Nartanam
Festival
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Experiencing and exploring dance through dancers, scholars, spectators and patrons to evoke intrinsic value & aesthetic pleasure. A journey to deeper aspects of dance through baithaks, seminars, lectures, choreography, traditional theatre and films.

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Nartanam, founded by Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai, now owned and published by Sahrdaya Arts Trust, Hyderabad, is a quarterly which provides a forum for scholarly dialogue on a broad range of topics concerning Indian dance. Its concerns are theoretical as well as performative. Textual studies, dance criticism, intellectual and interpretative history of Indian dance traditions are its focus. It publishes performance reviews and covers all major events in the field of dance in India and notes and comments on dance studies and performances abroad.

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A Buddhist Monk, dancing

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Publishers, Nartanam
EDITORIAL

In 1981 a German language film titled “Mephisto” was produced in Hungary. The film was based on a novel written by Klaus Mann and was directed by Istvan Szabo. It’s the story of a German stage actor Hendrik Hoefgen who rises to great heights with his performance as Mephisto in the stage adaptation of Goethe’s *Faust*. Hoefgen conveniently adapts his ideals to the requirements of the new ruling regime. Thus, he attains greater heights in his career. He distances himself from his near and dear. By the time he realises his mistake it is too late. The genius Istvan Szabo universalizes this theme in the film. Hoefgen could be in any country, he could be any artist, intellectual, writer or filmmaker. Artists do sometimes become sycophants of ruling regimes, compromise with their art for small or big favours and short time gains, losing sight of the bigger picture of the ART itself.

In the first quarter of 2017, I witnessed two well-known Kuchipudi dancers/gurus of Hyderabad present very inane productions – *Rudrama Devi* and *Kakatiyam*. The Kakatiya/Telangana horse cannot be flogged so often, so blatantly, and above all, with such mediocrity. The spectator manages to put up with it in silence while the critic does not dare/care to touch the holy cows.

To be fair to the government of the new state, Telangana, it is doing its best to make Hyderabad a vibrant city for arts and culture. It is the artists who have to live up to their art and its stature. It would not be out of context here to inform our readers of the success of our issue on Dances of Telangana which has been widely appreciated as was our special on the Folk Dances of Odisha earlier. We are happy to announce that our issue on Folk Dances of Assam is ready to be published.

I also happened to watch the octogenarian Kalamandalam Gopi perform *Rukmangadacharitam* in Thrissur. He has been performing the role of Rukmangada for decades. I wonder why the “so called” research, innovation and experimentation bug never bites such stalwarts and the spectators watch spellbound the same characters any number of times and crave for more of the same fare? A performance is ephemeral. Classical dance/theatre is a finely layered narrative which becomes a new performance/experience for the *Sahrdaya* (a cultured spectator – “one with the same heart” as the poet or the artist) every time a great maestro interprets the role/story. Perhaps, there lies the maestro’s innovation, genius, and research into his own soul and the universal truths through decades of performance of his art.
Dance is one of the art forms, which is caricatured the most. We display dancers at parades, showcase them at all kinds of seminars, dinners, inaugurations of government schemes/projects, make world records with thousands of them dancing, use them for tourism, show them off out of context in films and commercial advertisements and then speak of the divinity of dance. We see the culture departments/institutions across the country teeming with hapless dancers and sycophants jostling for the attention of the bureaucrats. How on earth can these artistes pursue their art in the pristine purity of their thoughts and being? They need to do their PR elbowing the others for their space under the sky.

It is interesting to note that there are a variety of short cuts to becoming a celebrated dancer, a scholar, a PhD and even a prestigious awardee. Not all resort to shortcuts. However, lobbying is not unknown to the arts. “Sadhana”, “Tapasya” “Nishkama Karma” which were entrenched in our psyche since centuries are the terms which are used profusely but are sniggered at secretly. Where is the idealism and strength of our ideology?

A recent international dance festival had the compere wrongly announcing a popular sloka from the *Abhinaya Darpana* as from the *Natyasastra*. A search on Google reveals that the sloka is wrongly attributed to *Natyasastra* in many dance websites!

A director of a zonal cultural centre was very confused and wanted to know how Kuchipudi was different from Bharatanatyam. He asked me to clarify. My immediate reaction was either he was joking or he was a painfully ignorant official. However, on close examination, one realises that the technique of Kuchipudi is frittering away and if it continues to lack a standard technique, pedagogy and repertoire and if its Yakshaganas are not revived and widely taught and presented through a repertory, Kuchipudi is in trouble. No matter how many thousands of mediocre dancers dance under the banner of Silicon Andhra to set a world record. The goddess Balatripurasundari in Kuchipudi village is sure to note the happenings around her. I would definitely not want to incur her wrath for not safeguarding the treasure blessed by her.

We witness again a classical case in Kuchipudi Natyaramam, where the Andhra Pradesh government does everything to support Kuchipudi; while the vision, the knowledge of the subject, and the intent of the official heading the Natyaramam is unclear. Bringing tourists to a ghost village where Kuchipudi is history will not revive it. Descending with brooms to clean the roads for a photo-op is very well but will not revive Kuchipudi. Anand Kuchibhotla who heads the Kuchipudi Natyaramam will have to pull out new tricks from his bag. Glib talk will not deliver
results. He will have to think better than spending lakhs on the wasteful Kuchipudi Circus of world records and the government would do better to see through such shallow efforts. Above all, the dancers and gurus need to shed their herd mentality and stop flocking to the glitz and sham of commodifying pristine art.

The following couplet of Ghalib expresses our lament ever so beautifully:

"Bas ki dushwaar hai har kaam ka aasaan hona
aadmee ko bhee muyassar naheen    insaan hona"

“We live in an age where everything seems such a task,
One cannot even afford to be human these days.”

The sacred Buddhist dances of Bhutan form the cover feature of this issue of Nartanam. A country where the happiness of the people is an important indicator of how well the country is doing ought to be certainly UTOPIA. While I could not get to the bottom of how they calculate the Happiness Index, I have definitely found the land to be beautiful with good natured and happy looking people. We have attempted to chronicle the dances witnessed at the Thimphu Tshechu, one of the many important festivals of Bhutan.

We are happy to announce our forthcoming issue on "Dance for Camera" featuring the inaugural Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) International Television dance festival, which took place in Hyderabad. The concert was broadcast across many countries through Television. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Fiji, Indonesia, India, Maldives, Malaysia, Philippines, and Uzbekistan participated in the event. This festival offered Nartanam the scope to focus on the concept of dancing for the camera, which is still at a very nascent stage in India. We have put together articles on the subject which throw light on the relatively unexplored discipline of choreographing and presenting dance for the camera.

With deep regret we bid adieu to a beloved teacher and scholar, Vakulabharanam Lalitha, who inspired scores of students including me, to pursue Ethnography as a field of study at the University of Hyderabad. She wrote the opening piece of Nartanam's special issue on Dances of Telangana. She would greet me with her charming smile and enthusiasm, despite severe illness, and delve into her old notes, papers and books groaning in pain, as we worked on the final draft of her article. We salute her commitment to academics.

