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Classical Dance Reports

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Reports

Spaces

A Guru Vandanam at Shukra Auditorium

Report with inputs from Bhavanvitha Venkatesh & KPF
24th September 2017



Kuchipudi Parampara Foundation's "**Guru Vandanam**" to **Kalaratna Guru Smt A B Balakondala Rao** was a pleasant Kuchipudi event in many ways. It was a well-attended gathering with right mix of dance enthusiasts, dancers and students. As the name of the event suggests, Guru Vandanam was to honor Balakka and screen the documentary on her directed by **Dulam Satyanarayana** that was the main focus. Balakka completed her successful tour to the USA and it was during her trip that Sangeet Natak Akademi announced her as an awardee. This function therefore happens to be her first on her arrival to India.



Kuchipudi Performances

KPF presented performances of Payal Ramachandani, Sitalakshmi Prasad - Mrutyumjaya Sarma duet, and the Foundation's own ensemble performance in the evening. Solo, duet and group performances as it so happened.

Payal performed three pieces and her first was a Marathi poem **Rusali Radha** about Lord Krishna & Radha that she herself choreographed. Even a spat between the divine lovers would be a beautiful episode and that is what the choreography proves. Payal opens doors for exploring creativity by this her visualization of a Marathi poem for Kuchipudi. Written by Rangeshwar, music composed by Rajat Prasanna, the piece had a musical prelude the dancer makes use to introduces and establish Krishna and Radha.

She also performed Guru Raja Radha Reddy and Sri Kishore Mosalikanti choreographies, **Kaliya Nartanam** and a **Purandara Dasa Kriti, Aarathi**. Payal maintained the distinct elements of her Gurus works as also of

her own choreography and that is laudable. Her narrative is detailed and has the portrayal of Radha and Krishna brought through some dramatic elements in their interaction.



Sita and Mrutyumjaya (**Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar Awardee**) presented two pieces, one in praise of Goddess Saraswathi, Composition of Mysore Vasudevachari, Raagam – Hindola Taalam – Aadi, and Choreography Sita Lakshmi Prasad, and the other a typical dance drama act, chosen from **Adhyatma Ramayana of Munipalli Subramanya Kavi**. The one they presented was from the Aranya Kanda, "**Inti Chengalva Banti..**", Raagam – Saveri Taalam – Misra Chaapu, Choreography Sita Lakshmi Prasad. The duo presented the episode of Rama's pursuit to capture the golden deer as per Sita's request which leads to the eventual abduction of Sita by Ravana. The dancers excelled in the episode. The typical Kuchipudi elements of dance drama came out and captured the attention of the audience. As Sita played Ravana and Mrutyumjaya as Sita, they proved their talent in playing challenging roles. Special mention has to be made to the traditional Kuchipudi practice of men donning the female characters here as in this piece the duo did just the opposite, playing the opposite roles, Mrutyumjaya as Sita and "Sita as Ravana"! Credit should go to Sri DSV Sastry for the wonderful and engaging music. This performance from Sita Lakshmi Prasad and Mrutyumjaya Sarma Pasumarthi makes them the most visible duo in Kuchipudi today.



KPF ensemble packed energy in their three performances, the first two were Saint Annamacharya Kriti "**Vandeham**" on Lord Venkateshwara in Ragam Hamsadhwani, Khandachapu talam, music has been set by Shweta Prasad and choreographed by Deepa Narayanan and later "**Chandrasekaram**", a Composition of Bellary Brothers in praise of Lord Shiva first with a slokam in Kapi Ragam followed by musical lyrics in Chandrahaus ragam set to Adi talam choreographed by Deepa Narayana. Deepa's "Vandeham" was performed for the first time by her students in this event.

The students of KPF were trained by Deepa Narayanan who learnt from renowned Kuchipudi dancer Guru Manju Bargavee. Deepa's male students displayed energy and joy of the rhythmic jatis. In **Ramayana Sabdam**, choreographed by Padma Bhushan Dr Vempati Chinna Satyam, Ragam Mohanam, set to Adi talam, their joy of the rhythm and team work came to the fore. The female dancers made neat execution of the jathis and were graceful in the movements and postures. The smooth Kuchipudi movements flowed from the choreography with needed agility.

The screening of the documentary was much awaited and came after the performances. An affectionate honoring of Balakka by senior dance personalities, Prof Mysore V Subramanya, Kiran Subramanyam & Sandhya Kiran, Smt Lalitha Das, Meena Das Narayanan, Smt Jayakamala Pandiyan, Sri Sai Venkatesh and Swapna Raju.

"**Balakka – Dancing With Tradition**" proved educative, informative and engaging. The richness of the Indian arts is in the manner disciples build relation with their Guru. After completing their learning, students

then go on to become the torch bearers of the Parampara. In the process of this evolution invaluable lessons are learnt through observations, through adherence of values, and eventually the spiritual growth. When the tradition continues into the next generation, it is these lessons that contribute to make them humble, simple and equip their students with those values that contribute to the well being of the society. The documentary has Balakka learning with dedication, teaching to her students the way she learnt Kuchipudi, and then explaining to Roxanna Gupta her disciple, her thoughts and beliefs. Her thoughts come out profound, explanations clear and affection genuine and touching. These are the elements that bond relations of Guru Shishya strong.

It was wonderful watching young dancers eagerly waiting to know how they performed from Balakka. They were in total awe of the Guru who was gracious and spoke to each of them. They watched pictures of young Balakka on the screen and her complete commitment to her dance form right from the tender age. They all came to know how she graduated to a level where she became a teacher in her own Guru's institute, and then becoming founder of Kuchipudi Kalaakendram, and today recognized as one of the key disciples of Master. The presence of her family members and grandchildren made it special. Accompanied by her two sons Aditya who is following her footsteps becoming a renowned Kuchipudi dancer, Anand Srihari, who blossomed into Mridangam expert and her daughter-in-law Malyada Anand, a reputed dancer, Balakka truly lives a Life dedicated to Kuchipudi.



Members of Kuchipudi Parampara Foundation played gracious hosts.

Inputs From

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*** All views are of the contributor.

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