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# Nartanam



*A Quarterly Journal of Indian Dance*





**"Music for Dance"**

Photo Courtesy: Avinash Pasricha

# *Nartanam*

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**Cover:**

**Mudra for "Two Birds"**

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Publishers, *Nartanam*

## EDITORIAL

<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/250419/sab-ghungroo-bandh-ke-tayaar-ho-gaye-modi-takes-a-dig-at-prime-minist.html> is the link to the following news clip in the *Deccan Chronicle* of 25 April 2019.

### DECCAN CHRONICLE WITH AGENCY INPUTS

Published Apr 25, 2019, 12:46 am IST Updated Apr 25, 2019, 12:51 am IST

#### **"Sab ghungroo bandh ke tayaar ho gaye: Modi takes a dig at prime ministerial aspirants**

Kamarpara/Lohardaga: Narendra Modi on Wednesday took a swipe at his rivals over their prime ministerial ambitions, quipping they were all decked up in ghunghroo, the ringing bells worn by dancers on ankles, before occupying the hot seat...."

The Dancer remains in the stranglehold of the image of "Nachne wali" who is paraded through celebrations, VIP welcome agendas, conferences and making world records in the name of showcasing culture. When will Dance be seen as a pursuit of education and nourishing the soul? I will allow the dance community to understand the above snippet and send a letter to the Editor about what they infer from the comment made by our honourable Prime Minister.

The latest Sangeet Natak Akademi award for Kuchipudi is given to a Bharatanatyam dancer who studied at Kalakshetra, Chennai, and has been a member of the faculty in the Central University of Hyderabad for decades teaching Bharatanatyam in the Dance Department. Is the body of his work in Kuchipudi so staggering as to warrant this coveted award? However, he possesses the most vital ingredient which makes the recipe for obtaining the SNA Award for Kuchipudi, i.e being born into a Kuchipudi family, whereby the divine art of Kuchipudi flows in his body and thus such a mortal can lay claim to the SNA award for Kuchipudi. Moreover, a Kuchipudi clan member sits in the General

Council after obtaining a Bismillah Khan Award for dubious achievements in Yakshagana.

One must salute the visionary statesmen of the Kuchipudi clan like Chinta Venkatramaiah, Chinta Krishnamurthy, Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry and Guru Vempati China Satyam amongst other great gurus from Kuchipudi. They were the true leaders of the form. One cannot but remember all the stalwart performers from Kuchipudi in the days gone-by. There were Kuchipudi clan maestros who took Kuchipudi out from the tiny village hamlet which today wears a ghostly look with a not-so-thriving University and a few clan gurus struggling to produce students of calibre. Chinna Satyam went to Chennai and produced innumerable disciples who have done yeoman service to Kuchipudi and are spread far and wide across the globe continuing their sterling work.

Outsiders whose veins are devoid of the exalted Kuchipudi family blood are today the foremost performers and gurus. There are youngsters (so called outsiders to the clan) who are doing brilliantly. Then, why is it that those born into Kuchipudi families despite their not-so-great achievements line up often for awards in both the SNA and the Bismillah Khan categories?

This question is left to the wisdom of the Sangeet Natak Akademi to ponder. One cannot appeal to the conscience of the receiver of the award to reflect on whether he/she genuinely deserves the award. Such a reflection is possible only for a true artist.

The cover of this issue of *Nartanam* is symbolic of the necessity of interaction between academia and the performers of dance.

This issue features papers from the conference 'Sensate Technicities: A Conversation Across Dance Cultures and Techniques' which took place at UNC Charlotte from 3-5 May 2019. It also features papers on 'Music for Dance' from the Nartanam Conclave 2018 held at Hyderabad. We have also published rare gems from *Nartanam* archives which elaborate on 'Music for Dance'.

## **Madhavi Puranam**

# **Papers from the Seminar**

## ***Sensate Technicities: A Conversation Across Dance Cultures and Techniques***

### **An Introduction to the Seminar**

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KAUSTAVI SARKAR

While playing the Manjira (metal cymbals) for solo artist Soumya Bose alongside musicians from Odisha, namely Ekalabya Muduli on percussion, Rupak Kumar Parida on vocal, and Ramesh Das on violin, I was transported to my training grounds, the classroom in Srjan, Bhubaneswar, where I am under the tutelage of Ratikant Mohapatra and Sujata Mohapatra in the field of Odissi dance. Performing in Robinson Hall, the abode of the Department of Dance in the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, I felt a deep-rooted connection with my first Odissi teacher Poushali Mukherjee. Today, I have charted a long curvilinear path as characteristic of Odissi given that I am faculty in UNC Charlotte and the organizer of the conference "Sensate Technicities: A Conversation Across Dance Cultures and Techniques." This conference took place in Robinson Hall at UNC Charlotte from 3 - 5 May 2019 and was attended by over three hundred people over the course of three days. This event adopted the "Odissi International" format introduced in 2009 by dance critic Shyamhari Chakra in order to galvanize and strengthen the global Odissi community. Part of my research, teaching, and service, Odissi dance presents a life-world for me and I wanted to share this world-view with the university community in the US. The conference was a resounding success attended by over hundred people-scholars, performers, choreographers, educators, policy makers, art historians, art critics, and first generation young artists who have taken this art form seriously. Artists flew from all over the US to share their craft with the Odissi community of the US. The event was covered by renowned dance critic, Padmashri Sunil Kothari who also shared his insights on South Asian

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KAUSTAVI SARKAR, faculty at the Department of Dance at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, teaches theory/ practice courses in dance technique, digital humanities, and liberal studies. She bridges academia and diaspora through her service as Artistic Director of Kaustavi Movement Center (India) and Board Member of American College Dance Association (US). She is working on her first monograph *Dance, Technology, Social Justice* in currently review with McFarland Publishers.

# Centering the periphery: The place of Odissi in British Higher Education

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ELENA CATALENO

Although the United Kingdom holds a strong community of Indian classical dancers and appreciators, Odissi remains relatively at the periphery of the dance world, with very spare opportunities to present and watch this dance form in professional venues and to professional standards. This is especially true, when compared to Bharatanatyam and Kathak, which have entered western popular and elite culture through windows such as the BBC Young Dancer of the Year and thanks to highly acclaimed choreographers, such as Akram Khan. The lack of more senior Odissi artists, who would pursue the dance professionally and full time and who would develop an aesthetic coherent with the local British context, has made this dance form remain very peripheral with only a few regular classes and little interest among younger generations of dancers. Odissi remains particularly unknown to the wider non-South Asian audience, although things have begun to shift in the last few years.

Kingston University of London is perhaps the only university in the UK, to my knowledge, where Odissi is embedded in the curriculum both as a compulsory training for first year undergraduate students and as an optional training for second and third year. While odissi is thought alongside other techniques, it remains peripheral in students' interests. Students who come to this university are predominantly white-British and black-British- Caribbean and are interested in becoming versatile performers by training, often rather shallowly, in different techniques, with a particular interest in street dance and hip hop. Given these students have very little interest in, nor identify culturally with any South Asian classical dance, and given also they often are not conditioned to rigorous training,

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ELENA CATALENO is an Odissi dancer, teacher and scholar presently based in the UK. Her artistic and academic career has been strongly influenced by an instinctive interest in the diversity of human practices and beliefs. This fascination with the nature of culture, honed by higher studies in cultural anthropology, has gradually merged with Elena's inborn talent for the performing arts.

# Beyond dancing – Performing Arts as a response to global peace

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APARUPA CHATTERJEE

## **Background: setting the stage**

Dwelling in the west for about a decade now, I have realized the growing need of sharing research on performing arts, much of which may be achieved when artists and scholars share transformative works. The scope of performing arts in recent research shows a path of transferring knowledge through tastefully artistic, poetic, and analytic renditions, fully engaging the audience. Following this line of thought, this article focuses in sharing a glimpse of my doctoral research – broadening the scope of applied arts, beyond performing as entertainment.

My prior artistic experiences and collaborations in performing arts groomed me, while learning, performing, teaching and researching as a dance scholar, professionally trained in the field of ‘Odissi dance’, from the school of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and in “Dhrupad music” by the Dagar gharana. As we stamped and sounded our bells, and the ‘Srjan’ performers’ repertory moved with smooth precision on the top floor of the Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Nrityabasa (school of dance) in Bhubaneshwar, on a scorching hot Sunday morning, Ratikant Mohapatra and Sujata Mohapatra taught us to execute ‘abhinaya’, based mostly on mythological texts or poetry- its purpose (from Natyashastra) and its scope. The use of the performance-based art, dance or theater, is perhaps instrumental for every dance scholar to understand the logic of arts for globalization. We continued to learn intransigent and socially significant ways of portraying several

---

APARUPA CHATTERJEE, a professional Odissi dancer, with dual bases in India and USA, is currently the Founder/ Artistic Director of the Austin based non-profit Odissi Dance Company. Her Doctoral research focussed on how performing arts were used for communication in Rwandan communities for post-conflict reconstruction. Chatterjee curates the North American Odissi Convention (USA) and *Kelucharan Guna Keertanam festivals* internationally every year. Chatterjee teaches extensively and focusses on dance pedagogy, technique and aesthetics.

