh Sharma, and other dignitaries were present on the occasion. The Gandhi Peace Prize was presented to the Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari for 2015; jointly to the Akshaya Patra Foundation and the Sulabh International for 2016; to the Ekal Abhiyan Trust for 2017; and to Shri Yohei Sasakawa (from Japan) for 2018.

Gandhi Peace Prize for social, economic and political transformation through non-violence was instituted in the year 1995. The award comprises an amount of Rs. 1 crore and a Citation. The jury of the Gandhi Peace Prize is a high-level committee headed by the Prime Minister of India.

This annual award is given to individuals, associations, institutions or organizations who have worked selflessly for peace, non-violence and amelioration of human sufferings particularly of the less-privileged section of society contributing towards social justice and harmony. The award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or gender.



The President, Ram Nath Kovind and the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi with the awardees of the Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on February 26, 2019. The Minister of State for Culture (I/C), Dr Mahesh Sharma is also seen.

Special Postage Stamp on Kumbh Mela Released

Union minister of state for railways and communication Manoj Sinha released a special postage stamp of the Indian Postal Department on Kumbh Mela on February 2. A special first-day cover was also released on the occasion. It costs Rs 5.

On this occasion, Sinha said Kumbh is a major event not only of the country but the world. He also said Kumbh is not only a religious and spiritual event but an astrological, cultural and astronomical event of the world. Kumbh has been treated as a source of light of knowledge, he added.



President of India Presents Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards 2017

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for 2017 at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on February 6. Union minister of state(l/c) for culture,

Dr Mahesh Sharma, along with senior officers of the ministry along with many dignitaries from the field of art and culture attended the event.

Cultural Heritage Youth Leadership Programme (CHYLP)

The scheme for Cultural Heritage Youth Leadership Programme (CHYLP) was envisaged enriching awareness of Indian culture and heritage amongst the youth in order to promote, understand and develop a fondness for India's rich cultural heritage, with a view to developing appropriate leadership qualities amongst youth. The focus of the programme was to be on less privileged children residing in backward areas by interacting with them in vernacular languages for their better understanding. Intermittently, the programme was given to the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), an autonomous organization working under the purview of the ministry of culture. CCRT organized workshops for the scheme. However, to accelerate the process, the museum division of this ministry arranged visits of children of unprivileged sections of society to museums for them to gain knowledge relating to the Indian history and culture and science. Details of children of an unprivileged section of society visit to the museum during 2018-19 are given below.

CCRT allocated Rs. 10.00 lakhs for implementation of this scheme.

Data Related To Visit Of Underprivileged Children Visit To Museums

S.No	Name of organization	Visit by No. of Underprivileged Children in 2018-19
1	National Museum	557
2	Allahabad Museum	2952
3	Salar Jung Museum	5096
4	NGMA-Delhi	385
5	NGMA-Mumbai	412
6	NGMA-Bengaluru	50
7	Indian Museum	670
8	Victoria Memorial Hall	1826
9	National Council of Science Museums (all 25 centres)	91102

The above information was given by the minister of state (independent charge) for culture Dr Mahesh Sharma.

20th **Bharat Rang Mahotsav** inaugurated in **New Delhi**

The minister of state for culture (I/C), Government of India, Dr Mahesh Sharma, inaugurated the 21-day-long nationwide theatre spectacle at Kamani Auditorium in a programme presided over by Dr Arjun Deo Charan, acting chairman, NSD Society and other senior officers of ministry of culture in New Delhi on February 2. Renowned danseuse and theatre artiste, Member of Rajya Sabha, Dr Sonal Mansingh, eminent theatre director and former director of NSD, Prof. Ram Gopal Bajaj were the guests of honour at the inauguration function where minister of state for social justice and empowerment, Shri Ramdas Athawale, was the special guest.



Inauguration of Bharat Rang Mahotsav 2019

The 20th edition of Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM), the international theatre festival of India, is organised by National School of Drama (NSD), one of the prominent training institutions in the world. The National School of Drama (NSD) is an autonomous institution under the ministry of culture, Government of India. The 20th BRM comes with 111 national and international acts in its basket that includes folk and other traditional theatre forms, invitee plays, and productions by the students of the National School of Drama.

The inaugural ceremony was followed by a 50-minute musical performance 'Karanth Ke Rang' based on the compositions of late B.V. Karanth, directed by Amod Bhatt and presented by Rangpurva group, Mumbai.

Suresh Sharma, director in-charge, National School of Drama, welcomed the guests at the inaugural function and thanked the members of international and national theatre fraternity for gracing the occasion with their presence. He spoke in detail about the wide variety of plays to be staged during the festival and allied events such as 'Living Legend' and 'Master Class' to be held in New Delhi and 5 other cities.

The 20th edition of BRM also included allied activities such as, 'Director's Meet', 'Living Leg-ends', and 'Master Class'. Apart from New Delhi, the NSD arranged parallel festivals of the 20th BRM in Dibrugarh (February 4 to 10, 2019), Varanasi (February 7 to 13, 2019), Ranchi (February 9 to 15, 2019), Mysore (February 11 to 17, 2019), and Rajkot (February 13 to 19, 2019). The festival culminated in New Delhi on February 21, 2019

Digitization of 2.83 lakh manuscripts consisting of 2.93 crore pages of manuscripts done under NMM: Dr Mahesh Sharma

Ministry of culture launched the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) in 2003 for documentation, conservation/preservation and digitization of manuscripts. Till date, it has documented about 43.16 lakh manuscripts in different scripts and languages.

follows the guidelines prepared by the National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property (NRLC), Lucknow.

For conservation and preservation of manuscripts, the cases are dealt on the basis of availability and accessibility. For conservation of manuscripts, NMM

Till date, 43.16 lakh manuscripts have been documented. Preventive conservation of 3,92,75,570 folios and curative conservation of 36,56,863 folios manuscripts has been done till date. Digitization of 2.83 lakh manuscripts consisting of 2.93 crore pages of manuscripts has been done

Creation of National Virtual Library of India as one of the components of National Mission on Libraries

The objective of the National Virtual Library of India (NVLI) is to facilitate the creation of a comprehensive database on digital resources of India on information about India in an open access environment. Salient features of NVLI are Federated searching through multilingual user interfaces; virtual learning environment; e-governance platform facilitating data analytics; multilingual searching and retrieval on ontology/thesaurus based.

The project of creation of National Virtual Library of India costing Rs 72.34 crore had been entrusted to IIT Bombay (in collaboration with C-DAC, Pune and

IGNOU, Delhi). An amount of Rs71.78 crore has been released by Government to IIT Bombay till date.

The core software application and cloud infrastructure for NVLI have been developed. The soft launch of NVLI has been done on February 15, 2018. Harvesting of Metadata and its curation is on.

As per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between National Mission on Libraries and IIT Bombay on 26.04.2016, the time frame for completion of the project by IIT Bombay is 3 years. The ministry of culture continuously monitors the progress of the NVLI project.

Taj Mahal & Agra fort among the top ten revenue generating monuments:

Dr Mahesh Sharma

The top ten revenue generating monuments during 2015-18 are Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Qutub Minar, Red Fort, Humayun's Tomb, Sun Temple Konark,

Group of monuments Mamallapuram, Ellora Caves, Group of monuments Khajuraho, and Ajanta Caves, Aurangabad

President of India presents Tagore Awards for Cultural Harmony for the Years 2014, 2015 and 2016

The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, presented the Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 to Rajkumar Singhajit Singh, Chhayanaut (a cultural organisation of Bangladesh) and Ram Vanji Sutar respectively, at a function held in New Delhi on February 18.

Shri Rajkumar Singhajit Singh is a highly accomplished and senior most guru, exponent, choreographer, prolific writer and scholar of Manipuri dance. His name is synonymous with the propagation of Manipuri dance both in and outside Manipur.

Chhayanaut is a cultural organisation of Bangladesh which has played a leading role in the promotion of Tagore's works and Bangla arts and literature not only within Bangladesh but all across the world. It has also rushed to the aid of people at times of famines, floods or riots, bringing people together to resolve the crisis with songs of protest on their lips.

Ram Vanji Sutar is a renowned sculptor and scholar. He has made more than 600 monumental sculptures in the last eighty years. He has sculptured the mammoth 182-meter high statue of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, the world's tallest statue (The Statue of Unity) which has recently been installed at Sardar Sarovar Dam, Gujarat.

Expressing gratitude for the recognition, the awardees said that they are honoured to receive the award and are inspired to pass on the message of fellowship and harmony as a symbol of Gurudev Tagore's legacy.

Tagore Award is given annually and carries an amount of Rs 1 crore (convertible to foreign currency), a citation in a Scroll, a Plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item. The award may be divided between two persons/institutions, who are considered by the jury to be equally deserving of recognition in a given year.

Initiatives to inculcate respect amongst the younger generation for Indian Cultural Heritage

Many initiatives to inculcate respect amongst the younger generation for Indian cultural heritage have been taken up by the ministry. The thrust towards yoga, various cultural circuits, etc., are some of the initiatives on the part of the government in this direction.

Also organisations under this ministry like Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA), Sahitya Akademi (SA), Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA), Kalakshetra Foundation (KF), National School of Drama (NSD) are organising various cultural events like exhibitions, workshops, camps, panel discussions, festivals, and also through medium of theatre with the main objective of creating an understanding of aesthetic and cultural values in order to appreciate and understand the creative expressions of mankind through the ages. Special efforts are being made to involve the youth in cultural development, to inculcate in them a spirit of harmony and togetherness and to channelise youthful energy in creative and productive pursuits.

Centre for Cultural Resources and Training organises 'National Cultural Festival' in which students interact with scholars and gurus. Students are also taken on tours to the places of cultural and natural importance, to show, how nature has inspired the visual artists, poet, musician or dancer, and to motivate them for making efforts to conserve our heritage at regional levels. To promote the Indian cultural heritage through the medium

of theatre, National School of Drama conducts workshops under its outreach programme in various parts of the country, where on the culmination of these workshops, the plays produced are stage performed and documented by the National School of Drama.

'Aao Mitti Me Khele' a clay modelling workshop was organized by Lalit Kala Akademi on the occasion of its foundation day, with the government school children at Rashtrapati Bhavan to make the younger generation aware of the long history of Terracotta art traditions in India. Lalit Kala Akademi also organizes the 'Annual National Exhibition' to promote contemporary art and make the younger generation aware of the current practices in the art and cultural field.

Sahitya Akademi annually organises about 50 Yuva Sahiti programme, publishes about 10-15 books under Navodaya scheme and issues travel grants to about 24 young authors.

Kalakshetra Foundation has produced several dance dramas on epics viz. Ramayana and Mahabharata, highlighting moral values of these epics which have become more relevant to the millennial society.

Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts and Culture conducts various activities including monthly book reading sessions and lectures, Bi-monthly Film Screening related to Art and Culture and Monthly Indigenous Games activities for educating young generation in the field of Arts and Culture.

Prime Minister inaugurates Virtual Experiential Museum at Man - Mahal near Dashashwamedh Ghat at Varanasi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the newly established Virtual Experiential Museum (VEM) in a Centrally Protected Monument under Archeological Survey of India, Man - Mahal, situated on the bank of the Ganges near holy Dashashwamedh Ghat at Varanasi on February 19.

Virtual Experiential Museum has been established by the National Council of Science Museum (NCSM) working under the ministry of culture, Government of India. NCSM has worked hard to show a glimpse of various cultural aspects, tangible and intangible, of

Varanasi through the use of modern and sophisticated virtual reality technology in this museum. Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) helped in designing and curation of this Virtual Experiential Museum and also in preparing the script for various documentaries to be shown in this VEM.

Entry ticket for this museum with the monument is Rs 25/- for Indian and visitor from SAARC and BIMSTEC countries while for other foreign visitors, Rs 300/- will be charged. The VEM will remain open from sunrise to sunset. The entry of children below 15 years is free.

Dr Mahesh Sharma inaugurates an exhibition of a rare collection of Nizam's jewels and jewellery at National Museum, New Delhi

The minister of state for culture (IC), Dr Mahesh Sharma, inaugurated an exhibition of the rare collection comprising 173 precious jewels and jewellery items of exquisite workmanship titled "Jewels of India: The Nizam's Jewellery Collection" on February 18. Arun Goel, secretary, ministry of culture; Dr BR Mani, DG, National Museum and other senior officers of the ministry of culture and National Museum were present on the occasion. The exhibition has been organised by the National Museum, ministry of culture, Government of India. The exhibition has been curated by Sanjib Kumar Singh and his team from the National Museum under the guidance of Dr BR Mani, DG, National Museum. A portfolio on the Nizam's jewellery collection and a booklet was also released on the occasion.

The Nizams' Jewellery is one of the largest and rich collections of jewels that was purchased in 1995 by the Government of India at a cost of Rs 218 crore. The collection had remained in the custody of "H.E.H. Nizam Jewellery Trust" and "H.E.H. Nizam Supplemental



Jacob diamond at 'Jewels of India: The Nizam's Jewellery Collection' exhibition

Jewellery Trust" formed by the last Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan in 1951-1952 to safeguard the ancestral wealth of the family. The trustees kept this treasure of great historical value in the vaults of Hong Kong Bank. When the Government of India acquired this collection in 1995, after a prolonged legal battle, it was shifted to the vaults of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Mumbai, where it



The Minister of State for Culture (I/C) and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr Mahesh Sharma visiting after inaugurating the "Jewels of India: The Nizam's Jewellery Collection" exhibition, in New Delhi on February 18, 2019. The Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Arun Goel is also seen.

remained till June 29, 2001. It was brought and kept in the vaults of the RBI, New Delhi, for safety and has now been shifted to the National Museum for a befitting display, the preparations of which are complete from all points of view including round-the-dock security.

