



Mdm Som Said with Mrs. Vijay Thakur Singh



Diya Gopalan

In order to focus attention on a young emerging talented dancer, Samarpana Festival presents a dancer of Sruti Laya in a solo Bharatanatyam recital. This year Diya Gopalan, a student of Gayatri Sriram for the past eight years, performed Sankhya, a thematic presentation based on the decimal system of counting, dovetailing various Indian philosophies and beliefs in narration. Diya is blessed with a commanding stage presence, a pleasant visage and immense passion for dance, youth coursing through her frame. Choreography was by Minal Prabhu and Gayatri Sriram. Pushpanajli was based on number one representing Nirakara Parabrahma, pure consciousness. From then on, succeeding numbers wove mythological stories, highlighting philosophical concepts with brief narration. The concept of duality as epitomized in Purush and Prakriti with Ardhanarishwara icon was danced in an arresting manner. The Trinity of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, the Chatur Vedas and Panchabhootas were woven in format of a varnam. These were imaginatively choreographed and danced with commendable stamina, never showing any stress. It was a delight to see someone so young going through the paces to the exacting nattuvangam by her mentors and excellent team of musicians including Balasubramanyam Sharma (vocal), G Gurumurthy (percussion) and K Jayaram (flute). It enhanced the appeal of dance, for Diya seemed to be completely immersed in the music. The six seasons Shadritu gave her scope for expressing reactions caused by the environment on a young maiden. Then followed Saptaswaras, seven musical notes. The eight directions, the presiding deities, the Ashtadikpalas suggested cosmos to whom the dancer paid obeisance. Diya covered the stage competently. Navarasas, the nine sentiments found in Diya's beautiful face a playground, where the expressions seemed to fleet effortlessly. The finale was tillana with Dasavatara, ten incarnations, which Diya danced with aplomb and verve. Here is a dancer who gives one and all an impression that she is born to dance and is bound to go places.

Following Diya Gopalan's performance was the presentation on 'The Devadasis of George Town,' an illustrated talk by V Sriram, the much sought after speaker on history and fine arts. He has been doing considerable work on the history of Chennai and Carnatic music and writes frequently on these subjects for The Hindu and Madras Musings. Author of nine books including Carnatic Summer on the lives of twenty two exponents, he with his erudition, deep knowledge of Carnatic music, sound sense of history and an amazing style of keeping his audience riveted to his discourse, regaled the audience with the story of the Devadasis. He gave rare information, screening photos and excerpts of music of artistes of bygone era. The banning of dance in the temples, the anti-nautch movement, the efforts of E Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi to re-establish Bharatanatyam on a high pedestal, the fantastic story of Bangalore Nagaratnamma, her fierce temperament and independence as a female, the pathetic conditions of the devadasis - all was told in a manner which kept his audience spellbound. Samarpana deserves congratulations for such a wonderful discourse. V Sriram should be invited every year from Chennai to the Samarpana festival to share his knowledge with old and young generation.