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# Sandesh

“The Message”

A Newsletter from IndUS of Fox Valley

## From Editors' Desk

Dear Readers,

Each year the October issue of *Sandesh* is dedicated to the theme of upcoming annual IndUS banquet. The theme of IndUS-2007 is *Music & Dances of India* and the articles in this issue are a prelude to such a rich and diverse component of Indian culture.

The lack of space prevents us to cover many other interesting forms and important aspects of Indian music and dance. We are sure that at the banquet you will discover interesting and informative exhibits and a truly enriching cultural experience. We also hope that these articles will intrigue those who are not able to attend the event and generate enough interest to further explore Indian music and dance.

Sandesh

An IndUS of Fox Valley

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*The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Editors or IndUS of Fox Valley*

## Indian Classical Music and Dances: A Brief Introduction

By B. S. Sridhar

### Classical Indian Music

The origin of Indian music is said to be rooted in the *Vedas* (1000-1700 B.C.). Over the centuries classical music has evolved into two distinct schools, namely, *Hindustani* (the North Indian) and *Carnatic* (the South Indian).

Carnatic music is devotional in nature, with attention on melody and rhythm, heavy emphasis is placed on *sahitya* or lyrics. The music is often in praise of the Hindu pantheon and often the poets are known to express other emotions such as love, anger, envy, disappointment, and dejection in defining their relationship with the deities. The concerts tend to be fairly structured around *varnams*, *alapana*, *kritis*, *kalpana swaras*, *padams*, *bhajans*, and *tani avartams*.

The most important and recent changes in Hindustani music can be traced to the period between fourteenth and eighteenth centuries when the musicians in the north came in contact with Persian music via the Mughals. Hereon, emphasis was on the abstract and aesthetics. In Hindustani, there are ten main forms or styles of performance: *Dhrupad*, *Dhamar*, *Hori*, *Khayal*, *Tappa*, *Chaturang*, *Ragasagar*, *Tarana*, *Sargam* and *Thumri*. The main elements of Indian music are Raga and Tala.

*Raga* (that which colors the mind) refers to a melodic scale with a precise, subtle ascending and descending array of notes. There are seventy two distinct ragas, each creating a distinct mood (*rasa*) such as the romantic, fearful, heroic, anger, disgust, kindness, peaceful, wonder, and humor. A

raga is a projection of artist's inner spirit. The current classification of ragas can be traced to two seminal works by great musicologists: *Svaramelakalanidhi* by Raamamaatya (c. 1550 AD) and *Caturdandi Prakaasikaa* by Venkatamakhi (1660 A.D.). The ten principal families of ragas in Hindustani are: *Asavari*, *Bhairav*, *Bhairavi*, *Bilawal*, *Kafi*, *Kalyan*, *Khamaj*, *Marwa*, *Purvi* and *Todi*. Carnatic labels for ragas generally differ but there are equivalent ragas in both systems.

*Tala* refers to rhythmic cycles. Indian music has developed a unique system of intricate and sophisticated rhythmic patterns. These cycles can range from a three-beat cycle (*teen taal* or *aadi tala*) to cycles consisting of hundred and eight beats! Within the fixed framework of these beats, the percussionist is afforded unlimited opportunity to improvise. The most exciting moment for a seasoned listener is when two performers after their extensive individual improvisations, come together on the first beat of the next cycle called *sum*. The most popular *talas* are: *Teental*, *Dadra*, *Rupak*, *Jhaptal*, *Ektal* and *Ada Chautal*.

*Laya* the tempo of the exposition of each raga proceeds through three phases. During the slow and deliberate *alap*, the artist engages in a serene exploration of the range and depth of the melodic scale, without any percussion. Rhythm enters the scene during the *chor*, without the drum accompaniment, when innumerable variations of *raga's* theme are elaborated. During the third phase, *jhala* side strings are played at a rapid pace. Drums join in during *gat*, a fixed composition when improvisation is

appropriate! Take your cue from the aficionados.

Any attempt to list notable performers is a controversial effort. Therefore, admitting this major limitation, let me generate an illustrative, not an exhaustive list of artists.

The great composers in the Carnatic tradition are Purandaradasa (1484-1564), Tyagaraja (1767-1847), Muthuswami Dixitar (1775-1835), Shyama Shastri (1762-1827), Swati Tirunal (1813-1846), and Mysore Vasudevacharya (1865-1961). The great performers include; MS Subbalakshmi, Aryakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, ML Vasantha Kumari, DK Pattammal, M. Balamuralikrishna, Maharajpuram Santanam (all vocalists), TR Mahalingam and Sikkil sisters (flute), S. Balachander (Veena), Lalgudi Jayaraman and MS Gopal Krishnan (violinists), Palghat Raghu (mridangam), Vikku Vinayakaram (Ghatam).

The famous Hindustani artists of the past and present are: Ustads Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Kareem Khan, Pandits Bhimsen Joshi, Jasraj, Shrimati Kishori Amonkar, Parveen Sultana, Shobha Gurtu, Veena Sahasrabudhe (vocalists), Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Vilayat Khan (sitar), Ustad s Ali Akbar Khan and Amjad Ali Khan (sarod, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia and Pannalal Ghosh (flute), Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma (sarangi), Ustad Bismillah Khan (shehanai), Dr. N. Rajam (violin), Ustads Allaha Rakha and Zakir Hussain (tabla).

