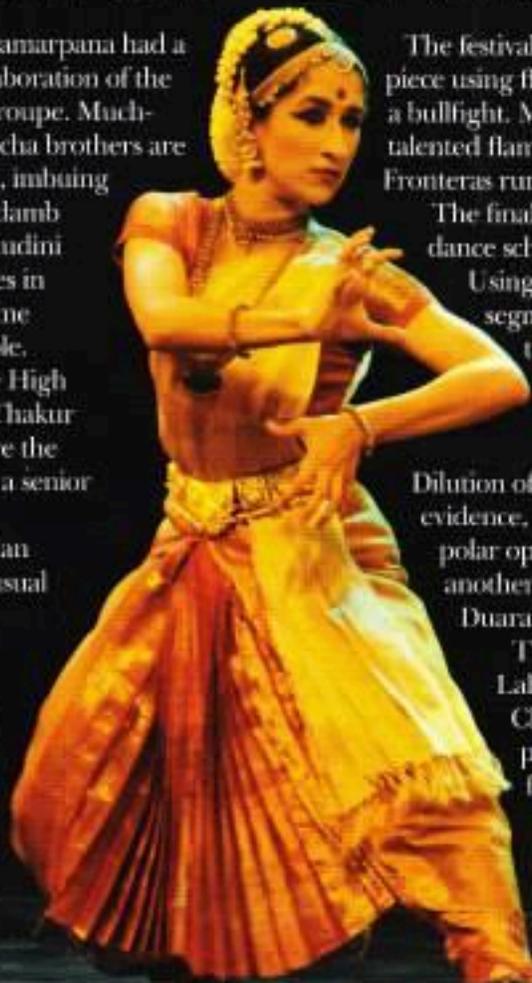


# SAMARPANA - DIVINE DANCES

The Asian Festival of Classical Dance - Samarpana had a brilliant start with the never-before collaboration of the Gundecha Brothers with the Kadamb troupe. Much-honoured Dhrupad singers, the Gundecha brothers are the leading exponents of the Dagarvani, imbuing the alap with a voice of its own. The Kadamb troupe, founded by the renowned Kumadini Lakhia, is among the top Kathak troupes in India today. To see these two groups come together for the first time was memorable.

The Chief Guest for the evening, the High Commissioner of India, HE Mrs Vijay Thakur Singh lauded the performance, and gave the Samarpana Citation to Mdin Som Said, a senior member of the dance fraternity.

The second day featured Diya Gopalan, an upcoming artiste performing an unusual Bharatanatyam repertoire based on numeracy. Dancing with exceptional grace, she more than justified the organisers' selection. A presentation on the Devadasis of Georgetown by noted scholar and musicologist V Sriram proved lively and informative.



The festival premiered *The Cruel Gardens*, an allegorical piece using flamenco and contemporary dance to portray a bullfight. Miguel Espino from Spain was the immensely talented flamenco artiste who collaborated with Flamenco Sin Fronteras run by Antonio Vargas, and Soren Niewelt.

The final day featured a collaboration between local dance schools in Bharatanatyam, ballet and contemporary.

Using bird stories as a theme in *Feathered Fables*, each segment brought alive the unique characteristics of their dance form - ballet performed by Academie de Danse, Contemporary by the NUS Dance Ensemble and Bharatanatyam by Shiruti Laya.

The panel discussion that followed on the *Dilution of Classical Arts* was peppered with anecdotal evidence, strewn with strong opinions and peopled with polar opposites, the discussion would have gone on for another couple of hours if moderator Prof Prasenujit Duara hadn't had to call a halt to the proceedings.

The closing was a performance by Anrita Lahiri who interpreted Rabindranath Tagore's *Chitrangada* through Kuchipudi. Her performance moved many to tears and was a fitting tribute to a great writer and festival. ■

— *Diya Ramesh*