We also bid adieu to Ranjana Jhaveri, one of the four sisters who formed the famous quartet of Manipuri dancers and charmed audiences for decades.

Madhavi Puranam
Letters to the Editor

The latest issue of *Nartanam* on Dances of Telangana fills the eye and thrills the mind. How wonderful it would be if the Government took up the task of parading this treasure all over the country!

Classical dances in which science and art predominate, stimulate the mind. Folk dances, with their spontaneous vigour and touch with life, inspire and elate. To appreciate the first, some knowledge is necessary on part of the audience. To enjoy the second, just our presence is enough for a thorough rejuvenation.

Thank you. May Krishna bless you!

V A K Ranga Rao

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Alluring!

“Many things catch your eye, but we pursue only those that capture the heart!”. Born and brought up in Saudi Arabia, I chose India for higher education. I was utterly nescient about the assorted and distinctive art forms and culture of this country. Earlier, my conjecture of the Indian culture was from what I heard from people circumjacent to me. But, confronting personally, the different elegant art forms of India I was absolutely astonished! The exquisite dance forms and music that delineates the manifold cultures of India simply widen the mind and the spirit.

I believe, a nation’s culture resides in the heart and in the soul of its people. These varied cultures that are depicted in various dance forms like Manipuri, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam and many others is where beauty lies. Indian art of dance has been elaborated in the atavistic books of *Natyashastra* and *Abhinaya Darpana* centuries ago.

Indian dance is an effort to create, beside the real world, a more humane world. Passion for their work is the basic ingredient of these artists. The divine in man and the expressions of inner beauty are drawn out. This art is deliberate, which communicates ideas and emotions through facial expressions and gestures. It is merely not just what you see, but what you make others to see!

Zainab Minhaj
1st year student, B.A (International Journalism)
M.G.M College, Aurangabad
(Post a lecture by Editor, *Nartanam* at the College of Journalism)
The release took place on 13 January 2017 at Rock Heights, Shilparamam, Hyderabad, on the eve of the dinner hosted by the Telangana government for the delegates of the countries participating in the inaugural edition of Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) International Television dance festival which was held on 15 January 2017 at Shilpakalavedika, Hyderabad.
Sacred Dance and Buddhism:
The Thimphu Tshechu

MADHAVI PURANAM

A recent visit to Bhutan took me to its capital Thimphu, to the Punakha Dzong, it’s ancient capital, and to Paro. I undertook an arduous three-hour trek all the way up to the Taktshang, the Tiger’s lair, which clings to a rock towering over 800 meters above the valley. Wherever one goes, the embrace of nature, the pristine beauty of the land, the simplicity of the people and their immense faith in goodness and prayer makes Bhutan beautiful. A carbon negative country, predominantly Buddhist, Bhutan eschews a responsibility to its land and people. I got to witness the Thimphu Tshechu in the land of the Thunder Dragon, where happiness has a place on the national agenda, and which proclaims that Happiness is a PLACE. It would not be clichéd to say that the ritual dances at the Thimphu Tshechu offered solace, which might be described as the peace one often craves for in a busy life.

Sacred dances of religious and magical content and intent have been as old as human civilization. Till today, they are means of worship, supplication of superior forces of nature, and appeasement of the gods and demons alike. Sacred dances are rituals, which are considered powerful enough to banish maleficent powers. Dance has been considered for ages as a gift to god and also as a gift from god. While dance has evolved into spectacle, entertainment, and art, its religious and magical content and intent have remained fixed and indelible in most cultures.

Bhutan is rich with many dance traditions performed for a variety of purposes, with specific meaning to different regions and ethnic groups. This article will discuss the sacred Buddhist dances of Bhutan, which are believed to have been
The flower needs its roots to continue to grow

VIRGINIE JOHAN

In 1999, I attended a performance in a kuttampalam for the first time: “Bali’s Death” (based on the first act of Bhasa’s Abhisekanatakam), on the day dedicated to the beginning of knowledge (vidyarambham) in the Vadakkunathan temple of Trichur. Ten years later, I witnessed the same Kutiyattam in this temple, where five traditional acts (among which “The Bali’s Death”) are performed successively according to a five-year cycle. Nothing, or almost nothing, had changed. In the close atmosphere of the temple-theater, under the late monsoon rain, the same day, at the same hour (during the last puja, before the closing of the sanctuary’s doors), the artists were quietly getting ready – all Chakyars, Nampyars and Nangyars, being the only ones allowed to perform on this stage. Over five nights, the performance (including the entry and retrospection of Shri Raman, entry and retrospection of Sugriva, and finally Kutiyattam) led the few spectators through the maze-like narrative dramaturgy of which Kutiyattam holds the secret, through the magic of substitution acting (pakarnattam), where each actor assumes multiple roles, and ending with the final rasa, karuna, communicated by the master Ammanur Kuttan Chakyar embodying the monkey-king Bali, who slowly agonizes at the end of the act. Both years, the spectators (numbering seven in 1999 and ten in 2009 on the last day, and far fewer the previous days) prostrated themselves at the end of the performance, which is always a ritual act – even if it is not only that.¹ According to the temple performers, the UNESCO declaration “had not changed anything” for the temple performances. Organized by the temple

VIRGINIE JOHAN (Paris), Rama Chakyar’s student, published about twenty articles on Kutiyattam and dedicated her Ph.D. to this art: From the person to the persona: an anthropological approach to Kutiyattam as epic theatre (2014, New-Sorbonne, 1644 pages, 3 DVD, in French). She works as a lecturer on Asian theatres and Anthropology (Institute of Political Sciences, and University Paris-8). A first version of this paper was published in Indian Folklife 38 (2011: “Kutiyattam, ten years after the UNESCO Declaration”).
This paper was sought for the special issue of Nartanam on “50 years of Kutiyattam”- Vol XVI no.3, July- September 2016. We missed publishing this important paper in the issue.- Ed
A comparative study of the ‘Padakuttana’ or ‘Adavu’ groups of Sangita Saramrta with The Present Practicing Tradition of Bharatanatyam

ADITI NIGAM BATRA

The paper focuses on the ‘padakuttana’ or ‘adavu’ as discussed in a dance chapter called ‘Nrttaprakarana’ of the Sangita Saramrta under the heading “Srama vidhi” (practice) and attempts to compare these adavu groups of the Sangita Saramrta which was in vogue during King Tulaja-I’s time with that of the present practicing tradition.

During the Maratha period in 17th century, King Tulaja-I, patronized the art of dancing as is evident from his text Sangita Saramrta. It is the first scientific treatise to codify and methodologically give the adavus of Sadir1 (Bharatanatyam) which were in vogue in the 17th century. It describes nearly thirteen groups of adavus or the basic dance units as mentioned in a valuable section apportioned to the practice of the dance called ‘Srama vidhi’ (practice) in a dance chapter called ‘Nrttaprakarana’ of the Sangita Saramrta. This valuable section also gives “the Samskritam names with their Tamil and Telugu equivalents, notably of the varieties of foot-beats”2, called padakuttana in Samskritam and adavu in the practicing tradition of the art form. Other than the names of the adavus, their description and the relevant sollukattus (rhythmic syllables) are also mentioned. This brings us very close to the present-day practice of Bharatanatyam which too, as is natural, is undergoing some changes.