### Classical Dance Forms of India

Much of the sophisticated grammar and idiom of classical Indian dances are traced to *Natya Shastra*, a sacred treatise attributed to Sage Bharata (approximately between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D).

### Bharatanatyam

Bharatanatyam is one of the oldest, beautiful, and purest classical dance forms of India. It combines artistic expression with a sense of spirituality. Highly trained dancers perform precise hand gestures, use intricate footwork, vivid facial expression, and fluid movement; dancers wear traditional costumes consisting of specially made

saris, jewelry and hair ornaments, and specifically applied facial and body make-up. They dance to a traditional south Indian *Carnatic* orchestra consisting of voice, strings, percussion, and flute.

*Bharatanatyam* uses three aspects or modes of kinetic expression that span the range of aesthetic possibilities: *Nritta*, *Nritya*, and *Natya*. *Nritta* is abstract or "pure" movement- is it pure dance devoid of emotional expression wherein dancers use body movements and pounding rhythmic footwork to create visual geometric patterns vibrating with dynamic energy. *Nritya* is lyrical dance that interprets poetry. Dancers use conventional hand gestures called *mudras* along with facial expressions and feelings to express the meanings or interpretations of the lyrics or text. Finally, *Natya* describes dance-drama that enacts a narrative or idea. In *Natya*, dancers use both pose and expressional aspects along with mime to create drama. Like fresco painting in Christian churches, the original purpose of *Bharatanatyam* was to educate the public about the scriptures. Today, *Bharatanatyam* remains a thriving art form, one that attempts to raise the level of spiritual consciousness of its viewers so they may achieve *rasa*, the experience of joy or bliss.

An illustrative list of great teachers and performers of Bharatanatyam are: Rukmini Devi Arundel, Bala Saraswati, Vyjayanthimala Bali, Padmini Ramachandran, Padma Subramanyam, Mrinalini Sarbhai and Sonal Mansingh.

### Kathak

Kathak is probably the most important of the major schools of classical dances originating from North India. The word *kathak* is derived from the Sanskrit word *katha*, meaning "a story". A *kathakar* is a storyteller who recounts mythological stories in temples. Nurtured in the holy precincts of Hindu temples, *kathakars* (a community of story tellers/dancers/actors) traveled throughout the country to recite and enact stories of humanity, epics and folklore employing the medium of dance, rhythm, music and mime.

With the advent of Muslim rulers in India (circa 12<sup>th</sup> century) Kathak underwent a major transformation. From a temple dance it evolved as a brilliant form of entertainment. In deference to the Islamic proscription of idolatry, in the royal courts of Moguls, the emphasis shifted from the devotional and mythological aspects toward the development of the aesthetic and technical dimensions of the art. The new school incorporated into its form spectacular elements as fast pirouettes, intricate rhythm, brisk movement and fast footwork. Kathak of today represents a beautiful fusion of the Hindu and the Persian cultures.

Among the great exponents of Kathak are: Pandit Birju Maharaj, Lachchu Maharaj, Durg Lal, Sitara Devi, and Maya Rao.

### Kathakali

Kathakali is a unique dance-drama that originated in Kerala, a southwestern state of India, nearly 500 years ago. Kathakali literally means "story play" and therefore is always based on Hindu mythological stories. The characters in Kathakali do not speak. Rather, communication is achieved through an intricate but highly sophisticated system of hand gestures, or *Mudras*. Two singers in the background provide the dialogue by singing in a variety of *ragas* (tunes). Sung-texts contain narrations to introduce the characters as well as the dialogue between them. The characters in Kathakali can be broadly classified into four types. *Pacha* (green) represents benevolent kings or divine figures; *Kathi* (knife) depicts an arrogant kings. Evil characters are represented by *Thadi* (beard) and forest dwellers or aborigines by *Kari* (black) characters. *Minukku* (glittering) denotes saint. The costumes worn by the artists are quite elaborate and colorful. In addition to facial painting, masks are commonly used to broaden the expressive potential. Kathakali exponents and performers of note are: Thottam Chandu Panicker, Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, Chennithala Chellappan Pillai, Nelliodyu, and Vasudevan Nambuthiri.

## Odissi

Flowing movements and graceful poses (*tribhangi*) characterize Odissi, yet another major dance form from India. The temple architecture of Orissa has a great impact leaving the audience wondering if the dance is the dynamic representation of architecture or the architecture are friezes of the dance movements! There is some evidence that the origins date back to second century BC as found in the archeological artifacts found in Rani Gumpha caves in Udaygiri, Orissa. The revival of Odissi coincides with the advent of Vaishnava poets, chief among them being Jayadeva. To day, Odissi has become synonymous with Jayadeva's beautiful erotic poetry in Sanskrit: *Gita Govinda*. Depending on the exponents of this dance, the music is

derived from the Carnatic tradition (e.g. Samjukta Panigrahi and Raghunath Panigrahi) or Hindustani tradition (e.g. Guru Kelu Charan Mahapatra). More recent celebrities include: Sonal Man Singh, Kum Kum Mohanty, and late Protima Gauri (nee Bedi).

