



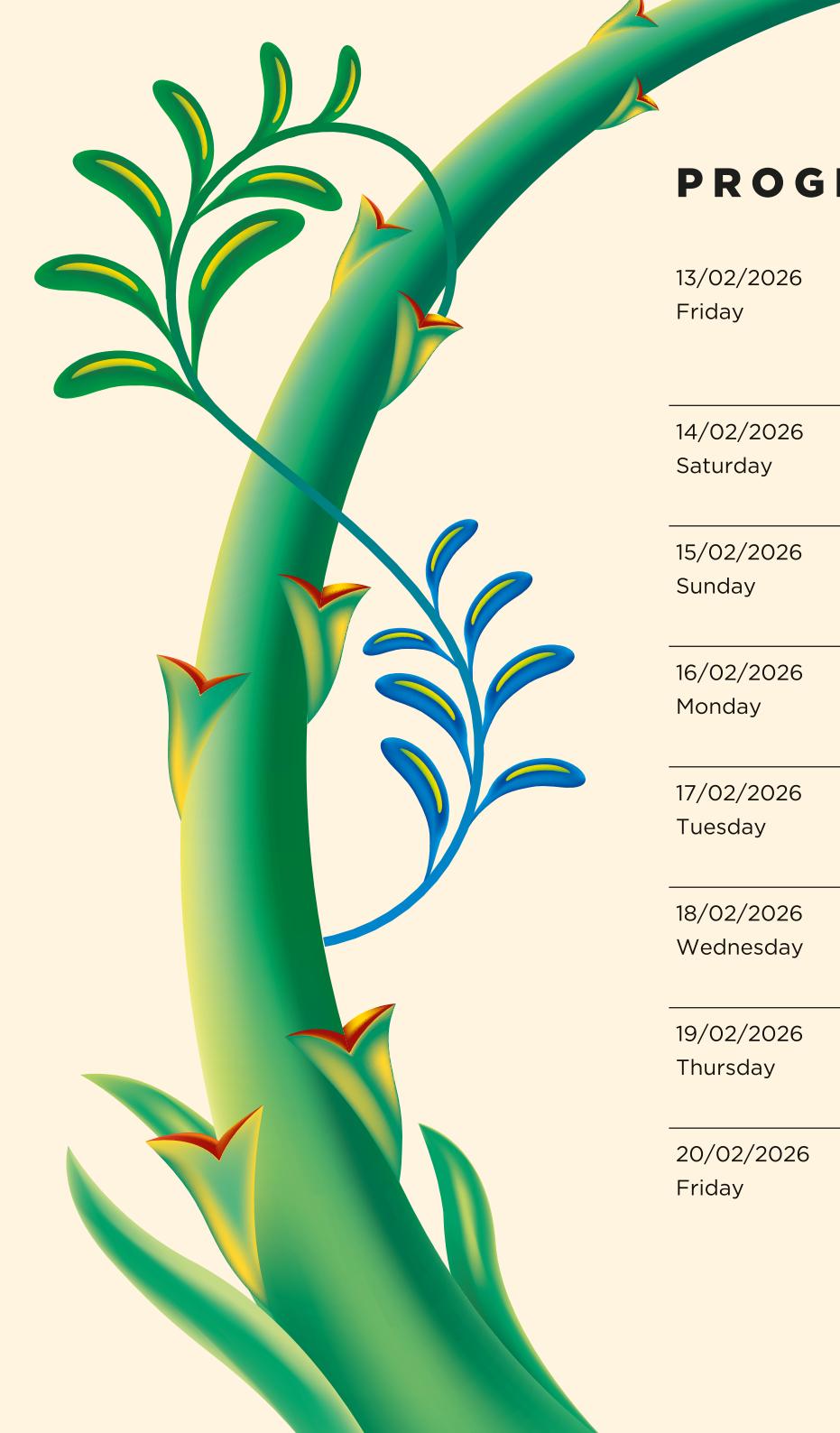
NISHAGANDHI DANCE FESTIVAL

2026 FEBRUARY 13-20

KANAKAKUNNU
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Government of Kerala



PROGRAM SCHEDULE

13/02/2026	6:00 PM	Inaugural Ceremony	
Friday	7:00 PM	Padma Shri Dr. Narthaki Nataraj	Bharatanatyam
	7:45 PM	Dr. Rajashree Warrier	Bharatanatyam
	8:30 PM	Latasana Devi & Group	Manipuri
14/02/2026	6:00 PM	Pooja Dasami	Mohiniyattam
Saturday	6:30 PM	Padma Bhushan Shobana Chandrakumar	Bharatanatyam
	7:15 PM	Madhulita Mohapatra & Group	Odissi
15/02/2026	6:00 PM	Srividya Sailesh	Bharatanatyam
Sunday	6:30 PM	T. Reddi Lakshmi	Kuchipudi
	7:15 PM	Padma Shri Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayanth & Group	Bharatanatyam
16/02/2026	6:00 PM	Akshaya Arunkumar	Bharatanatyam
Monday	6:30 PM	Meenakshi Srinivasan	Bharatanatyam
	7:15 PM	Dr. Kalamandalam Rachitha Ravi & Group	Mohiniyattam
17/02/2026	6:00 PM	Sharmada Vishwanath	Bharatanatyam
Tuesday	6:30 PM	Sitara Balakrishnan	Mohiniyattam
	7:15 PM	Prathibha Ramaswamy & Sandhya Udupa	Bharatanatyam
18/02/2026	6:00 PM	Padma Shri Dr. Aruna Mohanty	Odissi
Wednesday	6:30 PM	Dr. Sathyanarayana Raju	Bharatanatyam
	7:15 PM	Shruthi Shoby & Group	Mohiniyattam
19/02/2026	6:00 PM	Dimpee Baishya	Sattriya Nritya
Thursday	6:30 PM	Navya Nair	Bharatanatyam
	7:15 PM	Rachana Narayanan Kutty & Group	Kuchipudi
20/02/2026	6:00 PM	Asha Sharath	Bharatanatyam
Friday	6:45 PM	Aparna Balram Marar	Mohiniyattam
	7:15 PM	Swati Sinha & Group	Kathak
	8:00 PM	Shaijaa Bineesh	Bharatanatyam

Nishagandhi Puraskaram

Padma Shri Darshana Jhaveri

Padma Shri Darshana Jhaveri is a legendary figure in Indian classical dance, whose name is inseparable from the global recognition of Manipuri dance. As the youngest of the celebrated Jhaveri sisters, she has dedicated over six decades to the preservation and propagation of Manipuri dance under the guidance of Guru Bipin Singh. She is a rare, technically versatile artist who has mastered both the tandava (masculine) and lasya (feminine) elements of the form, while also attaining professional competence in playing the mridang (drum).

A visionary scholar and teacher, Darshanaji was instrumental in transitioning Manipuri dance from the temples to the proscenium stage while maintaining its original sanctity and spirit. Her extensive research and documentation of oral traditions have been vital in correlating the form with ancient shastras. For her monumental contributions, she has been honoured with the Padma Shri, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellow (Ratna), and the Kalidas Samman, remaining a definitive authority and guiding light in the world of Manipuri dance.



Bharatanatyam

Padma Shri Dr. Narthaki Nataraj

Padma Shri Dr. Narthaki Nataraj is a legendary Bharatanatyam exponent and a trailblazing icon of the Thanjavur tradition.

A direct disciple of Guru K.P. Kittappa Pillai, she spent 15 years in intense gurukula residency, mastering rare temple repertoires and Tamil literature. In 2019, she made history as the first member of the transgender community to be honoured with the Padma Shri. She is also a recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (2011) and the prestigious Nritya Kalanidhi from The Music Academy.

Beyond her technical brilliance, Dr. Nataraj is a visionary social activist who coined the term 'thirunangai' for trans women. Her life story is a testament to resilience, now featured in Tamil Nadu State Board textbooks.

