

EMPATHY- A FARCE :A play by Dr. Payal Trivedi

(For performing this play read the corollary at the bottom)

CHARACTERS: Dhruv, Vrushali, Dhruv's friend



Dhruv- I cannot love you. I have tried a lot vrushali but I cannot.

Vrushali- Just because I have scars on my face!

Dhruv- Vrushali I know what you mean! But I have tried to like u, I mean love you . I know you are immensely talented. You have a sweet voice. But...I cannot love you and Im sorry.

Vrushali- Dhruv why did you preach to everyone that don't judge a book by its cover! You cannot love me because you see these scars and...

Dhruv- Vrushali am sorry but I cannot somehow develop feelings for you.

(some days later Dhruv is talking to his friend)

Dhruv- Rishab I know I have to forget her face and love her because we need to love the character not the body but Im

helpless. I cannot just overlook her ugliness and I would not be able to do any justice to her.

Rishab- Amazingly double standard. You talk about the futility of looks and you make the same mistake now!

Dhruv- I am trying.

Rishab- You BETTER.

(A few days later)

Dhruv- Vrushali I will marry you. Come.

Vrushali- Dhruv!!!!!! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE??????(IS SHOCKED SEEING HEAVY SCARS ON HIS FACE)

Dhruv- Vrushali EMPATHY is a FARCE. I CANNOT UNDERSTAND YOUR NEED unless I become YOU. Let us start a new venture today. And yes I agree never judge a book by its cover. But cover is the unfortunate first thing that everyone sees. Come Vrushali let us start a new beginning.

CURTAINS

The playwright permits theatre practitioners to perform this play Royalty free with one request. Please message us in the comment box if you are interested in doing this play. Also, if and when you schedule your play, inform us and our readers in the comment box about it. Who knows someone might amble into your show after reading your message.

SHIV PARVATI SAMVAD: THE DIVINE MASCULINE AND THE DIVINE FEMININE – A FACE OFF (PART 1)



(Enter Shiva as a mendicant)

Mendicant: O Tripurasundari! How shocking it is to see a paradigm of delicacy as you performing such a rigorous penance! What is it that has provoked you to leave your father's paradise and come to this snowy wilderness to cause yourself such agony?

Parvati: Salutations to you shree Guru. I am here to fulfil my most coveted desire to marry the Lord of the three worlds!

Mendicant: O! Is it? Yes. Indeed, I must say then your desire is worthwhile.

Parvati: I am so pleased to hear this from you shree Guru. Indeed. I tried explaining this to my mother and father who are so adamant in their standpoint of labelling my desire to marry Shiva as unwarranted!

Mendicant: What? You are performing the rigors to marry SHIVA?

Parvati: Yes. Be doubtless about your listening skills Shree Guru. They are flawless. You have heard it right. It is him...My Lord and Master Shiva. I want to be his ardhagini! It is he whose desire has instigated this urge in me to continue appeasing him with my offerings unless he agrees to bless me by granting my wish to marry him.

Mendicant: And I am sure this all would have been planned by that shrewd Narada if I am not incorrect in my conjecture?

Parvati: Yes. And I am so glad he explained it all to me that I needed to perform this enduring penance in order to win my Lord's grace in my favour. So blessed will I consider myself if he happens to accept me as his sevika.

Mendicant: Sevika...you mean his slave. What a menial desire! O! Tripurasundari, have you seen yourself ever in the mirror to speak so lowly of yourself! How can you be so unfair to your unparalleled beauty that can stimulate many to submit in front of your unprecedentedly captivating, indomitably alluring visage, your incessantly long black tresses that can powerfully entwine the fate of many who claim to have solved the most intricate of all labyrinths and the above all your charming and graceful personality, your sweet voice that can cause even the best of nightingales to shame! Your doe-like eyes impair the best of sights when they dare to even compete with them! Perhaps you do not seem to have an idea of the unbeatable strength of your indisputable attraction that can hypnotize anybody who proclaims to stay indifferent to Kama's

shoot!

Parvati: Shree Guru. First and foremost, I bow down to you for your kind words. I think I am not worthy of such appreciation as had I been the way you have described myself to me, the god of Love would not have failed in his attempt, the way he did! I am just another 'ordinary' woman with no such extraordinary appearance as you have described me. All I can say is – 'thanks' for the adjectives you have used for me as they are indeed flattering for any woman and do give her the joy of being "recognized" and the pride of not being "bypassed".

Mendicant: I do understand Tripurasundari. I do construe the immense sadness caused when a MAN ignores a woman. I heard the way HE did to you! Simply intolerable! To just reject the advances of a celestial nymph as YOU! Horrible! But you know. You need not feel sad. He is just unworthy of your attention. Trust me! He deserves to be left the way he is! My beautiful lady! You simply do not know you can avail ANY MAN you want in your life! What have you to do with such a personality as Shiva? I fail to understand!

Parvati: Shree Guru. Applying conventional wisdom to my understanding of a personality as you, I do acknowledge that if someone as respectable as YOU is stating something, it has to be in my favor as you cannot be unkind towards me and wish ill of me. Having said so, I hereby request you to explain me the cause of your concern. I wish to obtain the Lord of the three worlds as my husband. As mendicants are not oblivious of past, present and future, you, I suppose, already KNOW my association with him is not of this birth but of the past many births and that we are destined to be together as we are inseparable. My earthly form as Parvati is germinated as per the need of the hour but YOU certainly possess the caliber of viewing us in our ardhanareshwara swaroopa the indivisible Shiv and Shakti. Therefore, I am incapable of fathoming your LEEA at the moment shree Guru! What on earth has provoked you to deter me from following my determination? Kindly explain.