The exhibition will remain open for public viewing from Feb 19, 2019 to May 5, 2019 from 10.00 AM to 6.00 PM (except Mondays and National Holidays). Entry by Special ticket of Rs.50/- per person.

Scheme for Pension and Medical Aid to Artistes

The government is implementing a Scheme namely "Scheme for Pension and Medical Aid to Artistes". The objective of the scheme is to improve the financial and socio-economic status of the old aged artistes and scholars who have contributed significantly in their specialised fields of arts, letters etc. but leading a miserable life or are in penury condition. The scheme

has also provision to provide medical aid facility to such artistes and his/her spouse by covering them under a convenient and affordable health insurance scheme of the government.

The above information was given by minister of state (independent charge) for culture Dr Mahesh Sharma.



Glimpses of the Kumbh Mela 2019, on the occasion of Maghi Purnima, at Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh on February 19, 2019.

Foundation Stone of Taj View Garden laid

Dr Mahesh Sharma, minister of state (Independence charge), ministry of culture and ministry of environment, forest and climate change, laid the foundation stone of Taj View Garden on the Taj Corridor Area between the Agra Fort and Taj Mahal in Agra on February 14. Pro. (Dr) Ramshankar Katheria, Member of Parliament, Agra and chairman of National Scheduled Caste Commission; Sh. Naveen Jain, Mayor, Agra Municipal Corporation and senior officers of ASI were present on the occasion.

The Taj View Garden is being developed on the Mughal period Charbagh garden pattern by the Archaeological Survey of India, ministry of culture, Government of India. The main purpose is to increase greenery by enormous plantation around the Taj Mahal. It will not only help to reduce the pollution around the Taj Mahal but also provide a pleasant view to the visitors.

CULTURE & TOURISM

CHILIKA LAKE IS A BRACKISH

Chilika Lake is a brackish water lagoon, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha state on the east coast of India. The lake with a water spread area of over 1000 sq km is a wetland of International Importance. It was designated as a Ramsar site on 1 October 1981. The largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest coastal lagoon in the world after The New Caledonian barrier reef in New Caledonia.

It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian subcontinent, attracting more than a million birds for nesting and roosting. The lake is home to 228 bird species, 139 of them being wetland birds. It is also home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals. The lake is an ecosystem with large fishery resources.



TORCH BEARERS



KUMKUM MOHANTY: ACING ALL FIELDS

Text: **Paul Nicodemus**



She learnt discipline from her father, subtlety from her mother and perfection from her guru. Imbibing these great qualities she moulded herself into a quintessential personality in the history of Odissi. Kumkum Mohanty is an Odissi exponent, guru, author and administrator who not only captured the imagination of the audiences worldwide with her graceful abhinaya but also someone who codified the grammar of Odissi dance.



Kumkum Mohanty



Kumkum Mohanty was born on September 10, 1946 at Cuttack to late Bama Charan Das, retired DPI and former Vice Chancellor of Sambalpur University, and Punya Prabha Das, a homemaker. Her mother was solely responsible for her dance career, while her father was a strict disciplinary who guarded her studies.

She started learning dance from her 7th grade. Right from her childhood, she was interested in music. "When I was two-and-a-half years old, I left my house, apparently, following a music procession. My entire household looked for me and even went to the police station," she says. A pan shop vendor recognised her and stopped her. In another instance, when she was in her 4th grade, her father asked her to sing a song for him and she sang 48 in a row. Shocked at her knowledge, Kumkum's father enquired with her mother about her interest in music. This happened in Puri when her father worked as a principal of Puri College. Once they returned to Cuttack, her parents enrolled her for music and dance classes at Kala Vikash Kendra. She was 11 years old. In a week she attended two dance classes and two music classes. Within 2-3 years Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, who was a teacher there, asked her to join him and she had to forgo her music classes. She completed her



Kumkum Mohanty

schooling and simultaneously her course at Kala Vikash Kendra. After finishing school she attended workshops conducted by her guru. Kumkum takes pride in being the disciple of Padma Bhushan awardee Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra.

Her father prioritised academics and permitted her to attend dance classes only if she got first class marks in her school finals. For the love of dance, Kumkum achieved a first class in her examination.

She pursued Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in college. During the same time, Odissi was on the brink of becoming a classical dance form and Guru Kelucharan visited her at home to invite her to a programme in Delhi. However, her father refused to send her as her exams were approaching. "I cried and stayed home. I got the first class," she says. Later, she joined Master of Arts at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack. She also went to Utkal University to pursue Political Science.

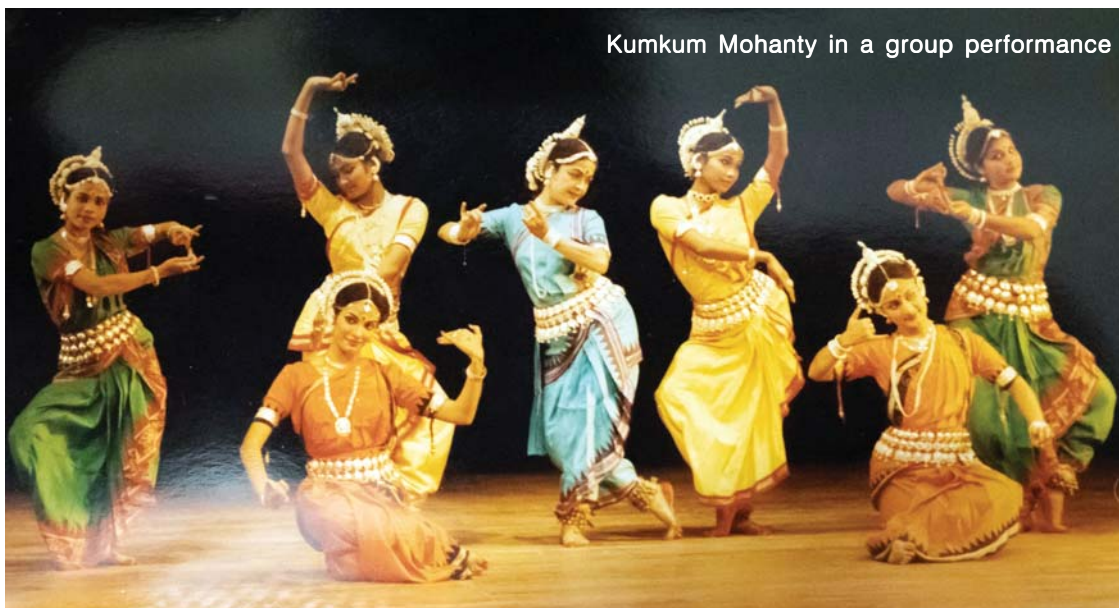
In 1967, the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi held a seminar on "The impact of Gita Govinda on classical dances of India." They invited guru Kelucharan to present



Gita Govinda and Kalicharan Patnaik went as a musicologist. "Guruji chose me for the seminar. He told my father he wants to take me with him to perform abhinaya. Maybe he liked my abhinaya. In fact, more than understanding anything I was just copying him. I said I cannot come as I have my final examination, but strangely my father said yes and wanted me to attend the seminar," she shares. The Gita Govinda was then composed in her house. After her performance in Delhi, a popular paper wrote 'Kumkum is Padmavathy' the next day. That was the turning point of

her life. Within two months, she was invited for a programme in Sapro House where Yamini Krishnamurthy and others performed. "I was very young at the time. Next day, the paper wrote, Yamini had to start with Thillana to keep up the pace that Kumkum had created," she shares.

There was a huge gap in the compositions of Odissi repertoire between 1955 and 1965 that happened in her house. Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and Pandit Bhubaneswar Mishra, a disciple of Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, composed at her house. "Pandit



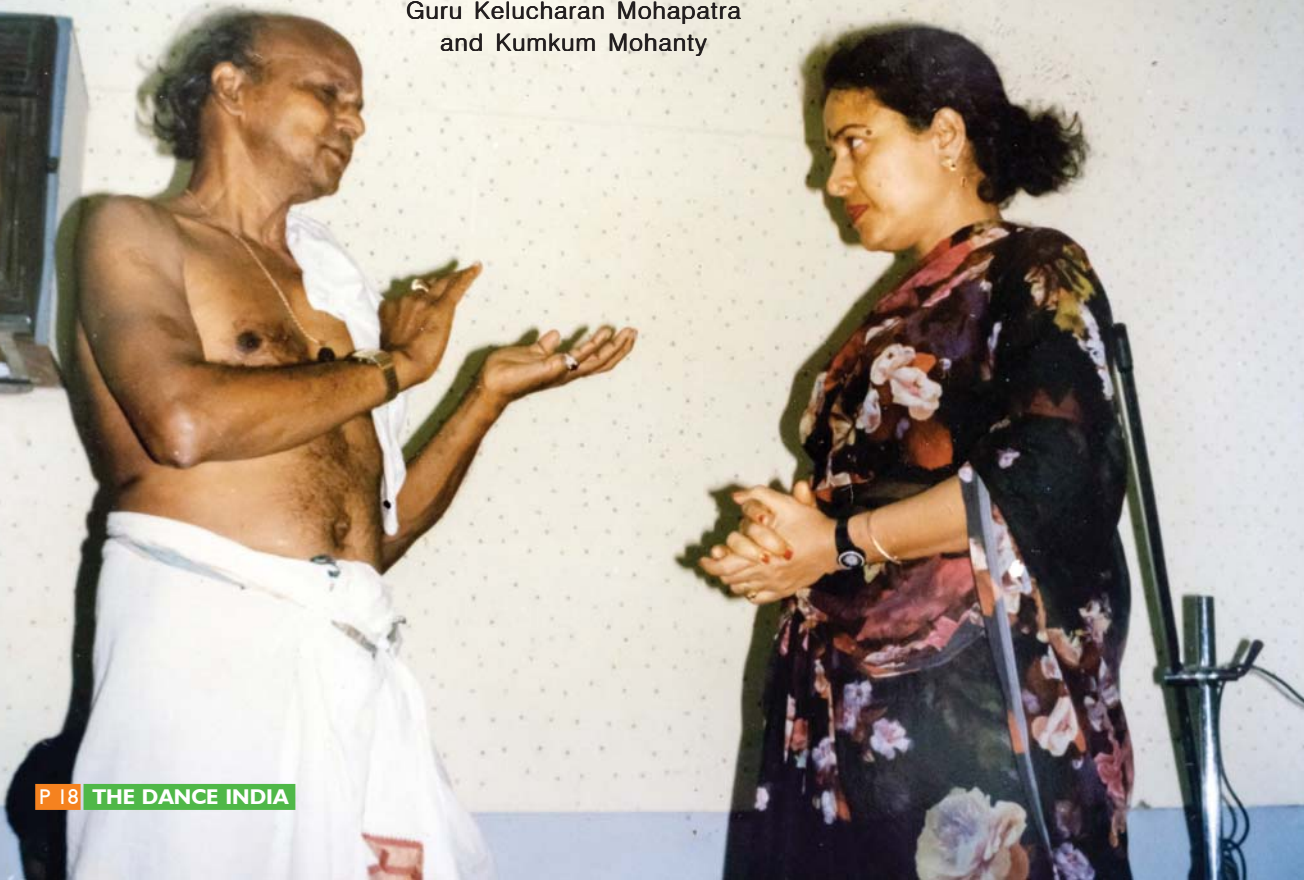


Kumkum Mohanty

Bhubaneswar Mishra joined All India Radio, Cuttack, and there was a conglomeration between Carnatic music and Hindustani music. He was at the centre where Odissi was also sung. I consider him as the mother of Odissi dance and Guru Kelucharan as the father. Mother gave birth to music and rearing was done by the father," she explains. Till then, because of the lack of music, Odissi repertoire was less and the combination of Guru Kelucharan and Mishra expanded the repertoire. "Mishra Ji gave music and guruji composed and it happened in my house. My grandmother slept on one bed, my father and mother on chairs, Mishraji and guruji on another bed. They composed on a small harmonium that my father bought for my music examination at a cost of Rs 28. The harmonium is still with me and from that, all the pallavis have come up. They composed in the wee hours and after 12 o'clock at night, guruji's creativity increased. I studied from 2:30 am to 5:30 am," says Kumkum.

She did a lot of hard work and Guru liked her as she could remember everything. Those days, video cameras were not in use. Kumkum remembered her guru's compositions and the next day recollected them on her way to Utkal University. During this time, in the late 60s,

Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra
and Kumkum Mohanty





Odissi repertoire grew and simultaneously Kumkum became popular at the all-India level.

