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Suvarna Festival 2025

A Report by Himangshu Srivastava



Suvarna Festival was jointly conceptualized in 2024 by two established artists, Dr. Himanshu Srivastava (Delhi based Bharatanatyam dancer and Painting artist) and Smt. Sayani Chakraborty (Kolkata based Bharatanatyam dancer and director Dhruba Institute of Dance), together with a vision to create a special space for bringing interdisciplinary arts together.

“नादः उभयतैव चित्रं नृत्यति...”

(Paintings are frozen moments of dance that becomes alive with music)

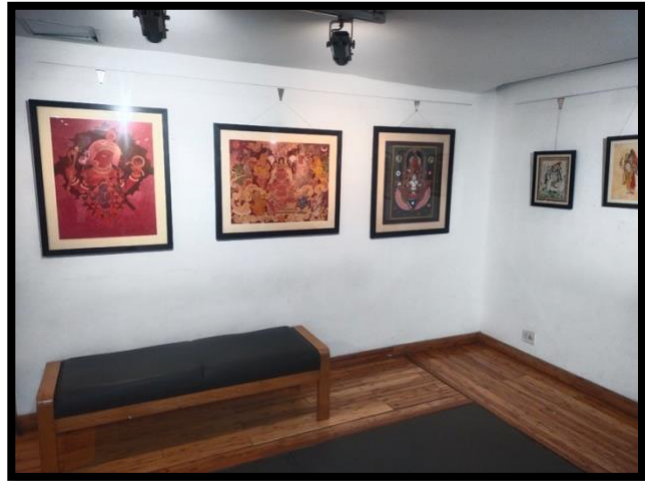
Inspired by the above lines the two founders laid down the foundation for Suvarna at an unusual space at the reputed ICCR Art gallery. In the words of the founders, “We wanted to challenge the paintings to claim their presence in a dance space and the Dance to relook at its space around paintings, I personally feel they will surely make an interdisciplinary exchange..”. The festival successfully completed its second year of bringing together Paintings, Music, Dance & Narratives together under one canopy, hosted at Abanindranath Tagore Art Gallery, ICCR Kolkata. It was supported by Sparsh studio for performing Arts, The Natyachitra and Dhruba Institute of Dance. The festival was conducted in three phases namely – *Suvarna-Manasa: an effort to facilitate art - dance-music learning by conducting lec-dems and workshops by artistes who have made a difference*. Dr. Himanshu broke ground with a workshop conducted on 22nd -24th August, that brought out the importance of the *alarippu* in a Bharatanatyam repertoire and also taught a fresh approach to it titled “Shariram Parama Mandiram” (Body, the Ultimate Temple) by relooking at this very traditional dance composition. This was followed by yet another master workshop-cum- lec-dem on 23rd August by Dr Durba Roychoudhury, Assistant Professor Rabindra Bharati University, who opened a new dimension of music and thoughts by picking up a rare approach titled ‘*Reflecting on Rabindranath Tagore’s Music on Several Compositions*’ and ‘*Conceptions & Misconceptions with regards to Rabindra Swaralipi Practices Now and Then*’ was well received by participants not just from Kolkata but also several parts of the country.

This workshop marked the opening day of the festival at Abanindranath Tagore Art Gallery where the second phase named – Suvarna Rekha began. Suvarna Rekha brought together two brilliant painting artists who set alive the gallery with their imagination and art. Amongst the invited artists were Dr. Arghya Dipta Kar, a PhD holder on Tantrik Shaktism from Jamia Millia Islamia. Bearing the legacy of the Bengal school of art, he has specialised in the Tantrik school of art under Shri Swapan Das, who hails from the lineage of Shri Nandalal Bose. Indeed each work of Arghya is a unique masterpiece. Pivoted around Shaktism, it spoke volumes of his research and in-depth knowledge. The second guest artist Smt. Riya Bannerjee was a multidisciplinary artist specializing in traditional Odisha Pattachitra and Tibetan Thangka art forms. Under the guidance of renowned gurus - Alok Ranjan Sahoo and Jigme Thinley, she has honed their skills in these intricate and sacred art forms. Riya's artworks pay homage to the ancient traditions while infusing modern sensibilities. Her art reflects a deep understanding of the cultural narratives. Riya took the audience to a surreal space through her miniature works.



Post the inauguration of Day One, on 23rd August, with the honouring of the painting artists and their works, the festival moved into its next phase titled *Suvarna Paada*, an initiative to bring the best of the dance artists with their most thoughtful works to a thoughtfully curated art gallery. The evening spotlighted Bharatanatyam productions ‘Ghanashyam’ by Smt. Sayani Chakraborty, a thematic exploration of Krishna, where this dynamic artist opened the evening to beautiful verses of Mirabai strung together as a Bharatanatyam Varnam, an exclusive work when the artist did prove her stamina and her innate connection with the philosophy. “*Aaj suni main..*”- Shayani began the

poorvangam with imagery of drizzle to drops, canonical to Mira’s passion for Krishna leading to her unabashed way of expression in the lines “*barse boondan..*”. This intricately woven Varnam was followed by an Ashtapadi that painted a poignant picture of the Vipralabha Radha. Shayani clearly proved her mettle by presenting a perfect brew of elegant *abhinaya* and striking *nritya*.