Mendicant (laughs): Now that you are so resigned to gather the reason of my objections towards your desire Trailokyasundari! Let me tell you the full-fledged TRUTH that is unavoidable and that has provoked me to express my concern and thwart you from making the same mistake that you've been making since eons! Listen to this very carefully. YES. Indeed I am well aware that you are the incarnation of Shakti that is born to seek Shiva. In the countless births that you've taken since the inception of this universe, you have been desiring the inseparable UNION of shiva. But...THAT IS NOT THE POINT. The point here is did you EVER OBTAIN SHIVA? The answer is NO. NEVER! You have been perpetually seeking his union and have perpetually remained incomplete. The inception of Shakti as the embodiment of Shiva and yet left to yearn for eternal union with him! Remember your birth as SATI. What did you attain? You had to finally give up your life! Again the chakra continued. Your incarnation as Parvati – And in this birth too...you are being tortured for attaining his union. Remember, even after you unite with him, you will have to bear the agony of separation. It is written in your destiny Parvati, you will have to suffer. You will have to take numerous births and in every birth, you will have to pass through the continual strife for uniting with him. My question is...when you already KNOW this; why on earth do you want to undergo this hellish experience again and again? Why do you not stop this? Why do you agree to experience this travail when you have the power to discontinue this tradition? Why do you wish to endure the torture? Disagree. Tell that ruthless shiva you no longer want to participate in the cycle of striving to unite with him. Tell him to let you be in your original form as Shakti, the power within the shiva that gives him life and the strength to sustain the universe. Deny; Parvati or else you'll never be able to attain beatitude. You will be incomplete for infinity! Mind you! This division that shiva has inflicted upon you is nothing but a CURSE!

Parvati: Shree Guru, firstly, I express my sincere gratitude

to you for your concern. Having said so, I would like to make certain clarifications with the limited intelligence of mine that I have obtained by the grace of many a learned people as you. The ceaseless travail that I have been undergoing since the inception of this universe is the self-imposed strife that I have chosen to experience as without experiencing separation, it is virtually impossible to experience LOVE. Since my feelings for my lord and master are beyond definition, I have always wanted to feel every bit of him. As I happened to recognize myself in him, I yearned for a separate identity; a form different from that of his because only by extricating myself from him could I avail the pleasure of pining for his union and valuing it so dearly. Remaining within him I was simply lifeless. I obtained my "identity" in the process of separating myself from him and became KNOWN as "Shakti", shiva's "better half". I was no longer shiva's entity- somebody of Shiva. I was another "entity" who was important for defining his existence as he required my presence to introduce himself fully as ardhanareshwara the composite of Shiva and Shakti wherein both are equal- not a tinge of gender difference. So, when we both are one in our separate identities, why do you think I should erase every possibility of the divine union happening through acknowledging the "difference" between the two of us? Why should I refuse to become his ardhagini, his wife when I know that it is only by choosing to be one I would be able to attain the inseparable union with him that would give me the recognition I truly deserve- of becoming indispensable element in his life. Remaining unrecognized within him, I lose the privilege of making my presence felt as the energy in him that keeps him charged for anything and everything, as the divine soul that keeps an entity alive, as the motivation that he avails of breathing life into this lifeless universe. Shree Guru. With utmost humility I hereby declare that Shakti is the requisite of shiva and when despite very well recognizing this, if Shiva chooses to ignore or bypass the eternal truth, it is Shakti's duty to make him realize her mandatory presence

in his life. I am NOT here to give up so easily. I am here to stay. I am here to remind shiva of his promise of enabling me attain unison with him because HE NEEDS ME to keep the cycle of creation and destruction ongoing, to regulate this cosmos or else, everything pertaining to creation will come to a halt. Everything will become unresponsive if the sublime prakriti that is the root of all creation does not unite with shiva to engender CREATION. I hope your doubts are clear shree Guru?

Mendicant: O! So you think so. But, Tripurasundari. Let me tell you. Listen carefully. That shiva does not believe in a tinge of what you have told me right now I suppose. Had he thought the same about your indispensable presence in his life, he would not have caused you this agony. And if he is testing you, I do not see any point in doing so as he already happens to KNOW you since eons. So, why is he being so unkind towards you and why do you take the onus of getting back his short-lived memory of your importance in his life since time eternal is my point. Can't be he accept you without causing you such misery? What is the point in making you suffer so much? He is behaving foolish that's all I can say by refusing to accept your pre-destined presence in his life? Can someone who is actually the Lord and the master of the three worlds be so gullible? I doubt in his so-called divinity now after seeing you in such misery!

(To be continued)

For comments (if any) please enter in the box given below.

