



# The NKC Daily 26<sup>th</sup> December 2009

## Convenor's note

"It is that time of the year again... The annual Marghazhi music and dance season will begin soon in Chennai. Programmes of music and dance by a galaxy of renowned, senior, leading, popular as well as upcoming artistes across the country make this festival a veritable Woodstock of the best in classical Indian performing arts with Sri Krishna Gana Sabha being a much sought after venue for both the performer and art lover.

Seeking to take art beyond mere performance and understand the intellect, grammar and spirit of dance, Shri R Yagnaraman, secretary of Sri Krishna Gana Sabha started the Natya Kala Conference in 1981. Over the last nearly three decades renowned names from the firmament of dance, have been invited by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, to don the mantle of Convenor of the Natya Kala Conference for a period of two years, thus ensuring a scintillating variety of thought and approaches to dance research.

Being invited by Shri Y Prabhu, Secretary, Krishna Gana Sabha, to be the Convenor of the Natya Kala Conference for the years 2008 and 2009, was a great opportunity to integrate, my art, academics, management and administrative training.

Ramayana in Performing Arts, was the theme of the conference in December 2008, which, explored the interrelationship and mutual influence of text, folklore, tradition and performing arts of the Ramayana, and has been hailed as the best ever Natya Kala Conference, and a runaway success.

Being in dance from the age of four, dance has meant many things to me, and yet it is not a hobby, or a pastime or even a career, but just a reason to BE...

And yet, the year, 2008, had other very deep and overwhelming meanings and connotations'. On July 1st 2008, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Over the last year and more I have been undergoing treatment, through surgery, chemo and radiation therapies.

However, through it all I continued to dance. By bringing laser sharp focus to my dance, in all its multifaceted glory, I successfully Tuned out of cancer and Tuned into my dance. My dance saved me from myself!

While deciding on a topic for the Natya Kala Conference for 2009, it became a natural choice therefore, to have DANCE MATTERS!, as the theme of this year's conference.

Today, the whole of India seems to be dancing! Dance, in all its multi hued presence has become a way of life. Yes, DANCE MATTERS! And it is time we bring matters related to dance centre stage. And thus this year's conference is DANCE MATTERS!

India today- A pulsating energy of the can - do spirit, a synergy of ancient India raring to walk hand in hand with a Young India - ready to take on the world - nay - ready to lead the world! An India - where competition is the new mantra, and excellence its hand -maiden, standing on the cusp of a dazzling new era of growth and abundance in every field of human endeavour.

An era quite propitious for art and artistes - Every dawn brings in a fresh new perspective, a rewriting of content, of redrawing of structures and a rewiring of codes! An exhilarating freedom, to scale personal levels of creativity and expression. A new and free market place that is open to new explorations and ideas, new contexts and yes, new challenges. Yet, it is this very market place of liberalization and globalization that brings the inherent classical dancer in conflict with a newly evolving and all encompassing mass culture

This year the Natya Kala Conference, with DANCE MATTERS, as its theme, will look at dance in India over the last 60 years, and its place in the India of tomorrow.

To curate this conference, I first created a matrix, of styles, and performances, individuals and personalities in art, traditional paradigms and fresh approaches, the soloist and the choreographer, male and female dancer, the scholar, writer and the critic, Gurus and students, all media print and electronic, TV and film, alongside, issues of relevance, livelihood, sustenance, copyright etc.

From this matrix emerged a cross section of 5 tiers, which encompasses the entire matrix, with little repetition in idea, form or content.

The conference is structured in five levels:

The first tier will look at the received legacy of some of Indian dance's greatest performers, artists, scholars and minds, who have shaped and fashioned what we know as classical dance today.

The second tier will take note of the changes, influences and new directions that are being drawn, imaged, imagined and presented, by different generations of dancers and thinkers. This section will look at those pushing and bursting boundaries, collaborating, striking new paths, finding new partners and parameters, and treading fresh grounds of artistry.

The third tier will look at issues of maintenance, sustenance and continuance and will have panel discussions that will address issues, of livelihood and relevance, of both dancers within and outside India.

The fourth tier will showcase the sweep and stretch that dance has undertaken into television and cinema, and its overriding influence thereof.

The fifth tier will look at dance matters, and will highlight some issues of and for dance, like lighting, intellectual property rights, media, etc.

Many senior dancers, and renowned artists and scholars, will share their knowledge and ideas over this 6 day conference, scheduled from 26th December to 31st December 2009 from 9am to 1pm, at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai.

Sri Jayant Kastuar, Secretary, Sangeet Natak Akademi, will inaugurate this year's Natya Kala Conference & deliver the keynote address, on Saturday the 26th December 2009 at 9.30 am

Finally I thank Sri Krishna Gana Sabha for reposing confidence in me and inviting me to convene this Conference, last year and this year. The conference is open to all and seating will be on a first come first served basis.

Be there, if you are an art lover or want to catch the best of India's dancers scholars, musicians and thinkers, while they come together to say DANCE MATTERS!"

