

# Recalling arduous effort

debasree  
karan found

a tribute to  
Rukmini Devi  
Arundale  
enthraling

**DEDICATION**, devotion and hard work are the three important qualities that transform a practitioner into an adept performer and Anneshan, a dance institution, through their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, "Nriyanjali", held at Gyan Manch not too long ago, acknowledged the effort and arduous journey of a dancer. It was a tribute to Rukmini Devi Arundale and her oeuvres in the realm of Bharatnatyam. After all, her legacy to the cultural heritage of India was not merely a revival of Bharatnatyam, which was shunned by the elite of her time, but also its reformation. She helped this art that was essentially routed in solo temple performances to evolve into the genre of dance-drama.

The occasion was graced by chief guest Aloknananda Roy, renowned dancer, choreographer and social worker, and Guru Khagendra Nath Barman, legendary dance exponent Guru. The presentation began a prayer song, "Maha Ganapati" sung by Sukumar G Kutty, accompanied by G Suryanarayan, who played *mridangam*, and violinist S Vishal. The first item was *Todyamangalam*, set to *raga Malika* and *talam Malika*.

It is believed *Todyamangalam* has some purifying and auspicious effect and thus it needs to be performed in the beginning to provide a pure devotional ambience for successful performances. This piece was gracefully performed by students of Anneshan.

Next came *Jatisuvaram*, set to *raga Saveri* and *Adi talam*. It had *jatis* (rhythmic syllables) compiled with the *swaras* (musical notes), like a garland. There was no *sabityam* or literature in it, unlike other *abhinaya* items of Bharatnatyam. The participants exhibited their command over different critical *adavis* (basic units of the art) and their coordination was commendable.

What followed was *Sbaddam* set to *raga Malika* and *Misrabachapu talam*. This is a Bharatnatyam item in which the expressions or *abhinaya* are introduced for the first time in the repertoire. The song is usually separated into stanzas and between each stanza there are *jatis*. The stu-

dents of Anneshan truly delighted the audience with their enactment of various pranks played by the child Krishna, through their dance recital. Then came the most interesting and elaborate pieces of the evening, namely, *Kirtanam* and *Padam*, which are probably the most important part of any repertoire. "Gokula Nilaya", a *kirtanam* sung in praise of Lord Krishna, describing him in highly poetic phrases, offered the dancers the freedom to showcase their mastery over *abhinaya*. The compositions were choreographed by Keya Bhaduri, founder of Anneshan and a disciple of Guru Sri Khagendra Nath Barman. She performed to a beautiful *kirtanam*, "Lalita Lavangalata", which described the beauty of nature during the spring when Lord Krishna, also known as Sri Hari, played with the "sakhis". The *abhinaya* in this piece was exquisite and yet light and uplifting for everyone to enjoy.

The second item performed by her was "*Mabisbasura Mardini Ma Pabi*" set to *Rag Baulei* and *Talam Misrabachapu*, where she dances praising Goddess Durga, who resides in the heart of Mahadeva or Lord Shiva and worshipping whom one can attain salvation. She enchanted all with the brilliant use of her eyes and also the foot works.

The finale item of the evening was a traditional Kalakshetra style *Tillana*. Set to *Rag Vasanta* and *Adi Talam*, this was a visual treat. The joys of rhythm and movement predominated in this item of pure dance.

The simple eye-neck-shoulder movements evolved into mesmerising display of rhythmic patterns and postures during this piece.

The performers, though were students, seemed to be very professional and the performances reflected their dedication and hard work. Overall, it was a treat for the eyes and indeed a very good attempt.



Padam