

# THE DANCE INDIA

A Treasure Trove of Culture & Tourism

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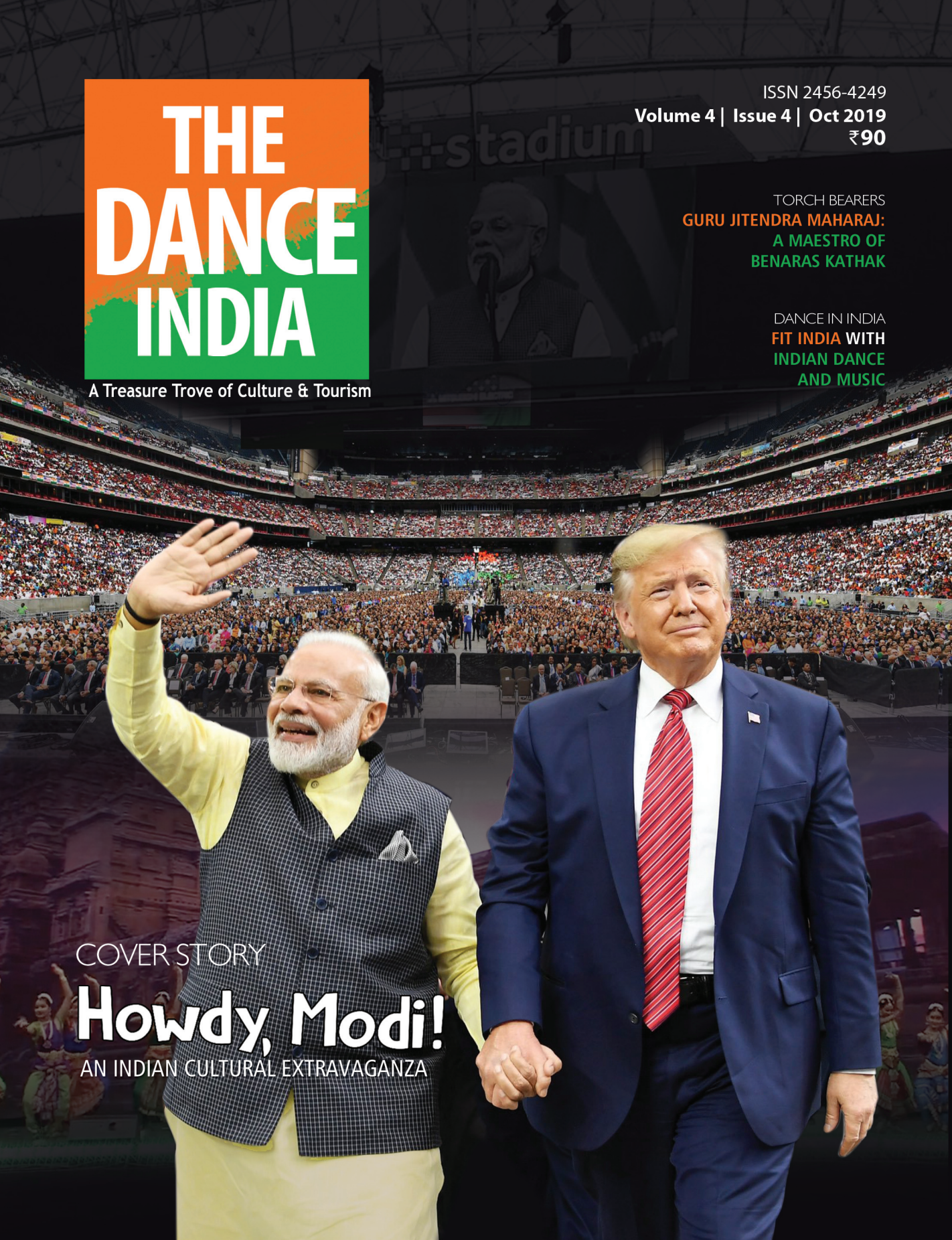
TORCH BEARERS  
**GURU JITENDRA MAHARAJ:**  
A MAESTRO OF  
BENARAS KATHAK

DANCE IN INDIA  
**FIT INDIA WITH**  
INDIAN DANCE  
AND MUSIC

COVER STORY

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# EDITORIAL

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

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

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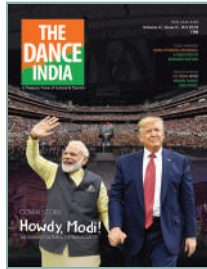
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# EDITOR'S DESK

**O**n September 11, 1893, Narendranath Datta or Swami Vivekananda delivered his first speech in the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. His speech garnered immense significance as it upgraded the dignity of India in the world. Cut to the present, another Narendra from this ancient civilisation made every Indian proud on a foreign land. Yes, we are talking about recent address by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi at the 'Howdy, Modi!' Summit in Houston, Texas, USA. Time and again, he has proved himself to be a force - not an individual but an institution. He caught the imagination of Indian citizens and delivered their 'Mann ki Baat' in America. When he spoke, the whole world heard - both friends and foes. His speech had a uniting effect, even on adversaries. The cultural programme preceding the speeches by Indian Prime Minister and President of the United States showcased the rich cultural heritage of Bharat. The way in which the Prime Minister reached out to the world with the help of Indian arts and Indian diaspora made everyone draw parallels with Swami Vivekananda. His speech elevated Indian culture and values and made everyone proud. He has done a commendable job in presenting Yoga to the world by establishing World Yoga Day and in the same way everybody hopes that he would spread Indian arts around the globe by incorporating them in the Fit India Movement.

Jai Hind!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BR Vikram Kumar'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

**BR Vikram Kumar**  
Editor

## Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel reviews conservation work and development of public amenities at the Red Fort

Union minister of state for culture & tourism (IC) Prahlad Singh Patel visited the Red Fort to review ongoing conservation work and development of public amenities at the Monument in Delhi on September 8. He was accompanied by officers of Archaeological Survey of India and ministry of tourism.



The minister inspected the new booking counter near T5 parking at Delhi Gate, newly conserved Chatta Bazaar, well area of Lahori Gate, ramparts, newly built museums and also took stock of the sanitation facilities like drinking water and public convenience at various locations in Red Fort.



During the inspection, the minister suggested starting battery-operated cars inside the Red Fort for the convenience of elderly people, women and children. He added that it's our responsibility to provide excellent public facilities at Red Fort.

The minister showed his satisfaction towards cleanliness, development and conservation work done by Archaeological Survey of India.

The minister also visited Mumtaz Mahal, Khaas Mahal, Rang Mahal, Hammam and other places. Officials from ASI and tourism ministry briefed the minister about the works carried out since the last 2 years, and ongoing developmental and conservation works at the Red Fort.

In a massive exercise in over the last 1 year, the Archaeological Survey of India has completely restored and revived the Red Fort.

## PRA-KASHI, an exhibition on the finest trends of contemporary weaving inaugurated

Union minister of state for culture & tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel inaugurated the exhibition PRA-KASHI on the finest trends of contemporary weaving, in New Delhi on September 9. The National Museum, New Delhi, in collaboration with Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, has organised this exhibition. The exhibition will remain open for general public till October 8, 2019, between 10 am to 6 pm from Tuesday to Friday. The exhibition will remain open till 8 pm on Saturday & Sunday, and it will be closed on Mondays.

Forty-six textile objects were displayed at the exhibition that is hand-woven on traditional Indian draw looms over the last twenty-five years at ASHA, a silk weaving workshop at Varanasi. To situate the textiles within the milieu of luxury arts in which they were



traditionally created, they shall be juxtaposed with twenty-one objects comprising historic textiles, miniature paintings, jewellery and decorative arts from the reserve collection of the National Museum.

The exhibition is curated by Pramod Kumar KG of Eka Archiving Services. It is in the memory of Padma Bhushan awardee Suresh Neotia and Padma Bhushan awardee Martand Singh, patron and savant of Indian textiles, crafts and the arts.

Believed to be India's oldest and most sacred city, Kashi (Varanasi) has been a spiritual destination for Hindu, Buddhist and Jain pilgrims since the first millennium BCE. From around the same time, the city has been celebrated for its textiles and in recent centuries for weaving bright gold and silver brocade silks that mirror the transcendental light of its sacred river, the Ganga.

The exhibition will showcase the most excellent range and diverse products of Asha through varied technical aspects, discernible shift in pattern and materials across their full range. It shall also depict the story of the most exquisite Indian textiles produced at Varanasi. The textiles showcased at the exhibition are created under the guidance of Padma Shri Rahul Jain, a leading expert on the traditional textile arts of India. Textiles are woven at the Asha workshop today feature in several significant museum collections including the British Museum, London; the Musee Guimet, Paris; the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Textile Museum, Washington DC.

This unique exhibition is a part of the National Museum's ongoing effort to collaborate with other leading organisations to showcase India's rich and diverse culture. This year, the National Museum has already organised three special thematic exhibitions on Baluchari Textiles, Himachal Folk Art and West Bengal's Patachitra or Scroll Painting. The National Museum is planning to host seven more special exhibitions in the next one year in collaboration with different national and international organisations.

## 'Shashwat Maharathi: The Eternal Seeker' an exhibition on Chitracharya Upendra Maharath inaugurated

Union minister of state for culture & tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel and Lt. Governor of Delhi Shri Anil Baijal jointly inaugurated the exhibition 'Shashwat Maharathi: The Eternal Seeker' on Chitracharya Upendra Maharath at newly renovated Jaipur House in National Gallery of Modern art New Delhi on September 17. The exhibition showcases more than 1,000 works of art, design, and woven objects of art by Chitracharya Upendra Maharathi. The exhibition will remain open for the general public from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm Tuesday to Friday. On weekends, people can visit the exhibition until 8:00 pm.

The show of paintings, drawings, murals sculptures, woven cloths and chairs all point to the zenith of his creativity. His interest in Buddhism brought forth many designs that were inspired by Buddhist ideology. The installations in the retrospective have been designed by DG, NGMA Adwaita Gadanayak. The exhibition has been curated by Adwaita Gadanayak and his team.