## Other Classical Dance Forms

Any essay, given the severe space limitations; can hardly be expected to have both breadth and depth. Kuchipudi, a dance form developed in Andhra Pradesh has a large following, thanks to exponents such as Vempati Chinnsatyam. Yamini Krishna Murthy, Radha and Raja Reddy. Though Kuchipudi shares a great deal of similarity with Bharatanatyam, it has also developed several significant differences

in terms of types of dance (e.g. *tarangam*), costumes and movements. Similarly, *Mohiniattam* of Kerala is distinct and yet an offshoot of Bharatanatyam. Jhaveri sisters made the graceful dance form of Manipuri, from Himalayan province of Manipur, famous. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer students are to be found and the threat of losing some of these ancient gems of our civilization is real. □

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## About Indian Classical Music Concerts

*By Vinitha Mahadevan and Shreemayee Kar*

There are two different systems of classical music in India; "Hindustani and Carnatic" prevalent in the Northern and Southern parts of India respectively. Basic principles for both the systems are almost same but they vary in language and the style of rendering. What makes Indian Classical music unique is the creative imagination and extempore improvisation of a *Raga* by the artist. A *Raga* (also known as *Raag*) is the medium through which emotional experiences are expressed in terms of a succession of *svaras* (notes). During a concert, one *Raga* chosen by the artist forms the basis for improvisation.

### Hindustani Music

The most popular form in Hindustani music is *Khayal*. In a concert, the artist begins with a *Bada khayal* composition of a chosen *Raga* in *vilambit* (slow) *laya* (tempo). The song consists of typically two parts, *asthayi* and *antara*. *Asthayi* is restricted to the *mandra* (lower) and *madhya* (middle) *saptakas* (octaves). Then follows *antara*, rendered in the *madhya saptaka*, in which first few *svaras* from the *tara* (upper) *saptaka* also is used.

The artist first improvises the song with *Alap*, or an improvisation of notes in slow tempo. The *Alap* proceeds leisurely, without being particular about the time measure, but laden more with the emotional content of the *raga*. Then s/he starts the *Bol-Alaap*, an improvisation of notes in slow and medium tempo with the wordings of the song. This is followed by *Sargam*. *Sargam* is the improvisation of notes of that *Raga* rendered in medium and fast tempo in various rhythmic patterns with suitable combination. The last is *Taans*, an improvisation of notes taken in medium and fast tempo. The *Khayal* in *Vilambit* (slow) tempo then is followed by another *khayal* song, set to *drut laya* (fast tempo). This is also called *Chota Khayal*, in which the artist displays his virtuosity mostly through *sargams* and *taan* in very fast tempos. Following the main composition, the concert continues with shorter and lighter songs. Some of the types of songs performed towards the end of the concerts are *Taranas* (*Tarana* is based upon the use of meaningless syllables in a very fast rendition) or bhajans (devotional songs).

Equally vital to the concept of *raga* is

*tala* (rhythm). In fact *raga* and *tala* together constitute classical music. The song-texts of a *Khayal* are composed within the framework of a specific *tala* cycle. Usually *Bada Khayals* are set in *Ektaal* (12 beat) and *Chota Khayals* in *Teen Taal* (16 beats). In most concerts both in Hindustani & Carnatic music, the percussion (*Tabla*) accompanists also gets to perform complex patterns of rhythm and display their skill. Many times the main vocalist and the *Tabla* accompanist engage in a rhythmic dialogue until the main artist picks up the melody once again.

Some of the other popular forms of Hindustani music are *Thumri*, *Tappa*, *Dhrupad*, *Dhamar*, *Ghazzals*.

### Carnatic Music

A Carnatic concert (called a *kutcheri*) usually lasts about three hours, and comprises a number of varied compositions. Carnatic songs are composed in a particular *raga*, which means that they do not deviate from the notes in the *raga*. Each composition is set with specific notes and beats, but performers improvise extensively. Improvisation occurs in the melody

of the composition as well as in using the notes to expound the beauty of the *raga*.

Concerts usually begin with a *varnam* which is composed with an emphasis on *swaras* of the *raga*, but also has lyrics. It is lively and fast to get the audience's attention. An invocatory item, may alternatively, follow the *varnam*. After the *varanam* and/or invocatory item, the artist sings longer compositions called *kirtanas* (commonly referred to as *kritis*). Each *kriti* sticks to one specific *raga*, although some are composed with more than one *ragas*; these are known as *ragamalika* (a garland of *ragas*).

After singing the opening *kriti*, usually, the artist sings the *kalpanaswaram* of the *raga* to the beat. The artist improvises a string of *swaras* in any octave according

to the rules of the *raga* and returns to beginning of the cycle of beats smoothly, joining the *swaras* with a phrase selected from the *kriti*. The artist then begins the main composition with a section called *raga alapana* exploring the *raga*. In this, artists use the sounds *aa, ri, na, ta*, etc. instead of *swaras* to slowly elaborate the notes and flow of the *raga*. This begins slowly and builds to a crescendo, and finally establishes a complicated exposition of the *raga* that shows the performer's skill. All of this is done without any rhythmic accompaniment, or beat. With the *raga* thus established, the song begins, usually with lyrics. In this, the accompaniment (usually violin, sometimes veena) performs along with the main performer and the percussion (such as a *mridangam*).