# Sensate Technicities: A Conversation across Dance Cultures and Techniques Engraved power structures in curvilinear representation of gentleness

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KAKALI PARAMGURU

The actions of German female terrorists during 1970s had the effect to challenge the existing gender ideologies, which functioned as “feminist practices,” even if that was not their intention (Melzer, 2015).<sup>1</sup> This, along with several other issues on gender politics and affect theories in feminist discourse was inspiring to think about the possibility that one can tend to fight against the oppression without realizing or intending it. It can turn out to be a psychological reaction, or escapes from any type of oppression as explored by scholars Ketu H. Katrak and Anita Ratnam (2014) whose book examined epic women in politics by investigating selected female icons of India and beyond. A question arises whether the Indian mythological female characters that dancers keep performing in Odissi were actually meek, and whether ‘Sita’ in the epic of *Ramayana* running after the golden deer, and ‘Radha’ falling for Krishna in a classical Indian dance performance “deprecates, denigrates and decries women” which Manjusri Chaki-Sircar, the creator of *Navnritya* (Neo-Dance) points (Chakraborty, 2006). This research, a work-in-progress, is an attempt to rethink those female characters of Indian mythology by examining their actions as described in the epics, interpreted by the poets through ages, and as performed by the dancers from their perspectives. This paper, a part of that research, explains how ‘Radha’ whose love for Krishna is romanticized as divine love, is a revolutionary female character. In this essay I will explore through the lens of feminist theories, how ‘Radha,’ constitute a freedom of emotion and feminist power structure. Through this I will connect feminist

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KAKALI PARAMGURU is currently a third-year doctoral student at Temple University, Philadelphia, USA. She is interested in the embodiment of the mythological female characters in the political ethics of Odissi dance through its aesthetic components with a study on the politics of representation and appropriation. Right now, she focuses on a comparative literary study of philosophical aesthetics, politics, and modernism of the twentieth century America and India for her Ph.D. thesis.

# Let us lead from the periphery

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ROHINI DANDAVATE

On 4 May 2019, I participated in a panel discussion in the Tenth International Odissi festival organized at University of North Carolina in Charlotte. The topic for discussion was “Centering the Periphery”. The underlying assumption seemed to be that being on the periphery is undesirable, and there is an innate need to move to the center. Since quite a few of us participating in this festival are immigrants, I noticed a connection between being an immigrant and having an urge to become a part of the center.

I moved to Columbus, Ohio in the fall of the year 1993 with my husband, who joined the Ohio State University to pursue his graduate studies. In India, I was an accomplished Odissi dancer, with years of training under the tutelage of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. However, after moving to the U.S., I felt a sense of loss since my art was not as relevant in the cultural ethos of my new environment. As a result, I faced a crisis of identity. In the predominantly Caucasian community of Columbus, the cultural references were different; I was faced with the challenge of developing an audience in a place where there was little curiosity, appreciation or craving for a traditional dance form from an unfamiliar culture.

## **Search for a purpose**

I got my first break when John Seto, Coordinator of Traditional and Ethnic Arts introduced me to the Ohio Arts Council. As an artist in residence in their Arts Learning Program, I would visit educational institutions and community

---

ROHINI DANDAVATE, an Odissi dance teacher and writer, earned her doctorate degree in Cultural Policy and Arts Administration from The Ohio State University. Rohini develops workshops and curriculum for educational institutions and community organizations that foster appreciation of cultural diversity through the experience of traditional arts. She has produced multimedia learning resources for Odissi dance instructors and students which are available on Amazon, and writes research papers on Odissi dance pedagogy.

# Sensate Technicities: An Investigation into Dance Technique

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KAUSTAVI SARKAR

*Jhenam Jhenam Jhenam Ta Gadi Ghene Jhenam Jhenam Jhenam Ta Gadi Ghene Jhenam Jhenam Jhenam Ta Gadi Ghene*

A languid torso floats over a strongly grounded set of footwork articulated by heel, toe, and flat stomps. Wrists move in measured proportions generating spaces within the body. Lips parting in a soft smile, eyes following circular arcs of the forearm, and the head and the neck working in tandem, create a choreographic arc bearing a gentle beginning, a percussively complex middle, and a subtle yet definite ending. This *Tihai*, a rhythmic composition repeating a set of mnemonic syllables for three iterations, mark the end of the first full paragraph of *Navadurga*. It is a choreography by Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra in the eastern Indian dance form called *Odissi*.

## Introducing the Moving Body

The above is a rhythmic excerpt from an *Odissi* choreography, In this montage, one can relate to the languid upper body and the grounded lower body of the *Odissi* dance form whose technique is of primary consideration here. This essay briefly investigates the nature of *Odissi* technique in a theoretical exposition. At the center is the sentient dancing body—one that negotiates its interior felt emotions and external factors, namely the historical and the cultural.<sup>[1]</sup> This essay navigates the multiple facets constituting *Odissi* technique and theorizes the term ‘sensate

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KAUSTAVI SARKAR, faculty at the Department of Dance at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, teaches theory/ practice courses in dance technique, digital humanities, and liberal studies. She bridges academia and diaspora through her service as Artistic Director of Kaustavi Movement Center (India) and Board Member of American College Dance Association (US). She is working on her first monograph *Dance, Technology, Social Justice* in currently review with McFarland Publishers.

# Teaching without Bodies: What Online Pedagogy in Higher Education could learn from the Digital “Guru”

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SHREELINA GHOSH

Understanding how Odissi dance is taught, practiced, and memorized can be crucial to the understanding of virtual pedagogy in general beyond the discipline of dance. The sustainability of Indian classical arts is because of their ability to absorb and adapt while adhering to certain basic essential *purities*. When academic instructors express hesitation regarding teaching a course in their discipline online and are curious on how to preserve the class-room-ness and bodied-ness while digitally mediating learning, we might consider pointing to the ways in which some Odissi gurus are disseminating a traditional art through digital space without stripping it of its pure, divine essence. Studying and understanding how virtual pedagogy of a thousand year old artistic tradition negotiates with adherence to tradition and change can have a critical revelation for instructors across academic disciplines who are adopting online learning.

Within the last three decades, advances in computing have impacted pedagogies related to the teaching of traditional knowledges like Mathematics, Chemistry, English, Biology, Dance, and Music. These are all traditional forms of knowledge. Each of them have a long pedagogical history where the dissemination of knowledge happens in an immediate (by which I mean not mediated or passed via a media) and embodied (by which I mean, the teacher and the student remains connected in a common physical space). When these knowledges are passed down digitally in the absence of a teacher or in the absence of a teacher’s body in an immediate (that is via an digital media), the relationship between the student and the teacher, student and the content of the knowledge, and the student and

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SHREELINA GHOSH is an Odissi dance performer and an English Professor at Gannon University at Pennsylvania. Her research interests mostly center at the intersections of cultural and digital rhetorics, and performance. Her current research examines the use of technology as a tool of online and hybrid learning. This study helps us understand the relationship between traditional and online teaching, and the impact of mediation on pedagogic practices.

# Papers from Nartanam Conclave-2018

## Music for Dance

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### The transitions in Kathak music since Independence

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SHAMA BHATE

I feel truly honoured to get an opportunity to put forward my views on Music for Kathak on this esteemed platform for an August audience of dance scholars, critics and dancers. I thank the Sahridaya Arts Trust, Nartanam with all my heart for creating an academic platform of this kind.

In Indian Ethos, and in Indian conscience, the concept of dance is always coupled with Music. We all know that 'Sangeet' for us means "Geet, Vadya, and Nritya" all together. In a performance, or even while teaching, the awareness of music is of utmost importance. The dance can never be conceived in a segregated manner without looking at the aspect of music. It is an all accepted fact that the dance has to be lyrical and musical, to be titled as complete dance.

Here I would like to give an example. I remember Pandit Kishan Maharajji, while talking about Pandit Birju Maharajji's Dance, once said and I quote - 'Inke pair toh gaate hain. Kisike bajte hai, kisike bolte hain, magar inke pair gate hain.' What he really meant was that the musicality is an inherent part of Maharajji's dance. The musicality lies in every aspect- Hastak (movements), Gestures, Ang, Stances, and of course in the footwork.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, a Kathak dancer wears about 150 to 200 Ghungroos around his/her ankle. The Ghungroos, therefore work as a musical instrument for a dancer. The peculiar contrary aspect is that the

---

SHAMA BHATE is disciple of Guru Rohini Bhate and Pandit Suresh Talwalkar, Shama Bhate's work spans over 35 years as a performer, teacher, choreographer, artistic director, and thinker. Her personal idiom, evolved over the years, is a blend of virtuosity (tayyari) and sensitive expressions (abhinaya), revealing a high degree of classicism. Based in Pune, Shama is the director of Nadroop that has produced more than 25 professional, talented young artists. After working in the traditional format for many years, she explores new choreographic possibilities using various art media like paintings, line drawing, sculpture, cinema etc.

