

Folk Dances of India: Kuchipudi

Kuchipudi is one of the major Indian classical dance folk forms performed in India. It derives its name from its village of origin, Kuchelapuram and is one of the favourite dance forms of Lord Krishna. Kuchipudi is known for its fast rhythms and fluid movements, creating a blend of delicacy and strength. Kuchipudi has for sure occupied a special place among other Indian classical dance forms by being a country-wide celebrated dance folk form and is recognized worldwide in many international traditional festivals.

Folk Dances of India: Kalbeliya

The desert state's iconic Kalbeliya dance form performed and enjoyed by the Kalbeliyan community of Rajasthani snake charmers encompasses swirling and graceful movements that make this dance a treat to behold. Their dances and songs are a matter of pride and a marker of belonging for the Kalbelias, which reflect the imaginative adaptation of this group of snake charmers to ever-changing socioeconomic circumstances in their Rajasthani society.

Leading scholar of Indian classical dance, architecture, art history, culture Kapila Vatsyayan no more

Dr Kapila Vatsyayan passed away peacefully at her residence (No.85, SFS Flats, Gulmohar Enclave, New Delhi), Wednesday 16th September, 2020 at about 0900 hrs, this morning, . She was a leading scholar of Indian classical dance, art, architecture, and art history.

Geeta Chandran to Perform at IHC

rajivchan@gmail.com IHC/rajivchan@gmail.com has invited Dancer Geeta Chandran and her Natya Vriksha Dance Company to present ANEKANTA at the Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

The key leitmotif of Chandran's ANEKANTA is that there are multiple realities to every issue – cultural, political, social, economic and, in fact, every aspect of life and living! ANEKANTA celebrates acceptance of multiple truths, embracing diversity and of universal acceptance.

In group choreographies, Geeta Chandran views ANEKANTA through dramatic dance strategies like an ALARIPPU presented in three speeds; of exploring GRIHABHEDA through movement; and finding linkages between SOUND and SILENCE! She also presents NABAGUNJARA, a thrilling episode from an Oriya Mahabharata.

In her solo choreography, Geeta's abhinaya will throw the spotlight on RAVANA, King of Lanka, known in all three worlds as an exemplar Shiva Bhakta. And yet, universally considered a monstrous villain. Yet, within the Valmiki Ramayana itself, there is evidence that he was so much more. And these shades offer the dancer an opportunity to explore ANEKANTA within the context of the Ramayana.

Music for ANEKANTA is designed by Geeta Chandran in close collaboration with K. Venkateshwaran and Dr. S. Vasudevan. This lyrical music-scape is further enhanced with rhythmic inputs by K. Sivakumar and Lalgudi Sri Ganesh adding verve and vibrancy to the production.

Yet another path-breaking dance concept by Dancer GEETA CHANDRAN, ANEKANTA aspires to bring valuable oxygen to the larger public discourse on identity. It is a powerful artistic statement of Dancer Geeta Chandran who has moved tradition forward with her strategic performances.

The Dilemma of Chhau – Problems of Being Folk by Gouri Nilakantan

A new identity are thus being assumed by the participants while there is a fair amount of continuity in the subject and it has seen some amount of stability in its dramatic content, costumes, music, plot and carefully choreographed movement. At the same Chhau can be said to be traditional as

Music and Ritual Discourses on Music -5 by Prateeksha Sharma



Ritual is an innate part of the human life. Ritual whether in the form of an invocation, a sacrifice, a fast or a penance, a holy dip in a river, ringing the bells, a prayer or an *aarti* they all contribute to disciplining the mind to focus. Every

spiritual and religious tradition uses music to help in focussing. Prayer brings the mind to a point of concentration, and in a one-pointed thought about the object of prayer. The object maybe the form of a diety or a formless entity, musical sounds help in making the mind still and gathering the thoughts from all the various directions the mind is usually scattered in. Therefore, spiritual music has its own special parametres and singers. When we go into a house of worship the sound of the music playing instantly snaps the chord from the noise of the world and introverts the senses.

