

Defining classical art

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Dr Ananda Shankar Jayant's new production 'Tales of the Bull and Tiger' (Simha and Nandi) witnessed a packed Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad recently. Visually stunning, the programme was an offshoot of the renowned artiste's creative ability, which reached stunning heights. A whole new dimension was opened up to display choreography, costumes, lighting and music of breathtaking ability all seamlessly melded to perfection. Pastel colours, minimum ornaments and backdrops of surpassing elegance set the tone. The basic theme was simple in presentation but contained a masterful blending of ideas taken from the epics of Hindu mythology to create a multilingual production. The depth and richness of the content set a new benchmark indeed.

The story and legends of Shiva and Parvati were presented through their "Vahanas" (vehicles) the Bull and the Tiger narrating to Ganesha and Kartikeya their parent's glory thus bestowing the title of the performance. The Mooshika or Mouse vehicle of Ganesha in a young student's appearance enchantingly led to invocatory verses on the elephant-headed God splendidly performed by senior students of Shankarananda Kalakshetra including Aditi, Harshita, Lahari, Sneha and others whose poise was excellent. The meticulous synchronisation and use of space created a rich experience. The ballet was continuous with no breaks for 87 minutes mesmerising the audience with its overflowing energy. Shimmering iridescent robes of violet and blue coruscated in a group of younger students as Peacocks the Vahana of Kartikeya mimicking the gait of these colourfully hued birds.

The background had the symbol of Kundalini, the esoteric Srichakra as Ananda radiantly

depicted the Mother goddess in all her majesty. Traditionally classic songs on Shiva including Rudrashtakam and Shambho gave scope for elaborating the famous rivalry between Vishnu and Brahma to try measuring the Linga of Light; the form taken by Lord Shiva to test them. This was a vibrant narrative by a pair of male guest artistes, who included Surendra. The marriage of Shiva and Parvati was scintillating as Ananda walked under a scarlet silk fringed canopy borne up by students in a ceremonial procession. Mithun Shyam as Shiva was the pivot bedecked as the bridegroom exchanging garlands with his bashful consort. His Tandava dance, which stole the scene was so filled with energy that it defied description.

The evening fittingly ended to the tones of a lilting lullaby sung by the Goddess to lull her children to sleep. Sunil Kothari, Dr Ramanachari and Chitra Visveswaran were but a few of distinguished guests who attended. The musical soundscape was by Sathiraju Venumadhav among a host of other creative credits including costumes by Ganesh Nallari. This will be the first programme in a series for the year-long celebrations of Shankarananda Kalakshetra's 40 years of service to classical art.

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