Following the main composition, the concert continues with shorter and lighter songs. Some of the types of songs performed towards the end of the concerts are *tillanas* & *thukkadas* - bits of popular *kritis* or compositions requested by the audience. Every concert that is the last of the day ends with a *mangalam*, a thankful prayer and conclusion to the musical event. □

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## Appreciating Women's Folk Songs

By Kirin Narayan

Recordings of folk music from different regions of India are increasingly available on the market, a delight to the ear for their wide diversity in performance styles. These recordings are all so different, even as they carry echoes of familiar *ragas*, instruments, and words; a reminder of the lively interchange between “folk,” “classical,” “devotional” and even “filmi” music. For commercial recordings, the folk songs we hear often feature fairly short items, sung by trained performers, and accompanied by instrumentation. I want to take the opportunity to reflect on a kind of folk music that rarely finds its way into commercial recording: the long, often repetitive-sounding songs chorused by groups of nonprofessional women singers who have assembled for happy occasions celebrated by a community. These occasions include births and birthdays, first haircuts, sacred thread ceremonies, weddings of human and divine couples, and even unexpected good news like an unemployed son finally getting a job. Such songs are sometimes called *mangal*, “auspiciousness” in different regions of India.

I have been interested in women's folk songs from the Himalayan region of Kan-

gra since I was a student. Since the primary rationale for women's group singing is ritual and celebratory, I soon learned that these events are more an expression of a community's solidarity than a chance for a particular individual to draw attention to her own talents. Singing women cluster together, seated close or standing, simultaneously performers and audience to the ritual event. Meeting such songs in their actual ritual contexts, then, one listens less for a particular artist's virtuosity, and more to the mingling and joining of diverse voices in a flowing river of sound.

Joining many voices together is a logistical challenge, and so such women's songs are often repetitive: the same melody repeats across verses, the same lines may be repeated twice, and the ending lines or refrains may be the same across the song. Such repetition opens out performance to any interested women who wants to join in, even if she is not familiar in advance with the song. But also, this repetition can seem dull to ears accustomed to more variation. If one surrenders to the repeating currents of melody, listening to the changing text, one is carried forward into an almost hypnotic space. Following the words requires

close attention--particularly if one is unfamiliar with the dialect or dialects in which women are singing—but it is enormously rewarding to discover the poetry and emotion embedded in the songs. Often, singers themselves have helped me appreciate these texts by interpreting the underlying meanings.

As women in Kangra explained to me, some women had the “*sukinni*” (*shauk*) or particular interest in singing. They enjoyed songs for the melodies (*tarj*) and appreciated a good voice (*gala*). To remember songs, they said, required a good brain (*dhimag*). The song texts themselves were appreciated also for the wisdom (*gyan*) and the feelings (*bhavana*) they contained. I found that women also referred to the therapeutic aspects of expressing emotions through song, and a sense of connection to other women who had experienced the same feelings. As Sangeeta Devi, in her 70s, told me “Those who don't have troubles will sing, but they won't know what they're singing about. Those who do have troubles will recognize the pain. Everyone will sing, but it's only when you know pain that you really understand the song.”

As an example, I present a song I taped in November of 1990, during an afternoon gathering in honor of the wedding of Saili, a local form of Tulsi, the sacred basil Goddess. About fifteen women sat together near five burning lamps, all of us looking comically raccoon-like as we had just applied blessed lampblack to our lower eyelids and this had smudged. Songs flowed from those that addressed the Goddess herself to larger themes of marriage.

This song is set in a joint family of the past, with the stereotypical figures of the mother-in-law (*sas*) and husband's sister (*nanad*) standing as an obstacle to a new bride's closeness to her husband. It is also set in a time of oil lamps rather than electricity. The refrain "henna is red" (*mahendiye rongliye*) refers to the red patterns on the hands of a bride, making this a song in which negotiating intimacy in the joint family is as challenging as walking alone through the night in frighteningly uncertain weather. For the full effect, one would of course need to hear the music.

*The evening has come, the day is done.*

*Oil lamps cry out for oil.*

*Henna is red.*

*I ask my mother-in-law for a lamp.*

*I ask my sister-in-law for oil.*

*Henna is red.*

*Mother-in-law won't give me a lamp.*

*Sister-in-law refuses me oil.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the first step.*

*Lightning streaks the sky.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the second step.*

*Mud weighs down my feet.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the third step.*

*The night is pitch black.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the fourth step.*

*My torch is extinguished.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the fifth step,*

*I lose my anklet.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the sixth step.*

*I'm beside the bed.*

*Henna is red.*

*Are you sleeping? Are you awake?*

*Your woman is here.*

*Henna is red.*

*I'm not sleeping, I'm not awake.*

*Go away, go back.*

*Henna is red.*

*The evening has come, the day is done.*

*The oil lamps cry out for oil.*

*Henna is red.*

*Mother-in-law gives me a lamp.*

*Sister-in-law pours in oil.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the first step.*

*Stars fill the night.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the second step*

*The night glitters.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the third step.*

*The moon lights the sky.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the fourth step.*

*My torch leaps bright.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the fifth step.*

*I find my anklet.*

*Henna is red.*

*I climb the sixth step*

*I'm beside the bed.*

*Henna is red.*

*Are you sleeping? Are you awake?*

*Your woman is here.*

*I'm not sleeping, I'm not awake*

*Come into my arms.*

Transposing a walk through the wilderness with an ascent up indoor stairs, the heroine sets out the first time through a night that is stormy, windy, and muddy; her second climb unfolds under a calm sky lit up by the moon and stars, her own torch burning bright. During her first ascent, her mother-in-law and sister-in-law

had denied her their support in the form of an oil lamp filled with oil, and on reaching the husband, he too rejects her. The second time, she is lit up with the blessings of her female in-laws, and is warmly welcomed by the husband, too.