She completed her Masters from Utkal University and received a Gold Medal. She was appointed a lecturer at Shailabala Women's College, Cuttack. Meanwhile, the ICCR invited her to go to Russia in 1970. Her father tested her again and said she could go to Russia only if she qualified in the UPSE examination. She became an IAS officer, but an official from the foreign service told her he would take her into service if she quit dancing. "I said sorry. I wrote to the UPSC to hold my interview in advance as I had to travel to Russia. At the interview the chairman asked me why I wanted to join the services despite being an international-reputed dancer. I told him it was my father's wish and he advised me to follow my dreams instead of being a civil servant and getting posted in a remote village," she said.

Always a frontrunner, Kumkum stood first in almost all her feats. Having qualified in the UPSE, she joined the allied service (Indian Postal Service) in 1970 and was posted in Saharanpur and Mussoorie. Her dance career



came to a halt, but she practiced whenever she found time. In Mussoorie, she received a gold medal as the All Round Best Officer.

In 1972, Kumkum got married to Madan Mohan Mohanty, an IAS officer and was blessed with a baby boy soonafter. After that, her life revolved around the office and household work. "Those days I received numerous invitations to perform but my husband never pursued it. My abhiman (pride) prevented me from performing without him asking me to. I tore the telegrams and invitations," she shares.

In 1978, when her husband served as the collector of Sundergarh, he wanted to raise money for the children affected by leprosy and asked her to perform. "It was like a signal from God who brought me back to the stage. I started heavy exercises and eventually guruji came and a new pallavi was composed," she says. However, within a short time, she had to stop her dancing to give birth to her second child.



Kumkum Mohanty



Kumkum Mohanty

In 1983, she came to Odisha on deputation. She served for six years and was instrumental in establishing the Odissi Research Centre, a Government of Odisha Autonomous body under the chairmanship of chief minister. "This assignment gave me immense pleasure and helped me translate my inherent ideas into action," she said.

At this time, she asked herself who would document the art forms and repertoire for the future generations when all artistes were busy performing. The items composed in her house were not documented as there was no way of doing it. She thought if there been a method of writing them, like a notation, she would have jotted them down. These things constantly played in her mind and she made a scheme on codification, documentation, notation and dissemination and gave to the Government of Odisha. That was when the then chief minister of Odisha J.B. Patnaik brought her to Odisha on deputation. The chief minister knew her from a long time because of her performances as Kumkum Das before she got married.

**Kumkum Mohanty
during her NCC Days**

Stalwarts like Guru Kelucharan, Pandit Bhubaneswar Mishra and Balakrishna Das were part of the Odissi centre.

Kumkum began her work documenting living traditions of Odisha like Devadasi and Gotipua. She held a seminar for artistes and gurus of Maharis and Gotipua who belonged to the 70s and 80s. Around 50 dancers, all in their old age, attended it. She questioned them on how they learnt the art form? She got the answers from them and turned them into 14 chapters in her book 'The Odissi Dance Path Finder - I'. She then worked on her second book.

"I asked Guruji to show me Odissi in one minute. He slapped me and asked if I was joking with him? I said 'no' and told him I will invite five gurus and they



**Kumkum Mohanty receiving Padma Shri award from
Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, President of India**



**Kumkum Mohanty receiving Sangeet Natak Akademi award
from Shankar Dayal Sharma, President of India**



have to show their dance in one minute. The audience would decide the name-of-the-art form,” she says.

Of the one minute, in 15 seconds she recorded 3 typical postures of Odissi and 45 seconds 3 typical movements. A team of three Sanskrit scholars, Sanjukta Panigrahi, Guru Pankaj Charan Das, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and Kumkum then spent months in naming these poses. They identified nearly 66 poses and 35 movements, which became part of her second book ‘The Odissi Dance Path Finder - II’.

After completion of the period of deputation (1989), she preferred to resign from the Indian Postal Service and was absorbed by the Government of Odisha. She retired as a director, special project (culture) and ex officio - special secretary, department of culture, Government of Odisha, in the year 2004.

As the chief executive of the Odissi Research Centre, she could give a new orientation to the style of Odissi dance and music. The Odissi Research Centre took part in all prestigious dance festivals in India and abroad under her leadership. She was actively involved in the



Kumkum Mohanty



Kumkum Mohanty

research on techniques of Odissi dance, teaching to the inertness and choreographing Odissi dance items and dance-dramas. Kumkum also took part in all the prestigious music conferences and dance festivals - All India Dance Festival, Khajuraho Festival, Krishna Gana Sabha, Swami Haridas Sammelan, Elora Festival, Ganga Mahotsav, Konark Dance Festival, Odissi International festival being a few of them. She also performed in ICCR Cultural Exchange Programmes in USSR, Germany, U.K., Japan, Indonesia, Paris, South America, etc.

Kumkum established her dance school Geeta Govinda under Geeta Govinda Charitable Trust in 2006, in Bhubaneswar. She also acts as an adjunct professor at the School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management, IIT Bhubaneswar.

Apart from dance, Kumkum enjoys cooking and gardening and says, “Plants are my life. Daily, I watch them like my baby.”



Kumkum Mohanty

She received several awards and accolades for her contribution towards the art form of Odissi including State Sangeet Natak Academy Award - 1993, Central Sangeet Natak Academy Award - 1996, Padma Shri by the Government of India - 2005, Kalidas Samman by the Government of Madhya Pradesh - 2016, Best Teacher Award by IIT Bhubaneswar - 2017.

“Shraddha, Sanskar, Sanskruti, Sadhana and Sabari are the five essential qualities that will help an individual achieve anything in life,” she concludes.

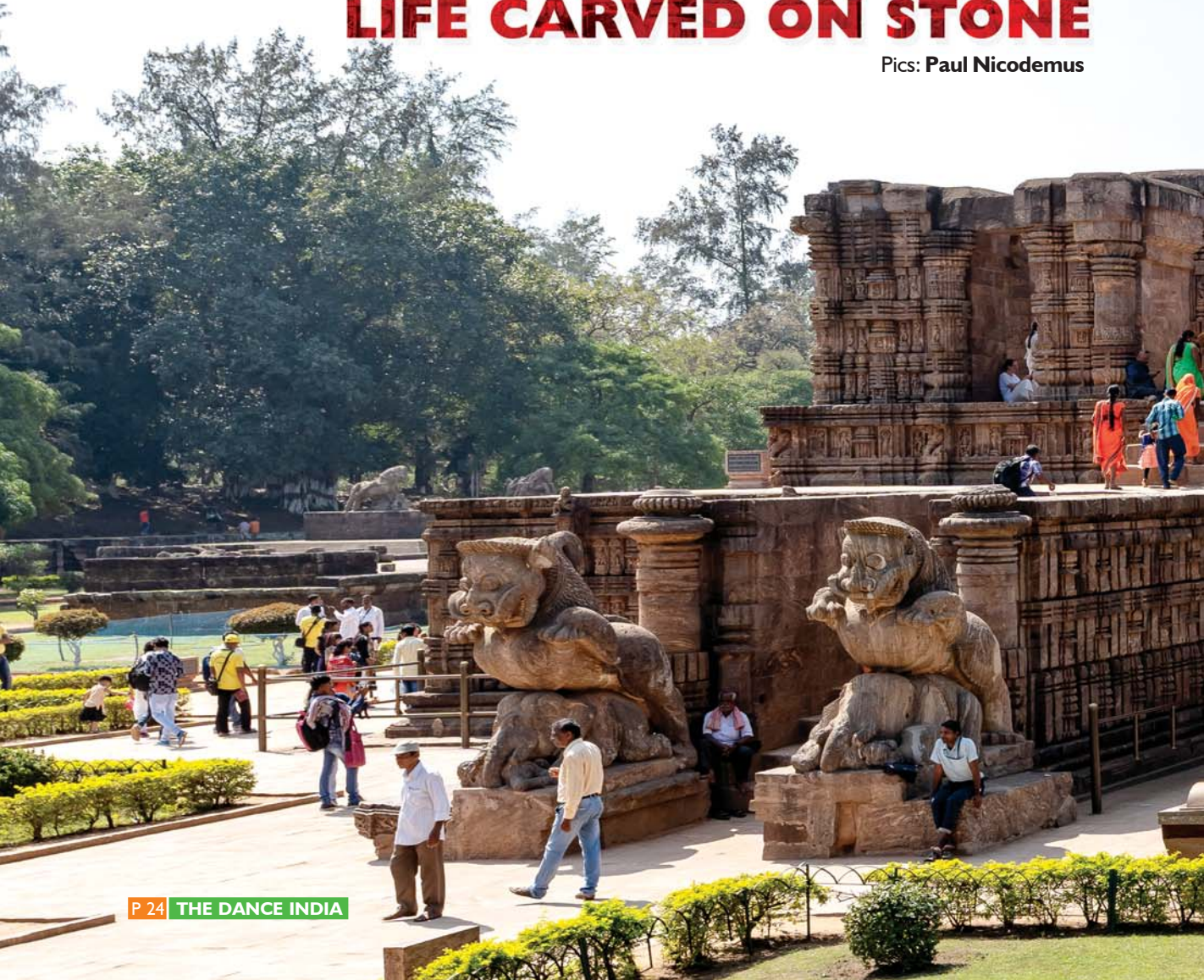


Kumkum Mohanty in her youth

COVER
STORY

KONARK **SUN TEMPLE** **LIFE CARVED ON STONE**

Pics: Paul Nicodemus



*Here the language of stone surpasses the language of human.
- Rabindranath Tagore*



KONARK SUN TEMPLE: LIFE CARVED ON STONE



Text: **Paul Nicodemus**

The State of Odisha is known for its temples and its unique architecture. Among the Odissi temples, the one that stands out because of its architectural design and sculptural brilliance is the Sun Temple of Konark - a masterpiece of creative genius in both conception and realisation.

The Konark Sun Temple located on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, bathes in the rays of the rising sun at coordinates 19°53'15"N 86°5'41"E and is a temple dedicated to the sun god. The Sun Temple is the representation of Kalinga temple architecture, with all its defining elements in the complete and perfect form. The name Konark is derived from the combination of the Sanskrit words Kona (corner or angle) and Arka (the sun). The European mariners of the time referred to the main temple as 'Black Pagoda' as compared to the Jagannath Temple of Puri which was called 'White Pagoda'.

The Sun Temple of Konark has its set of legends from the mythical times. Brahma Purana, Bhavishya Purana and Samba Purana are some texts that speak about

Konark and its significance as a sacred place. The place is associated with the legend of Samba, the son of the Hindu deity Krishna, who was cured of leprosy by the sun god's blessings. Madala-panji, the medieval palm-leaf chronicle of Jagannath Temple, claims King Purandara Kesari built a temple to Konaraka-deva. Later, the rulers of Ganga dynasty who replaced the Kesaris paid their homage to the deity. It is believed that Narasimha Deva I (AD 1238-1264) of the Ganga dynasty built a temple in front of the earlier one built by Purandara Kesari and placed in it the image of the earlier temple. After the death of Mukundaraja (AD 1559-68), the yavanas attacked the temple and took away the copper kalasa and the crowning padma-dhvaja. The specific reason for constructing such an enormous temple is unknown and it is assumed that the temple could have been an act of thanksgiving, either to his recovery from the disease or the fulfilment of his prayer for a healthy son.

The Sun Temple is an outstanding testimony, in physical form, to the 13th-century Hindu Kingdom of Odisha, under the reign of Narasimha Deva I. The temple

The path leading to the Sun Temple of Konark





A lithography plate from James Fergusson's "Ancient Architecture in Hindoostan" (1847) showing part of the main tower still standing

portrays a chariot of the Sun God, with twelve pairs of wheels drawn by seven horses eliciting its movement across the heavens. It is adorned with sophisticated and refined iconographical depictions of contemporary life and activities. Surya has been a popular deity in India since the Vedic period and the temple stands as an epitome of Kalinga architecture representing grace, joy and the rhythm of life. Its scale, refinement and conception signify the strength and stability of the Ganga Empire as well as the value systems of the historical milieu. Its aesthetical and visually powerful sculptural narratives are today an invaluable window into the religious, political, social and secular life of the people of that period.

Debala Mitra, in the book titled 'Konark' published by Archeological Survey of India as part of World Heritage Series, beautifully describes the Sun Temple and writes, "The stupendous size of this perfectly proportionate structure is matched by the endless wealth of decoration on its body - from minute patterns in bas-relief, executed with a jeweller's precision, to boldly modelled, free-standing sculptures of an exceptionally large size. Architecture and sculpture formed the intrinsically-linked

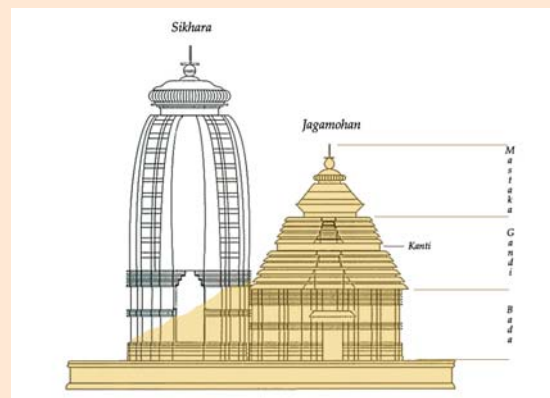


One of the 24 wheels of Konark Sun Temple

spokes of the same wheel of the schematic plans of Indian temples, and this process reaches its efflorescence at Konark."