# Kathakali Music: Evolution and Nuances

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K.K. GOPALAKRISHNAN

The history of the evolution of arts in India shows that the vocal rendering was gradually assigned to separate singers to facilitate effortless acting/dancing and other physical movements. Kathakali's predecessor Ramanattam initially had the actors sing the verses themselves. During the reformation of Ramanattam, Vettath Raja (C1600) introduced the chenta, the drum already dominant in several folk and ritual forms of the region, and brought in separate vocalists for the scripted elements to free the actors to facilitate smooth acting and dancing.

Available historical details about an incident that occurred during the very first premier of the Kathakali performance under the aegis of Kottayam Tampuran (16-17th C) underscore that right from the moment Ramanattam has become Kathakali with his (Kottayam Tampuran) composition, the vocal rendering was assigned to background singers. This also speaks of the emergence of the tradition of singing a few selected verses from the *Gita Govinda* at the beginning of a typical and traditional Kathakali performance. As far as Kathakali music is concerned, the highlight of it lies in the blend of vocal rendering with the two percussions, chenta and maddalam, and its successful flow through the physique of the actors as per situations concerned.

Earlier, little significance was given to the melody and emotion of Kathakali's vocal rendering; it was viewed only as a supporting art. The rendering is more or less in tune with the singing of *Gita Govinda*, known as *Ashtapadi* in Kerala, in front of the sanctum. This temple music structure known as *Sopana Sangeetam*

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K.K. GOPALAKRISHNAN is a cultural writer from Kerala contributing for periodicals such as *Nartanam*, *The Hindu*, *Sruti* etc. He is the author of critically acclaimed *Kathakali Dance Theatre – A Visual Narrative of Sacred Indian Mime* (2016).

# Music in Sattriya dance

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BHABANANDA BARBAYAN

Srimanta Sankaradeva is the founder of the Sattriya tradition. He had established the *Satra* as the centre for professing his new found religion known popularly as '*Eka-saran nama-dharma*'. In course of time, these *Satras* served as the grooming ground for literature of art, music, dance and other histrionic activities. This tradition is still being carried on.

Being an integral part of dance and drama the music has been practiced through ritual ceremonials in the *Namghar* or *Kirttanghar* of *Satras*. There are two kinds of ceremonials in Sattriya music practice i.e. daily and occasional; however, occasional are mostly related to dance and drama.

Like other forms of music, Sattriya may also be categorized into vocal and instrumental. In vocal, there are two groups of songs composed by Srimanta Sankaradeva and his favourite disciple Madhabadeva known as *Bargita* and *Anka-git* or *Natar-git*. It is known that Sankaradeva originally composed nearly 240 such songs. Unfortunately, the songs were destroyed in a fire. After the accident, Sankaradeva asked his disciple Madhabadeva to compose similar songs. Madhabadeva recovered 34 songs of his Guru from memory and also composed a number of songs himself. 157 songs are found of Madhabadeva and they are set on 36 ragas.

Moreover, both the Gurus composed another type of songs which were used in their plays known as *Anka-git* or *Natar-git*. There are 129 songs composed by Sankaradeva for his six plays. Likewise Madhabadeva also composed some

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BHABANANDA BARBAYAN was inducted into the Uttar Kamalabari Satra at the age of four. He learnt the nuances of Sattriya culture there under gurus Paramananda Barbayan and Tuniram Barbayan (nriya), Cheniram Barbayan (bayan), Kamal Bargayan (gayan), and Baluram Bargayan and Gupiram Bargayan (oja). At 16, he became the youngest Barbayan of the Satra. He obtained a Ph.D. and has introduced Sattriya dance in the curriculum of different universities and is a regular visiting faculty in universities abroad. He has established three Sattriya training institutions - Satraranga in Majuli, Assam (2000), Rongayan in Guwahati, Assam (2003) and Sattriya Akademi in New Delhi (2008).

# Components of Music in Vilāsini Nāṭyam

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ANUPAMA KYLASH

The Sangītaratnākara of Sarangadeva says, ‘Gītam vādyam tathā nrutyam trayam sangīta muchyatē.’ Sangīta is a blend of the, ‘word’, ‘music’ and ‘dance’. Indian dance systems are comprehensive, knowledge systems, therefore, literature, music and dance are always interlinked to form a ‘whole’, or a totality, comprising of various allied arts.

The art of the Telugu Kalāvanthulu, Vilāsini Nāṭyam, is a fine example of a dance system that has maintained this linkage, over centuries. The original votaries of this dance form were adept in literature, music and dance. As inheritors of this tradition, the present day Vilāsini Nāṭyam dancers are expected to give equal priority to all these areas of study.

The cultural history of the Telugu people reveals the existence of two dance systems. One was performed by men and was a ‘Purusha Sampradāyam’, while the other was primarily a female tradition and was termed, ‘Sthṛī Sampradāyam’. References to the Sthṛī Sampradāyam are prolific in archival, epigraphical and literary sources, thereby, establishing the presence of the female singer - dancer in temples, royal courts and public theatres, from as early as the 10th C AD. These female, artistic groups were called the Nattuva or Chinna Mēlam, and these women were referred to by many names such as, ‘Swāmini’, ‘Bhogini’, ‘Kalāvati’, etc. The term ‘Kalāvanthulu’, probably derived from the Kalāvati and was in use by the mid 20th C for a woman who excels in the arts.

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ANUPAMAKYLASH learnt Kuchipudi from Guru Uma Rama Rao and has been actively performing for the past 20 years. She holds a Doctorate in Dance from the University of Hyderabad. She runs Anubhav, a center for dance, music and literature in Hyderabad. With her disciples, Anupama has presented a number of creative and innovative dance features. She has presented several lec – dems and papers at seminars and conferences of dance. Anupama is also a ‘Vishaarad’ in Hindustani music from the Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalay, and is a graded artiste of Doordarshan.

# The journey of music in Kuchipudi through years and genres

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DSV SASTRY

*This paper will explore the role of music in Kuchipudi as an art form, and how the music of the form has changed from the late 19th century-early 20th century to the present times. The ragas employed, their relevance and usage in various situations and the manner of exploiting a jathi or a talam to portray rasas in Kuchipudi will be discussed in this paper. It will also argue that the music of Kuchipudi is a bani by itself and has an identity of its own, despite having adopted the tenets of Carnatic music. The ideas and thoughts expressed in this paper drawn solely from the author's experience of personally having engaged with the art form of Kuchipudi for more than three decades and are not a culmination of any focused scholarly study.*

Being a performative art form that depicts stories from mythology, Kuchipudi's music, like its lyric, is one of its key tools of storytelling. Be it a *kalapam* or *yakshaganam*, which were the only genres performed majorly in Kuchipudi until the early decades of the 20th century, or in the dance dramas or even solos, which had become an integral part of Kuchipudi by the late 20th century itself, the music that accompanies the visual plays a dominant role in portraying characters, depicting emotions or simply put, in the process of *rasanishpatthi* of a Kuchipudi performance. Kuchipudi's music truly follows the popular abbreviation BHA-RA-THAM, in the sense that the choices of *ragam* and *talam* are solely based

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DANDIBOTLA SRINIVASA VENKATA SASTRY trained in Carnatic music and Yakshagana sangeetham under Pasumarthy PVG Krishna Sarma and learnt Kuchipudi dance from Vedantam Radheshyam and Vedantam Rattayya Sarma. A multi-faceted personality, he imparts training in Kuchipudi dance, has choreographed solo numbers, composes music and jathis for Kuchipudi dance dramas and solo numbers, and is a vocalist and nattuvangam artiste for almost all contemporary leading Kuchipudi artists of the country. Currently he is part of the Department of Dance, Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad, as a vocalist.

# Papers from the Archives of *Nartanam*

## Evolution of Dance Music

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T. S. PARTHASARATHY

“There can be music without dance, but no dance without music” is an established dictum. All types of dances like classical, folk, tribal, religious, ritual and even funeral dances use various kinds of music. Dances in even remote villages and hill areas employ drums, crude pipes, flute, etc and grunts in a Naga dance are considered to be their music.

If we use the term ‘*Sangitam*’, there is no need to mention dance separately, as *Sangitam* includes dance and instrumental music, “*Gitam, Vadyam tatha nrityam trayam sangitam uchyate*” is a well-known sloka which is found in many books with a slight change here and there.