By: Dr. Payal Trivedi

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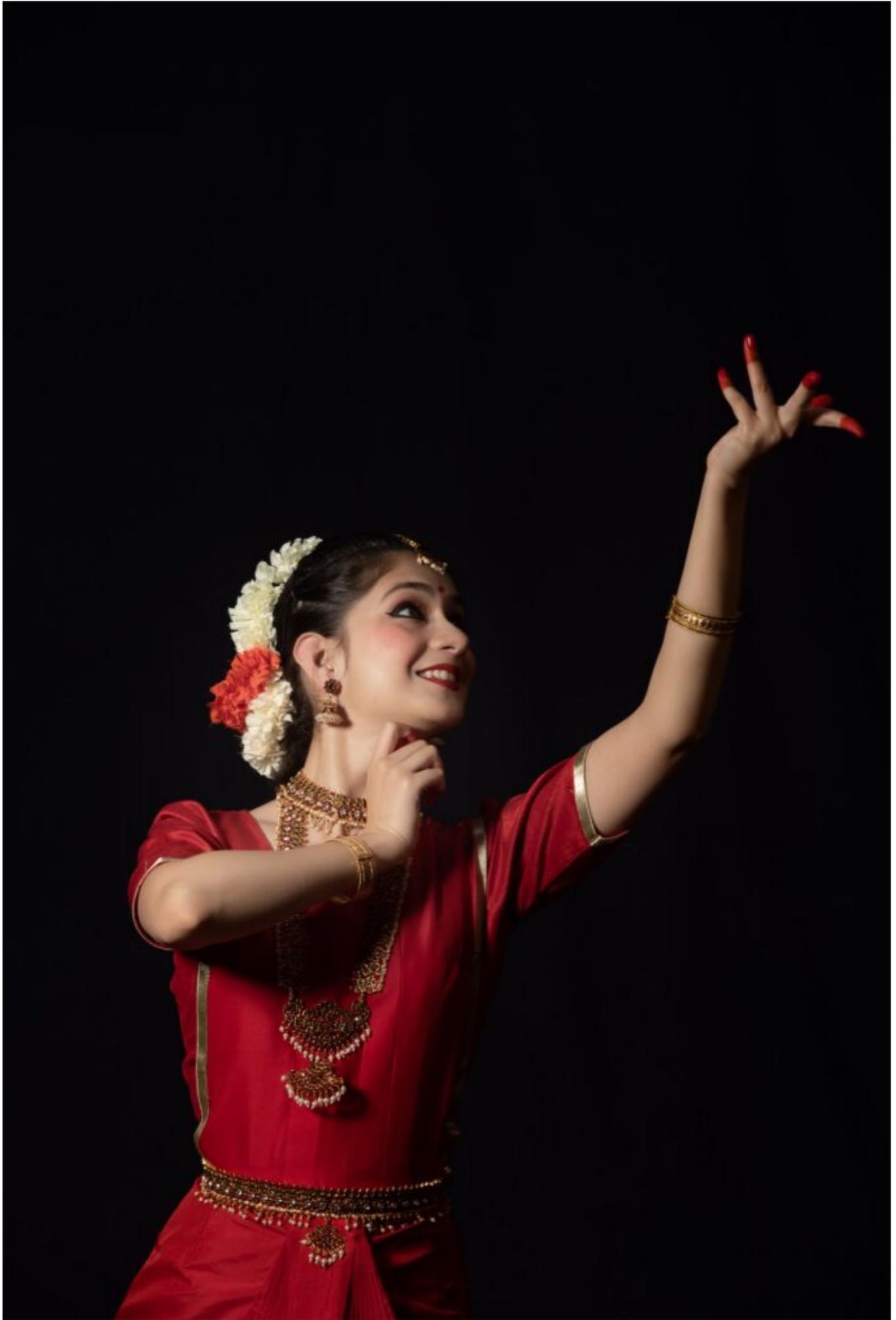
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VAIDEHI-Shruti Verma's Rendition of Pivotal Scenes from Sita's World



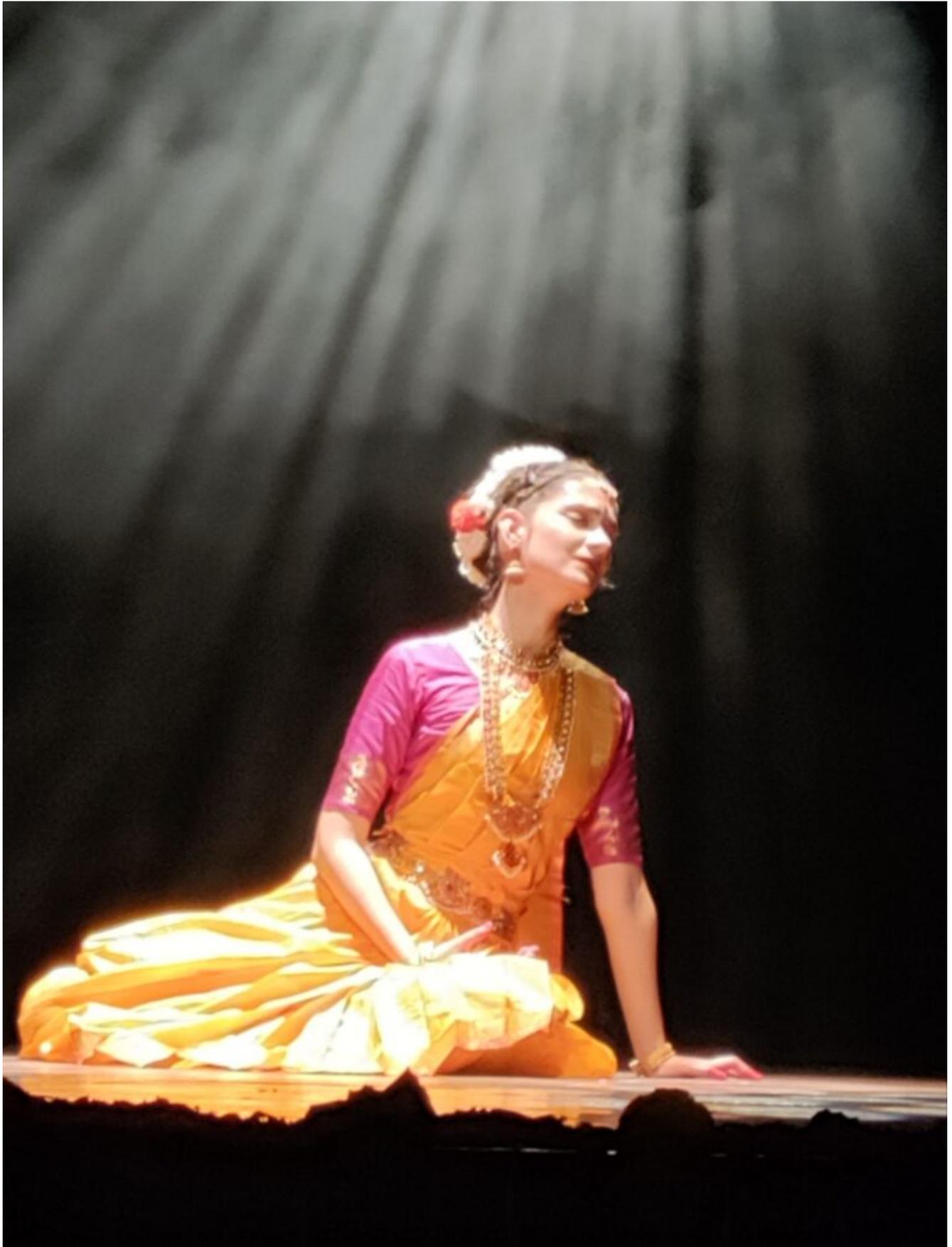
Sindhu Mishra's Aayam presents VAIDEHI: Sita's World in Tulsidas Ramayana

