



THE ART AND SCIENCE OF
“ASHTAAVADHAANA” UNVEILED



Scholar's who participated in the Ashtavadhana pose with the Chief Guest Sri. Chiranjeev Singh (3rd from left) Standing from left Prof. K.S. Kannan, Dr. R. Ganesh, Dr. Shantha Shaivalini, Smt. Meera Kannan, Dr. R. Shankar, Sri. G.S. Raghavendra, Sri. Ganesh Bhat Koppalotota, Sri Naresh Kirti, Sri. Sudhir Krishnaswamy and Sri. H.A. Vasuki.

Avadhaana is a rare and unique classical art of ancient India which is scholarly and entertaining. Essentially a literary art, it demands a high degree of creative skills and retentive ability. “*Avadhaana*” literally means concentration, but the many dimensions of this art form make it an awe-inspiring experience to the listener, and an intellectual and literary challenge to the *avadhaani*.

A tantalizing literary form of multi-tasking and parallel-processing, *avadhaana* involves instantaneous versification of any topic posed as a query, within a specified framework. These extempore poems have all the classical features of poetry such as grammar, prosody, poetics and aesthetics.

The verses have to be mentally composed in the midst of deliberate,



constant disturbances and engaging conversations which are full of wit and humour.

Apart from the task of composing verses on the spot, the *avadhaani* should be able to recall all of them at one go, and explain the beauty of his lines with conviction.

Hence *avadhaanam* is a three-fold act of spontaneous versification in a highly classical idiom, where a quick wit and sharpness of intellect, buttressed with a lively bent of mind, come to be tested.

All these came to the fore at the *Ashtaavadhana* programme organized by the Dr. K M Munshi Institute of Art & Culture at the Khincha Hall on January 18. Well-known *avadhaani* and Sanskrit poet Dr. R Shankar, held centre stage, holding his own against posers like *niShedhaakshari* by Prof.



Dr. R. Shankar

K S Kannan, samasya (Sri H A Vasuki), *dattapadi* (Sri Naresh Kirti), *Aashukavitaa* (Sri G S Raghavendra), *kaavyavaachana* (Smt. Meera Kannan), and *saMkhyabandha* (Dr. Shantha Shaivalini).

Even the most challenging chitrakaavya (Sri Ganesh Bhat Koppalatota) and mischievous *aprustutaprasaMga* (Sri Sudhir Krishnaswamy) were easily managed by Dr. Shankar.



Scholar's who participated in the Ashtavadana from left Dr. R. Ganesh, Sri. Ganesh Bhat Koppalatota, Sri Naresh Kirti, Sri. H.A. Vasuki, Prof. K.S. Kannan, Dr. R. Shankar, Sri. G.S. Raghavendra, Sri. Sudhir Krishnaswamy, Smt. Meera Kannan and Dr. Shantha Shaivalini.

Like any other great art or science of ancient India, *avadhaana* too has its roots in the Vedas and the shastras of Sanskrit literature. Later, even the regional languages adopted this art and nurtured it, making it accessible to all. In Kannada, its history goes back to the 10th and 11th centuries. After centuries of hibernation, it was revived in the Twentieth century. Depending upon the number of tasks to be completed, the art is categorized into several sub-forms. The most fundamental and entertaining of them is the *Ashtaavadhaana*.

Here, the performer called the *Avadhaani*, will be questioned in eight ways, as was done by the above-mentioned scholars to Dr. Shankar. The *avadhaani*, in four rounds, will complete these tasks and wind

ASHTAAVADHAANA WHOLESOME ENTERTAINMENT

up the session with the recalling of the verses, followed by elaborating on the same. The entire session may take two to three hours, providing wholesome entertainment to all.

Shatavadhaani

Dr. R Ganesh coordinated and compered the programme, adding to the animated discussions. Former UNESCO Ambassador Dr. Chiranjeev Singh was the chief guest and follow the *avadhaanas* on this occasion. ●



Dr. Sri. Chiranjeev Singh, former Ambassador to UNESCO being honoured by Sri. H.N. Suresh, Director, BVB, with Dr. R. Ganesh, Noted scholar joins.

A classical dance workshop was organized by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in association with Mysuru **Sampradaya** dance experts Dr.Lalitha Srinivasan and Dr. Padma Sampath (disciple of Nala Najaan).

Nala Najaan, an American by birth, had spent 14 long years in post-independent India, learning Bharatanatyam both in Mysuru and Thanajavur, styles of classical dance and music in those days. He had maintained a detailed diary documenting the dances he had learnt, which has been

A WORKSHOP ON MYSURU SAMPRADAYA BHARATHANATYAM

preserved in meticulous fashion by his foremost disciple, Dr.Padma Sampath.

The simple maintaining of the records without tampering with them in any way, points without doubt to the lineage of the *guru-shishya parampara* oral tradition, which has stood the



Dancers who participated in a workshop of rare and authentic Bharatanatyam composition from Mysuru Sampradaya pose with Guru Dr. Lalitha Srinivasan, and Guru Dr. Padma Sampath (NRI, USA).

test of time vis a vis Indian literary art and traditions.