Given its magnificence, the popularity of the monument has surpassed the limits of Odisha in the sixteenth century. The great Vaishnava Saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (AD-1486-1533) from Bengal visited the place. Abu'l Fazl (AD-1556-1605), a court historian of Akbar, paid his tribute in his Ain-i-Akbari (Administration of Akbar) by describing the grandeur of the temple.

There are a number of theories put forth for the viable cause of the collapse of Shikara over the sanctuary of the main temple. Some of the theories include the subsidence of the foundation, a shock of earthquake or lightning, raising doubt if the temple was ever completed. It appears that the structure disintegrated gradually, the beginning of the decay initiated by the desecration of the temple. From the 15th to the 17th century, the temple



Original temple and the surviving structure (yellow), left; the temple plan, right

was raided on various occasions by Muslim armies. By the 19th century, much of the temple had been ruined. Under British rule, sections of the temple complex were restored, but much of it remained in ruins. The complex was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984.

Though the temple lost its main sanctuary, the remaining structure and ruins serve as an outstanding testament to the creativity and skill of the artistes of the time. On the north and south sides are 24 carved wheels, each about 3 meters in diameter, which are also symbolic motifs referring to the cycle of the seasons and the months. These complete the illusionary structure of the temple-chariot. Between the wheels, the plinth of the temple is entirely decorated with reliefs of fantastic lions, musicians and dancers and erotic groups. Like many Indian temples, the Sun Temple comprises several distinct and well-organised spatial units. The exterior walls of the Sun

Sculpture on the Main Temple wall



Temple at Konark from the base of the upana to the top of the gandi are embellished with an amazing amount of bold sculptures and delicate carvings, transforming the inert stone into an inspired vision of sculptural magnificence. Debala Mitra writes, "No doubt the artisans 'built like Titans and finished like jewellers'. Despite its richness and exuberance, the sculpture does not dominate the architecture but serves to emphasise the majesty of the temple."

The themes of the sculptures may broadly be categorised into deities, musical-nymphs of the celestial spheres, secular sculptures, birds, beasts, aquatic animals and mythological figures, architectural motifs, pilasters, mouldings, chaitya-windows, trellis, purely decorative patterns woven out of floral and geometrical motifs.

This temple consists of a Vimana (main temple) intended for housing the deity, Jagamohana (hall in front of Vimana) from where the worshippers could have had a glimpse of the deity and a Nata-mandapa (dancing hall). A separate Bhoga-mandapa (offering hall) was not built at this place. While the Vimana (main temple) and Mukhasala (porch) are built on one platform, the Nata Mandir (performance hall) is in a separate platform although on a similar line. Except the Pitha (platform),

A local guide explaining to the tourists at Sun Temple



the shape of the temple is similar to those at Puri and Bhubaneswar.

Three primary rock types were used in the construction of the Sun Temple - chlorite, laterite and khondalite. Chlorite was limited to the door frames and few sculptures, and laterite was used in the invisible core of the platform and staircases and in the foundation. The rest was built on poor quality khondalite.

The hall of dance or Nata Mandir (locally called Bhoga Mandap) is in front of the porch on a separate basement. It is assumed that dancing and offering were probably done in the same building.

There is an intervening space of 30 feet between the eastern flight of the porch and the Nata Mandir. The height of the Pitha or basement of the Nata Mandir is almost equal to the Pitha of the main temple. Examining the construction and its architectural execution it is appropriate to call it the Hall of Dance or Nata Mandir. The roof of this structure has collapsed and only remains of its walls stand.

The height of the platform on which, the Nata Mandir has been built is about equal in height to the platform of the main temple. The Pitha is divided into three parts. The bottom part of the Pitha from the ground level is decorated with lotus petals and creepers. The second portion of the Pitha is full of small temples around. There



Horses



Hunting Scene



Erotic sculpture carved on the wall of the Main Temple

are also innumerable dancing girls around with musical instruments. Besides, beautiful elephants and creepers are seen in this portion. There are lotus petals, flowering creepers and dancing girls all around the Pitha.

The sculptures of the Nata Mandir are regarded as the most charming and best specimen of Orissan sculptures. It was specially constructed for providing aesthetic pleasure. A glance at this beautiful Mandap or hall from any side would look like a well-arranged drawing sheet. On the contrary, to the main temple and other parts in the Sun Temple complex, there does not exist a single erotic figure on the walls of Nata Mandap. Most of the architectural features which made the temple so famous were completely buried under the debris and sands, till the early 19th century.

According to UNESCO, the boundaries of the nominated property encompass the attributes necessary to represent the Outstanding Universal Value of the Sun Temple, Konarak. Within the inscribed and protected extent of the property, its surviving structures and sculptures, as well as the dislodged remains preserved in-situ, represent its quintessential qualities of architectural form, design and sculptural relief. Furthermore, the



A Simha-Gaja at the entrance



Elephants



Tug of War



Surya, the Sun God

protected zone includes all areas that have the potential to reveal any unexplored archaeological remains that may possibly enhance the understanding of the property's Outstanding Universal Value. An extension of the site boundaries and the buffer zone around the property by land acquisition has been recommended for the better management of the site. Concerns over the structural integrity of elements of the site have been raised in the past, including the impact of monsoon rains and associated soil erosion. In addition, erosion of metal cramps supporting the structure due to salt air has in the past resulted in some damage.

Identified and potential threats to the integrity of the property include development pressure: modernisation and urban growth affecting the environment of the monument; environmental pressure: deforestation due to cyclones and human activities, saline breeze and sandblasting, vehicular movements, and microbiological growth; tourism pressure: increase in number of tourists; natural disasters: flood and cyclones; and local population growth.



Makara

The Sun Temple, Konârak is protected under the National Framework of India by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act (1958) and its Rules (1959). Other relevant protective legislation includes the Forest Act, Konârak Development Act and notified the Council Area Act. Under the AMASR Act, a zone 100 metres outside the property and a further zone 200 metres outside the property constitute, respectively, prohibited and regulated zones for development or other similar activity that may have adverse effects on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. All conservation programmes are undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India through its national, regional and local representatives. There are five management-related plans: safety, environment, master planning, environmental development and tourism. World Heritage funding was received to carry out an assessment of structural stability. Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the property over time will require continuing the structural and material conservation of the main Jagamohana structure and its sculptures; establishing a stronger functional integration of local and central authorities; including the larger landscape setting into the regulated area for development; and addressing the identified threats related to development pressure, environmental



Arka Khetra, an Interpretation Centre by the Indian Oil Foundation at Konark



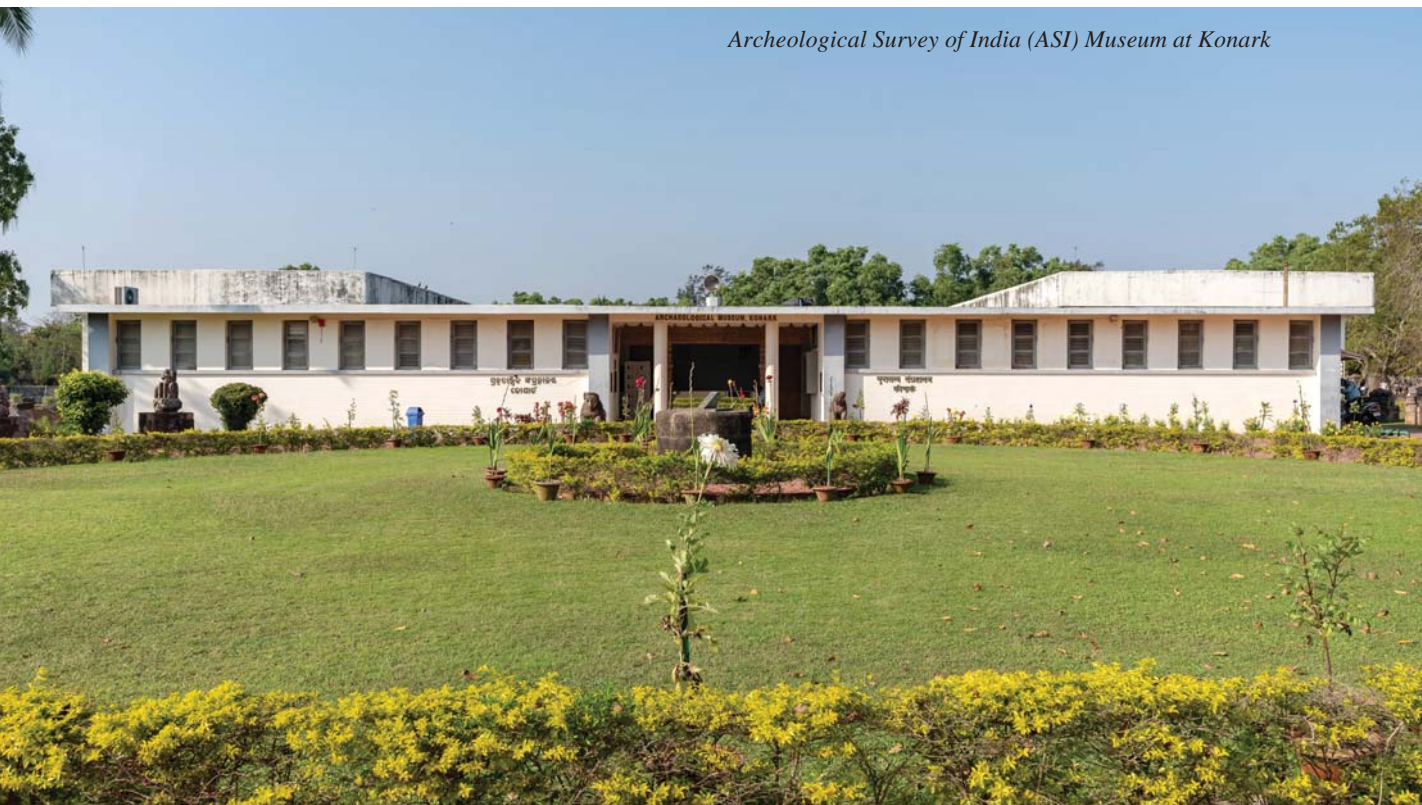
Chhayadevi Temple (1100-1200 AD)

pressure, tourism pressure, natural disasters, and local population growth.

The Konark Museum which started in the year 1968 is maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India. The museum is located a couple of hundred meters near the main temple in the north direction. The museum has four galleries that showcase 260 different fallen architectural pieces and sculptures that were found

during the clearance work of Konark temple complex. The Konark museum is a treasure house for historians and art lovers and is open for public from 10 am to 5 pm. It remains closed on Fridays.

Konark is located 64 km from Bhubaneswar, the nearest airport, and 31 km from Puri. Konark can be reached either by road or rail.



Archeological Survey of India (ASI) Museum at Konark

FROM STILLNESS IN STONE TO MOVEMENT IN DANCE

Text: **Debi Basu**

The small village of Raghurajpur in Odisha is an epitome of the 'idyllic rural' life. Located on the southern banks of river Bhargavi, it is verdant with paddy fields, betel-nut vines, coconut palms, mango groves and other tropical bounties. It has a thriving community of artisans who produce varieties of handicrafts such as 'pata' paintings, palm-leaf engravings, stone carvings, papier-mache toys and masks, wood carvings, wooden toys and tusser paintings.

In the midst of such a setting was born a young lad in the year 1926 to a family of 'pata' painters or 'Chitrankaras'. He left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of India with his contribution to revival and rejuvenation of Odissi classical dance. Today his name is synonymous with Odissi, one of India's ancient classical dance styles.

Late Padma Vibhushan Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra hailed from a family with humble means but immense talent both as expert painters and musicians. His father, Chintamani Mohapatra, a 'chitrankara' by profession was an accomplished percussionist. Like all traditional art forms, the 'chitrankara' tradition is a community heritage passed down from one generation to the next. It was only natural for Guruji to follow his father's footsteps and make it his livelihood. However, that was not to be,

as the young boy found his unique voice to express his mastery through dance. As a young boy, Guruji was captivated more by the vigorous rhythms of Sankirtana and Jatra (folk theatre) which used to be regularly performed in his native village. His mother indulged her son and Kelubabu became a regular in the evenings at the two 'akhadas' of his village that trained young gotipua dancers. His father was unaware of Guruji's growing passion for dance. As a young boy Guruji spent his time keenly observing the acrobatic dancers and imitating the dance movements of the boys under training, he would try reproducing the rhythms on his own body.

Disenchanted by his son's overpowering attraction to the effeminate gotipua dancers Chintamani Mohapatra decided to squarely confront young Kelubabu. The 'akhadas' then, were patronised by wealthy zamindars who looked at young dancers as mere titillating entertainment. This dance was devoid of gravity or spirituality and provided frivolous allurements. As a concerned father, Chintamani babu urged his son to ask questions before deciding to pursue the difficult life that lay ahead. He asked Guruji if he considered dancing in 'akhadas' to be their 'Odra nritya'? Was it their legacy? He nudged Guruji to find answers and advised him to spend time at the Konark temple, a repository of the

Nata Mandap (The Hall of Dance)



Sculpture depicting Dancers and Musicians carved on the Pilth of Nata Mandap



history of Odisha, keenly observing its compelling and intricate architecture.

