



## SRI PARTHASARATHY SWAMI SABHA

*Bharat Nritya Utsav*

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invites you to experience  
the spiritual expression of  
**Bhava, Raga and Tala**

*Wishing Sabhas, Artistes and Rasikas a Memorable Season*



## Upholding the rich tapestry of Indian dance

Parthasarathy Swami Sabha has been a home for a host of legends in the field of music and dance. From budding talents to senior performers, it has given space to eclectic minds and diverse emotions.

The sabha has made history over time. Dr. J. Jayalalitha (a former member of our sabha) had staged, 'Kaveri Thantha Kalaiselvi' when she was also honoured by the sabha. Dancers Padmini and Ragini, Hema Malini, Roshan Kumari, Mallika

Sarabai, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Balasaraswathi have been honoured in various festivals conducted by the sabha. Interestingly, it has also had many firsts like the Ramayana of Travancore Sisters and Dr. Vyjayanthi Mala Bali's Thiruppavai.

In its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is happy to release its newsletter dedicated to its festival 'Bharat Nritya Utsav' for dance and dancers for the first time.

## Natya Kalasarathy 2019-20

Parthasarathy Swami Sabha is proud to present the Natya Kalasarathy Award to two outstanding and 'thinking dancers' who have made significant contribution to the field of dance for the past few decades. As performers they have stolen the hearts of their audience; as teachers they have nurtured many young minds and encouraged them to practice and propagate dance; as choreographers they have emerged magnificently with majestic thoughts. And as people, they have touched lives in their own humble efforts.

Their journeys are inspiring and thought provoking. Accolades and awards have made them more simple and humble over time. Ask them about how they conceive their ideas, they would say just two words – intense research.



**Recipients of the award  
this year are**

**Padmashree Awardee Aruna Mohanty  
(Odissi)**

**and**

**Kalaimamani Dr. Lakshmi Ramaswamy  
(Bharatanatyam).**



Read their stories to get a glimpse of their lives.

## Natya Kalasarathy Awardees (2002 – 2018)

Prof. Sudharani Raghupathy

Smt. K.J. Sarasa

Smt. Ranganayaki Jayaraman

Smt. Chitra Visweswaran

Smt. Kalanidhi Narayanan

Sri. Udupi Lakshminarayanan

Smt. Malathi Thothadri

Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam

Sri. Adyar K. Lakshman

Smt. Rajeswari Sainath

Dr. Srinidhi Chidambaram

Smt. Meenakshi Chitharanjan

Smt. Deepika Reddy (Kuchipudi)

Smt. Urmila Sathyanarayanan

Smt. Anitha Guha

Smt. Gopika Varma (Mohiniyattam)

# “I want to create dance that matters”

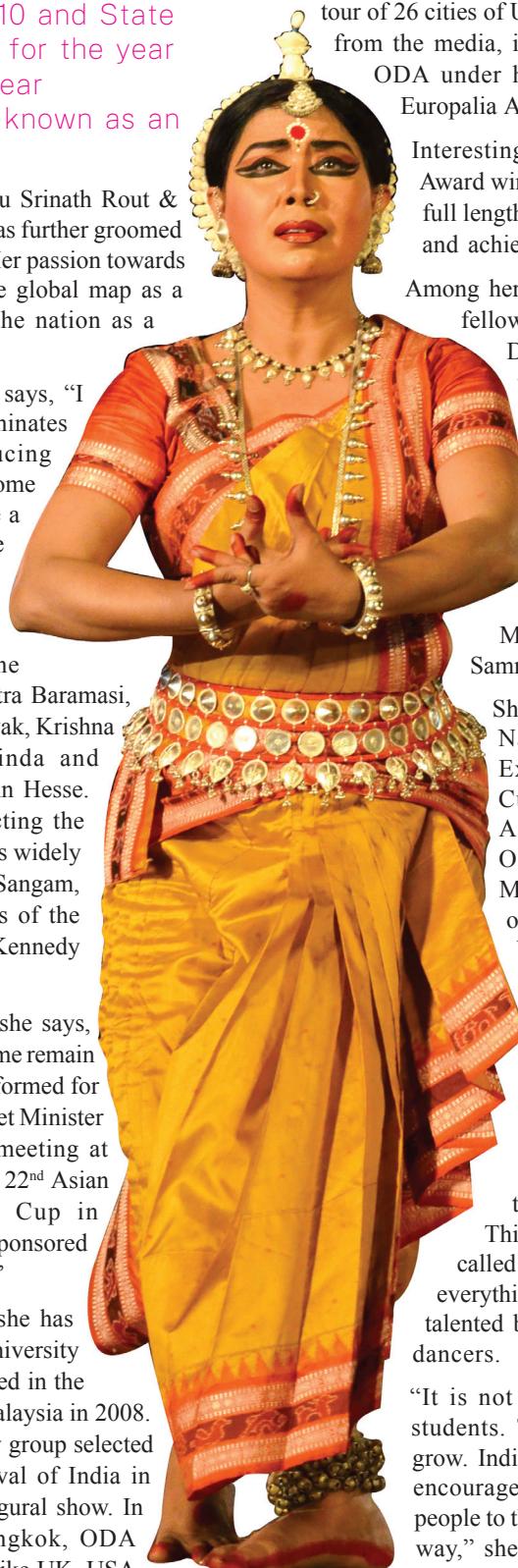
Recipient of the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for the year 2010 and State Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for the year 2014, the Padmashree for the year 2016-17, Smt. Aruna Mohanty is known as an innovative dancer.

