

# THE HINDU

## 500-year-old tradition regales Delhiites



A dance recital, *Srijani'r Nritya Arghya*, opened to a packed Azad Bhawan auditorium as patrons of dance came to watch a Sattriya recital. The classical dance form is lesser known in the city among the eight classical dance forms, perhaps because it is not widely performed as the others.

It was only in November 2000 that the Sangeet Natak Akademi recognised the dance as one of the classical dance forms of India.

The performance was organised by the Srimanta Foundation, in association with Indian Council for Cultural

Relations, with Srijani Bhaswa Mahanta as the lead dancer. She was accompanied by a group of young monks from Purana Kamalabari. Many people from Assam were present at the performance, thrilled to have a slice of their culture on display and were eager to explain to the novice viewer details about the history and details of the performance.

Srijani who recently graduated from Lady Shri Ram College has been training since her childhood under that guidance of her Guru Padmashree Ghana Bora Adhyapak. She was accompanied by Hari Saikia (khol), Debajit Saikia (khol), Nitya Nanda (vocals), Babanita Das (vocals), Dwipendra Sarma (violin), Prasabba Baruah (flute), and Madan Saikia (cymbals). The music was composed under the guidance of Kesavananda Deva Goswami.

Srijani's performance, which involved singing and mimicry filled with emotion, received praise from eminent classical dancer Sonal Man Singh who was among those present.

"Apart from her dancing, her singing was sweet, evocative and soothing," Ms. Man Singh said.

She was happy to see a female dancer carry forward the spiritual, traditional dance that was earlier performed only by male monks. She hoped that Sattriya would scale new heights and travel across the world.

The monks from Purana Kamalabari, under the direction of Adhyapak Parama Kakaty, presented a choreographed item with traditional Sattriya mukha.

The traditional masks were made from items like bamboo, jute, tulapat and gobar and provided a visual impact to the choreography and story line.

CEO of Prasar Bharti Jawhar Sircar, who was among the audience, said that although other classical dance forms have had to be reworked, cleansed and re-packaged over the years, Sattriya had been able to maintain its pure form and distinct style for over 500 years.

He was happy that the dance had received patronage and sponsorship and called for more people to come out and support the arts so that it could be sustained.

***Sattriya, a lesser known dance form among the eight classical dance forms of India, was recognised as one only as late as November 2000***