This moment on, young Guruji decided to uncover elements of history through deep introspection and study of the Konark temple architecture. Indian temples are not merely places of religious worship, they are rich archives of the culture of people and their ways of life. Set on the eastern shores of India, the Sun-temple of Konark became his guide, giving him glimpses into the past. An outstanding architectural marvel, present-day Konark temple consists of only a few remaining parts of the main sanctum, the 'audience hall' or Jagamohana,

the 'offering hall' or Bhog Mandapa and the 'dancing hall' or the Nata Mandira.

Guruji embarked on a pursuing a life of passion. Taking his father's advice, he immersed himself in studying the 'Natamandira' adorned with architectural motifs and splendidly sculpted figurines. Each panel was meticulously analysed to get a sound understanding of human form, balance and geometry. With this knowledge, he set a solid foundation, imperative to create a definitive grammar for any classical dance style. The characteristic torso movement of Odissi was brought to the forefront and was used proficiently in his



Sculpture depicting Dancers and Musicians carved on the Pilth of Nata Mandap

King enjoying a dance performance

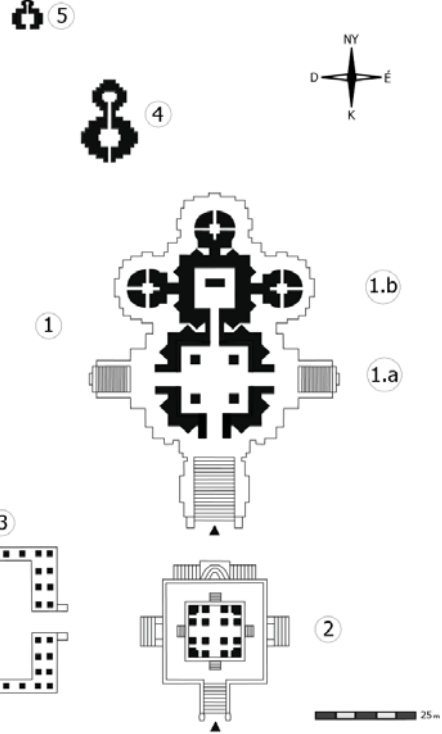


compositions. The temple pillars and walls are elaborately carved with dancing male and female figures in various poses, playing different kinds of musical instruments such as the mardala, manjira and the flute. In the past, 'Batu' was included in the Gotipua repertoire and was presented as a strenuous and acrobatic dance showing some of the musical instruments. Guruji skillfully employed the stances of temple figurines in his interpretation of the mandatory 'batu' nritya giving it the much-needed finesse of a classical dance. Temple



Sculpture depicting Dancers and Musicians carved on the Pilth of Nata Mandap

King enjoying a dance performance



Plan of the Sun Temple, Konark, Orissa, India 1. Main temple complex 1a. Audience Hall (Jagamohana, Pidha Deul) 1b. Main Sanctum (Garbha-Griha, Rekha Deul) 2. Dancing Hall (Nat-Mandap, Nata Mandir) 3. Offering Hall (Bhoga-Mandap, Bhog Mandir) 4. Mayadevi Temple 5. Vaishnava Temple

architecture showcased episodes from Indian mythology, folklore, tales of the then ruling dynasties and also gave glimpses of contemporary life. Guruji used them wholeheartedly in his choreographies for not only pure dance or 'nritya' pieces but also the deeper and spiritual compositions set to ashtapadis of Jayadeva. He breathed life into the sculpturesque stances of figurines captured in stone using them extensively in his interpretations of ashtapadis such as



Offering Hall



Kuruyadunandana, Sakhi he, Yahi Madhava and many others. Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra's choreographies were instrumental in making the temple sculptures relevant to newer generations. With his virtuosity as a percussionist and a keen understanding of his art form he augmented the Odissi repertoire with an astoundingly unique aesthetic. He collaborated extensively with masters in their respective fields like the late Pandit Bhubaneswar Mishra and Pandit Raghunath Panigrahi to further embellish the Odissi repertoire.

Guruji's surge as a master choreographer and teacher naturally led to the increased popularity of Odissi world over. It is often overlooked but one of the most noteworthy aspects of Guruji's teachings was love for his roots and culture that he eagerly shared with his pupils. Training under Guruji was no easy task and dancers underwent intensive workshops with the maestro. During these demanding

workshops, Guruji would make it a point to take his

Sculpture depicting Dancers and Musicians carved on the Pilth of Nata Mandap



students to the nearby temples and share with them his reading and understanding of temple architecture. He candidly shared his interpretations of what he saw carved and set in stone with his pupils.

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have spent time with a towering personality like Guruji. He has been my constant anchor and I am sure that his blessings are steadfast with his students who are now teachers and composers themselves. The temples continue to stand tall as a testimony of our rich history. But it takes the genius of Guruji to breathe life into them. He was a master weaver who connected the dots and created elegant strokes of beauty. He had the magic touch to transform stillness of stone into mellifluous poetry that is Odissi.

Sculpture depicting Dancers and Musicians carved on the Pilth of Nata Mandap





RAYS HOPE



JAI QUEHAENI: A PRINCESS OF BHARATANATYAM

Text: **Paul Nicodemus**



She is a passionate young dancer and her sublime beauty compliments her artistic skills. She is a sought-after Bharatanatyam soloist who also brings added presence and energy to the ballets. Jai Quehaeni, who is named after a mythical princess from

the Kalinga border, is indeed a princess of Bharatanatyam who excels in other facets of life. She has completed her Bachelors in Film Technology specialising in direction and holds a Diploma in 'Theater Arts for Holistic Development'.



Jai Quehaeni was born in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. She hails from a really loving and supportive family. Her father S Rajasheakar Reddy is a businessman and her mother Indra Lakshmi is a nutrition and dietetics doctor. She has three siblings - two elder brothers and a younger one.

Quehaeni officially started learning dance when she was about 6 years old. Bharatanatyam was the dance form she learnt. "I think it all began with my grandfather. We used to sit together and watch old Tamil movies like 'Vanjikottai Valiban' and 'Thillana Mohanambal' and I was blown away by the grandeur, the costumes, the jewellery,



Jai Quehaeni

the makeup and how beautifully the leading ladies danced! I wanted to dress up just like them and dance as beautifully...that probably was the seed," says Quehaeni.

She says she has been fortunate as everyone in her family have been supportive. Her grandfather has been a pillar of support and encouragement. "He was the one who would take me to dance class, wait there patiently with snacks and he did all of this being a cardiovascular surgeon," she reveals. Her father has always been a constant boost and her mother is the reason for all that she is today. "My mother has so selflessly put her needs behind and travelled with me and majorly helped me and continues to do so," she says.

She experiences a sense of pride talking about the significance of Bharatanatyam in the cultural fabric of India. "It has been an infinite pleasure to have drowned in such an art form that is so refined spiritually and where it is not just about the physical discipline but it connects with you in a holistic manner. To know that it comes from such a culturally rich heritage from Tamil Nadu, being written by Bharata Muni, the whole history of this art form gives me a unique sense of blissful pride," she says.

Her inspiration to dance and choreography comes from her guru Chitra Visweswaran. Apart from being a legend,

she is a humble and fantastic human being from whom Quehaeni learnt not just dance but also a lot of ethics. Her guru has a beautiful approach, and she often tells her disciples, "Don't think from the head."

"She has always taught us to perfect the basics first and then move towards the poetic beginning of the dance. There is nothing called perfection in any art form but something close to that," she says. Quehaeni's creativity is lured by poetry especially of Mahakavi Bharathiyar, Meera, Rumi, Christopher Poindexter and many more. "Yes, poetry is where I draw my creative inspiration from and nature, the movement in nature and its intricacy is fascinating," she shares.

She also reveals that she loves to imitate animals in dance and when she sees a mountaintop or a river bed or the graceful movements of the waves, she visualises herself dancing on them. "Indeed, words aren't enough to explain that euphoric feeling," she says.

Her dance journey started as a kid with her mother. With the little Bharatanatyam that she knew, her mother taught her to dance. "We had these cute sessions where she would choreograph for me and I would dance around and that's how it all began for me, the love for this art," she shares. Quehaeni's first official Bharatanatyam teacher was Madurai R Muralidharan and Chitra Muralidharan. Later, she moved on to intense training under Guru Chitra Visweswaran. She is a part of her guru's dance school 'Chidambaram Academy of Performing Arts'.

Her guru is her first role model. Apart from her, any artiste who inspires her transforms to being her role model. "More than role models I have inspirations. People inspire me, because each one is unique in their own way and I would always like to be away from the confined state. The ultimate purpose is being the 'best version of you'. I believe in learning from every being with a boundless flow," she explains.

Apart from the dance, she has been passionate about a lot of things. She is pursuing M.Sc. in Psychology. She has been a part of the organisation called RASA, where they work with children with special needs through theatre arts like drama, dance, music, art and craft etc. "Teaching gives me a lot of joy. I love animals, I am a huge pet lover, I love cooking while listening to soothing music (It is truly therapeutic), and poetry. I'm devoted to any good poetry. I am fond of archery and MMA too," she smiles.

Typically, her day starts early morning with a little exercise which considers a treat to her body. She enjoys jogging and few floor workouts. She prefers a light breakfast or



a healthy juice before going to her class where she spends 4-6 hours every day. She does not diet, but she knows of what she puts in her body. "Frankly, I love food! I usually tend to go to bed late and the routine revolves again. I'm just someone with a fairly normal routine," she says.

Quehaeni prefers to keep short-term effective goals like staying fit and learning and mastering her art. "I tell myself and focus on 'to do better than the day before' as life is too unpredictable to plan for something way far ahead," she says. She is someone who lets life take its course and tries to give her best every day.

According to her, life is made of challenges, tiny ones, some mid-variants and some extremely challenging ones. "I think as an artiste you feel everything deeply,

you relate to things deeply and because of that things might affect you deeply. There are those days when you question yourself 'Are you good enough?', 'Are you doing justice?', 'How do you sustain?', 'Do you keep depending on your parents or someone else?', these moments are challenging because sustaining becomes essential too, without letting go of the passion. I feel sometimes my anxiety gets the better of me but a good dose of music and dance steers me back on track," she shares.

The young artiste's career has many exciting moments and when it comes to dancing, she recollects two incidents. The first incident happened when she had a performance in Malaysia, where she was not particularly in a great condition physically, yet she still tried to give her best. After the show, an old lady walked in slowly



Jai Quehaeni

Jai Quehaeni



with the help of her walker and told her "You were so beautiful" and handed her some Malaysian ringgit and asked her to buy something for herself. "That moment was so overwhelming. To see that I could touch someone that way with my art form, was a special feeling. Though my words can't express enough, the memory will always be a treasure," she says.

The second incident happened when she performed at a village called Ravana Samuthiram. It was a humble setup with a tiny stage but surrounded by welcoming hearts. "I did this particular padam called 'Ariya Paruvam'. After my performance, a tiny little girl, maybe 5 or 6 years old, came up to me, held my hand and told me in Tamil 'Akka neenga romba azhaga aadneenga, enakum ungala maari aadanum! (Sister, you danced really beautifully. I want to dance like you too!)'. That moment, that twinkle in her eyes, that innocence in her voice, somehow gave me the sense of satisfaction that I was on the right path and that I was doing justice to my art, my life and me as a person. That, just felt genuinely good!" says Quehaeni.

She thinks it is important to stick to both tradition and contemporary trends. "It is almost like how we need people to preserve the magic that already exists and people to create more magic," she explains. She has not dived into fusion but has no quarrels with the artistes who do fusion.

According to her artistes, in general, are sensitive and when people tap into their sensitivity, the humanity in them shines through and that in turn helps in building a far more successful and caring society where one doesn't just care about his or her needs but learns to lend a hand to the ones in need. In her experience, children with some sort of artistic exposure turn out to be really well-rounded individuals.

Some awards and accolades she received include 'Spirit of Youth' from The Madras Music Academy in 2014; 'Dharmavarappu Seetharama Anjaneyalu's Endowment Prize' from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai, and more recently, 'Swayam Prakasha Narthaki' from Sarasalaya School of Bharatanatyam, Chennai.

Quehaeni performed at distinguished Sabhas in Chennai like The Madras Music Academy, Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Bharat Kalachar, Narada Gana Sabha, Karthik Fine Arts, Mylapore Fine Arts, Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha and Brahma Gana Sabha. She also presented her art form in countries like France, Germany, Luxembourg, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, The United States of America, The United Kingdom, Bahrain, Muscat and Spain.

Jai Quehaeni, with her elegant and poised stage presence and matured outlook towards art and society, stands as an inspiration to aspiring artistes.



Jai Quehaeni

SPECIAL FEATURE



IN CONVERSATION WITH Dr TADEPALLI SATYANARAYANA SARMA

Text: **BR Vikram Kumar**



The Dance India's editor, BR Vikram Kumar had a candid conversation with Ustad Bismillah Khan Awardee Dr Tadepalli Satyanarayana Sarma who was recently nominated as a council member of the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. Here are some excerpts from the conversation.

What is your reaction on being nominated as a council member of the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi?

I look at the nomination as a great responsibility. Taking up such a huge responsibility at a young age brings me happiness. As an artiste from the traditional Kuchipudi family, I hope to do my duty with utmost dedication and bring many artistes closer to the Sangeet Natak Akademi. Irrespective of the background of





the artiste, I pledge to bring the fruits of the Sangeet Natak Akademi to all those who embrace and dedicate their lives towards practising and propagating the traditional art form of Kuchipudi.