Such a codification of the basic dance units or adavus of Sadir (Bharatanatyam) dance matching well with the oral dance tradition for the first time in a scientific treatise, seems to be a significant contribution of King Tulaja-I, to Bharatanatyam.

ADITI NIGAM BATRA is a painter, Bharatanatyam dancer and a teacher. She is a disciple of guru Ananda Shankar Jayant. She has been awarded National Scholarship in Bharatanatyam from Government of India, Ministry of Culture and is also a graded artist of Doordarshan. She has performed at many important dance festivals in India and abroad. She holds a Bachelors degree in Painting, Masters degree in Bharatanatyam, M.Phil in Comparative Literature, Ph.D in Dance (Bharatanatyam), Diploma in 3D Animation, and Vid-Diploma in Hindustani Vocal.
Section I: The Story of Bharatanatyam

Baani 2016 was like a ‘Harmonic Convergence’ for the cause of Bharatanatyam. Like how astrological alignments in the vastness of Space, this event too required such a sacred space and it could not have been anywhere else but, Kalakshetra.

Baani conference came as a need of the hour, especially because Bharatanatyam is a global phenomenon, evolving continuously retaining the ideologies of ancient thoughts through the social, religious and political restructurings. This process of evolution can be traced clearly from ancient cankam times as a practice tradition. Although it was beyond the scope of the conference to trace its genesis, nevertheless it marginally emphasized the importance and relationship of the nattuvanar family, their role in shaping dance and dancers. Every speaker related ‘baani’ to a geography and as a pedagogy. Another salient feature that was stressed by all was the importance of music in dance. The musicality directed the movements and the temporality controlled the dance. Last but not least, the exhibition curated by Sruti magazine would have created the necessary intrigue in seekers within dance to trace the traditional community to their roots, such that, an extrapolation can be made about a past, that will also connect many dots. This article traces the journey of Bharatanatyam.

DEEPA CHAKRAVARTHY is a Mohiniattam performing artist, engaged with the art form for over a decade. She has done her Junior Research Fellowship in Mohiniattam, awarded by the Ministry of Culture. Her topic for this was "Krishna Cult, the underlying current for Mohiniattam". Her interest to gain experience in other knowledge traditions propelled her to work with visual artist A. V. Ilango. Having worked as a school teacher, she writes on education, culture and art to bring awareness on the overlap that traditional practices share with mind and body. The article is based on the Seminar on "Baani" held at Kalakshetra in 2016.
Unlike the usual run of institutions, Aurangabad’s Mahagami Gurukul established in a sylvan setup by the Mahatma Gandhi Mission with Odissi/Kathak dancer Parwati Dutta as director, has annually held a three day festival dedicated to the great 13\textsuperscript{th} century genius who hailed from this region – Sarngadeva, whose work \textit{Sangita Ratnakara} represents, in many ways the central moment of Indian musical history, with its summary of \textit{sastra} from earlier and contemporaneous periods, but also a paradigm for the organization of \textit{sangita sastra} from subsequent centuries. And in the inter-disciplinary approach of Sarngadeva, the term \textit{sangita} included dance, to which separate status was given for the first time, unlike the \textit{Natyasastra}, where dance was a part of total theatre. Marking the landmark of twenty years spent in being informed and inspired by the \textit{sastras} of our music and dance, and understanding their relevance through \textit{prayoga} in the present...
Recently, one witnessed a lavish government sponsored production "Kakatiyam" choreographed by Padmaja Reddy in Hyderabad. Dance in the production was at the very basic level of competence and performance. It does not qualify for a review in Nartanam but needs to be discussed for the serious issues it throws up for the dance fraternity. The ballet put on stage about 150 children with a wide range of mediocre dancing skills. The dance technique used was not discernable distinctly as classical or folk or tribal. With the rigour, the stance, the movements, the gestures, the expression all very indistinct the ballet did not qualify to be claimed as a traditional dance style of Telangana, as was hailed by the propaganda material.

Telangana is blessed with myriad folk, tribal and classical forms. Kuchipudi, which was patronized by the Golconda nawabs, is as much a classical form of Telangana as of Andhra Pradesh. Mere lines acting as borders between states do not divide the art forms as belonging to one or the other region. Thus there is no urgent need to reinvent in haste a dance form in the classical idiom to give an identity to the new state of Telangana. The haste with which the Perini dance form is being attempted to be pushed into the syllabus of the music and dance colleges by a recent government order is another example of trying to forge urgent identities which may be faulty in their basic conception.

The newly reconstructed dance form, as it was claimed, allegedly encompassed a few desi dances from the Nrttaratnavali – Prerani, Kanduka, Kollata, Rasaka and Dandarasaka. The Kollata as described by Jaya is a pure acrobatic performance on a rope and involves swinging, wheeling round, etc., it was also performed on swords. However, the presentation Kakatiyam whose press coverage claimed that it showed "Kollata" actually showcased "Kolatam" played with sticks. This stick dance is called "Dandarasakam" by Jaya, which was too simplified in its depiction in Kakatiyam and would have to stand academic scrutiny. The Kandukanrityam which is still found in the repertoire of Mohiniattam and finds a mention in Svapnavasavadattam and Dasakumaracarita according to V. Raghavan, was simplified to copying the poses of the sculptures of the Ramappa temple. Whereas, Jaya has said that the dancers have to form a lotus-like figure, make wavy lines and other formations (the interpretation has to be a subject of an
Hyderabadies got to witness a visual and aural treat of Tribal arts and culture during the Aadirang Mahotsav (3-5 March, Shilpa Kala Thoranam) presented by the National School of Drama (NSD), New Delhi jointly hosted by the department of Language and Culture, Government of Telangana. The seven sister states of the northeast – Tripura, Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim – and the host state Telangana were brought together with a majestic display of their tribal culture and art forms. About 600 dancers presenting a variety of tribal dances was a delightful spectacle.

A seminar with scholars such as Anup Ranjan Pandey, B. K. Mohanty, Kanu Patil, O. Muthhaiah, V. V. Bhedekar, Jayadheer Thirumal Rao, Kailash Patnaik, Prakash Kandle, Subramanya Naidu and others provided for valuable analytical inputs on a variety of topics on tribal arts and culture. This writer could not attend the seminar for the simple reason that the event was not advertised enough and the department forgets to invite the media, artists and the scholars in the city when they do such events. The simplest of PR machinery fails and the events mounted at such costs fail to reach more people, which they could have easily.

A group of charming Chero dancers from Mizoram trooped on to the stage while the audience watched with bated breath their quick paced dance negotiating the fast clapping bamboo sticks. It created a fantastic rhythm for the agile dance maneuvers. The petite Mugyanta dancers from Nagaland danced with dexterity. The Kabui Nagas who collect honey in the forests of Manipur were at their very best. With horns as their headdress, they danced to invite beasts to come up the hill to dance with them. The huge tribal drums, high pitch tremolo singing, exotic and colorful handloom dresses, all brought alive the earthy connection of the tribal dances to the land and culture of northeastern India. The elaborate neck pieces worn by the women were exotic.