As the founder of the Velliamballam Trust, she mentors students from marginalised communities, ensuring that her legacy of artistic excellence and social transformation continues to inspire the world.



13/02/2026 Friday 7:00 PM



Bharatanatyam

Dr. Rajashree Warrier

Dr. Rajashree Warrier is a multifaceted visionary and one of India's foremost Bharatanatyam exponents.

A dancer, musician, poet, and scholar, she is celebrated for her impeccable abhinaya and innovative choreography.

In 2025, she was honoured with the Kerala Prabha, the state's second-highest civilian award, for her monumental contributions to the arts.

She is a "Top Grade" artist of Doordarshan and holds a PhD in Music from Kerala University.

As the founder of UTTARIKA, Dr. Warrier is a pioneer in expanding the Bharatanatyam repertoire. She has seamlessly integrated Malayalam poetry, folk tales like the Panchatantra, and the satirical works of Kunjan Nambiar into her dance, often incorporating vernacular body idioms to create a unique aesthetic language. A recipient of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi Award (2013), her work continues to bridge the gap between classical rigour and regional literary heritage.





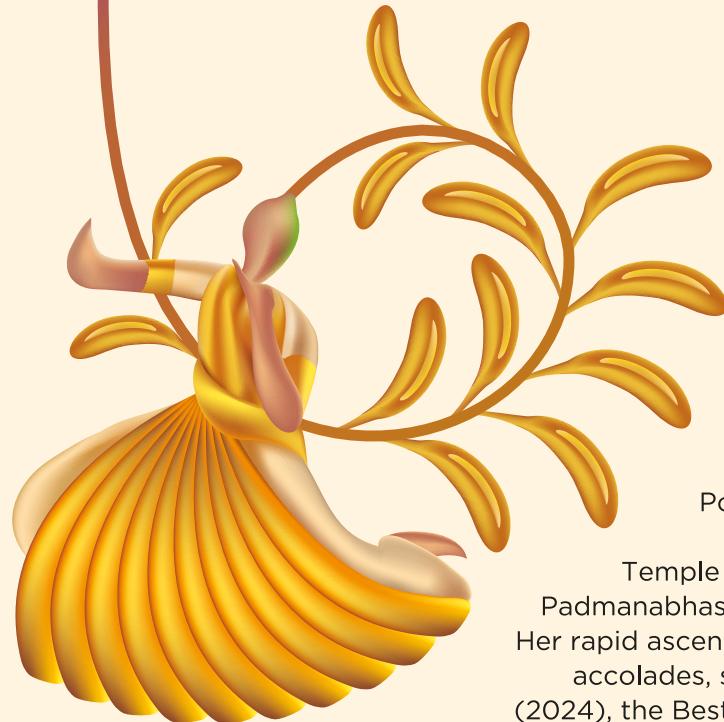
Manipuri **Latasana Devi & Group**

Latasana Devi is a distinguished performer, teacher, and choreographer of Manipuri dance. A disciple of legendary maestros like Guru Bipin Singh and Padmashri Darshana Jhaveri, her artistry is deeply rooted in the rigorous traditions of Manipuri Nartanalaya.

She is a specialised practitioner of various traditional forms, including Kartal Cholom, Nata Seishak, and Pung Cholom, having trained under eminent Sangeet Natak Akademi awardees.

A Top Grade artist of Doordarshan and an established ICCR empanelled performer, Latasana has been honoured with the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (2024) and the Bharat Ratna Atalshree Samman (2021). Beyond her global performances, she is a dedicated social activist. As the founder of the Kaina Foundation and through her work with the NCPA's Nritya Parichay, she mentors hundreds of students, including underprivileged children, ensuring the graceful legacy of Manipuri dance continues to flourish in contemporary society.





Mohiniyattam **Pooja Dasami**

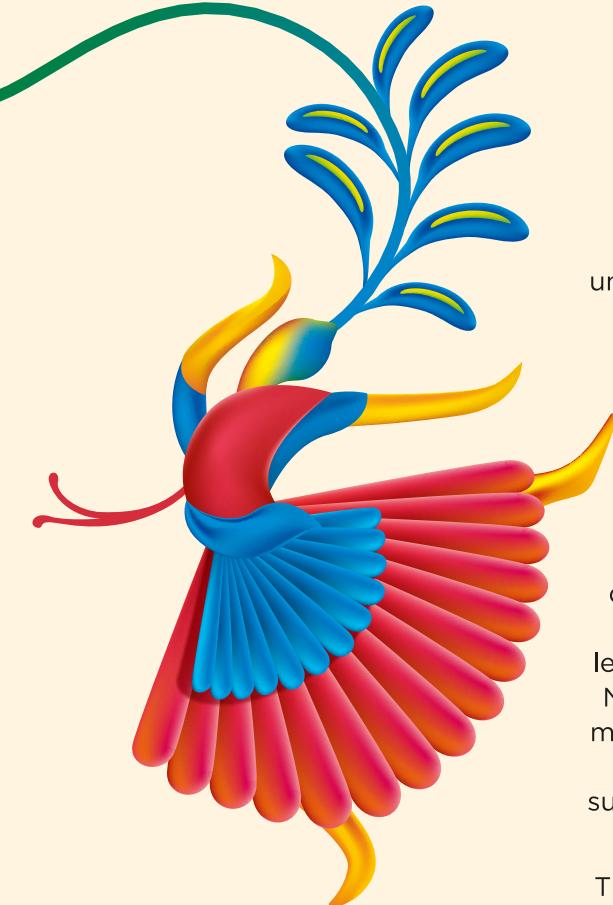
Pooja Dasami is a rising star in the classical dance circuit, recognised for her disciplined stage presentation and rhythmic clarity. For over a decade, she has undergone systematic training at Natanakshethra under the dedicated guidance of her guru, Smt. Kalamandalam Darsana Sanesh. Her artistry is further enriched by the support of Kalamandalam Dr. Raji Subin, ensuring a performance marked by strong technique and expressive abhinaya.

Pooja's talent has been showcased at prestigious platforms, including the Guruvayoor Temple Festival, Keraleeyam 2023, and the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Kshethram Murajapam Festival. Her rapid ascent in the field is backed by significant accolades, such as the Balasaraswathi Award (2024), the Best Performer Award (2025) from the All India Dance Teachers Association, and her recent victory as a State Winner at the State Kalolsavam 2025.

She represents the vibrant future of classical dance, blending tradition with youthful energy.



14/02/2026 Saturday 6:00 PM



Bharatanatyam **Padma Bhushan Shobana Chandrakumar**

A true icon of Indian culture, Padma Bhushan Shobana Chandrakumar is a master of Bharatanatyam whose career spans over four decades of unparalleled creativity. Celebrated for her "art in its highest commitment," she was honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 2025. This prestigious award follows her distinction as the youngest classical dancer and actress to receive the Padma Shri. Shobana's artistic vision extends across commercial film, live theatre, and music direction. A two-time National Film Award winner for Best Actress (1993, 2002), she is also the first Bharatanatyam artist to conceive, direct, and compose music for a unique genre of Indian dance theatre, collaborating with legends such as A.R. Rahman and actors like Naseeruddin Shah and Shabana Azmi. Her major productions, such as Krishna, Maya Ravan, and Trance, have seen global success, with Krishna touring over 100 cities worldwide.

Through her institution, Kalarpana, Shobana fosters classical dance in a structured academic manner, mentoring generations of artists. Holding a PhD and a D.Litt., she currently serves on the Kerala Government board, continuing her mission to bring traditional arts to global audiences.



14/02/2026 Saturday 6:30 PM

Odissi

Madhulita Mohapatra & Group



Madhulita Mohapatra is one of the most celebrated Odissi exponents of her generation, recognised for her technical virtuosity and exceptional abhinaya. An "A" grade artist of Doordarshan and an empanelled artist of the ICCR, she has been honoured with the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar, the Devi Award (2024), and the IIW She Inspires Award at the UK Parliament. Trained under legendary mentors including Guru Aruna Mohanty and Guru Gangadhar Pradhan, her work is acclaimed for its inventive choreography and brilliant use of movement and space.