Initiated into dance at an early age by Guru Srinath Rout & Guru Govind Charan Pal, Aruna Mohanty, was further groomed by eminent Guru Shri Gangadhar Pradhan. Her passion towards dance took her forward, placing her on the global map as a prominent Indian dancer recognized by the nation as a Padmashree Awardee.

But what is it that makes her unique, she says, “I invest a lot of time for research that culminates into innovative thinking thereby producing unique choreographies. It is important to come up with ideas that matter that could provide a long lasting impact on the audience, else mere movements and representations fades away no sooner than the audience walks out of the auditorium.” Some of the compositions in her repertoire include the dance ballet Sravana Kumar, Kharavela, Jatra Baramasi, Gatha Odishi, Swargadapi Gariyasi, Pratinayak, Krishna Shraman, Astapadis from Geeta Govinda and Siddhartha, based on the novel by Hermann Hesse. Her production, ‘Shrusti O Pralay’, depicting the super cyclone that hit Odisha coast in 1999 is widely acclaimed. Her latest composition, Bhaba Sangam, Amazing Odisha, presenting the intricacies of the cultural fabric of the state, was staged at Kennedy Centre, Washington DC, USA in July 2015.

Sharing about her milestone performances she says, “Each performance is important. However some remain etched in the mind. For example, when I performed for the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India & Cabinet Minister during BJP National Executive Council meeting at Bhubaneswar and the opening ceremony of 22<sup>nd</sup> Asian Athletic Meet, World Mens’ Hockey Cup in Bhubaneswar. Needless to say, the ICCR sponsored tour with my troupe in European countries.”

Along with her performances worldwide, she has also worked as a visiting faculty in the University of California, San Diego. She has participated in the International Odissi Festival organised in Malaysia in 2008. Orissa Dance Academy (ODA) was the only group selected by Govt. of India to perform in the Festival of India in Germany, in the year 2012 during the inaugural show. In the International Dance Festival in Bangkok, ODA represented India where 14 other countries like UK, USA



◆ JAGYASENI CHATTERJEE

and Japan also presented their productions. ODA’s three months tour of 26 cities of USA in 2013 received unprecedented reviews from the media, including New York Times. The artistes of ODA under her leadership has also performed in the Europalia Art Festival, Brussels in 2013.

Interestingly, Aruna has also acted in the National Award winning Film ‘Sri Krishna Rasa Leela’, the first full length musical ballet based movie on Odissi dance and achieved rare positive reviews.

Among her many accolades, she has also received the fellowship by the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Govt. of India and conferred with the prestigious Maharani Award in 1997 by Guru Pankaj Charan Research Foundation, Bhubaneswar, Sanjukta Panigrahi Memorial National Award – 2001, Bharat Bhavan Award by the President of India, Jagannath Sanskruti Bikash Parishad Award Lifetime Achievement Award from Outlook Magazine, Baroda and the Kalanurangam Samman from Nrutya Darshan Academy.

She has served as a member of Central Sangeet Natak Akademi for five years and as the Executive Member of Indian Council for Cultural Relation (ICCR), New Delhi and Advisor to Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre along with being Member of various committees in the Ministry of Culture, India. During her tenure as the Vice-President of Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, Aruna made valuable contribution in developing and executing the cultural policy of Govt. of Odisha.

She has been organising the Dhauli – Kalinga Mahotsav for last 14 years at the heritage site of Dhauli Shanti Stupa, the Udayaraga Festival to encourage young talents from different classical dance genres.

This festival also includes an interactive seminar called ‘Bahirangam – beyond body’. And besides everything, she runs a Gotipua Gurukul where young talented boys are scouted to be groomed as Gotipua dancers.