Is there anybody who was earlier nominated as a council member from the Kuchipudi traditional families?

I learnt, in the past, many years ago Padma Shri awardee Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma from a traditional Kuchipudi family served as a council member of Sangeet Natak Akademi and today, I got an opportunity to serve the Akademi with the support from Kuchipudi Bhagavatulu. I take it as a work of destiny.

What are your thoughts on the Sangeet Natak Akademi?

The aims and objectives of the Sangeet Natak Akademi are wonderful. Starting with the Akademi's chairman, Shekhar Sen, all the supporting members of SNA strive hard to bring art closer to the people. The policies, schemes of Guru-shishya Parampara or schemes supporting artistes by SNA are effective. Be it the General Council or Executive Council, all the members are committed to supporting art and artistes. The problem arises when artistes look at Sangeet Natak Akademi only as a body which gives awards. It is a wrong conception. This outlook of the art community towards SNA should change. The Akademi can only provide limited awards every year. By focusing on awards, artistes are failing to explore various schemes and policies adopted by SNA for their benefit.

Are you going to discuss publicising SNA Schemes when the council meets?

Definitely. Even, I did not properly understand the capabilities of Sangeet Natak Akademi until I joined the organisation as a council member. Till then, I looked at the Akademi as a prestigious body under the ministry of culture which gave awards and presumed that once the artiste received the award, it would be the turning point of the career. But after joining the organisation as a member and meeting the chairman, Shekhar Sen and other members and knowing about the work that is being done through SNA, I came to know about various facets like scholarships, research, documentation and various other provisions. We would definitely see that these facilities and benefits reach the deserving artistes.

The art community in South India has been vocal about the bias shown by SNA towards them. Is it true?

There is no such bias in policies of Sangeet Natak Akademi. When you look at the art community in North India, they are more united. Even when a particular artiste receives an award, others don't crib and instead, they show support. Unfortunately, this healthy atmosphere is sometimes missing in the South. Especially, talking



Dr Tadepalli



about Telugu artistes, when an artiste receives an award, other contemporaries spread bad blood. It has to stop. Sangeet Natak Akademi is a cultural body for entire India and not for one particular region. As far as I observed, there are no language or regional barriers in the Akademi.

There is an opinion among the artistes that the information regarding applications and schemes are not properly updated on the website. Will you take it to the notice of the government?

I would take this opinion to the notice of our chairman, Shekhar Sen, secretary, Rita Chowdary and dance in charge, Helen Acharya. These officials have had years of experience in leadership and we would discuss and see that all the benefits designed for the welfare of artistes would reach them. Sangeet Natak Akademi is a diverse and dynamic body.

What would be your contribution to South India in the days to come as a Sangeet Natak Akademi representative from this region?

Yakshaganam is a grand traditional art form of South India and everybody needs to know about it - be it

Kuchipudi Yakshaganam, Kannada Yakshagana, Melattur Bhagavata Yakshagana, Kathakali Yakshagana or Telangana Chinni Bhagavatula Yakshaganam. I feel that these dance forms based on theatrical roots have not been receiving the same support as other dance forms and I would like to take this to the notice of the central government and request the Sangeet Natak Akademi to focus on these traditional art forms as they did with Chhau and establish an exclusive Yakshagana Kendre for these theatre dance traditions. Especially, in Telugu states, Sangeet Natak Akademi should not only recognise artistes who perform Kuchipudi or other art form but it should also recognise the personalities who facilitate and contribute to the growth of these art forms like overall contributions, musicians and accompanists.



Dr Tadepalli

So far nobody from the Telugu region has been recognised under this category. It is difficult for art or artiste to grow without the support of these people. Even though there is such category, somehow no person from Telugu land has been recognised.

What is your take on the influence of the central government on Sangeet Natak Akademi and allocation of fewer funds in the annual budget?

Organisations like Sangeet Natak Akademi, Sahitya Akademi and Lalit Kala Akademi are autonomous bodies created to cultivate a healthy environment for arts and artistes. Apart from allocating funds, the recent times have noticed an increased presence of the government in the functioning of these autonomous bodies whereby causing disharmony — may be the present government inherited it from the previous governments. Whenever the government interferes and tries to influence, manage or flex its power on these cultural bodies it gives rise to political overtones which are not a good thing to happen. I strongly believe people could only see the greatness of a nation through its art and culture. From ancient times, foreigners who visited our country described the greatness of India through their experience of our art forms. I wish and hope that the government would allocate more funds to culture.

Would you like to convey anything to the cultural divisions of the Telugu states?

I would like to convey my gratitude to chief minister of Andhra Pradesh Nara Chandrababu Naidu for his perennial support and for constantly trying to put Kuchipudi on the world map. I would also thank Vijaya Bhaskar, CEO, AP Creativity and Culture Commission, for his support. Art forms in Telugu region like Kuchipudi, Perini and Andhra Natyam are being limited to performances and it would be great if there the governments encouraging research and conduct symposiums on these art forms. The state and central governments should collaborate with Sangeet Natak Akademi and document these art forms after thorough research for the benefit of future generations.

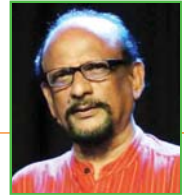
The government should play a role in developing interest and devotion among the youth towards our traditional art forms and turn them into our cultural ambassadors. We are already consulting with the representatives in Telugu states. In Telangana with the support of Mamidi Harikrishna, Director, Department of Language and Culture, we are planning to develop Perini. We should teach children not only dance but also the greatness of art forms and people who strived to establish them.

The Dance India wishes Dr Tadepalli Satyanarayana Sarma success in all his endeavours as a Council Member of the Sangeet Natak Akademi.



Dr Tadepalli

EVOLUTIONARY TRAILS OF MOHINIYATTAM



Text: **George S Paul**

Rediscovering Mohiniyattam", the two-day national seminar organised by Nalanda Dance Research Centre and Sangeet Natak Akademi in Mumbai recently, assumed much importance as the stakeholders in the seminar were only the pioneering institutions involved in resuscitating the dance form, viz. Kerala Kalamandalam and Nalanda. After all, styles evolved by institutions have wide acceptance and authenticity as against individual ones, though one cannot underestimate them.

Lecture-demonstrations, presentation of researched repertoires, performances and illuminating talks by scholars went a long way in the attempts of the two institutions in reconstructing Mohiniyattam.

As for the Nalanda part, screening of the film shot by Kankan Rele as part of her research into the roots was an eye-opener. It was during 1971 that she had filmed Kunjukutty Amma, Chinnammu Amma and Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma. While Kalyanikutty Amma was an alumna of Kalamandalam during 1937 - 1940, Chinnammu Amma was the teacher who was roped in 1950. The film provided Kanak Rele with enough insight into the original styles. Kunjukutty Amma's

abhinaya bore much resemblance to Nangiarkoothu and her footwork owed much to the folklore. Elements of Thiruvathirakali could be seen prominently in Chinnammu Amma's style. Kalyanikutty Amma followed a much different fashion as she was the youngest of the trio.

The demonstrations by Saji Menon, an alumna of Nalanda, bore eloquent testimony of the quantum of research by Kanak Rele which helped her to propound the "Theory of Kinetics" of Mohiniyattam. Interestingly, the theory is anchored both on Natyasastra and Balarama Bharatham of Kerala origin. Indigenous elements in Mohiniyattam, predominantly seen in the "Kanak Style" owes much to the latter, especially the movements in sync with mnemonics of rare talas of Kerala like Marma, Kumbha and Lakshmi, the vocalization of which goes a long way in enhancing the bhava. Performance of Kalamandalam Girishan (Vocal) and Kalamandalam Gopalakrishnan (Nattuvangam) deserve special mention in this connection. Saji's demonstrations could provide a vignette of the enchanting nritta sequences evolved according to the Kanak Style.

Dr.Kanak Rele



In the session of the 'Expanded Repertoire', Saji presented excerpts from Amba, one among the prestigious choreographies of Kanak Rele. One could discern how the abhinaya could be embellished by the techniques evolved by Kanak. Further, the portrayal of the character from Mahabharata assumed much contemporary relevance in the wake of movements for women empowerment. The second piece was from Draupadi, performed by Madhuri Deshmukh, a disciple and a member of the faculty in Nalanda. The character's anguish over the attempts to disrobe her and the relief after Krishna's intervention marked Madhuri's histrionic potential. As for the former part, one felt she could have scaled down the roudra of the character.

Kanak Rele sprang a surprise by enacting the lamentations of Gandhari excerpted from her own choreography. Though short, it was really a treat to the eyes as the octogenarian danseuse could bewitchingly portray the travails of the legendary character.

The rediscovery part of Kalamandalam was explained and demonstrated by Dr Rachita Ravi, a member of the faculty of the institution accompanied by Kalamandalam Shaiju and Reju Narayanan.

It may be remembered that Mohiniyattam, introduced in Kalamandalam as early as 1932, had a chequered history. For want of teachers and students, the course had to be discontinued twice as the dance form was looked down upon by the society, owing to its degeneration after the period of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal. However, continuity of tradition occurred only from 1950 after Chinnammu Amma joined as the teacher. The "Kalamandalam Style" that evolved during the later years had its foundation on the very few numbers she could memorize. Kalamandalam Sathyabhama, her first student and later Kalamandalam Leelamma were instrumental in moulding this school of Mohiniyattam. The cholketu in Sourashtram and pada varnam 'Sami ninne' in Yadukula Kamboji were the main items that Chinnammu Amma could teach apart from one Jatiswara in Chenchurutti and the padam, 'Enthaho vallabha' in Asaveri. Incidentally, the film shot by Kanak Rele showed Chinnammu Amma perform this padam.

Admittedly, the adavus evolved in Kalamandalam, especially by Sathyabhama were derived out of the analytical study of these items. And she could develop as many as forty. Years later Leelamma enriched them by adding sixty that consisted of six groups based on tala variants and eight sets of theerumanam.

Demonstrations by Rachita included select adavus coined by Sathyabhama and Leelamma. Since Kalamandalam still sticks to the

Kachery (concert) pattern for its repertoire - Cholkettu, Jatiswara, Varnam, Padam and tillana - perhaps the format developed by the Thanjavur brothers during the period of Swathi Thirunal - Rachita chose to present a few of them in parts that showcased the Kalamandalam style. That she could present the vintage cholkettu in Sourashtram taught by Chinnammu Amma and also the padam Enthaho Vallabha which was shot by Kanak Rele demonstrated how these items were refined during later years by Sathyabama. Also cholkettu in ragamalika and the Thodi varnam Sami ninne choreographed by Sathyabhama in ragamalika appeared more attractive than the ones practised during the Chinnammu Amma period. A perceptible innovation was introduced by Leelamma in the Varnam in Simhendramadhyamam that entailed sancharis for the first time. Rachita's selections thus highlighted the chronological development of the Kalamandalam style. This was really commendable.

In the 'researched repertoire' session she gave a list of new choreographies but chose to present a couple of them which marked the departure from the sringara-centric themes conventionally embraced by Mohiniyattam in Kalamandalam. This included the Navavarana composition of Annamacharya in Bouli,

Rachitha Ravi



Madhuri Deshmukh



'Sriman Narayana' and 'Parinitha'. The latter choreographed by her proved how the Mohiniyattam dancers were alive to the contemporary themes. 'Parinitha' portrayed the mythological women Sita, Mandodari, Draupadi, Gandhari and Urmila, some of who appeared in Kanak Rele's choreography too. For want of time, Rachita presented only the part of Urmila, the anguished wife of Lakshmana for his scant regard for her while coming home accompanied by his brother Rama and Sita after fourteen years of exile. She questions him - atypical of the conventional behaviour of a woman under a patriarchal system.

Didactic were the papers presented by Dr C P Unnikrishnan, Dr Manoj Kurur and Kavalam Sreekumar. Unnikrishnan's approach to Natya Shastra was hitherto unheard of. According to him, the treatise could be reckoned as a thesis which he explained logically. As for the student-delegates attending the seminar, this was really an eye-opener. Also, he made references to Neuro-aesthetics, a relatively new topic that explained the relationship between the performer and the audience. Manoj systematically derived all talas of Kerala including the Sopana ones, beginning from a single beat and building on it. The interactive session could easily drive

Saji Nair



home the intricacies of the talas to the students who practice many items based on them. Sreekumar demonstrated the nuances of Sopana ragas and rendered a few compositions of his father Kavalam Narayana Panicker including those used by Kanak Rele in some of her choreographies.

The seminar concluded with three major performances. Dr Sunanda Nair, the first graduate from Nalanda, exhibited her amazing histrionic virtuosity as a khandita nayika in the two items. Excerpted from 'Amarusataka', a collection of lyrical poetry of the renowned poet Amaru of the seventh century expatiates on the preparations of the nayika to receive her lover. Sunanda made the narration by the sakhi to the nayika a picturesque one. Composed in ragamalika and talamalika, it entailed nritta sequences as well. Sunanda also staged an interpretation of the Sixth Ashtapadi. Radha fantasizes her acts of love with Krishna to realize later that what had transpired was only a figment of her imagination. As for her nritta, the amplitude of movements could have been less to enrich the lasya elements more.