Bharata whose main object was to deal at length with dramatic representation and its various departments, assigns a minor role to vocal and instrumental music in his magnum opus. Among the seven chapters in his book dealing with music, only chapter 32 is devoted to *Dhruva gana* or the composition and singing of songs. The rest of the chapters cover the entire gamut of musical theory including *swara*, *sruti*, *murchhana*, *grama*, *tana*, *sthana*, *varna*, *alankara*, *jati*, *dhatu* and *vritti*. A literary composition with meaningful words conforming to the principle of music viz, *swara* and *taal* is called a *pada* or song. A song is also called a *dhruva* because the patterns of letters, *varna-s*, *alankara-s*, *layajati-s* and *pani-s* are well established in it. *Dhruva-s* have been classified into five categories like the entrance song (*pravesiki dhruva*), exit song (*naishkramiki dhruva*) and a *dhruva* employed in pure dance when such dance steps are introduced is called *akshepiki dhruva*. Bharata has given a large number of examples of *dhruva-s*.

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T. S. PARTHASARATHY is a renowned musicologist and critic. This article from the archives of *Nartanam* is an abridged version of the one first published in the souvenir of Kuchipudi Mahotsav 99.

# Kuchipudi Sangitha Nruthya Rupakam

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P. SANGEETHA RAO

Creative fine art expresses itself through various forms. One such popular expression of Kuchipudi dance form is *Yakshagana*. In Andhra Pradesh the *Yakshagana-s* such as Bhamu Kalapam, Golla Kalapam, Usha Parinayam, Bhakta Prahladha, Rama Natakam etc, have been staged uninterruptedly for generations together till date. The *Yakshagana* as pointed out is only one of the many forms through which the Kuchipudi dance expresses itself. The different forms and formats of the creative fine arts such as music, dance and literature continue to be popular with their audience for a limited period and slip into oblivion due to the pressures of time, social changes and the changing tastes of the audience. An instance of this is the lack of popular appreciation and support to the once popular poetic expression in Telugu literature set to the prosodic prescriptions. It is also true of certain forms practised in the fields of music and dance.

If a particular form of artistic expression continues to win appreciation and command a rightful position for a long period, it is but due to the presence of an inherent factor in that form of art that has the universal acceptance not limited by the tyranny of time. It is a fact that the original *Yakshagana* form of Kuchipudi dance style is gradually losing its popular appeal, but it is regaining its rightful glory in its modified Kuchipudi dance drama form. By the continuous research, effort and tireless practice of a determined few, the *Yakshagana* form is modified and evolved into Kuchipudi ballet in its present form and depicted as the cultural representative of the Andhra region.

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P. SANGEETHA RAO is a distinguished scholar of classical music. He was associated with Guru Vempati Chinna Satyam for over two decades and has composed the music for all the ballets produced by the maestro since 1974. This article from the archives of *Nartanam* is an abridged version of the one first published in the souvenir of Kuchipudi Mahotsav 96.

# Music and dance in temple plays - Yakshagana

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B. RAJANIKANTA RAO

## Rasa Nritya in 'Gaatha Saptasathi'

The following *Prakrit* verse from *Gaatha Saptasathi* depicts a pleasant encounter of the *Gopis* with Lord Krishna, after completing the performance of 'Rasa' dance:

(Prakrit)      “*Nachhana salaahana nihena Paasa  
parisanthia niuna govii Sarisa goviyaanam  
chumbaii Kavola padhimaagayam Kanham*”

(Sanskrit)    “*Nartane slaaghana Nibhena Paarsva  
parisamsthitha nipuna gopee Sadrisa  
gopikaanaam chumbati Kapola pratimagatam Krishnam*”

(English translation)

“The *gopis* had just ended their (*rasa*) dance. The *gopi*, who just stood aside watching their dance, went forward and kissed the cheeks of the dancer in appreciation. The glistening cheeks of the *gopis* reflected Lord Krishna's figure and all the kisses of the senior *gopi* reached Lord Krishna's reflection.

The *prakrit* verse, quoted from the *Gaatha Saptasathi* is indicative of the existence of the performing art form, as a musico-dance drama, entitled *Rasakam*. This dealt

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B. RAJANIKANTA RAO is a renowned poet, musician and playwright. 'Rajani', the pseudonym he adopted for the All India Radio, became a byword among Telugu listeners for his wonderful lyrics, musicals and yakshagana. He has set many of his own compositions and that of others to music, which are very popular. He is the recipient of the Central Sahitya Akademi Award in 1961, the coveted Nippon Hoso Kyorai award from Japan besides other honours. He is a prolific writer with several publications in Telugu and English to his credit. This paper was presented at the National Seminar on Kuchipudi Dance - Concerns and Future Projections, Hyderabad, 4-6 December, 1998 and later in the souvenir of Kuchipudi Mahotsav 99.

# **PERFORMANCE** **REVIEWS**

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## **SPIC MACAY convention with IGNCA collaboration centrestages multi-flavoured exercise as meditative not entertaining**

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LEELA VENKATARAMAN

A fruitful collaboration saw SPIC MACAY's seventh International Convention simultaneously celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Even as the torrid summer heat sapped energies, JNU hosted the week-long event on its spacious grounds. For SPIC MACAY's founder Kiran Seth, braving forty years, surmounting financial and organizational bottlenecks, armed with just total commitment and faith, that the right cause with 'Nishkama Seva' will keep the flame burning despite impediments, destiny this year ensured the collaboration of M. Jagadesh Kumar, Vice Chancellor JNU who, including the concluding all-night programme from 8p.m. to 6-30 a.m, was present right through with his wife.

While eloquently intoning about 'spirituality' in our arts, the increasing trend making everything a spectacle, has robbed arts of that attentive listening, creating that inner silence, which in equanimity has an ecstasy. Spiritual traditions have to be experienced for that quiet spaciousness within each one of us to be felt. SPIC MACAY's supreme contribution lies in trying to tether impetuous, restless young minds by providing, not high power entertainment (of which there is plenty) but a total Indian experience integrating Yoga, meditation, music, dance, theatre, painting, folk art and crafts, screening of epoch making films with interactions with writers and actors and workshops conducted by top artistes- helping evolve an understanding of the assimilative Indian identity sans dogma, in myriad flavours. It was extremely encouraging experiencing over 1200 youngsters from all parts

of India, squeezed into an auditorium normally seating 400 people(!), maintaining an attentive silence, refraining from loud ovations or claps, taking in all forms of art. A week of rising in the wee hours of 'brahma muhoortam' at 3-30 a.m., with a day filled with activities till 11.p.m. with only cat naps of 'Yog nidra' in between, the Convention was a unique exposure to the mystical core of the Indian experience.

One saw 'Madrasis' from the South, who when asked their names said that they could not understand Hindi, joining Sattriya workshop of Guru Ghanakanta Bora and thoroughly enjoying it! A young lecturer from an Engineering College in Kharagpur gamely trying to engage with Kathak movement in an Intensive said "I want to have that experience and know what it is". Fighting the weather, performing in non-air-conditioned classrooms, Bharatanatyam learners hailing from all corners of India, in Saroja Vaidyanathan's intensive, performed a swarawali, in stupefying synchronization! Geetanjali Lal's Kathak Intensive saw aspirants writing down bandishes with notations. Guru Munna Shukla, alongside the 'tathaitaitat' introduced youngsters to myriad hand movements interpreting 'Pancha bhoota'. Kavita Dwibedi's Intensive introduced beginners to the central Odissi concerns of tribhanga, Chowka with a Vighneswara invocation. Rani Khanam tried some basic abhinaya, given her group of mixed proficiency. Involved youngsters in Sudha Raghuraman's intensive perfected a Balamurali Krishna Varnam in Gambheera Nattai and a Dayanand Saraswati composition in Yamuna Kalyani and in Sarathi Chatterjee's Intensive, one heard *sur*-filled singing by a large group. A North Indian couple, dumb struck after an exposure to Kapila Venu's Kudiyattam kept repeating - "We never knew such an art form existed. "Kamaal hai". For many youngsters and adults, this week long Convention proved a primary look at the entirety of India.

Coming across so many eminent people from various spheres compels the realization of how many great men and women have variously contributed to the country! Acknowledging this truth is the Shree Ragam pancharatna Keertanam "Endaro mahanubhavulu" by inimitable composer/musician Tyagaraja. Carnatic violinist A. Kanyakumari, epitome of modesty, accompanied by disciple Sai Rakshi, presented this very Keertanam, the solfa passages before each sahitya sequence robustly suited for the Tavil percussion (Triplicane Shankar) and Kanjira (Aniruddha Atreya) - engaging the full attention of students. The zippy Hamsadhwani start with "Vatapiganapatim" and Tillana in Sindhubhairavi also had a rhythmic gait finding quick response in the young. Soft touches with Raga improvisations came in Tyagaraja's 'Inta Sowkhyamu' in Kapi, with fleeting glimpses of Hindolam, Shahana etc and finally came the melodious Yamuna Kalyani "Krishna ne begane baro". If Violin accompanied by Tavil catered to youthful taste, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan's Sarod recital sported two accompanists on tabla,

while an episodic reminiscence preempted his main Durbari Kanada, of how his father and Guru Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan, on the occasion of being conferred the Padma Bhushan was introduced to the President Rajendra Prasad, who enquired what he could do for him. The Ustad replied that he wanted nothing but preservation in its purity of Durbari Kanada, created by Miya Tansen in the 15<sup>th</sup> century - rescued from dilution through liberties of present-day artistes! The Sarod maestro's rendition of Durga was precluded by 'Pahadi Durga', Durga used in Assam's Bihu dance and 'Tagore's Ekla Chalo', before presenting the full-blown classical version. While this, for some diehards watered down classicism, it is also significant to educate youngsters on how classical ragas are often stylized versions of folk originals.