The Biju dance of the Chakma adivasis from Tripura ushering the new year, the delightful Lambada dancers of Telangana in all their regalia dancing vigorously to exciting rhythms were a sight to behold. The Gadiya Lohar Lambadas are believed to have originated in Rajasthan. The dances depicting rivalries between tribes of Mizoram and the ferocious contest leading to enslaving of the dead warriors’ souls were feisty and fierce. It is said that the defeated leaders of the tribes were beheaded and their souls became the slaves of the winning communities.
Astad Deboo: New Challenges

SUNIL KOTHARI

Ever seeking new challenges and scaling artistic heights, contemporary dancer Astad Deboo with traditional drummers from Imphal, Manipur, in collaboration with Shree Govindji Nat Sankritan headed by Guru Seityaban Singh, Astad Deboo choreographed "Rhythm Divine II- River Runs Deep". Presented by Astad Deboo Dance Foundation and Raza Foundation at Kamani, New Delhi, the show was a runaway success from the word go.

Astad has been working with Manipuri martial artists and drummers for the past 16 years. Ten years ago Pung cholom drummers and he started working together. Young, vigorous, steeped in their own cultural traditions performing in a comforting cycle of familiar security, Astad interacted with them with the help of Guru Seityaban Singh, planned contemporary work, exploring the tradition of Pung cholom, with eight drummers drawing inspiration for their movements, extracting the essential movements minus drums, resorting to abstraction, choreographing sections which reflected, as Astad explained in his programme note, more open articulation of old fears through bold, new creative with music and movement, a brasher engagement with restlessness and frustration. North East is a heart breaking amalgam of natural beauty and militant aggression, of lightening moves and glacial response, of the turbulence of politics and the calm pace of tradition, flowing below other like twin rivers.

Opening with a stunning visual, Astad in the centre and on either side the drummers with stream of light from top on them and drummers slowly moving in front, the slow pace, their bodies half in dark, half in light, the images suggested serene life below which there was restlessness. The gradual build up against fear and prolonged silence to music by Takashi Kako, Keith Jarett and Nik Bartsch evoked soothing feelings of quiet and also of disturbance.

Astad’s solo in flaring skirt like specially designed costume by Archana Shah, Monica Shah, Krishna Mehta, with extremely slow but controlled movements, bending backwards, using minimal hand gestures, and quivering fingers, may be praying to powers divine, was hypnotic. He has devised these movements which have a stamp of Astad. The groups of drummers performed some times to silence and sometimes to music beats, in circles, holding arms, forming a long chain, moving in a manner suggesting wave, water flowing, at times whirlpools and at times gentle flow. The graceful movements had special regional quality and with
Mahasati Chandanbala

SUNIL KOTHARI

Three have been few dance-dramas based on Jain stories. In the early sixties in Mumbai Yogendra Desai had produced and directed Roopkosha, a theme of a Virangana, from Jain literature. Avinash Vyas, the celebrated musician had given music to the Gujarati libretto and Kanak Rele had performed the main role. In Toronto, Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer Janak Khendry has used Jain stories for his dance-dramas.

Recently Shila Mehta, produced and choreographed a dance drama Mahasati Chandanbala, based on a Jain myth. Based in Mumbai, running her Nupur Zankar Academy of Kathak for more than 30 years Shila Mehta was based in Kolkata where she was trained by Prahlad Das, father of Chitresh Das, and also by Chitresh Das, and later by Vijai Shankar, a disciple of Pandit Birju Maharaj. When she moved to Mumbai, she took advanced training under Kumudini Lakhia. Today Shila has branches of her institution in Belgium and New Jersey.

A Jain, Shila has explored the dance-drama under review, using multi-media and also resorting to semi classical and folk dances. And in keeping with the Jain canons she has succeeded in conveying the message succinctly.

The story is as follows:

India boasts of a galaxy of ideal women, who with their devotion, tolerance, righteousness, virtuousness and sacrifice have enriched our social, cultural and religious heritage. One amongst those great souls was princess Vasumati, popularly known as Mahasati Chandanbala.

In 529 BC when Lord Mahavira was in the Angad region of Bihar in a city known as Champapuri, an intelligent and brave king Dadhivan ruled over that region. His wife queen Dharini and their daughter Vasumati were pious by temperament. Soon a war broke out between Dadhivan and Shatanik, the king of Kausambi. He was married to the elder sister of Dharini, King Dadhivan's wife. King Dadhivan lost the war. A soldier took Vasumati and Dharini captive. The shocked queen died.

The soldier took Vasumati to the slave market to sell her. A merchant by name Dhanavah bought Vasumati out of compassion and took her home. Dhanavah told his wife Moola to treat Vasumati as their daughter. Vasumati did not disclose that she was a princess. She told them that her name was Chandanbala. One day in
Recently, I happened to visit Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati. When preparing the book *Sattriya: Classical dance of Assam* (Marg Publication, 2013), Avinash Pasricha and I had been to SS Kalakshetra to photograph some of the masks in a museum there and few manuscripts paintings. But this visit gave me the opportunity to see it in detail and meet the new Director and Secretary Konwar Narayan, a young dynamic IAS officer. Earlier, the renowned exponent and SNA awardee for Sattriya dance Sharodi Saikia was the Director and Secretary. Now Konwar Narayan too has moved to Sibsagar, and the SS Kalashetra is awaiting the arrival of a new director, yet again.

The very first information I gathered during my visit was of Ankiya Nat *Parijata Haran* by Sankaradeva being staged by a team of French actors from France under the direction of Bhabananda Barbayan, who regularly visits France, presenting Sattriya dances at Musee Guimet in Paris and other places. He also teaches Sattriya to French and also to some Italian and Mexican female dancers. His has been a great influence in France on Sattriya dances.

The entire play has been translated into French. The artists came to Guwahati and for two months rehearsed and performed it in French, delivering dialogues in French. It was held under the first conference of Srimanta Sankaradeva International Festival between 2-8 January 2016. SS Kalakshetra has brought out a special edited commemorative volume, containing articles both in Assamese and English. It contains excellent photographs of *Parijata Haran* performed by French actors. The French version with Assamese text and photographs is under print. This experiment seems to be quite colourful and also interesting in terms of international cultural exchange. I was also told that in July Bhabananda will lead a troupe to London to perform *Parijat Haran*, with Sattriya dancers from Uttar Kamalabari Sattra. It is indeed heartening to see Sattriya making waves abroad. Two Sattriya exponents Menaka PP Bora and Shatarupa Chatterjee, (a disciple of Gorima Hazarika), are now settled in London and are presenting Sattriya regularly in UK and in Europe.

Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra was conceived as a living epitome of Assamese culture. The cultural advisory committee meeting of the government of Assam held on 6 August 1986 visualized it as a complex to serve as a centre of activities in the field of dance, drama, music, fine arts, literature etc. The foundation was laid on 2 February 1988. It is a registered society with a general council and executive council. The construction of it was fully funded by the Ministry of
Khajuraho: Beyond Dance

SUNIL KOTHARI

This is the forty third year of Khajuraho Dance Festival (Feb 20-26) with extended art activities transforming the venue into a multi-art event, engaging a cross section of visitors to Khajuraho, be they tourists from within India and abroad, performing artists, painters, sculptors, litterateurs, film buffs, photographers, musicians, event managers, bureaucrats, dance critics, or common men who out of sheer curiosity walk into the grounds where for seven days from ten in the morning till ten in the night there is enough for each one to savour, relish.