Maharathi was the author of many books too, The book on bamboo art, "Venushilpa" was among the best. Vaishali ke Lichchavi (The Licchavi dynasty of Vaishali), Bauddha

Dharma ka Abbhuthan (The Rise of Buddhism), Indragupta were some of the other memorable works.

Following the tradition of ancient art of sculpture, he designed many noted buildings: Venuban Viharin Rajagriha, Sandarbh Vihar, Ananda Stupa, Prakrit and Jainology Institute at Vaishali, Nava Nalanda Maha Vihar at Nalanda, etc.

Born in the village Narendrapur, Puri district in Odisha, in May 1908, Maharathi finished from the Govt College of Art, Kolkata, as an artist cum architect. In later years he came to Patna in Bihar. From 1933 to 1942 he advocated a literary-cultural revival as he worked in the publishing house, "Pustak Bhandar", in Laharyasari, Darbhanga. In 1942, he was appointed a special designer in the department of industry, Govt of Bihar. In 1954, he visited Japan to attend the UNESCO International conference as a representative of India.



The Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge), Prahlad Singh Patel and the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Anil Baijal at the inauguration of the Exhibition of 'Shaswat: The Eternal Seeker' on Chitracharya Upendra Maharathi, at the National Gallery of Modern Art, in New Delhi on September 17, 2019.

## Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman hands over antique Bronze Idol of Buddha to Union minister of state for culture & tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman handed over an antique Bronze Idol of Buddha to Union minister of state for culture & tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel in New Delhi on September 17. This Buddha statue is documented as "Seated Buddha in Bhumisparsha Mudra" Ht. 6.5" Circa 12th Century AD.



The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman hands over the 12th century Buddha statue which was stolen 57 years ago and finally traced at an auction in the UK to the Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge), Prahlad Singh Patel, in New Delhi on September 17, 2019. Secretary, Culture, Arun Goel, and Revenue Secretary, Dr Ajay Bhushan Pandey are also seen.

The Bronze Idol of 'Buddha seated in the Bhumisparsha Mudra' was stolen on August 22, 1961, from Nalanda Museum of ASI and had resurfaced at an auction in Maastricht (organised by a London based dealer Rossi & Rossi in February 2018). After receiving this information, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officer in London contacted the Art & Antique Unit of Metropolitan Police. ASI also certified that the statue was stolen from Archaeological Museum, Nalanda.

Scotland Yard handed over the statue to the Indian High Commissioner in the UK, YK Sinha on August 15, 2018, to mark India's Independence Day.

The finance minister & the culture minister both expressed their happiness at the return of the idol.

## Culture minister Prahlad Singh Patel meets local administration at Leh to boost tourism; takes part in the closing ceremony of Ladakh Festival 2019

On the second day of Leh tour, Union minister of state for culture & tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel held a meeting with officers of local administration including DC Leh and representatives of the tourism sector at DC office on September 4. During the meeting, the minister discussed better coordination between local administration and central government to boost tourism in the Ladakh region.

The Union minister also attended the closing ceremony of Ladakh Festival 2019 as a chief guest in the evening. Speaking on the occasion, he congratulated the people of Ladakh for their newly acquired status as Union Territory. The minister also said that he was holding meetings with officials and different stakeholders of Ladakh for development of the region. He assured the local people of fruitful results of meetings which will be better than their expectations. Patel appreciated cultural performances of various artists during the closing ceremony of the festival.

Gyal P Wangyal, chairman Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, was also present during the event.



## Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu presented the National Tourism Awards 2017-18

Vice President of India, M Venkaiah Naidu, presented the National Tourism Awards 2017-18 on World Tourism Day in New Delhi on September 27. A total of 76 awards under various categories were presented. Union minister of state for culture & tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel; secretary-general of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Zurab Pololikashvili; tourism minister of Paraguay Sofia Montiel De Afara; tourism secretary Yogendra Tripathi; DG tourism Meenakshi Sharma, senior officers of the ministry of tourism and 82 international delegates were among those present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, urged all stakeholders of the tourism industry to be especially mindful of their ecological footprint and called for more responsible and sustainable tourism practices. He further urged the people, especially the youth, to visit at least 15 tourist destinations within India by 2022 to give a boost to domestic tourism, as per the suggestion made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Naidu urged students to undertake 'Bharat Darshan' to learn about various facets of India's culture, heritage, languages and cuisine and enhance their understanding of the unique cultural mosaic of the country.

Union minister of state for culture & tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel expressed his happiness at India being selected as the host country for a celebration of World Tourism Day 2019 by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). He congratulated all the awardees and said that we believe in 'Atithi Devo Bhava' and that is why our tourists are essential for us. He added that the Indian government is continuously taking tourist-friendly decisions like the reduction of E-tourist visa fees, making available an extended e-tourist visa, reduction in GST on hotel tariffs which will boost tourism in the country.

Later briefing the media, Prahlad Singh Patel and secretary-general UNWTO Zurab Pololikashvili announced that the Online Academy of UNWTO will make available tourism-related courses in Hindi also on their Academy portal. The Union minister thanked the UNWTO for its endeavours to promote tourism. The tourism minister further announced that from next year onwards there will be a new special category in tourism awards for persons demonstrating extraordinary actions like saving the life of a tourist in life-threatening situation etc.

Union minister of state for culture & tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel and tourism minister of Paraguay Sofia Montiel De Afara also signed a Tourism Cooperation Agreement after the event.

On this occasion, a workshop on 'Tourism Jobs of the Future' was also organised by UNWTO in collaboration with its affiliate member in India, Outlook Responsible Tourism Initiative. The workshop was held to provide a platform for tourism MSMEs and social entrepreneurs in India to explore how to accommodate future tourism trends, scale-up their activities and tourism practices and create more job opportunities in their communities.

A panel discussion was held on 'Maximizing Tourism's Potential To Create More And Better Jobs' in addition to a presentation 'The Future is Now-The UNWTO Online Academy' by UNWTO.

The ministry of tourism, Government of India, annually presents National Tourism Awards to various segments of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. These awards are presented to state governments / Union Territories, classified hotels, heritage hotels, approved travel agents, tour operators, tourist transport operators, individuals and other private organisations in recognition of their performance in their respective fields. The National Tourism Awards have, over the years, emerged as a prestigious recognition of achievements in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors.



**The Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge), Prahlad Singh Patel holding a press conference, on the occasion of the World Tourism Day - 2019 Celebrations, in New Delhi on September 27, 2019. Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Yogendra Tripathi, and other dignitaries are also seen.**



Padma Shri recipient Dr Sunil Kothari receiving Sri Madhabdev Award, the highest Government award from Chief Minister of Assam Sarbananda Sonowal, for his contribution to Sattriya dance and Indian scholarship at Narayanpur, the birthplace of Sri Madhabdev on 23 September. The award consists of Rs. 300,000 cash, a shawl and a citation.



Andhra Pradesh Tourism received "Best State/UT Comprehensive Development of Tourism (First Prize)" award from Vice President of India for the year 2017-18. Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Youth Advancement and Pravin Kumar, IAS, CEO, AP Tourism Authority received the award at New Delhi on September 27, 2019.



Devadasi Nritya Mandir honoured BR Vikram Kumar, Editor of The Dance India with 'Abhinava Natyakala Poshaka Sanman' on the occasion of the 14th Devadasi International Dance Festival - 2019 held at Bhubaneswar in Odisha on September 25. Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Minister of Tourism & Culture, Odisha presenting the award to Shri BR Vikram Kumar.

# DANCE IN INDIA



Text:

**Dr Saroja Vaidyanthan**

Padma Bhushan recipient,  
Bharatanatyam Guru,  
Choreographer and Author.

## FIT INDIA WITH INDIAN DANCE AND MUSIC

“A fit mind in a fit body  
is important”

-PM Modi

**W**henever we think about fitness, the first word that comes to our mind is a healthy and robust body. We feel right about this aspect of fitness. One thing that we ignore is the CPU of our body, which is our mind. A healthy body is nothing but an empty or sometimes a dangerous box without a healthy mind. Indian music and dance are a way to cure your mind and avoid negative energy from your body and our environment. Intricate movements of dance, different positions of standing poses, and various actions of hand, neck, eye, face, and body gestures maintains the flexibility and strengthens your body. Also, the beautiful rhythmic compositions keep us awake, determined and provide us with a calmness which is very important in this rushing pace of life to maintain peace.

Rhythmic tactics, concentration and hard work in any craft can make one a master in that field. In the same way, the regular practice of dance maintains





Dr Saroja Vaidyanthan



Prime Minister Narendra Modi setting a fit example with his yoga.

not only the physical fitness of your body but also improves memory at any age. It is proven by a study that patients with diseases like diabetes, heart problems, people suffering from obesity and Parkinson's disease are benefitted by dancing with music at least once or twice a week.

The best part of fitness through dance is that it can also result in giving a positive balance to your body and mind, a fantastic control overall. In this new age of India, people have also started following dance fitness routines. It makes you conscious and aware of your body and undoubtedly gives remarkable control over each body part. Modern dance styles are also working tremendously well in the field of health.



With age, there is a decline in mental and physical fitness which is aggravated by degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. A study based at the German Centre for





Dr Saroja Vaidyanthan

Neurodegenerative Diseases published in the open-access journal named *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* shows that dance has a profound effect in reversing the signs of ageing.

Dancing increases the area of the brain called the hippocampus that declines with age. This area is also essential for memory and learning, thus dancing helps improve both. Moreover, even the study stated that it was only dancing that led to noticeable behavioural changes in terms of improved balance.

A new system is being evaluated which generates sounds based on physical activity. This will be very helpful for people who have dementia as they react strongly to music. Thus an effort is being taken to combine both active physical dance and music to bring promising effects in patients suffering from dementia.

So many physical and mental ailments are cured by music and dance. Even being an audience to little prayers, temple processions, music with percussion and string instruments, folk dances and of course classical dances, helps us unwind and release stress from our minds. Of course, physically performing dance and music is more beneficial for one's physical and mental health.