Music recitals radiated the feel of interacting with a higher consciousness, as in Pandit Rajan-Sajan Misra's savoured, step by step Khayal alaap in raga Shree, as also the Chota khayal with the Ramadasa composition, concluding with the Bhajan saluting the teacher - "Guru sadhu aise hi guru pave, Raag Rangaka bhar bhar pyala pive aur. pilaave". The musical vigour combining negation of the Self Characterised Vidwan T.V. Shankaranarayanan's salutation, seeking the deity Vazhangadi Mahaganapati through his own Hindolam composition, in search of inner peace. The Kalyani center-piece bristling with commanding virtuosity and briskness of improvised swara passages, the quivering emotion of a Papanasam Sivan Virutham evoking Guruvayurappa in Chakravakam or Tygaraja's "Nagumomu Ganaleni" in Abheri, or the yearning appeal of the Jonepuri "Eppo Varuvaro", were all laced with that feel of addressing a higher presence.

So too was the trilling intensity of Khayal in Ashwini Bhide Deshpande's Jhinhoti "Maha deva Shankara" like an aradhana in the vilambit in Jhaptal (Drut in teental was in Tarana). An aesthetic contrast with "Papihara" in Miya Malhar and finale with the deep philosophy of a Kabir Bhajan "Chadar ho gayi bahut purani" was in character.

The gravitas and command in Prabha Atre's Khayal rendition of Jog Kauns and her Bageshree, Kaushik Ranjani showed up the grandeur of India's classical music to listeners. As for Ustad Shahid Parven Khan's Sitar, the leisurely alaap treatment (rare today) in Rageshri seemed to speak to the listener's inside and the piercingly melodious Piloo had the audience in raptures. SPIC MACAY's encouragement of rare instruments like the Rudra Veena played by Ustad Bahaudin Dagar, was like a deep prayer in the alap in Yaman, basking in the mandara sthayi alone for over half an hour.

The equivalent of the 'Gayaki ang', the appreciation for the violin playing duo Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi direct inheritors of the legacy

of their esteemed father late Lalgudi Jayaraman, hearteningly revealed non south Indians becoming more open to Carnatic classical. Starting with the Shyama Sastry “marivere” in Anandabhaiavi followed by Tygaraja’s “Manavinaalakincha” in Nalinakanti, “teerade vilaiyaatu pillai” followed by Sadashiv Brahmendra’s composition in Sama, and Tillana in Desh was the ragam, tanam with pallavi in Hamsanadi “swagatam Shubha Swagatam” – and all this at 3 o clock in the morning, after the duo had just landed from an American tour!

From Sufiana Qawwalis by the Warsi Brothers of Hyderabad to Bhai Mahohar Singh’s reposeful cogently introduced Gurbani compositions, from Capital City Ministrels presenting traditional and contemporary creations to Buddhist meditation by Drikung Kagyu Shachukul Monastery Monks – Music- in- prayer presented an incredible range.

Rural- urban divides ceased to exist, as students paid obeisance to artistes like Teejan Bai of Pandvani ( pandva- vani of the Pandavas) , whose absence of formal literacy posed no hindrances in imaginative mentoring, her Intensive aspirants encouraged to speak in Hindi and not her Madhya Pradesh dialect. Tribal art too had its representation in Gusadi Dance from Telengana, dancers resplendent in exotic peacock feather-adorned massive headdresses dancing to the drone pipe accompaniment, in a variety of steps for over an hour!

Dadi Pudumjee’s talk with demonstration of inanimate objects and dolls, through the puppeteer’s manipulations, becoming characters evoking that suspension of disbelief, had the most avid listeners. Shri Krishna Khanna’s talk on Modern painting with some visuals of his coveted work screened, astonished, with the clear thinking introspections of a 94 year old - confined to the wheelchair but with a still razor sharp mind, explaining how the Progressive Art Movement believes in no structured work – for as one applies brush to a surface, the expanding work assumes its own logic and begins to say something. He showed visuals of his work on the Maurya Hotel phony Dome where he set off with no preconceived idea. Soon from shades of the Last Supper to Power represented in Military Trucks, it became a collage of emotions on Earth and in the Universe, with animals, people, mountains and what have you. The compulsion to paint, acts as the driving force.

Dancing as if possessed, Malavika Sarukkai had the overfilled auditorium spellbound, notwithstanding the inexplicably long wait before she made her entry after announcement. The majesty of her Shiva depiction as ‘Paramadayakara’ ‘mrigadhara’ Gangadhara, based on Tyagaraja’s composition in Pantuvarali “Shambho Mahadeva” was followed by the grace and dignity of Devi as visualized in the Neelambari ‘Sringaralahiri’. Captivatingly varied responses, human and

non-human to 'Maulischandrika' Krishna entering Mathura, based on *Krishna Karnamritam* verses sung in ragamalika, evoked overwhelming moods of desire, wonder and charm. The Balamurali Tillana in Brindavani ushered the conclusion with " Vandemataram". Murali Parthasarathy's moving vocal support along with a fine music team of instrumentalists, not omitting Malavika's passionately involved introductions made the evening unique.

Kapila Venu's Koodiyattam wizardry in mapping of facial expressions with the Mizhavu percussion, visualised 'Kailas Udharanam'. Parvati's suspicious queries concerning Ganga lodged in Shiva's locks, prompting Shiva's evasively trivialising explanations had confused Parvati leaving in a jealous tizzy - till Mount Kailash her home, arrogantly lifted by Ravana, starts shaking, sending her scurrying back to Shiva for comfort.

It was a rare interacting session with Rajiv Kapur winner of the Best Actor award for the "Making of the Mahatma" in 1996, along with Pallavi Joshi who plays Kasturba. The absorbing film, living up to the challenge of so persuasively fleshing out roles of persons so familiar to our times, while revealing the inner workings of the Mahatma's mind also raised questions about the sacrifices demanded of his wife and family, in fulfilling his goals. How did Kasturba, who in dry humour mentions at one point that having survived marriage with Mohandas, nothing is beyond her, feel about her life? The film is a must see for all Indians!

A marathon effort pulled off yet again!

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## Hyderabad Diary

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SRIVATHSAN NADADHUR

### **A fitting ode to Telugu literary greats**

Quite often, the beauty of regional languages, which lies in its abstraction and minimalism, doesn't receive the significance it merits in classical dance performances. Perhaps, at a time when dance recitals are preferred to be shorter by the day, the need to provide commentary/context behind the lyrics of a particular dance item isn't stressed upon enough. However, in a recent abhinaya-based presentation by noted Bharatanatyam dancer Anupama Kylash where she chose to explore the 'sensual and sublime' quality of a Telugu padam, the focus on the lyric remained as significant as the dance item.

The fourth of 'The Ramachar Memorial Concert' series, hosted at Saptarni, Hyderabad, was an artistic ode to the Telugu literary greats, namely Annamacharya, Kshetrayya, Sarangapani, Munipalle Subramanya Kavi and Pothuloori Veerabrahmam. The dancer Anupama herself provided an elaborate context to each of the compositions she had performed on the stage while highlighting the significance of the poet's literary style, themes, and signatures.

It was fitting enough that the evening began with an Annamacharya kirtana (who's revered as the father of the padakavita format), Valapula daadi vacche vanitalaara. The composition conveys the feeling of a nayika who's troubled by the pangs of separation from the man of her choice, in a lyric filled with several imageries and motifs about nature. The dancer was a picture of confidence with her abhinaya, playing the lovestruck protagonist who has to express 'viraha taapa' in multiple ways. The femininity essential to the number was brought out with utmost grace.

The mood of the performance had soon transitioned to shringara, through a Kshetrayya padam where the naayika makes the first move in expressing love for her male counterpart. Laced with a delicate balance between the expression of love and sarcasm, the composition that goes like 'Magavaarika intha mohamaatamaithe, maguvala gathi emiraa' (If a man is this shy, what can you expect from a woman?) provided adequate scope for a dancer to portray the

song's intent through her body language. That, Anupama did well, rightly balancing her performance with a hint of condescendence.

The dancer next chose to perform select episodes from the Adhyatmika Ramayana with the number 'Ne Dhanyanaithini Jagathprabho', penned by Muni-palle Subramanya Kavi. The piece opened with a conversation between Lord Shiva and Parvati where the former narrates the spiritual essence of Ramayana to his better-half. While performing crisply packaged episodes revolving around Lord Rama's childhood, his equation with his mother Kausalya and his transformation into a powerful warrior and a noble husband, Anupama was up to her task well. The multiplicity of emotions in the item elicited an engaging performance from the dancer.