A Bhairavi varna, composed by the Tanjore Quartet, was taught at the workshop. Mrs Padma shared the nuances of the varna as told and taught to her by her Guru. The varna delves into art-centred exchange programmes among kings of those days, reaffirming their friendship and appreciation for each other.

The story behind this varna goes like this: The Mysore Wodeyars requested their visiting court poet/scholar (one of the Tanjore brothers), to compose a special piece in praise of the Maratha kings and commissioned it through a court dancer, who in turn travelled to the Thanjavur court and danced to the composition with élan, boosting the ego and morale of the Thanjavur kings.

Every line of the *pallavi* of the varna has an elaborate story –

ENHANCING THE VAAKYARTHA AND THE BAAHAAVARTHA

YESTER YEARS' ROYALTY ALONG WITH DANCE NUANCES SHARED

telling sequence, the '*sancharis*' enhancing the vaakyartha and the baahaavartha abhinaya .

The rhythmic passages are crisp and short, the syllables for them, simple and melodious.

The dance steps are typical to the *Mysuru Sampradaya* with curvi-linear movements and grace.

The most striking feature of the *varna* is that it tells the spectator the glory and grandeur of the erstwhile Maratha kings Tulajendra and his son Sharabhendra of the 19th century, who ruled Thanjavur and nearby places. Their flamboyant life-style, the vast, fertile land and its geographical borders and the temples they patronized are sketched in utmost detail in this musical composition.

The ten-day workshop proved to be a unique learning experience . The group of dancers learnt with earnest

enthusiasm from Dr .Padma . The way of life of yesteryears' royalty along with dance nuances were shared and discussed with sincere interest during the workshop.

Another fascinating, almost historical feature of the workshop was that the dancers practiced to music that was recorded in a studio in the 1960s for Nala Najaan by his teachers Mugur Sundaramma and Nanjanagudu Nagarathnamma , in which the former renders the vocals and the latter wields the cymbals. Saxaphone, the wind instrument used for Bharatanatya performances in those days, is also part of the music ensemble heard on the cassette, which gave the workshop an archival twist.

Mugur Sundaramma and Nagarathnamma were accomplished disciples of Jetti Thayamma and belonged to the

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ancestral roots of Nanjanagudu tradition.

The workshop participants extended their gratitude to the management of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bangalore, for hosting the event in their premises. The Bhavan was appreciated for the video recording of the workshop, for posterity.

This unique workshop, which proved to be an eye-opener to present day dance practitioners about the rich classical dance heritage of Karnataka. The young dance aspirants were in awe when Dr. Padma explained the glory of those days, narrating interesting anecdotes which she had heard from her Guru.

Dr. Lalitha Srinivasan deserved praise for her initiative to pass on the tradition, and Dr. Padma Sampath for her time and generous sharing of her knowledge. ●

AN EYE-OPENER DANCE WORKSHOP

BVB-SOUTH CENTRE 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION - JANUARY 17, 2015



*Dr. R.V.
Raghavendra,
Founder
Ananya
inaugurating
the programme
on Jan 17,
2015 with Smt.
Prema
Thotadri,
Hon. Associate
Secretary of
BVB*



Chanting of Veda by the students



Students performing Sugama Sangeetha



Students performing Violin



Students performing Veena

BVB-SOUTH CENTRE 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Students performing Mridanga



Students performing Keyboard



Students performing Bharatanatyam

Students performing Flute



Students performing Bharatanatyam

A team of five students of Madikeri, Havish Ganapathi, Nilanjana Gayathri Kuttappa, Nethra Khandige, G.R. Ashuthosh and Sanjana B.S under the guidance of Mrs. Meera Poonacha are one among the twenty National Award Winners who will be sent to Chandigadh for Higher Education and Training and will participate in the Higher Level Children's Science Congress at New Delhi. Their concept of Extinction of Cardamom in Kodagu due to variation in climate and weather

SUSTAIN AND REVIVE CARDAMOM IN KODAGU

and methods of conserving Cardamom production won them a place at the National Level held at Shree Jagadguru Balagangadharanatha Swamy Institute of Technology Bengaluru. Congratulations from the Chairman, Managing Committee, Principal and Staff. ●



Students of BVB Kodagu Vidyalaya Nilanjana Gayathri Kuttappa, Nethra Khandige, Sanjana B.S., Harish Ganapathi and G.R. Ashuthosh pose with Sri.Sreenivasan, Principal and other dignitaries after receiving the certificates.

BHAVAN PRESENTED A HILARIOUS PLAY TITLED 'HENGASKATRI' ON JANUARY 8, 2015 AT KHINCHA HALL.



OBITUARY : S.N. CHANDRASEKHAR



NONAGENARIAN BHAVANITE FADES AWAY

Samyukta Karnataka, Deccan Herald, Indian Express and Kannada Prabha. He was the only journalist to have branched into art criticism in a big and

Senior journalist Salem Nanjundaiah Chandrasekhar, known as much as an intrepid art critic, passed away in Bangalore, on January 19. He was 93.