The assembled group burst out laughing and joking as they concluded the song. Someone explained to me that this was about a girl being married young and not being fully accepted by her female in-laws and her husband; only later, when she comes of age, is she really integrated into family and welcomed by her husband. Someone else said that no, this was about second wives and how husbands, having lost one, would cherish the second more. Several women present, I knew, had been married as teenagers to older widowers, and so, it seemed, they were commenting on their own lives and also teasing each other.

On my last visit to Kangra, I met an older woman in the same settlement. She complained of the growing popularity of DJs with loudspeakers for celebratory events. "It's so that loud you can't hear anything," she said, "So how can women sing?" "What kind of music do the DJs play?" I asked. "Any kind that sets your feet moving by themselves!" she said with a smile. "Punjabi songs, filmi songs, even Pahari songs—but only the type that are for dancing."

Listening to women's celebratory songs may not move one's feet, particularly when these are unadorned by the accompaniment of instruments or drums. Such songs are emotionally moving though, and reward the patience of attentive listening with insights into the feelings generated within particular ways of life. □

*Kirin Narayan is author of several books: Storytellers, Saints and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching, Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon: Himalayan Foothill Folktales (in collaboration with Urmila Devi Sood), and Love, Stars and All That, a novel. She teaches in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Her latest book, My Family and Other Saints, will be published by the University of Chicago Press in November.*

## Indian Classical Dance - A Deep Ocean

By Meenakshi Ganesan

Indian arts & culture have a distinct identity & recognition in today's world. Ancient Indian dance forms originating from the temples speak volumes of the great cultural heritage of India. These dance forms as practiced & performed today have captured global attention.

Bharatanatyam is among the oldest & most popular Classical dance styles of India. Its heritage is a matter of cultural pride and celebration, especially for the people of Southern India. The term "Bharatanatyam" comes from the words *bhava*, which means expression; *raga*, which means melody; *thala*, which means rhythm; and *natyam*, which means dance. Performed on stage as a blend of body movements, rhythmical expressions, and dramatization, Bharatanatyam is said to have been based on the books *Natyasasthra* and *Abhinaya Darpanam*. Bharatanatyam is composed of three elements, *nritta* (rhythmic element), *nriya* (combination of rhythm and expression) and *natya* (dramatic element). It is based on *adavus* (steps) and *hasthamudras* (hand gestures). The dancer uses the *adavus*, *mudras* and *abhinaya* (expressions) to narrate a story or sing the praise of a Lord/Goddess to the audience.

Traditionally, a Bharatanatyam recital commences with a *Pushpanjali*. *Pushpa* (flowers) and *anjali* (offering) is an invocation dance piece in praise of Lord Ganesha, the elephant headed God, whereby the dancer bows to his/her teacher, the lord & the audience for a successful performance. Then presented is *Alarippu*, a symmetrical presentation with folded hands followed by *Jathiswaram*, a dance

full of *adavus* with challenging rhythm patterns. *Varnam* is presented as the centerpiece of a recital. *Varnam* means color & this piece is the most difficult, long and challenging blend of expressions and rhythmic patterns. *Padams* follow the *Varnam*, as they are dances in praise of the Hindu deities and create room for self-expression. *Thillana*, is presented as the finale and is full of body movements, hand gestures and sculpturesque poses. A *Mangalam*, thanking the Guru finishes the recital. The costumes worn by the dancers are made of pure silk with gorgeous jewels and hair decoration. The music to Bharatanatyam, is based on Indian classical Carnatic music form South India.

There are other classical dance forms in India as beautiful and ancient as Bharatanatyam. Odissi comes from Orissa, the eastern coast of India. Like Bharatanatyam, it was originally intended to be performed in temples, its outstanding feature being its intimate relationship with temple sculpture. An Odissi dancer wears a saree with the typical *patola* designs, characteristic of Orissa. The style of draping the saree is identical with that of Bharatanatyam. However, the jewelry that the dancer wears is all in silver including an ornate broad silver belt around her waist along with intricate head piece.

Kathak happens to be the major classical dance form practiced in northern India. It is characterized by rhythmic footwork, under the weight of hundreds of ankle bells, spectacular spins, and the dramatic representation of themes from Urdu poetry alongside those of Hindu mythology. Kathak arose from the fusion of Hindu and Muslim cultures that took place during the Mughal period.

Kuchipudi from the state of Andhra Pradesh, originated as a dance drama

with religious themes. Traditionally, Kuchipudi dance was performed solely by men hailing from the Brahmin community. Such families were known popularly as *Bhagavathulu* of *Kuchipudi*.