This rendition offers a fresh perspective on the Ramayana, focusing on pivotal scenes from Sita's viewpoint—a rare approach. The choreography and concept, curated by Guru Smt. Sindhu Mishra, provide a captivating retelling of this timeless epic. Shruti Verma, a senior disciple under Guru Smt. Sindhu Mishra's guidance, displays a profound dedication to Bharatanatyam, infusing passion and determination into her pursuit.



The Visionary ***Guru Smt. Sindhu Mishra***

Shruti's performance brings every aspect of body and soul to life. Bharatanatyam, as an art form, embodies the essence of the world around us. It encapsulates the movements of trees, flowers, breeze, birds, animals, and all living beings, enabling the dancer to communicate with both the external and internal worlds. This synergy between Bharatanatyam, nature, and self-expression goes beyond mere aesthetics, delving into profound narratives such as the Ramcharitmanas, vividly portrayed through the dancer's solo performance.



Agony in imprisonment

Shruti embodies a spark of vibrant, contemporary creativity. Supported by her unwavering Guru, she explores modern

interpretations of this traditional art form, crafting soul-stirring experiences through her dance, both for herself and her audience.

A vital member of the Aayam dance troupe, Shruti has amassed significant on-stage experience through enthusiastic participation in numerous group performances. Her portrayal of the iconic Sita in Aayam's thematic production, *Vaidehi*, breathes new life into the character, offering a fresh interpretation of the epic narrative.

Shruti's dance is a harmonious blend of exuberant joy and profound emotion, channeling grace and divinity with each movement. Alongside her Bharatanatyam training, Shruti is currently pursuing a Bachelor's in engineering, exemplifying a balance between tradition and modernity in her artistic journey.

Performance Highlights:

Each segment of *Vaidehi* encapsulates the essence of Bharatanatyam, blending intricate footwork, expressive gestures, and emotive storytelling to transport the audience into the heart of the Ramayana's narrative, offering a fresh perspective on timeless tales.

● **Shri Ram Chandra Kripalu Bhajman:** The performance starts with Shri Ram Chandra Kripalu Bhajman – a well-known bhakti piece on Lord Ram. Written by Saint Tulsidas, this profound poetry expresses a deep admiration for Lord Ram's awe-inspiring and beautiful characteristics. With each verse overflowing with adoration and humility, the piece exalts his divine magnificence.

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Set to Ragam Sindhu Bhairavi (○○○○ ○○ ○○ ○○○○○○○) and Talam Misra Chapu (○○ ○○○ ○○○)○

Sung on stage by Shri G. Elangovan

● **Varnam:** This was the longest and most elaborate segment consisting of jathis (rhythmic patterns) and abhinaya. The poetry is taken from Baal Kand of Tulsidas' Ramcharitmanas. In the narrative, Sita finds herself deeply captivated by Ram's beauty upon seeing him in the gardens of Mithila, but soon grows dejected as she worries about him not being able to break Pinaak, Shiva's bow. She heads to Devi Bhavani's temple, expressing her devotion and humility through prayers and offerings. Devi, moved by Sita's sincerity, bestows upon her a divine blessing, assuring her that her heart's desire will be fulfilled, and she will have the one she adores as a beloved bridegroom. This moment marks a turning point in Sita's journey, where her faith and devotion are rewarded with the promise of divine intervention in her love story with Ram.

Set to Ragam Bageshri (♩♩♩ ♩♩♩♩♩♩♩) and Talamaalika consisting of Chatusra Ekam (♩♩♩♩♩♩ ♩♩♩) and Misra Chapu Taal (♩♩ ♩♩♩ ♩♩♩) Composed and sung by Shri Nitin Sharma

● **Padam:** "Suno Kapi " is a pure abhinaya piece, based on the poetry of Surdas. The Padam depicts an emotional moment from epic Ramayana – when Hanuman reaches Ashok Vatika and gives Ram's ring to Sita. In the confinement of Ravana, Sita, an incomparable beauty and an epitome of dedication, self-sacrifice, courage and purity, has turned into a picture of grief. In his inimical style, Surdas's rendition of Sita diverges from her typical portrayal, highlighting her sarcasm amidst despair, showcasing a spectrum of emotions—from disillusionment to profound suffering and emotional anguish due to her prolonged separation from Ram.

