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## DANCE

## Fired with imagination



V.V. Ramani

AUGUST 31, 2017 15:15 IST

UPDATED: AUGUST 31, 2017 15:15 IST

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Divya Devaguptapu | Photo Credit:  
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**From the tiny lamp to the blazing sun, 'Flame' took several dimensions in the mindscape of Mythili Prakash. Divya chose Margam to present 'Inspiration'**

**A** spotlight casts its golden glow on the dancer's forearms holding an Anjali mudra, in the darkened environs of the stage. The fingers start moving slowly, gathering momentum, until in a state of suspended animation the arms fade away and what we see is a flame rising upwards in glowing splendour. This memorable moment, in Mythili Prakash's performance captured the

essence of the theme, Jwala, with great precision. The occasion was ARTery's Ekam festival, curated by Ramanathan Iyer.

The cosmic energy of the sun god riding his chariot was captured by the dancer entering the stage at Spaces, before moving on to present his impact on the Earth. Images of the blooming lotus drawing life from the sun, the rise of clouds and drops of rain, were a few sancharis danced to a musical composition

combining Aditya Hridayam and other Vedic chants with rhythmic patterns.

'Agni kunjoru' the powerful verse of Subramania Bharati, heralded the next item 'Jwala – The Flame'. The two facets of flame, one of a life-giving force and the other as a destructive force were depicted by the dancer with detailed delineation of the fire being lit in the Homa Kundam contrasting with the image of lighting of a pyre. And then there was the little lamp that a mother lights and places in the alcove, while singing to her child. Mythili conveyed the feeling of Vatsalya Bhava in an appealing manner for the song 'Chinnanchiru Kiliye.'

The flame that forms a ring around the dancing Nataraja and the inner flame of Sakti was the theme of the next song with the dancer portraying the masculine and feminine aspects. "Hope is only in faith," says Meerabai to dispel darkness from our lives. "Oh Lord Hari, come and save us," goes the song 'Hari Tum Haro,' tuned by R. Vaidyanathan.

Mythili in Shradha explored the stories of Draupadi, Gajendra Moksham with detailed sancharis in keeping with the lyric. However, she underplayed the feelings sought to be expressed in this theme, diluting its impact in the process.

The flame that travelled from cosmic to the physical, positive to negative, now looks inwards seeking liberation. A beautiful composition by Hajrat Zaheen Taji (music scored by Muzaffar Ali and Aditya Prakash) came alive with the dancer moving around in circles discarding physical matter before returning to her quest for Jwala –the inner flame. A team of talented musicians with Aditya Prakash and Sushma Somashekar on the vocals, Aadith Narayanan wielding the cymbals, Eshwar Ramakrishnan on the violin, and K.P. Ramesh Babu on the mridangam contributed to the success of the show. Victor Paulraj's lighting design was an asset.

With a good collection of poems, songs, slokas, rhythmic and melodic notes, Mythili's performance pushed the boundaries of the art form without deviating from its grammar.

Inspiration was the theme of dancer Divya Devaguptapu's performance at the Ekam festival and she presented her thought process as Margam.

She was aided by the musical ensemble consisting of Sridev Rajagopalan (vocals), Adith Narayanan (nattuvangam), Rijesh Gopalakrishnan (violin), Ramesh Babu (mridangam) and Sunil Kumar (ganjira).

The inspiring edifice of temple architecture and the sculptures there was woven into a depiction that was structured in an Alarippu with slokas and rhythmic syllables in Misra Chapu tala. The dancer captured the grandeur of the temples

with her movements at a leisurely pace and the little details of lighting of lamps, ringing of the temple bell and festive decorations enhanced the depiction.

### **Varnam adapted**

A Sriranjani Varnam sung by M.D. Ramanathan – composed by Tiger Varadachariar in 4 kalai Adi taalam – was adapted well by Divya. This Varnam – ‘Yehi Manmatha Kodi’ with a sakhi as a protagonist and addressed to Lord Krishna – elaborates the pining state of the nayika. Descriptions of nature and the pangs of the heroine were some expressive moments of abhinaya. The rhythmic interludes were presented with competence and conviction by the dancer.

The dancer’s maturity in abhinaya came to the fore in telling the story of Kunti’s dilemma, the music based on a Telugu poem.

The anger that she has against the sage who gave her the boon, Surya for giving her the child, the thought of carrying an illegitimate child, nevertheless mingled with love, and finally the sorrow with which she discards the child were beautifully expressed by the dancer. It was a poignant moment, when she splashes water on her face to come back to reality, having been distracted by affection for the child.

The thani avarthanam of a Carnatic concert was adapted for the final rhythmic composition. The jatis in varied korvais composed by Ramesh Babu was danced with vigour to conclude on an energetic note.

Divya’s performance showed her as a talented artiste, but one really wished she had been more creative – go beyond Margam to deal with the theme of Inspiration.



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