The theme of Gopika Varma's recital appeared novel. The four anecdotes which she presented explained how God can turn a servant of the bhakta. Legendary

characters in them involved Vilwamangalam Swamiyar, Kururamma, Mahavishnu, Mahabali, Radha and Krishna. Interestingly, the first two were related to Sree Padmanabha Temple of Thiruvananthapuram and Guruvayur temple, respectively. However, the performance was time-consuming and Gopika would have cut short it by half. More pronounced aramandi would have added to her stage appeal.

Soul stirring was Rachita's 'Karnayanam', her own choreography depicting the agony and angst of the legendary hero. It was mainly an abhinaya piece within the allotted time frame. The hapless victim of ridicule and curse being a 'suta putra' (son of a charioteer), Karna recounts them to Surya Bhagavan on the banks of Ganga. Rachita's abhinaya soared to dizzy heights as she delineated the line 'Ottare undenikkultapam' (many are my internal sufferings) for which mukhabhinaya was utilized to the hilt. The melancholy mood was amply supported by the music rendered in slow tempo as well.

"Rediscovering Mohiniyattam" was indeed the history of the same and further, an unprecedented one. The seminar was inaugurated by Aruna Sairam, vice-chairman of Sangeet Natak Akademi.

Gopika Verma



MUKTESWAR DANCE FESTIVAL - 2019



Text: **Nita Vidyarthi**
Pics: **Odisha Tourism**

The 10th century Mukteswar Temple premises in Bhubaneswar comes alive every year on the day of Makar Sankranti with the performances of Odissi dancers attracting a large number of tourists from different parts of the country and abroad. The most important and exclusive Odissi dance festival spanning over three days, Mukteswar Dance Festival is organised by Odisha Tourism, in association with Odisha Tourist Development Corporation and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi and presents skilful dancers in solo, duet and group formats every evening. The open-air experience of watching the performances on the sprawling stage with the magnificent backdrop of the temple complex is fascinating and the fine weather adds to its pleasure.

The presiding deity being Shiva, it is only apt that the evening's performances begin with the invocatory Shiva Vandana. The blissful practice was revived again this year prior to the dance recitals by different groups of singers from well-known institutions of the city. The inauguration every evening began with the lighting of the lamp in front of an idol of Nataraja by a holy flame brought from the Siddheshwar Temple on the left of the stage. After the invocation, the Odissi recitals begin with a solo followed by a duet, concluding the evening with a group presentation.

Jahnabi Behera





The group song "Shiva Panchakshara Stotram" on the first evening was by the members of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre under the music composition of the renowned singer Sangeeta Gosain. Conceived by Dr. Subhas Pani, the harmonious chorus was supported by Sachidananda Das on the mardal, Agnimitra Behera on the violin, Swapneswar Chakravarty on the sitar and Srinibas Satpathy on the flute. The second evening opened with Rupak Parida and his group presenting a thundering "Shiva Namavali Ashtakam". "Uma Maheswara Stotram" in the last evening by Bijay Kumar Jena and the members of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya was enjoyable.

This year saw scintillating performances by some of the best young solo dancers who had already made a mark for themselves.

SOLOS

The opening recital was by Nrityagram's stunning Surupa Sen. Known for her knife-sharp movements with an athletic outward style, she swept the audience off their feet with "Parvati Panchakam", set to Pandit Raghunath Panigrahi's music. In her impassioned expressions in the Odia abhinaya "Ke Kiso Kohila" by poet Gopal Krushna, Surupa heightened the lyrics of the composition, enhanced by the mellifluous music of Raghunath Panigrahi while being stimulated by the flute. The piece with mesmerising *lasya* emanated a lyricism and grace that left the spectators awestruck. The concluding Meera Bhajan "Aali Sawarki Drishti" was soaked in

devotion. All the dances were composed by the dancer herself and bore the stamp of her institution.

Lingaraj Pradhan a Yuva Bismillah Khan awardee trained by Bichitrananda Swain was under the direct supervision of Padmasree Gangadhar Pradhan. He ensured his training with perfect sculpturesque poses and fluid body movements in Pallavi set to raga Ananda Bhairavi, Ektali. Sri

Rudrashtakam based on the 8 verses composed by Tulsidas in Ramcharitmanas saw Lingaraj traverse swiftly from one expression to another displaying the attributes of Lord Shiva, with strong technical virtuosity. His expressions as Mahakal were memorable.

Another wonderful dancer on the opening of the final evening was Janhabi Behera. Nurtured under Padma Shri Aruna Mohanty and guided by Guru Gangadhar Pradhan she showed a strong grip on rhythm in the Khamaj Pallavi In "Aigiri Nandini" with energetic steady steps choreographed by Aruna Mohanty, set to music by Bijay Kumar Jena, she went on to describe Devi Shakti in all forms supported by the narrative by Pandit Nityanand Mishra.

DUETS

Bhagabat Geeta on the first evening was a challenging Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra composition presented by two seasoned dancers of Kolkata, Rajib Bhattacharya as Krishna and Subikash Mukherjee as Arjuna under the guidance of Guru Ratikant Mohapatra. Rajib's

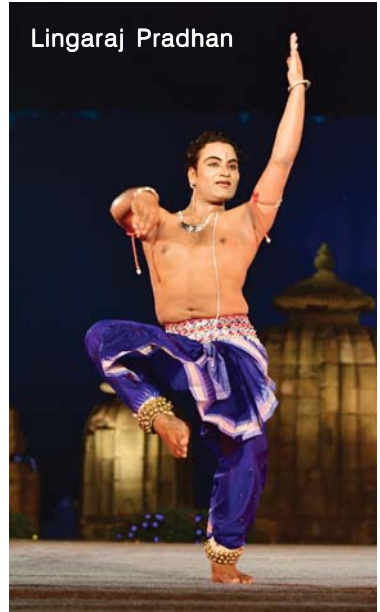




Surupa Sen

controlled expressions as Krishna was in the maturity of his character though repetitive at times. Subikash fitted well into the role. With strong musical support both the dancers performed with dexterity showing fine footwork and dramatic skills. Krishna's advice "Nimitya Matram Bhava Sabyasachi" to Arjuna was a triumph. And the expressions of both captured the moods of the two characters.

Lipsa Satpathy and Y. Asha Kumari from New Delhi negotiated the complex rhythmic patterns of pure dance Pallavi in raga Devagandhari, taal Jyoti with crisp and balanced footwork and fine coordination. The two very graceful dancers with matured and spontaneous abhinaya skills portrayed the nine



Lingaraj Pradhan

emotions based on the episodes of the Ramayana in "Abhinaya Nabarasa" with a series of definitely prescribed movements doing full justice to the theme and the aesthetics. The final evening's duet was by Tapan Kumar Sahoo and Bidya Biswajita of Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar. Their Pallavi was set to the resplendent raga Gawati, Ektali presented with absolute ease negotiating the intricate patterns of the piece with grace

maintaining total coordination. The popular Pancha Parameshwara was an ode to the five deities, Ganesha, Narayana, Rudra, Ambika and Bhaskara. The vibrant choreography supported by excellent music in Raga Malika, taal Malika, saw the climax in their performance in the depiction of Ambika especially portraying Mahisasuramardini and Chamunda Kapalini.



Rajib Bhattacharya Subikash Mukherjee Kolkata

Lipsa Satpathy and
Y. Ashakumari



by choreographing all the pieces and being himself a wonderful and lovable Gajanan. A gratifying performance indeed.

The second evening's performance by Gurukul spearheaded by veteran Sutapa Talukdar fell short of expectations. "Gowri Nandana" the mangalacharan, was followed by Nari portraying the uttama, madhyama and adhama in which Talukdar was Radha.

GROUPS

The best group performance of the festival was on the first evening by Nritya Naivedya, guided by Pravat Kumar Swain. After the Mangalacharan "Pratah Smarami" an invocation for Devadidev Mahadev in raag Bibhas, ektaali, Pallavi in raag Bakulavarnam was presented with full coordination, the dancers equipped with technical competence to negotiate the rhythmic patterns of the composition. In Rasa Vichitra the nine emotions or Navarasa was portrayed through the birth of Ganesh. Scripted by Pandit Nityanand Misra with music by Sukanta Kundu and rhythm composition of Dhaneswar Swain the piece saw riveting renditions of dancing fleeting through the nine emotions making good use of stage space with the rich music. Pravat, a talented young dancer and choreographer, demonstrated his mettle

"Basanta" set to the lovely song "Mita Basata Aasila" was the concluding item. The group lacked co-ordination and uniformity in execution which did not rise above mediocrity.

The curtain for the festival was drawn with the performance by the colourfully clad dancers of Meera Das' Gunjan Dance Academy, Cuttack. They began with Desh Pallavi weaving picturesque patterns, with lovely sways and poses and bhramaris while negotiating the complex rhythm. The well-trained and confident dancers proved their competence in Shiva Panchakshara stotram and the concluding "Rudra Pranaam" a fast pace rhythmic number in the pursuit of the ultimate desire to attain peace with "Rudra Pranami Mokshaye".

Nritya Naivedya



VISHWASHANTI SANGEET SAMAROH - 2019

- For world peace and a better society



Text: **Paul Nicodemus**

With the ever-increasing problems of today's world, it is important to promote and preach world peace for the betterment of society. With this aim in mind, Vishwashanti Sangeet Samaroh, a festival of performing arts came into being, promoting dance and music and bringing immense happiness and peace of mind to the audience. The annual festival is organised by Nrityadhara Kathak Research Institute, Thane.

For this year's edition, the festival committee took a step further and presented seven classical dance styles of India on a single platform. It was a four-hour show wherein each dance style was presented in its pure form. The show turned out to be a big success as the audience came in large numbers to witness the beautiful and unique collaboration. Senior artiste like Padma Shri awardee Darshana Jhaveri performed and demonstrated Manipuri dance and received a standing ovation from the



Padma Shri awardee Darshana Jhaveri



audience. BR Vikram, Editor of The Dance India Magazine from Visakhapatnam, graced the festival as the chief guest of the festival.

Kashmira Trivedi



Padma Shri awardee Darshana Jhaveri performed 'Swara Prabandha' based on Swaras. The Manipuri exponent later performed 'Madanakshep' one of the



BR Vikram Kumar, Editor, The Dance India being felicitated by Mukta Joshi



Debi Basu

32 divisions of Vipralambha Shringar. The grace and efficiency with which she performed the Manipuri style left the audience spellbound. Debi Basu began her recital with a 'Mangalacharan', an invocation piece of the traditional Odissi repertoire. Later, she presented Jayadeva's ashtapadis from his celebrated work Geeta Govinda. C Gopalakrishnan, a Kathakali artiste demonstrated the 'Kinetics of Body' in Kathakali – Footwork and body movements, Navarasas,



Saji Menon





C Gopalakrishnan

Shabdavarnana and a small part of the story 'Duryodhanavadham'. Saji Menon, a Mohiniattam artiste performed an item on the story of Amba's life, who suffered at the hands of Bheeshma. Dr G Ratheesh Babu performed a Kuchipudi Keerthana on Lord Shiva. Kashmiri Trivedi, a Bharatanatyam artiste, performed 'Ganesh Vandana' describing the 12 names of Ganesh. She also performed 'Yahi Madhava Yahi Krishna', a famous ashtapadi from Geet Govind. Mukta Joshi, a



Mukta Joshi

Kathak artiste, started with Devi Tandav and Stuti. She later performed few Todas and Paran in Taal Rupak - 7 beats. She demonstrated the Jaipur style of Kathak with her excellent footwork and chakras and Jugalbandi.

Every year the Vishwashanti committee strives hard to conduct such programmes wherein music and dance become a medium through which people connect spiritually and attain happiness and mental peace.

The festival ended with the shloka, 'Angikam Bhuvanam Yasya' praising Lord Nataraja in 7 different styles. Padma Shri awardee Roshan Kumari, the guru of Mukta Joshi, sent special blessings and love to all participants and wished success to the Vishwashanti Festival. With the blessings of her Guru, this show was conceptualised by Mukta Joshi, coordinated by Kashmiri Trivedi and organised by the committee members of Vishwashanti Sangeet Samaroh. We must commend Mukta Joshi for her soulful effort in providing a grand platform for artistes from across the country.



A BLISSFUL EVENING OF CLASSICAL DANCE

- The first programme of ICCR in Andhra Pradesh



Text and Pics: **Paul Nicodemus**

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) for the first time conducted a cultural programme in Andhra Pradesh. ICCR in collaboration with Nataraj Music and Dance Academy organised an evening of classical dance at Kalabharathi Auditorium on February 28.

The programme which began at 6:30 pm featured Leena Mohanty, an ICCR empanelled Odissi artist from Bengaluru, Nirlipta Patnaik, an Odissi artiste and disciple of Leena Mohanty, and Rachana LL Vepa, a Kuchipudi artiste from Visakhapatnam.

Leena Mohanty is an acclaimed dancer and one of the leading exponents of Odissi dance with wide national and international fame. Disciple of Gurus Sri Deba Prasad Das and Sri Durga Charan Ranbir, Leena has performed in many cities across the globe. She is the recipient of many prestigious awards like Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar, Mahari Award and many more.