Through her Bengaluru-based institution, Nrityantar, Madhulita has transformed the landscape of classical dance in Karnataka. Her Nrityantar Dance Ensemble is one of India's most sought-after troupes, performing at prestigious venues such as the Konark Festival, Taj Mahotsav, and the Geeva Heritage Festival (USA). Together, they bridge the gap between timeless tradition and contemporary vision, remaining committed to the highest calibre of artistic excellence and India's cultural heritage.



14/02/2026 Saturday 7:15 PM

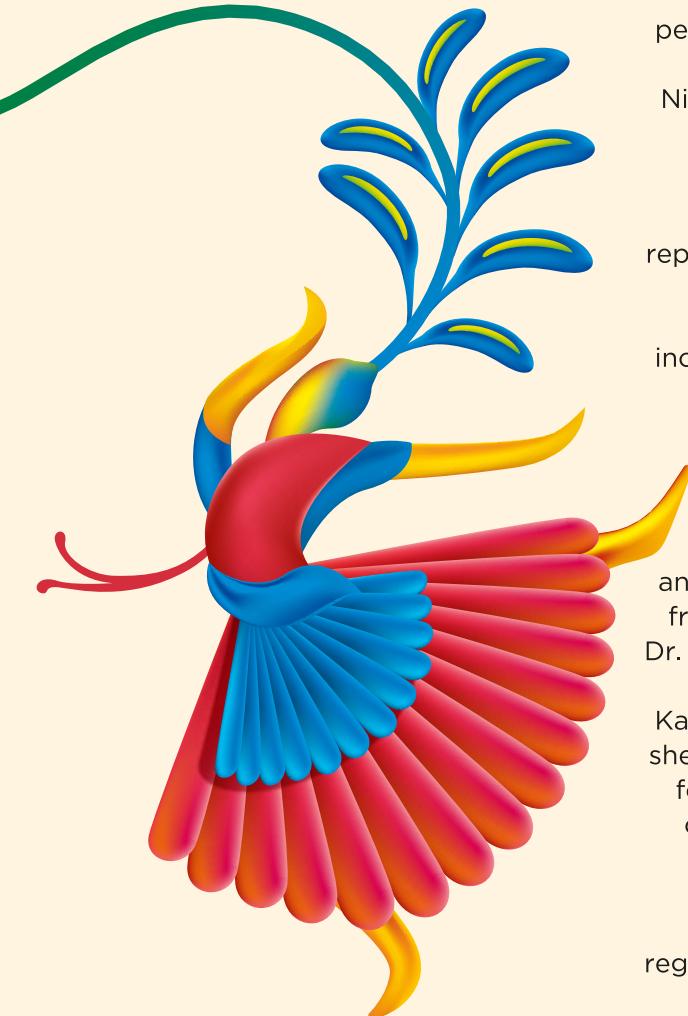
Bharatanatyam

Srividya Sailesh

Srividya Sailesh is a quintessential Bharatanatyam artist, seasoned performer, and dedicated pedagogue. Her artistic excellence is evidenced by over 600 global performances, ranging from the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC) to the London International Arts Festival.

A versatile artist, Srividya is celebrated for her proficiency in both traditional repertoire and contemporary productions like Krishna and Trance. Her technical mastery has earned her prestigious accolades, including the 'Yuva Kala Bharathi' (2016) and the 'Best Nattuvanar' award from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha.

Beyond the stage, she is a distinguished scholar with an M.Phil from Thamizh University and a Master's in Bharatanatyam from SASTRA University under Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam. As a senior faculty member at Kalarpana Research Institution, she plays a vital role in carrying forward the holistic traditions of her guru parampara to the next generation. Her work continues to bridge the gap between classical rigour and regional literary heritage. This year, she is supported by her guru, Padma Bhushan Shobana Chandrakumar, during her nattuvangam at Nishagandhi 2026.



15/02/2026 Sunday 6:00 PM



Kuchipudi

T. Reddi Lakshmi

T. Reddi Lakshmi is a premier exponent of Kuchipudi, celebrated for her quicksilver movements and deep sincerity. A senior disciple of Padmashri Guru Jayarama Rao, her three-decade journey in dance is defined by a commitment to the traditional Yakshagana roots and the Devadasi lineage, having trained under the last living practitioners of East Godavari.

A recipient of the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (2022) and the Indira Priyadarshini Award, Lakshmi is a "Top" graded artist for Doordarshan and an established performer for ICCR. She has performed in over 19 countries and at prestigious Indian festivals like Khajuraho and Konark.

Beyond performance, she is a scholar with a Master's in Kuchipudi and an MBA, the founder of Nritya Vahini Academy, and a dedicated teacher providing free training to underprivileged children.



15/02/2026 Sunday 6:30 PM

Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayanth & Group

Bharatanatyam

Padma Shri

Padma Shri

Padma Shri Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayanth is one of India's most celebrated classical dancers, renowned for her mastery of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi. A disciple of the legendary Kalakshetra style, Ananda imbues her performances with a sparkling vitality that bridges traditional grammar with contemporary sensibilities. Her acclaimed body of work spans rich mythology, historical chronicles, and searing social commentaries.

Beyond the stage, Ananda is a scholar holding a PhD in Tourism and a Master's in Ancient Indian History. A Padma Shri and Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee, she is also a celebrated TED speaker and a senior officer in the Indian Railway Traffic Service. As the Artistic Director of Shankarananda Kalakshetra, she continues to shape the next generation of artists with her holistic vision of dance as a spiritual journey.



15/02/2026 Sunday 7:15 PM



Bharatanatyam **Akshaya Arunkumar**

Akshaya Arunkumar is a distinguished Bharatanatyam exponent whose artistry is defined by her dual mastery of dance and music. She began her training under the legendary Padma Bhushan V.P. Dhananjayan and Smt. Shantha Dhananjayan, and currently refines her craft under the guidance of Shri. Renjith Babu and Smt. Vijna Vasudevan. An empanelled artist with the ICCR and SPIC MACAY, as well as a graded artist for Doordarshan, Akshaya has graced prestigious stages including the Madras Music Academy and the India Habitat Centre.

Her technical excellence has been recognised with titles such as 'Yuva Kala Bharathi' and 'Natya Chudar'. Uniquely, she is also a graded Carnatic vocalist with All India Radio, bringing a deep musicality to her performances. Balancing her artistic life with academic rigour, Akshaya holds an engineering degree in IT and a Master's in Business Analytics, embodying the modern, scholarly approach to classical Indian arts.



16/02/2026 Monday 6:00 PM

Bharatanatyam

Meenakshi Srinivasan



Meenakshi Srinivasan is a distinguished Bharatanatyam dancer whose work bridges classical performance and architectural sensibility. Trained in the Pandanallur style under Smt. Alarmel Valli, her artistry is marked by refined line, luminous grace, and deeply resonant abhinaya. As a performer and choreographer, her work reflects sensitivity, clarity, and an informed engagement with tradition.