## Guru Jitendra Maharaj: **A MAESTRO OF BENARAS KATHAK**



Text: Paul Nicodemus

**TORCH**  
BEARERS



Guru Jitendra Maharaj

**B**ack in time, artistes in India travelled from one place to another showcasing their art form. Watching one such event, dance caught his imagination when he chanced upon a Kathak performance by Guru Krishna Kumar Maharaj of Varanasi Gharana in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. The dancer's emotive eyes, grace, body movement and response to the rhythm of percussion, the overall synergy, impressed him. It made him touch the feet of the dancer after the recital. The guru noticed the boy still in his teens and asked what he did. "I would like to learn dance from you", came the reply. On that day, the youngster had a tryst with destiny and grew up to become the great Guru Jitendra Maharaj - a consummate dancer, an accomplished percussionist, an exemplary guru and propagator of temple style of Kathak dancing. While other members of the family chose regular career-oriented jobs, his heart took to dance.



Guru Jitendra Maharaj during Vysakhi Nrithyotsav - 2019

Born on September 9, 1934 at Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, Jitendra Maharaj hails from an intellectual Zamindari family. His father, late Om Prakash Maharaj and mother, late Ramrakhi were spiritually strong and wanted their children to do well in life. He received his training in Kathak under the tutelage of Guru Krishna Kumar Maharaj of Varanasi Gharana. He learnt the art form in a guru-shishya parampara style for many years. "I was in Madras when my guru had a heart attack. After the programme, I felt like talking to him, a sort of telepathy. Next day, I was supposed to travel to Delhi. I telephoned him and got to know that he was unwell. As soon as I met him, the first thing he said was... 'See, ours is Benaras Gharana, and I have taught you well. Now it is your turn to carry the mantle.'" Though Guru Krishna Kumar Maharaj had children, they were still young, and Jitendra became a foster son-disciple and worked towards propagating the temple style of Kathak.

After seeking blessings from Holy Devraha Baba who encouraged him to revive the lost forms of Kathak and ensure the elevation of them to a respected status, Jitendra Maharaj decided to complete this goal. He devoted his life for the development of Pre-Mughal style (Bhakti Nritya) that was practiced in temples during Asht Seva. He continued the tradition and contributed discovering and collecting nuances of Kathak and its missing links. Jitendra revived its pristine glory and emerged as an essential pillar of Indian dancing. He must be credited for the development and popularity of Kathak during his career spanning more than seven decades. He decided to give religious inputs to the content and took Kathak to new heights by choreographing new dance dramas. He has dozens of dance productions to his credit. "At one point of time, in the medieval ages, temple style Kathak of Benaras Gharana witnessed decadence,

Guru Jitendra Maharaj



and I did deep research and gave numerous performances to revive it," he says. He performed in Mandirs, Jothirlings, Shakti Peethas and Kumbh to restore it pristinely.

Jitendra Maharaj has set a trend in selecting themes making dance production of mythological and non-mythological stories viz Rudra Awtar, Agnishika, Vahadehi Vanwas,



Guru Jitendra Maharaj

Akhand Sobhgyawati, Ram Ki Shakti Puja, Yashodhra, Shiv-Shakti Mahima, Kala Aur Vasna, Ardh Nareshwar, Krishnamayee Meera-Andaal, Rabindranath Tagore's Poetic Expression, Veerangna, Pitambara, Ganga Avtaran, Meera Madhav, Preet Kiye Dukh Hoye, Traditional Dhrupad composition of Ganesh, Shiva, Durga, Kali and Saraswati.

His dancing is energetic and well researched to achieve perfection over rhythmic nuances and intricacies for 15-20 hours. Jitendra Maharaj used

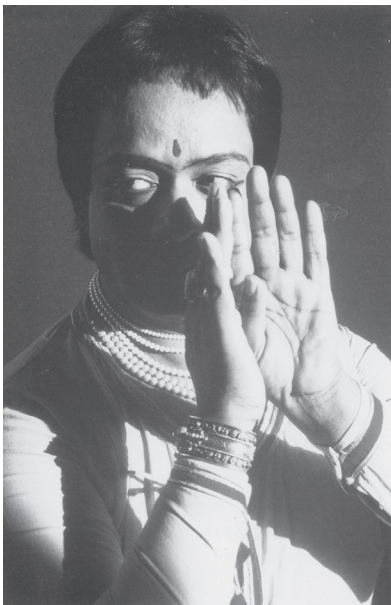


to dance on the wet sand. He has developed his style of dancing drawing from the treasure trove of themes, poetry, and choreography collected from Vedas and Upanishads. His concerts have the entire gamut of nritya, sometimes in different talas, interspersed with gats of lyrical beauty and compositions of dramatic moving renditions of

thumris and Bhajans. In many ways he represents a lost era of complete Kathak performed all night with intensity followed by the accompaniment of masters of tabla like Samta Prasad, Latif Khan and Kishan Maharaj. "I haven't left any state of India, I performed in every one of them," he says.

Jitendra Maharaj has distinguished himself both as a Kathak dancer and teacher - an amalgam of cultures and tantalising creativity. He started teaching the dance form at the young age of thirteen at Model Academy Bareilly, then at Natwari Kendra in Varanasi, as dance director at Manavsthal School in New Delhi. Maharaj then taught at the Vanasthali Vidyapeeth, and for two years he was in the UK teaching Indian fine art as visiting professor. He has lectured in various European Universities. He has toured and performed extensively at many festivals, conducted workshops and lecture-demonstrations for Kathak students in India and abroad. "My students loved my method of teaching dance. As adults, our understanding will be different from that of children, so I used to get down to their level and teach them," he reveals.

He has won particular acclaim for his choreographic work incorporating mythological stories, along with Dhrupad compositions. Jitendra Maharaj has also worked on fitness, yoga and music-dance therapy; and authored books on spirituality in dance, and the relation of dance with yoga. He has assisted his guru in the choreography for the film, 'Prem Rog' produced by Raj Kapoor. Critics and connoisseurs



showered him with praise and called him a wizard of musical excellence.

He established the Sangeetka Institute of Performing Arts for teaching Kathak Dance in Delhi in 1970. Since then, he has trained many young dancers. His institution 'Sangeetka' is an ideal example of Guru Shishya Parampara.

He is one of the few privileged dancers to have performed at Sankatmochan, Badri-Kedarnath, Rameshwaram, Chidambaram, Tirupati, Banke Bihari Mandir in Vrindavan (after 518 years he was the only artist to have performed in front of Krishna deity), Kanya Kumari, all the Shiva and Shakti peethas, and in all the Religious Akharas of Kumbha and Mahakumbha on the recommendation - invitation of late Rajmata Scindia, and various ISKCON temples all over Europe. Along with his duo disciple Nalini-Kamalini, he set a world record by dancing at the height of 18,000 ft at Kailash Mansarovar in 2003. He also danced during world religious conference



Guru Jitendra Maharaj with his disciples Nalini Kamalini



Guru Jitendra Maharaj with his disciples Nalini Kamalini and others

Guru Jitendra Maharaj receiving Sangeet Natak Akademi award from the President of India Ram Nath Kovind



and 1000-year celebration of Tabo Monastery in Himachal Pradesh, at Potala Palace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lhasa, Parayang and at the river of Bagmati to strengthen Bharat-Nepal Maitri amid the gathering of thousands of devotees, saints and Mahamanadelswhars. His cultural voyage is still underway. He has authored a book



on spiritualism in dance and the relation of dance with yoga. He has conveyed a message, art as a medium of Moksha-the salvation.

As Sanskar Bharti Sangrakshak - Pracharak, he participates in the various Shivar and Karyashalas organised at the remote northeast areas viz Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Guwahati. He also performs in the tribal belt of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Bihar. Through dance workshop, students are taught, patriotic, mythological and contemporary



themes. His dance institute makes them aware of indigenous values, appraises and seasons them with socio-cultural message, encourages, exposes and empowers them through placements as trainers and performers to work as torchbearer of traditional cultural heritage in India. It also provides research scholarship to underprivileged talented students, and places them at a common platform with renowned artists. So far 70 students are trained and given placement at in his Dance Institute.



Guru Jitendra Maharaj receiving Vysakhi Lifetime Achievement Award from Nataraj Music & Dance Academy, Visakhapatnam

He made a film for BBC and ILEA Inner London Educational Authority featuring 'Voyage of Varanasi Kathak and its Origin'. The series of lectures held since 1984, in various universities/academic institutions of the world were widely acclaimed. The response to the series in Oxford, Cambridge, Leiden Manchester University, London School of Economics, Kings Medical College, Harrow and Lylia Ballis, Helsinki (Finland) Beijing, Nanning (China), Indonesia, Bangkok, San Francisco, UCLA and Seattle were excellent. Subject discussed were the relation of dance with yoga, personality development, physical fitness and treatment through various Dance Mudras, hand gestures and movements have been widely acknowledged. A remarkable change in the behaviour was observed in the case of stubborn, violent and depressed students.

For the past two decades as cultural advisor to MTNL health Mela, Guru Jitendra Maharaj conducts a seminar on the subject - Coordination of body-mind-soul, organised by the Medical Association of Delhi. It is said to develop concentration, will power, eyesight and improve asthma. The guru trains to rehabilitate and



Guru Jitendra Maharaj



empower spastic and physically challenged students through his cultural wing called "Baisakhi" ability unlimited Institute for Handicaps, at Delhi and Nagpur.

Jitendra Maharaj has a Praveen degree in Music and Dance he has authored many articles, research papers, and books. He has served as a



non-official member of the Indo-sub-commission for culture. A pioneer in contemporary Kathak dance, he is credited for moving away from the solo form of Kathak starting in the 1960s, by turning it into a group spectacle, and also innovating by taking away traditional stories and adding contemporary storylines into Kathak repertoire. And yet, for the purists, the classicists, there was no room for complaint in his work, he presented the Kathak



Guru Jitendra Maharaj with Nalini Kamalini

dance form in a way that had never been seen before, and which at the time had some purists up in arms. However, these choreographies are now considered a classic, and many of the innovations he premiered have become ingrained in every Kathak performance.

While Guru Jitendra Maharaj has trained numerous students, it is his disciples, Nalini and Kamalini Asthana, who have been with him through thick and thin. They have dedicated their lives to take the excellent work done by their guru forward. The sister duo became an instrument spreading



Lifetime Achievement Award from Nataraj Music & Dance Academy, Visakhapatnam (2019). Ghongroo Wizard, to him his most significant award which he received from all the saints and Shankaracharya.