SNC, whose pen name doubled up as a respectful form of addressing him, had an uninterrupted service record of over Seventy years in print media journalism, having worked in mainstream newspapers such as

meaningful way, covering the entire gamut of performing and fine arts, and craft forms.

As a Kathak and Bharatanatyam dancer, a studious listener of both streams of Indian classical music—Hindustani and Carnatic, an avid reader on the arts, and with the decades of experience he had garnered as a journalist, connoisseur, and art critic, he brought a rare sense of



*H.E.
H.R. Bhardwaj,
former
Governor of
Karnataka
honouring
Sri. S.N.
Chandrasekhar,
Senior
Journalist of
Karnataka*

perception and sharpness to his writings, unparalleled in the newspaper world of Karnataka till date. SNC's interaction with the greats in the arts field, right from the 1940s, was legion, making him a source of information sought out by individuals and institutions alike. The dance and music fraternity of Karnataka especially benefited from the knowledge of his huge art canvas.

What set apart Chandrasekhar's reviews were his depth of understanding of the subjects he wrote about, and his forthright and fearless stance. If he endeared himself to all as a warm and concerned human being, he antagonised many with his forceful and unbiased writing, which in fact earned him a grudging respect from the same quarters.

Official recognitions including the State Lalithakala, Sangeeta Nritya, Rajyotsava, and Media Academy awards came his way without asking—networking, especially for personal gain, was anathema to SNC. Encomiums from several cultural organizations were his including from the Percussive Arts Centre, the M.S.Nanjunda Rao award from the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath and the

G. Venkatachalam Memorial Award.

Closely connected with the Ramakrishna Math, and a Gandhian to the core, like his siblings, Chandrasekhar's frugal and disciplined lifestyle and philanthropic attitude were visible to all. He created several endowments with the money received from these awards for sponsoring music and dance programmes to help encourage young aspirants.

Chandrasekhar was the only journalist of his age to have pursued his writing as a mission. A true karma yogi, he worked till the day his end came. His 15-year association with the Bhavan had made him an indispensable, revered Bhavanite, ever ready to take any writing or editing work. He had a presence which was as imposing as it was lively. The Bhavan family today feels orphaned, but memories of his compelling stature and values will remain as worthy of emulation.

The warmth and affection he exuded will remain in the hearts of everyone his personal touched, for always. ●

Fri. 6.	6.30 p.m. - Homage to Sri. S.N. Chandrasekhar Venue : Ananya, 4th Main, Malleswaram, Bengaluru.	
Thu 12.	6.00 p.m. - ESV Hall Dr. G. Srinivasamurthi Endowment Lecture Topic : Relevance of Ayurveda in modern days Speaker : Dr. V R Padmanabha Rao and Dr. Punith Kumar	
Fri 13.	6.00 p.m. - Devotional song by Ms. Asha Ganapathy (in association with Infosys Foundation) Venue : Indian Institute of World Culture, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru	
Sat 14.	6.00 p.m. - ESV Hall Dr. Anantha Rangachar Endowment Lecture Topic : Contribution of Dr. Anantha Rangachar in translation of Upanishads Speaker: Dr. P Ramanujan Principal Investigator e-PG Pathashala Project	
Sat 21.	6.00 p.m. - Khincha Hall Bharathanatya : Ms. Deepa Raghavan, Director , Nritya Kaveri School of Dance (Disciple of Padmashri Kanaka Srinivasan)	
Sun 22.	10.00 a.m. - Khincha Hall Natarajothsava organised by Karnataka Nritya Kala Parishath	

PROGRAMME : FEBRUARY - 2015

Sun 22.	11.00 a.m. - Cartoon exhibition featuring 'Pickles and Lota' by Ms. Godha Raghavan Chief Guest : Justice M N Venkatachaliah, Former Chief Justice of India Sri. N. Ram, Editor-in-Chief Sri. Shankar, Renowned cartoonist, The Hindu. Sri. D. Murali, Formerly Dy. Editor The Hindu Business Line Venue : Indian Cartoon Gallery, M.G. Road B'lore Note : The exhibition open to Public till March 7, 2015	
Fri 27.	6.00 p.m. - BVB -Infosys Foundation Cultural OUTREACH Programme Inauguration : Vid Anoor Anantha Krishna Sharma Swara Laya Madhuri : Instrumental music ensemble Direction : Vid. Geetha Ramanand Veena – Vid. Geetha Ramanand & Vid. Revathi Murthy Venu – Vid. Tejaswi Raghunath Violin – Vid. H.M. Smitha Mridanga – Vid. A.S.N. Swamy Ghata – Vid. S.N. Narayana Murthy Khanjira – Vid. B.S. Nagaraj Morsing – Vid. Bhardwaj Sathavalli Venue: Sevasadan, 14th Cross, Malleswara, Bengaluru – 560055	
Sat 28.	5.00 p.m. - Khincha Hall Bharathanatya Arangetram by Smt. Niyathi P Kashyap, Disciple of Guru Smt. Padma K G	

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