The second artist for the evening was Dr. Himanshu Srivastava, who presented a thought provoking work ‘UN–Eklavya: The Riddle of the Thumb’ that took the audience down the journey of Eklavya. At an obvious point where we all know how this young boy cuts off his thumb, there is a unique and humane perspective launched by Himanshu signifying the modern day Eklavya , by splitting him into the demon and the angel inside his head. It was left to the audience to decide which one was what, right or wrong being merely perspectives. Powerful musical score together with gripping research and thought made this character earn a soft corner in everyone’s mind.

Day Two, (24th August) continued the painting exhibition from 3:00 PM and featured two captivating dance performances. Smt. Dakshina Vaidyanathan presented a soulful Bharatanatyam recital at 6:00 PM, opening with a traditional composition of Saint Thyagaraj on Shiva titled

‘Thyagaraj Yoga Vaibhavam’ the truncated verses were carefully delineated by Dakshina as “*Thyagaraj yoga vaibhavam- rajyoga vaibhavam- yoga vaibhavam – vaibhavam- bhavam- vam*” distinctly bringing out the depth of each work through her choreography. Coming from the lineage of Dr. Saroja Vaidyanathan & Guru Smt. Rama Vaidyanathan, Dakshina brought a fresh Breeze of thoughts on classic works. This was followed by a very personal dance number. In the words of the artist, her pregnancy inspired her to create this work that celebrates every single day, every single expression from curiosity to affirmation until the birth, Dakshina kept the audience spellbound. The concluding piece was “the divine secret” where an intimate affair between Tirupathi Venkateshwara with his consort Padmavathi was brought to life. The artist turned the gallery into the sanctum sanctorum where the two poised their divine play.

The concluding artist for the evening made a powerful impact marking a grand closure. It



was Guru Anita Mullick with her impeccable Bhavabhinayam, on the episode of coronation of Krishna as Mathurapati followed by the brief encounter of the two mother’s Devaki & Yashoda, both asking each other “*bolo mai kya kya leela in naiyano ne naa dekhi*” (Tell me oh! Mother, what are the beautiful play of our son that we haven’t witnessed). Accompanied by Akash Mukherjee (vocals), Shri Shankar Narayanaswamy (mridangam), and Himanshu Srivastava (*nattuvangam*), she presented fine nuances of their motherhood and their streak of jealousy for each other’s fate. While the episode of Devaki’s just born son snatched away by Kamsa brought tears to the audiences’

eyes, Yashoda’s playful sighting of baby Krishna filled the hall with hope and faith. With each nuance carefully measured and each blinking with a motive, Anita ji clearly displayed her unmatched flare for *abhinaya*. The most amusing part of her repertoire was her smooth slipping from one character to the other without displacing the central theme.

The Suvarna Festival stood true to its vision—bringing together diverse streams of creativity under one roof and offering audiences a rare blend of tradition, innovation, and cross-disciplinary dialogues. Last but never the least the young hands from Dhruba Institute of dance (disciples of Smt. Sayani Chakraborty) lent a beautiful theme to the hall and made a fantastic team.

Swayam Prakasha Kirana, Delhi 2025

A Report by Sudip Chakraborty



Swayam Prakasha Kirana is a profound and immersive production that transcends the conventional boundaries of dance to embrace multiple art forms and spiritual philosophies. Rooted in the deepest recesses of the creator's soul, the work explores the idea that the self is not separate from divine light — it is, in fact, that light itself.



The production is a collaborative masterpiece, blending Kathak, theatrical dance theatre, Indian classical music (both Carnatic and North Indian ragas), evocative paintings in wash and tempera, and cutting-edge projection technology. The collaborative efforts of Jaydeep Sinha (music), Dr. Arghya Dipta (visual art), lights by Barun Kar and Dhruv Malik (projection design) brought these elements to life, while Sudip Chakraborty's role as director, producer, choreographer, scriptwriter, and conceptual visionary seamlessly wove them together.



The narrative follows the journey of a seeker navigating the path from curiosity to spiritual awakening. Through ritualistic tantric movements and the layered expressions of *bhakti*, the choreography mirrors the seeker's transition — from *vamachara* to *kaulachara* and finally into Srividya. The performance artfully integrates *mantra*-s, rhythm, and escalating tempo (*karam laya*) to create a mounting tension that reflects the seeker's inner struggle and transcendence.

The choreography evokes elements of *panchabhuta* (the five elements) and the vision of the Dasha Mahavidyas, culminating in the seeker's profound realization that the Divine has always resided within. The climax, where the seeker surrenders to the worship of Mahatripurasundari, dissolves the illusion of separateness and completes the journey toward enlightenment.

Premiered on 30 May 2025 in association with Nirvana Arts Foundation and co supported by PESUEV at the India Habitat Centre, Swayam Prakasha Kirana captivated the audience with a full house and a three-minute standing ovation. The performance not only brought together devotees and spiritual seekers but also created a space of shared awakening and introspection — fully embodying its name, Swayam Prakasha Kirana — the ray of self-illumination.