

“I am delighted to be here with you all today to launch this virtual festival of ‘Parampara Series 2020’, organised by Natya Tarangini in partnership with the United Nations.

This is indeed a season of festivals—Dussehra, Deepavali, Milad-un-Nabi, Guru Nanak’s birthday and Christmas. They lend a healing touch of happiness, a bright buoyant optimism and an infectious sense of well-being. We all need this glimmer of good cheer to make our lives more fulfilling. That’s what music and dance provide us. They rejuvenate us. They exhilarate and energize us. They help us dispel gloom and despair. They nourish our inner spirit.

There could not have been a better time than now for holding this dance and music festival. Not only are we celebrating the World Day for Audio-visual Heritage but are also celebrating the creative genius of India.

Against the backdrop of the disruptive pandemic, we are living through anxious times. We are searching for a vaccine and remedy against the virus. We are re-setting our lives against the backdrop of lockdowns, economic downturns and lack of social interaction.

Music and dance can relieve this anxiety. It can restore our hope in the future. It can bring harmony into our lives. We will be able to better cope with these uncertain times.

I am glad that this edition of ‘Parampara Series’ brings together performances in Indian classical music and dance from the past editions. This is an excellent initiative.

Parampara means ‘tradition’, the transmission of cultural treasure house from one generation to the next.

I am indeed pleased to note that the ‘Parampara Series’ endeavor by Natya Tarangini has continued for 23 years now, and the innovative efforts to make it happen for the 24th year, even during times like this, are praise-worthy.

Dear friends,

India has a glorious tradition of music and dance. Deriving from the Samaveda and Bharatamuni’s Natyashastra, the tradition or parampara has evolved over more than 20 centuries. In addition to the two classical traditions of the Hindustani and Carnatic, there is a rich repertory of folk music and dance traditions that has enriched India’s literary heritage.

However, beneath this plethora of diverse forms of dance, music, and drama lies a central commonality--that of our civilizational philosophy and values like harmony, unity and solidarity. There is also a distinct focus on devotion, spirituality and there is an entire gamut of expressions of nine ‘Rasas’ that constitute human existence.

Dear brothers and sisters,

This is the message that the world needs right now-- a harmony within the body and an ability to live harmoniously with everyone around us. There cannot be a better medium to deliver this message than through our great living traditions.

Bharatiya culture and civilizational values have always highlighted the importance of harmonious co-existence with the nature and all living things. Since ancient times, our culture has accorded reverence to nature and nurtured environmental-friendly practices.

It would be apt to recall the words of Mahatma Gandhi, who had said: "I bow my head in reverence to our ancestors for their sense of the beautiful in nature and for their foresight in investing beautiful manifestations of Nature with a religious significance."

The pandemic triggered by COVID-19 has demonstrated to the humankind the dangerous consequences of disrupting nature and its habitat. Environmental protection and sustainability must be at the core of every action of individuals, communities, organizations and governments. It is our duty to pass on a safer and greener planet to future generations.

We need a society that cares, a society that shares and a society that is built on empathy and unconditional love. We must constantly review and renew our traditional treasures. The Parampara must be sustained. It can happen through systematic incorporation of these elements in the education system.

I urge schools to make performing arts a compulsory part of the curriculum. It would help students to become confident, shed inhibitions, explore hidden talents and nurture creativity.

I must commend the continued efforts of Drs. Raja Radha Reddy, Kaushalya Reddy, and their family, who have been training a number of young students in Kuchipudi and have kept the tradition alive for so long.

As anywhere else, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the performing arts industry in India, with the theaters and auditoriums being closed for the past few months.

In such a situation, novel initiatives like this are laudable. Clearly, technology-led alternatives offer immense potential and I encourage more artists and institutions to leverage technology and find new avenues to propagate and preserve the tradition.

I must also appreciate the UN, especially the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Renata Dessallien for co-hosting this virtual festival.

Next month we shall celebrate Deepavali, the festival of lights. I would like to echo the Indian sages, who had prayed for the entire humanity two thousand years ago: 'Thamaso ma Jyotirgamaya' meaning 'Lead us from darkness to light'. That is the light we must look forward to in the months to come. It is the melody and rhythm that we wish to hear and see around us. We are thankful to the illustrious, gifted artistes who are endowed with these special abilities. Let us enrich the diversity in the world by promoting our cultural art forms.

It is a privilege to be a part of this great Indian Parampara as a part of the larger world cultural landscape.

My sincere regards to the organisers and the participants of the Parampara Series for their efforts in keeping this light alive!

Once again, it gives me great pleasure to have launched this program. My best wishes for the future to all the participants, practitioners and enthusiasts of Indian dance and music.

Jai Hind!"
