

National Seminar on 'Indian Music and Dance: The Absence of Critical Attention and Analysis'. (04-06 September 2017)

Concept Note:

The classical Indian music and dance present a very rich, dynamic and sustained creative repertoire of Indian imagination. Their reach is wide; they exist in all regions of India and, lately, beyond India. They have ever-expanding followers of rasikas belonging to all generations especially the younger generation. They have survived the powerful and all-devouring onslaught of the Western music and dance. Arguably they are the only other forms of classical music and dance other than the western in the world.

Fortunately, the Indian classical music and dance have had a dynamics in which preservation of tradition and individual innovations have taken place together without any dissonance. Divested of the royal and feudal patronage soon after independence, these forms have in many different ways, democratized themselves winning large audiences and popular support. Though largely thought of as stubbornly conservative, the classical arts have embodied many changes and innovations. The grand narrative of the decisive changes in the jealously guarded tradition has yet to be written about and analyzed critically.

It is truly amazing that the classical arts have survived and thrived in the absence of critical attention and analysis. This in a country like Indian where until the 18th-19th century elaborate critical thinking about music and dance took place. The shastric tradition of discovering and articulating new concepts got, more or less, abandoned or, at the least, not pursued vigorously.

There have been many changes, subversions, departures, deviations, innovations etc. in the classical tradition but they have all gone critically almost unnoticed or largely under noticed. The institutions, both of dissemination and training, have done very little in this behalf. Compared to the largeness and complexity of a dynamic repertoire critical writing about music and dance is small and largely inconsequential. The classical concepts are not rejuvenated meaningfully nor any additions made in the light of several changes that have come about.

In modern times literature and arts in the world over have received vast and meticulous critical attention, appreciation and nurturing. Their absence in India in the face of thriving classical arts seems unusual, indefensible and surprising.

A National seminar on 'Indian Music and Dance: The Absence of Critical Attention and Analysis' was organised at IAS during 04-06 September 2017. Shri Ashok Vajpeyi, Chairman, Raza Foundation, New Delhi and Dr. Jyoti Sinha, Fellow, IAS were the Conveners of the seminar. The welcome address was given by Professor Vijay Shankar Varma, National Fellow, IAS. The Keynote address was given by Shri Ashok Vajpeyi, Convener of the seminar.

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