"Gurus should break the shackles and teach the next generation of aspiring artistes as much as possible, without holding anything back. Make a path for them to grow and if possible, provide them with good platforms. Once this happens, they will take care of themselves and excel as professional artistes," he concludes.



temple style of Kathak across the globe. "Just as I have taken my guru's work forward, Nalini and Kamalini have taken my work everywhere in India and abroad. Kamalini is currently the chairperson of Kathak Kendra, New Delhi, and Nalini is the artistic director of Sangeetika Institute of Performing Arts. In a way, I am relieved because of the good work they have been doing. They are continuing the work that I have started," he says.

For decades, he has performed at many concerts and festivals in India and abroad, including his performances in the commonwealth and Victoria Hall, London; and the Carnegie Hall, New York. Over the years, for his service to dance, Jitendra Maharaj has been honoured with the Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1996); the Indira Priyadarshini Award (1998); Nritya Shiromani Award by Sur Singar Samsad, Mumbai; Nritya Vachaspati (1962), The Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (2017) and Vysakhi



# KOLKATA

KOLKATA JATHIS NATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL - 2019



## Jathis National Dance Festival 2019

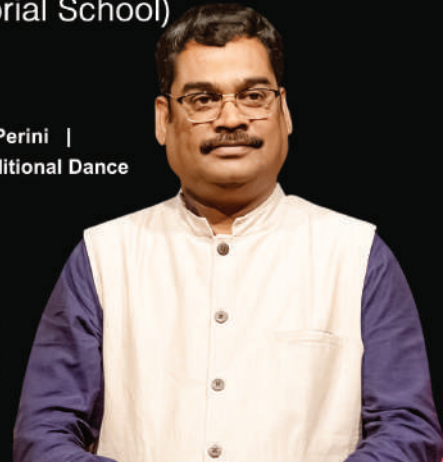
On 23 & 24 November 2019  
at Guru Govindan Kutty Auditorium  
in Kalamandalam Performing Arts  
and Research Centre,  
P-20 K.I.T. Scheme No.118,  
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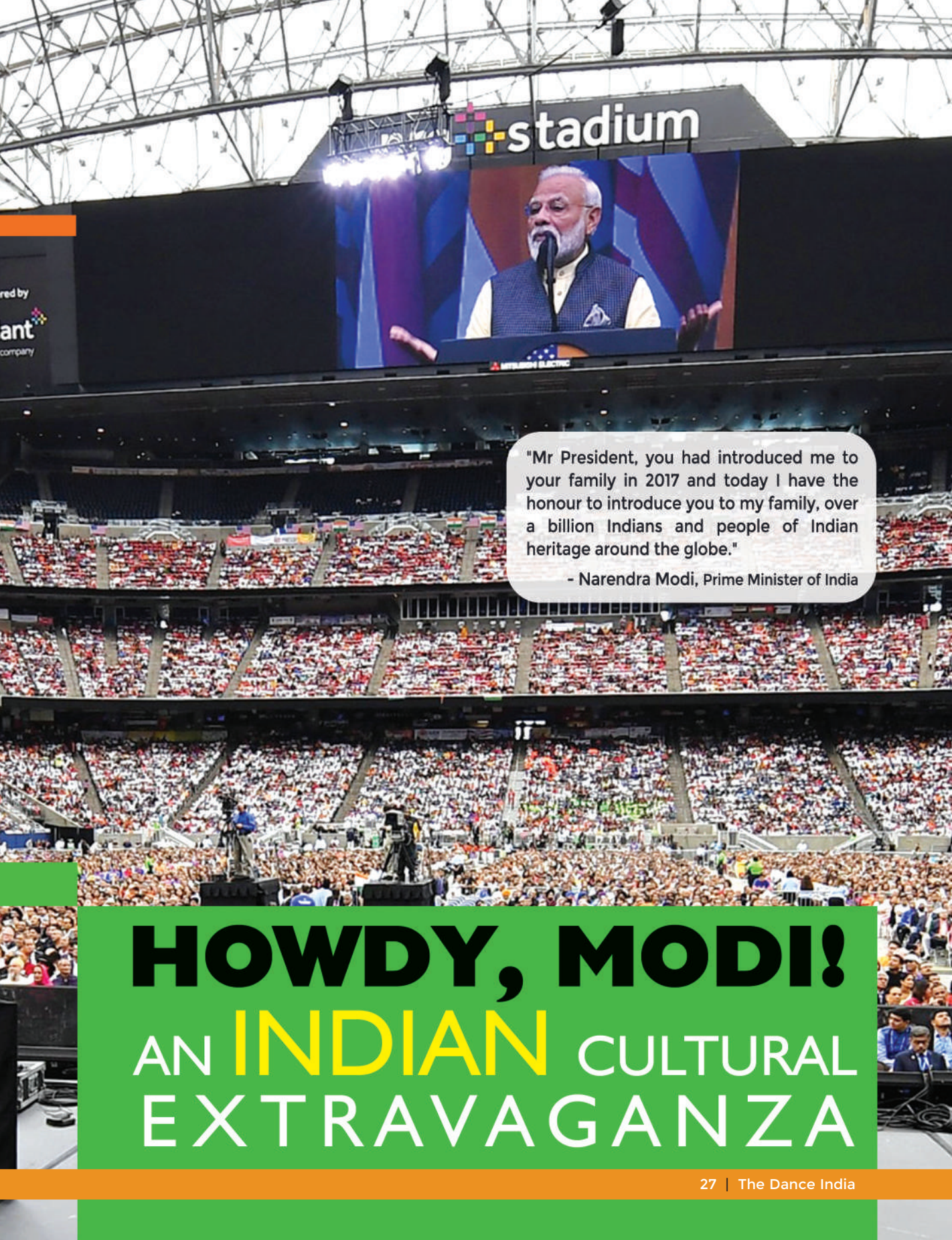
BR Vikram Kumar  
DTA, PGDTA, MA (Dance)  
Founder & Festival Director





# Cover STORY





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"Mr President, you had introduced me to your family in 2017 and today I have the honour to introduce you to my family, over a billion Indians and people of Indian heritage around the globe."  
- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

# HOWDY, MODI! AN INDIAN CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA



**Text: Paul Nicodemus**  
**Pics: Press Information Bureau & PMIndia**

# HOWDY, MODI!

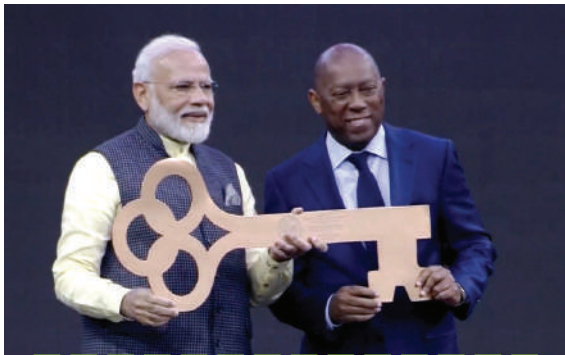
## An Indian Cultural Extravaganza



On September 22, over 50,000 people inside the stadium in Houston, and hundreds of millions of audience watching the live broadcast in English, Hindi and Spanish television around the globe witnessed a historical event. 'Howdy Modi!' was a community summit hosted by the Indian diaspora in Texas for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the President of the United States Donald Trump at the NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas on September 22. More importantly, the summit also became a platform for a Rich Indian Cultural Extravaganza. The sold-out event became the largest gathering for an invited foreign leader visiting the United States other than the Pope.



Yoga Presentation during Howdy, Modi!



Mayor of Houston Sylvester Turner presenting the 'Key to Houston' to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Preceding the speeches of the two leaders, a 90-minute cultural extravaganza titled "Woven" co-produced by Mela Arts Connect with the support of the local arts community, showcased the rich diversity and culture of Indians in America.

According to Texas India Forum (TIF), the summit was organised with the support of more than 1,000 volunteers and 650 Texas-based Welcome Partner organisations. In an unprecedented manner, Prime Minister of India and the President of the United States addressed a packed NRG Stadium at 'Howdy, Modi!'



Indian Dance during Howdy, Modi!

A Hoarding in Houston, Texas, USA



Around 400 artistes performed dances and songs representing different states of India. From the well-known 'Ekla Chalo' Bengali song by Rabindranath Tagore to the Gujarati Garba and Raas to the energetic Punjabi Bhangra, 27 groups performed various dance forms in front of a cheering crowd.

A segment on yoga, a mix of Indian classical and western music, Bollywood songs, gazals and a face-off between a tap dancer and a classical Kathak dancer was presented. The packed stadium cheered and danced in ecstasy.

The cultural programme began with Gurbani hymns by a group from the Sikh community. It was followed by the 'Indian American Story', an assimilation of the second generation through dance, music, biographical clips and a multimedia show.

The Indian classical dance segment began with the art form of Mohiniattam, and it was followed by Bharatanatyam and Odissi dance performances. Towards the end, artistes from these dance forms got together and performed in unison showcasing unity and diversity of Indian classical art forms. The multimedia projections of historic temples and monuments in the background aided the dancers in establishing the cultural significance.