## Excerpts from the interview of Dr Ananda Shankar Jayant...

(for detailed interview visit [www.natyakalaconference.com](http://www.natyakalaconference.com) and [www.narthaki.com](http://www.narthaki.com))

You were one of the speakers at TED India. Do share your experience

TED India was one of the most fantastic experiences I have had. Being one of just 40 speakers, from across the globe was indeed very special. TED India's list of speakers was an inspirational and unusual mix of people from diverse disciplines. With the theme The Future Beckons, it was the ultimate brain spa.

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design -- three broad subject areas that are, collectively, shaping our future. Attendees and speakers are from vastly different fields and draw inspiration from unlikely places.

Attendance at TED is by invitation only, and the attendees -- CEOs, scientists, designers, intellectuals -- are as extraordinary as the speakers, who in 2007 included former US President Bill Clinton, author Isabel Allende, legendary biologist EO Wilson, designer Phillippe Starck, and Virgin CEO Richard Branson; in 2008, speakers included brain expert Jill Bolte Taylor, physicist Stephen Hawking and undersea explorer Robert Ballard. Indeed, TED's success is based on the extraordinary effect of bringing together 1,000 of the world's most remarkable

people. The result? Unexpected connections. Extraordinary insights. Powerful inspiration.

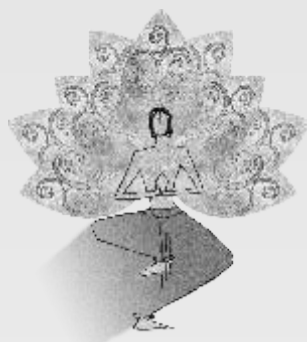
The TED India conference was held at the beautiful INFOSYS campus in the 1st week of November, and included India's most promising innovators, entrepreneurs, artists, storytellers, scientists and NGO's. About one third of the program came from outside India.. Other speakers included, film director Shekar Kapur, Diplomat and Minister, Sashi Tharoor, scientist RA Mashelkar, innovators Pranav Mistry and Pawan Sinha, management guru CK Prahlad, Harsha Bhogle, Hans Rosling, dancer Mallika Sarabhai and musicians Anil Srinivasan and Sikkil Gurucharan, Shivamani and Usha Uthup and other eminent people from various fields, including His Holiness the Karmapa, and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev

This was a singular honour. I learnt to speak and dance and say all I wanted to say in 18 minutes! I was speaking in the session titled Power of Stories, alongside innovator, Ramachandra Budhihal, Film director Shekar Kapur, actor Abhay Deol, and photographer Ryan Lobo. I received a standing ovation!

I have tried to bring some of TED's organisational ideas to NKC this year.



Ananda Shankar Jayant



## Programme :

26th December 09

9.30 - 10.30 : Inauguration by  
Smt D Purandreshwari, Union Minister of  
State for Human Resource Development,  
Government of India.

Key Note Address, Jayant Kastuar, Secretary,  
Sangeet Natak Akademi.

Dr Ananda Shankar Jayant,  
Delivers the Convenor's address

10.30 - 10.45 : Tea break

10.45 - 11.45 : Plenary session:

Where do we go from here? Dr Sunil Kothari

11.45 - 13.00 : Changing Kinetics.

