

**Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, Thiru.Banwarilal Purohit, participated as Chief Guest at the Saraswathi Puraskaram Award.**

Thiru.Banwarilal Purohit, Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu participated as Chief Guest at the Saraswathi Puraskaram Award function Organised by The C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation at Alwarpet, Chennai today (21.9.2019) and addressed the gathering.

Hon'ble Governor said that "I am happy to be here at the function organized by the C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation for conferring the Saraswathi Puraskaram 2019 on Dr.Vyjayanthimala Bali in recognition of her outstanding contributions towards the preservation and promotion of Indian Culture and the fine arts.

The rich cultural heritage of India dates back to several millennia. Our nation has through the centuries, served as a fertile soil for the blossoming of different genres of the fine arts such as music, dance, literature, sculpture, painting and handicrafts. Of these dance represents the colourful kaleidoscope of India. Dance weaves the country together even as it celebrates the diversity and colours of the land with all its beauty and grace. It is a celebration of the body, the mind and the spirit. It is Spiritual; it is esoteric and is a manifestation of the Jeevatma yearning to merge with the Paramatma.

History reveals that in our ancient societies, music and dance were a part of daily life and they were deeply rooted in spirituality. The Classical art forms of Tamil Nadu such as Bharatanatyam are endowed with a scientific basis and great antiquity. There are references to the Bharatanatyam in Tamil literature ascribed to a period that dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The secret of their vitality is their continued growth without losing their purity and pristine form.

At the famous Chidambaram Temple the presiding deity, Nataraja is seen performing the cosmic dance thus keeping the Universe in balance. That the cultural evolution of India had attained such great heights even by the 10th century CE, so as to visualize the balance of the Universe through a cosmic dance form is evidence of the extent to which dance was admired and respected. Hence Lord Nataraja is first invoked in all dance recitals all over Tamil Nadu and many parts of India as a mark of respect and reverence.

Thus for almost 2000 years the dance form of Bharatanatyam grew in refinement and expression until in 1910, during the colonial rule of the British, a ban was imposed on the dance being performed. The Indian independence movement in the early 20th century, witnessed a period of cultural ferment and an effort by the people to reclaim their culture and rediscover history. It was due to this and the efforts of lovers and exponents of fine arts, notable among whom can be mentioned Rukmani Devi Arundale and Balasaraswati that Bharatanatyam was brought back into the mainstream and gained public acceptance.

The world over, dance and music are expected to calm the mind and please the bodily senses. The Indian form of cultural expression goes one step further in that, it appeals to the soul.

In the words of Mark Twain, and I quote, "India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legends and the great grandmother of tradition." Looking at this definition in the context of dance alone one can see how far it is true. The sheer variety of dance forms in India is a matter of admiration and exhilaration simultaneously.

The Kathak dance form is derived from the Sanskrit word katha, and is a medium to communicate stories from the epics and puranas through dance, songs and music.

Odissi is another classical dance different in form and style that expresses stories and ideas of Vaishnavism, with glamour and glorious footwork.

Manipuri which also focuses on Vaishnavite themes has a different attire and style of presentation.

The Kattakali of Kerala is yet another dance form that lends itself to the style of performing a drama on stage with music and expression.

Bharatanatyam and the various different dance forms that originated in different parts of India have been given to us as our cultural heritage.

The Guru Parampara tradition that was practised for the transmission of this heritage to succeeding generations ensured mentoring with discipline, perfection with parental affection and a proper understanding of the student's strengths and weaknesses.

Some salient elements of this tradition relationship are a) the prevalence of a formal arrangement where the guru accepts the initiate as a shishya and accepts responsibility for his well-being and progress, b) the practice of implicit obedience by the student and Gurudakshina, where the shishya gave a gift to the guru as a token of gratitude on the completion of his stay with the Guru.

Functions such as these will help to promote and rekindle in our youth an interest in our rich cultural inheritance and their tradition.

It is my ardent desire that the cultural institutions of India grow stronger with time and cement the foundations of our nation to unify our people and lead them on to greater glory.

The C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation is one such institution which was established to serve the interests of the community at large and to promote Indian culture through research and development. The Foundation's mission is to provide innovative and specialized education within the Indian cultural ethos, to improve the social, economic and cultural lifestyles of diverse populations and to strive for excellence.

The Saraswathi Puraskaram is a prestigious award given by the C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation to honour distinguished artistes for their lifetime contribution to the fine arts.

Saraswathi the goddess of knowledge, music, art, wisdom and learning is venerated as a part of the trinity of Saraswathi, Lakshmi, and Parvati all of whom personify the divine power of Shakti. Saraswathi is often shown holding the veena the symbol of melodious harmony. A hamsa or swan is shown near her feet and this symbolizes her ability to discern the truth by discriminating between good and evil, and separating out the essence from the outward show, and the eternal from the evanescent.

Padmashri. Dr. Vyjayanthimala Bali has been conferred the prestigious Saraswathi Puraskaram award today she is extolled as a famous exponent of the Bharatanatyam. Her contribution to the promotion of the fine arts through the medium of cinema is well known and universally acknowledged.

In fact, Dr. Vyjayanthimala Bali was one of the first film personalities from the south to act in Hindi films. She not only found instantaneous acceptance all over India, but also enjoyed an enviable track record of having played the role of the leading lady alongside all the top heroes of the Hindi screen. Indeed she is one of the finest examples of how national integration can be brought about through culture and art.

She turned to politics after a successful career in the film world. As a politician she was in active politics for more than 2 decades and acquitted himself creditably in the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha. A patriot at heart she worked hard to work for the propagation of the nationalistic ideals which were dear to her. For all this the nation rewarded her with the Padmashri, the Sangeet Natak Akademi

award, the Kalaimamani award and many other titles and honours. I congratulate Dr. Vyjayanthimala Bali for her achievements and wish her many more years of health, prosperity and glory.

I extend my greetings to the President, the Trustee and the office bearers of the C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation. The efforts taken by them to organise the Saraswathi Puraskaram 2019 award function deserve a special word of praise. My best wishes to them. May they be visited with success in all their endeavours”.

On this occasion, Dr. Nanditha Krishna, President, The C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Dr.Sumathi Krishnan, Trustee, The C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Ms.M.Bargavi Devendra, Honorary Secretary, The C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation and other dignitaries participated.

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Raj Bhavan, Chennai -22  
Date: 21.9.2019

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Joint Director (PR)