Another composition that made for a unique interpretation was poet Sarangapani's Enta peda vaade venugopaludu, a 'ninda stuti' where the lyrics conveyed how a devotee intimately chides his favourite God and describes his leelas. The element of irony and humour in the composition was utilised well by the dancer, who had her task cut out in portraying Lord Krishna in his complete glory through hand gestures and expressions.

It was only poetic that Anupama concluded the concert on a note of vairagya (renunciation) and what better than a song by Pothuluri Veerabrahmam to do so? Kasiki povalena, theerthamu mosuku raavalena, it went and the number was relevant in many ways than one. It was a piece whose bhava wasn't the easiest to be portrayed, with renunciation as its primary focus. The number was rightly repackaged for the audiences, given it didn't stress highly on detachment and rather was suggestive about not getting distracted by the attachments surrounding you. The parallel between environmental conservation and the abhishekam done for God was easily the most evocative segment of the performance.

This was a solo presentation that was as enriching as it was appealing because its purpose went beyond engaging the crowds and also informed them. However, the commentary to the compositions marginally went overboard at times and took precedence over the dance presentation. Veteran dancer Kala Krishna's words about Devadasis utilising their monetary wealth to give back something to the society, threw additional light on their community beyond dance.

### **Vyshnavie's Kuchipudi enthralls Hyderabad connoisseurs**

Emerging Bharatanatyam danseuse Vyshnavie Sainath Yagnesh showcased her versatility across another dance form, Kuchipudi, in a captivating solo recital held at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad recently. Organised by Chaitanya Art

Theatres, her performance adhered to the structure of a conventional Kuchipudi recital that kept a packed auditorium glued over two hours. The dancer, a disciple of Kuchipudi exponent Vedantam Satya Narasimha Sastry, made good use of her agility and apt abhinaya to deliver a fine performance.

Commencing the proceedings, Vyshnavie had performed to Gajavadana Beduve, a Purandaradasa kriti in praise of Lord Ganesha. Swift footwork coupled with hand gestures and mudras that aptly portrayed aspects unique to the elephant-headed God, the start was a hint of better things to come and the danseuse surely didn't disappoint.

The central act of her performance was the staging of Siddhendra Yogi's Bhamu Kalapam. The story of the multi-faceted mythological character Sathyabhama continues to warrant similar attention and allures crowds regardless of the dancer who's performing it. Here, Vyshnavie's strong physicality and appealing histrionics aided her cause in bringing Sathyabhama alive on the stage. Meanwhile, her nritya and nritya captured the self-pride and the essence of Sathyabhama's personality to perfection. The interactive quality of the composition, where Sathyabhama narrates various facets of herself to her sakhis besides the contrast between aspects like jeevatma and paramatma, was a delight to watch.

Vyshnavie's next item, Bala Gopala, a tarangam by Narayana Theertha, took the performance forward in a seamless fashion. With a gamut of expressions conveying every aspect that makes Lord Krishna a charmer with the women and a favourite among his devotees, the dancer displayed good poise and carried off the quintessential dance segment on the brass plate with much elan.

The pure-dance oriented piece of any classical performance, the thillana composed by Kuchipudi legend Vempati China Satyam, set in Hindola ragam and adi talam, sustained the momentum of Vyshnavie's performance well. The dancer showed no nerves as she displayed her finesse with the thrikalam adavus written in praise of the Kuchipudi dance form.

Vyshnavie had marked a closure to the classical evening with the mangalam in style. That she'd received adequate praise from veteran Kuchipudi dancer Shobha Naidu at the venue, served enough testament to her ability. Vocalist Chander Rao's pulsating support to the dancer besides the contributions of Karra Srinivas, Shiva Ramakrishna, and Venkatesh on the mridangam, violin and the flute respectively, provided the right impetus to Vyshnavie's performance. The event also saw organisers felicitating Shobha Naidu and Vedantam Satya Narasimha Sastry (who also assisted with the nattuvangam) for their notable contributions to the dance form.

### **When the vahanas turned storytellers**

Bharatanatyam dancer Ananda Shankar Jayant, known for consistently reinventing her repertoire with the changing tastes of the audiences, had yet again staged one of her most famous and innovative productions ‘Tales of the Bull and Tiger’ to a packed audience at Ravindra Bharathi recently. Hosted in memory of vocalist Sathiraju Venumadhav, whose musical efforts for dance productions were extensively encouraged by Ananda Shankar herself, the dancer and her students were successful in telling the story of Lord Shiva and Parvati through their vahanas, Simha, and Nandi yet again.

Nuanced choreography, decorous backdrop, glitzy lighting, and powerful music were instrumental in ensuring an enriching production that didn’t give its audiences much time to breathe over the 87-minute span. The delicately packaged story about the legends of Shiva and Parvati took off with a series of enchanting verses by the mooshika on the elephant-headed God, performed evocatively by the students of Shankarananda Kalakshetra. The shift in focus to the parents was almost seamless, as the production elaborated on specific qualities unique to both Shiva and Parvati with an impressive use of audio-visuals. The quirky props to depict the mooshika and mayuram, the vahanas of Ganesha and Kartikeya respectively, made for a visual spectacle on the stage.

One of the most engaging portions of the production dealt with the Vishnu-Brahma clash owing to Shiva, as the high pitched chants based on several literary texts referencing the God provided just the right vocal intensity backing the expressive act from the dancers. Then came the mesmerising union of Lord Shiva and Parvati, as narrated by their vahanas to God’s children. Ananda Shankar was particularly expressive with her abhinaya; meanwhile, the procession leading to their marriage was a sight to behold. Bengaluru-base dancer Mithun Shyam made a mark in his brief yet assured portrayal of Shiva besides a Tandava laced with his eclectic range of expressions and physical agility.

The climactic portion of the lullaby was timed right. The teamwork of the production showed, be it Ganesh Nallari’s costumes, Renuka Prasad’s powerful rendition of the jathis, Gunjan Ashtaputre’s work on the digital front or Ananda Shankar’s stylised choreography. One issue with the production was its effort to be multilingual, which clearly didn’t materialise efficiently. From Adi Sankaracharya’s Soundarya Lahari to Lalitha Sahasranamam, the Thiruppugazh, Thevaram, Mutthaih Bhagavathar kritis and Dayananda Saraswati’s Bho Shambho, the lingual transition could have been better. Sticking to one language or a couple of them at best would’ve probably helped the consistency factor. Mamidi Hari

Krishna (Director for the Department of Language and Culture, Telangana) and J Swaminathan (Deputy Managing Director, SBI) had also graced the event.

### **When technicalities complemented terrific choreography**

The eve of the World Dance Day meant more than just an ideal coincidence for the anniversary of Sangeet Natak Akademi winner and Kuchipudi danseuse Deepika Reddy's dance school Deepanjali. The event facilitated an opportunity for over 80 budding dancers to showcase their worth to a jam-packed gathering at the cultural venue Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad. Imaginative choreography backed by resonating performances ensured that the recitals spanning over two-hours went by like a breeze. A conventionally technology-addicted Hyderabad audience sat speechless for the duration for a classical performance, which was an achievement in itself.

Perfect symmetry, terrific physical flexibility, quality choreography aesthetics and the effective use of technology were the hallmarks of the performances by dancers aged between six and forty. The invocatory dance pieces Mahadevasutam and Poorvarangam marked a sound start for the programme. The jati-swaram, a critical test on the nritta aspect for a dancer, opened audiences to the agility and synchrony of the budding dancers performing to rhythmic dance patterns, set to Attana ragam and adi talam.

Ramayana Sabdam, an integral facet of a holistic Kuchipudi act, cast a spell with a wide gamut of emotions it conveyed across several episodes of Lord Rama's life. From Rama's birth to him offering shelter to Vibhishana to triumphing over Ravana and the subsequent coronation at Ayodhya, the dancers displayed impressive on-stage camaraderie and swiftness as they performed to the piece. Each of these incidents was marked by sharp and crisp narratives that retold the epic tale with much flair and spellbinding choreography.

Oothukkadu Venkata Subbaiyer's compositions always lend themselves to appealing dance numbers for the diverse lyrical and poetic quality they possess. Deepika Reddy, quick to realise the same, chose Brindavana Nilaye and Swagatham Krishna for the later part of the programme and her students lived up to the literary richness of the compositions with their on-stage presentation. High on the shringara element, Brindavana Nilaye is full of visual metaphors that compare Radha's beauty to several aspects of nature. The dance performance was as charismatic as the literary work itself, all thanks to the right mudras, the impressive abhinaya and perfect coordination between the dancers.