The movements in Kuchipudi are quick and scintillating. Invariably accompanied by Carnatic music, it shares many features with Bharatanatyam.

Mohiniattam and Kathakali both hail from the state of Kerala. Literally meaning, the dance of the enchantress, Mohiniattam is a classical dance form of Kerala performed solely by women. It was originally performed in the temples of Kerala. Kathakali is a classical dance-drama style art form. *Katha* means 'story', while *Kali* is the enacting of stories through mime and movement. Rooted in the soil of Kerala, Kathakali is primarily a dance drama form and is extremely colorful with billowing costumes, flowing scarves, ornaments and crowns. The dancers use a specific type of symbolic makeup to portray various roles which are character-types rather than individual characters. Various qualities, human, godlike, demoniacal are well-depicted through fantastic make-up and costumes.

To summarize, each of these classical dance forms from India has its own distinct character and beauty, reflecting the rich cultural diversity and heritage of the Indian subcontinent. □

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"There will be no wisdom, no learning, no art, nor craft, no device, nor action that is not found within natya."

- Sage Bharata, Author of *Natya Shastra*, a treatise on dance and drama, circa 1st century BCE

## Kathak- A Classical Dance from Northern India

By Kamal Varma

Growing up in North India and especially in the city of Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, Kathak Dance was a part of my daily vocabulary. Lucknow Gharana (a style in Kathak) is from the Lucknow School of Dance, It is a narrative dance form characterized by fast footwork (*tatkar*), spins (*chakkar*) and innovative use of *bhav* (Emotions) in *abhinaya* (Acting).

The word Kathak derives from Katha, a story, and it begins in ancient times with the performances of professional storytellers called *kathakars* who recited or sang stories from Indian epics, mythology and the scenes from the lives of gods with some elements of dance. Popular performances included Sri Krishna's exploits in the holy land of Vrindavan, and tales of *Krishna-Leela* (Krishna's childhood). The traditions of the *kathakars* were passed on through generations. There are literary references from the third and fourth centuries BCE which refer to these *kathakars*.

After the 15th century Kathak began to acquire its distinctiveness from the Mughals that conquered northern India. The dance forms of Persia began to influence Kathak. Dancers were allured from the temples to the Mughal courts by gifts of gold, jewels, royal favors and patronage from the kings. Dancers from the Middle East and temple dancers from North India adopted from each other's dance styles and became a common link between Hindu and Muslim cultures.

The influence of the Persian dancers was clearly shown when dancers started performing their footwork with straight legs and with 150 *ghungroo* (bells) on each ankle. The footwork in Kathak is usually reserved for the very last tempo, and dancers often enter into playful rhythmic competition with their *tabla* (drums) accompanists in the form of a duet, called *jugalbandi*. They develop creative improvisation with the accompanists and intensify the energy to leave the audience spellbound. The *chakkars* (spins) of Kathak are mesmerizing as dancers spin with precision and control.

Lucknow, Banaras and Jaipur are recognized as the three *gharanas* (schools) where this art was nurtured and where the interpretative and rhythmic aspects were refined to a high standard. Each gharana has prominent dancers.

**The Lucknow Gharana** is characterized



by precise, finely detailed movements and an emphasis on the exposition of *thumri*, a semi classical style of love song.

The one pre-eminent dancer of that time was Bindadin Maharaj who danced 16 hours continuously to win a competition between him and his accompanist. The contemporary famous name is Pandit Birju Maharaj who is a legend of this century and has created his

own style. Sitara Devi is another famous name among today's dancers.

**The Jaipur Gharana** is characterized by strong rhythmic elements and it was developed in the courts of the Kachchwaha kings of Jaipur. This style explores different *talas* (rhythmic cycles), and provides a vigorous and forceful form.

**Banaras Gharana** is characterized by the *natwari bols* (medium rhythmic syllables), which are different from the *tabla* and the *pakhawaj bols*. Use of *Chakkars* is kept at a minimum in this style of dance.

Today often dancers mix styles from different gharanas in their performances.

Kathak today is a theater art, but it still draws its inspiration from the literature of Vaishnavism, from the ancient stories of the gods, and the devotional love poetry of medieval India. It also remains a solo art form, based on personal interpretation and emotional value. The beautiful, generous and abundant jewellery and costumes of the dancers combined with poetic narration tell fabulous tales of drama, triumph, and tragedy to create a magical world. □

*Kamal Varma hails from Lucknow, a city known for kathak dance besides its rich Mughal heritage. At young age she learned kathak for three years and could perform twenty to twenty five chakars at a stretch. She resides in Appleton, Wisconsin and is an active member of IndUS of Fox Valley.*

*"Dance is your pulse, your heartbeat, your breathing. It's the rhythm of your life. It's the expression in time and movement, in happiness, joy, sadness and envy."*  
- Jaques D'Amboise

*Dance, like music, knows no geographical boundaries, no linguistic barriers and no racial divisions. All walls crumble where art is concerned. It is a great unifying and integrating force."*  
- Vempatti Chinna Satyam

*"Art and life are not two different things for me. Both teach you to relate to things at the subliminal and ordinary levels. Music helps you deal with every situation. It soothes and matures you"*  
- Ustad Amjad Ali Khan

*"Dance has to unfold with the grace of a tree giving out leaves, flowers and then tiny fruit. Nothing so beautiful can be done in haste"*  
- Pt. Birju Maharaj

*Without music, life would be a mistake ... I would only believe in a God who knew how to dance.*

- Friedrich Nietzsche

*"Dancing in all its forms cannot be excluded from the curriculum of all noble education; dancing with the feet, with ideas, with words, and, need I add that one must also be able to dance with the pen?"*

- Friedrich Nietzsche

## Etiquette for Indian Cultural Programs

By Anu Varma

If you have never attended an Indian cultural program and are intimidated by the prospect of appearing to be a novice, here are some helpful hints.