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Set to Ragam Sarangi and Talam Adi

Composed and sung by Shri Nitin Sharma

● **Thillana:** This is a rhythmic piece in carnatic music that is generally performed at the end of the repertoire. Thillana uses Tala phrases in the Pallavi, Anupallavi and lyrics in the

Charnam. The Charanam of this thillana honors Shri Ram, the valiant son of Dashrath renowned for vanquishing Ravana and reuniting with Sita, and revered as the master of Hanuman.

Set to Ragam Bhimpilasi (♭♭♭ ♭♭♭♭♭ ♭♭♭♭) and

Tripata Taal (♭♭♭♭ ♭♭♭ ♭♭♭) in Khanda Jaati (♭♭♭ ♭♭♭♭)

Composed by Guru Govind Rajan Sung on stage by Shri G. Elangovan

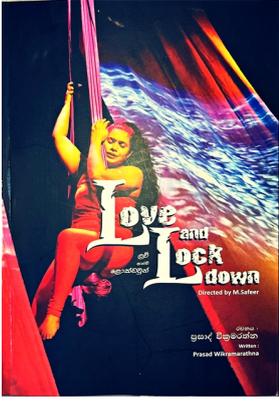


‘Manjula and I have a dream of performing the play in ten languages’ – Md Safeer.



Jahnabi Bora / Reharshal photo by Utpal Datta

Guwahati is about to experience an International Drama Production, likely the first of its kind, a play that brings together theatrical talent from several countries worldwide. Gathering such talent in one place for a purpose is incredibly challenging in terms of communication, time, money, and the arduous labour required. The point is that such plays impact the intellectual and cultural environment of the time, stirring the minds of creative individuals. This impact may initially be small, but it delves deep, illuminating the realm of creation with new possibilities. Creative individuals from different countries come together for work and reach a consensus after discussions—this creative process is challenging. However, these challenges give rise to new possibilities and experiences. It's not just the creators who experience this but also the audience. Many such experiments are underway worldwide, but this will be the first artistic experiment of its kind in Guwahati, which is exciting news for the cultural community.



This production is organized by a theatre group titled AA NK, led by Dr Mrinal Jyot

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Safeer combines various elements in drama production, transforming the play into a unique experience. He has been invited from various countries worldwide to showcase the achievements of his art. He is also an established book publisher and has made his debut as a film director. The film has already been screened at several film festivals.

Witnessing the first performance of a play, movie, exhibition, etc., is a satisfying and often rare experience. We will witness the first performance of Safeer's latest production here in Guwahati. I had the opportunity to witness a rehearsal of the production and engage in a brief discussion about it.

'The author of the play, Manjula Wedivardhana, originally from Sri Lanka but now living in France, is a renowned novelist and poet. I had a concept like this: there will be five

scenes—five different colours, representing five men—and there will be one woman. She will be the last woman on earth, acting in front of the five men, her final act. He wrote a play based on this concept, a poetic play written in Sinhalese. The play was translated into English by the Australian author Dilini Areawala. In 2016, I met an Italian actress named Julia Filippo at the Colombo National Theater Festival. She was seeking an opportunity to work with an Asian director, having already worked with many European directors and wanting to gain new experiences and knowledge. We began working on the play, which premiered in Dubai at the Foreza Monodrama Festival. The festival is attended by thousands of theatre professionals from different countries worldwide. The play was well-received by audiences worldwide. The main feedback was that monodrama is usually centered around the actor, but this play incorporates a combination of set design, lighting, dance, music, and acting. The play received invitations from many countries, and we performed it in several, including Korea and Azerbaijan. I also staged the play in Pune, India, and in Sri Lanka. My friends expressed the need for a Sinhalese version of the play, so I staged it in Sinhalese with a Sinhalese actress. Then came COVID, and the play was put on hold. Last year, I spoke to Mrinaljyoti Goswami, and finally, we are here. Mrinal translated the play into Assamese, and we will perform it with an Assamese actress,' Safeer said.



Safeer directs Jahnabi Bora. photo Utpal Datta

“How will the play continue after this, and what are your plans?”

‘Manjula and I have a dream – we will perform the play in ten languages. It has been performed in English and Sinhalese, and it’s currently being performed in Assamese. Next year, it will be performed in French. The initial plans to perform the play in Hindi and Korean have been completed.’

“A play, not just a play, any artwork, has its roots in the soil of its place. How can the context of those roots be preserved during such phases of transformation?”

‘It’s quite simple. In this Assamese play, we have incorporated elements that evoke the essence of Assam. As a director, I don’t rely solely on the text of the play. I take the dialogue, and the rest is my own interpretation. Manjula wrote many things, and I have selected only certain parts. We have created several versions of the play, which means we have interpreted it in various ways. Each production is an interpretation.’

“You are an advocate and practitioner of physical theatre. How

do you view physical theatre? 'Many people consider gestures alone as the essence of physical theatre. However, I believe and practice differently—physical theatre is not just about gestures. It encompasses dance, music, lights, sets—all components contribute to physical theatre.'

The play is translated by Dr. Mrinal jyoti Goswami and will be staged on April 28 and 29 at the Madhavdev Auditorium of Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra. 'Premar Dolna (Swings of Love)' introduces Jahnabi Borah, a promising talent and National School of Drama, Sikkim Centre alumnus, to Guwahati's theatre aficionados. Under the guidance of director M Safeer, Jayadewa Upeksha Sandeepani, and H.M. Pasindu Nirmal Perera from Sri Lanka contributed as associates, with Dhrubajyoti Deka from Assam serving as the production manager.