Harikrishnan, Srividya Natarajan,

Priyadarshini Govind

27th December 09

9.15 - 10.05 : The Balasaraswati, legacy

Nandini Ramani

10.10 - 11.00 : The male dancer -

Kalakshetra legacy, VP Dhananjayan

11.10 - 12.00 : Kuchipudi - The Vempati

China Satyam legacy, Dr Anuradha

12.10 - 13.00 : Documenting Dance -

The Mohan Khokar legacy, Ashish Mohan Khokar

28th December 09

9.15 - 10.05 : The Expressive Body,

Sujata Mohapatra

10.10 - 11.00 : Essence of Abhinaya,

Lakshmi Vishwanathan

11.10 - 12.00 : Media and Dance,

Sadanand Menon, Ramnarayan, Anjana Rajan,

Chitra Mahesh, Anuradha Ananth

12.10 - 13.00 : Excerpts from new works,

Arangham Trust, Natya- STEM dance kampani,

Thiruchelvam, Samudra

29th December 09

9.15 - 10.05 : Re-imagining the image,

Chitra Vishweswaran

10.10 - 11.00 : In Conversation -Collaborations

Anita Ratnam, Astad Debbo

11.10 - 12.00 : Thaka Dimi Tha, TV,

Reality shows and dance, Radhika Shurajit

12.10 - 13.00 : Dancing Difference

Moderator: Anita Ratnam

Lata Pada, Rama Bharadwaj, Ratna Kumar,

Harikrishnan, Aravindh Kumaraswamy, Siri Rama

30th December 09

9.15 - 10.05 : Dance Choreography,

Kumudini Lakhia

10.10 - 11.00 : In Conversation: Stretch Marks

Geeta Chandran, Ramli Ibrahim

11.10 - 12.00 : Young Gurus - Gen Next

Moderator: Leela Venkataraman

A Lakshman, Gopika Verma,

Kishore Mosalikanti, Deepika Reddy, Anita Guha

12.10 - 13.00 : Film Choreography, Saroj Khan

31st December 09

9.15 - 10.15 : Dance Lights,

Gautam Bhattacharjee

10.20 - 11.00 : IPR and Dance, Uttara Asha

Coorlawala, Jayaprada Ramamurthy, Universal-Legal

11.10 - 12.10 : Art, Beauty, Creation

Moderator: Anil Srinivasan,

Unnikrishnan, Rajeve Menon, Devdutt Patnaik

12.20 - 13.20 : Valedictory, Shanta Serbjeet Singh

26<sup>th</sup> December 2009

## Excerpts from the interview of Dr Sunil Kothari...

(for detailed interview visit [www.natyakalaconference.com](http://www.natyakalaconference.com) and [www.narthaki.com](http://www.narthaki.com))

Your title 'Where do we go from here?' Do you think there are clear paths of where the dance will go or is it very fuzzy and being pulled in many directions?

Having seen classical dances for more than half a century, one questions where do we go from here. We are performing the past and have not cut it off from its umbilical cord. What one sees is a certain mindlessness and a lack of awareness about the arts, the role arts can play, or say specifically dance can, is lost sight of. The assembly line production of dancers and the problems of the transition of performers from the hereditary class to the middle class, the rampant commercialization of the context too has affected the dance sequence. In its solo avatar the form certainly has thrown up exceptionally gifted dancers. But now the danger signals are evident. The mindlessness and mediocrity accompanying quantification and promotion in the name of supporting art- without the necessary checks and balances have caused havoc. It has for example led to the factory syndrome of a conveyor belt production of dancers, followed by pre-fabricated arengetrams, mechanical presentations and loss of feeling. In the urban centres performances do not attract crowds and audiences are dwindling except for special events.. And, yet one encounters a false hype and euphoria during say, December Festival season in Chennai. Regarding second part of your question dance is bound to develop in many directions. I feel confident dancers shall meet the challenges posed to them.

Tell us about your new book.

Sattriya Dances of Assam .We have completed photo documentation recently and Marg Publications shall release the book by September 2010.

Let us know the secret of your passion for dance and your extraordinary energy.

You are very kind to complement me. I have enjoyed working in the field of dance . I do not know about extraordinary energy. I hope I shall be able to carry on.



## The Kinetics of Kittappa Pillai's Choreography



Sacred geometry  
of dance and  
beyond...

*Hari Krishnan  
and Srividya  
Natarajan*  
explore the  
choreographic  
creations of a  
maestro

## Of individualistic style



*Priyadarshini  
Govind* tells of  
her strong  
foundation in  
dance and the  
onward journey  
of discovery...

### Did U Know

Most of the early 20th century modern choreographers and dancers saw ballet in the most negative light. Isadora Duncan thought it most ugly, nothing more than meaningless gymnastics. Martha Graham saw it as European and Imperialistic, having nothing to do with the modern American people. Merce Cunningham, while using some of the foundations of the ballet technique in his teaching, approached choreography and performance from a totally radical standpoint compared to the traditional balletic format.

Sita Pooviah was the first Indian to do her PhD in dance. Her thesis was called 'The art and science of Indian classical dancing and its social bearing' from the University of Bombay in 1950.

('Mirrors and Gestures: Conversations with women dancers' by CS Lakshmi)

When Zohra Segal was a student at Dresden's Mary Wigmen dance school, she happened to see her first performance of the Uday Shankar troupe and thought he was a eunuch! Many years later, his artistic vision became the foundation for her dance career.

('Story of their lives' by Sangita Wadhvani, Elle)

### Snippets

There are three dances associated with Shiva. The first is an evening dance in the Himalayas, watched by the devas; this is the ordinary play of consciousness. This represents the movement of consciousness at the societal level. The second is his tandava dance in the form of Bhairava; this marks the end of one creation, one life, one universe. Thirdly, as a more explicit image is the dance of Shiva as Nataraja, the lord of dancers, in the golden hall of Chidambaram, the center of the universe in the sky of the mind, in the heart of the temple.

('The Dance of Shiva' by Subhash Kak)

When Ragini Devi was invited to give a course of 10 lectures on Indian dance under the auspices of the University of London, it was the first course of its kind to be sponsored by an English university.

('Dance Dialects of India' by Ragini Devi)

Dr. V Raghavan, an outstanding scholar of the 20th century believed that Bharata Natya is a form of authentic Indian dance art, the antiquity of which goes to Rigvedic hymns and even Mohenjodaro times. He asserts that it was the same dance that Arjuna taught the Virata princess in Mahabharata, it was the same dance that Malavika danced in Kalidasa's play and Madhavi in Silappadhikaram. Ajanta, Amaravati, Sittanavasal and Tanjore paintings are visual representations of the same dance.

('Remembering Dr. V Raghavan' by TK Venkatasubramanian, Nartanam, May - Aug 2008)