In India, with its unique tradition of community singing in *bhajans*, *satsangs* and *sankirtan* music is the predominant element that unifies the consciousness of the participants. Even if people are unable to sing, for not knowing the language or the lyrics, they usually join in the community act with something as simple as clapping. Such community activities, which are a part of the life of a householder, especially in certain communities or the post-retirement phase of life, are a prescription to stall the modern day affliction of alienation among the elderly; which often leads to mental, physical and spiritual decay. This kind of community musico-religious programmes are also a mechanism for those who are involved to remain active, busy and involved in a meaningful social exchange- by not being solely dependent on their families at all times. The greater is the social and physical involvement of an individual the less likely is the person to fall prey to degenerative diseases.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

GEETIKA AND MANTIKA – AN ARANGETRAM TO REMEMBER A Review by Suryakanthi Tripathi (Former DG ICCR)



A Perfect Pair

The two sisters, Geetika and Mantika Haryani, sixteen and thirteen years old respectively, had their Bharatanatyam Arangetram at the ISKON Auditorium in Delhi on 1st February 2009. For the young dancers, it was an evening to demonstrate how well they had learnt the classical dance over the past seven years.

Smt. Mala Murli of Nritya Geetanjali, who has distinguished herself as a Bharatanatyam guru, had instilled in both her students a level of confidence that allowed them to give of

their best. Her own sensibility and individuality was also very evident in the dances performed by the two sisters.

The accompanying musicians enhanced the dance performance, particularly Shri K. Venkateshwaran, who had a rich voice and proved to be an able and versatile singer for the recital.

The recital followed the traditional order beginning with the Alarippu, followed by a Jatiswaram, Shabdam, Varnam, Padams and finally the Tillana.

The Varnam, as expected, was the piece-de-resistance of the evening. The dance, set to the Sanskrit composition of Maharaja Swati Tirunal and describing the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, required skill in abhinaya, tala and in the execution of intricate adavu jatis. With their graceful movements, neat footwork and good coordination, the dancers drew the spontaneous applause of the audience more than once.

Their recital concluded with a fast-paced Tillana, in Ragam Hindolam set to Adi Talam, in which the sisters performed the complicated adavus and tirmanam with joyful élan.

The Arangetram came together in all aspects – the guru, the dancers, the musicians and the dances. The dedicated enthusiasm of both the teacher and her talented disciples was very evident that Sunday evening. Their debut on stage is something both Geetika and Mantika can justifiably be proud of. If they continue to train and practice with the same degree of commitment, we will have, in the coming years, two very fine exponents of this great dance form.

Form Grace Poise

Form Grace Poise

Preminder Singh
reviews a dancer's performance



Bindu Juneja

There was a breath of fresh air in the dance world at The Habitat centre auditorium on 30th july. Bindu Juneja breezed in with a quality performance after an absence of more than 12 years from any stage in Delhi. A student of Madhavi Mudgal for more than 10 years, she married and didn't just settle down in Bhopal. She continued to dance and teach at her own dance academy '*Parn*'. She studied the Kathakali style of movement from maestro Margi Vijay Kumar. This is the style par excellence of theatre, of facial expression, of *abhinaya*. Leila Samson in her book '*Rhythm in Joy*' says 'the Kathakali dancer can, through facial expression alone, show the fall of a flower as it wanders downwards from the heavens. With his eyes alone he can measure its progress towards him. He smells its fragrance...his eyes, nose and senses are activated to reflect a myriad reactions.'

It is this that reflected in Bindu's performance and choice of pieces. Of 6 she did only one *Pallavi* (in *Raag Jait Kalyan*) and chose 3

abhinaya pieces to show the range and depth of her art.

The first '*Priye Charushile*' an *Ashtapadi* from the Geeta Govinda shows Krishna cajoling an angry Radha with a lot of flattery. Bindu did this with an easy grace and consummate skill and avoided the overacting that younger dancers are prone to in this *ashtapadi*.