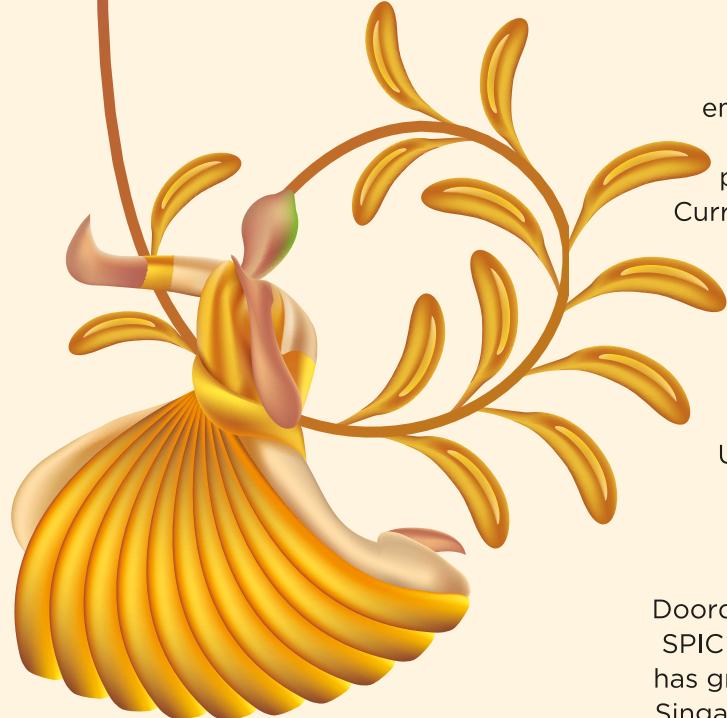
Meenakshi has performed widely across India and at major international festivals in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. She is a recipient of the Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (2011) and has been conferred titles including Natya Kala Vipanchee, Natya Kala Dharshini, and Nrtya Abhinaya Sundaram. Awarded the Best Dancer by the Madras Music Academy in 2023 and 2024, she is an ICCR-empanelled artiste and a Top Artist of Doordarshan. She directs SAMA, her dance academy, while also running her architectural practice, Calm Studio.



16/02/2026 Monday 6:30 PM

Mohiniyattam

Dr. Kalamandalam Rachitha Ravi & Group



Dr. Kalamandalam Rachitha Ravi & Group is an eminent Mohiniyattam exponent, choreographer, and scholar whose artistry is rooted in the prestigious traditions of Kerala Kalamandalam. Currently serving as Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Mohiniyattam at Kerala Kalamandalam, she holds a doctoral degree focusing on the scientific foundations of the art form. Her exceptional contributions have been recognised with the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (2016) and the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy Award (2024).

An "A" graded artist of Doordarshan and a member of the SPIC MACAY panel, Dr. Rachitha has graced stages globally, from Singapore to the United States. Her acclaimed choreographies, such as Mandodary, Chinthavishtayaya Sita, Moksha and Damitham, reflect a deep engagement with literature and mythology. Through her dual roles as a performer and academic, she continues to redefine the contemporary landscape of Mohiniyattam.



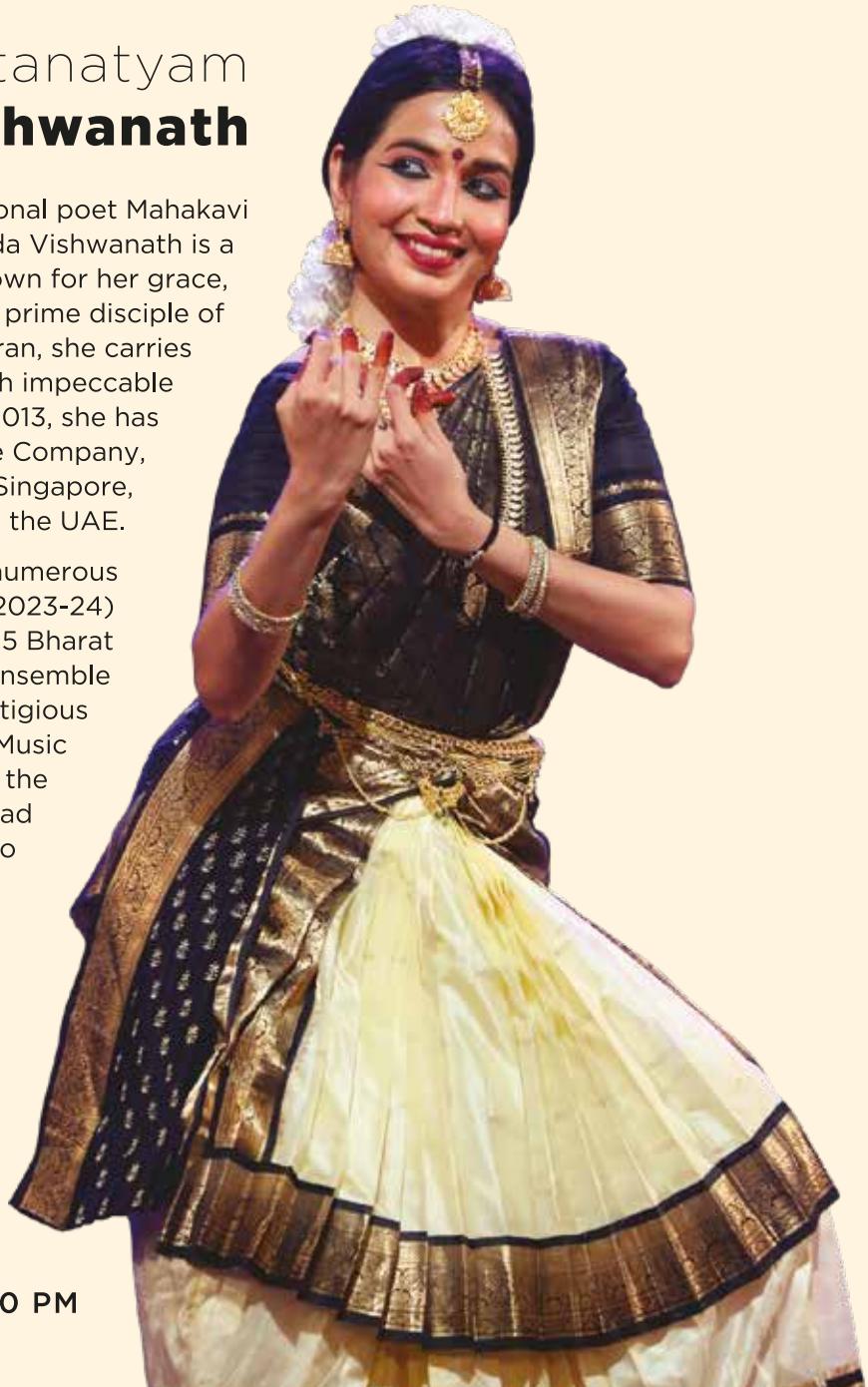
16/02/2026 Monday 7:15 PM



Bharatanatyam **Sharmada Vishwanath**

Hailing from the lineage of the national poet Mahakavi Subramania Bharathiyar, Sharmada Vishwanath is a distinguished Bharatanatyam artist known for her grace, precision, and profound spiritual intent. A prime disciple of the legendary Padma Shri Chitra Visweswaran, she carries forward the refined Vichitra Bani with impeccable technique and expressive abhinaya. Since 2013, she has been a member of the Chidambaram Dance Company, touring extensively across India, Australia, Singapore, USA and the UAE.