The pièce de résistance was, however, Swagatham Krishna beyond a doubt. Aspects surrounding Krishna's childhood including God's tussles with Mushtika

and Chanoora, the Kalinga nartanam were beautifully reimagined in the dance format. The focus shifted to Lord Rama for the final act for poet Ramadasu's work Thakkuvemi Manaku that reiterated the basis of the Dasavataras and the several tales embedded in them. The choreography based on unique visual elements surrounding each of the 10 avatars made for an aesthetic conclusion. Energy, spirituality, athleticism and a sweeping impact, this evening had it all.

### **Bharatanatyam danseuse Gayathri Amulya finds her feet**

It was a warm summer evening under the stars and equally pleasant was the sight of watching young danseuse Gayatri Amulya find her feet in front of a distinguished audience for the event 'Parampara' at the Apollo Foundation Theatre in Hyderabad. The student of dancer Kiranmayee Madupu had paid a rich ode to the Vazhuvoor style of Bharatanatyam whose origins date back to the Chola dynasty.

Performing one of the original styles of the dance-form known for its integral focus on the shringara aspect, Gayatri's recital scored well in terms of the abhinaya besides adequate precision with her foot movements. Amulya's alarippu set in misra chapu talam threw a good hint of what the programme was to offer in terms of artistic quality. It was indeed a welcoming tribute from Amulya to her gurus and the Lord of dance Nataraja that commenced the evening on a note of piety.

The varnam, the central piece of the Bharatanatyam performance was an adequate showcase of the expressional range of the dancer. In the shoes of a nayika, the lovestruck maiden who experiences viraha taapa as she's distanced from Lord Subramanya Swamy, the artiste's true-to-life elaboration of her spiritual leanings, liking for the Lord and the reason behind her emotional distress warranted genuine attention from the spectators. Kiranmayee's choreography was a perfect exercise in brevity and elegance without losing sight of the essence of the piece.

Incidentally, her next piece was Natanam Adinar, the Gopala Krishna Bharati-composed kirtanam set in Vasantha ragam and ata talam that Kiranmayee's guru Hema Malini Arni has also popularly specialised in. No wonder as a pretext to the performance, Kiranmayee had told that her guru could perform this with her 'muscle memory'. Gayathri's performance to the composition was efficient but relatively restrained beyond necessity this time around. While her adavus were near-perfect, her expressions weren't as pronounced as it was expected for a kirtanam that depicts the majestic dance of Lord Shiva.

However, the dancer was quick to rectify the same and come into her own elements with Madhura Nagarilo, the jaavali composed by Chittoor Subramanyam

Pillai. Her performance was exactly what the doctor ordered for the day, depicting just the right amount of innocence for a young girl attracted and yet pained by the mischief brought about by a flirtatious Krishna. Amulya was poised, coy, shy but as firm in what she wants to convey through the piece, which is exactly what a javali demands. The khamas thillana exhibited Amulya's confidence with her nritta. K Chandra Rao's uplifting, powerful vocals, Sai Kumar on the violin and Srinivas Karra on the mridangam were a right match to the danseuse's performance.

### **A holistic initiative to discuss the nuances of dance**

Classical dance finds its ultimate expression on the stage, but there's so much nuance, understanding, and sadhana behind the act that often goes undiscussed. The need for a refined understanding of the academic side to dance is as significant as the performance tradition itself and there couldn't have been a more fitting day than the World Dance Day to realise the same. Natya Mitram, the city-based group that brings together dancers to understand the subtext to a form and performance, in association with Shilparamam, bridged that gap with their event 'Jignyasa', a quiz on Indian classical dances across junior and categories among dance students.

With over 16 groups participating in the event, enthusiastic and budding dancers left no stone unturned to dig their knowledge surrounding dance forms for a couple of hours. While dancers Munukuntla Sambasiva and Vaidehi Subhash had served as panelists for the juniors category, Anupama Kylash and Yashoda Thakore did the honours for the senior students respectively. Aparna Dhulipala and Niyanthri Mu, research scholars from the University of Hyderabad made for spirited quiz masters, channelising the memory power and the creative energies of the students in the right direction.

The event not only brought out the competitive dimension to dance, but also helped students learn from each other. It was indeed a pleasant sight to watch young minds debate, discuss dance in such intricate depth. While students from dancer Anusha Srinivas' dance school Srinidhi Arts Academy had bagged top honours in the junior category, students of Pallavi Academy of Fine Arts founded by P.B. Krishna Bharathi scaled past the rest in the senior group. Other students from Srinidhi Arts Academy and Muvva- Nritya Raaga Nigamam had emerged runner-ups in the two categories.

A series of eclectic dance performances in the evening at the cultural venue marked a fitting end to the day. While Kalamandalam Sreeja Satyanarayana came up with a delightful act in Mohiniattam, the likes of Preetilekha, Neeraja Devi, Subrat Sarkar, and Sanghamitra Mudili did well to sustain the spirit of the event with their performances in Sattriya, Kuchipudi, Kathak, and Odissi forms.

### **Sincere effort, middling impact**

No epic or a classic literary text is complete without a dimension attached to friendship. Classical dance forms, with all its richness embedded with several mythological tales, make for great storytelling devices to elaborate on such themes. Pramod Reddy and his dancer counterparts from Abhinetri Dance Academy had proved the same and enthralled audiences by focusing on several interesting friendships between mythological figures through their dance production 'Maithrim Bhajathe' at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad recently. Rama, Krishna, Karna, Kuchela and Sugreeva were the characters in focus for the dance drama that was engaging in its two-hour duration.

Borrowing several references from epics and literary texts like the Vedanta Panchadashi, Rigveda, Adhyathma Ramayanam, Geya Bhagavatham, Narayanaya Theerta Tarangam, the production had a strong basis and impressed crowds with a neat presentation that provided alternative perspectives to several mythological tales. However, despite the apparent sincerity, the grandeur of the execution and the vastness and the diversity of the material, Maithrim Bhajathe wasn't as organic as it was expected to be. Lost in its multiplicity of languages and literary embellishments, the clarity of the presentation appeared to have slightly taken a backseat.

The visual impact was clearly an advantage that worked in the favour of dancer Pramod Reddy and co. Certain imagery within the choreography and the research that went into the material were quite appreciable. The Rama-Sugreeva episode in the production was one of its major highlights. The precise choreography did well to underline how Rama channelised the transformation of Sugreeva into a man of worth who even goes onto help the former in the annihilation of Ravana.

With the next piece, the proceedings weren't as smooth in the attempt to deify Krishna and understand his friendships with several characters including Kuchela, Arjuna among a few. The execution deserved more simplicity. As the philosophical side to Krishna went slightly overboard in the item, indulgence superseded the precision aspect. The choreography and the performances are still worthy, but there's so much material dug up into one piece that the essence is muddled somewhere between. The impact, as a result, doesn't sweep you off your feet.

If not the best, the most interesting segment for the evening had explored the friendship between Karna and Duryodhana in detail. While most dance productions glorify their equation, this episode in Maithrim Bhajatha was open in its criticism for Karna in his blunt support for Duryodhana in several situations, despite knowing that his friend may have been on the wrong side of dharma. The courtroom

sequence where Draupadi's dignity was compromised, was poignantly recreated, thanks to the efforts of danseuse Sridevi, Pramod and Ravi Teja who'd reprised the roles of Draupadi, Karna and Duryodhana respectively. The dramatic potential was utilised well in the choreography and the impressive use of colourful lights, shadows, rich costumes further enhanced the impact of the presentation.

Signing off with the very composition the production is based on, Kanchi Paramacharya's Maithrim Bhajatha, Pramod Reddy's attempt to reinvent himself with a contemporary spin to mythology was mostly successful. Vocalist Sweta Prasad's boisterous voice had livened up the presentation. Full marks for the effort, just that the result wasn't as seamless.

### **Dance in all its diversity**

In a first of its kind attempt in Hyderabad, the International Dance Day witnessed over 25 dance forms being performed through the day at the cultural venue Nritya Forum. The who's who of the dancer community, from amateurs to hobbyists to professionals, several performers took to the stage to unleash their creative expression. Organised by Face of Artz as part of a weekly dance series titled Yaad Karo Kurban promoted by expressionist dancer Patruni Chidananda Sastry, the event looked at dance as a form of unifier in the country with all its multiplicity and diversity; the performing art fulfilling its patriotic purpose this occasion.

The first five performances were dance pieces choreographed as an ode to the freedom fighters and dance gurus who were torchbearers of their respective forms across the world. While Mayuri Dance Academy did their bit to dedicate their thillana to Rukmini Devi Arundale, Kashinath Dey and his students came up with a unique ode to Rabindranath Tagore with their Rabindra Nritya. Mani Prasad Goud's tribute to Nataraja Ramakrishna and Vempati China Satyam followed suit to make way for the other segment of the event minus the patriotic fervour.