Nirlipta Patnaik is well trained in her art with a Master's Degree in Yoga Training from the



Leena Mohanty, Nirlipta Patnaik and Rachana

honourable Bihar School of Yoga. She brushed up her skills in Odissi dance under the guidance of Leena Mohanty in the respectable Bansi Bilas Institute of Bhubaneswar.

Next, it was time for Leena Mohanty and her disciple Nirlipta Patnaik. The duo took the stage by storm with their scintillating Odissi dance. They began their performance with 'Dhara Dharendra Nandini' — an Odissi piece expounded on Lord Shiva as Nataraja. He is worshipped as the king among dancers. He is described as the greatest yogi who wears the sky as His garments, balancing on His solitary foot, totally poised. Composed in raga Patdeep and tala Ekatali and Khemata, it was choreographed by Guru Durga Charan Ranbir and music was composed by Guru Sri Ramhari Das.

Srimati Sripati with the lyrics "Srimati Sripati Brundabane Keli Rachile..." touched upon Krishna's most important weapon in his play (Lila) - illusion (Maya). Krishna plays his flute, the melodious sound of which reaches Radha's ears. She is captivated by it, the call of Krishna makes her forget all other worldly ties. She joins her Lord under the boughs of the trees at Vrindavan and revels in the ecstasy of the union. Both the artistes presented beautiful Odissi with abhinaya. The piece was set in raga - Shankarabharanam and tala Jati. It was choreographed by Leena Mohanty and music



Leena Mohanty



Rachana

Rachana LL Vepa is a third year student of B. Tech in Gayatri Vidya Parishad, Visakhapatnam. A student of Kala Ratna AB Bala Kondala Rao, she has been performing in various programmes at many places in the country.

The evening began with 'Ganesh Pancharatnam' by Rachana. The Kuchipudi recital was a perfect choice as it was an invocatory prayer to Lord Ganesha. Ganesha Pancharatnam, as the name suggests, had five stanzas and each stanza detailed the characteristics of Lord Ganesha. Written by Jagadguru Adi Sankaracharya, it described the joyous nature of Vinayaka. The piece was choreographed by AB Bala Kondala Rao and the composition was a treat to the eyes.

Rachana followed it up with a 'Seetha Pravesa Daruvu', an exclusive composition from one of the most popular ballets choreographed by her teacher AB Bala Kondala Rao. It showcased the joy of Seetha Devi after returning from aranyavasam to Ayodhya. She recollects all the fond memories and expresses her happiness to her Chelis. It was a 'bhava' based composition and Rachana did a fabulous job in emoting the true expressions. Rachana with her beautiful structure, grace and abhinaya totally owned the performance.

Leena Mohanty and Nirlipta Patnaik

composition was done by Guru Sri Ramhari Das.

'Chamunda Stuti' was the final Odissi piece performed by Leena and Nirlipta. Chamunda, one of the chief yoginis and the slayer of the demons Chanda and Munda, is closely associated with Maa Kali - the fearsome aspect of the Devi. Perfect Odissi sculptural postures were portrayed by the artistes and both of them had sublime sync. The item was set in raga Shankarabharanam and tala Ekatali. It was choreographed by Leena Mohanty and music was provided by Guru Sri Dheeraj Kumar Mohapatra.

The programme concluded with 'Vachenu Alamelumanga' by Rachana. Vachenu Alamelumanga is a well known Annamacharya Keerthana describing the beauty of Goddess Alamelumanga and the way she is welcomed by her devotees. The composition showcased the Goddess' Aura in raga Hindolam and tala Adi.

As a customary practice of ICCR, the artistes themselves introduced the piece they were performing and gave an insight to the gathered audience. Gantla Srinubabu, president of Andhra Pradesh Working Journalist Union, graced the occasion as a guest and lauded the efforts put in by artistes and organiser BR Vikram Kumar.



Artistes being felicitated by Gantla Srinubabu, president of Andhra Pradesh Working Journalist Union,

SITA SWAGATHAM BY GAYATRI SRIRAM

Indian Council For Cultural Relations (ICCR) presented Sita Swagatham by Gayatri Sriram at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on February 8.



Sita Swagatham - an insight into Sita's story from her perspective in a non-chronological order which spans the Ramayana as seen from Sita's eyes. The story took a non-traditional format and saw Gayatri Sriram enact several characters some of whom Sita loved and some whom she feared. The production covered Sita's life from her marriage to Lord Rama to the childhood of Luv and Kush, and her final departure as she merged into the earth.

The solo dance feature was well presented by Gayatri Sriram from Singapore, who is a professional dancer, choreographer and presenter. The abhinaya part and nritya part were neat and good. She proved to be an artiste of great potential and showcased her professionalism. Her work had quality and moved the

audience in many sequences. The presentation was choreographed by Karnataka Kalashree Minal Prabhu and Gayatri Sriram. Music and lyrics were provided by Viswanatha Balasubramanya Sharma and Vidwan G Gurumurthy. Accompanists include Guru Minal Prabhu on nattuvangam, Vidwan Balasubramanya Sharma on vocals, Vidwan G Gurumurthy on mridangam, Vidwan Jayaram Kikkeri on flute and Vidwan Prasanna on percussions. Lighting design was provided by Murugan Krishnan.

- Sai Venkatesh, Karnataka





Samidha Shinde

@ANDHERI

Vedika, the monthly programme of The Dance India Magazine was conducted at the Bagarka College, Andheri East, on February 17. Samidha Institute of Fine Arts initiated the programme in the presence of Dr Guru Rekha Shri Desai, a member of International Dance Council and founder of Kalakruti Dance Academy, and Tillottama Raghuvanshi, a sitar artiste from Pune.

Students of Kalakruti Dance Academy began the evening with their Bharatanatyam presentation, Mallari, where the basics - Asamyukta hastas, Drishti bheda, Shiro bheda, Greeva bheda and Natyakram were demonstrated. It was followed with 'Sri Ram Chandra



Kripalu Bhaju Mana' and concluded it with an ode to Lord Nataraja in 'Nataraja Raja Namah', a unique choreography curated on an Aarti. Tillottama Raghuvanshi's sitar performance was par excellence. She was accompanied by her brother Yogesh on tabla. He further enhanced performance. The entire performance by the duo proved to be a therapeutic experience to the gathered audience. Performances were hosted by Guru Siddhi Desai, daughter and disciple of Guru Dr Rekha Shri.

- Samidha Shinde





Shamal Pawar

@KURLA

The Dance India's monthly programme, Vedika in collaboration with Atharva School of Fine Arts and supported by Shamal Pawar was held at Kurla on February 17. Since its inception, the programme has been curated by BR Vikram Kumar, editor and Kashmira Trivedi, coordinator of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The first presentation of the evening was given by Bhagyashree Kulkarni and Kashmira Limaye groomed under Rajashree Gadhikar. It was a wonderful Kathak performance. They presented various facets of Kathak - Thaata, Aamad, Toda, Tukada and Padhant. Their performance concluded with a beautiful Tarana. The audience applauded their effort to learn the classical form and then present it so confidently.



The second artiste of the evening was Sheetal Subramaniam, an accomplished Carnatic Vocalist, trained under Guru Saraswati Krishnamoorthy and Guru Susheela Mani. It was an interesting interactive session with presentations of Varanam, Kriti and concluded with a beautiful Murugan padam where the live demo of music with dance was shown. The audience enjoyed the wonderful interactive session where students of Shamal Pawar also gave Talaam for the songs.

The artistes were overwhelmed with the gesture of creating the free platform, Vedika by The Dance India Magazine.

- Shamal Pawar



Vrunda Upadhyay

@DOMBIVLI

Vedika, The Dance India's monthly programme in collaboration with Mudra Dance Academy supported by Vrunda Upadhyay, was held at Dombivli on February 10. The programme began with a beautiful Hindustani vocal recital by Latika Patil and Manjiri Deshmukh, disciples of Manjusha Thatte of Swarmanjusha Institute. Latika on harmonium and vocals accompanied Manjiri. The duo presented Bada khayal and Chota khayal with taan and Bol taan in Raag Puriya Dhanashree. Later, performers Kum. Neeraja Nair and Kum. Anamika Kumar, disciples of Guru Radhika Nair performed Bharatanatyam. They presented traditional varnams and then a rare 'Kavadi Chindu' on Lord Shiva. The varnam in praise of Lord Shiva was performed By Kum Neeraja P Nair in raga Vasantha and tala Adi. Next varnam in praise of Lord Sri Krishna was performed by Kum. Anamika Ashok Kumar in raga



Hindolam and tala Adi. Both of them concluded the recital with a Kavadi Chindu.

The programme was graced by Dimple Nair, a well known Mohiniattam dancer from Doha and a young audience was also part of the gathering. Towards the end, participating artistes were recognised with the certificate as a token of appreciation by The Dance India team.

- Vrunda Upadhyay





Rajan

@NAVI MUMBAI

The Dance India magazine held its monthly programme Vedika in collaboration with Meenakshi Nritya Vidyalaya, supported by KV Rajan at Shri Manikananda Seva Sangham in Navi Mumbai on February 5. In this month's edition, two different forms of classical dance, Kathak and Bharatanatyam, were showcased.

Somoja Saha, an ardent art seeker and a well-trained Kathak danseuse who learnt under the discipleship of Sreelekha Mukherjee, Dr Shubhada Gokhale and Dr Puru Dadheech began the proceedings with the well-known Vishnu Vandana Shantakaram. Following this, there was a presentation of Chautaal, which had 12 beats. It is also known as chartaal and occasionally as Dhrupad taal implying 4 claps. It is an ancient taal created from the sound of Pakhawaj. The taal has been a part of temple heritage for many years and is being performed before the deities for generations after generations.

By following the rhythmic pattern of Kathak her students presented That, 'Amad' in Vilambit laya, Tode, 'Paran kaviti' and other pieces in Madhya laya and a 'Challan' in Drut Laya. The third item was a solo performance Ashtapadi sung by Anil Khosare and choreographed by Guru Dr Shubhada Gokhale. 'Niratata Dhang' was a mesmerising composition by

the legendary Pandit Bindadin Maharaj who was an ardent follower of Lord Shree Krishna. He has described the Raas Leela of the Lord and gopis using beautiful words which aptly portray the joyful ambience of Vrindavan, the charm of Radha, their graceful dance together and in turn the elegance of eternal love.

The performers were Vedika Bhanote, Risnavi Ghosh, Anoushka Gandhi, Debosmita Dutta Biswas and Somoja Saha herself. It is clear that the academy inculcates spirituality and emotional well being of the young children, and also develops self-confidence for a flawless stage performance. As a part of its initiative, it also teaches and supports the needy and underprivileged art seekers to enable them to achieve their dreams.

The next part of the programme showcased Bharatanatyam by students of Sangeeta Ghosh. Sangeeta is a disciple of Guru Thankamani Kutty of Kalamandalam, Kolkata. Sangeeta was also a former dance teacher of Kalamandalam, Kolkata. Presently, she is managing her own academy Nartanam, following the unique Bharatanatyam style of her guru. Sangeeta has also been a part of the organising committee of the monthly programme of The Dance India Magazine at Navi Mumbai from the inception.

Her students, Ananya Padwal, Srishti Agarwal, Saanvi Vivek Kumar, Samruddhi Santosh Shingare and Mahati Amlekar presented Ganesh Vandana with Thodayam in raga Nattai and tala Adi. Thodayam means pushpanjali, an ancient item performed as an invocation to the deity. It was followed by Panchakshara Stotram and Alarippu Tishram based in raga Hamsadhvani and tala Tishra Chapu. Alarippu is a Telugu word, which means flowering or opening of the body and limbs of the dancer. The movements of alarippu are symmetrical and graceful, implying that the dancer is ready to perform.



- Julia Ghosh

TRIBUTES



Dr T Padmini was an endearing exponent of Carnatic veena. She was an A-grade artiste of All India Radio and Doordarshan. Profusely qualified, Dr Padmini was an MA in English and Carnatic Vocal from Andhra University. She did her Alankara in Veena from Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in Mumbai and PhD on Annamayya from Andhra University in 1998.

Dr Padmini developed her skills at an early age in the Nedunuri school under the tutelage of R Vijaya Lakshmi and T Ramanujasuri. In the words of scholar Dr M. Adinarayana: "Over the years she acquired individuality with her sadhana and developed a unique system for the delineation of raga and tala. Her presentation of a complicated thillana or a lullaby always evoked aesthetic delight. While playing rare ragas like Chenchu Kambhoji, Deepakam or Vijaya Vasantam, she displayed

a rare virtuosity. She produced sweetness and depth when she played familiar ragas like Kalyani, Thodi, and Bhairavi. Reviving the tradition, she would at times sing while playing, to bring out the lyrical beauty of the krithis." She had performed extensively in India and abroad.

On her request, Tarakeshwara Foundation had organised a Pancha Veena concert by her disciples at Annamayya Mandapam at RK Beach Road in Visakhapatnam. Simple and dignified, she always exuded an aura of an otherworldly artiste.

Vainika Dr T Padmini left this world at the age of 63. The family has decided to donate her body to Andhra Medical College. Tarakeshwara Foundation will organise a memorial concert in her name in the first week of April.



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