I am delighted to share with readers the magic spell the festival is casting with added activities. There are workshops with crafts people. The weavers weave magic with warp and weft, on their looms. The exhibition Art Mart of painters mainly from Madhya Pradesh, the sculptors, the events at the venue Kalavarta, screening of documentary films not generally seen, are the attraction. There is a special enclosure Nepathya where each year the focus is on a particular state and its dance heritage with exhibition of costumes, masks, objects of rituals, floor paintings, designs, and performances between 6-7pm. The audience are then led to the main event of dance with the backdrop of Chitragupta temple transporting onlookers to a dream world.

When the dancer appears in solo from the side to strains of music it is visually stunning. The temple provides a context, a setting for unfolding of mythological stories, which the dancer enacts, stringing the chords and evoking archetypal memories. Be it a prayer to Sun God, or Ganesha or Lord Shiva, the audience gets ready to receive it in moments of bliss. What the rhetoricians call rasa, the relish is experienced with this god given setting of Khajuraho temples.

From among the organizers, it often happens that someone is bitten by the bug, as they say and brings his vision to fruition with likeminded persons, who are willing to stick their necks out, work tirelessly against all odds and difficulties, surmounting them and creating opportunities to expose those who visit Khajuraho to various expressions of culture besides classical Indian dance forms.

Having been associated with the festival from early years, I have seen its growth from mere presentation of the dance forms to dialogues with dancers, art historians, critics, thinkers, film makers, theatre workers, painters, photographers.

From this year the organizers have introduced a new series “Atithi Devo Bhava” of interacting with neighbouring countries, beyond borders, drawing attention to
It was a unique experience for the people of Guwahati to witness a performance of *Ram Vijay* Ankiya Bhaona in Spanish, performed by a group of talented artists from different nations like France, Italy, Mexico, Denmark and Slovenia. Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra Society, Guwahati had organized the IIInd international Conference on Srimanta Sankaradeva, the architect of Sattriya culture, (15th century Assam), in January 2017. *Ram Vijay* is Sankaradeva’s finest Ankiya Bhaona. It was efficiently directed by the young, devoted and talented ‘bhakat’ of Uttar Kamalabari Sattra, Majuli – Bhabananda Barbayan.

The Ankiya bhaona or the traditional Vaishnava theatre was introduced by the saint, poet, scholar, music composer Sankaradeva. He composed six Ankiya bhaonas – *Rukmini Haran, Parijat Haran, Patni-Prasada, Ram-Vijay, Keli-Gopal* and *Kaliya Daman*. Ankiya bhaona is a combination of natya, nritya and sangita. The four types of abhinaya – angika, vachika, aharya and sattvika are actively illustrated. Dance has a dominant and active role too. The text of bhaona is written in a mixed language called Vrajawali. Sutradhar or the central narrator has a very important role. He must be a good actor, reciter, dancer, singer etc. as the entire drama is communicated or initiated by the Sutradhar. Following all these features, the group of foreign artists performed the drama very effectively to keep the audience spell bound.

The story of *Ram Vijay* is known to all. Srimanta Sankaradeva portrayed the story of Lord Rama from his childhood to his wedding with Sita. All the Indian mythological characters were very convincingly performed by all the artists. Sutradhar was performed by Maltis Dalton, who did justice to the character. Dalton communicated the whole performance in Vrajawali, the original language of Ankiya bhaona, though the other characters used Spanish. His acting, dialogue in Vrajawali and Sanskrit, and dance was captivating. The other characters of the drama were Betzabel Falfan (Sita), Zurlo Benedetto (Rama), Octave Pavte (Lakshmana), Nikos Appelqnist Dalton (Janaka), Amalic Hammershi (Kanakaboti), Babette Christensen (Madanamajuri), Sebastien Corbiere (Dasharatha and Parashuram), Alex Moyroud (Taraka), Baptiste Drouillac (Bishwamitra), Andrej Antonic (Subahu) etc. Bishwamitra, Parashuram, Sita, Kanakaboti’s performances were praiseworthy. It is worth mentioning that Betzable Falfan, who acted as Sita, also translated the drama into Spanish language. She is in fact the first Master in Sattriya dance from Paris VIII University. She is a disciple of Bhabananda Barbayan.
BOOK REVIEWS

Kuchipudi : Gurus, Performers and Performance Traditions
M. NAGABHUSHANA SARMA / Ranga Sampada,
Hyderabad/ 2015/ Hard-bound/ Rs 400/ 340 pp

The author dedicates the book to G. M. SARMA, Founder of Nartanam for his relentless service rendered to Kuchipudi. The book throws light on the Kuchipudi-born dancers and gurus and their contribution to the art during the last century and a half.

The author speaks of his fascination for the art form which began in 1967 under the tutelage of his guru Bhagavatula Ramakotaiah who taught him Yakshagana. His association with great Kuchipudi maestros – from Vedantam Raghavaiah to Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma gave him close insights in to the art form.

As the founder editor of Nartanam, a quarterly journal devoted to the study of Indian dance, he has closely followed the lives and achievements of stalwarts of various dance forms and also the artistic and performative transformations that the art forms have been going through. His several articles over the years on various Kuchipudi gurus and practitioners in Nartanam form the core content of the book.

About forty illustrious masters in the field of Kuchipudi dance and their work are discussed in the book. As the author puts it, the book mainly concentrates on the work of Kuchipudi-born artists with the exception of four non-Kuchipudi teachers belonging to the first batch of the new crop whose work showed diverse expressive ways.

The book could have been better produced by some sharp editing and subbing as well. More visuals could have added to the archival value of the book. The letter by a reader of the book to Nartanam through which she sought answers from our founder editor on his book is produced overleaf. We are yet to receive a response.

Madhavi Puranam
From
Leela Kumari c/o Dr. L. Mahesh Kumar
1A Easdale Enc. 111/2 Sterling Rd.
Madras- 600034


Respected Sri Sarma,

After reading your book on Kuchipudi, the following questions arose in my mind. Kindly bear in mind that I am eighty, only interested in dance and music from my childhood in Nuzvid, not knowledgeable. Please forgive my ignorance.

1. According to the Kaifiyat, the Kuchipudi Bhagavathulu were permitted to perform a Kelika or a Keerthana? On page 14.

2. “Kuchipudi artist must dance, sing and deliver dialogues. No other classical dance form demands this”. Page 50. In Kalakshetra, Madras, I have seen the main performer in Koodiyattom and Chakkiyar Koothu do all this. Are they not classical forms?

3. Is the Marathi song you referred to, on page 100, ‘Tandavanrityakarigajanana’?

4. What is the meaning of the word ‘Pandhamuttu’ on page 107?

5. I was under the impression that Vedantham Raghavaiah’s first film was “Mohini Rukmangada” (1937) in which he performs the Tarangam ‘Balagopala’ in female dress. You say, on page 190, that it was “Raitubidda” released in 1939! And he played the lead role in “Garudagarvabhangam”, not that of a dancer.