This was followed by an *abhinaya* '*Katana Bedana Mohi Desi Madana*' a composition of the 14th century Maithili poet, Vidyapati. The love lyrics describing the sensuous love story of Radha and Krishna and the poetry and prayers dedicated to Lord Shiva form a rich tradition of folk songs still sung in the region of Mithila in Bihar. They are also ideally suited to the Odissi style where the lyricism of the poetry is reflected in the sensuousness of the dance.

Bindu confirmed her mastery of expression of the Nayika separated from her beloved as well as her understated and confident exposition of the curvilinear movements of the dance.

The penultimate piece before the Moksha showed her dramatic skills in '*Ramashtakam*' depicting the various episodes from Lord Rama's life as a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a king and as both friend and foe. Bindu's skill in the theatrical aspect of the dance owes a lot to Dr. Kanak Rele the Mohiniattam veteran, but to combine in one seamless performance the quiet elegance of her guru Madhavi, the passionate expressions of Margi Vijay and the *abhinaya* learnt from Dr. Rele we can safely say that we have another potentially great dancer in our midst who deserves much more than one performance in Delhi every twelve years..

Choreography was by Bindu and the excellent music was by Meera Rao.

Arunima – a dancer who educates as she performs



I first saw Arunima dance before a TV camera in Lodhi Gardens. The effortless ease with which she glided through her steps almost simulated levitation. She is one of the India's most versatile leading young Kuchipudi dancers. The senior most disciple of the renowned dancing duo, **Padamashree Guru JayaRama Rao and Vanasree Rao**, she started learning Kuchipudi at the age of seven.

As a young girl of 9, Arunima acted in the ballet "Amrapali". The Kuchipudi Dance Academy formally launched her in 1995 where she performed her '**Arangetram**' at the **Triveni Kala Sangam**, New Delhi. Since then there has been no stopping her as she pursued her art with relentless devotion to achieve soaring heights in the field of classical dance.

Her dance is different from the way most others perform. It is interactive. She assumes that her audience doesn't necessarily understand the significance of bhavas and mudras. At a recent performance in the Malvia Durbar hall of Banaras Hindu University she endeared the audience not only with her performance but also with the way she conducted it like a lec-

dem (Lecture Demonstration). She had been invited by the Sanskrit Akademi and she chose to perform the 'Nala Damyanti' story from the Mahabharata.

Nala was a valorous, handsome, and popular king. He heard about the beauty of Damayanthi – the princess of Kundinapuram in Vidarbha, and decided to make her his consort. It so happened that when Narada visited Nala he spoke glowingly of Damayanthi and also told him that she would make an ideal match for our now besotted king .

The lovelorn King tries to distract himself by composing music and loitering in the royal garden. Suddenly one day he sees a beautiful, golden swan by the lake. Nala creeps upto the sleeping bird to capture the swan. The swan is released after persuading Nala that he will play cupid and win Damyanthi over for the King –

The cupid swan proceeds to Kundinam, and is amused to find that Damayanthi was also pathetically lovelorn. Obviously she too had heard of Nala's fame. He attracts her attention, lures her away from her companions- and eventually pretends to have come into her clasp – he teases her about her childishness. This scene was rendered in a charming fashion – the swan consoles Damayanthi, narrates Nala's goodness and eligibility and promises to help them. One can easily gather that there was a lot of scope for *abhinay* and the dancer exploited the theme to perfection. As Arunima quips in her eloquent style; **"dancing is like dreaming with your feet"**

Arunima has performed widely across the nation both as a solo artiste and as part of her gurus' team at various dance festivals, prestigious venues and lecture demonstrations including **the Andhra Day Celebrations in Hyderabad 1993, Hyderabad Arts Festival 1994, India International Centre, Andhra Bhawan, the India Habitat Centre, Ayappa Temple, Triveni Kala Sangam, Trade Fair 1999, 2002, 2003, 2006 SOPAN festival by Sahitya Kala Parishad, Delhi Tourism Festival at**

