

## **REVIEW: Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Jayamangala School of Music and Dance in Maryland, USA**

Written By: Prof. V. Sivakumar

The Great Poet and Sanskrit Scholar, Bhartruhari, wrote:

Sahitya Sangeetha Kala Vihinahaa  
Sakshath Pashu pumsa ivahaa ...

which means, those " without any ability to appreciate literature, art and music are only like animals " and cannot be counted as Humans. I used to wonder whether that was a correct statement. After some thinking on the subject, I realized the true meaning of what he said. With money, status and fame, one can enjoy creature comforts, high positions of Power, name recognition and celebrity status in the society but for one to elevate himself/herself to higher realms of creation, beauty and aesthetics, and to understand " The Self , The Core Values, the Supreme Almighty, etc., " , one definitely has to have some appreciation for the finer aspects of life such as art, literature and music.

I thank God Almighty every day, for bestowing a little bit of such a sense in me so I could truly enjoy fully the silver jubilee celebrations of the Jayamangala School of Music and Dance conducted in two phases one on June 19th, 2016 at the Jewish Community Center in Rockville, Maryland and the other on July 10th, 2016 at the Cultural Arts Center, Montgomery College, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

Jayamangala School was founded by Mrs. Rajalakshmi Krishnan and it was registered as a non-profit school in Greenbelt, Maryland in 1991 for the sole purpose of serving the Cause of Music and Dance in its varied forms and to spread that knowledge to people around the globe. Like any school, its main objective was to pass on the craft to the next generation of students in Carnatic vocal music, violin, veena, mrudangam and dance in the Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and Mohiniattam styles. Besides teaching classes on all these art forms both face to face and thru' the internet, the school's faculty have conducted workshops in music and mrudangam by inviting scholars from India, have held musical conferences on different subjects, have joined other professionals in their respective fields to give jugalbandhi performances etc.

The July 10th performance included a musical symphony titled---' Music Transcends'. This symphony was conceived and coordinated for the first time by Jayamangala's Administrator, Dr. Bala Nathan, in 2004. This was held in Maryland, Philadelphia, PA, Trissur, India and true to the belief of the Jayamangala's board members that music transcends cultures, ethnicity, religion, race, socio-economic status, the symphony was thus conducted again in the Prince Georges County Prison to entertain the inmates in Maryland. The inmates, staff, administrators of the prison were extremely delighted especially enjoying the percussion ensemble. It was a befitting performance to be included in the silver jubilee celebrations. Besides this symphony, the celebrations included a dance titled, " Pancha Kanya: Five Resilient Women " that depicted the Lives of Ahalya, Kunti, Draupadi, Taara and Mandodhari, the five historical women in Hindu epics that overcame adversities in their life by sheer determination, will-power by empowering themselves to reach their objectives and goals in their Lives.

Bharatanatyam is all about timing, discipline, aesthetics, beauty, expressions, rhythm, communications thru' body language, converging into providing total satisfaction to the audience, i.e., 'sowkiyam' for the chosen song. This requires 100 percent synchronization of the dancer with the members of the orchestra providing the music in all aspects through out the program. Rarely have I seen such perfect coordination between the team members as I saw in Pancha Kanya dance. Director of the school of Dance in Jayamangala, Ms. Shobha as a teacher, is what one would call, "PERFECTION WITHOUT PRESSURE". Since she maintains very high quality in her own performances, she imparts the same standards in her students and picks orchestra members, also, with the highest quality standards be it the singer, violinist, flautist and the percussionist. Thus, orchestra team members' profile reads like "Who is Who" among artists in India in their chosen professional field. With profiles like that, each member playing their part so well and with an impeccable perfect training from Shobha and other dance teachers of different schools in the area, the five girls who portrayed the Pancha Kanyas of the Hindu Epics were near Perfect in their performances and in their personification of every Heroine in every song that was played for the program.

The June 19, 2016 performance was a musical (dance) drama titled "Shakuntala: A Timeless Tale". The dance-drama retold the story of Kalidasa's eternal Heroine Shakuntala. The story also had a twist to make it of contemporary value in today's youngsters' "Relationships". As part of its goal to spread the art around the globe, when this play was enacted in Lusaka, Zambia, the Zambia Post, reviewed it as follows:

"THE PLAY TAKES ON A NEW MEANING WITH ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE"

The dance drama is a 4th century sanskrit play by the poet Kalidasa. This was adapted with Hindi songs and english dialogs by Shobha Subramanian. This reinterpreted classic followed the romantic legend of Shakuntala and King Dushyanta, narrated by Shakti a 21st century modern woman who has a story of her own.

Shakti reminisces her interactions with John, while recounting Shakuntala's tale with Dushyant. Shakti, being the modern woman, does not think that she should get back with John after what she had gone through all these years alone raising her child as a single parent to be where she is now unlike Shakuntala who accepted Dushyant when he came back to her expressing his profound grief for what he had done to Shakuntala. Director Shobha left the audience to make their own valid conclusions.

Art lovers from different parts of the world joined Jayamangala in its 25th year celebrations by a great number and left the hall on both days with immense satisfaction and joy with the feeling of elation admiring the students, faculties and the board members for putting up such a spectacular show as part of the silver jubilee celebrations on both days. Kudos to all of them from this author with special admiration for the innovative thinking of the Director of school of Dance, Shobha, for making the programs relevant to modern day youth.

The former CEO of GE, Mr. Jack Welch is credited for making GE the best run company by successfully implementing the "The Six Sigma" methods of operation for years. This essentially

means, quantitatively, that there is only one in a million chance that something could go wrong in these operations. Jayamangala and Party proved that their " Team " is as good and perhaps better in getting both these events done flawlessly.

Indeed, it was a " Six Sigma and Beyond " operation. Congratulations to one and all in the Jayamangala School of Music and Dance for their great 25th year anniversary celebrations.

This silver jubilee celebration is one for the records, which will remain in every one's memory for a very long time.