6. Basavaraju Apparao’s widowed wife Rajyalakshmamma gave me a book, ‘Basavaraju Apparao Geethalu’ saying that it contained all songs written by him. That does not have any ‘Yenki Patalu’. You said so on page 211. Was his wife mistaken?

7. On page 224 you refer to ‘Lavana Raju Katha’. Isn’t it ‘Lavana Raju Kala’?

8. Many scholars have remarked that ‘kuchi’ in Kuchipudi, refers to dance. I know for certain that just a little distance away is Pedapudi. In which case ‘kuchi’, here, can only mean small. Am I right?

Yours sincerely,

V. Leela Kumari
Today many kinds of books are available in English about dance. Some are showy, coffee-table tomes that contain beautifully printed colour pictures on art-paper. Sometimes, the text matches this visual quality. Some are serviceable suppliers of concrete information about who, what, where, when and why; a few of these contain reliable information.

Very few are logically structured purveyors of theory, taken from Bharatha’s Natyashastra and other such art-science sources. The Nayikas of Annamacharya is one such. Its author, Anupama Kylash, is a dancer having learnt Kuchipudi and Vilasini from dedicated gurus, Uma Ramarao and Swapnasundari, respectively. Her dance expositions, on the two occasions I saw them, show her reading between the lines and weaving them into the main fabric, the text. This is what every senior dancer should do.

Take for instance, the padam of Ghanam Seenayya, ‘Sivadeeksha paruralanura’ (Kuranji), a favourite of singers and instrumentalists for its melodic content and dancers of all feathers for its lode of innuendo. Innuendo? But of course! Is she really

Deep, difficult and ultimately delightful for the daring!

Just like Krishna; easy to access!
asking him, Mannaru Ranga, to get lost? Or baiting him, teasing him, drawing his attention to her wet-saree draped contours, the fact that she is ‘temporarily’ occupied (how long can a woman’s pooja take, whatever kind it may be!), keeping him on a tempting leash!

This is the way the author dissects the erotica of Annamayya. A few points need to be made before going into the mainstream. The five divisions of the book are for clarity. The first is about the padam, the song form. Second is about Annamacharya. The third floats out the essence of various Alankara Sastras before supplying Annamayya’s take on erotica. In the next, 52 songs of Annamayya are taken up for minute dissemination. The last is the Bibliography. In most books this is just a list of the volumes referred to by the author. Here she lists, apart from six important articles, 103 books. Just going through the titles is an education and an indication of the author’s devoted pilgrimage.

Annamayya (1408-1503) is the first known writer of the Telugu song. Yes, there were songs before him, but in the hearts of the common folk. Palkuriki Somanatha in his ‘Panditharadhya Charitra,’ has mentioned many kinds of songs prevalent at that time, 12/13th C., and most of them have been given a definitive form by Annamayya. By going through his matins, lullabies, songs of colour-spraying revelry etc., one can imagine their original folk form.

Even a cursory examination by a dilettante would show that Annamayya was truly incomparable in the range of his imagination and the way he expressed it. Whatever he chose to say, had only one aim – to enchant the laity and the literary with the magic of his words and turn them heavenward by making them realise that Venkateswara-Krishna was their only salvation. In his songs of the spirit (Adhyatmikasankeertanalu) he cajoles, threatens and wins over the listener to his way. In the erotica (Sringarasankeertanalu), he baits the ordinary wayfarer, not with the over-diluted buttermilk but with fresh-pressed sugarcane juice.

To enjoy his lyrics, one need not be a believer. A knowledge of Telugu suffices. And if one happens to love the language at any level, he is enslaved, first by Annamayya and only then by the two Dark Ones, one who lifted a hill and the other, standing pretty on another.

Kshetrayya (end 16th C-mid-17th C) gave the lyric a modified form by giving it a secondary refrain (anupallavi). This influenced the singing of it too. To be honest, we don’t know how Annamayya’s songs were sung then; yes, on the copper-plates the ragas are mentioned but it is questionable if the Sankarabharanam of six hundred years ago was sung like it is today. We are a little more certain of Kshetrayya’s tunes.
Today a padam means an erotic song meant for dance. And mostly it is Kshetrayya’s, even though there are dozens of composers like Sarangapani, Ghanam Seenayya etc. That is Kshetrayya’s achievement.

What is Anupama Kylash’s? She takes songs of these two highway-layers, and examines them through the lens of a balletomane. She pores over each word, tests every statement, reads between the lines and provokes the diligent reader into getting inside the mind of the composer.

Kshetrayya’s intent was to delve deep into the hearts of lovers, male and female, evaluate the stress of affairs, draw conclusions and spread it like a rich repast before the connoisseur.

Seventeen years separate the writing of these two books. The one about Kshetrayya is more accessible. A dancer of average ability can read it with pleasure, glean bits and pieces from it and enrich her own exposition. She need not understand all the implications. Even a surf-ride will leave behind the perfumed spray of Anupama’s reasoning.

The Annamayya book needs a lot more commitment from the reader. It isn’t a pillow-side volume to dip into and drift off into pleasant dreams. It needs basic knowledge of dance-lore and a desire to hitch oneself onto a higher platform. It needs composure to read, sit back, ruminate and assimilate the riches. I don’t think a non-dance enthusiast will go to all that trouble.

Both the books, beautifully produced, are bereft of competent editing. A pity, really. Such gold, such lovely fashioning into priceless ornaments, and such carelessness in putting them together.

Just two points about Annamayya. He died in 1503 and not in 1507. This is confirmed by the song, ‘Dinamudwadasi’ by his descendant. Someone said that he was born in Tallapaka and others repeat it. There is no documentation of this. I think he was born in Madupuru, his mother’s native village; there is no record of this either but the long-standing practice of a woman going to her mother’s home for the first confinement, suggests this. There is no index of the songs in either book. That’s the dessert!

- V A K Ranga Rao
Kathakali, a relatively recent performing art with a 400 year old heritage, is one of the artistic wonders of the world. Originating in Kerala in the southwest corner of India, it vividly unveils the stories of larger-than-life characters – gods and demons – of Hindu epics with an aesthetic combination of dance, theatre, mime, acting, instrumental and vocal music, and above all the pageantry of extremely bewitching costumes.

*Kathakali Dance-Theatre* records the art of Kathakali comprehensively. The book chronicles its various facets – the acting, music, costumes, crucial contributions of the masters, momentous incidences, evolution of styles, riveting anecdotes, and related socio-political issues affecting Kerala. The first-hand personal rendition of the author’s experience and the detailed glossary make it immensely readable. Full of photographs depicting the masters of the art, green room activities and the vibrant theatres of Kathakali, this book is a treasure trove of information for uninitiated readers, arts scholars, theatre buffs, potential researchers and students keen about the art and its future.

The author K. K. Gopalakrishnan is a well-known connoisseur and writer-photographer who specialises in Kerala performing arts traditions. For the past two decades and a half he has been writing for *The Hindu* periodicals such as their Sunday Magazine, Literary Review, various editions of the Friday Review, and *Sruti* and *Nartanam* magazines. He is an advisor to *Nartanam*.