Curtain Raiser: Based on Ramcharitmanas Aayam will present VAIDEHI this week



Shruti Verma

Aayam presents "Vaidehi," offering a new voice to Sita. Aayam, a dedicated institute promoting the age-old tradition of Bharatanatyam, based in Delhi, will showcase a unique presentation of the magnum opus of Saint Tulsidas – Ramcharitmanas.



File Photo of Guru Sindhu Mishra as a dancer
Conceived and choreographed by Guru Smt. Sindhu Mishra, the aim is to bring out a creative spin on the Ramayana and explore the love and virtue of Sita. Shruti Verma, a senior disciple of Guru Sindhu Mishra, will present this unique storytelling through her honed skills within the vocabulary of Bharatanatyam. The performance, scheduled for 6 pm on April 20th at LTG Auditorium in New Delhi, will mark Shruti's debut solo performance. It promises to be a fine blend of talent, tradition, and artistic innovation.

The performance will include a distinguished live orchestra, with Shri G Elangovan on Carnatic vocals and flute, Shri Nitin Sharma on Hindustani vocals, Shri Sachin Sharma on the tabla, and Dr. Ramamurthy Kesavan on the mridangam. Nattuvangam will be by Guru Smt. Sindhu Mishra. Shruti Verma, a committed dancer and an undergraduate in computer science, has been

performing with her troupe at major festivals and stages, promising to be a passionate and bright dancer. She will portray the myriad perspectives and emotions of Sita, all culminating in her undying, steadfast love for Lord Rama, bringing out colors from the Ramcharitmanas that were previously unknown.

Guru Smt. Mishra distinguished herself as a performer in the classical milieu under the guidance of eminent Gurus Shri KN Dakshinamoorthy, Shri KJ Govindarajan, and Smt. Kamalini Dutt. She emerged as a choreographer with a unique and compelling style and played a vital role in conceiving, organizing, and choreographing high-profile events and festivals across the country. The recipient of awards and fellowships from the central and state governments, she is also the founder of Aayam, a cultural society that has nurtured a new generation of not just dancers but artists.

Inside Out, Rocks

By Dinesh Agrawal

COMING SOON... INSIDE OUT



Wacky Posters announced the opening of a new play in Gurgaon

The latest play, Inside Out, is one more feather in its writer and director, Gouri Milkantan Mehta's cap. Gouri is a graduate in theatre from Miami University and has directed more than a dozen plays in English and Hindi. Last time when I watched Gouri take an account of her actors' preparedness (they were all on the stage and she was sitting with a mic down in the spectators' place) I think that propelled them into lively action. Nine Jaloo Hill was a grand success and the uproarious applause from the audience made the actors jubilant in the end. A similar thing happened this time too when Gouri pulled up her socks and sleeves and reprimanded her actors for a lackluster approach (they lacked throw in their speech and crispness in their movement) in the first half of Inside Out and that resulted in a much animated and lively performance in the second half; and that made all the difference,

compensating the loss suffered.

The play begins with a monologue of a teenaged bohemian girl, Kamini who now calls herself Nargis, played by Narayini Kumar. She comes from her secluded living in Kurnool her half Australian mother to Gurgaon aspiring to discover herself. The cactus pot that she carries along is her sole companion. In order to avoid sneering from the city guys, she pretends to have come from Bangalore. In another monologue, a young man Nikhil, played by Karan Madan, discloses his aspiration for becoming a lucratively paid litigation lawyer in Gurgaon. Nayan and Nishant, played by Niyomi Dey and Sheel Kalia, through a light hearted conversation, portray a domineering wife and a henpeck husband. Nishant does not like her playing Mozart, her snoring in the bed, her using eight pillows in the bed, liking golgfish and suggesting to visit Vahamas and Neemrana. Nayan loaths his 'aromatic' socks, the overuse of air conditioning and a noisy flush in the bathroom, and so on. After twelve years of their married life, they decide to separate temporarily.



A Scene from the play – where two is company – three is ??

Nishant with the help of Nikhil, gets a room to share with Nargis, and Nayan is persuaded by the same Nikhil to accommodate Neil, a Kashmiri migrant and a Health Insurance personnel, as a tenant, played by Rajguru Mohan. Here, the guy

playing Nikhil, Karan Madan, who replaced the actor playing this role in the last minute, made his presence felt with his remarkable confidence and zest. After some pretentious lies about herself, Nargis discovers her true identity. Nargis tries to befriend Nishant to which he gives a cold response. Both the actors – Narayini Kumar and Sheel Kalia – portray their characters well. However, more variations in tone and gestures when switching from the pretentious self to the true self could have done wonders.

Nishant makes an attempt to come back home but finds a chit left in the house by Nayan, dissuading him from coming back. When again he comes to fetch his belongings, Nayan tells him she had sold them off. Lok Kala Manch offers a stage which confines the scope for movement; and, apparently, the play seems to have been conceived for a bigger one. The stage encompasses a single bedroom of Nargis on the left, a bar at the right back and the sitting room of Nayan in the right front and the left front is used for Nikhil, and Neil meeting him. The wise use of stairs in the last scene deals well with the otherwise cramped stage.

