

**Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit, Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu participated as Chief Guest at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Day celebrations of Association of Bharatanatyam Artistes of India**

Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, participated as Chief Guest at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Day celebrations of Association of Bharatanatyam Artistes of India (ABHAI) at Sathguru Ganananda Hall (Narada Gana Sabha), TTK Road, Alwarpet, Chennai today (27.04.2019) and addressed the gathering.

Hon'ble Governor said, "It gives me great pleasure to be here today on the occasion of 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Day Celebrations of the Association of Bharatanatyam Artistes of India. 'Abhai' as this Association is called was founded in 1987 with the objective of bringing together Bharatanatyam artistes, the accompanying musicians, the costume designers, the make-up artistes and all others associated with the art form under one roof to uphold the tradition of Bharatanatyam and nurture the budding talent so as to preserve our culture heritage.

The rich cultural heritage of India dates back to several millennia. Our nation has through the centuries, served as a fertile soil for the blossoming of different genres of music, dance, literature and fine arts. Of these dance represents the colourful kaleidoscope of India. The world over, dance and music are expected to calm the mind and please the bodily senses. The Indian form of cultural expression goes one step further in that, it appeals to the soul. Dance weaves the country together even as it celebrates the diversity and colours of the land with all its beauty and grace. It is a celebration of the body, the mind and the spirit. It is Spiritual; it is esoteric and is a manifestation of the Jeevatma yearning to merge with the Paramatma.

There are a number of dance forms such as Bhartanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri practised in India. They all generally have the central theme of propagating ideas and stories from the ancient texts of India with a spiritual orientation. The music is divine and all the performers are intimately linked with the creator.

Of them, the dance form of Bharatanatyam traces its origins to Tamil Nadu and has its theoretical foundations in the Natya Shastra of Bharata Muni. The antiquity of Bharatanatyam can be perceived from the fact that this dance form is mentioned in the ancient Tamil epic Silappathikaram.

Dance takes centre-stage as far as the Chidambaram Temple is concerned. Lord Nataraja the presiding deity at the temple performs the cosmic dance keeping the Universe in balance.

The temple has been designed to represent the human system in a scientific manner. The main shrine is covered by 21600 tiles of golden hue, which is equal to the number of times a human being inhales and exhales in a day. The 'viman' of the temple has 9 'kalash' which stand for the 'navadwaras', the nine openings of the human body. The 'kanaka sabha' represents the important systems of the human body such as the respiratory system, nervous system, circulatory system, etc. and the cosmic dance represents the heartbeat of the living organism.

That the cultural evolution of India had attained such great heights even by the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, so as to visualize the balance of the Universe through a cosmic dance form is evidence of the extent to which dance was admired and respected.

Thus, for almost 2000 years this dance form grew in refinement and expression until in 1910, during the colonial rule of the British, a ban was imposed on the dance being performed. The Indian independence movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, witnessed a period of cultural ferment and an effort by the people to reclaim their culture and rediscover history. It was due to this and the efforts of lovers and exponents of fine arts, notable among whom can be mentioned Rukmani Devi Arundale and Balasaraswati that Bharatanatyam was brought back into the mainstream and gained public acceptance.

I am delighted to see that leaders in the field of dance have been honoured today.

Dr. Tmt. Sonal Mansingh who has been conferred the prestigious Natya Kalanidhi Award is a Member of Parliament is famous as an exponent of Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Chhau and Natya Katha. She is the Founder- President of Shri Kamakhya Kalapeeth -- the Centre for Indian Classical Dances, in Delhi, which has been propagating Indian art and culture for over four decades.

Dr. Tmt. Jayashree Rajagopalan, the recipient of the "Nritya Perunjoti " Award is a veteran with several decades of experience as a Scholar, Performer and Teacher and the driving force behind the Abhai Mumbai Shakha.

The "Gandharva Nipuna" awardee Tmt. Girija Ramaswamy is also a veteran of several decades in the field of Vocal Music and Harikatha. She has been a well known vocal accompanist for Natyam for several decades.

Thiru P.T. Narendran the recipient of the "Narthaka Nipuna" Award is a alumnus of Kalakshetra and has over four decades of performing and teaching experience in dance and music.

Indian dance forms are a treat to watch. They benefit the dancer and the audience and bring both close to God. The greatness of Indian culture lies in its ability to draw people away from mundane interests and towards elevated thought processes. Hence we have thinkers, philosophers and spiritual leaders of an Indian society of class who serve as beacons of light for the whole world.

I feel proud that it is this spiritual orientation that is the guiding spirit behind today's function also. I am sure that the lamp lit today will continue to show the path for several succeeding generations. I extend my best wishes and greetings to the Association of Bharatanatyam Artistes of India. They deserve our appreciation for the manner in which they have been extending help to artistes in need — by providing monthly medical assistance, and support in cash and kind. The organisation has also undertaken outreach activities in schools and in institutions of higher education with the intention of propagation our cultural heritage.

They have been fortunate to have been guided by several stalwarts over the last 3 decades. I am sure that this kind of dignified and dynamic leadership will continue to chart out the future path of Association of Bharatanatyam Artistes of India in the coming years.

We can be sure that with organisations such as Association of Bharatanatyam Artistes of India the banner of Bharatanatyam will continue to fly with grandeur and majesty not only in India but also all over the world. My best wishes to all those assembled here on this happy occasion".

On this occasion, Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, Padma Bhushan Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam, Thirumathi. Roja Kannan, President, Association of Bharatanatyam Artists of India, Kumari. S. Janaki, Vice President, Association of Bharatanatyam Artists of India and other dignitaries participated.

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Raj Bhavan, Chennai -22

Sd/-

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Joint Director (PR)