“It is not about my own performance or my own students. There is joy in supporting young talents grow. India brims with talent! Classical dancers need encouragement and support from organisations and people to thrive. I enjoy to do my bit in the most humble way,” she says as she concludes.

# Of passion, patience and perseverance

An eclectic artiste, Dr Lakshmi Ramaswamy has taken the road less travelled; of creating contemporary classical dance productions based on rare Tamil texts and presenting to her audience the life, ethics, folklore of the ancient times.

Year: 2005. Location: Madras University, Bharatanatyam classroom with the legendary Padmabhushan Kalanidhi Narayanan where she is teaching Soundarya Lahari sloka. During the 'veera' segment, a 30 plus year old student raises her hand and objects her teacher, "Why should Mother Goddess in Veera rasa be portrayed by virtue of Shiva's valour? I have a second opinion. She is Shakthi, the kinetic. Shiva acts because Shakthi helps him to do so. *Maami* gives a subtle look and says, "Why don't you try?" The next day Lakshmi gives vent to her thoughts and comes up with 'veera rasa' of Shakthi by portraying Shakthi – the omnipresent and universal Mother Goddess. *Maami* without hesitation said, "Alright. Only you can do this. But all others would do what I have taught."

That's Dr. Lakshmi Ramaswamy, a dynamic mind who brims with new thoughts, deeply rooted in tradition and conviction and drawn towards the rare and the unknown.

"So many times, so many people have advised me, why don't you do a popular track; it is the digital age. You'll get more number of likes and views. But I have enjoyed working on the not so known literary works. It takes a lot of time and patience

and a lot of downfalls but the wait is worth more than a million views," shares, Dr. Lakshmi Ramaswamy, senior danseuse, teacher and researcher in the field of Bharatanatyam.

From full length Sangam productions – Natrinnai, Aingkurunuru and Purananuru (which she revived again this Margazhi season, she has expanded her repertoire to Pallu, Madakku, Pudhu Kavithai and more.

Reasoning out her interest she elaborates, "There is so much poise in classical poetry and rhythm in its aesthetics. Even raging a warfare had its own norms then! Creating and recreating old literary works pose multiple challenges. For example, interpreting is time consuming with limited resources; managing funds for sets, costumes and lights is a Herculean task and many a times I land up spending from my pocket. Platforms to showcase such productions are quite few and they too have budget constrictions," she reveals and adds, "But these are not stronger than my art. Art has thrived for more than 2000 years old. We are mere messengers."

One of the country's first Fulbright Fellow in Bharata natyam (2000) Lakshmi took up Arts and Culture Management and Administration at Golden Gate University. She is also a 'Top' Grade Artiste of Doordarshan and a Senior Fellow at the Ministry of Culture, India. The

first doctorate in Bharatanatyam from Madras University, her PhD thesis on the rare work, 'Kuthanul' has now been commissioned by the Government of Tamil Nadu to publish as a book "Indiya paarampariyaththil cuvai" (with references to rasa from Kuttanul to Cilappadikaram) for readers worldwide.

She was conferred with the Kalaimamani title (2011) for Bharatnatyam by the State for her contributions in the field.

How did the four decade journey as a dancer begin? She smiles and replies, "My mother. It was my mother's dream that her daughter must become a dancer. Else I would have been just another employee in company trapped in a regular job." Her mother's enthusiasm pushed Lakshmi to her Arangetram or first solo debut as a student of Smt. Indira Krishnamoorthy in front of a gathering of 7000 people in Tirunelveli, (a bustling cultural town in Tamil Nadu). After her marriage she shifted to Chennai and greatly with the support of her husband, Ramaswamy, Lakshmi enrolled herself for a Master's in Bharatanatyam at the University of Madras.

As a mother of a 10 month old, she also became a student at the famed Chitra Visweswaran's Chidambaram Academy for Performing Arts and consequently became a staff member who also lend the nattuvangam support to her Guru. "It is under Chitra Akka that I picked up nuances that changed the whole perception of dance. From English grammar to writing official letters; stage management to light design; tour planning to performance experiences, she nurtured me to stand up as a thinking dancer," reveals Lakshmi who has in her bag 26 productions in 25 years.

Amongst the dancer's other works include unique productions – Suka Marga (based on parrots in Indian Art, Thought and Literature), Sundara Kandam, Bhaja Govindam, Rama Hare Krishna Hare, Silambu Vidu Thoothu (the anklet messenger), Aalaavathu Eppadiyo (How do I attain thee?)