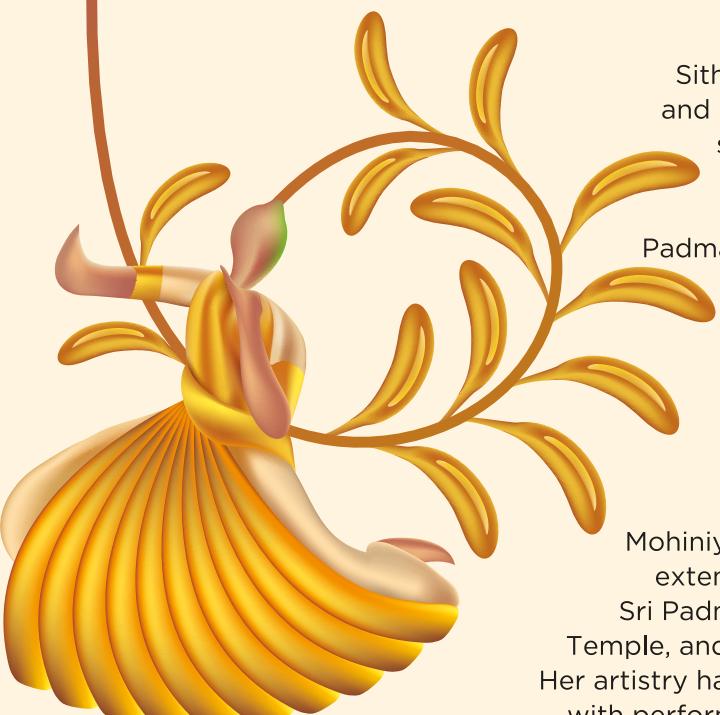
Sharmada's excellence is marked by numerous honours, including the Yuva Kala Bharathi (2023-24) and the Best Performer Award at the 2025 Bharat Nritya Utsav. An accomplished soloist and ensemble performer, she has performed at prestigious festivals such as Koodalmanikyam and the Music Academy. Beyond performing, she is the founder and artistic director of the Visharad Institute of Dance and Fine Arts, dedicated to nurturing the next generation through the guru-shishya tradition.



17/02/2026 Tuesday 6:00 PM

Mohiniyattam

Sitara Balakrishnan



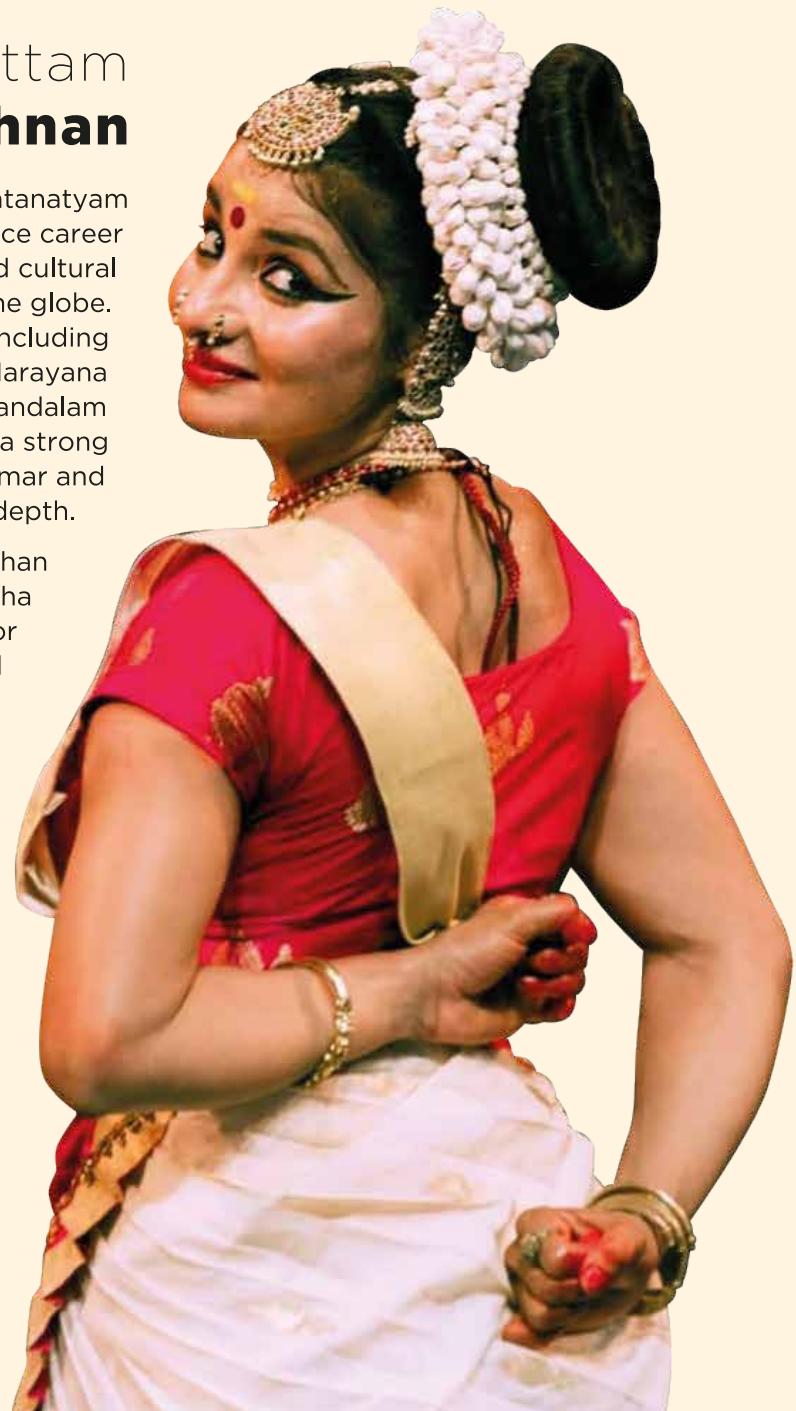
Sithara Balakrishnan is a seasoned Bharatanatyam and Mohiniyattam artist with a performance career spanning major temples, festivals, and cultural platforms across India and the globe.

Trained under eminent gurus, including Padma Bhushan Dr. Kanak Rele, Kavalam Narayana Panicker, and Padmashri Kalamandalam Kshemavathy, her work reflects a strong command over classical grammar and expressive depth.

An "A" grade artist of Doordarshan and a recipient of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi Award for Mohiniyattam (2023), Sithara has performed extensively at prestigious venues such as Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Guruvayur Temple, and the Margazhi festivals in Chennai. Her artistry has reached international audiences with performances in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, and the UAE.

Beyond the classical stage, she is an accomplished theatre artist, honoured with the Prem Nazir Award for her compelling portrayal of Neeli in the dramatic adaptation of the iconic movie *Neelakuyil*. As the founder of Sithara's Performing Arts in Trivandrum, she continues to contribute significantly to both performance and pedagogy.

17/02/2026 Tuesday 6:30 PM



Bharatanatyam

Prathibha Ramaswamy & Sandhya Udupa

Prathibha Ramaswamy, a prime disciple of Guru Dr. M.R. Krishnamurthy, is celebrated for her musical precision and compelling abhinaya. An "A" graded artiste of Doordarshan and recipient of the Aryabhata Award, she holds an MFA in Bharatanatyam and an MSc in Human Development. Her artistry is further refined by extensive training in Nātya Śāstra, kāranas, and Navarasa Sādhana. Through her Abhijñā Arts Foundation, she mentors the next generation with deep academic and practical insight.

Sandhya Udupa, a disciple of Acharya Indira Kadambi, represents a contemporary artistic outlook rooted in classical values. Also an "A" graded Doordarshan artiste, her movement vocabulary is uniquely enriched by her background in Kuchipudi, Yakshagana, and Carnatic music. As the trustee of Udupa Foundation, she curates the Nritya Katha festival and was recently honoured as the Best Performer at the Bharat Nritya Utsav (2023). Together, these two powerhouses offer a performance that balances classical rigour with expressive clarity.