By the last scene, actors seemed to have shed off any inhibitions they might have had so far and they came in the fore with their striking punches. In the two simultaneous scenes played by Narayini Kumar and Rajguru Mohan on the one hand and Niyomi Dey and Sheel Kalia on the other concluded the play marvellously well. Separation for over two months seems enough for Nayan and Nishant to realise that they could not live without each other. At the same time, Nargis and Neil too discover themselves to be a compatible match. Gouri surprises! She surprises with her zest and zeal, her innovations, her hard work and accuracy. She surprises by beginning with amateurs and turning them into professionals. She surprised this time once again with the same set of her skills, and endeavour.

– Dinesh Agrawal

Divine Evening of Music and Dance at 'Shakti Mahapith' Kamakshya'



The time was just evening, the place was the courtyard of *Shakti Mahapith Kamakshya*, and the air was filled with the *Shabda Brahma* created by Pandit Ram Kumar Mallick and his team. Pandit Mallick ji, a Padmashree awardee for his contribution to the Darbhanga Gharana of Dhrupad, orchestrated the musical tapestry. The architect of that great moment was Sangeet Natak Akademi, which initiated a festival of Music and Dance titled '*Shakti*', set to resonate across all the *Shaktipiths* of India. This was the inaugural event of this series.

Listening to Dhrupad by Mallick Ji live is a rare artistic experience, and Sangeet Natak Akademi receives heartfelt gratitude from the audience for curating such a program in Guwahati. Dhrupad, a genre of Indian classical music, is practiced by a select few artists, and public recitals are comparably infrequent. Pandit Ram Kumar Mallick, renowned in this field, is one of the prime representatives of the Darbhanga Gharana. In this concert, he was accompanied by Dr. Samit Kumar Mallick on vocal and Mr. Rishi Shankar Upadhyay on Pakhwaj.



Pandit Ram Kumar Mallick

In this concert, Pandit Mallick performed Aalap and Chautal in Raag Yaman and a Durga Vandana 'Jaya Mangala Sarba Mangal Kar Nihari'. His baritone voice, infused with the ritualistic sensitivity of prayer, transcended the earthly realm, captivating the audience. The melodious utilization of Gauhar Vani and Khandar Vani was evident in his singing. Alongside his gorgeous vocal delivery, the harmonious blend of detailed Aalap, Meed, Gamak, intricate rhythmic patterns, clear pronunciation of Bandish's verses, and other layakari, made

his recital an extraordinary auditory experience. His rendition of Durga Vandana paid homage to the *Shaktipith*, his voice echoing the strength and aesthetic beauty akin to a philosophical interpretation of a forceful waterfall on a hill, retaining its melodious appeal even after it falls on the ground. Pandit Ram Kumar Mallick's performance elevated the recital into a spiritual pilgrimage through resonant melodies.



Another significant performance was *Suknanni Ozapali* (a traditional religious song from Assam with rhythmic body movements resembling dance) and *Deodhani Nritya* by Drona Bhuyan and his ensemble. Drona Bhuyan, a leading artist of *Ozapali* and *Deodhani*, was honoured with the Padmashree by Govt of India. The presentation comprised *Ozapali*, involving singing, and *Deodhani Dance*, with Bhuyan playing the lead role in both performances as a singer and drum player in the dance. The team's performance paid tribute to Shakti through song and dance, resonating with the energetic beats of traditional drums, dynamic movements with war-fighting props, and spirited choreography, crafting a soul-stirring reverence to the Devipeeth, the eternal Shakti.



Two other performances in the evening included the Kathak Dance by Dr. Ruchi Khare and her team and Garva Dance by the Sanskar Group of Bhabnagar.

In closing, as an enthusiast of music and dance, I fervently urge Sangeet Natak Akademi to arrange another enchanting concert featuring Rudra Veena in this sacred Shaktipith.

Photo **UTAPL DATTA**

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=search&v=795010365395664>

Shiva-Shakti: Divine love and

power personified on stage



Ria Gupta delivering the Bharatanatyam recital titled 'Shiva-Shakti'.

Shiva, in Hindu philosophy, the dynamic interaction between the feminine and male energy in the cosmos is symbolized by the profound idea of Shakti. It represents the coming together of Shakti, the divine feminine energy that animates the entire creation, and Shiva, the cosmic awareness. The manifestation, maintenance, and disintegration of the universe depend on this union. Shiva Shakti encompasses a multitude of Shakti aspects or expressions, each with distinct attributes. The divine couple Shiva-Shakti, viewed from a metaphysical perspective, represents two fundamental aspects of the One: the feminine principle, which stands for Its Energy, the Force that acts in the manifested world and life itself, and the masculine principle, which represents the enduring aspect of God. Here is where Shakti is.

It was a personification of divine power on stage as Ria Gupta, disciple of Guru Smt Sindhu Mishra, presented a Bharatanatyam recital titled 'Shiva-Shakti – The Cosmic Union'.



Guru Sindhu Mishra explaining the concepts of the Dance

The recital, organised by the cultural society Aayam at Delhi's LTG Auditorium, mesmerised the audience with its harmonious blend of tradition and innovation, technique and artistry.

Ria presented a compelling exploration of Shiva and Parvati, the cosmic pair representing the opposing forces of destruction and creation that form the eternal cycle of the universe. Equally compelling were the creative choreography, unusual choice of poetic texts, and juxtaposition of Carnatic and Hindustani styles of music.

Conceived and choreographed by Guru Smt Sindhu Mishra, the presentation described aspects of Shiva and Parvati through little known verses from the Ramcharitmanas. Ria's talent and training were on full display as she portrayed the contrasting deities with layered precision and emotion.