For her students, Lakshmi is not just a repository of dance history and mythology. Her experience of learning from Padma Subrahmanyam (Karanas) and Kalanidhi Narayanan (Abhinaya) and Dr. S. Raghuraman (Tamil Literature) are anecdotes in every teaching class.



Quite excitedly she reflects, "I met *Paddu Akka* for the first time during the Abhai workshop in her space Subrahmanyam where she taught the hastas and charis in Natya Shastra. The last Vidyut Branta Cari was done by me and Bijoyini during the presentation that followed the workshop. Consequently, I was one of the first to enrol in the Nritya Sali course under her direct supervision and I still remember the questions she asked me during the examination," shares Lakshmi who also serves as Assistant Professor in Vels University and as Vice President in Prayathnam."

"Sharing snippets of my experience with teachers gives my students a chance to know our roots, where we come from – their ideas and thoughts," she believes. And hence during her institute Sri Mudhraalaya's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, she called it as 'Rajatam' under the theme of Vande Guru Paramparam.

Sri Mudhraalaya with its satellite institutions now have 3 generation of dancers. Students of the institute are marked soloists, Doordarshan graded artistes, national scholarship holders, PhD students and research scholars. Students are also trained in art administration through Lakshmi's very new NAM – NatyAmrita Manthan, a team that organises unique lec-dems and cultural events in Chennai. "My mission is to ignite the minds of my students and make them feel proud of who they are, and what they do. Bhakti is not about rituals or lighting lamps. It is about firm conviction and honesty; it is about having a passion and going all out to make it happen!"



Bharat Nritya Utṣṭav

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## For the love of Ashtapadi-s

Parthasarathy Swami Sabha in association with Dr. Lakshmi Ramaswamy's Sri Mudhraalaya conducted a lec-dem, 'Of Eternal Love – an insight and approach to visual presentation of Ashtapadi-s'.

TIDE - A YouTube Channel for all Indian Dance Forms by GIRI had joined hands as the digital partner of the event.

Three unique sessions were conducted by three eminent stalwarts in the field. Dr. Neena Prasad (Mohiniyattam), Padmashree Awardee Aruna Mohanty (Odissi) and Smt Jigyasa Giri (Kathak) shared about the remarkable Pan Indian presence of Ashtapadi-s taken forward through the Indian classical dance styles. Each of the styles represent Ashtapadi-s in their own unique flavours. This flavour manifests through their own perspectives and use of grammar, body language and emotive mimesis evoking beauty.

These poems blend well and evoke and splendidorous madhuryam!

Eminent dance critic Smt Leela Venkatraman also presented a talk, *Flavour and Fragrance of Ashtapadi-s* while Dr. Lakshmi Ramaswamy gave a short presentation as part of the welcome address.

The event drew attention of classical dance lovers, and dance students, teachers, poets and writers who were drawn to know the choreographic nuances and lyrical beauty of Ashtapadi-s for a deeper comprehension of the genre.

Earlier in 2019, the Sabha had organised the first NAM Seminar in collaboration with Sri Mudhraalaya with 17 speakers over 15 sessions at the Anna Centenary Library.

## Coming up

### 20-1-2020 (Monday)

5.30 pm	Bharatanatyam	Poornashri Srivathsan
7.00 pm	Bharatanatyam	Sridevi Rangarajan

### 21-1-2020 (Tuesday)

5.30 pm	Odissi	Aneesh Raghavan
7.00 pm	Bharatanatyam	Sneha Manikandan

### 22-1-2020 (Wednesday)

5.30 pm	Bharatanatyam	Anerudh Srinivasan, Deepa Ramanathan, Manjari Pradeep, Renuka Sugavanam
7.00 pm	Bharatanatyam	J. Varsha

### 23-1-2020 (Thursday)

5.30 pm	Bharatanatyam	Apoorva Natarajan
7.00 pm	Bharatanatyam	Varisha Narayanan

### 24-1-2020 (Friday)

5.30 pm	Bharatanatyam	Samyuktha Shankar
7.00 pm	Bharatanatyam	Oviya Raja

### 25-1-2020 (Saturday)

4.00 pm	Bharatanatyam	Lavanya
5.30 pm	Bharatanatyam	students of Natya Kala Niketan
7.00 pm	Bharatanatyam	Shruthi Lakshmi

### 26-1-2020 (Sunday)

4.00 pm	Bharatanatyam	Mruthula
5.30 pm	Bharatanatyam	Vanshika
7.00 PM	Bharatanatyam	Preethi Shankar

The newsletter is available online in our site

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