17/02/2026 Tuesday 7:15 PM

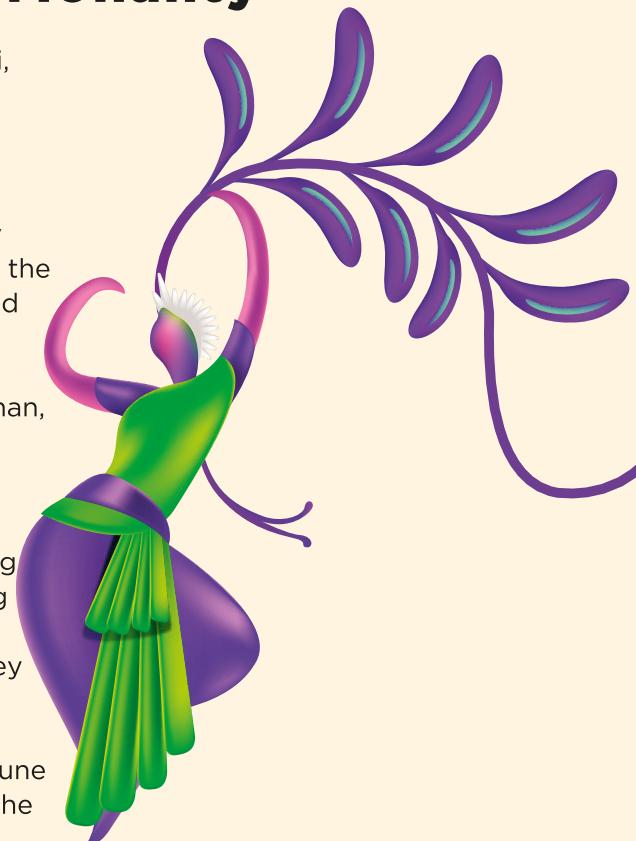


Odissi

Padma Shri Dr. Aruna Mohanty

Padma Shri Dr. Aruna Mohanty is a titan of Odissi, celebrated globally for her technical versatility and visionary choreography. As the Creative Director of the Orissa Dance Academy, she has played a pivotal role in evolving the Odissi repertoire. Her extraordinary contributions have earned her the Padma Shri, the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, and an Honorary D.Litt. from Rama Devi Women's University. She is a prodigy, trained under Guru Gangadhar Pradhan, a Padma Shri himself.

Beyond traditional recitals, Dr. Mohanty is a master of large-scale spectacles, having choreographed the opening ceremonies for the G-20 Summit, World Cup Hockey (2018 & 2022), and the 1st World Odia Language Conference. In June 2025, she made history as the co-choreographer for Indian Swan Lake in Germany, a groundbreaking collaboration blending European ballet with the fluid grace of Odissi. A former President of the Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, she remains a guiding force in Indian classical arts.



18/02/2026 Wednesday 6:00 PM



Bharatanatyam

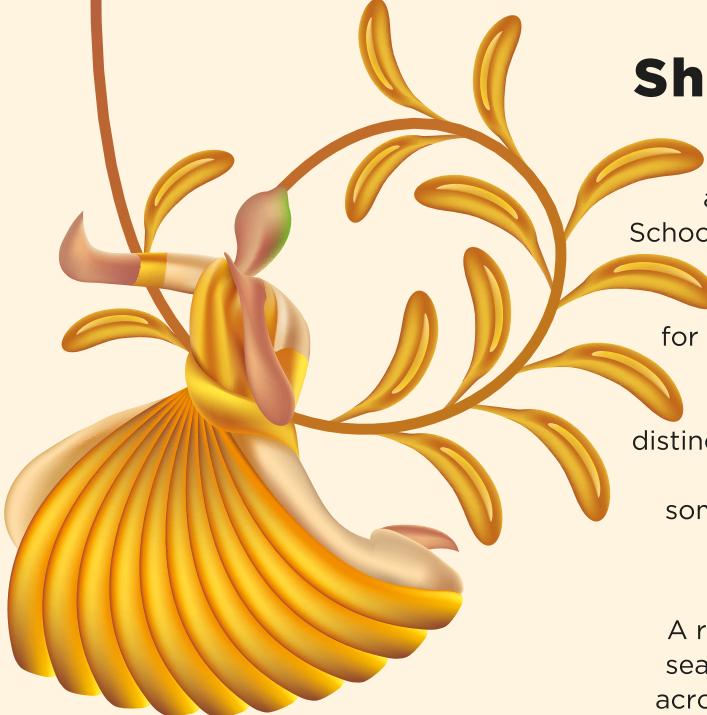
Dr. Sathyanarayana Raju

Dr. Sathyanarayana Raju is one of India's most distinguished male dancers and choreographers, celebrated for his technical mastery and soul-stirring performances. Breaking through gender monopolies in classical dance, he has established himself as a complete artist through unwavering dedication and hard work. Trained in the Pandanallur style of Bharatanatyam under Guru Smt. Narmada and Guru Smt. Subhadra Prabhu, he also holds expertise in Kathak, having trained under the legendary Dr. Maya Rao.

An 'A-top' Graded artiste of Doordarshan, Dr. Raju has received global acclaim across the UK, USA, Canada, and Singapore. His thematic solo, Rama Katha, is particularly noted for its expressive depth. As the founder of "Samskruthi - The Temple of Art," he mentors a new generation of dancers while organising major festivals. His illustrious career is adorned with an Honorary Doctorate, the Karnataka Kalashree, and the Narthaka Award. Known for his humility and flamboyant stage presence, he remains a pivotal figure in preserving and innovating within the Indian classical arts.



18/02/2026 Wednesday 6:30 PM



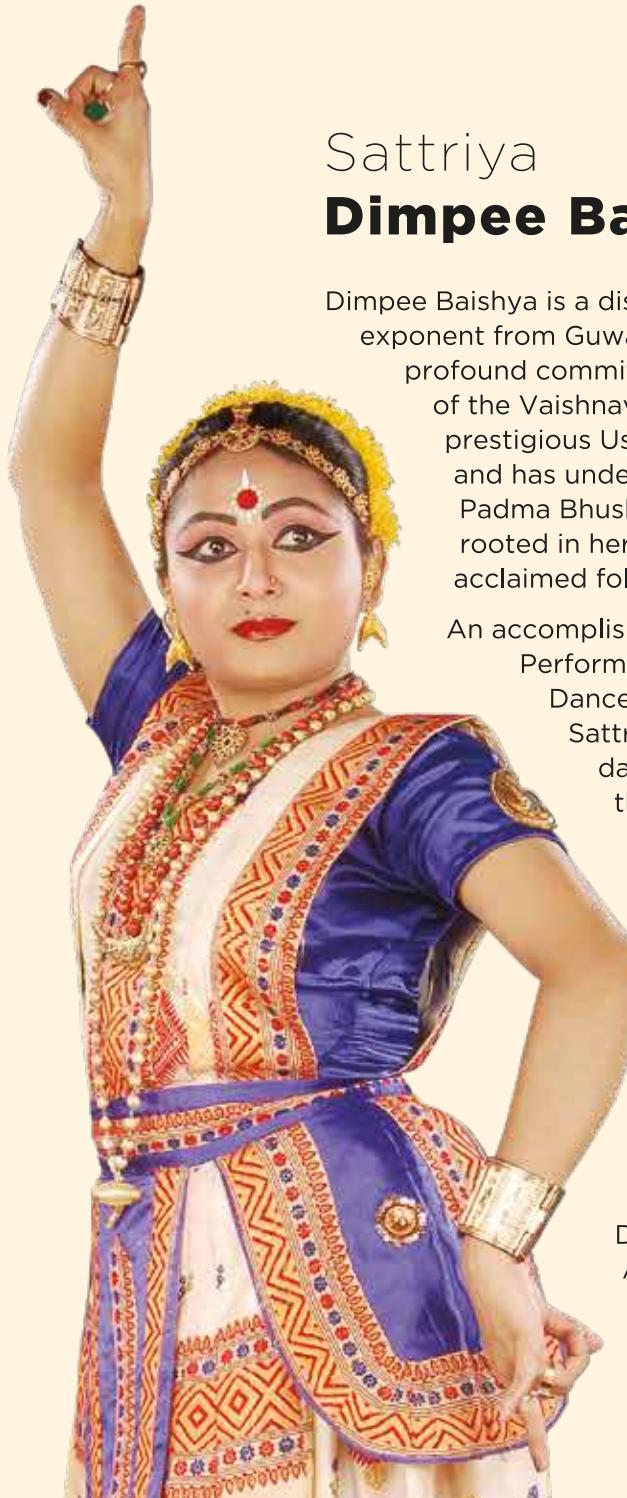
Mohiniyattam **Shruthi Shoby & Group**

Shruthi Shoby is a senior Mohiniyattam artiste and the Founder-Director of Srishti School of Classical Dance, Chennai. With over two decades of focused practice and performance, she is recognised for her refined technique, quiet authority on stage, and an aesthetic rooted firmly in tradition while remaining distinctly her own. Trained in Mohiniyattam, Bharatanatyam, and Kuchipudi under some of the most respected gurus in Indian classical dance, her foundation is both rigorous and deep.