♪ At a performance, the artist will enter the stage to loud applause. They will greet the audience with a bow, Namaste (hands clasped as if in prayer) or a Salaam (a gentle bow and salute with a cupped hand). Don't be alarmed if they next begin to tune their instruments. Indian artists share the experience of instrument preparation with their audience.

♪ If you find yourself enjoying the performance, nod your head from side to side as if in negation. Contrary to what you may think, the artists or the other audience members will not perceive this as rude. It will be a sign that you are truly enjoying the music and are 'feeling it'. If this is a music performance, you may consider closing your eyes as you nod your head back and forth. This should only be done if the music is really

'speaking to you'.

♪ If you are at a dance performance and the artists on stage are making facial expressions that lead you to believe that they are in pain or anguish, rest assured that they are fine. Most classical Indian dance is similar to ballet in that it is the telling of a story. It is not the pain of pounding barefoot footwork on a cold wood stage that leaves them in anguish; it is usually love lost, love forsaken, love betrayed, love unrequited....

♪ If, during a piece, the artist performs something unusual, exciting, amazing or electrifying and you would like to let them know that you enjoyed it, you can applaud. Indian audiences believe in providing the artists with instant gratification instead of making them wait till the end of the piece.

♪ If you are exceptionally moved by a performance (or a piece of a performance), you may also recite these words

out loud to encourage the artists: "Wah, Wah." This is pronounced not like the annoying cry of a baby but more like the 'Baa Baa' of the nursery rhyme Black Sheep, if the sheep was making a sound of exultation. Generally speaking, this is the equivalent of Bravo.

Following these simple guidelines during a performance will have the audience believing that you are truly an aficionado of Indian culture. Of course, be careful with this tactic as it may lead to queries and expectations of in-depth discussions of the artists or the art. Should this happen, you may try smiling and swaying your head back and forth as if in negation. □

*Anu Varma, an IT manager by profession, enjoys Indian music and dance, classical as well as folk. Her passions include reading, writing, and learning about the plight of the people around the world, whose voices are not heard. Issues related to women are of especial concern for her.*



### News ...

#### IndUS joins hand with Midwest iChild to celebrate India Heritage Day

On July 28<sup>th</sup> 2007, IndUS played an important role in creating a sense of heritage in children adopted from India. Seventy-five children and their parents attended India Heritage Day in Green Lake, Wisconsin. It was organized by Midwest iChild in collaboration with IndUS and India Association NEW. The daylong activities included outdoor games: langdi, kabbadi and cricket, cooking demo of chhole and puris, rangolis with colored sand, mehendi tattoos, making wall hangings with their names written in Hindi, and indoor games: chess, shells, Indian Parchessi, sagargote and hop-scotch.

In the evening, after dressing up and a sumptuous Indian dinner at American Legion, in Princeton, the children got a

folk dancing lesson using beautiful Dandiya sticks they had painted the previous day. The parents too joined in the dance, making it a joyous finale for a wonderful day.



Rakesh & Priya Kaushika, Praveena, Nikhil & Datta Maslankar, Richa Mehrotra, Radhika Raj, Divya Ravel, Nikunj and Kirti Ringwala, Shakti & Deepak Shukla, Sameer, B.S. & Sandhya Sridhar.

#### India's Independence Day Celebration at the American Family Insurance, Appleton.

The American Family Insurance, Appleton celebrated India's Independence Day

The day was a great success. Our sincere thanks go to Razia Husain,

on August 15, 2007 and invited IndUS to participate in this festivity. Kamal and Badri Varma represented IndUS. While Kamal gave a presentation on IndUS, India association, and the Indian community in the valley, Badri gave a brief history of India, ancient, pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods. IndUS provided Indian appetizers and AFI arranged a very elaborate Indian lunch.

#### Foods of All Nations

On September 22, 2007, Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center (FCRMC) organized the 10<sup>th</sup> Foods of All Nations at the City Center Plaza, Appleton. At this highly successful gala event more than 600 people relished two dozen dishes of authentic foods from all the five continents and enjoyed music and dances from around the world. Since IndUS of Fox Valley is a member organization of FCRMC, its presence was highly visible. Several IndUS members were involved in setting up the place, food serving, and in cleaning up

### The Board of Directors

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 Dr. Sandhya Sridhar & Kamal Varma  
 (*Education & Outreach*)  
 Mr. Rajeev Dugal (*Fund Raising*)

Please visit our website at  
[www.indusfoxvalley.org](http://www.indusfoxvalley.org)

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the place. Also, Kaarthika and Manish Wallajapat performed dances and B.S. Sridhar, like in previous years took control of the sound system. Moreover, Nancy Heykes,

Jeff Kuepper, Ram Shet, Sandhya Sridhar, Ashok Tannan, Kamal Varma, and Badri Varma were members of the Steering Committee and were involved in organizing the event. IndUS is proud to be one of the vibrant threads of diversity, which strengthen this Fox valley community.