Many marked the summit as a defining moment in India-America ties. The attendance of both leaders symbolised an ever-strengthening partnership between the world's largest and oldest democracies, India and the United States. Over 30 elected representatives across parties, including Governors, Senators and House Representatives witnessed this historic event with the two leaders.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of United States Donald Trump

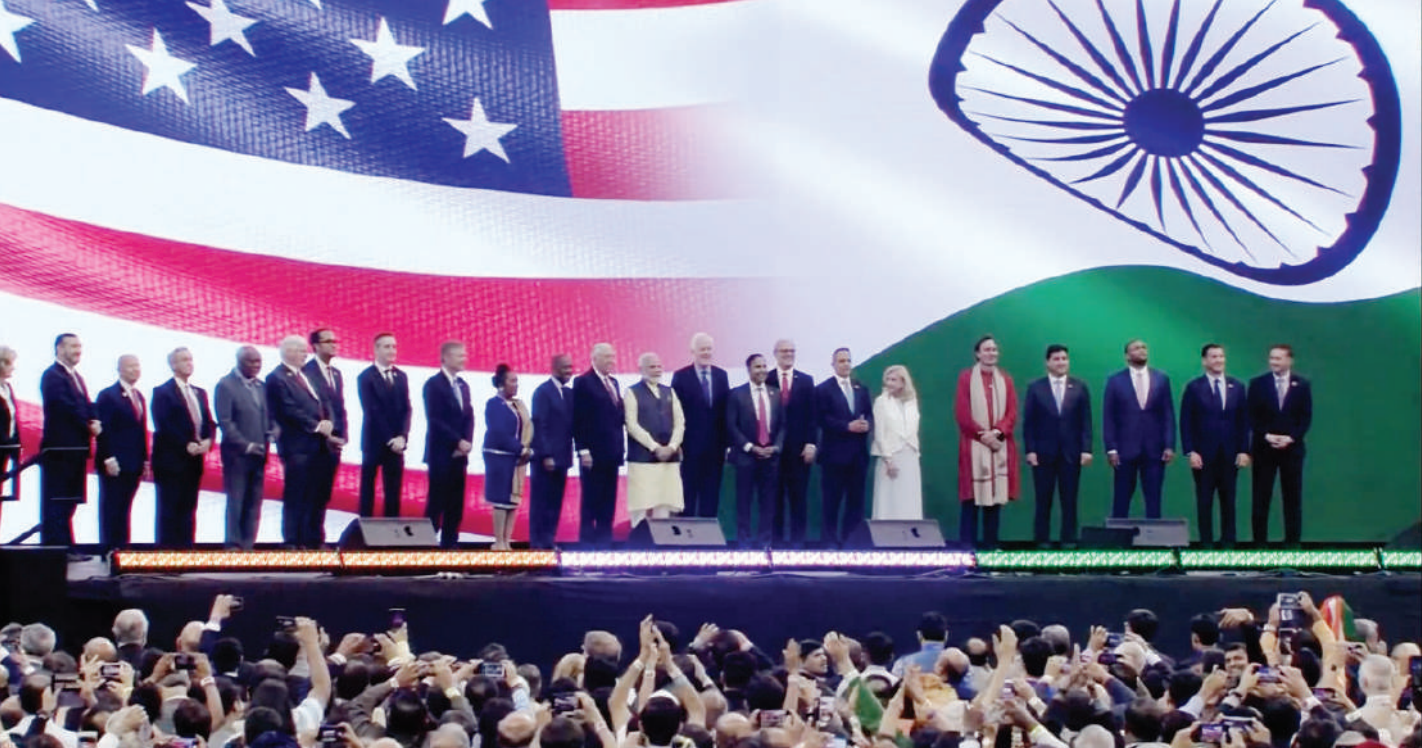


Odissi Performance

In his introduction of the President of the United States, Prime Minister Modi said,

"Mr. President this morning in Houston, you can hear the heartbeat of this great partnership in

this celebration of the world's two largest democracies. You can feel the strength and depth of human bonds between our two great nations. People are at the heart of all relationships from Houston to Hyderabad, from Boston to



Senate and Congress members from Texas during Howdy, Modi!

Bengaluru, from Chicago to Shimla, from Los Angeles to Ludhiana, from New Jersey to New Delhi." He later added, "Mr President, you had introduced me to your family in 2017 and today I have the honour to introduce you to my family, over a billion Indians and people of Indian heritage around the globe."

President Trump responded with equal enthusiasm and said, "I've come to express my profound gratitude to the nearly 4 million amazing Indian



Americans, all across our country. You enrich our culture, you uphold our values, you uplift our communities, and you are truly proud to be American. And we are proud to have you as Americans."

Republican Senators from Texas John Cornyn and Ted Cruz and Democratic House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer spoke before the President took the stage. They spoke of India's rich history, current stature on the global stage, and the contribution of Indian-Americans to the United States of America.



Indian Americans performing a Bengali Song

Welcoming Prime Minister Modi to Houston, House Majority leader Steny Honer said modern India inspired the United States. He said that Prime Minister Modi leads the nation while being mindful of the challenges, undeterred as India reaches into a new frontier of space and equally determined to lift millions out of poverty back on earth.

Earlier, Mayor of Houston Sylvester Turner



Indian Americans performing a fusion of Indian and Western Music



Indian Dance



The victory lap around the arena by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the United States Donald Trump



presented the 'Key to Houston' to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a mark of respect, solidarity and long-standing India-Houston relationship.

Prime Minister Modi began his address by saying, "The energy of NRG bears testimony to the growing synergy of India and the United



States of America". He also stressed that unity and diversity is India's heritage and is what makes it unique. "This diversity of India is the very basis of our vibrant democracy. This is our strength, and this is our inspiration. Wherever we go, we take with us the values of diversity and democracy."

PM Modi's speech highlighted a resurgent, and



A Jugalbandi between Kathak and Tap Dance artistes

## Indian Classical Dance Performance



Bharatanatyam



Bharatanatyam

confident India focused on removing barriers and uplifting the society by reaping the benefits of modern technology, strong leadership, and a fundamental commitment to democracy.

The community summit, in the end, emphasised the strong ties between the people of the United

States and India, and it reaffirmed the strategic partnership between the world's oldest and largest democracies. 'Howdy, Modi!' stands as a testament to the strong Indian-American community, which came together in Texas to produce an unprecedented community-led event.

## Indian Folk Dance



Punjabi Bhangra



Prime Minister Modi extended an invitation to President Trump and his family to visit India. "Our friendship will give new heights to the vibrant future of India and the United States," the Prime Minister said.

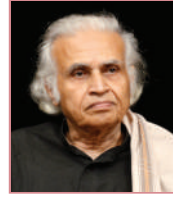
The victory lap around the arena by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the United States Donald Trump, holding hands to a standing ovation would be etched in the minds of millions of Indian Americans.



Odissi Performance



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Indian diaspora in Houston, Texas, USA



Text: Dr Sunil Kothari

## In Double Bill Series DIVYA RAVI AND ABHAYLAKSHMI SHINE

Two gifted dancers from Bangalore presented Bharatanatyam and Odissi in the novel series of Double Bill, a programme started by late chief programme officer Premola Ghose at India International Centre, New Delhi, in 2017.



Divya Ravi and Abhaylakshmi

Trained by Saundarya Srivatsa, a disciple of legendary Ramada teacher, Divya Ravi in Bharatanatyam displayed her command over nritta and abhinaya in a compact one-hour performance. Since she and Abhaylakshmi are based in Bangalore, the opening prayer in praise of Lord Ganapati and Goddess Sarswati was choreographed by two of them using Bharatanatyam and Odissi techniques. The iconic image of mushaka, the mouse as a vehicle of Ganapati as enacted by Abhaylakshmi and with an arm in the shape of trunk of an elephant by Divya was a striking image. Similarly for Sarswati, Divya playing veena and Abhaylakshmi as swan vehicle of Sarswati was also imaginatively choreographed.

Divya in Bharatanatyam suite began with Mallari, recreating the ambience of a temple, where even the fragrance of incense and flowers intoxicates senses of a devotee, the musical instruments played, the architecture, the procession, and the vision of the Lord with experience of five senses, panchendriya, using five nadais,



neat, with clear straight lines, and teermanams were faultless.

Divya was in her element enacting the Marathi abhang of Ekanath depicting five gopis looking at Krishna wearing sarees of different colours and getting attracted to him. The one wearing white saree had a face as beautiful as moonlight. Her blouse had designs of stars, and even her churning butter was white. The mugdha wore turmeric powder, and her skin was glowing. Dressed in a yellow sari, with a blouse studded with diamonds, she stood out for her beauty. One with dark skin, wearing a dark colour sari, dark blouse with chandrakala, crescent moon design, applying kajal in eyes, shone forth like Krishna. And the fifth wearing red colour sari, applying kumkum on the forehead and on the parting of the hair, eating betel leaf colouring her lips red, danced joyously. The one with green colour collected peacock feathers and decorated herself looking smilingly at Krishna.

Each one played fudadi, in the round, holding hands in a crossway, which symbolically had no beginning, no end, and prayed to Ekanath who worships Vithala. Depicting each gopi, Divya succeeded in bringing out each one's character. Even she incorporated movements of Tamasha which added beauty to her dancing. Here is a dancer worth watching.

Abhaylaskshmi has won credit for her role in Sukshma, the story of tree woman by AK Ramanujam, choreographed by Sharmishtha Mukherjee. Trained by Sharmishtha Mukherjee, a disciple of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, in Odissi, Abhaylaskshmi presented three gharanas of Odissi presenting Adi Guru Pankaj Charan Das's pallavi in Sankarabharanam raga and ektali, which indeed has a distinct flavour and choreography than the pallavis of Gurus Deba Prasad Das and Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra.

The Deba Prasad gharana was reflected in Durgacharan Ranbir's choreography of Poet Banamali's song about

Radha seeing for the first time Krishna under Kadamba tree and getting mesmerized by him. So powerful was his beauty that not a single gopi, says the poet remained pativrata, devoted to their husbands and were drawn to Krishna. Abhaylaskshmi registered the delicate bhavas of irresistible attraction for Krishna. Her abhinaya was becoming the nayika who could not get over her helplessness and continuously watching Krishna.

Kelubabu's choreography of "Sakhi He Keshi Mathanmudaram", saw Abhaylaskshmi in her bashful form, confiding to her sakhi she met Krishna for the first time and had intense love play. Krishna uttering sweet nothings undos her garment and kisses her passionately. Radha is unable to describe that experience. The divine Lord had possessed her. Kelubabu has interwoven the abhisraika nayika state when Radha leaves stealthily to meet him and on her way meets with hurdles, thorns piercing her feet, her sari getting stuck in a branch, a serpent passing across and so on and then Krishna hiding and embracing her. Depiction of Shringara in Kelubabu's choreography has an eternal appeal.

Abhaylaskshmi performed the story of Madurai Meenakshi, daughter of Pandya Raja, Malaudhwaja Rajakumari, born out of a sacrificial fire of Putrakameshti yagna, and brought up as a prince expert in warfare. When she meets Shiva, Sundareshwara, she turns into a shy woman, her third breast falls off, and she is married to Lord Shiva.