A regular performer during the Margazhi season, Shruthi has presented her work across major cultural platforms in India and abroad, including the 44th World Chess Olympiad in Chennai. She has collaborated with leading figures in classical dance and has served as a jury member for zonal and district-level competitions in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Her contribution continues through performance, pedagogy, and sustained artistic engagement.



18/02/2026 Wednesday 7:15 PM



Sattriya **Dimpee Baishya**

Dimpee Baishya is a distinguished Sattriya Nritya exponent from Guwahati, Assam, celebrated for her profound commitment to the monk-tradition dance of the Vaishnavite monasteries. She is a recipient of the prestigious Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (2022) and has undergone rigorous training under maestro Padma Bhushan Jatin Goswami. Her artistry is deeply rooted in her heritage, as she comes from a family of acclaimed folk and theatre artists.

An accomplished scholar, Dimpee holds an M.A. in Performing Arts, has cleared the UGC-NET in Dance, and has submitted her PhD thesis on Sattriya culture. Her versatility extends beyond dance to the Khol and Ojapali traditions. As the founder of Prayas Kala Kendra, she dedicates herself to mentoring the next generation of artists. From the Uday Shankar Festival to Guruvayur Ulsavam, her performances are a testament to the spiritual grace and rhythmic vitality of Assamese classical traditions.

She has also received a Junior Fellowship from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and is honoured with the Shilpi Sambardhana by the Department of Culture, Government of Assam.



19/02/2026 Thursday 6:00 PM



Bharatanatyam **Navya Nair**

Dhanya Veena, widely recognised by her screen name Navya Nair, is a distinguished Bharatanatyam exponent, celebrated film actress, and cultural ambassador. A prime disciple of the eminent Guru Smt. Priyadarshini Govind, Navya began her artistic journey at a young age, blending deep dedication with classical rigour.

Her performance career spans prestigious global stages, including the Nishagandhi Festival, Soorya Festival, and international venues in the USA, UK, Australia, and the UAE. Beyond the stage, Navya is a two-time Kerala State Film Award winner for Best Actress (Nandanam, 2002; Kanne Madanguka & Saira, 2005) and a recipient of the Kalaimamani from the Tamil Nadu Government.

An academic achiever, she holds an MBA and a BA in English Literature, and is currently pursuing an MFA in Bharatanatyam.

As the founder of the Maathangi School of Performing Arts, she is committed to the soulful preservation of classical dance, exemplified by her acclaimed production Chinnanchiru Kiliye, which mirrors poignant societal themes through the medium of dance.





Kuchipudi **Rachana Narayanan Kutty & Group**

Rachana Narayanan Kutty is a versatile artist who seamlessly bridges the worlds of classical dance and Indian cinema. A former Kalathilakam of Calicut University, she holds a Master's Degree in Kuchipudi from Alliance University and is specialised in the Karanas of Natyashastra under the guidance of Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam. Her extensive training includes Mohiniyattam under Kalamandalam Leelamma, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali and Chakyarkoothu.

An "A" grade artist of Doordarshan, Rachana is the founder of the Srishti Centre for Arts and Culture, where she has mentored students for over 25 years. Her choreographic excellence was recognised internationally with the Best Choreographer award at the Lonavala International Film Festival (2019). Beyond her acclaimed stage productions like Monsoon Anuraga, she is a celebrated actor in the Malayalam film industry. A recipient of the Sangeetha Nataka Academy scholarship and the Mukunda Raja Yuva Prathibha Puraskaram (2022), she continues to innovate within the classical framework, blending academic research with soulful performance.



Bharatanatyam

Asha Sharath

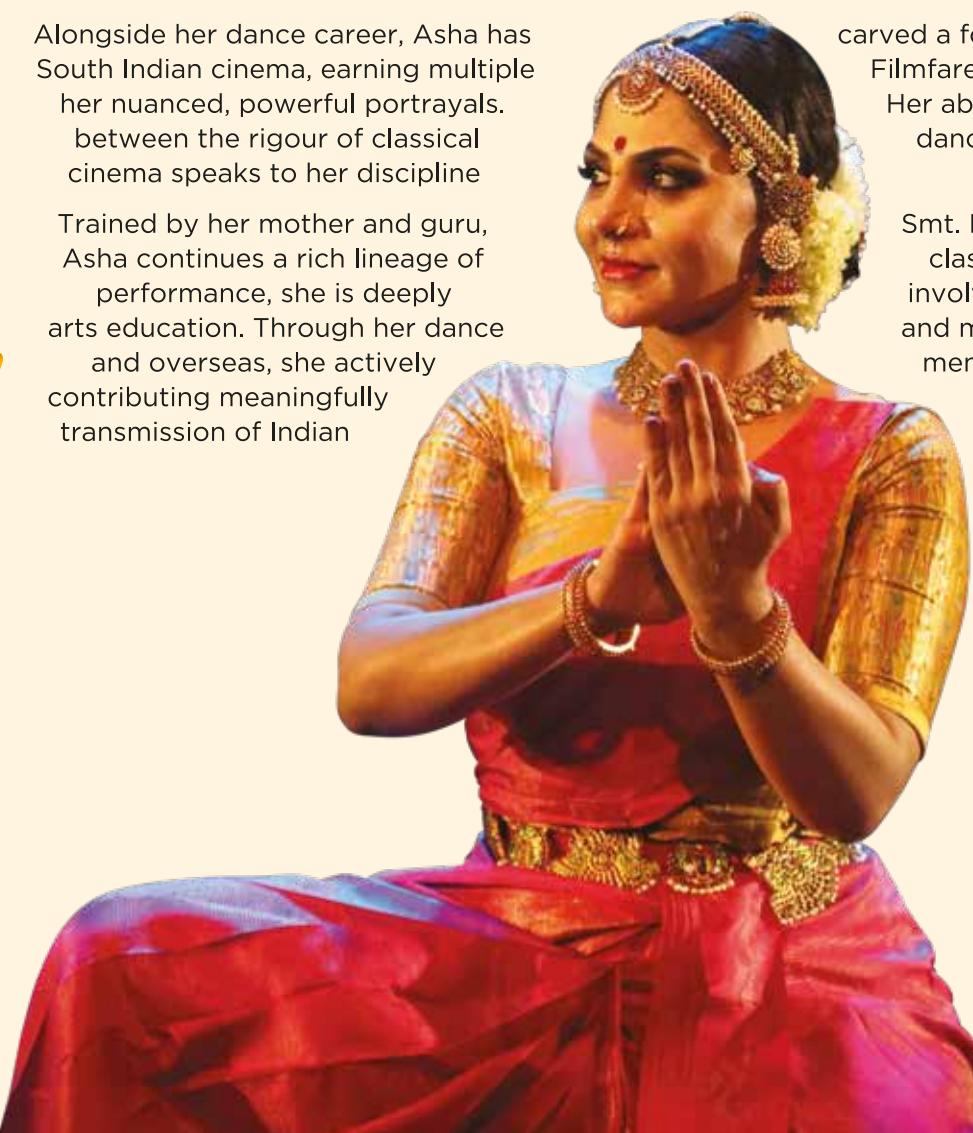
Asha Sharath is a distinguished classical dancer whose performances have resonated with audiences across India and abroad. Rooted in tradition and emotional depth, her work reflects a sincere engagement with Indian cultural heritage, marked by clarity of movement and expressive strength.