Santushti 2003, the Bharat Yatra Festival in Lucknow 2001, Shringaramani Festival in Mumbai 2001, Kuchipudi dance festival in Kuchipudi Village, Chitrangada Ballet – National Choreography Festival at Habitat Centre 2003, Qutab Festival in 2003, Young Dancers Festival at Kolkata sponsored by Sangeet Natak Academy in 2004, Legends of India Festival in 2004, 2007, Kalidasa Festival at Nagpur in 2004, Habitat World in September 2005, Virasat Festival at Dehradun in 2005, the Mardol Classical Dance Festival at Goa, the Goa International Centre in 2006, Nehru Center in Mumbai in 2006, Biotech Conference in Hyderabad in 2006, Ugaadi (AP Bhawan) Celebrations in 2006, Jhansi Mahotsav in 2006 and Chamba festival in 2006, Mahabalipuram festival in Chennai in 2007, Jugalbandi with Kathak, choreographed by Pdt. Birju Maharaj at Holi Ke Rang Mahotsav (sponsored by Kalashram) at Habitat Centre in March 2007, Budh Mahotsav in Patna, May 2007 (where she performed the dance ballet Vasavadatta on Rabindra Sangeet Choreographed by her gurus), Jaya Smriti in Mumbai in June 2007 organised by Hema Malini, Radha Asthami in Barsana, September 2007, Indo-European Conference organized by ICCR, September 2007, Fusion concert with Band Advaita, September 2007, Sahitya Kala Parishad young dancer's Festival, September 2007, Neemrana Fort Palace in Oct 2007, SAARC Band festival November 2007, JNU Delhi November 2007 , HCL Concert Series at Habitat Center December 2007, Haridas Sammelan in Mumbai December 2008, Delhi International Arts Festival December 2007, Brahma Gana Sabha in Chennai January 2008, Nungambakkam Cultural Academy in Chennai , January 2008, Bhavbhuti Festival – Gwalior, February 2008., Ustad Allaiddin Khan Samaoroh – Maihar, Gwalior February 2008.

She was also invited to perform for the Honorable President of India at Rashtrapati Bhawan in June 2006.

Arunima has displayed her art in prestigious international dance festivals – EXPO 1998, Lisbon, Portugal, India's 50th year of Independence held in Bonn, Germany, EXPO 2000 in

Hanover, Germany, IC.C.R. tour in 2003, Ministry of External Affairs of India, in prestigious venues in Australia, including Canberra Festival, Sydney Opera House, Melbourne, Brisbane, Fiji, Thailand, Malaysia & Indonesia, India Week Celebrations at Buremburg and Frankfurt, Tagore International Center in Berlin in 2005, Nehru Centre in London, 2005, Asian Arts Festival in Manila , Philippines 2007.

Recognition has also come to Arunima in the form of the State Government of **India Sahitya Kala Parishad Scholarship** for Dance in 1998 and the **Shringarmani title by Sur Shringar Samsad**. Besides being empanelled as an Established artiste at the I.C.C.R., Arunima is also an A grade artiste of the **All India Radio and Doordarshan**. Her appreciative reviews and dynamic profile have been featured in all leading television and radio channels (Doordarshan, Sony, Aaj Tak, Star News etc) and newspapers including **Hindustan Times, Times of India, Indian Express, Business Standard, India Today etc.**, She also featured in the **London School of Economics Newsletter** for her outstanding performance. In an endeavor to share the joy of being closely involved with India's rich cultural heritage, she has also worked for SPIC MACAY, a voluntary cultural organization as its Planning and Finance coordinator. She is also a member of a *GATI*, a young dancers' art forum.