An officer of State Bank of India who chose to resign to focus on art studies, he served from 2010-2016 as the Director of the Centre for Kutiyattam, Thiruvananthapuram, of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. He is also the Governing Body member of the South Zone Cultural Centre of the Ministry of Culture and a member of the General Councils of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi and Kerala Folklore Akademi.

Popularly known as both KK and KKG in the Indian arts scenario, he is a significant source of information/reference for artists, scholars, media and research students of Kerala arts.
India is home to an incredible variety of classical dance styles: Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, and Manipuri are some of India’s greatest gifts to the world. Bharatanatyam, like any other dance form demands regular immersive and extensive practice. In today’s fast paced lifestyle, formal training in Bharatanatyam, by the teacher, is only feasible for a few hours a week, making practice at home by the student an imperative essential. Many, find this difficult, for want of guidance at home.

To bridge the gap between class room training and essential home rehearsals, for Bharatanatyam practitioners and students, and simultaneously recognizing the need to link technology and art, for the larger purpose of sharing the rich Indian cultural heritage globally, Ananda Shankar Jayant's Shankarananda Kalakshetra has conceived and created Natyarambha, an interesting digital arts education initiative. It is interactive and engaging and can run on any device. It provides students and dance performers across the world, digital access to detailed guidance and practice modules for home practice.

Link to a brief promo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQJgE4PeiSs
Its salient features are:

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<th>For all skill levels</th>
<th>Readymade routines</th>
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<td>Natyarambha is easy for beginners, yet powerful for pros.</td>
<td>While Natyarambha bootstraps you with a wide range of handpicked routines tailored to all levels, it also allows you to create your own routine for that perfect personalized practice session.</td>
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<th>Easy sharing</th>
<th>Anytime, Anywhere</th>
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<td>Whether you are a student or a teacher, Natyarambha lets you share the personal routines you created with others.</td>
<td>All that it takes is a favourite device and a little bit of space to stretch your limbs. Natyarambha on and practice on. No excuses please.</td>
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**CONTACT**
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The sixth edition of Lasyotsavam, a national festival of Indian classical dance and theatre traditions of Thrissur based Lasya Akademi was presented at the regional theatre of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi on March 25-26. Mohiniattam dancer Pallavi Krishnan is the curator of Lasyotsavam. The inaugural day presentation was *Rugmangadacharitam* in Kathakali, with thespian Kalamandalam Gopi in the role of Rugmangada and Pallavi Krishnan, an alumnus of Santiniketan and Kerala Kalamandalam, as Mohini. Pallavi, who graduated from Santiniketan with Kathakali as the main subject, was performing Kathakali after a gap of 25 years. She was trained by Kalamandalam Harinarayanan in the role of Mohini under the guidance of Kalamandalam Gopi.

“Since 1992, after coming to Kerala, I started watching more Kathakali performances though my training at Kerala Kalamandalam was in Mohiniattam. I am an ardent fan of Gopi asan. It is the dream of every Kathakali artist to perform with Gopi asan at least once in their life time. When I expressed my desire to Gopi asan, he encouraged me by arranging Harinarayanan to train me and prepare me to perform outside my comfort zone, Mohiniattam,” said Pallavi after the performance to a packed hall. Gopi, who will shortly turn 80, was sharing the stage in a Kathakali performance with a dance exponent as the heroine for the first time.

The scene by scene power point support explaining the entire act and almost all the hand gestures and expressions was useful for the audience not exposed to
the intricate acting techniques of Kathakali (and at the same time very distracting for the well informed). Pallavi acquitted herself well but to match Gopi asan's overpowering performance is a tough act for even a seasoned Kathakali exponent.

On the final day of Lasyotsavam, the Kerala premier of *Nadi* – the River, was staged. The thematic group choreography by Leela Samson and her group portrayed the deep philosophy that the river inspired. India’s poets, from Sufi fakirs to Baul singers, and Sangam poetry made for rich literary content. The pleasing presentation saw skilled dancers evoke the fine nuances of the poetry set to melodious music. Leela's dance has the quality where the dancer is only a vehicle, the content and emotion reigns supreme. The production has been reviewed earlier in *Nartanam* by eminent critic Leela Venkataraman. The evening also saw Kalamandalam Veena Warrier present a Mohiniattam solo recital. A promising dancer Veena presented a Cholkettu, a Tyagaraja Pancharatna kriti and a Swati Thirunal composition.

Madhavi Puranam

Veena Warrier
National Dance Festival of Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University

A three-day national dance festival from 20-22 March 2017, was organized by Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad. The artists were – Priti Patel and her group (Manipuri), Yamini Reddy (Kuchipudi), Mallika Kandali (Sattriya), Dharani Khanna and others. There were seminars in the morning sessions which were very poorly publicized and hence Nartanam could not send a correspondent to cover the same. However, this writer witnessed the performances on the last day of the festival.

Mallika Kandali from Guwahati performed Slokor nach and Ashta Nayika, which were ably choreographed by her. The music composed by late Murari Sarma was excellent. Slokor nach is based on the various slokas – some have definite meaning while others have only rhythmic mnemonic syllables. The Ashta Nayika number presented by Mallika based on the eight nayikas saw her as a seasoned dancer. She used eight different postures for the eight different nayikas. Mallika’s understanding of Sattriya was evident in the interesting choice of songs. All the songs were sourced from Srimanta Sankaradeva’s Ankiya Bhaonas and were beautifully sung. Sattriya, a traditional form with the bhakti rasa as the mainstay, is often believed to be limited in its scope to present the sringara rasa or for the portrayal of the variety of nayikas. However, Mallika chose the songs depicting the nayikas and their contexts very well from the bhakti dominated Ankiya Bhaonas. With a mature and intense performance Mallika won a resounding applause from the spectators.

The dance drama “Rudramma” by Alekhya Punjala was disappointing to say the least. A dancer of her stature has a responsibility to live up to the accolades won by her which includes prestigious awards.

Madhavi Puranam
Nupur's 23rd edition in Goa

The 23rd edition of ‘Nupur’ – a classical dance festival of Kala Academy, Goa and West Zone Cultural Centre was held in the precincts of Shree Mahalsa Saunstha, Mardol village, Goa from 18-20 March 2017 with the participation of well known dancers of the country. The festival which started in the year 1994-95 under West Zone Cultural Centre scheme has espoused the keen interest of Goan performers and also dance lovers towards classical dance forms of India. The conscientious efforts of the organisers has taken this festival to greater heights.

The festival is organised at the Mahalsa temple on a specially erected stage. Shree Devi Mahalsa is believed to be the Mohini incarnation of Lord Vishnu during Samudra Manthana (Ocean churning) who enticed the daityas and asuras (demons) with a divine dance performance.

The inaugural performance of the festival was by Goan Kathak artists Varada Bedekar, Prerna Palekar, Arpita Shirodkar and Tejaswini Loundo with the choreography and padhant by renowned Kathak guru Shama Bhate. The accompaniment was lent by Vikrant Naik (Vocal), Amar Mopkar and Swapnil Mandrekar (Tabla), Prasad Gawas (Harmonium) and Sonik Velingkar (Flute).