Alongside her dance career, Asha has South Indian cinema, earning multiple awards for her nuanced, powerful portrayals. Her transition from classical dance to cinema speaks to her discipline and versatility.

Trained by her mother and guru, Asha continues a rich lineage of classical dance. Through her performances, she is deeply involved in arts education. Through her dance and overseas, she actively contributes to the meaningful transmission of Indian culture and heritage.

carved a formidable presence in the Indian film industry, receiving numerous awards including Filmfare and Critics' Awards for her ability to move seamlessly between the demands of dance and the demands of acting. Her range and artistic depth are truly remarkable.

Smt. Kalamandalam Sumathy, a prominent figure in classical learning. Beyond her dance career, she is deeply involved in social causes and music institutions in India. She mentors young practitioners, contributes to the preservation of Indian arts, and is actively involved in arts across cultures.



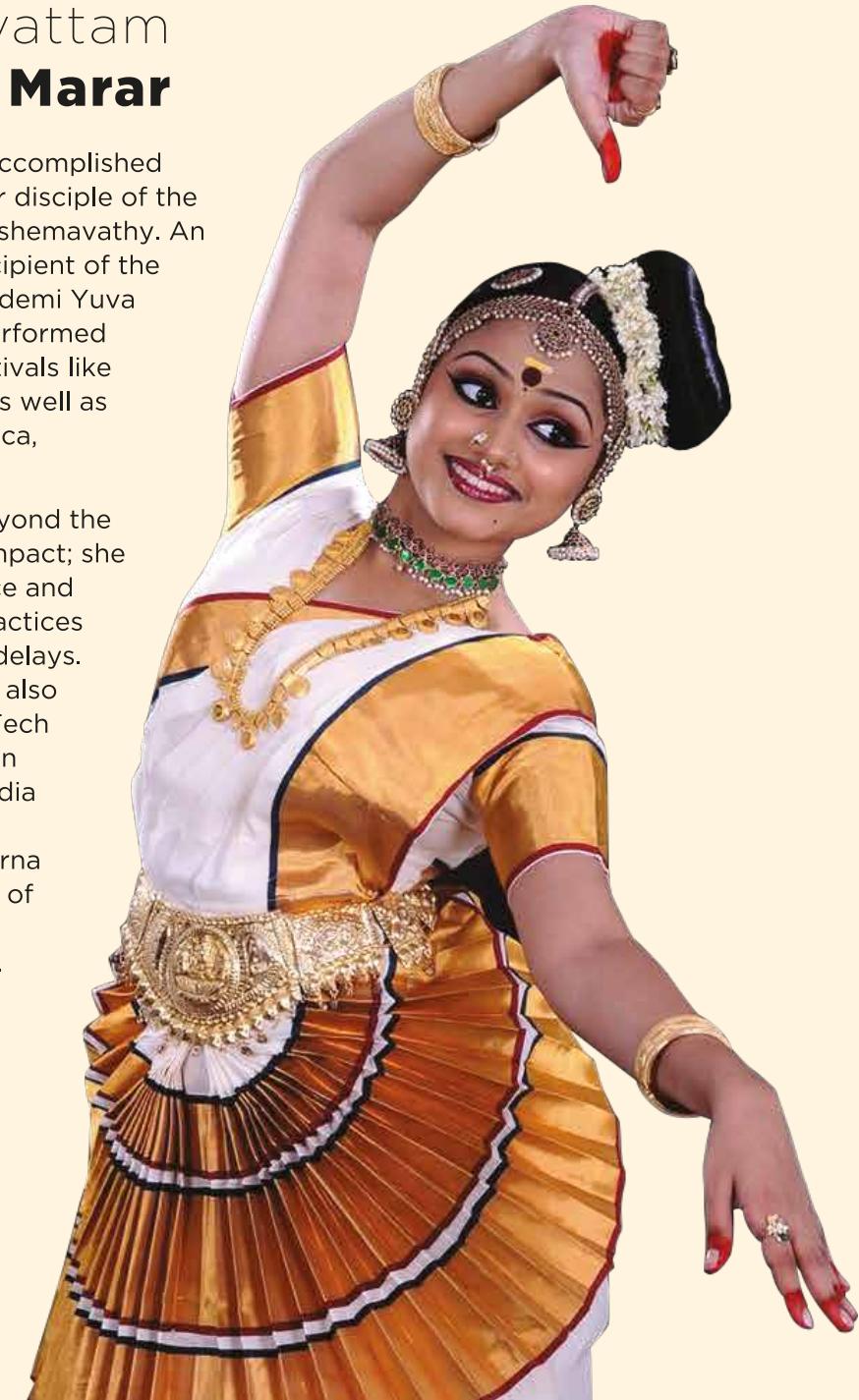
20/02/2026 Friday 6:00 PM



Mohiniyattam **Aparna Balram Marar**

Aparna Balram Marar is an accomplished Mohiniyattam artist and a senior disciple of the legendary Guru Kalamandalam Kshemavathy. An ICCR empanelled artist and recipient of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi Yuva Prathibha Award, she has performed extensively at prestigious festivals like Nishagandhi and Swaralaya, as well as across the USA, Costa Rica, and the Middle East.

Aparna's expertise extends beyond the stage into academia and social impact; she holds an MFA in Classical Dance and pioneers inclusive movement practices for children with developmental delays. Remarkably multifaceted, she is also an IIM Bangalore alumna, an M.Tech rank holder, and a researcher in Responsible AI. Representing India on the G20-B20 Digital Transformation Task Force, Aparna seamlessly integrates the grace of traditional heritage with cutting-edge global innovation.





Kathak **Swati Sinha & Group**

Swati Sinha is one of the foremost practitioners of Kathak today, representing the Jaipur style through the lineage of the great master Pt. Rajendra Gangani. Her dance is a powerful blend of technical virtuosity—marked by sharp movements and intricate rhythmic patterns—and subtle, poignant abhinaya. For her significant contributions to the field, she has been honoured with the prestigious Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar by the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Yuva Prathibha Samman.

An "A" grade artist of Doordarshan and an ICCR-empanelled performer, Swati has graced iconic stages including the Khajuraho, Konark, and Soorya festivals, and has toured extensively across China, South Africa, and South Korea. As a choreographer, she has directed cross-cultural productions like SAMPRAVAH and collaborated with flamenco artists. Through her institution, Sampada, and the Ras Raj Foundation, she fosters a holistic approach to Kathak, integrating Yoga and literature while bringing classical arts to underprivileged communities.



20/02/2026 Friday 7:15 PM

Bharatanatyam

Shaijaa Bineesh

Shaijaa Bineesh is a distinguished exponent of Indian classical dance, celebrated for her technical mastery in Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam, and Kuchipudi. A disciple of luminaries such as Padmabhushan Alarmel Valli and



Padmasri Kalamandalam Kshemavathi, her artistry seamlessly fuses rigorous classical foundations with evocative innovation. Her performances are marked by a refined abhinaya and a rhythmic precision that captivates the discerning spectator. She has performed alongside legendary artist Padmasri Shobana on several stages in India and abroad.

As the Founder and Director of the Svasti Institute of Performing Arts, Shaijaa is a dedicated mentor and a vital force in preserving the purity of traditional forms. Graded A Artist by Doordarshan and recipient of the Sthree Shakti Puraskaram 2025, she is defined by an aesthetic discipline that bridges ancient structure with modern expression. Whether performing alongside legends like Padmasri Shobana or leading international festivals, she remains a formidable contemporary guardian of India's cultural heritage.



20/02/2026 Friday 8:00 PM





NISHAGANDHI
DANCE FESTIVAL
2026 FEBRUARY 13-20
KANAKAKUNNU
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Government of Kerala

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, GOVT. OF KERALA

Park View, Thiruvananthapuram 695033, Phone: +91-471-2321132, +91-471-2560426

Email: marketing@keralatourism.org Website: www.keralatourism.org