The Sanskrit text was written by Abhaylaskshmi's scholar friend and the music was composed by musicians from Odisha. Abhaylaskshmi succeeded in creating her own choreography within Odissi idiom. She deserves praise for her attempt to show three different gharanas and her own choreography in Odissi.





**Text: Kavitha Krishnamurthy**  
**Pics: Deepak**

## Nrutya Sambrama 2019

# A BEAUTIFUL EVENING of DANCE and MUSIC

On September 15, many art lovers present at the Dakshina Ayodhya temple in HBR layout got to witness a beautiful evening of dance and music. The students of Niranthara School of Dance presented Bharatanatyam and Kathak on the occasion of Nruthya Sambrama 2019.



The programme took place in the esteemed presence of Chetan Gangatkar, Chandraprabha Chetan founders of Natya Ninada Nrityalaya and Srinivasan Rajendra, artistic director of Aditya Hrudayam space for arts.

Niranthara School of Dance, founded by Somashekar Chudanath and Sowmya Somashekar, is a well-established dance school in Bangalore. Started in the year 2008, the school has been conceived to meet the highest dance training expectations of Bangalore's rapidly growing community. The couple trains students in both Bharatanatyam and Kathak dance forms. Niranthara has expanded its branches even in rural areas to encourage and motivate people to learn Indian classical dance forms.



The evening began with an auspicious gesture of lighting the lamp by chief guests and the host. The students of Niranthara started their presentation with an inaugural song, followed by a Pushpanjali, an invocatory piece in a Bharatanatyam recital. Bharatanatyam and Kathak items were presented alternatively by the students. The show ended with a Tarana, a signature piece in a Kathak repertoire. The students between the age group of 4 to 40 participated in the show. Well trained by their teachers, the students put up a great show.

Post the performances, the chief guests were invited on stage and felicitated by Sowmya Somashekar and



Somashekar Chudanath. They then shared a few words of encouragement with all the artists. The main highlight was, however, when Somashekar Chudanath mentioned that Niranthara School of Dance was going to contribute to Cauvery Calling, a mission undertaken by Isha Foundation to plant trees on the banks of the river Cauvery. One tree would be planted on behalf of each student that participated in the Nruthya Sambrama 2019, which had more than 60 students performing.

The evening ended with a small token of appreciation on behalf of Niranthara School of Dance to all the students who had participated.





Text: Nita Vidyarthi  
Pics: Sangeet Sattra

# A Captivating Offering of **SATTRIYA** **DANCES** in **GUWAHATI**

Some of the best Sattriya dancers of the present generation showcased their talents and training at the 11th Raseswar Saikia Barbayan Award Ceremony and the Annual Festival of Dance and Music 2019, organised by Sangeet Sattra, Guwahati, the premier institution of Sattriya Culture founded by the

legendary Guru and Principal Raseswar Saikia at Sri Sri Madhabdev International Auditorium, Guwahati. The recipient of this year was Bharatanatyam dancer Chitra Visweswaran and Kathak dancer Vipul Das of Assam. From this year onwards, the Tonmoyee Bordoloi Memorial Pratibha Sandhani has been introduced for younger talents.

Under the guidance of Sattriya dancers Ranjumoni and Rinjumoni Saikia, daughters of the Guru, the seniors, juniors and beginners presented impressive solos, duet, trio and group items side by side with seasoned dancers and musicians of Sattriya Culture in the three-day festival.

Concentrating on the Sattriya dance recitals, it was a real pleasure to watch three splendid solos by the immensely skilled senior dancers and also a stunning duet.

Ustad Bismillah Khan recipient Dr Meernanda Borthakur, a dentist by profession, is a Sattriya dancer of repute and a well-known name in the dance circuit. A disciple of the stalwart Guru Jatin Goswami, the 4th Devdasi National Awardee, who has performed in

Awardees Vipul Das and Chitra Visweswaran



major festivals, she is academically sound in Sattriya culture, delivering lecture-demonstrations widely. Her forte is abhinaya which was communicated with deep understanding and sensitivity in her refined ekaharya abhinaya enacting three characters in 'Usha-Chitralekha' dwelling upon Usha falling in love with



Jolymoni Saikia

Aniruddha and requesting her confident Chitrlekha to bring him to her. 'Chitrlekha Boley Sakhi Kiba Hoilo Tor' (Chitrlekha asks Usha, Sakhi what is the matter with you?) was a warm expression of concern portrayed by the dancer as Chitrlekha with a refrain of vocals by Bhupen Nath and Vishnu Sarma. The 'Usha Parinayam' episode was taken

from the Kumar Haran Kavya written by Ananta Kandali set to music by the late Murari Sharma and was the highpoint of the festival. Choreographed by the Sattriya stalwart Nrityacharya Jatin Goswami, she also displayed her grip on pure dance in a Ramdani part of Rajgarhia Chali, which has a feminine character.

Chitrlekha Gogoi Khaund was lucky to have started her training at an early age of six under the legendary Guru Late Raswswar Saikia Barbayan and continued her training under Rinjumoni Saikia. She has performed across the country and outside at major festivals, and her portrayal of both of her choreographic works was a delightful blend of pure dance form and abhinaya. Her solo began with the 'Pravesh Nach' (entry) in tala Thukani, raga Sarang followed by number 2 Rajagaria Chali in Suktala and Paritaal, proving her prowess in Nritta (pure dance). The Sri Sri Madhavdeva's Borgeet in tala Suktala 'Utho Utho Bapu Gopal Hey' was sensitive abhinaya by her displaying 'Vaatsalya Rasa'. The refined, delicate charm, as the affectionate Jashoda, waking up the little Krishna from sleep,



Chitrlekha Gogoi

brought out the lyrics of the song vividly with her spontaneous expressions of a mother.

The third solo was by petite Nrityangana title holder Jolymoni Saikia, a seasoned dancer, trained under the Sattriya Maestro Guru Raseswar Saikia Borbayan. She continued her training under Ranjumoni and Rinjumoni Saikia after the demise of her Guru. A consummate dancer, she has also been guided by the stalwart Dr Keshavananda Dev Goswami and SNA recipient Sarodi Saikia. The three-time Gold Medalist in all Assam Sattriya dance has completed her Arangetram under Padma Shri awardee Pushpa Bhuyan. Jolymoni, has performed across the globe and is the founder principal of the institution 'Sanskriti' for the upliftment of Sattriya dance and music.

She began with the invocatory Krishna Vandana and followed it up with



Ramkrishna Rumi Talukdar



Bijita Goswami Group



Sangeet Sattra intermediate group



Meernanda Borthakur

a lyrical excerpt 'Rama Krishna Mukho Thakeyo' from Sri Madhavdeva's Naam Ghosa which speaks of the glory of Lord Krishna. The Suddho (pure dance) Sutradhari Nach, based on Kou Raga proved her grip on the grammar. The abhinaya piece 'Kujir Banchapuran' was an ekapatra abhinaya of the famous story of the fulfilment of Kubja's wish. Beginning on the lines of an Ankiyo Bhaona with the chanting of 'Nirantar Hari Bolo' and 'Bandey Nityang Krishnang' the mellifluous music by Arunjyoti and Pragma Pal

was perfect support of Jolymoni's sophisticated choreography and imagery that left the audience spellbound.

SNA recipient senior dancer Ramkrishna Talukdar's focused vision and commitment have earned him recognition as well as a long career in dance. He presented two stunning duets with Rumi Talukdar, beginning with the invocatory 'Vishnu Bandana' in which his sculpturesque 'Ananthasayanam' pose with



Demonstrating Mati Akhara juniors



Rumi as Lakshmi offering 'Pada Seva' was etched in the minds of the audience. With stretched leg extensions, elevations, jumps, sitting positions and masculine movements the episode of 'Jatayu Moksham' from the Ramayana saw him with the features of the epic weaved with incredible abhinaya and balanced with vigorous dancing as the mighty Ravana, keeping within the limits of Sattriya movements and its notable characteristics. There were no excesses in theatricality, and neither did it touch the domain of Ankiya Bhaona but impressed the audience with an excellent command of tala, and laya. Rumi kept herself in perfect sync with Ramkrishna with her solid training, grace and aesthetic appeal. A rewarding experience indeed by the immensely skilled dancers.

The trio Juri Das, Elizi Ojah and Sukanya Deka began the Sattriya dance recitals with a part of 'Namghosa' set to raga Pahadi. A well-coordinated lasya-based graceful Gopi Nach, in Raga Pahadi and Ektali, set to Saint Madhavadeva's famous Borgeet 'Kamal Nayan Aaj Pekhalu Maayee' (seen the lotus-eyed Mother) was impressive, and they concluded with Kharman. Their teamwork, training and the imaginative choreographic formations were praiseworthy.

Among the group items, Bijita Goswami, another very

skilled and involved dancer, drew the attention of the viewers with her group in the item 'Krishna' with the famous soul-stirring Nandi sloka 'Yet Pada Pankaja' from Rukhmini Haran. The number 1 Ramdani of the Rajagharia Chali showed technical skill in the pure dance and an exquisite sense of negotiating the stage space with grace.

Every evening of the festival concluded with several Sattriya group items by the students of Sangeet Sattrā. The whole spectrum of training of pure dance, basic exercises and also some unique compositions made available to the viewers by beginners, young learners, intermediate, junior dancers and moderately mature ones of the institution, helped the lay audience to get an overall view of the dance form. A soul-stirring prayer 'Muktit Nispriya Jeetu Se Hee Bhakatak Namoh' penned by Saint Madhavdev is embedded in the psyche of each Assamese and was meaningfully choreographed and performed by the children. It was a beautiful gesture to acquaint the non-Assamese viewers with this essential item.

The discipline of the large groups of dancers spoke of the rigorous training and the excellent steering of the trainees by the dedicated teachers. The integrity of Ranjumoni and Rinjumoni Saikia's leadership with the qualified faculty members must be lauded.



Sangeet sattrā juniors



Text and Pics: Paul Nicodemus

## Vysakhi Nrithyotsav 2019 A GRAND CELEBRATION OF INDIAN DANCE

The 12th Edition of Vysakhi Nrithyotsav showcased Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Mohini Attam, Kathak and Thang-Ta art forms.

