

Tagore in Kathak language

A unique presentation of Kathak based on Rabindra Sangeet impressed Manjari Sinha

THE ongoing 150th anniversary celebrations of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore by Impressario India had a unique presentation of Kathak choreography based on Rabindra Sangeet at the India International Centre this past week. The soulfully rendered songs of Gurudev by Jayati Ghosh and her talented team of vocalists and instrumentalists were turned into visual poetry by dancer-choreographer Monisa Naik along with her excellent troupe of Kathak dancers, all trained under Guru Rajendra Gangani of Jaipur Gharana.

Tagore was inspired by nature's beauty, which slowly blended into love and love evolved into devotion. Thus the poet aligns his inner self with the Roop, the tangible form of Nature, and transcends to the Aroop, the formless or abstract in his poetry. This was aesthetically conveyed through the riveting presentation which was rare in the sense that Rabindra Sangeet was most convincingly interpreted through the language of Kathak.

The evening opened with the invocatory 'Nruttyero Tale Tale..' to Nataraj for His dance has beautified the universe with its atoms and molecules, its moons and suns. The poet salutes the sanyasi ascetic, the sundar beauteous Shankar and the dreadful Abhayankar and prays to Him to break our slumber through His dance and bring sense of freedom in our lives. The group Kathak choreography translated it all with assertive Nritta and sparkling footwork in the Tisra Jati ladi.

'Akash bhora surjo tara...' describes the sense of wonder that the poet finds in the beauty of nature especially the two seasons that are very dear to him - Vasant and Varsha which inspire the feeling of love.

The song 'gahan kusum kunj maahe..' was from Bhanu Singher Padabali that Tagore penned at the age of 16-19 using the pen name Bhanu Singha. Influenced by works of Vaishnavite poets like Vidyapati, Chandidas and Gobindadas, these poems are based on the divine love of Krishna-Radha in the deep forest



where Krishna's flute plays sweet and soft and the Sakhis are all getting ready for the meeting. The song 'aaj dakkhino pobon..' in raga Paraj literally describes the effect of Vasant in nature and also within our minds. Vasant has arrived and brought the wind from the southern sea with the imagery of a duet by Radha-Krishna in spring set to the Tala of Khand Jati the five beats time cycle.

Monisa very thoughtfully used the forgotten style of 'baith kar bhaav battana' emoting while sitting, in her solo piece to depict the Viraha aspect of Shringaar in 'Ami tokhono chilem...' "I was in deep slumber when the rain came. The night was dark and deep and in that darkness my dream came true. The fragrance of rain drenched juthi, the mad wind, the lightning in the dark cloud everything got mixed into the atmosphere and I surpassed my body and the worldly feeling."

The song 'Savana gagane ghor ghanagata..' describing the rainy season came as a fabulous group dance followed by some crisp footwork to depict the rain showers and the thunder of clouds. The solo by Monisa on 'Sakhi Andhare ekela ghore' depicted the lonely night where the flute is calling her but the sky is overcast, the wind is blowing and the Yamuna is overflowing.

The programme ended with the song 'Aj khele bhanga khela?' which was again a song depicting the flavour of Vasant, thus completing the cycle. The cycle of creation and destruction that again paves the path of creation. The poet calls for all to join the celebration of a game which ends just to make way for another beginning.

The brilliant Kathak choreography was enlivened with the lively music that comprised instruments like Esraj by Shekhar, key boards by Anindo Chaudhury, Sarod by Preetam and

