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Directory of all things dance

By Ananda Shankar Jayant | Published 01st July 2017 0:00 PM | Last Updated 01st July 2017 11:44 AM | A+ A- |



As a young choreographer, in 1986, I was sitting with great humility in front of a maestro, requesting him to share the name of a set designer he worked with so that I could commission some sets for my new choreography. But the guru refused to share this information. Yes, those were the days when even legendary veterans guarded such information zealously. Even sourcing the address of an arts presenter meant being on the right side of the one who had it and just may share it with you.

And then in 1992, a miracle—Narthaki—happened. A directory of all dance-related information, liberating all of us from the stranglehold of information dictatorship; with access becoming the key word. Now, anyone could access the holy grail of information—of dancers, gurus, institutions, musicians, festivals, impresarios, venues, designers, and even who was in the lime light. And yes it thrilled me to be on it. Narthaki at 400 was a bible for dancers, and was the first item we all packed on a dance tour. I still have my dog-eared copy.

Narthaki was an idea to provide easy access to dance-related information, an idea that was a game changer, an idea that was birthed and nurtured, by dancer, scholar, writer, and arts visionary Anita Ratnam. She says, "Narthaki is a wonderful bee-in-my bonnet that stung me in New York, and now reigning in cyberspace."

After two print editions, the new millennium saw Narthaki go online in April 2000, and with it, classical dance leapt from the stage into digital space, even as many artists were learning to have email IDs and navigate the internet.

Today, technology informs us about every aspect of life. But imagine this portal 18 years ago. Narthaki-A veritable Google for Indian dance that not just aggregated dance information, but also provided knowledge with it. Columns by eminent scholars added dance academia to Narthaki's menu. Shrinking dance coverage in the print medium to mere Page 3 photos had Narthaki inviting senior critics to review dance. Narthaki has become an indispensable networking tool for the worldwide Indian dance community. Ratnam says, "Technology has truly become a friend of arts, instantly capable of recording and offering the ideal connection."

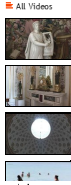
A pioneer and arts entrepreneur, Ratnam has revolutionised the way we receive and share dance information, creating and sustaining, a unique dynamic digital space for the Indian classical dance industry, that provides inclusion and space for its many stakeholders even as she leads the charge for dance advocacy, tackling issues of nepotism, corrupt practices, professionalisation of spaces and services, simultaneously bringing focus on dancer's health and support systems. And yes, Narthaki is run by three women—Anita, Lalita and Sumati—connecting dance globally, and bringing attention to Indian dance on the world stage over the past 18 years.

Selected to receive the Viswa Kala Ratna from UK-based MILAP Fest, Anita is brimming with ideas, to ease access to creative processes, and provide interactive opportunities for learning on Narthaki as she continues to dream of taking the enchanting world of Indian dance to the world. The word Narthaki means a dancer, but to all us dancers, it only means www.narthaki.com - a dancer's almanac.

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Things to do in Rajasthan

Trove



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TAGS: dance, directory, Narthaki, choreographer, Anita Ratnam, Ananda Shankar Jayant, digital

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