Audiences were treated to some artistic bliss as Indian dance ascended to new heights at the prestigious Vysakhi Nrithyotsav 2019. The 12th All India Dance Festival organised under the aegis of Nataraj Music and Dance Academy (NMDA), Visakhapatnam, enthralled Indian dance aficionados at Kalabharathi Auditorium in Visakhapatnam on September 21, 22 and 23. In a grand ceremony, the 12th edition of Vysakhi Nrithyotsav was inaugurated by guests MVV Satyanarayana, Member of Lok Sabha, Vadarevu Vinay Chand, IAS, district collector of Visakhapatnam, and Sudagani Ravi Shankar Narayan, IRS, additional commissioner of



Padma Bhushan awardee Dr Kanak Rele

income tax. The festival was organised with the support of the ministry of culture, Andhra Pradesh Creativity and Culture Commission and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). The three-day extravaganza held under the supervision of BR Vikram Kumar, festival director, founder president of NMDA and editor of The Dance India, witnessed scintillating Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Mohini Attam, Kathak and Thang-Ta presentations.



Geeta Narayan



Naresh Penumaka, IRS, chief commissioner of customs and Central Tax addressing the gathering.

Guests honoured Padma Shri recipient Kumkum Mohanty, Odissi exponent from Bhubaneswar with Vysakhi Lifetime Achievement Award; Sudagani Geeta Narayan, Kuchipudi artiste from Visakhapatnam with Vysakhi Navarasa Natya Ranjani Award; Sutapa Awon Pradhan, Bharatanatyam artiste from West Bengal with Vysakhi Natyasri Award, and M Gopal, festival director from Karnataka with Vysakhi Excellence Award for Dance Promotion.

Padma Shri recipient Kumkum Mohanty, an Odissi exponent, retired civil servant and professor at IIT Bhubaneswar, presented a beautiful



Tejasri and Sujana

Odissi dance along with her eight disciples from Geeta Govinda Charitable Trust, which she founded. Beginning with 'Mangalacharan', their dance performance showcased Batu Nritya, Plavi, Abhinaya and Moksha Odissi pieces with subtle dynamism. As the group performance set the mood for the evening, Kumkum took everybody by surprise with her age-defying performance. The presentation, which lasted for about 45 minutes, received a massive round of applause from the gathering. As a second performance, Kuchipudi artiste Sudagani Geeta Narayan, trained under Naatyasri KV Lakshmi, principal and secretary of Nataraj Music and Dance Academy, displayed aesthetics nuances of Kuchipudi dance with finesse. Geeta Narayan started her performance with a pure dance piece, Bhujangaraya Sharma's work 'Anandatanavam', choreographed by master Vempati Chinna and composed



**Padma Shri awardee Kumkum Mohanty**

by Sangeeta Rao. Her second presentation was an Annamacharya Kriti, 'Satyabhama Sarasapu Nagavu'. Goddess Lakshmi's caressing of tired Lord Vishnu in Kurmavataara after Kshirasagara Madanam was beautifully choreographed by KV Lakshmi and presented equally well by Geeta Narayan. Both these pieces illustrated the artiste's expressive skills and received appreciation from the audience.

Rabindranath Tagore's 'Chandalika' written in 1938 on the caste system that has been plaguing Indian society for generations, proved to be still relevant. The visual poetic work 'Prakriti Chandalika' dance drama was presented by Nrityalok, a socio-cultural institution dedicated to dance from West Bengal under the direction of Sutapa Awaon Pradhan. The 45-minute ballet took



**A scene from Bhageeratha Vilasam**



Gauri Dwivedi

the audience on a thought-provoking and entertaining journey. The story was centred on Prakriti (Chandalika), a low caste girl who was despised by her neighbours. In a society where everyone considers themselves as untouchable, the voice of a Buddhist monk asking her to quench his thirst was the epitome of conversation. It was an amalgamation of various classical and traditional dance forms of India including Bharatanatyam, Rabindra Nritya and Baul. Madhurima Das as Chandalika, Sutapa Awon Pradhan as Chandalika's



A scene from Bhageeratha Vilasam

### Students of Ratheesh Babu



mother, and Jith Mondal as Buddhist Bikkhu (Ananda) were brilliant.

On the second day, Padma Bhushan awardee Dr Kanak Rele received the Vysakhi Lifetime Achievement Award. Guests D Sathyanarayana Raju, IRS, additional commissioner of income tax, and O Naresh Kumar, CEO of Symbiosis Technologies, and chief patron of Vysakhi Nrithyotsav opened the proceedings by lighting the traditional lamp. Later in the evening, they presented Dr Kanak Rele with the 'Vysakhi Lifetime Achievement Award' for her contribution to the art form of Mohini Attam.

Dr Kanak Rele, Mohini Attam exponent, author and educationalist with her Mohini Attam, Gauri Dwivedi from New Delhi with her Odissi, and Dr Ratheesh Babu and group from Chhattisgarh with their Bharatanatyam mesmerised the gathering with their soulful performances.

### Dr Ratheesh Babu





Dr Kanak Rele sat on the edge of a raised platform and began her presentation with an introduction and lecture-demonstration about Mohini Attam. She later performed 'Kubja', one of her favourite pieces. She charmed the audience with her abhinaya.

The eight-member troupe of Dr Ratheesh Babu from Chhattisgarh captivated everyone with their Bharatanatyam recital. The piece, 'Pibare Rama Rasam' in raga Bhairavi and tala Adi, emphatically captured the transformation of thief

Ratnakara to sage Valmiki upon meeting Narada. As a second item, the troupe presented 'Sapta Tandava Malika' of Lord Siva. It was a spirited performance set in Ragamalika and Talamalika. Gauri Dwivedi began her Odissi performance with Devi Stuti, 'Dhyaye Suvarna Varna' choreographed by Guru Gangadhar Pradhan. She later presented a pure dance piece 'Hamsadhvani', choreographed by Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. It began with Vilambit and concluded with Dhruv taal transcending the viewers into a different realm. With her perfect Odissi postures resembling the sculpture at Konark, she enchanted the gathering.

The chief guest for the day, Naresh Penumaka, IRS, chief commissioner of customs and Central Tax, and Guests of Honour Dr Ajit Pathak, national president of Public Relations Society of India, and D Satyanarayana Raju, IRS, additional commissioner of income tax, kick-started the third day with a lamp lighting ceremony. The guests honoured Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee Guru Jitendra Maharaj, Kathak exponent from New Delhi with the 'Vysakhi Lifetime Achievement Award' and Kathak duo Nalini Kamalini from New Delhi with the 'Vysakhi Outstanding Service to Dance Awards'. Kuchipudi guru Naatyasri KV Lakshmi from Visakhapatnam received the



Nalini and Kamalini sister-duo



Aruna, Sujana and Tejasri

'Vysakhi Natya Shiromani Award', and Thang-Ta artiste Rosen Longjamba received the 'Vysakhi Natyasri Award'.



Students of NMDA

The programmes began with a spectacular Kathak presentation by renowned Kathak duo Nalini and Kamalini, disciples of Kathak maestro, Guru Jitendra Maharaj of Varanasi Gharana. Kamalini is the chairperson of Kathak Kendra, New Delhi and Nalini is the director of Sangeetka Institute of Performing Arts, New Delhi. Both the sisters were recipients of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. The first presentation, 'Mahadeva Stuti', a traditional Dhrupad piece glorified Mahadev. They depicted omnipotence and divinity through Kavit and Shlokas set to raga Shankara and Bhoopali, and Bandish was set to raga Malkauns. 'Yugal Nritya' was a harmonised presentation competing through skilful choreography, subtle movements, thrilling and



Madhurima Das and Sutapa Awon Pradhān

Thang Ta performers from JNMDA, Manipur



Thang Ta performers from JNMDA, Manipur

breath-taking footwork. They set it to raga Durga and Jhaptal. The duo then performed a 'Thumri' depicting expressions and emotions of Nayak and Nayika. 'Padasanyojan' was the equation of foot expression with the jingling of ankle bells. They set it to raga Kalavati and Teen-tal in Drut Laya. The sisters possessed rare artistic qualities of natural expression, grace, sweetness, clarity and perfection. Towards the end of their presentation, the duo interacted with the audience through their dance and the entire auditorium clapped to their footwork.

Rosen Longjamba, who works as a guru of Thang-Ta at Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy in

Nrityalok





A scene from Prokriti Chandalika by Nrityalok



Dr Ratheesh Babu and troupe with guests

Imphal, presented a breath-taking traditional Manipuri Thang-Ta (Martial Art). Thang-Ta, one of the martial art forms, was developed to defend themselves from the hostile neighbouring countries. 'Thang' means Sword and 'Ta' means spear. Watching this north-eastern art form was a first for most of the attendees.

Bhageeratha Vilasam, a Kuchipudi dance ballet depicting the story of Bhageeratha bringing goddess Ganga to the earth was brilliantly presented by the students of Nataraj Music and Dance Academy under the guidance and choreography of Naatyasri KV Lakshmi. Every artiste in the ballet got into the character and portrayed it to perfection. Shreya as Bhageeratha; Sujana Kalakota as Shiva; Tejasri Bathina as Parvathi; Aruna as Ganga; Archana, Sanjana, Amritha, Bhavya and Cheyana as classical dancers; Archana, Amritha and Himagna as folk dancers, did a commendable job.

Compère Dr Perala Balamurali Krishna's informative narrative further enhanced the presentations. International lighting designer Sai Venkatesh from Bangalore weaved his magic with lights. Vysakhi Nrithyotsav 2019, has once again demonstrated the unique and rich cultural heritage of India. People will remember the grand festival for a long time.



On behalf of PRSI, Ajit Pathak, national president of PRSI and US Sharma, vice-president of PRSI South, felicitating BR Vikram Kumar, festival director of Vysakhi Nrithyotsav, founder of Nataraj Music and Dance Academy and editor of The Dance India for his contribution to Indian art and culture.

