

## Journey of a dancer and Guru

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Aharyam is an integral part of classical dance, which is as important if not more than the abhinayam and angikam. Each of the classical art forms has its unique costume, however, as the senior dancers explore more and more themes to expand their dance repertoire, so too are the costumes and jewellery that are being reinvented to make the classical dance performance a wholesome experience.

And contributing to this is the dancer herself and the costume designer with sensibilities and innate understanding of the dance form. Dance Guru and Bharatanatyam dancer of repute Ananda Shankar celebrates 40 years of her dance school, ShankaranandaKalakshetra through a special exhibition 'Aharya Darpanam' curated by fashion designer Ganesh Nallari (who is also a classical dancer and designs costumes for dance) and photographer Murlidhar Gonugunta.

It is an interesting display of pictures of her stage performances – ballets with her team, solo dance programmes etc., Alongside the pictures are the costumes completing the story of the four decades of her dance. The exhibition in addition to being a nostalgic revisit of the past for the dancer and her students, some, who continue to pursue dance, and others who moved on, dance critics who have seen the journey and wrote about it and her back stage team; is also a mirror to the evolution of the young dancer and the dance itself adapting technology in stage craft and techniques of costume designing.

From the heavy Kanchi sarees, to simple cottons, from vibrant colours to thematic borders, from traditional costumes to moving away from the norm, like the Radha costume, or the black cotton saree with tribal border for the ballet 'Darshanam – an ode to the eye' and the animal costumes for the 'Tales of Bull and the Tiger', use of heavy ornaments in typical

classical style to wearing simple beads or at times wooden jewellery- are all on display to see – through the carefully curated pictures and the costumes themselves, surprisingly well preserved by Ananda. Also, on display are the props like the Talapatras and the Tanpura used for ‘Annamacharya’, notes about the performances, critics comments and brochures of all the performances through the years, that visitors can read for more information.

During the launch of the show, Ananda Shankar felicitated her team of stage designers, costume designers, tailors, photographers, sound and light technicians – in short, behind the scenes heroes that play a significant role in a successfully rendered stage performance. The exhibition at Kalakriti Art Gallery is extended till November 29 on popular demand.

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