Besides Dance, Arunima has also excelled in academics. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from India's prestigious **St. Stephen's College** and then studied **MSc in Accounting and Finance from the London School of Economics**. Her outstanding performance led her to **teach** at the LSE summer school in 2002. After completing her teaching assignment, she returned to India to continue with her dance. Until recently, she was managing a career in management consulting at a leading US based firm. She is now focusing to build her own arts foundation to promote performing arts across the globe. Arunima has also successfully ventured into dance choreography and research to explore different creative

aspects of the performing arts

She is also a **keen Pistol shooter** and has won several medals in State and National Championships, including a Gold Medal in national Championship in 1999. She was also, the Captain of the Rifle Shooting Club in her college and received College Colors for her outstanding performance in Shooting. She is also the recipient of the **Government of India Sports Talent Search Scholarship (1991-1992)**. She is also keenly interested **in dramatics** and has performed in several radio and TV programs (Yog Yatra on Star news etc), music videos and commercials.

However Kuchipudi continues to be her abiding passion, which she pursues with relentless devotion.

Endowed with “a pair of large eyes, a mobile visage and attractive stage presence”. Arunima is a devoted dancer with a promising career ahead....

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A Young Dancer's First Solo

A Young Dancer's First Solo

-Manohar Khushalani

An *Arangetram* in dance is like an airplane pilots first solo flight – an announcement to the world that you have arrived and can now go it alone. Shruti Gurudanti is still in school, in class twelve, she had her *Bharatanatyam Arangetram* this Sunday after having practised dance

since the age of eight. The debut performance was also the dancer's personal saga of courage – despite a knee operation last November, she chose to go ahead with the show. Shruti's performance was technically flawless. Credit would also go to her Guru, Vasanthi Sridhar, who was able to inspire her to work so hard for her performance.

Gurudanti's rendition started with *Pushpanjali* in Raga *Tala Malika*. An offering of flowers to the audience, with brisk and agile light footed movements which built up to a crescendo of the pulsating beat of percussion. This was followed by *Khanda Allaripu* set to *Khanda Jati*. This is a short and crisp item symbolising the flowering or opening up of the body as a warm up for the more difficult pieces that follow. Shruti used fluid movements of the shoulder with neck and eye rolls to embellish this dance sequence. In *Jatiswaram*, which is a combination of *jati* (rhythmic syllables) and *swara*, the dancer used side stepping with symmetrical and circular movements of the arms. She gave an inspired performance of pure *Nritya*, drawing repeated applause of the audience.



Above: *Shruti Gurudanti*

Not many of the celebrated Gurus these days create worthy disciples, for fear of creating competition for themselves. An insecurity that Guru Sridhar does not suffer from. Under the aegis of Prashanti Natya Nilayam, she has conjured up a number of collective Arangetram's and Dance Drama's to introduce her

young disciples to the real world.



Above: (L) *Guru Vasnathi Shridhar*
(R) *Shruti Gurudanti*

Varnam was the *piece de resistance* of the show. Through *abhinay* the danseuse described the naughty Krishna and how he enchants the Gopis with his pranks. The vanishing trick is used by him while playing hide and seek with the Gopis, and the audience is bemused by the intriguing confusion he creates in their mind by insisting that he was always there. The transformation of this prankster to a full fledged artist by melodiously playing the flute along with the accompanying instruments to placate the agitated gopis is a popular sequence in Bharatanatyam. The nayika is so much in love with Krishna that she has lost consciousness of her own existence.



Shruti displayed a range of expressions as she recreated the Draupadi *cheer haran* sequence playing the wily Duryodhan and the anguished Draupadi alternatively. The sequence included the sight of the little Krishna dancing on the poisonous snake Kaaliya *Varnam* was set in Ragam "*Mohanam*", Talam "*Adi*".

Padam "Padari" set to Ragam "*Kamboji*" Talam "*Roopakam*", is a endearing interplay between the nayika who has recently fallen in love and her sakhi who is her confidante. The sakhi pretends not to care or bother about what she was being told. She only appears to admire her own self and strut about without a care in the world. The nayika ultimately pleads to her sakhi to go fetch her lord for her. Shruti concluded her recital with the *Tillana*. in Ragam "*Kadanakuduralam*" and Talam "*Adi*". The young danseuse displayed a great promise, provided she applied herself and internalised the moods of abhinay. Something that will follow with age and practice.