# VYSAKHI AWARDS - 2019



**Padma Shri recipient  
Kumkum Mohanty with  
Vysakhi Lifetime  
Achievement Award**



**Padma Bhushan awardee  
Dr Kanak Rele with Vysakhi  
Lifetime Achievement  
Award**



**Guru Jitendra Maharaj with  
'Vysakhi Lifetime  
Achievement Award' and  
Kathak duo Nalini Kamalini  
with 'Vysakhi Outstanding  
Service to Dance Awards'**



Naatyasri KV Lakshmi with 'Vysakhi Natya Shiromani Award'



Sudagani Geeta Narayan with Vysakhi Navarasa Natya Ranjani Award



M Gopal with Vysakhi Excellence Award for Dance Promotion



Sutapa Awon Pradhan with Vysakhi Natyasri Award



Thang-Ta artiste Rosen Longjamba with 'Vysakhi Natyasri Award'



Dr Ratheesh Babu with Vysakhi Natyasri Award



Gauri Dwivedi with Vysakhi Natyasri Award



Nrityalok Troupe with Vysakhi Certificates

# Andhra Pradesh Tourism State Annual Tourism Excellence Awards 2019

**A**ndhra Pradesh Tourism Authority, Government of Andhra Pradesh, has been presenting 'State Annual Tourism Excellence Awards' to various segments of the travel and tourism industry every year. These awards are given to classified hotels, heritage hotels, approved travel agents, tour operators, individuals and other private organisations in recognition of their performance in their respective fields and also to encourage healthy competition with an aim to promoting tourism at state as well as district level.

This year, the World Tourism Day was celebrated in all the District Headquarters by the district collectors, and the state event was conducted at Tummalapalli Kalakshetram, Vijayawada on September 28. On the occasion, 'State Annual Tourism Excellence Awards' were presented. The state celebrations were graced by Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, minister for tourism, culture & youth advancement, Vellampalli Srinivas, minister for endowments, Malladi Vishnu Vardhan, MLA Vijayawada Central and Boppana Bhava Kumar. The event was presided over by Pravin Kumar, IAS, chief executive officer-APTA & BITC and managing director-APTDC.

## LIST OF AWARDEES



Best Hotel / Classified Hotel (5\* Deluxe) -  
M/s Novotel, Visakhapatnam



Best Hotel / Classified Hotel (5\*) - M/s Gateway,  
Vijayawada



Best Hotel / Classified Hotel (4\*) - M/s Palm Beach  
Hotel & Resort, Visakhapatnam



Best Hotel / Classified Hotel (3\*) -  
M/s Hotel Bliss, Tirupati



Best Budget Hotel - M/s Minerva Grand, Tirupati



Best Wayside Amenity - M/s Garuda Food Courts, West Godavari



Best Haritha Hotel - M/s Haritha Hill Resorts, Horsley Hills, Chittoor



Best Eco-friendly Hotel - M/s Palavelli Resorts, Palakollu, West Godavari



Best Hotel Based Meeting Venue - M/s Novotel, Vijayawada



Best Theme Based Resort - M/s Sunray Village Resort, Vizianagaram



Best Restaurant in Hotel - Kava Grills, Fairfield Marriott, Visakhapatnam



Best Stand-alone Restaurant - Oriental Pavilion, Vijayawada



**Best Chef - Sri Rupeswar Rao, Fairfield Marriott, Visakhapatnam**



**Best Chef (Andhra Cuisine) - Santosh Kumar, Fairfield Marriott, Visakhapatnam**



**Best Rural Tourism Project - M/s Palavelli Resorts, Palakollu, West Godavari**



**Best Unique Tourism Project - Dhyana Buddha Project - Amaravati**



**Most Eco-friendly Tourism Project - Chilukuri Sreenivasa Rao, Kadiyam**



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Best Tourist Guide - B Srinivasa Rao, APTDC, CRO  
Office, Visakhapatnam



Best Film on A.P. Tourism - M/s TV2RISM,  
Visakhapatnam



Best Tourism Promotion Collateral Publicity Material  
- Sivanarayana Reddy, Kakinada



Best Journalist Award (Telugu) - P Pavan Kumar, APHB Colony, Kadapa



Most Innovative use of Information Technology / Best Tourism Website / Portal promoting A.P. - M/s DSA Media Publications-YO! Vizag



Tourism Promotion through Andhra Pradesh Art & Culture - V Chinna Kullayappa, Nimmalakunta, Ananthapuramu (Leather Puppet show)




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# 'ABHINAYA' and 'ANGASHUDDHI'

**P**arinithi Kalakendra (R), Sagar under the supervision of its founder Vid M Gopal organised 'Kalamaasika', its monthly festival of music and dance at Shivamaya Sabhabhavan, Sagar on September 15. Eminent personalities from Sagar, I.V. Hegde and Adheshava, graced the occasion as guests.

Sindhu S from Bangalore performed a Bharatanatyam recital with utmost grace. She started her concert with a beautiful Ganesha Kriti and presented it to perfection. The performance highlighted her prowess in both 'abhinaya' and 'angashuddhi'. As a second piece, she performed beautiful 'Devaranama' and followed it up with 'Sivapadam'. She concluded her performance with a 'Thillana'.

Sindhu dedicated her childhood to cultural activities as she was told classical art forms improve knowledge and memory power and bring respect in society. Her presentation gave an insight into the bright future that awaits her. Towards the end, she expressed her happiness in being a Bharatanatyam dancer.



Sindhu S



THE  
DANCE  
INDIA

# VEDIKA @ ANDHERI



Samidha Shinde

**V**edika' means full of knowledge. To spread this knowledge, we started our monthly programme, and this programme tree has been growing daily. Many young artistes are blooming like flowers on this tree. It boosted the confidence of art students, and they are exhibiting their talent - a fruit of this tree. Many new ideas have been proposed, so this month we decided to pick a topic taught by very few gurus of Bharatanatyam. We introduced 'Techniques of Writing Bharatanatyam Item as per Tala'.



Many gurus suggested this topic when I wrote my Bharatanatyam items or adavu. After going through my collection, my students liked it, and they wanted me to undertake this workshop.

On September 15, we conducted this monthly programme. We began with a sign for different Bharatanatyam terms and movements like hand movement, padaprachar and mandalas. We even gave a few short forms for various actions. Students were taught to apply this sign while writing adavus. We have shown a variation of Bolas or Shollus for adavu with Jati explanation.

While doing my Bharatanatyam training under Dr Sandhya Purecha, I learned this technique of writing items which has been helpful to me. Thanks to Sandhya Tai and Guru Parvati Kumar for opening this treasure for all dance students. It helped me remember items during my MFA.



While delivering this workshop, I realised that this knowledge would make 'Tala' calculation perfect for students. Students enjoyed learning, and we started creating new symbols for fast writing. When I choreograph items for my students taking part in national and international festivals, this helps me in perfecting their steps.

All students enjoyed composing Jati and tried different formations. Due to the limitation of time and the vastness of the subject, all topics could not be covered, and students have requested for another workshop. We decided to continue this process every month by clearing their doubts and introducing new topics. We included many things like writing the type of item as per dance adavus, musical notations and aakruti (drawing figures). Students from my branches and students of other gurus attended the workshop. I realised that many students are working hard towards dance education.

Samidha Shinde





**THE DANCE INDIA**  
**VEDIKA**  
**@ NAVI**  
**MUMBAI**

**KV Rajan**

**V**edika, The Dance India's monthly programme, in collaboration with Meenakshi Nritya Vidyalaya supported by KV Rajan took place at Sushma Patil Vidyalaya and Junior College, Panvel, Navi Mumbai on September 25.



The evening began with a performance by Shruti Amit Raja, founder of Shruti Nrityalaya. She started her recital with Pushpanjali set in raga Vasantha and tala Adi, composed and choreographed by Guru Dr Parimal Phadke. This Kritis was followed by Devi Shabdham composed by Madhurai N Krishnan. Shruti concluded her performance with the traditional Thillana in raga Bageshri and tala Adi.

The uniqueness of her Guru's choreography included some Karnas - 'Swastikarechitam', 'Katichinnam', 'Vaksaswastikam', and the audience was in rapturous praise. The dancer's ability to convey the essence of the dance through her expressions and moves stood as a highlight.

Since last one year, we have seen many Indian Classical dance styles performed in Vedika, but this month's programme witnessed the beautiful presentation of folk dance by the disciples of Guru Swadesh Varankar, founder of Swady Dance Academy (Navi Mumbai). They performed two styles of folk dance - Kupari and Ghusadi.

Kupari dance was performed at Samavedi Christian Community in Vasai taluka, Maharashtra, as entertainment at the wedding ceremony and in Kupri



Mohastov in the month of December, while Ghusadi is performed in the Pawara Society of Dhule, Nandurbar district, Maharashtra. People of this society gather on the occasion of Holi, and the men and women dance with peacock feathers on the head and ash on the whole body. Both the folk dances were a delight to watch and something different the audience have experienced. Students who performed folk dance were Shweta Jadhav, Tanisha Kolaskar, Kimaya Parkar, Prachi Naik, Shweta Kumari and Ritu Anil. The programme concluded with the felicitation of the participants by giving certificates.

**- Madhura Pawaskar**





**Shamal Pawar**

**T**he Dance India, in collaboration with Atharva School of Fine Arts, in its monthly programme, Vedika, presented Sujatha Ramanathan, a disciple of Guru Lata Raman. Over the years, Vedika has become an excellent platform for young Indian dancers and musicians to showcase their talent and senior artistes to share their knowledge.

Sujatha, a Chartered Accountant by profession, has been working in the corporate banking sector for 20 years. She currently heads her own Technology Business besides, continuing her passion for Bharatanatyam. The gathered enthusiasts got a chance to witness a delightful presentation of traditional Bharatanatyam Margam. Sujatha gave a poised performance. At a stretch, she performed Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Kautvam, Shabdham, Shiva Stuti and Tillana. Shamal Pawar, the founder of Atharva School of Fine Arts, supported the monthly programme.

**- Shamal Pawar**



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## KATHAK



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

The magazine is an umbrella for various art forms in the fields of dance, music, literature and theatre that have existed for thousands of years. It also highlights the struggles and success of artistes across the globe. Like the 'mudras' in all dance forms, we have through our articles tried to express the importance and significance of art as well as to entertain.

It is our honour to document lives and times of dancers, musicians, authors, various artistes and critics who have made art popular. We salute their efforts and endeavour to pass it on to the next generation.

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