It was a refreshing change to see the Kalavantula Natyam returning to the stage after a reasonable gap, the dancer Alekhya Mangalampalli providing the right subtext to the dance form prior the performance evoked fond nostalgia of the rare performing art of the Kalavantulus, proclaimed to be the oldest devadasis of the Telugu land. Avijit Kundu's agility and swiftness besides his bhava were his strengths in his performance of the Gaudiya Nritya, a dance form that traces its origins to Bengal. Satwikka Penna's Andra Natyam, Preeti Mohapatra's students' presentation of the Battu and Mangalacharan (integral aspects to Odissi) held the audience sway. A touch of the folk came into the fray with a couple of Sambalpur folk numbers performed by the students of Sashmita Mishra.

Theatre actress and dancer Anita Peter's brief Mohiniyattam sustained the creative momentum for the day and scored high on precision and aesthetics. Team Nation's Rock Beat, replete with youngsters brought a slice of the western aura with their performances and equally effective were the likes of Rishab and Manikanta with their hip-hop acts and finger stunts. A young danseuse Keerti advocated for the support of LGBTQIA groups across the world through the dance form Waacking, unique to the queer community. Belly dance also found its way into the programme, with two dancers Manaswini and Sravan Telu utilising their fluid physicality to their advantage during their performances. Patruni Chidananda Sastry's transformation from Bharatanatyam to the Japanese performing tradition Butoh was seamless.

Next came a few basic classical pieces by the students of Bharatanatyam dancers Pujita Krishna, Subbulakshmi. The rustic spin to the event was also provided by students of Mayuri Dance Academy as they grooved to garba, lavani, and kavadi chindu forms to name a few. An inspirational talk by Bharatanatyam exponent Mridula Anand was all the impetus that a dance aspirant needed to fulfil his/her penchant for the forms they're interested in. The day wasn't definitely a purist's delight but it did take one step ahead in making dance forms more accessible to its rasikas.

### **In memory of Sattiraju Venumadhav**

The untimely passing away of vocalist Sattiraju Venumadhav at 44, the one of a kind musical talent, hasn't only left a huge void to fill in the music fraternity alone but also the dancer community. After undergoing a series of surgeries owing to heart ailments, the late musician breathed his last at a private hospital in Hyderabad in late April. Venumadhav had proved his worth as a vocalist and a composer specialising at dance productions, renditions of annamacharya kirtanas and a quality teacher to name a few.

Deservingly, all the music sabhas in Hyderabad had put up a united front pay their condolences to the vocalist at the cultural venue, Saptaparni in an attempt to ensure that his works live beyond his age. In a meet hosted by the singer's good friend and cultural organiser Mahidhara Seetarama Sharma, the classical fraternity recollected his musical contributions and what made him stand out among the pack of contemporary vocalists.

The spectators at the venue were teary-eyed as they'd listened to Venumadhav's works like Ninnadanela, Sri Raghukulamanduputti, Nagavulu Nijamani projected on a video screen. Event organisers, musicians, dancers, connoisseurs, the singer's near and dear went on a memory trail to describe the

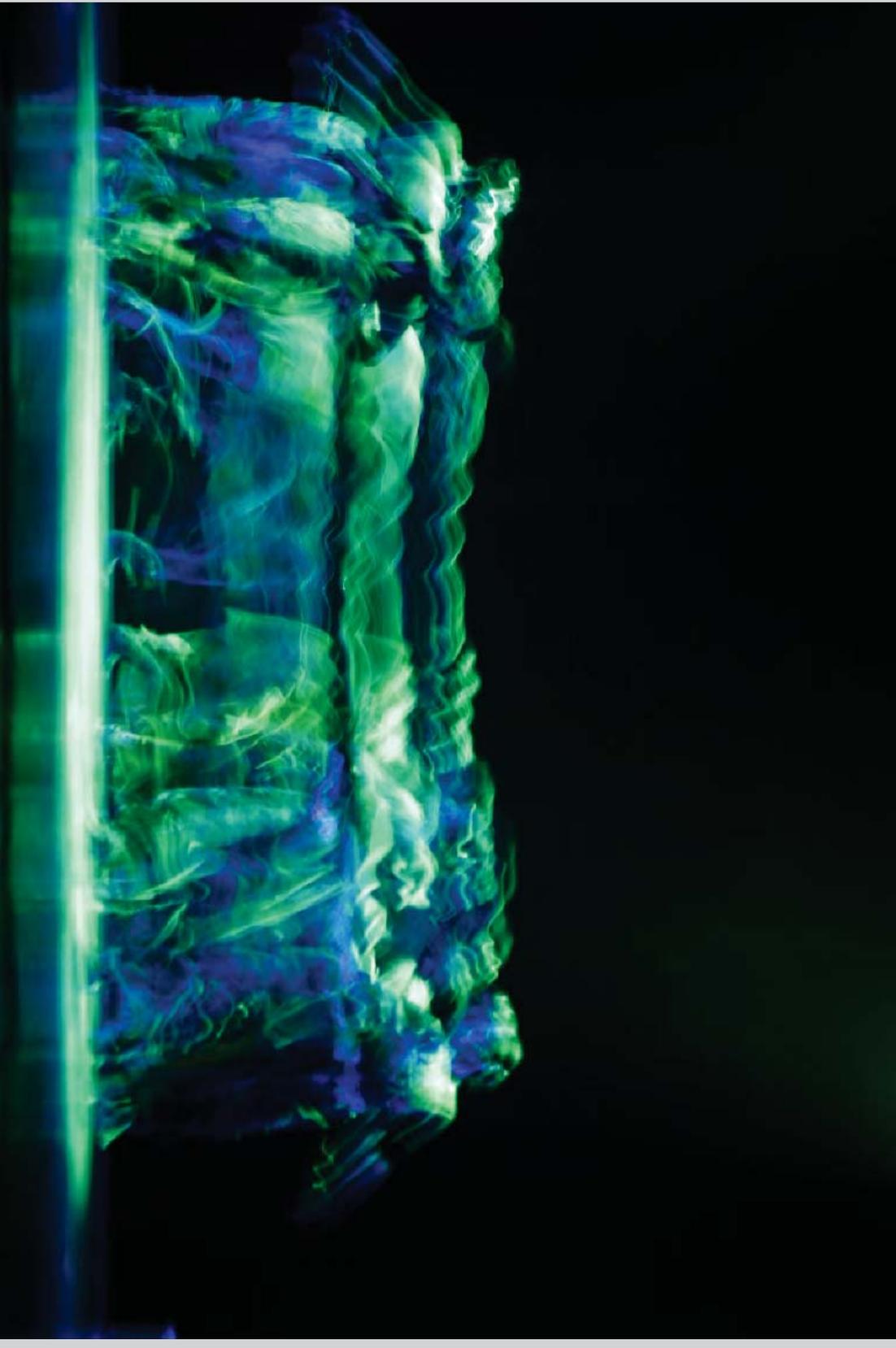
stark simplicity and the musical excellence that the man had attained at a very young age.

Bharatanatyam veteran Ananda Shankar, the silent force behind Venumadhav's growth as a musician went onto describe what the loss would mean to her. "Venu was introduced to my mother through Eelapati Sivaprasad. Venu had met me during the late 90s, marking his early beginnings in singing for dance recitals while my mom used to give him specific instructions. Even as my mom had passed away, she had taken a promise from Venu that he would never leave me. But he did, now! From a young man to a matured married man with two kids, it's been a two-decade journey that I truly cherish. We have travelled across the world for performances, Russia, Zambia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, UK. Wherever he'd gone, his bharateeyata was intact, he was particular about his Sandhya vandanam."

Elaborating on his musical journey, she had added, "His music matured over the years in a very interesting way. Venu itself felt that it's impossible to remember the numbers and the patterns for dance numbers. Being an impromptu dancer myself, we complemented each other with the renditions and arrived at a pattern and gave indications to each other, sharing great creative synergy. For my productions like Darshanam, an ode to the eye, Kavyanjali and The Tale of the Bull and the tiger, he had used rare ragas like samudradeepika, atihar, was adept at singing for the Nava rasas."

She felt that his biggest strength was his sense of humour and his ability to bring the dancer and the orchestra in the same framework. "Bhava was always his strength and it worked magic for the dancers. We all have cried for the emotion he has brought to the compositions. Tamil, Malayalam, Sanskrit and Telugu, language was no barrier to him. Very few people actualise their innate talent to reality and get swayed by the samsara bandhanam, but he had managed to do both. It's a big loss for us. Thankfully, his music is out in many forms; so it's up to us to take it forward," she concluded.

Another Hyderabad based dancer Geetha stated, "It was only because of Ananda Shankar that we used to go to hear Venumadhav, be it recorded music or live music. For a performing artiste, the most important thing is to bring the rasa and bhakti. Only when you do it through your soul that you touch the hearts of the audience. This is the greatest quality of Venu Madhav, he would touch all of us with his music and the quote 'music is the language of the soul' is truly evident in his case. We will miss his soulful renditions, but he will continue to live with us through his music. I'll look forward to listening to his performances again and again with Ananda akka's performances."



**"The Spirit of Dance"**

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