In her first solo recital, Ria proved herself as an accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer. Her passion and dedication were evident as she created an ambience of divine love and power through her nuanced abhinaya and intricate jatis.

The evening unfolded with a Ganesh Kriti, 'Ananda Narthana Ganapatim Bhaavaye'. Marked by vivacity and depth, the piece described the divine bliss emanating from Ganesha's dance, which accompanies the captivating music of the gandharvas playing the lute, mridangam and veena. The choreography was an energetic blend of rhythmic and expressive movements, executed with ease by Ria.

Growing up, Parvati—the daughter of Himavan and Mainavati—heard stories about Lord Shiva. In addition to her curiosity about who this Shiva was, Parvati also harbored dreams of marrying him as she had begun to adore him. According to folk lore Parvati did penance for thousands of years to please Lord Shiva and woo him. Finally the Lord was pleased and married Devi Parvati!

This aspect of the epic tale was enumerated by a Pada Varnam, created especially for this presentation. The poetry, from Baal Kand of Tulsidas' Ramcharitmanas, describes the episode where Parvati is encouraged by Narad Muni to undergo penance

in the forest to prove her love to Shiva and become his consort. Seeing this, Shiva sends the Saptarishi to test Parvati's devotion. Ria explored the narrative with intense expressions and sophisticated rhythmic patterns. Set to Ragam Shahana and Talam Adi, the composition was composed and sung by Shri Nitin Sharma.

The following piece was a Keerthanam – the well known 'Natanam Adinar'. In a vibrant rendition, Ria portrayed the joyful dance of Lord Shiva in the golden halls of Chidambaram, which was so powerful that all eight directions trembled, the head of Adishesha swayed, and drops of Ganga's water scattered all around from his matted hair. Set to Ragam Vasantha, the Shri Gopalakrishna Bharatiyar composition was sung by Shri G Elangovan.

The Padam was another unusual excerpt from Ramcharitmanas. In this, Ria explored an episode from Shiva and Parvati's wedding celebrations, where the people of Himachal, upon seeing Shiva's wedding procession, were shocked to see a terrifying band of ghosts, demons, spirits. Maena, the mother, attempted to convince Parvati into abandoning the wedding, to the extent that she was ready to give up her life for it!

The tale of Parvati imparts to us the significance of metamorphosis. She endured great penance in order to gain Lord Shiva's favor because of her undying devotion and love. Her path of introspection and personal development highlights the capacity for transformation that exists in all of us. It motivates us to welcome change



Ria Gupta

The evening concluded with a scintillating Hindolam Thillana, composed by Shri Dandayudhapani Pillai and sung by Shri G

Elangovan. The charanam was an invocation to Shiva, the lord of dance, the one whose auspicious feet are cherished by his devotees. It was a fitting end to a powerful performance, which elevated the audience with its richness and depth.

The distinguished orchestra included Shri G Elangovan on Carnatic vocals and flute, Shri Nitin Sharma on Hindustani vocals, Shri Sachin Sharma on the tabla and Dr Ramamurthy Kesavan on the mridangam. Nattuvangam was by Guru Smt Sindhu Mishra.

Ria's mastery of Bharatanatyam techniques as well as nuanced understanding of literature were evident throughout her performance. In her first solo stage appearance, she succeeded in making an impact, with her dedication and dynamism apparent. She presents yet another young artiste flowering under the tutelage of Guru Smt. Mishra.



File Photo of **Guru Sindhu Mishra** as a young Bharatanatyam Danseuse

Guru Smt Mishra distinguished herself as a performer in the

classical milieu under the guidance of eminent Gurus Shri KN Dakshinamoorthy, Shri KJ Govindarajan and Smt Kamalini Dutt. She emerged as a choreographer with a unique and compelling style, and played a vital role in conceiving, organizing and choreographing high-profile events and festivals across the country. The recipient of awards and fellowships from the central and state governments, she is also the founder of the cultural society Aayam.

The Triumph of Theater on Delhi's Stage through Natsamrat Natya Utsav



Recently, Delhi's theater organization Natsamrat presented a total of eight of its seven different plays. Where the audience appreciated all the plays very much. The special thing about Natsamrat's plays is that this organization performs plays that touch the souls of the audience, giving heart-touching messages to the society through laughter or simplicity. These plays were staged in LTG Auditorium, Mandi House, New Delhi.

The play 'Fauji', written and directed by Sanjay Basliyal, was staged on 16 March at 3 pm and the play "Sakharam Binder", written by Vijay Tendulkar and directed by Vishwajit Alexander, was staged at 4:15 pm on the same evening. The play "Kuch Tum Kaho Kuch Hum Kahan" written by Ashish Kotwal and directed by Shyam Kumar was staged on 17 March at 3 pm and the play "Kambakht Ishq" written by Satya Prakash and directed by Shyam Kumar was staged on the same evening at 4:15 pm. Went. The play "Comedy Junction", written by Anton Chekhov and directed by Fareed Ahmed, was staged on March 23 at 3 pm and the play "Chandralok.com", written by Harishankar Parsai and directed by Rakesh Kodinya, was staged at 4:15 pm. The comedy drama "Kallu Nayi MBBS", written by Molière and directed by Shyam Kumar, was staged on 30 March at 6:30 pm and 7:45 pm (2 shows).

All the actors associated with the drama created a different place in the minds of all the viewers with the magic of their acting. One audience even said that our family always waits for your plays. Another viewer said that Natsamrat's plays are such that every age member of the family feels happy. Natsamrat director Shyam Kumar said that we will continue to bring such plays in front of the audience and through our plays will continue to give messages to the society on deep topics through laughter.