### Diversity Resource Fair and Round Table for Educators

On October 9, 2007 the Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center organized a Diversity Resource Fair and Round Table

Discussions for Educators at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, Menasha. It was a project of the center's Education & Outreach committee, which Ruth Mansukhani and Kamal Varma currently co-chair.

There were 17 booths representing different organizations and about 70 participants attended the fair,



which included area school teachers, principals, counselors, and administrators. Mahendra Dosi and Kamal Varma were at the IndUS booth to answer questions about IndUS, India, and local Indian community. At the table there were flyers of IndUS of Fox Valley and the IndUS-2007 event, which the participant found useful and the pakoras were a hit as usual.

While Ruth Mansukhani was busy with the over all arrangements, Badri Varma

facilitated the discussion at the round table for the high school educator's group, which shared ideas about "What works for you".

### IndUS – 2007

The preparations for this gala celebration are in full swing. Different committees and dozens of volunteers are busy giving a final touch to their efforts. As announced earlier in our June issue, it will be held on Saturday, October 27, 2007 at Reeve Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and this year's theme is *Music and Dances of India*. The exhibition area will have visual exhibits, audio-visual multimedia presentations, musical performances, and dance demonstrations. Chef Professor Peter D'Souza, UW-Stout, an internationally acclaimed culinary artist, returns with his new creations and as a part of the cultural program a creative extravaganza that blends the best of the dance and music traditions of India waits to please your eyes and ears.

Tickets are still available, please contact Kamal Varma, 920.731.0834 or [kvarma@new.rr.com](mailto:kvarma@new.rr.com). One has to register for this event in advance and tickets are not sold at the gate.

### A Tribute to Srimathi S. Balakuntala

Srimathi S. Balakuntala, a Benefactor member of IndUS of Fox Valley, passed away on September 30, 2007. She was mother of Dr. B. S. Sridhar, Ex-president of IndUS, but was 'Amma' for everybody in the Indian community also. She took great interest in all the activities of IndUS and attended its events on a regular basis. She was an accomplished singer, and read voraciously. She kept herself mentally young by these activities-a role model for us all.

She will be remembered as a kind and genuinely caring individual and a great friend of IndUS. We are with the Sridhar family to share this bereavement.

IndUs is dedicated to creating cultural awareness. *Sandesh* is your forum to express your ideas on any topics of general interest. We invite your suggestions, ideas and write-ups.

## IndUS Future Fund: An Appeal

IndUS of Fox Valley promotes Indo-American friendship and goodwill by serving the community through social, cultural, educational and charitable activities. IndUS is justifiably proud of its record of its charitable activities over the years. Volunteers from Seva, the charitable arm of IndUS have served meals at Salvation Army, Appleton for over 13 years, and have collaborated with Rotary Club in packing medical equipment and supplies as a part of Sharing Around the World Medical Project (SAMP). Our contributions have helped Salvation Army, Firefighters of New York, Shama Inc. and earthquake victims of Gujarat, India.

This past year, IndUS raised over \$200,000 to help victims of Asian tsunami, hurricane-affected fellow Americans and more recently to bring relief to earthquake ravaged children of India and Pakistan. We have awarded scholarships amounting to \$5000 to students in the Valley.

Starting this year, IndUS has launched a new 5-year initiative: "Investing in Future." Under this program, IndUS will lay a foundation in science and mathematics among socio-economically disadvantaged children of Fox Valley and their cohorts in India. Future projects will include healthcare, social services, and community enrichment initiatives. Naturally, we wish to create a perpetual source of funding for our community service activities.

IndUS has joined hands with Community Foundation of Fox Cities to establish IndUS Future Fund. Each year, IndUS will use the fund's investment income for charitable causes. Sixty percent of the income will be devoted to local causes. IndUS aspires to reach a target of \$100,000 by the year 2008. This should enable IndUS to make a sustained, effective contribution to the community. The effort Community Foundation will have given IndUS a matching grant. Our current accumulations stand at \$35,000. In June, 2007, we have received a 8 pledge s for \$ 18, 8000. Their will be further follow up efforts in this regard.

Your generous support will strengthen us in our resolve and our effort as we build IndUS Future Fund! In the coming weeks, IndUS will hold a strategy session to get input from our friends and supporters. We need donors and promoters who can help achieve our target. We hope that you will attend and bring along friends and family who would participate enthusiastically in this exciting endeavor!

**IndUS Of Fox Valley**  
18 Woodbury Court  
Appleton WI 54915

**IndUS of Fox Valley**  
*Presents*

**IndUS-2007**

*A Celebration of Indo American  
Friendship and Goodwill*

***Music & Dances of India***

**Saturday, October 27, 2007**

**5:00 to 9:00 p.m.**

**Reeve Memorial Union**

**UW—Oshkosh**

***Exhibition***

***Social Hour***

***Authentic Indian Cuisine***

***Cultural Program***