Neha Bhatnagar, a disciple of guru Saroja Vaidyanathan and guru Rama Vaidyanathan gave a scintillating performance of Bharatanatyam. She was
accompanied by Saroja Vaidyanathan on Nattuvangam, K.Venkatesh on Vocal, Rajat Prasanna on Flute and Thanjavur R. Kesavan on Mridangam.

The second day of the festival opened with the exquisite Kuchipudi dance recital by T. Reddi Lakshmi, disciple of Guru Jayarama Rao and Vanashree Rao, who showcased her Kuchipudi repertoire to prove why she is regarded as one of the most promising Kuchipudi exponents of the present generation.

The concluding performance of the second day saw artists of Lok Chhanda Cultural Unit from New Delhi, presenting Mayurbhanj Chhau and Kathak, choreographed by Maitreyee Pahari. Their performance did not live up to the expectations with monotony setting in.

The concluding day of the festival witnessed Kathak performance by Deepti Gupta in the Jaipur gharana style of Kathak under the guidance of her guru Rajendra Gangani. Deepti Gupta showed promise as a skilful dancer in nritta items with speed and virtuosity. Guru Rajendra Gangani (padhant and Pakhawaj), Mahendra Parihar (Vocal), Mayank Bedekar (Tabla) and Nafeej (Sarangi) provided excellent accompaniment.

The concluding performance of the festival by Arushi Mudgal in Odissi was delightful. Her talented sister Sawani Mudgal complemented the dance presentation with her mellifluous singing with equally commendable instrumental support by Pradeepa Kumar Moharanama (Mardala/Pakhawaj), Ravinder (Flute) and Yaar Mohammad (Sitar).

D. L. Amonkar
The second of the famous Jhaveri Sisters (the eldest was Nayana Jhaveri), Ranjana Jhaveri, the well-known Manipuri exponent passed away on 17 January 2017 in Mumbai, at the age of 87, after protracted illness.

Guru Bipin Singh in Mumbai trained the four sisters Nayana, Ranjana, Suvarna and Darshana from early forties. They formed a group by 1950 and started performing in Mumbai. They were closely associated with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and the Indian National Theatre (INT) in Mumbai.

Their father Navnitlal Jhaveri was a progressive person and encouraged his daughters to learn dance. The early forties were not very conducive and in favour of young educated girls to take to dancing. Dancing was still looked down upon as an art form. But the entire family were great admirers of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and his love for arts. From Mumbai several young artists visited Santiniketan. Among them were Govardhan Panchal who studied painting under Nandalal Bose and also studied Manipuri dance. Another Gujarati artist was Yog Sundar, son of Darbar Gopal Das, from an erstwhile princely state.

Yog Sunder when he returned to Mumbai, participated in a dance-drama *Jay Somnath*, based on K.M. Munshi’s novel, along with Govardhan Panchal and guru Bipin Singh. Nayana Jhaveri played the role of Chauldevi. It was produced by INT and staged at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Guru Bipin Singh extended the borders of classical Manipuri dance and choreographed several numbers – solo, duet, group dances for the four sisters and also dance-dramas. They received excellent response from the audience and Jhaveri sisters began to perform all over India and also in Imphal, Manipur.

Ranjanaben, as she was known, was a graceful dancer. The form of classical Manipuri dance suited the sisters’ personality. Guru Bipin Singh’s choreographic works suited them well. Besides solos, duets, group dances...
guru Bipin Singh also edited night long versions of various traditional Rasalilas of Manipuri. That contributed a lot to popularizing Manipuri dances.

Among the solo numbers Ranjana’s abhisraika nayika was very popular. Her angika abhinaya and Radha undergoing various tests to walk in the dark, on wet land etc. to meet Lord Krishna were noteworthy. Her delicate frame and attractive visage created an image of a dignified Radha.

Guru Bipin Singh had choreographed many solo numbers some of which Ranjanaben used to perform. Vidyapati’s "Kahe dahat tanu Madan hamar?"—“O Cupid, why do you harass me mistaking me for Lord Shiva?” The entire song with its poetic conceit was much appreciated. Manipuri is essentially in nature a dance-drama form, a group dance. But guru Bipin Singh selected from Vaishnav padavali, suitable songs for solo and duet presentations.

All four sisters received uniform training. And therefore each one was adept in performing the songs for abhinaya in solo format. Ranjanaben was a versatile dancer and did justice to the character she was asked to portray in dance.

Khubak ishai, clap dance, Prabandha nartan, Kanduk khel, and other numbers were presented in order to showcase the variety in Manipuri dance. The entire presentation was so devised that during the programme each dancer got a special number to perform. Ranjanaben used to perform the ashtapadi from Gita Govinda, in particular portraying the Khandita nayika, “Yahi Keshava, yahi Madhava.”

I have happy memories of demonstrations that Ranjanaben gave of Vaishnava padavali. To demonstrate various meanings through hand gestures, guru Bipin Singh had taken a stanza from Vaishanava padavali and many a times Ranjanaben used to demonstrate it.
I remember their choreographic work of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore’s *Bhanusingher Padavali* in Brajbauli specially choreographed for a presentation. It was staged at the centenary celebrations of Gurudev Tagore in Mumbai.

Rukmini Devi Arundale choreographed the dance-drama *Bhanusingher Padavali* in Bharatanatyam, Mrinalini Sarabhai choreographed *Tasher Desh*, in Kathakali and Bharatanatyam. All these dance-dramas were presented at the Brabourne stadium in Mumbai.

There was such rapport among the four sisters that whatever numbers they were asked to perform by guru Bipin Singh they could perform easily. Ranjanaben with her other three sisters created harmony. I was closely associated with Jhaveri Sisters for forty years and I saw them working as a perfect team.

Unassuming and self-effacing by nature, Ranjanaben was shy, but loved to perform Manipuri. Very fond of other classical dance forms, the four Jhaveri Sisters appreciated other dance forms and artists. Their residence was often a meeting point for visiting dancers.

When I was Professor and Head of Department of Dance at Rabindra Bharati University, Darshana and Ranjanaben had visited Kolkata for workshops organized by Priti Patel, a disciple of guru Bipin Singh and she also studied under Darshana Jhaveri and Kalavati Devi, wife of guru Bipin Singh. Ranjanaben’s demonstration was much appreciated by the dancers who joined the workshop. As a matter of fact, I always found that there was such deep understanding among the four sisters under the leadership of Nayana Jhaveri that off stage and on stage one always noticed and admired their love for Manipuri and there were no ego hassles.

Ranjanaben was very fond of Gujarati literature. She had a BA degree and her Gujarati Professor was very fond of her writing in Gujarati. Her husband Bhaskarbhai Lakhani was also fond of arts and always supported Ranjanaben. Their daughter Lalana studied Manipuri and used to perform along with the Jhaveri Sisters. But later on she specialized in glass ceramics and is now a renowned artist creating artistic works in glass.

Ranjanaben’s passing away is deeply mourned by the dance community. Jhaveri Sisters with their devotion, aristocratic, cultural background, and humility have provided a role model to young generation. The dance community will miss Ranjana Jhaveri.

*Sunil Kothari*
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